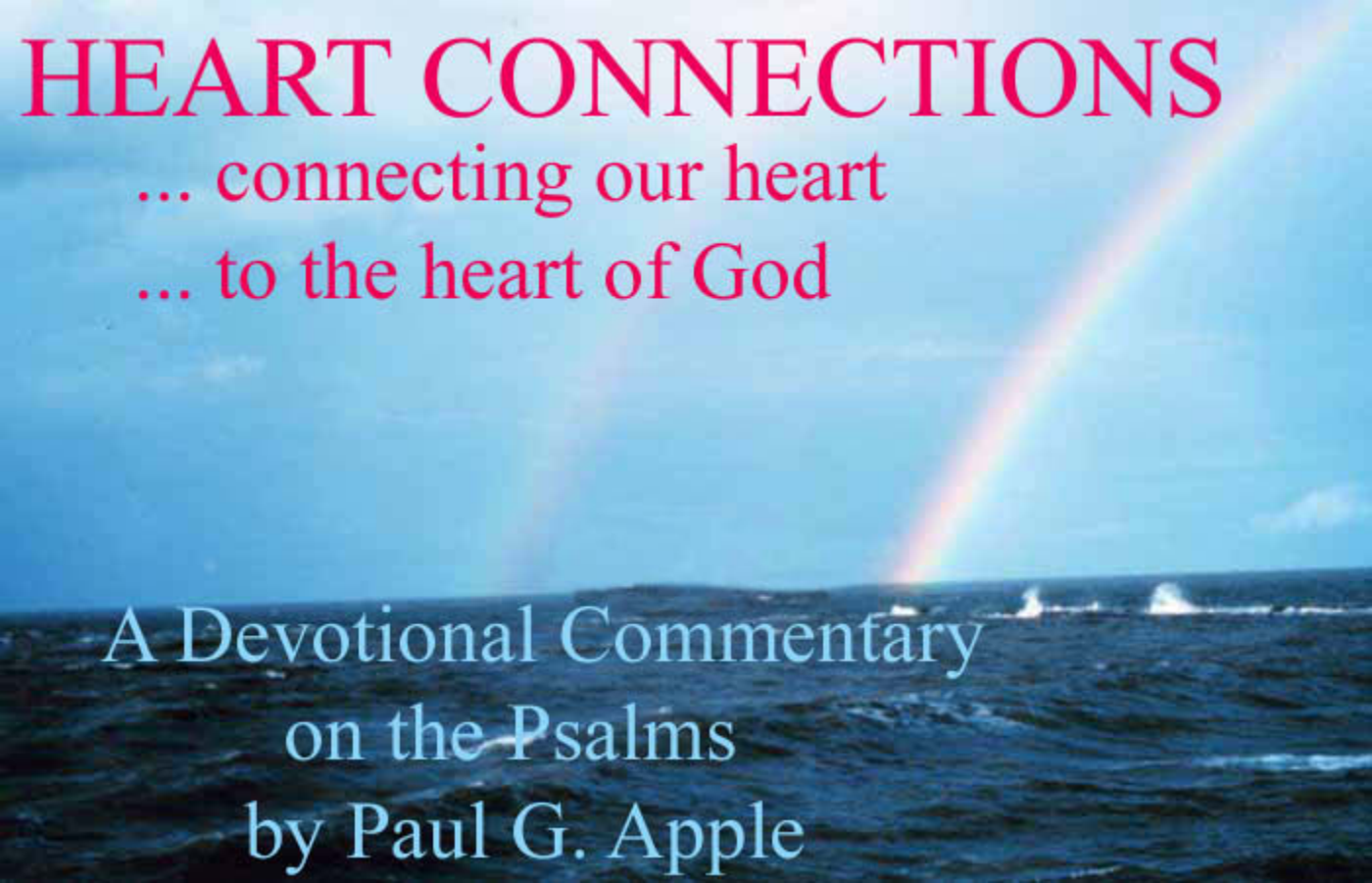

HEART CONNECTIONS

... connecting our heart
... to the heart of God

A Devotional Commentary
on the Psalms
by Paul G. Apple

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A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms

by Paul G. Apple, June 2000, rev. June 2026

For each psalm:

- Thesis statement … to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline … to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions … to encourage life application
- Representative quotations … to stimulate deeper insight

Psalm 34:21 "*our heart rejoices in Him*"

Photograph on the cover is that of a double rainbow off the breakwater at the entrance to the Calcasieu river. The photographer was Commander Grady Tuell, NOAA Corps and the photo is contained in the NOAA Photo Library, NOAA Central Library:
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DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

"*Freely you received, freely give*" (Matt. 10:8) – This is an important principle which has shaped the direction of my approach to the distribution of this electronic format of *Heart Connections*. My goal is to make this commentary available to as many people as possible. My target audience is not just pastors or Bible teachers – although the benefit to them is obvious. Rather my goal is that **any Christian** could use this simple reference tool:

- to guide them in their own personal devotions in the Psalms
- to help them lead interesting family devotional times
- to provide a framework for a small Bible study or discussion group

Free distribution (no strings attached) is the best way for me to reach this goal of widespread distribution and blessing to others. Our Lord Jesus Christ has sovereignly given gifted individuals to the church "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ*." (Ephes. 4:12-13)

This commentary is one contribution I can make towards that end. My desire is to continue to produce similar materials for other books of the Bible and to maintain the same type of "freeware" distribution approach.

Please direct all comments to Paul Apple at
webmaster@bibleoutlines.com

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(410) 744-8919

Finally, I would hope that everyone who finds benefit from this commentary would do something very specific that requires no resources and very little time on their part – that is to just send a quick email to a number of your Christian friends mentioning the availability of this e-book at

http://www.BibleOutlines.com

The best type of advertising is word-of-mouth advertising and this is certainly the type that I can best afford! Another way to help spread the word would be to encourage your church to place a short announcement in your church bulletin or newsletter. My vision is for a grass roots movement that would make it possible to distribute a wide range of excellent biblical helps across this internet platform that offers such easy access to so many.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to especially thank my dear wife, Karen, whose patience has allowed me the opportunity to labor on this project. The end result is as much her ministry as it is mine. Our children – Jenny, Rick, Stephen, and Julie – have also allowed me countless hours of uninterrupted study and writing without becoming frustrated or disillusioned. This has been especially difficult for them since the project seems so nebulous until it reaches the distribution stage where they can see some of the email responses from people benefiting from the material.

The privilege of having parents who love the Lord and have been faithful to Him throughout my life is a precious heritage that cannot be measured. In this age of rampant family strife, it has been helpful to navigate through the turbulent waters of the psalms from the secure sanctuary of a peaceful family. As I write these words at my desk in the comfortable study of our Baltimore home, I would be remiss if I did not thank my mother-in-law for her generosity that has helped our family in many tangible ways.

My sister Joanne encouraged me greatly near the end of the project by collecting some of the women in her church (Church of the Saviour in Myersville, MD) to develop the devotional questions for the last group of psalms (when my creative tank was starting to run dry). My sister Susan and her husband Dennis Kohlhafer came to my assistance with some much needed computer upgrades to help me over a few hurdles as well. My colleague Mark Schruefer was gracious to help a neophyte with an initial website design.

I benefited as well from the generous use of various commentaries I was able to borrow from my good friend Dr. Todd Beall of Capitol Bible Seminary in Washington D.C. In addition, I found the seminary library to be a convenient and valuable resource. Help has also come from unexpected sources. A woman who wishes to remain anonymous graciously offered to help with the proofreading even though we have no prior contact apart from this pdf file. This is truly internet fellowship in the gospel!

But most importantly, all of my praise and thanks must go to my Lord Jesus Christ for His faithfulness in encouraging me to persevere and His blessing in keeping me excited about the insights He provided into this precious Book of Psalms. I trust as you work through these studies and meditate yourself on these Bible passages, your heart cry will echo that of mine:

"*Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law*."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon:

"More and more is the conviction forced upon my heart that every man must traverse the territory of the Psalms himself if he would know what a goodly land they are. They flow with milk and honey, but not to strangers; they are only fertile to lovers of their hills and vales. None but the Holy Spirit can give a man the key to the Treasury of David; and even he gives it rather to experience than to study. Happy he who for himself knows the secret of the Psalms."

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF PSALMS

A good place to start with studying any book of the bible is to ask ourselves the question:
<u>WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?</u> We are going to identify 5 key reasons to study the Psalms:

1. Enhancing our Prayer Life (or Life of Prayer) cf. disciples: "*Lord, teach me to pray*"
   A good devotional exercise is to pray through a particular psalm; identifying with the emotional state of the writer and applying the verses to your life
2. Enhancing our Praise and Worship – "*Lord, teach me to worship*"
   Certainly this was the hymnbook for Israel and central to their praise and worship
   Conveys a sense of the **Majesty of God** – something that seems lost in our casual culture
3. Encouraging us to be Authentic and Transparent before God and Others
   Nowhere else in Scripture do you see such raw emotion and the highs and lows of every type of challenge that life can present. Whatever you are feeling or experiencing, you can find a psalm that relates to your situation. God wants us to communicate with Him in openness and honesty.
4. Learning More About the Character and Person of God:
   His Goodness, His Sovereignty, His Holiness, His Wrath, His Lovingkindness, His Mercy, His Power, His Majesty, the balance between His Transcendence and Imminence
5. Learning more about our Lord Jesus Christ as we see the Messiah in the Psalms

<u>Objective</u>: "*Connecting Our Heart to the Heart of God*"
David = "*a man after God's own heart*" – What does that mean? **1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22**

1. David Desired What God Desired
David wasn't perfect, but his *deepest loyalty* and *ultimate desires* aligned with God's:

- He loved God's Word (**Psalm 19, 119**).
- He wanted to honor God's name and reputation (**1 Samuel 17:45–47**).
- He had a heart for worship and repentance (**Psalm 51**).

Key Point: To be "*after God's own heart*" is not to be sinless, but to be God-centered.

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2. David Was Humble and Repentant
When David sinned (e.g., with Bathsheba and Uriah), he didn't excuse or justify it. He repented *deeply* (see **Psalm 51**).

- Saul, by contrast, deflected blame and tried to protect his image (**1 Samuel 15**).
- David showed **genuine brokenness** over his sin.

Key Point: A heart after God is one that grieves sin and returns to God. God desires a broken heart

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3. David Obeyed God from the Heart
Acts 13:22 emphasizes that David *"will do everything I want him to do."*

- This doesn't mean he was perfect, but that he submitted his will to God's.
- He trusted God's timing, refused to kill Saul even when he had the chance (**1 Samuel 24**), and consistently sought God's guidance.

---

4. David Prioritized Worship and his Relationship with God
David established worship in Israel, brought the Ark to Jerusalem, wrote many Psalms, and longed to build a house for the Lord.

- His relationship with God was **personal and passionate**.
- He spoke to God with *honesty, love, and awe.*

Where are we today:
In our emotions and our circumstances?
In our trials and tribulations?
In our despair and disappointment"
In our doubts and confusion?
In our joy and confidence?

Whatever can be experienced … we see in the psalms in intensified, extreme form.
Understanding the psalms provides us with a better understanding of our own **spiritual needs**

QUOTES ABOUT THE PSALMS

How have some of the famous Bible scholars summarized the **impact** of the Psalms:
(I think you will recognize these famous names)

Charles Spurgeon **(in *The Treasury of David*) --** I especially like this work; started my study…
"The Book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words. It teaches us how to mount up with wings as eagles, and how to commune with God."

C. S. Lewis **(in *Reflections on the Psalms*)**
"Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry."

"The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance."

Derek Kidner **(in his *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on Psalms*)**
"The Psalms are a lifeline in turbulent times, giving voice to pain and praise in equal measure."

John Calvin
"I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul.'"

"There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."

J. Sidlow Baxter: (Explore the Book)
"**This Book of Psalms is a limpid lake which reflects every mood of man's changeful sky. It is a river of consolation which, though swollen with many tears, never fails to gladden the fainting. It is a garden of flowers which never lose their fragrance, though some of the roses**

have sharp thorns. It is a stringed instrument which registers every note of praise and prayer, of triumph and trouble, of gladness and sadness, of hope and fear, and unites them all in the full multi-chord of human experience."

Abraham Lincoln:
"**I find something in them for every day of the year**."

Big Idea:
Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, whatever emotions your heart may be feeling, whatever struggles you may be going through, you will find a place in the Psalms that resonates and draws you closer to the Lord.

Key Verse:
Psalms 34:3 "*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together*."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title:
- Hebrew: *The Book of Praise* – in every psalm there is a note of praise
- English title -- *The Book of Psalms* – derived from the Latin Vulgate

Derivation of the word "Psalmist" – from the classical Greek = the music that comes from a stringed instrument; later on it came to mean a song of praise.
We have here pieces of music that were accompanied generally by stringed instruments.
This book was the **hymnbook** of the OT people.

Authorship: Not just David – can't just call the book *the Psalms of David* – although as we will see shortly, that is in some sense the case
- David – 73 or 75
- Asaph – 12 -- choir director
- Korah (or sons of Korah) – 10
- Solomon – 2
- Moses – Psalm 90
- Heman – Psalm 88
- Ethan – Psalm 89
- Anonymous – 50 (Ezra might have written some)

Organization:
Overall -- **5 books** – closing with Doxology – "*Amen and Amen*"
1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150

Because the number 5 lines up with the 5 books in the Pentateuch, some have tried to make a thematic connection between each of the 5 books of Psalms with the 5 books of Moses. But those efforts are superficial and lack consistency – seems like a forced attempt.

These psalms developed as individual poems (many put to music) or as collections of poems that were eventually assembled together with David probably being the final editor – that is why it is accurate to call these *the Psalms of David*. What is the support for David's role?

- Consistent with Jewish tradition.
- Also Jesus quoted in the NT from Psalms that were ascribed to other authors in the heading, but Jesus referenced the source as David.

Headings in the Psalms: (Bill McRae)

- Sometimes allusions to authorship in superscription – is it reliable or added later? Hebrew scholars consider it inspired and part of the text. The first verse is the superscription in Hebrew bible.
- Some word that designates the type of psalm
  - 57 – "*Psalm*" proper – a song that was to be sung with accompaniment of **stringed instrument**
  - 12 – "*songs*" – **Psalm 87** is example – maybe supposed to be sung **acapella**?
  - 13 – "*maskil*" – describes type of song = a **contemplative** type of poem
  - 6 – "*Mikhtam*" – pithy sayings? obscure
  - 5 – "*prayer*"
  - 5 – "*praise*"
- Musical terms – type of music that is to be used; maybe specifying a specific instrument for accompaniment (music has not been preserved)
- "Selah" = "*Amen*" ? Bruce Waltke says rather it is a **musical indication**; there was to be a lifting up of the voice at this point in volume or pitch or tone?
- Melody indicators – **Psalm 45, 60** –
- Liturgical indicators – When is the psalm to be sung? – **Psalm 92** – on the sabbath; **Psalms of degree**, etc.
- Historical indicators – **Psalm 3** – A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son

Interesting Facts:

- Contains the longest and shortest chapter in the Bible.
- It is the Bible's longest book.
- It is quoted more times in the NT than any other book.
- Arguably the most popular book in the Old Testament and probably the whole bible.
- 9 acrostic psalms – **9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145**

To get a flavor of the Psalms – let's quickly examine the beginning and the end of the book **Psalm 1** and then **Psalm 150**

Psalm 1 -- *TWO PATHS / TWO DESTINIES*
RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WORTH IT – BOTH NOW AND FOREVER!
(THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND BLESSINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS VS. THE LACK OF CHARACTER AND JUDGMENTS OF THE UNGODLY)

I. (:1-3) THE RIGHTEOUS
A. Strength of Character

1. Careful avoidance of the influence of sinners (:1)

Note the progression:

"*How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked,*
*Nor **stand** in the path of sinners,*
*Nor **sit** in the seat of scoffers*!"

2. Total absorption in the Word of God (:2)

"*But his delight is in the law of the Lord,*
And in His law he meditates day and night."

B. Blessings

Overall: "*Blessed*" (:1)

1. Stability and Strength -- *"like a tree firmly planted by streams of water"*
2. Fruitfulness – "*Which yields its fruit in its season*"
3. Endurance – "*And its leaf does not wither*"

Overall: *"And in whatever he does, he prospers"*

II. (:4-5) THE UNGODLY -- the exact opposite – "*The wicked are not so*"

A. Lack of Character

1. Immersed in sin
2. Absorbed in the world

B. Judgments

1. No strength / Instability – "*they are like chaff which the wind drives away*"
2. No fruit -- just frustration
3. No endurance

"*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,*
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

III. (:6) CONCLUSION -- FINAL DESTINY

A. Final Destiny of the Righteous

"*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,*"

B. Final Destiny of the Ungodly

"*But the way of the wicked will perish*."

This book of Psalms is **Fundamentally all about Spirituality**

The Book of Psalms is going to describe for us how to live a life that pleases God.
It will define for us true spirituality.
It will contrast the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked.

Psalm 150 -- *PRAISE THE LORD!*

BIG IDEA: DOXOLOGY FOR THE HYMNBOOK OF PRAISE

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

I. (:1B) WHERE?

"*Praise God in His sanctuary;*
Praise Him in His mighty expanse."

II. (:2) WHY?

"*Praise Him for His mighty deeds;*
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness."

III. (:3-5) HOW?

"*Praise Him with trumpet sound;*
Praise Him with harp and lyre.
Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.
Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals."

IV. (:6A) WHO?

"*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord*."

(:6B) CONCLUSION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

This book of Psalms is **Fundamentally all about Praise and Worship**

We must give expression with our lips and our music to both:

Who God Is

And What God Has Done

Approach to studying the Psalms: (Bill McRae)

- **Devotional approach** – immediate application to me in my life – Danger: you need to correctly interpret before making any application
- **Messianic approach** – see allusions to Christ – Problem: many have no reference; we will be talking about Messianic Psalms a little bit later
- **Historical approach** – [Best approach] reads it in light of historical setting – normal biblical hermeneutics -- sometimes difficult to determine historical setting; superscription helps; cf. background to our hymns; **proper interpretation leads to legitimate application**

How to read thru the Psalms? Bible Reading Plans

- Systematically; select 5 per day [to read the Psalms in 1 month] or more ideally, just pick 1 per day – you can pray thru the Psalm as part of your devotions for the day
- Randomly -- Select one that more fits your particular mood and circumstances – requires a topical index which I am going to provide for you

How to Categorize the Psalms?

- Many commentators take a form approach – The psalm is either a Lament, a Hymn of Praise [these might be individual or national], a Hymn of Thanksgiving [Difference: related to a specific blessing rather than God's attributes in general], and Enthronement Psalm, a Royal Psalm, a Pilgrim Song (Songs of Ascent or Degree), etc. There might be minor differences in what forms are defined and what elements you might tend to see within each form

- I am going to take more of a thematic approach which takes the concept of form one step further – Difficulty: you come up with a lot more categories

Introduction to Topical Index:

Since I have already studied through all of the Psalms individually, I can offer you a Title and Big Idea statement for each Psalm. That allows you to scan for a particular topic that interests you and is relevant to what you want to study.

I have identified 16 Categories –
[might be some overlap; just listed the psalm under its main theme]

1. RIGHTEOUS VS WICKED / INTEGRITY / GODLINESS —
   Psalms **1; 7; 14; 15; 17; 26; 49; 64; 101; 120**

2. REVELATION / WORD OF GOD — [covered in our Sunday evening studies]
   Psalms **19; 119** (22 strophes)

3. MESSIANIC (broken out separately, but could fit under other topics as well) —
   Psalms **2; 8; 16; 22; 40; 45; 69; 72; 89; 102; 109; 110; 132**

4. KINGSHIP / ROYAL / SOVEREIGNTY —
   Psalms **21; 24; 47; 48; 85; 87; 93; 97; 99; 113; 122**

   Enthronement Psalms – God is Reigning; God is in control; a more focused type of Kingship Psalm (**47, 93, 96-99**)
   3 Categories:
   - God reigning over nation of Israel
   - God's universal reign over the universe
   - Millennial reign of Lord – most refer to this category

   3 Major Parts:
   - Imperative exhortation to Praise
   - Reasons to praise God
   - Conclusion

5. CRISIS / DESPERATION —
   Psalms **55; 57; 70; 88; 142; 143**

   Psalm 142 – A Cave Man's Complaint
   Maskil of David; when he was in the cave. driven away from Jerusalem
   Big Idea: **WHEN I AM TRAPPED AND ALL ALONE**
   THE LORD IS STILL MY ESCAPE ROUTE
   - **(:1-2)** Cries out to God for help
     "*I Cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;*
     I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.

I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him."

- (:**3-4**) Lament: Description of his trouble / Desperate Crisis
  "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,* Overwhelmed
  Thou didst know my path. Encouraged
  In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me.
  Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me;
  There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul." Feeling Trapped
- **(:5)** Word of Confidence / Expression of Trust
  "*I cried out to Thee, O LORD; I said,*
  'Thou art my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.'" Refuge / Portion
- (:**6**) Confession
  "*Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low;*
  Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me.
- **(:7**) Praise
  "*Bring my soul out of prison,*
  So that I may give thanks to Thy name;
  The righteous will surround me,
  For Thou wilt deal bountifully with me."

6. REPROACH / SLANDER — How should we respond?
   Psalms **4; 86; 123**

7. ANSWERING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS —
   Psalms **10; 13; 74; 77; 79**

   Often categorized as **lament psalms**, where the psalmist voices deep distress, confusion, and grief. These psalms don't shy away from asking hard theological questions, especially about God's apparent absence, injustice, and the suffering of the righteous.

   Common Threads:
   - Why are you silent, God? (**Ps. 10:1**) God's seeming absence in the face of injustice.
   - How long will suffering continue? (**Ps. 13** – The "*How Long*" Psalm)
   - Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer? (**Ps. 79:1**)
   - Has God abandoned His covenant or forgotten His mercy? (**Ps. 77:8**)
   - Where is God when disaster strikes? (**Ps. 10:1**)

8. PROTECTION / DELIVERANCE / VICTORY —
   Psalms **3; 5; 12; 18; 20; 28; 44; 46; 59; 61; 62; 108; 118; 121; 124; 140; 141; 144; 147**
   Good study: all of the images used to convey a picture of God's protection / deliverance

9. JUDGMENT / VINDICATION / IMPRECATORY / WRATH OF GOD —
   Psalms **7; 9; 35; 50; 54; 55; 58; 59; 68; 69; 75; 79; 82; 83; 94; 106; 129; 137; 139**

10. PENITENTIAL / CONFESSION OF SIN / DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD —
Psalms **6; 32; 38; 39; 51; 53; 130; 137; 143**

11. IMPORTANCE OF FAITH / FAITHFULNESS OF GOD —
Psalms 11; 27; 56; 91; 105; 146

12. HOPE / PERSEVERANCE / PERSPECTIVE —
Psalms **31; 37; 38; 42; 43; 71; 78; 90; 125; 130; 131; 138**

Pilgrim Songs / Songs of Ascent – **120-134** – sung as the Jews travelled upwards to Jerusalem to celebrate the 3 annual feasts (I have broken these up by theme)

13. GOD'S PROVIDENCE / GOODNESS / THANKSGIVING / BLESSINGS / GOD'S FAVOR —
Psalms **23; 65; 67; 73; 80; 81; 84; 95; 100; 103; 115; 126; 127; 133; 134; 135; 139**

14. GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS / MERCY —
Psalms **36; 41; 52; 60; 63; 107; 116; 117; 136 – repetition of phrase: "*For His lovingkindness is everlasting*"**

Other psalms focus on some of God's other attributes:
1) **God's Omnipotence --** God's Mighty Hand and Outstretched Arm **-- 136:12** –
2) **God's Omniscience -- 139:1-4 –** God knows us intimately

15. FEAR OF THE LORD / MAJESTY / WORSHIP —
Psalms **25; 29; 34; 66; 68; 76; 104; 111; 112; 114; 128**

16. PRAISE / JOY —
Psalms **30; 33; 92; 96; 98; 145; 148; 149; 150**

Psalm 33
Big Idea: BECAUSE WE CAN COUNT ON GOD,
OUR HEART SHOULD OVERFLOW WITH SONGS OF JOY

- **(:1-3)** Call to Praise
"*Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;*
Praise is becoming to the upright.
Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy."
- (:**4-19**) Reasons for praising God
Dependability of the Character of God / the Word of God / the Purposes of God
- (:**20-22**) Conclusion – Confession of faith in God
"*Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.*
For our heart rejoices in Him, Because we trust in His holy name.
Let Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,

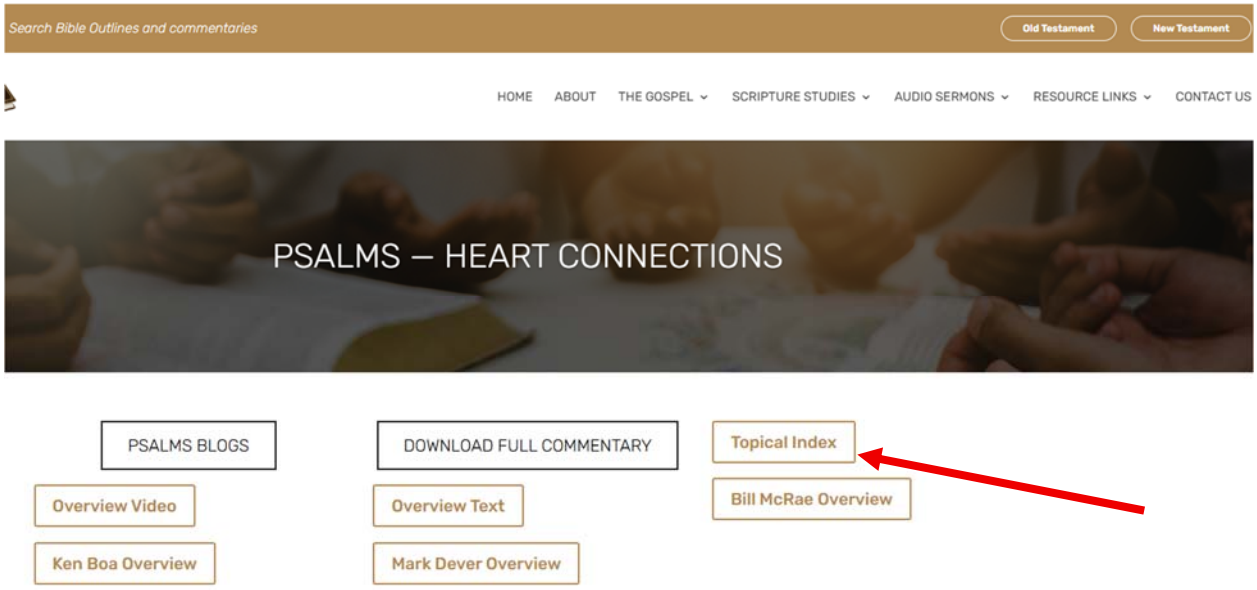
According as we have hoped in Thee."

Psalm 96 –
Big Idea: GREAT IS THE LORD AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED – FOR HIS GLORY AND STRENGTH

- (:**1-6**) Israel called to praise the Lord
- (:**7-10**) Nations called to praise the Lord – "*The Lord Reigns*"
- **(:11-13**) Nature called to praise the Lord

I would love to give each of you a printout of that list … but it's too long so I have to give you access through my **website**.

Psalms Summary Page



Topical Index Page

CRISIS / DESPERATION

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Psalms 57:1-11	WORSHIP FROM THE CAVE OF DANGER
	IN THE MIDST OF DANGER WE CAN WORSHIP GOD FOR HIS KINDNESS AND TRUTH
Psalms 70:1-5	HELP!
	HURRY UP AND RESCUE ME!
Psalms 88:1-18	LIFE IN THE PITS -- A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE
	THE LONELINESS OF BEING FORSAKEN BY GOD AND MAN MAKES LIFE IN THE PITS INTOLERABLE
Psalms 142:1-7	A CAVE MAN'S COMPLAINT
	WHEN I AM TRAPPED AND ALL ALONE THE LORD IS STILL MY ESCAPE ROUTE
Psalms 143:1-12	STAYING UPBEAT WHEN YOU ARE BEING BEAT UP
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REPROACH / SLANDER

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ANSWERING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

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	REJOICING BY FAITH WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH REQUIRES FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS
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	THE REALITY OF MY TROUBLES CAN NEVER CONTRADICT THE GREATNESS OF GOD
Psalms 79:1-13	HOW LONG? AND WHY?
	WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCIPLINED, THEY CRY OUT FOR THE ANSWERS TO 2 SEARCHING QUESTIONS: HOW LONG? AND WHY?

Imprecatory Psalms:

Definition: These psalms invoke a curse on someone; invoke judgment or curses on one's enemies. The word *imprecatory* comes from the Latin *imprecari*, meaning "to invoke" or "to call down (evil)." These psalms are among the most emotionally intense and theologically complex passages in the Bible. Imprecatory psalms express raw human anger, a desire for justice, and deep frustration with evil. They are prayers of protest and appeals to divine justice, where the psalmist entrusts vengeance to God rather than taking it into their own hands.

Many people have a **problem** with how a man of God could express such passionate zeal for judgment. "*Come and dash them to pieces.*" Shouldn't our orientation be to love our enemies?

Calls for divine retribution. Different Categories:

- **Personal**, directed at specific enemies (e.g., **Psalm 109**).
- **National**, calling for judgment on foreign oppressors (e.g., **Psalm 137**).
- **Covenantal**, rooted in God's promises to protect the righteous and punish evil (e.g., **Psalm 69**).

Example of an Imprecatory Psalms – Psalm 69:

- A lament where the psalmist asks God to blot out the names of his enemies from the book of life. **Vs. 22-28**

A. (:22) Turn the Tables on Their Prosperity

"*May their table before them become a snare;*
And when they are in peace, may it become a trap"

B. (:23) Smite them Physically

"*May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see,*
And make their loins shake continually."

C. (:24) Pour out Your Wrath

"*Pour out Thine indignation on them,*
And may Thy burning anger overtake them."

D. (:25) Wipe them from the face of the earth

"*May their camp be desolate;*
May none dwell in their tents."

E. (:26) They have tried to exploit God's discipline of His children

"*For they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself hast smitten,*
And they tell of the pain of those whom Thou hast wounded."

F. (:27-28) Wipe them out from the book of life

"*Do Thou add iniquity to their iniquity,*
And may they not come into Thy righteousness.
May they be blotted out of the book of life,
And may they not be recorded with the righteous."

Conclusion: These outbursts are:

- The expressions of an OT saint longing for the vindication of God's righteousness;
- Utterances of zeal for God and His kingdom; not praying for personal vengeance
- Displays a legitimate abhorrence of evil and sinfulness and a longing for the establishment of God's kingdom in justice and righteousness
- These are prophetic utterances demonstrating the attitude of God toward sin and sinners; God hates sin
- Jesus used Cursing quite extensively:

  Look at how Jesus called down a curse on several cities – **Matt. 10:14-15**
  Luke 6:24-26 "*Woe to you*…"
  Luke 11:39-52 -- 6 woes (curses) proclaimed on the Pharisees

But what **Application is there for Christians**? Should we ever pray such prayers? Certainly I would never use language to this extreme.
Are Christians even permitted—let alone required—to pray this way? Who has the right to pray curses on someone else? Who is a proper object of cursing? And what are proper occasions for imprecatory prayer?
How has the transition from the Old Covenant where the theocratic nation of Israel faced physical enemies and obstacles to God's kingdom to the New Covenant where we face spiritual enemies: Satan, Internal sin, etc.?

A few questions a Christian might consider:

- Am I seeking **God's justice** or my personal revenge?
- Does this prayer align with Christ's call to **love, even my enemies**?
- Am I **trusting God** with judgment rather than trying to control the outcome?

Personal Testimony: I have on a very few occasions prayed a **judgment type prayer** –

- When I was faced with a particular ungodly person at work that was blatantly opposed to God and the Gospel
- Either/Or Prayer – Lord, either save this individual or remove them from this context so that they do not continue to oppose your gospel – God answered on both sides of the equation in some remarkable ways

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Messianic Psalms:

Introduction and Overview of the Messianic Psalms
The Messianic Psalms are a group of psalms in the Hebrew Bible that Christians traditionally interpret as prophetic references to the Messiah—God's anointed king and deliverer.

Classifications of Messianic Psalms
Messianic Psalms can be classified in a two main ways:

1. Directly Messianic Psalms
These psalms are considered to speak directly and exclusively about the Messiah, without a primary reference to any contemporary historical figure (like David).
Examples:
    - **Psalm 2** – Speaks of the Son being enthroned by God ("You are my Son; today I have begotten you" – cited in Hebrews 1:5).
    - **Psalm 110** – Describes a priest-king in the order of Melchizedek, interpreted in the New Testament as referring to Christ.

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2. Indirectly (or Typically) Messianic Psalms
These psalms refer first to a historical figure (usually David), but are seen as a type or foreshadowing of the Messiah. The Messiah is believed to fulfill these patterns more fully.
Examples:
    - **Psalm 22** – Begins with "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*?" (quoted by Jesus on the cross) and includes details resembling crucifixion.
    - **Psalm 69** – David speaks of suffering and rejection, echoed in the Gospels regarding Jesus.

These psalms are often quoted or alluded to in the New Testament, reinforcing their messianic interpretation within Christian theology.

Notable Messianic Psalms
Here are some of the key psalms traditionally considered messianic:

- **Psalm 22** – A vivid description of <u>suffering</u> that closely parallels the crucifixion of Jesus (e.g., "*They pierced my hands and feet*" / "*They cast lots for my clothing*").

- **Psalm 16** – Speaks of the Holy One not seeing <u>decay</u>, which Peter and Paul cite as referring to Jesus' resurrection (**Acts 2:25–31; Acts 13:35–37**).

- **Psalm 2** – Describes God's Son being established as king over the nations, a passage directly quoted in the New Testament to refer to the <u>resurrection</u> of Jesus (**Acts 13:33)**. "*He said to me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.*'"

- **Psalm 110** – Declares the Messiah as both <u>king</u> and priest ("*You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*"), a key text in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

3 people clearly involved here: "*The Lord says to my Lord*"

1) David -- who wrote the Psalm
2) "*The Lord*"
3) "*my (David's) Lord*"

<u>Big Idea</u>: **THE MESSIAH WILL CONQUER ALL ENEMIES AND FUNCTION:**

AS KING (:2-3) Strength of His rule / Loyalty of His people

AS PRIEST (:4) What is distinctive about the order of Melchizedek? **Heb.7**

no record of any progenitors or successors; it is a forever priesthood
He was king over Salem in the ancient world (later called Jerusalem).
No record of his beginnings or end
Reign of Righteousness and Peace (Rom. 5:1)
Received tithes from Abraham -- shows his greatness
Melchizedek blessed Abraham
Gave Abraham bread and wine -- possible type of Lord's Supper?

AS JUDGE (:5-6) Judges His enemies in the day of His Wrath

Big Idea:
Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, whatever emotions your heart may be feeling, whatever struggles you may be going through, you will find a place in the Psalms that resonates and draws you closer to the Lord.

CONCLUSION:
May we be people like David – whose heart is connected to the heart of God.
May we come to appreciate even more the Majesty of our God.
May we use the Psalms to enhance our worship and praise of our Almighty King and Savior.

TEXT: PSALM 1

TITLE: TWO PATHS / TWO DESTINIES

BIG IDEA:
RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WORTH IT – BOTH NOW AND FOREVER!
(THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND BLESSINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS VS. THE LACK OF CHARACTER AND JUDGMENTS OF THE UNGODLY)

INTRODUCTION:

Poem by Robert Frost –

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both....
I took the one less traveled by,
And **that has made all the difference**."

Not that we desire to travel both roads … but the choice of which path has far-reaching consequences.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS

A. Strength of Character

1. Careful avoidance of the influence of sinners (:1) – Note the progression:
"*How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked,*
*Nor **stand** in the path of sinners,*
*Nor **sit** in the seat of scoffers*!"

2. Total absorption in the Word of God (:2)
"*But his delight is in the law of the Lord,*
And in His law he meditates day and night."

B. Blessings

Overall: "*Blessed*" (:1)

1. Stability and Strength -- *"like a tree firmly planted by streams of water"*
cf. Ripken commercial "like a rock"
you need a constant supply of the water of the Word of God;
cf. Christmas tree: after stop watering it, it dries up quickly

2. Fruitfulness – "*Which yields its fruit in its season*"
takes time and patience; a tree does not yield fruit immediately
a. Fruit that is distinctive to the tree
b. Fruit that appears after patient, long-term growth

3. Endurance – "*And its leaf does not wither*"

Overall: *"And in whatever he does, he prospers"*
Allows believers to be the ultimate risk-takers, withing the framework of the will of God

II. THE UNGODLY -- the exact opposite – "*The wicked are not so*"

A. Lack of Character

1. Immersed in sin
2. Absorbed in the world

B. Judgments

1. Instability / no strength – "*they are like chaff which the wind drives away*"
   cf. the husk of a peanut beneath the outer shell
2. No fruit -- just frustration
3. No endurance

III. CONCLUSION -- FINAL DESTINY (:6)

"*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,*
But the way of the wicked will perish."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Parents, discuss with your children a time in your life when you came to a crucial fork in the road and you had to make a critical decision that impacted the course of your life.

- Pick an instance where you made a godly choice
- Pick an instance where you made a poor choice
- Pick an instance where you made the "wisdom" choice – not necessarily involving right and wrong, just the best decision you could make at the time.

2) Discuss how peer pressure can be either positive or negative. How important is it to choose your friends wisely? Who we hang out with impacts how our life turns out. Examine the roots of cynicism in this psalm. How can that type of judgmental spirit, carping attitude and negativism be so destructive in sapping you of the joy that should rightly be your possession?

3) What are some techniques to help you and your children meditate on God's Word? Think about the importance of memorizing God's Word so you can meditate on it. What Scripture memorization plan do you have in place for your family?

4) In what ways has God prospered your family as you have made righteous choices? Are you actively looking for God's blessing? Do you expect to be producing fruit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Carr: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUCCESSFUL BELIEVER

I. (v. 1) THE PATH OF THE SUCCESSFUL BELIEVER

A. The Successful believer is separated in his walk of life.

1. He doesn't Believe like the wicked
2. He doesn't Behave like the wicked
3. He doesn't Belong with the wicked

B. The downward progress -- Walk, Stand, Sit.

C. The successful believer realizes that there is a vast difference between himself and the world he was saved out of, and he lives accordingly!

II. (v. 2) THE PLEASURE OF THE SUCCESSFUL BELIEVER

A. The Word Has Captured His Full Affection -- Delight = Pleasure!

1. It is Food -- Job 23:12; Matt. 4:4
2. It is Light -- Psa. 119:105
3. It is Truth -- John 17:17
4. It is a Mirror -- James 1:23-25
5. It is Water -- Eph. 5:25-27
   a. It Cleanses -- Eph. 5:26
   b. It Quenches -- John 4:13-14
   c. It Refreshes -- Psa. 119:150
6. It is a Seed -- 1 Pet. 1:23
7. It is a Sword -- Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17
8. It is a Hammer -- Jer. 23:29
   a. It can Build Up -- Pro. 16:24
   b. It can Tear Down -- Rev. 2:16; 19:15, 21
9. It is a Fire -- Jer. 20:9; Luke 24:32

B. It Has Captured His Full Attention

III. (v. 3) THE PROSPERITY OF THE SUCCESSFUL BELIEVER

A. His Position -- By the River! Always close to the life giving resources.

B. His Prominence

C. His Permanence

D. His Productivity -- "*Brings forth fruit*"

E. His Predictability -- "*In his season*"

F. His Perpetuity -- "*leaf shall not fade*"

G. His Prosperity -- "*Whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper*"

Stedman: "The Psalms are particularly appropriate for our day because they are the folksongs of the Bible. This is a generation that loves folksongs. These Psalms relate the experiences of believers of the past, reflecting the emotional upsets, problems, and disturbances which saints of old have gone through. They tell how they found their way through and they are wonderful, therefore, for helping us in our emotional pressures. There is no book like the Psalms to meet the need of the heart when it is discouraged and defeated, or when it is elated and encouraged. To express these emotional feelings this book is absolutely without peer. They are helpful simply because they teach us how to find our way through many types of problems. These marvelous folksongs are much like the ballad style of music that we hear so much today, simply recounting experiences that various men and women of the past have gone through.

Many of you may not know that the Psalms divide into five books which are similar in theme to the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). The first book of Psalms ends with Psalm 41 and echoes the theme of Genesis, an introduction to human life and a revelation of the needs of the human heart. It is the book of foundations. The second book of Psalms begins with 42 and runs through Psalm 72. This corresponds to the book of Exodus. That is the book of redemption, the story of God's moving in human history to change and redeem people and save them from themselves. The third book begins with Psalm 73 and goes through Psalm 89. It is like the book of Leviticus, the book in which Israel learned how to draw near to God, how to worship him through the provision God made for his people, the tabernacle. Then Psalm 90 to Psalm 106 constitutes the fourth book which goes along with the book of Numbers, the book of wilderness wandering, of testing and failure. Finally, the fifth book covers Psalm 107 to 150 and is like the book of Deuteronomy, the second law, i.e., the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which sets us free from the law of sin and death. It describes the way by which God finally accomplishes the redemption and sanctification of his people, the changing of human beings into the kind of men and women he originally designed."

Piper: "Well, where is this psalm? It is the beginning of the book of Psalms. And what are the psalms? Many of them are prayers. In fact, the Psalter is the prayer book of the Bible. Millions of Christians go to the Psalms to find words for the cry of their hearts in the worst of times and the best of times. So I begin Prayer Week with Psalm 1 because the Bible begins its prayer book with Psalm 1.

But why does it? And why should we? The reason is that in the Christian life -in the life of God's people - prayer and the Word are connected in such a way that if you disconnect them, both die. Let me sum up the connection between prayer and the Word in three ways. The Word of God inspires prayer, it informs prayer and it incarnates prayer."

Piper: "So the blessing, the happiness, referred to in verse 1 is a life that is nourishing and fruitful for others, a life that is deeply durable in the face of drought and a life whose "*labor is not in vain*" (1 Corinthians 15:58), but succeeds in God's good purposes into eternity. That's the blessing of delighting in the Word of God and meditating on it day and night."

McGee: Re vs. 1 – "This verse states the *practice* of the blessed man. A little bit further in this psalm we will see the *power* of the blessed man, and finally his *permanency*.

Kidner: "*Counsel*, *way* and *seat* (or '*assembly*', or '*dwelling*') draw attention to the realms of thinking, behaving and belonging, in which a person's fundamental choice of allegiance is made and carried through; and this is borne out by a hint of decisiveness in the tense of the Hebrew verbs (the perfect)…. the three complete phrases show three aspects, indeed three degrees, of departure from God, by portraying conformity to this

world at three different levels: accepting its advice, being party to its ways, and adopting the most fatal of its attitudes—for the *scoffers*, if not the most scandalous of sinners, are the farthest from repentance (Pr. 3:34)."

Kidner: "*Chaff* is , in such a setting, the ultimate in what is rootless, weightless (cf. the 'vain and light persons' of Jdg. 9:4, AV) and useless."

Kidner: Re vs. 6 "*The parting of the ways*" – "To '*know*' is more than to be informed (as in 139:1-6): it includes to care about, as in 31:7 (Heb. 8), and to own or identify oneself with (cf. Pr. 3:6). To *perish* is used in many senses: here for instance of a road or course that comes to nothing or to ruin; elsewhere of hopes or plans frustrated (e.g. 112:10; Pr. 11:7), of creatures that get lost (119:176), and of men and achievements that come to grief (2:11; 9:6). The New Testament brings to light the eternal implications which are already contained in it (e.g. Jn. 3:16). So the two ways, and there is no third, part forever."

VanGemeren: "Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm and shares many features common to the Book of Proverbs and to other psalms designated as wisdom psalms (34; 37; 49; 73; 111-12; 119; 127-28; 133…) As a didactic psalm Psalm 1 encourages the pursuit of godliness by contrasting God's rewards and his judgment. Therefore, the psalm tends to be idealistic. For example, it does not claim to deal with the totality of human life, such as the problem of suffering…"

VanGemeren: "Meditation is not the setting apart of a special time for personal devotions, whether morning or evening, but it is the reflection on the Word of God in the course of daily activities (Josh 1:8)."

Ogilvie: "The Secret of Lasting Joy – The blessed person is one who is energetically pressing ahead through life, grasping its many-splendored wonder. His eyes are on the Lord and His plan for him. Life is exciting; serendipities of grace await him each new day; expectation of unlimited possibilities makes his spirit vibrant with hope. Surprisingly, the psalmist described what the blessed man does not do. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful. From what we are told the blessed person has not time to do, we are given an apt description of how cynicism begins, grows, and becomes a settled attitudinal sin… At the core of the cynic's heart is the desperate need for love. He is the negative, critical person he is because he cannot believe in himself or anyone else. (cf. Ephes. 3:17-19)."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to be Blessable**
Introduction: Brief, but powerful. God is not in heaven reluctant to give blessings to his people. He is a God who delights in blessing his people. **Ps. 35:27**

God's prosperity doesn't mean that all your times will be good, but that even in the dark times, the difficult times, God will see you through that. And God will prosper you even in that. And that was the way it was in Joseph's life. **Gen. 39:3**

Look at the word *prosper* there in verse 3. It's used 53 times in the Old Testament. Sometimes it's translated successful or success. but it's used to speak of a plant flourishing no matter what environment that it's in, to be fit for anything, to prosper in any circumstance.

Big Idea: **Four distinguishing marks of the life that God is able to bless**

I. He's separated from the world – vs. 1

The person that God blesses is a person that has learned to say no to the world. He realizes that the world can offer him nothing. **1 John 2:15**
Solomon had to learn the lesson that the world could not satisfy. **Eccles. 2:17**

The world seeks to conform you into its mold. The world wants everyone to be worldly, to have the values of the world, to accept the philosophies of the world. But God is seeking to transform us. The world wants to conform us from without. God wants to transform you from within.

A. He rejects the world's advice

Be very, very careful about what people call Christian counseling. A lot of it is Freudian psychology.

B. He rejects the world's actions

Standing is the idea of abiding or a pattern of life. It's doing what others do. Standing where they stand.

C. He rejects the world's attitudes.

Seat here is used figuratively of a place of influence and power. Scornful is to be critical. It's an attitude of rebellion. We could say a lack of reverence to ridicule holy things. The ungodly use their mouth to blaspheme God, to ridicule and tear down the things of God.

II. He's saturated by the word – vs. 2

A. He appreciates the word of God

The Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.

B. He appropriates it -- Meditation

What is even better than you going through the Bible is the Bible going through you, allowing God's word to get into you, into your heart and life. We have to internalize God's Word for it to do any good for us spiritually.

III. He's situated by the waters – vs. 3

Water in scripture is a symbol for the spirit. Water for cleansing is a symbol of God's word, but water for drinking is a symbol of the spirit. And the water here comes from the rivers. Nourished and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

A. Notice his permanence
He shall be like a tree. A tree will grow year after year. and gets stronger, it gets taller, it begins to bear fruit.

B. His position
Another thing about a tree is it has a hidden life. It has a root system that no one sees, it's underground. The roots go deep down into the soil, they stretch out into that river, getting nourishment. The roots are the key to the strength and prosperity of a tree. When a tree bears fruit, good fruit, we know it has strong roots, right? The key to your prosperity is your hidden life. What you're doing when no one else sees you but Almighty God.

C. His productivity

D. His perpetuity
"*his leaf also shall not wither*"
This is a person who will not wither away because of the circumstances around them. They will continue to trust in the Lord.

E. His prosperity

IV. He's segregated from the wicked – vs. 4
There's a purposeful contrast between the wise and the wicked, between the godly and the ungodly. **Jer. 17:5**

It's a picture of futility. It's a picture of emptiness, weightlessness, worthlessness. Oh, the world gives you such a beautiful picture of itself. The people of the world give you such a beautiful image of themselves. The same ones who have no fear of God, no reverence of God, that scorn the Word of God and the things of God, yet they present themselves as being so beautiful and so wonderful. You know what God says? It's all weightless, it's all worthless, it's all chaff. There's no substance to that, none whatsoever. And so it's a picture really here of inevitable judgment that awaits the wicked, those who do not put their trust in the Lord.

Conclusion: In short, Psalm 1 is really a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed man. And all those who are not like Christ, all those who don't follow God's way, that's the wicked. God is calling us to follow after the Lord Jesus Christ, to be like Him.

TEXT: PSALM 2

TITLE: NO CONTEST

BIG IDEA:
REBELLIOUS WORLD LEADERS MUST BOW DOWN BEFORE GOD'S ANOINTED RULER OR BE BROKEN BY GOD'S WRATH

Note: It is important to determine who is speaking in each section

I. (:1-3) THE FUTILITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE RULE OF GOD -- FORGET IT!

A. (:1) It Doesn't Make any Sense

"*Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing*?"
cf. Acts 4:27-28

B. (:2) There is No Safety in Numbers

"*The kings of the earth take their stand,*
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and
Against His Anointed"

a multitude of bad counselors leads to bad decisions
Who is on the Lord's side?

Wever: no one can escape the sovereignty and power of God;
you can make one of two decisions:
1) he can lovingly accept it OR
2) be in rebellion against it (like an ox that won't move until it's been goaded = drawing blood)

C. (:3) Resolutions of Rebellion are Doomed to Failure

"*Let us tear their fetters apart,*
And cast away their cords from us!"

The rebellious view submission to God as imprisonment

II. (:4-6) THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE -- NO PROBLEM!

A. His Position -- sits reigning in the heavens -- Majesty

"*He who sits in the heavens*"

B. His Mocking of their feeble resistance

"*He … laughs, The Lord scoffs at them*"

C. His Wrath in promising judgment

"*Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury*"

D. His Triumph in establishing His King over all the earth

"*But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain*"

III. (:7-9) THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANOINTED KING -- THE SON OF GOD -- IT'S A DONE DEAL!

A. Messiah's Dominion Consistent with God's Sovereign Plan for History

"*I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord*"

Early interpreters of Psalm 2 always viewed it as a Messianic psalm -- based on Davidic Covenant

2 Sam. 7:12-16 -- the Davidic Covenant = promises given to David; no conditions imposed
God says: This is what I have determined to do
David's response: Lord, OK, go ahead

PROVISIONS OF DAVIDIC COVENANT: (from Wayne Wever)

1. David is to have a future child = Solomon, who will take over the throne
2. The son shall build the temple instead of David
3. The throne of David's kingdom will be established forever
4. The throne won't be taken away from Solomon even though his sins merit chastizement;
   God won't take it away from the family as he did to Saul
5. David's house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever ultimately
   "house" = David's physical descendants
   there will always be a royal line; Joseph was in that line
   "throne" = right to rule; royal line
   "kingdom" = nation of Israel, political entity
   "forever" = whatever the disruptions, changes in form; the privilege and right will never be removed; doesn't mean an unending time

B. Messiah's Dominion Part of His Inheritance as the Son of God

1. His Relationship as Son

"*Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee*."

2. His Privilege as Son

"*Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance,*
And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession."

C. Messiah's Dominion Will Demolish All Opposition

"*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,*
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware"

Role = Judge and Executioner / ruling with a rod of iron rather than as a lamb led

to the slaughter

IV. (:10-12) THE ESCAPE CLAUSE FOR THE REBELLIOUS -- TURN OR BURN!

A. Final Warning – Requires the Mighty Swallowing Their Pride

"*Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;*
Take warning, O judges of the earth."

Show discernment -- not like the fool that won't listen
Heed the warning -- not like the naive that continue on

B. One Way Out – The Fear of the Lord is the Key

1. "*Worship the Lord with reverence*"
   right attitude is important

2. "*Rejoice with trembling*"

3. "*Do homage to the Son*"

C. Only 2 Options:

1. Perish under His wrath
   "*lest He become angry, and you perish in the way,*
   For His wrath may soon be kindled."

2. Submit and enjoy His blessing
   "*How blessed are all who take refuge in Him*!"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Have you come to grips with the sheer folly and futility of any rebellion against the King of Kings? Does our life show the same type of cycling back into forgetting the Lord and rebelling as the Book of Judges? Is there some area in your life where you are fighting against God?

2) Our fear of God should mature as we consider the emphasis in this psalm on the Lord's anger and wrath. How can the liberals say that God is just a God of love who has no intention of punishing the wicked? What NT passages speak of the anger and wrath of God? Is the Sovereignty of the Lord a comfort to us or a challenge?

3) The concepts of Sonship and Inheritance are central to this passage. What will it mean for us to be co-heirs with Christ and to reign together with Him? What have we inherited from our parents? What will we pass along to our children?

4) Do we consider submission to the Lord to be a form of bondage or of freedom? Do we find the Lord's yoke to be heavy or light? Do we find the Lord's commandments to be burdensome or helpful?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "The final beatitude … leaves no doubt of the grace that inspires the call of verses 10ff. What fear and pride interpret as bondage (3) is in fact security and bliss. And there is no refuge *from* Him: only *in* Him."

Perowne: "The king who sits on David's throne has become glorified and transfigured in the light of the Promise. The picture is half ideal, half actual. It concerns itself with the present, but with that only so far as it is typical of greater things to come. The true King, who to the Prophet's mind is to fulfil all his largest hopes, has taken the place of the visible and earthly king. The nations are not merely those who are now mustering for the battle, but whatsoever opposeth and exalteth itself against Jehovah and His Anointed."

Leupold: Titles it "The Ultimate Victory of the Lord's Anointed." Structure: "The first strophe describes the bitter opposition of the enemies of the Lord's anointed. The second describes the calm assurance of the Lord Himself in the face of this opposition. The third presents the glorious divine ordinance appointed for the Lord's anointed. The last consists of an exhortation to the rebels to submit discreetly to Him who is their Lord."

Murphy: "This Psalm is Messianic, for it speaks of an Anointed One who transcends all earthly sovereigns; catholic, for it calls the Gentiles into the Church; evangelical, for it announces happiness to all who trust in the Lord; and monitory, for it warns the rebels to make a timely submission. It celebrates the kingly office of the Messiah. The first and second Psalms form a pair. The former gives prominence to the moral son of God, the latter to the proper Son of God; the one signalizes the law as set forth in the spiritual life of the new man, the other celebrates the gospel in the person of the Messiah, who secures the happiness of all who trust in Him."

Spurgeon: "However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway: the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?"

Spurgeon: "The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff; in the second Psalm we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and here, we contemplate Christ, the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for he is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust."

McGee: Re vs. 7 – "The reference in the second Psalm is not to the birth of Jesus. He never was begotten in the sense of having a beginning. Rather, this is in reference to His resurrection. Christ was begotten out of Joseph's tomb. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and God is the eternal Father. You cannot have an eternal Father without having an eternal Son. They were this throughout eternity. This is their position in the Trinity. It hasn't anything to do with someone being born, but it does have something to do with someone being begotten from the dead. It has to do with resurrection."

Harris: **THE MESSIAH MISSIONARY PSALM**
Theme: The futility of opposing God's government. Cf. Acts 4:25, 26.

I. CONSPIRACY. Ver. 1-3 "*The rulers take counsel together*" (ver.2)
1. Agitation. Ver. 1. "*The heathern rage*." Propaganda is instituted against the purposes and government of God, bring confusion and anarchy into the universe.
2. Aggression. Ver. 2. "*The kings set themselves*." Evil organizes, and those who have come to places of power have plotted in open rebellion againt the God who is over all.
3. Anarchy. Ver. 3. "*Let us break … cast aside*." An effort is made to overthrow the government of God. This has ever been the aim and purpose of the Evil One.

II. CONFUSION. Ver. 4-6. "*In derision*" (ver. 4).
1. Derision. Ver. 4. "*Shall laugh*." A daring figure, but a symbol of the futility of opposition by the created thing against its Creator. Such rebellion must fail.
2. Determination. Ver. 5. "*Speak … vex*." God's purposes are fixed in his universe, and none can thwart them.
3. Decision. Ver. 6. "*I have set*." God has set his heart on the rule of his Son on earth, and that purpose cannot be set aside. He shall reign "*whose right it is*," and the kingdoms shall ultimately be his forever.

III. CONCORD. Ver. 7-9. "*The heathen for thine inheritance*" (ver. 8).
1. Decree. Ver. 7.
2. Design. Ver. 8.
3. Dominion. Ver. 9.

IV. COUNSEL. Ver. 10-12. "*Be instructed*" (ver. 10).
1. Surrender. Ver. 10.
2. Service. Ver. 11.
3. Serenity. Ver. 12.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Christmas Kiss**
Introduction: Verse 12 is a command here that is given in this psalm. Really, it's kind of the culmination of the whole psalm. The verse basically tells us to kiss the Son or perish.

First of all, it's a messianic psalm. These are psalms that specifically portray Christ as king. And these are normally psalms that speak prophetically about the Messiah. And they look way beyond the present circumstance, and they look far into the future to someone that is great. **Psalm 2** presents Jesus Christ as the anointed King and Son of God. Psalm 2, you might be interested to know, is probably one of the most quoted psalms in the New Testament. It shows the attitude of God the Father to the world about how we should adore and magnify and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

Big Idea: **Reasons to kiss the Son**

I. Because of the rebellion against him. Vs. 1-3
There is a hatred against God's anointed. The world is in rebellion to God and his son. They are raging, they are revolting, they are rebelling against Christ.

A. Forms of their rebellion.

1. Protesting

"*Rage*" = Hebrew word that means to plot. An insurrection, that's the idea here.

2. Premeditating

"*Imagine*" -- the word used here is the same word used in Psalm 1 for meditation. When we meditate, we're thinking about something over and over and over again in our mind.

3. Positioning

"*set themselves*" -- They are positioning themselves against the Lord and His anointing.

4. Planning

"*take counsel together*" – They don't want the reign and rule of God's anointing over them.

B. Focus of their rebellion = against God

C. Folly of their rebellion – vs. 3
You're a slave to someone or something. The best thing you can do is be a slave to Jesus Christ.

II. Because of the revelation about him. Vs. 4

A. He's the reigning king

B. He's the revealed Son – v. 7

What does it mean when it says, *this day I have begotten thee*? 2 Possible meanings:

1) the day of the eternal decree when Christ was declared to be the son of God.
2) the time when Christ's identity was manifested to the world that he was the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity when he was born into this world. And I think that this is more in line with what he's talking about here.

This verse is quoted in Hebrews to speak of both His incarnation and His resurrection. So I think it encompasses all of that. I think this refers not only to His incarnation, but His public ministry, His baptism, His crucifixion, His resurrection. Why? Because all of those events, all together, they all bear witness that Jesus was the Son of God. All of those things, they all testify to that same fact, that he was the eternal son of God.

C. He's the returning Lord – vs. 8

1. His Sovereignty – **vs. 8**

All the earth and everything will come under submission to Jesus Christ. **Phil. 2:9**

2. His Severity – **vs. 9**

Egyptian kings, when they celebrated their rule, they did it by writing the names of their enemies on the side of pottery, and then with a rod, they would smash it. It was a very symbolic gesture of their supremacy over their enemies. **Rev. 2:5**

D. He's our Refuge – **vs. 10**

The wisest thing you could ever do is to stop resisting Christ, stop rebelling against Christ, submit completely to who He is.

Resulting Blessings:

1) Protection – **vs. 12**
2) Peace – **vs. 11**
3) Pardon – you will share in His victory

TEXT: PSALM 3

TITLE: THE LORD MY SHIELD

BIG IDEA:
GOD PROTECTS AND DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR ENEMIES

("*A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.*")

I. (:1-2) THE ENEMIES ARE CIRCLING IN FOR THE KILL

A. (:1) The Odds are Getting Worse

"*O Lord, how my adversaries have increased!*
Many are rising up against me."

Number of enemies increasing
Snowballing effect -- others getting braver to attack God's Anointed

B. (:2) Situation Looks Hopeless

"*Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no deliverance for him in God.'*"

II. (:3-6) GOD IS A CIRCLE OF PROTECTION AROUND ME

A. (:3) The Description of this Protection

1. My Shield
2. My Glory
3. The One who lifts up my head

B. (:4) The Desperate Cry for this Protection

"*I was crying to the Lord with my voice,*
And He answered me from His holy mountain."

in accordance with the holiness and righteousness of God

C. (:5-6) No Fear!

1. Able to Sleep – Inward Peace
   "*I lay down and slept*"

2. Able to Awake – Protection of the Lord
   "*I awoke, for the Lord sustains me*"

3. Mindset of Courage and Confidence in the Lord
   "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*
   Who have set themselves against me round about."

III. (:7-8) DELIVERANCE IS GOD'S SPECIALTY

A. (:7A) He responds to the cries of His people

"*Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God!*"

B. (:7B) He hits the enemy where it hurts

1. Wounds Their Pride

"*For Thou hast smitten all my enemies on the cheek*"

2. Destroys Their Capability for Inflicting Savage Wounds

"*Thou hast shattered the teeth of the wicked.*"

C. (:8) He Specializes in Deliverance and Blessing

"*Salvation belongs to the Lord;*
Thy blessing be upon Thy people!"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How powerful are my enemies compared to the desperate situation that faced David? Think of the agony of being opposed and hunted down by your own son. Think of the mocking taunts that label you as being beyond God's help.

2) Are we able to turn our fears over to the Lord and rest in the Peace He can provide or are paralyzed by anxiety and inner turmoil? How soundly do we sleep at night when we are facing pressure situations? Are we taking refuge behind the shield of the Lord?

3) How upset and unsettled and distraught is our Lord over the dangers that face us? Is He alarmed by a force of ten thousand marshalled against us? Why not?

4) Do we think that Deliverance ultimately depends on us or on the Lord? Do we take too much responsibility on ourselves and neglect the sovereign grace of God? What do we think the psalmist means by "Salvation belongs to the Lord?"

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alexander: Re Psalms 1-3 – "In these three psalms there is a sensible gradation or progressive development of one great idea. The general contrast, which the first exhibits, of the righteous and the wicked, is reproduced, in the second, as a war against the Lord and his Anointed. In the third it is still further individualized as a conflict between David, the great historical type of the Messiah, and his enemies."

Kidner: Re the Title – "The notes reproduced in small print in most of our versions, at the head of all but a few of the psalms, are part of the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible (unlike the marginal notes added by the Massoretes) and are included in its numbering of the verses. Hence in most psalms which bear a title the verse-numbers in

the Hebrew text are out of step with ours. The New Testament not only treats these headings as holy writ, but following our Lord's example it is prepared to build its arguments on one or another of the notes of the authorship which form part of them (Mk. 12:35-37; Acts 2:29ff …) …

This is the first psalm to bear a title … and is one of fourteen that are thereby linked with historical episodes, all in the life of David (Pss. 3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142). His flight from Absalom is recounted in 2 Samuel 15:13ff."

Kidner: "God's *holy hill* (4) was doubly relevant, as the place where God had installed both His king, David himself (with all the promises of 2:6ff), and His ark, the symbol of His earthly throne (cf. 2 Sa. 6:2) and of His covenant. Not Absalom's decrees, but the Lord's, will issue from mount Zion …"

Spurgeon: "You will remember the sad story of David's flight from his own palace, when, in the dead of the night, he forded the brook Kedron, and went with a few faithful followers to hide himself for awhile from the fury of his rebellious son. Remember that David in this was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, too, fled; he, too, passed over the brook Kedron when his own people were in rebellion against him, and with a feeble band of followers he went to the garden of Gethsemane. He, too, drank of the brook by the way, and therefore doth he lift up the head."

Spurgeon: Re "*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord*" – "This verse contains the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine. Search Scripture through, and you must, if you read it with a candid mind, be persuaded that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the great doctrine of the word of God: '*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord*.' This is a point concerning which we are daily fighting. Our opponents say, 'Salvation belongeth to the free will of man; if not to man's merit, yet at least to man's will;' but we hold and teach that salvation from first to last, in every iota of it, belongs to the Most High God. It is God that chooses his people. He calls them by his grace; he quickens them by his Spirit, and keeps them by his power. It is not of man, neither by man; '*not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy*.' May we all learn this truth experimentally, for our proud flesh and blood will never permit us to learn it in any other way."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 3 – "The power of the Great King is referred to by the word '*glory*' … The phrase signifies the Lord's glorious rule over his kingdom. He is the Lord of hosts, with tens of thousands of angels at his command. Even as a king can be described as glorious because of his vast armies, so the Lord is glorious because he can marshal the angelic host to aid his children (34:7; 91:11). The king puts his confidence in the protection that God alone can provide, because his glory is greater than any human power. The glory of God is nothing less than the revelation of his hiddenness!"

Craigie: Re relationship to Ps. 4 – "Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* [Cambridge: University Press, 1906]... has suggested to many interpreters that the psalm was used regularly in the morning worship of the individual or of Israel; this suggestion has been

incorporated within the title given the psalm in this commentary ["A Morning Prayer"}. Ps 4:8 has suggested that the fourth psalm was employed during evening worship. Thus the location of these two psalms next to each other in the Psalter would not be accidental; the compiler of the Book of the Psalms (or of a collection within it) has set alongside each other two standard psalms for use in morning and evening worship respectively."

Craigie: Re vs. 8 – "The psalmist prays that God would smite his enemies '*on the cheek*' (3:8c). The words are symbolic; to smite someone on the cheek was to administer a gross insult (cf. 1 Kgs 22:24; Job 16:10; Lam 3:30). As the psalmist had been insulted by the words of his enemies (3:3b), so now he prays for an insult to be administered to them."

Craigie: Re use of "*Selah*" in the psalms – "The word Selah is used three times in Ps 3 (vv 3, 5, and 9); in the Book of Psalms as a whole, it is used a total of seventy-one times and a further three times in the psalm of Habakkuk (Hab. 3:3, 9, 13). Both the etymology of the term and its precise significance remain uncertain. It is used sometimes at the end of sections which may be equivalent to strophes or stanzas (e.g. Ps 3:3, 5), sometimes at the end of a psalm (e.g. Ps 44:9), but sometimes no evident significance may be determined from its location …

One factor which seems to be fairly certain is that the term has some kind of musical significance, either with respect to the singing of the psalm or with respect to its musical accompaniment…

One theory: might be taken to imply 'pause,' or 'instrumental interlude,' or even 'louder.'"

McGee: "…'*selah*' was probably a musical rest, a musical pause. For the common layman who does not understand much about music it means, 'Stop, Look, and Listen.'"

Yates: Re vs. 3 – "…God is *a shield* to protect him, *my glory* to restore his dignity, and *the lifter up of my head* to give him new courage."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When Your World is Coming Apart**
Introduction: Many, if not all of us, have experienced circumstances in our life where it seems like our whole world is just coming apart. Now, this psalm was written at a time when David's world was coming apart. David's sin had set in motion a series of God-ordained devastating consequences.

What do you do when your world seems to be coming apart? Perhaps David wrote Psalm 3 right after he crossed the Jordan as he was leaving Jerusalem, running away from Absalom's rebellion. And he was on the other side of Jordan awaiting the inevitable forces of Absalom that they were going to do battle with. Verse 5 hints that he wrote it after waking up safely after a good night's sleep. This psalm teaches us

that we can keep it together even when our world is coming apart. We can experience God's peace even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances that we're facing in life.

Big Idea: **Seven things that can help us if things seem to be coming apart**

I. Face your problems with God – vs. 1
I've noticed how some people sometimes try to run from their problems or ignore their problems.

II. Don't give in to negative talk – vs. 2
But the thing that we have to admire here about David is he doesn't give in to the negative talk. He brings all of that to God as well.

III. Focus on who God is – vs. 3
David remembers three things here about God.

1) The Lord is our shield – protection
2) The Lord is my glory --
3) The Lord is the lifter of my head

IV. Vent your emotions to God – vs. 4
There are times as believers when we just need to go to God and just vent to the Lord. Just go give it all to the Lord.

V. Learn to rest in the peace of God – vs. 5
David, despite the dark circumstances around him, was able to sleep. **Is. 26:3; Ps. 4:6-7**

VI. Refuse to be controlled by fear – vs. 6
Ps. 56:3

VII. Depend on God in humble prayer – vs. 7-8
David just commits this whole matter to God in humble prayer. He remembers that God is faithful, God faithfully delivered him. He's confident that God will do it again. After all, salvation belongeth to the Lord. God loves to bless his children. This is why God wants us to pray, because our prayer is an expression of humble dependence upon God.

TEXT: PSALM 4

TITLE: THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY LEADER

BIG IDEA:
UNJUSTIFIED REPROACH AND REJECTION SHOULD NOT DISTURB THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY LEADER

I. (:1) PRESENT PETITION FOR HELP INSPIRED BY PAST RELIEF

A. Answered Prayer is the Goal for Petition for Help

"*Answer me when I call*"
"*hear my prayer*"

B. Righteousness and Grace is the Grounds for Petition for Help

"*O God of my righteousness*"
"*Be gracious to me*"

C. Past Deliverance is the Confidence for Petition for Help

"*Thou hast relieved me in my distress*"

II. (:2-3) PLEA FOR RENEWED LOYALTY BASED ON GOD'S APPROVAL

Probably the context is the same as in Psalm 3 where David is facing the problem of Absalom's rebellion. The leading men of the nation were forced to choose sides and determine whether they would remain loyal to David or go over to Absalom's camp. Once in Absalom's camp they still could repent and renew their loyalty to God's appointed king. It was an ongoing struggle over loyalties.

A. It is a Mistake to Reject the Godly (Despite his Present Reproach)

1. A Mistake to Show Reproach where Respect was due
"*O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach*?"

2. A Mistake to Value what is Worthless Rather Than Priceless
"*How long will you love what is worthless*"

3. A Mistake to Choose Deception Over Truth
"*and aim at deception*?"

B. It is Prudent to Renew Loyalty to Those Leaders Whom God Has Approved

1. God Approves of the Godly
"*But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself*"

2. Answered Prayer Is One Stamp of the Lord's Approval
"*The Lord hears when I call to Him*"

III. (:4-5) PRESCRIPTION FOR ENDURING REPROACH AND REJECTION

A. Fear of God

"*Tremble, and do not sin*"

B. Quiet Meditation

"*Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still*"

C. Sacrifices of Righteousness

"*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness*"

D. Trust in the Lord

"*And trust in the Lord*"

IV. (:6-8) PEACE AND JOY SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY

A. God's Goodness is Just Around the Corner

1. Despite the Discouraging Words of those whose Faith is Failing

"*Many are saying, 'Who will show us any good*?'"

2. Because of the Persevering Prayer of those whose Faith Never Quits

"*Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, O Lord*"

B. God's Gladness Is Already in My Heart

"*Thou hast put gladness in my heart,*
More than when their grain and new wine abound."

C. God's Peace and Security Surround Me

"*In peace I will both lie down and sleep,*
For Thou alone, O Lord, dost make me to dwell in safety."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Is my life characterized by God answering my prayers? Does that reassure me that I am God's and He is looking out for me?

2) How does my Value System compare to what God has revealed in His Word as most precious? Where am I still giving too much loyalty to someone or something that is "*worthless*"?

3) What are some of the "*sacrifices of righteousness*" that the Lord desires?

4) Is my faith strong or fainting? Do I picture God's Goodness as just around the corner and His deliverance as imminent or do I think that God has written me off and will no longer shower me with His blessings?

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NOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "The circumstances surrounding this psalm are similar to those of Psalm 3. However, here the lament becomes a song of trust to express the psalmist's relief. The serenity of tone throughout is the result of an experience of God's help in the past. Even as God gave rest in the previous experience (Ps 3), there is assurance that he will proivde that same peaceful rest again. Verse 8 connects this song with evening prayer."

Kidner: "Surrounded by suspicion, David first appeals to people's goodwill and good sense (2): but ultimately the vindication that matters to him is not in their hands but in God's (3)."

VanGemeren: "The message of the psalmist is that his confidence is in the Lord who will not abandon his beloved in distress but will restore his blessings and joy to them. This confidence gives rise to one blessing that the enemies cannot take away: inward peace (v.8)."

Perowne: "The Psalm opens with a short prayer, in which David's faith stays itself on his experience of past mercies. Then his thoughts run upon his enemies, on the curses of Shimei, on the treachery of Ahithophel. '*O ye sons of men*,' – thus he turns to address them, and the expression denotes persons of rank and importance, -- '*how long will ye turn my glory into shame*?' How long will ye trample my honour as a king in the dust, refusing me the allegiance which is my due? How long will ye love vanity (or emptiness), and seek after lies? How is it that ye are bent on this mad enterprise, and persist in using the weapons of falsehood and slander to my prejudice? He reminds them that, in assailing him, they are assailing not him, but God, who chose him and appointed him to his office (ver. 3)."

McGee: Re vs. 7 – "David was like the rest of us—his heart failed in the time of trouble. Around him were unbelievers, his own people, who were mocking him, 'God is not going to do anything for him.' But God *did* do something for him. '*Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased*.' David found that God was good to him. And God is good to us, my friend."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When You Can't Sleep**
Introduction: Most scholars agree that the situation of the writing of Psalm 4 is the same as Psalm 3. It's both the same background, probably written, in fact, on the same day. David has a little trouble sleeping! Scholars think that Psalm 3 was written by David in the morning, and Psalm 4 was written by David in the evening. What was causing David such distress? David's son Absalom had rebelled.

Big Idea: But when you read this psalm, when you get to the end of it, however, his insomnia is gone. And he says in verse 8, *I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety*. So I want you to see tonight just **five steps to overcome insomnia in your life**.

I. Call upon the Lord. Vs. 1

The world basically says you should count sheep, right? Did you know that Harvard psychologists did a study on that? Richard Davidson and Gary Schwartz, they conducted a study on insomnia, and they concluded, this is a quote,, visualizing sheep prevents the brain's right hemisphere from processing anxiety-provoking imagery, while the counting keeps the left hemisphere from straying into problematic thought, end quote. So basically, they agree that counting sheep will really help you at night. But if you're a child of God, there's something better than counting sheep, right? What's the old saying? Don't count sheep, but talk to the shepherd, right?

David is basically saying, help me, Lord, to be bigger. When my problems increase, help me to be big enough to deal with them. Maybe God's will is not to take the problem away, but to make us bigger in dealing with that problem. He wants us to grow. **Ps. 119:32**

II. Confront the problem by faith. Vs. 2-3

He has so many enemies all around him. And so he confronts that problem, but he does it in faith. And he reminds himself that everyone, all those enemies, they're following after vanity. They're following after lies. But David reminds himself that he is God's child and servant. God's going to protect me.

III. Commune with your heart. Vs. 4

Evaluate yourself. Talk to yourself. **Ps. 116:7; 146:1**

Suggested topics:

1) Focus on the greatness of God; stand in awe of God; there's no problem too big for God to handle. **Ps. 145:3**
2) Determine not to sin. **Eph. 4:26**
3) Be sorry for your sin. **1 John 1:9**
   Sometimes a restless night might be a conscience that is not clean because of past sins.
4) Renew your commitment.

   Offer right sacrifices. These are the sacrifices that a person would make when God has helped them and they're making a vow before the Lord. **Ps. 50:14-15; 76:11**
5) Make a decision to trust God. **Is. 50:10**

IV. Conquer all negative thoughts. Vs. 6

Phil. 4:7-8 – Think upon positive things.

The way he combats negative thinking is he remembers God's favor on his life. He remembers the blessings that God has poured out on him.

V. Claim a good night's sleep. Vs. 8
Ps. 127:2 - He gives his beloved sleep.

When you lay your head on your pillow tonight, are you absolutely certain that if you don't wake up, that your soul will be with the Lord in heaven.

TEXT: PSALM 5

TITLE: MORNING DEVOTIONS

BIG IDEA:
THOSE WHO SEEK GOD'S FAVOR IN THE MORNING REJOICE IN GOD'S PROTECTION AGAINST ALL ENEMIES

I. (:1-3) MORNING DEVOTIONS ARE CRITICAL: CRY FOR HELP IN THE MORNING

A. Attempt to Gain a Hearing
"*Give ear to my words*"
"*Consider my groaning*"
"*Heed the sound of my cry for help*"

B. Address Your Cry to the One Who Can Help
"*O Lord*"
"*my King*"
"*and my God*"

"*For to Thee do I pray*"
"*I will order my prayer to Thee*"

C. Await Answers to Prayers Offered in the Morning
"*In the morning, O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice;*
In the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch."

II. (:4-6) GOD HATES THE BAD GUYS

A. Expressions of Hatred
1. does not "*take pleasure*"

2. does not "*dwell with*" any wickedness

3. will not allow the wicked to "*stand before Thine eyes*"

4. "*dost hate*"

5. "*dost destroy*"

6. "*abhors*"

B. Expressions of Wickedness
1. "*wickedness*"

2. "*evil*"

3. "*boastful*"

4. "*all who do iniquity*"

5. "*those who speak falsehood*"

6. "*the man of bloodshed and deceit*"

III. (:7-8) GOD LOVES THE GOOD GUYS

A. (:7) God's Love Makes Worship a Reality and a Priority

"*But as for me, by Thine abundant lovingkindness I will enter Thy house,*
At Thy holy temple I will bow in reverence for Thee."

B. (:8) God's Righteousness Guides My Path

"*O Lord, lead me in Thy righteousness because of my foes;*
Make Thy way straight before me."

IV. (:9-10) THE BAD GUYS DESERVE GOD'S JUDGMENT

A. (:9) They Are Bad News

1. Not Dependable

"*There is nothing reliable in what they say*"

2. Destructive

"*Their inward part is destruction itself;*
Their throat is an open grave"

3. Deceptive

"*They flatter with their tongue*"

B. (:10) Their Rebellion Deserves God's Judgment

1. Verdict = Guilty

"*Hold them guilty, O God*"

2. Punishment Should Fit the Crime

"*By their own devices let them fall!*
In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out"

3. Problem = Rebellion

"*For they are rebellious against Thee*"

V. (:11-12) THE GOOD GUYS RECEIVE GOD'S PROTECTION

A. Joy for Those Under God's Protection

1. Our Responsibility

"*take refuge in Thee*"

2. Joy and Gladness

"*be glad*"
"*Let them ever sing for joy*"

3. God's Responsibility
"*And mayest Thou shelter them*"

B. Boasting for Those Enjoying God's Protection
"*That those who love Thy name may exult in Thee*"

C. Favor for Those Surrounded by God's Protection
"*For it is Thou who dost bless the righteous man, O Lord,*
Thou dost surround him with favor as with a shield."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How important do we feel it is to start off the morning in prayer with our King and our God? Do we look throughout the day for God-moments = those times when God shows His presence with us and answers our prayers?

2) Study the evils of the tongue that are detailed here as characteristic of the wicked. How careful are we in our speech? Do we build others up or tear them down? Are we reliable and faithful in keeping our word? What does our speech reveal about what is in our heart?

3) What does this psalm teach about the leading of the Lord?

4) Can you picture yourself surrounded in a bubble of God's favor and protection that functions as a shield? What a cause for joy and gladness! Are we actively taking refuge in the Lord? How do we go about doing that?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Perowne: "The Psalmist has access to God not only because he is of a different character from those mentioned in ver. 7, but because the King of kings, of his grace and goodness, permits him to draw near. Therefore also he adds '*in Thy fear*.' We see here the mingled feeling of confidence and liberty of access with solemn awe and deep humility which befits every true worshipper."

Leupold: "The outline of this psalm is as follows: it first expresses a plea to be heard (vv. 1,2); it then gives expression to the general principle that is involved, the clear principle that the wicked may not abide in the presence of God, but God's true children may come into his presence (vv. 3-7); then follows the prayer based on this principle,

which prayer petitions: Guide me but condemn the manifestly wicked—a result because of which all godly men will rejoice (vv.8-12)."

Craigie: "The evil persons specified here are of various kinds. They include '*boasters*' (either persons arrogant and confident in their own strength, or worshipers of another god; see v 6, note a), *'workers of iniquity*' (the most common expression in the Psalms for wicked persons) and those who speak '*falsehood*' (v 7). '*Bloodthirsty … men*' may either be murderers, or more likely unscrupulous persons whose falsehood and deceitfulness create trouble for the weak and innocent, and could in certain cases result in the death of the innocent (e.g. through false testimony in court). But all evil persons are not only cut off from God's presence (v 5), but are also *hated* (v 6) and *loathed* (v 7); their ultimate destiny is destruction (v 7), for life lived in direct contradiction to God is doomed from the beginning."

Craigie: "Psalm 5 offers not only a prayer that may be used in the worship of God, but also a mirror of mankind without God. And it is important to note that the principal characteristic of evildoers in this psalm is to be found in their speech: they are '*boasters*,' they speak '*falsehood*,' '*there is no truth in their mouth*,' '*their throat is an open grave*,' and '*they speak flatter*.' Ancient Israel was not a primitive society where the only ills were acts, but—like our own society—it was an age in which the more sophisticated sins of speech abounded. And the sins of speech were not only an affront to God, but also caused pain in the lives of fellow human beings. Thus, from a NT perspective, it is difficult to limit this psalm as a prayer for protection; it must also be perceived as a prayer of self-examination and a request for forgiveness and deliverance."

McGee: "This is the comfort of the godly. When you look about you today, you may have as I do a sinking feeling as you see the evil that is abroad and the iniquity that abounds. It is something that makes you sick at heart. What is the comfort of the godly in days like these? The psalmist tells us. The hatred that he has in his heart for evil reveals that he is on God's side. God also hates it. It also makes God sick in His tummy to look down on this sinful world of today …"

TEXT: PSALM 6

TITLE: STAYING AFLOAT IN TEARS OF GRIEF

BIG IDEA:
GOD HEARS US AT OUR BREAKING POINT

I. (:1-3) WE STRUGGLE WITH HOW GOD CAN WAIT SO LONG TO DELIVER US

A. The Nature of the suffering -- Discipline but not Wrath

"*O Lord, do not rebuke me in Thine anger,*
Nor chasten me in Thy wrath"

B. The Intensity of the suffering -- I can't take much more

"*Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am pining away;*
Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are dismayed.
And my soul is greatly dismayed;"

C. The Duration of the suffering -- How Long?

"*But Thou, O Lord—how long?*"

II. (:4-5) WE PLEAD FOR DELIVERANCE -- CLINGING TO HOPE
TWO REASONS FOR DELIVERANCE

A. The Character of God -- His lovingkindness

"*Return, O Lord, rescue my soul;*
Save me because of Thy lovingkindness."

B. The Opportunity for Testimony -- Giving Thanks

Close to death
"*For there is no mention of Thee in death;*
In Sheol who will give Thee thanks?"

III. (:6-7) WE ARE WORN OUT WITH GRIEF – TIRED TO THE POINT OF GIVING UP

A. The Exhaustion of Grief

"*I am weary with my sighing*"
"*My eye has wasted away with grief*"

B. The Tears of Grief

"*Every night I make my bed swim,*
I dissolve my couch with my tears."

C. The Pressure from Adversaries

"*It has become old because of all my adversaries*"

IV. (:8-10) WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE LORD HEARS AND VINDICATES

A. The Lord Hears

"*For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.*
The Lord has heard my supplication,
The Lord receives my prayer."

B. My Enemies Give Up in Shame

1. Warning

"*Depart from me, all you who do iniquity*"

2. Judgment

"*All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly dismayed;*
They shall turn back, they shall suddenly be ashamed."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How effective and consistent are we in discipling our children for their good while avoiding the temptation to punish them in anger? How can we learn from how our heavenly Father disciplines us?

2) Have we ever been exhausted with grief? Worn out with crying? How did the Lord bring us back to a state where we could function once again?

3) Are we taking every opportunity now to give God thanks, recognizing that our time here on earth is short?

4) Do we have this type of confidence that the Lord hears our prayers? Do we believe that our enemies will eventually be put to shame?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "Depression and exhaustion as complete as this are beyond self-help or good advice. Even prayer has died away. The *foes* (7) who would normally have roused David only crush his spirit now. If anything is to save him it will owe nothing to his own efforts. Such is the extremity which God is about to transform."

Spurgeon: "This Psalm is commonly known as the first of the Penitential Psalms (32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). and certainly its language well becomes the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once the sorrow (verses 3, 6, 7), the humiliation (verses 2 and 4), and the hatred of sin (verse 8), which are the unfailing marks of the contrite spirit when it turns to God."

Maddux: "A Sinner's Prayer:

I. A plea for mercy…
II. A plea for health …
III. A plea for companionship…
IV. A plea for separation…"

McGee: "I think we have here a picture of David, and I think we have a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also I think it is a picture of Israel in the last days, and a picture of believers right now – you and me. What a psalm this is! This is a cry for mercy out of the very depths of despair. Only mercy can save us. We are told over and over again in the New Testament that God is rich in mercy. He has had to use a lot of His mercy on me, but He has some left over for you. He has plenty of mercy, and we certainly need it."

Harris: A PENITENTIAL PRAYER
Theme: Sorrow and humiliation over sin, joy because of salvation.
Occasion: Perhaps when illness made the soul conscious of spiritual maladies.

I. DISTRESS. Ver. 1-5. "*My soul is sore troubled*" (ver. 2).

1. Petition. Ver. 1-3. "*Have mercy upon me*" (ver. 2). We are all conscious, at times, that we need to be rebuked for shortcomings. In such hours we can always appeal for mercy to the Lord and be sure that we shall have a hearing and receive forgiveness.

2. Plea. Ver. 4, 5. "*Return, O Jehovah … deliver*" (ver. 4). A consciousness of God's presence always heals the hurts of life, and to live in the secret of his presence is to be immune from the plottings of man or the things which distress the ungodly.

II. DESPAIR. Ver. 6,7. "*Because of my grief*" (ver. 7).

1. Weary. Ver. 6. "*I am weary*." There is no name for God in this passage, and so we have a picture of the sinner, unforgiven and unredeemed in the world. He was absorbed in his own sufferings.

2. Worn. Ver. 7. "*It waxeth old*." So is the plight of the sinner, "*without God and without hope*." It is made worse by the realization that he has come to the end of his rope, and he is spent beyond recovery so far as earthly resources are concerned.

III. DELIVERANCE. Ver. 8-10. "*They shall turn back*" (ver. 10).

1. Conviction. Ver. 8, 9. "*Jehovah hath heard*." We come back to the name of God again. A new note is heard, peace has come instead of panic, confidence replaces despair. There is no one thing to drive away gloom like a season of prayer, and nothing that will bring confidence and produce conviction in the soul like answered prayer. "Sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings."

2. Certainty. Ver. 10. "*Shall be put to shame.*" Here is the assurance that God is on the throne and that "all's right with the world." Our God Omnipotent reigneth! What a comfort to the soul in distress to know that "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*."

TEXT: PSALM 7

TITLE: INTEGRITY COUNTS FOR SOMETHING

BIG IDEA:
INTEGRITY ENSURES PROTECTION FROM FIERCE ADVERSARIES SINCE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL VINDICATE THE INNOCENT AND EXECUTE THE WICKED

I. (:1-2) THE RIGHTEOUS TAKE REFUGE IN GOD FROM FIERCE ADVERSARIES

A. The Role of Protector

1. Our Responsibility = Take Refuge

'*O Lord my God, in Thee I have taken refuge*"

2. God's Responsibility = Deliver Me

"*Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me*"

B. The Role of Attacker

(cf. 1 Peter 5:8 -- the attacks of Lion #1 = Satan)

1. The enemy pursues

"*who pursue me*"

2. The enemy cripples

"*Lest he tear my soul like a lion*"

3. The enemy devours

"*Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver*"

II. (:3-5) INTEGRITY ENSURES PROTECTION

A. Integrity means:

doing no injustice
not harming a friend
not taking advantage of someone

B. We need protection against those who would:

pursue my soul
overtake it
trample my life
"lay my glory in the dust"

III. (:6-11) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL VINDICATE THE INNOCENT

A. (:6) Provoking the Appointed Judge to Action

1. "*Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger*"

2. "*Lift up thyself against the rage of my adversaries*"

3. "*And arouse thyself for me*"

Why? Because "*Thou hast appointed judgment*"

B. (:7) Preparing the People to Receive the Verdict
"*And let the assembly of the peoples encompass Thee;*
And over them return Thou on high"

C. (:8-11) Promising Vindication for the Men of Integrity
1. Explaining How God Judges

a. Universal Judgment
"*The Lord judges the peoples*"

b. Searching Judgment – Nothing Hidden from the Judge
"*For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds*"

c. Righteous Judgment from a Righteous Judge

d. Righteous Indignation
"*a God who has indignation every day*"

2. Expecting Vindication for the Righteous

Key Verse: "*Vindicate me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me*"

"*Establish the righteous*"

"*My shield is with God,*
Who saves the upright in heart"

IV. (:12-13) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE HAS PREPARED WEAPONS OF EXECUTION

"*sharpen His sword*"
"*bent His bow and made it ready*"
"*prepared for Himself deadly weapons*"
"*makes His arrows fiery shafts*"

Response to this threat should be Repentance

V. (:14-16) THE WICKED WILL GET WHAT THEY DESERVE

A. (:14) They Traffic in Wickedness

"*Behold, he travails with wickedness,*
And he conceives mischief, and brings forth falsehood"

B. (:15-16) They Will be Trapped in Their Own Traps

1. The Pit

"*He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,*
And has fallen into the hole which he made"

2. The Pate

"*His mischief will return upon his own head,*
And his violence will descend upon his own pate"

VI. (:17) PRAISE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

"*I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness,*
And I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) To what extent can we rely on our conscience to determine whether we are living a life of integrity? If we have done injustice to another, will we even be aware of it? Are we actively asking the Lord to try our hearts and minds and search us?

2) What type of a judge is God? What is revealed in this psalm about God as Judge? Are we comfortable having God as our Judge?

3) Contrast how powerful the wicked looks to us when they are attacking us (vs.1-2) vs. How helpless and futile the wicked are proven to be when they get what they deserve (vs. 15-16). Look at the weapons the Lord uses against the wicked.

4) What should determine the measure and nature of our praise to God who both delivers us and vindicates us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

VanGemeren: "The psalmist puts his case before the Lord, '*the righteous judge*' (v.11) in the face of the false accusations of the enemies (vv.1-2). He believes in his own heart that he has not done anything to deserve the ill-treatment of his adversaries….

The situational aspect gives way to an eschatological dimension in David's expectation that the Lord will rule over the nations. When the rule of God is established, the righteous will no longer be harassed by the wicked. On the basis of this faith, the

psalmist leads us to rejoice in the righteousness of our God. Christians can join with the spirit of the psalm as they look forward to the rule of Christ over the nations and the execution of justice and righteousness on earth (cf. 2 Thess 1:5-10).

The specific genre of Psalm 7 has been difficult to determine because it contains elements of an individual lament (vv. 1-2), an oath (vv.3-5), a psalm of Yahweh's kingship (vv.6-12), and a thanksgiving hymn (v.17)."

Kidner: Regarding 7:3-5 – "The oath of innocence: The three *if*-clauses, culminating in the challenge flung down in verse 5, reveal a deeper hurt than persecution, namely slander. Like Job's great protestation (Jb. 31, one of the moral peaks of the Old Testament), David's reply reveals something of his code of honour, as well as the thrust of the accusation (the *this* of verse 3), which alleged that he dealt in bribes and treachery. (Absalom, with admittedly more subtlety, proved how damaging a 'smear campaign' could be against a David not yet idealized: cf. 2 Sa. 15:1-6.)"

Spurgeon: Re vs. 2 – "It is a picture from the shepherd-life of David. When the fierce lion had pounced upon the defenceless lamb, and had made it his prey, he would rend the victim in pieces, break all the bones, and devour all, because no shepherd was near to protect the lamb or rescue it from the ravenous beast. This is a soul-moving portrait of a saint delivered over to the will of Satan."

Spurgeon: quoting William Dyer on vs. 17 – "To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless him for miseries is the way to remove them: no good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured."

Leupold: "There is always something particularly dastardly about committing injustice against a man who lives at peace with one. This appears to have been the charge raised against David. One almost gets the impressin that he is referring to a slander which had just been freshly devised and had just come to his ears. The '*this*' seems to have some such emphasis. With strong indignation the writer interrupts himself. Not only had he not done the evil charged, he had even done the very opposite: he had delivered his enemy, who had no cause for the enmity that he harbored against David."

TEXT: PSALM 8

TITLE: REACHING FOR THE STARS: GOD'S GLORY AND MAN'S DOMINION

BIG IDEA:
GOD DESIGNED SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT MAN TO REIGN OVER THE EARTH IN MAJESTY

I. (:1-2) GOD REIGNS IN MAJESTY

A. His Intrinsic Majesty

"*O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth,*
Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!"

B. His Rightful Dominion over all Enemies

1. He Channels His Power Through Instruments of Weakness

"*From the mouth of infants and nursing babes*
Thou hast established strength"

2. He Subdues all Enemies

"*Because of Thine adversaries,*
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease."

II. (:3-4) MAN SEEMS INSIGNIFICANT – BUT NOT TO GOD!

(Seems insignificant in light of the majesty of heaven –
until you understand the Plan of God)

A. God's Creation is Impressive

"*When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,*
The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained"

Picture the shepherd David out under the stars at night contemplating the Lord's creation; In modern day times we are even more staggered as we have some insight into the vastness of the cosmos

B. God's Care for Man is Surprising

"*What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?*
And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?"

We do not have a God who doesn't care

III. (:5-8) MAN REIGNS OVER THE EARTH IN MAJESTY

applied to the Messiah (cf. Heb. 2:6-8)

Man was made in the image of God -- we are closer to God than to the material world

A. His Derived Majesty

"*Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God,*

And dost crown him with glory and majesty!"

Wayne Wever:
"Man was created in the image of God.
What is the image of God in man?
we are spiritual beings as God is Spirit; man is a moral being; God is a personality and so are we
3 aspects of personality:
1) intellect -- a mind to reason
2) emotions -- sensibility -- response
3) volition -- will to make our own decisions

a mind to know Him
a heart to love Him
a will to obey Him

Even fallen man is in the image of God, even though it is a shattered image
(e.g. the purpose of a mirror is to reflect the glory of God; Christ can put back together the broken pieces of the shattered mirror)

The gulf between God and man is not as great as that between man and the material world.

The glory of man = his God-likeness, his nature.
The honor of man = position of man over the works of God's hands.

God making earth a fit habitation for man was the purpose of the six days of creation."

B. His Assigned Dominion over all Creation

"*Thou doest make him to rule over the works of Thy hands;*
Thou hast put all things under his feet"

You can only exercise this dominion once you accept the rule of God over you

(:9) DOXOLOGY

"*O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do we allow ourselves to struggle with issues of Significance when the God who has created us has proclaimed our Significance.? What is our concept of the Dignity of man?

2) How can we ever doubt God's personal care for us? He gives attention to all of the

details of our life.

3) Have we lost a sense of the majesty of God in today's church? What contributes to the erosion of our understanding of this important attribute of God?

4) How do we understand God's "dominion command" from Genesis in light of God's express design for man? How did the Fall impact God's purpose for man?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "Imagine the scene. Here is young David out under the stars at night watching his sheep. Of course, the air at that time and place was not darkened with smog or polluted with the irritants that fill the air today. The stars were brilliant, and the moon, in its full phase, was crossing the heavens. He felt, as we have all felt as we have stood under the stars at night, something of mingled mystery and awe as he looked up into the star-spangled heavens. He considered the beauty of nature and its silent witness to the wisdom of God. He sees the ordered procession of the stars and watching them through the night sees how they wheel in silent courses through the heavens. He notices the varying glory of different stars, and the evident vast distances that are visible in the heavens. All the breath-taking beauty of this scene breaks upon his eyes as the sun sets. He is astonished at the greatness of a God who could create such things. The interesting thing is that thirty centuries after David wrote these words we feel the same impression when we consider the starry heavens. …
How vast is the universe in which we live! Incredible in their extent and outreach, these vast distances are spanned only by the measurement of the speed of light -- and even that is hardly adequate. These billions of galaxies whirl in their silent courses through the deepness of space. How tremendous is the power that sustains it all and keeps it operating as one harmonious unit! That is what impressed this Psalmist."

VanGemeren: "For our purpose we shall consider it as a hymn of praise and, more particularly, a hymn of creation praise. Brueggemann treats this psalm together with Psalms 33, 104, and 145 as 'Songs of Creation' …
The Lord is the object of praise (vv.1,9). Therefore the praise is not an expression of joy in creation apart from the Creator. Pantheism deifies and glorifies nature as a separate entity from the Creator. Theism joyfully looks at God as the good Creator, Ruler, and Sustainer of the world."

VanGemeren: "The '*majesty*' of Yahweh's name radiates from his work on earth and heaven. The word '*majestic*' ('*addir, mighty*') is a royal attribute denoting his victories (Exod 15:6), his might in judgment (1 Sam 4:8; Ps 76:4), his law (Isa 42:21), and his rule over creation (Pss 8:1, 9; 93:4). All creation reveals the power and glory of God's name (Rom 1:20). Only God's people know how to respond to this revelation of his majesty in nature, because he has revealed his '*name*' to them (Exod 3:14-15)."

Stott: "Humankind has sinned and fallen, and consequently has lost some of the dominion which God had given us; but in Jesus, the second Adam, this dominion has been restored. It is in Him rather than in us that humankind's dominion is exhibited. By His death He even destroyed the devil and delivered his slaves (verses 14,15). He has now been '*crowned*', and exalted to God's right hand…. (this dominion) applies to us also if we have come by faith to share in His exaltation."

Murphy: "Out of the weak cometh forth strength. This is a general principle of nature… the human infant is the most helpless of all things born. The acorn falls from the parent tree, and without further care strikes a root and becomes a vigorous sapling. The calf stands, staggers, and even walks on the day of its birth. But the babe for many years after birth, if left without a mother's care, would inevitably perish. Yet that suckling grows to be the man, the lord of creation."

Ogilvie: "Living at Full Potential – Getting outside ourselves and seeing our potential from God's perspective is a liberating and exciting experience. Contemplation of the majesty of God results in an awesome experience of the magnificence of His vision of our potential.

That's what happened to King David when he prayed what he wroted down in the eighth psalm….

Psalm 8 must be considered within the context of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God. The keynote of His message, the witness of His life, and the purpose of His death were to make the promise of the psalm a reality. The kingdom of God is His realm, reign, and rule in us, between us in our relationships, and through us in all the affairs of life. We enter the kingdom by rebirth, we grow in it by a constant reliance on the King, and we realize its full impact as we seek and do the King's will. Delegated authority, plus dependence on the One who gives the authority, equals dominion….

The steps necessary for living out the glory and honor the Lord has bestowed on us:

1) Claim your realm
2) Consecrate your realm
3) Commit yourself to excellence in your realm"

Morris: "man has corrupted the meaning and purpose of the stars in two ways. In one, he has assumed the stars have direct influence over human lives and has developed a monstrous system of pagan astrology. In the other, as his concept of the vastness of space has increased, he has assumed that man is of no importance; the earth is merely a speck of dust in an infinite evolving universe, and man is an accidental bit of organic scum on the dust particle.

This twentieth-century question was raised in essence long ago by the psalmist. How could the God who created the mighty heavens possibly be interested in man? …

Even man in the strict biological sense is infinitely more complex than the stars, of course. It is absurd to belittle man simply because of his size. Although a star is big, it is very simple, composed mostly of hydrogen and helium. The measure of significance in the universe is not size but order and complexity, and the human brain is by far the most complex aggregation of matter in the universe, so far as science can

determine. In the strictly physical sense, the earth is the most complex aggregation of inanimate matter about which we know in the universe, and it is uniquely designed as man's home."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Three Kings of Christmas**
Introduction: Much confusion about the 3 Magi of the story of Christ's birth. But in this psalm you clearly have 3 kings. Now, David, when he wrote this psalm, you kind of get the idea that when he wrote this psalm, perhaps he was outside one night and he just looked up into the heaven and he saw the millions of stars and he gave a gasp and he was just in awe at the power of God. And he compares the vastness of the sky and the stars to the puniness of man. And he just wonders how God, who created all of that, why he would ever be concerned about us.

Big Idea: **Meditate on the Three Kings in this psalm.**

I. The Creator King
A. God's creation bears witness to Him. Vs. 1
The first part of this psalm focuses on God the Creator. And the emphasis here is on God's greatness and how God's greatness is on display for all to see. The name of God spoken of here = Yahweh -- it points to God being eternal and God being self-existent.
Ps. 19:1 – cf. vastness of the universe

B. **God's children bear witness to Him. Vs.** 2
Eccles. 11:5 -- the incredible creative miracle of a child growing in his mother's womb

God has ordained that praise come from the mouth of children. And there's a power to that.

II. The Crowned King
This, of course, is speaking about Adam. Look down in verse number five, *for thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou has put all things under his feet.* God assigned Adam to be his ruler over his creation. Now, we have people today who teach in the education systems that man is a mammal, one of the animal kingdom. And so, they would say that man was made just a little bit higher than the animals.

A. Created in God's Image
We reflect the image of God. The great commentator H.C. Leupold says this, "Nowhere is man's dignity asserted more clearly and boldly than in this passage."

B. Crowned as God's Regent – vs. 5
Adam forfeited that glorious dominion that God had given. How? Adam sinned, and his sin brought a curse to the earth. Adam's disobedience brought sin and sorrow and death. Man has to work to subdue the curse of the earth that came upon all of creation after Adam's sin. **Rom. 8:22**

III. The Christmas King = Jesus – vs. 4

God visited us. God came to earth while we were in this terrible plight, while we were in this terrible condition. When it says that thou visitest him, this is messianic. This is pointing to Jesus Christ. **Heb. 2:8-9** -- Why was Jesus born? for the suffering of death, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. He came as a substitute, whereas God's wrath should have fallen upon me, it should have fallen upon you, it fell on Jesus Christ on the cross instead.

A. Jesus came to die for our sins and to give us life when we put our faith in him.

B. Jesus came to restore man's glory. Vs. 10; Rev. 5:9-10

C. Jesus came to be our elder brother. Vs. 11

As our brother, he proclaims God's name to us. **Vs. 12**

D. Jesus came to defeat the devil. Vs. 14

He conquered death. As believers, we don't have to be afraid of death anymore because we know what takes place. He rendered Satan ineffective and destroyed him that had the power of death. The word destroyed there means rendered ineffective, not annihilated. Satan is still around. But he has no claim over us. He is ineffective when it comes to the children of God.

Conclusion: Remember that Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day. That's what makes us strong and valiant. And that's the whole essence of the gospel in that verse. To save us all from Satan's power when we have gone astray, oh tidings of comfort and joy. And that's why we can have hope, that's why we can have joy, even in the most difficult circumstances because of Christ, who was born on Christmas Day, who rescued us from sin, who rescues us from Satan's power. And so, when you think about Christmas and the three kings of Christmas, remember, these are the real kings. The Creator King, God the Father, whose glory is above the heavens. The Crown King, Adam, who, because of his fallenness, brought a curse upon the world. Christmas King Jesus who visited man, who came into this world that he might die for us and restore to us our glory and conquer Satan on our behalf to be our elder brother and show us how to live in this world. That's what Christmas is about.

TEXT: PSALM 9

TITLE: VICTORY HYMN

BIG IDEA:
THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL PUT THE WICKED IN THEIR PLACE

I. (:1-2) THE RIGHTEOUS REJOICE WHEN THE WICKED ARE FINALLY JUDGED

A. Give Thanks wholeheartedly
"*I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart*"

B. Testify to God's wonders
"*I will tell of all Thy wonders*"

C. Rejoice
"*I will be glad and exult in Thee*"

D. Sing Praises
"*I will sing praise to Thy name, O Most High*"

II. (:3-6) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WIPES OUT THE WICKED

A. The Place and Role of the Righteous Judge
1. sitting on the throne (no doubt about the outcome)
2. judging righteously
3. vindicating the just
4. destroying the wicked

B. The Place and Destiny of the Wicked
1. they turn back
2. they stumble and perish
3. they are rebuked
4. they are destroyed
5. their name is blotted out
6. they come to an end in perpetual ruin
7. their cities are uprooted
8. the very memory of them has perished

III. (:7-10) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE SHELTERS BELIEVERS

A. He can shelter believers because He Abides Forever
"*But the Lord abides forever*"

B. He can shelter believers because He Judges in Righteousness
"*He has established His throne for judgment,*
And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity."

C. He is a Stronghold
"*for the oppressed*"
"*in time of trouble*"

D. He will Never Forsake Believers
"*For Thou, O Lord, hast not forsaken those who seek Thee*."

E. Our Responsibility
Trust Him
Seek Him

IV. (:11-16) PRAISE TO THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE FOR:
DELIVERING THE AFFLICTED
GIVING THE WICKED WHAT THEY DESERVE

A. (:11) Our Response = Praise to the Righteous Judge
1. Praise
"*Sing praise to the Lord, who dwells in Zion*"

2. Testimony
"*Declare among the peoples His deeds*."

B. (:12-14) For Delivering the Afflicted
1. He remembers their plight
"*For He who requires blood remembers them;*
He does not forget the cry of the afflicted."

"*Behold my affliction from those who hate me*"

2. He is gracious to deliver from our enemies
"*Be gracious to me, O Lord*"

"*Thou dost lift me up from the gates of death*"

3. We need to praise Him and give testimony
"*That I may tell of all Thy praises,*
That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Thy salvation."

C. (:15-16) For Giving the Wicked What They Deserve
1. Trapped in Their Own Traps
"*The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;*
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught."

2. It is the Lord's Doing
"*The Lord has made Himself known;*
He has executed judgment.

In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared."

V. (:17-20) SUMMARY

A. (:17) Destiny of the Wicked = Forgotten in Sheol

"*The wicked will return to Sheol,*
Even all the nations who forget God."

B. (:18) Destiny of the Afflicted = Remembered by God

"*For the needy will not always be forgotten,*
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever."

C. (:19-20) Final Call for the Lord to Put the Wicked in Their Place

"*Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail;*
Let the nations be judged before Thee.
Put them in fear, O Lord;
Let the nations know that they are but men."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some of the "*wonders*" to which David could testify? What are some of the special things that the Lord has done for us?

2) Think of all the things that we do to create "special memories" – take pictures and videos, establish family traditions, compile scrapbooks, record in journals and diaries, etc. – How tragic will it be for the very memory of the wicked to perish?

3) How can we encourage our faith in the Lord's ability to shelter His own and protect us from being wiped out by oppressors? How can we better focus our hope on the Lord's ability to cause us to endure to the end and be saved?

4) Think of the phrase: "What goes around comes around" Or think of the Golden Rule. Note how often in the psalms the wicked are judged by receiving upon themselves the evils they had plotted for others.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "Evidently this psalm was originally joined to Ps 10, as shown in certain Hebrew manuscripts, the LXX, the Vulgate, and in another Latin version by Jerome. The two psalms form an acrostic using the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The presence of *selah* at the end of Ps 9 and the lack of a title on Ps 10 bear this out. The first psalm is highly national, while the second is strongly personal."

Leupold: "That they have a kinship cannot be denied. That they have obvious differences is equally clear… each deserves to be considered an independent psalm."

Leupold: Re vs. 18 – "The '*needy*' and '*meek*' here mentioned, together with the '*poor*' of v. 12, are the same, namely, the persons who are in reality the godly but suffer oppression for the Lord's sake. They bear their affliction in a godly spirit. They will throughout history seemingly be 'forgotten,' their '*hope*' will always seem to be at the point of perishing. But they are the ones who will endure."

VanGemeren: Re the structure –

"A. Individual Praise (vv.1-2)
B. Judgment on the Wicked (vv.3-6)
C. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv.7-10)
A'. Communal Praise and Individual Prayer (vv.11-14)
B'. Judgment of the Wicked (vv.15-18)
C'. Hope in God's Just Rule (vv.19-20)"

TEXT: PSALM 10

TITLE: GOD SEES ALL

BIG IDEA:
THE WAY OF THE WICKED IS NOT HIDDEN FROM THE EYES OF THE LORD

KEY VERSES:
1) :11 The wicked deny that God sees
2) :14 The righteous testify that God sees

I. (:1-2) THE RIGHTEOUS WRESTLE WITH THE DELAY IN GOD'S DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT

A. (:1) The Why Question
"*Why dost Thou stand afar off, O Lord?*
Why dost Thou hide Thyself in times of trouble?"

B. (:2a) Delay in Deliverance
"*In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted*"

C. (:2b) Delay in Judgment
"*Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised*"

II. (:3-4) THE WICKED LIVE AS IF GOD DOES NOT EXIST

A. (:3) Driven by Greed, He Rejects God
"*For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,*
And the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord"

B. (:4) Inflated by Pride, He Denies the Existence of God
"*The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him.*
All his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'"

III. (:5-6) THE WICKED THINK THEY ARE UNTOUCHABLE

A. They Enjoy Temporary Physical Prosperity
"*His ways prosper at all times*"

B. They are Blind to the Spiritual Judgment that Awaits Them
"*Thy judgments are on high, out of his sight*"

C. They Gloat in Their Arrogance
"*As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them*."

D. They Deceive Themselves with a False Sense of Security
"*He says to himself, 'I shall not be moved;*
Throughout all generations I shall not be in adversity.'"

IV. (:7-11) THE WICKED LACK THE FEAR OF GOD AND PURSUE ALL MANNER OF EVIL

A. (:7) General Description of evil conduct

1. "*Cursing*"
2. "*Deceit*"
3. "*Oppression*"
4. "*Mischief*"
5. "*Wickedness*"

B. (:8-10) Special Emphasis: Sneak Attacks on the Innocent
(the unfortunate, the afflicted)
(Psalmist spends most of his time discussing this tendency)

C. (:11) Basic Problem: Lives as if he is not accountable to God
"*He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it*.'"

V. (:12-15) GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN THE PLIGHT OF THE AFFLICTED

A. (:12) Call For Action

1. Arise
"*Arise, O Lord*"

2. Do Something
"*O God, lift up Thy hand*"

3. Remember the Afflicted
"*Do not forget the afflicted*"

B. (:13-14a) False Presumption of the Wicked = God Won't Hold Them Accountable
"*Why has the wicked spurned God?*
He has said to himself, 'Thou wilt not require it.'
Thou hast seen it, for Thou hast beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Thy hand."

C. (:14b) Hope of the Helpless
"*The unfortunate commits himself to Thee;*
Thou hast been the helper of the orphan."

D. (:15) Call for Judgment
"*Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,*
Seek out his wickedness until Thou dost find none."

VI. (:16-18) THE KING OF KINGS SHOULD NEVER BE TAKEN LIGHTLY
He hears and will respond in His timing

A. (:16) The King of Kings Reigns Over All Forever

1. His Reign is Eternal

"*The Lord is King forever and ever*"

2. His Reign Outlasts the Most Powerful of Nations
(Ultimately it is "*HIS land*")
"*Nations have perished from His land.*"

B. (:17) The King of Kings Hears the Cries of the Afflicted

"*O Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble;*
Thou wilt strengthen their heart,
Thou wilt incline Thine ear"

C. (:18) The King of Kings Makes Things Right

1. He Vindicates the Oppressed

"*To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed*"

2. He Silences the Oppressors

"*That man who is of the earth may cause terror no more*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we realize how Near the Lord is to us, or do we imagine that He hides afar off? Do we live with the consciousness that He sees all and will make things right in His time? There is nothing that the wicked can do in "secret" that will not ultimately be made manifest.

2) Do we set up circles of accountability with our family and friends, recognizing that we need to live with a sense of accountability?

3) In what practical ways do we remember the afflicted and the orphans and the oppressed and the unfortunate and try to help them? (Note how many words are used throughout this psalm to describe such people.)

4) What can we learn about the strategy of the enemy from this psalm? What type of deceit and secret plotting does he employ? How can we better defend ourselves against the attacks of the enemy?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "While this psalm has literary and textual affinity with the preceding one, the mood here is entirely different. The enemy is no longer the wicked of the nations but

the wicked within Israel. The calamity has been caused by the misuse of power on the part of ungodly men of power. The mood is one of lament rather than of thanksgiving."

Yates: Re vs. 1 – "Why? The frequent question beginning with '*why*' always describes a situation of frustration and forsakenness. The psalmist shows his own impatience and despair. After all, the persecution of the poor by the proud wicked leaders has reached an unbearable limit. His plea is that the wicked may reap what they have sown."

Perowne: "The Psalmist calls upon God to chastise the unbridled insolence and scorn of the wicked. These have reached such a pitch, that it seems as if God winked at evil. Men are not only doing wickedness, but boasting of their wickedness, and finding that justice does not overtake them, they are acting in the conviction that there is no God. The prosperity (ver. 5), security (ver. 6), insolence (ver. 4, 11), deceit (ver. 7), and violence (ver. 8-10) of these despisers of God is vividly portrayed. The Psalm concludes with the triumphant assertion of faith, that despite all seeming disorders, Jehovah is King, and that He does hear and answer the cry of the oppressed."

Leupold: "Luther approaches the psalm from this angle: he claims that we here have an exhaustive description of the wicked in their opposition to the kingdom of God. Godlessness as it typically manifests itself is here being portrayed, he claims. In this view he follows the lead of Augustine. On this basis he concludes that it is really Antichrist who is being described. This seems to us to be too pointed an interpretation that is built on the basis of evidence that is a bit scant."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 11 – "The psalmist returns to his starting point (cf. vv.2-4). The arrogance of the wicked expresses itself in injustice, but his root problem is his utter disregard for the Lord. He has rejected the covenant God, not by speculative thought, but by his speech and actions. As soon as he has set out on the road of independence from God, he gains confidence. He mistakes God's patience with evil for God's lack of interest in justice and the innocent victims. His boldness grows as he no longer senses any accountability to God for his actions. Why should he, if God does not even see? The godly, too, experience God's absence (v.1). Anarchy rules when God's patience with the wicked does not bring them to repentance."

Holwick: FROM A DISTANCE

(Written by Julie Gold, performed by Bette Midler)

From a distance the world looks blue and green,
and the snow-capped mountains white.
From a distance the ocean meets the stream,
and the eagle takes to flight.
From a distant there is harmony, and it echoes through the land.
It's the voice of hope, it's the voice of peace,
It's the voice of every man.
From a distance we all have enough and no one is in need.

And there are no guns, no bombs, and no disease,
No hungry mouths to feed.
From a distance we are instruments, marching in a common path.
Playing songs of hope, playing songs of peace,
They're songs of every man.
God is watching us, God is watching us,
God is watching us from a distance.
From a distance you look like my friend even though we are at war.
From a distance I just cannot comprehend what all this fighting is for.
From a distance there is harmony, and it echoes through the land.
It's the hope of hopes, it's the love of loves,
It's the heart of every man.
It's the hope of hopes, it's the love of loves,
This is the song of every man.
And God is watching us, God is watching us,
God is watching us from a distance.
Oh, God is watching us, God is watching,
God is watching us from a distance.

I. Why does God seem distant from us?
A. God seems distant because He is utterly holy and different from us.
B. Sometimes God seems distant because we are distressed and we don't sense his presence in our lives.
1) The writers of the Psalms felt God was not only distant, but ignoring their cries for help.
Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Psalm 10:1
C. Other times God seems distant because he really is - he has separated himself from us due to our unrepented sin.
D. When Jesus hung on the cross, he felt completely forsaken and cut off from his loving Father. He was genuinely cut off, but it was for our sins and not his own.

II. Distance can give us a different perspective on things.
A. Many of our problems seem overwhelming, but in time we will overcome them. Maybe even forget we had them!
B. Other problems we have will never be solved in this life. We can dream about them, and hope for them, but never attain them.
C. The "Heroes of Faith" in Hebrews 11 had this "far-sighted" perspective. It was so far-sighted they did not even overcome their problems in this lifetime.
D. What problems do you have that seem overwhelming?
1) What can God do about them?
2) Could you accept it if the situation never changes?

III. "God is watching from a distance."

A. Is God always distant, or can he come close?
1) The song implies God doesn't, and can't, do anything more than "watch."
2) This would reflect a philosophy called "Deism." Deism teaches that God exists, he created the world, but he no longer gets involved in it. Humanity is on their own.

B. The Bible clearly teaches that God can be close to us.
Hebrews 10:22

IV. How close does God seem to you?
A. Have you had an experience with God, at any time, that seemed real and personal?
B. Looking at your whole spiritual life, how close are you right now?

Harris: THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED
Theme: The persecution and oppression of the righteous by the wicked.
Occasion: Unknown. A song in the minor key, born of some experience peculiar to the Psalmist.

I. OPPRESSION BY THE WICKED. Ver. 1-11. "*The wicked … doth persecute*" (ver. 1).

1. Appeal. Ver. 1, 2. "*Why standest thou … hidest*?" (ver. 1). A passionate cry of the wounded heart. This reveals the problems that come to those who seek to serve God and find obstacles that seem insurmountable.

2. Arrogance. Ver. 3-5. "*The wicked boasteth*" (ver. 3). The fancied security and the arrogant agnosticism of the ungodly which the righteous must meet, and the open defiance of God on the part of the enemy.

3. Assumption. Ver. 6-11. "*I shall not be moved*" (ver. 6). This is the flagrant presumption of wicked men, that no one can overturn them. Thus is their character revealed.

II. OVERCOMING BY THE GODLY. Ver. 12-18. "*Break thou the arm of the wicked*" (ver. 15).

1. Appeal. Ver. 12. "*Arise, O Jehovah*." The appeal is made to God's omniscience. "*Thou hast seen … thou beholdest*." Here is the prayer of a persecuted soul, for God is ever the refuge of the oppressed and afflicted.

2. Arguments. Ver. 13-16. "*Thou hast seen it*" (ver. 14). Reasons are therefore given why a vigilant faith should ask for God's intervention. His honor is at stake, and this is dear to those who are truly his people.

3. Assurance. Ver. 17, 18. "*Thou hast … thou wilt*" (ver. 17). Faith is heartened by the remembrance of past judgments that have fallen upon wrong-doing, and the conviction that God will come and help his people overcome the oppressor makes the Psalmist speak in the future tense. Faith counts the thing as done and rests content on that assurance.

TEXT: PSALM 11

TITLE: FAITH VS EXPEDIENCY

BIG IDEA:
OUR RESPONSE TO PERSONAL DANGER AND NATIONAL COMPROMISE MUST BE FAITH NOT EXPEDIENCY

Background:

Tied to Psalm 10
same context of wicked attacking the innocent in secret
same emphasis on the eyes of the Lord seeing both the righteous and the wicked

I. (:1-3) POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO PERSONAL DANGER AND NATIONAL COMPROMISE

A. The Reality of the Personal Danger (:2)

"*For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,*
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart."

B. The Rationalization for Giving Up -- What's the Use? (:3)

Can one man make a difference or even take a stand when the Nation has compromised?

"*If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do*?"

C. The Response of Faith (:1a) -- Take refuge in the Lord

"*In the Lord I take refuge*"

D. The Response of Expediency (:1b) -- Run away

abdicate your responsibility;
try to protect yourself at all costs;
follow the advice of worldly counselors

"*How can you say to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain*'"

II. (:4-6) FROM THE LORD'S PERSPECTIVE, THE WICKED NEVER POSE ANY DANGER

A. The Lord is Above it All (:4a)

The Righteous Lord Reigns from His Temple in Heaven

"*The Lord is in His holy temple;*
the Lord's throne is in heaven"

B. The Lord Sees and Evaluates Everyone (:4b-5a)

"*His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men;*

The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked"

C. The Lord Will Execute Devastating Judgment (:5b-6)

"*And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*
Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup."

III. (:7) THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR

A. "*The Lord is Righteous*"

B. The Lord "*Loves Righteousness*"

C. "*The Upright will Behold His Face*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Apparently there were times when David chose not to run and hide in caves and other circumstances where he felt it was important to flee and hide. What do you think influenced these different decisions?

2) What does it mean to have the "*foundations*" destroyed? What can the righteous do in such circumstances?

3) How does the Lord test the righteous and the wicked? What is the Lord checking for? How does the Lord respond to each?

4) When is fire and brimstone preaching appropriate?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: Re vs. 1 – "it seems best to understand that the psalmist is referring to an evil taunt. 'Bird,' then, was a derogatory term as it is today when used to describe a person. The New English Bible seems right in carrying the quote through verse 2. The wicked is warning the believer, whom he calls a bird, to get out of the way because he has readied his bow to shoot down the prey."

Alden: Re vs. 7b – "The greatest prize the poet can think of is to see God face to face. Several gospel songs echo this hope. Carrie E. Breck (1855-1934) wrote one entitled 'Face to Face.' Another by Charles H. Gabriel (1856-1932) includes the lines: 'When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me.'"

Kidner: Re vs. 7 – "The psalm ends, as it began, with *the Lord*, whose character as

righteous answers all the fear of 3a and the frustration of 3b. '*The foundations*' of righteousness are none other than His nature and will: what He *is* and what He *loves* (7). And if the first line of the psalm showed where the believer's safety lies, the last line shows where his heart should be. God as '*refuge*' may be sought from motives that are all too self-regarding; but to *behold his face* is a goal in which only love has any interest. The psalmists knew the experience of seeing God with the inward eye in worship (e.g. 27:4; 63:2); but there is little doubt that they were led to look beyond this to an unmediated vision when they would be ransomed and awakened from death '*to behold (his) face in righteousness*' (cf. 16:8-11; 17:15; 23:6; 49:15; 73:23ff.; 139:18)."

Spurgeon: "These verses contain an account of a temptation to distrust God, with which David was, upon some unmentioned occasion, greatly exercised. … His case was like that of Nehemiah, when his enemies under the garb of friendship, hoped to entrap him by advising him to escape for his life. Had he done so, they could then have found a ground of accusation. Nehemiah bravely replied, '*Shall such a man as I flee*?' and David, in a like spirit, refuses to retreat, exclaiming, '*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain*?' When Satan cannot overthrow us by presumption, how craftily will he seek to ruin us by distrust! He will employ our dearest friends to argue us out of our confidence, and he will use such plausible logic, that unless we once for all assert our immovable trust in Jehovah, he will make us like the timid bird which flies to the mountain whenever danger presents itself."

VanGemeren: Re "f*oundations*" in vs. 3 – "The word '*foundations*' … occurs only here with this meaning … The '*foundations*' appear to be a metaphor for the order of society (75:3 [NIV, '*pillars*']; 82:5; Ezek 30:4): the 'established institutions, the social and civil order of the community' (Briggs, 1:89-90). This order has been established by the Lord at creation and is being maintained, as H.H. Schmid puts it: 'All factors considered, the doctrine of creation, namely, the belief that God has created and is sustaining the order of the world in all its complexities, is not a peripheral theme of biblical theology but is plainly the fundamental theme' (Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: 'Creation Theology' as a Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology,' in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernard W. Anderson [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], pp. 102-17). God's justice and law are being replaced by human autonomy and its resultant anarchy."

Meyer: "When John Welsh and his fellow-captives were summoned from their prison on the Firth of Forth, to appear before the court, they sang this Psalm as they walked by night under guard to their trial. It is worth reading in the rugged Scotch version. The Psalm is a debate between fear and faith, and probably dates from the time when David was being persecuted by Saul.

THE COUNSELS OF EXPEDIENCE (:1-3)

Timid friends, anxious for his safety, urged him, not simply to flee to the literal mountains, which he did, but to desert the cause of God, and to renounce his faith—which he never did. Birds escape the dangers of the plains by winging their flight to the caves or woods of the hills. Such counsels of expediency were frequently given to Nehemiah…

THE ANSWERS OF FAITH (:4-7)

The revolutions of earth cannot shake His throne. He permits the Evil One some license that the righteous may be tested (Job 1,2; Luke 22, 31, 32). And when the limit is reached which His love apportions to His people's trials, then their persecutors will first be entangled in snares, from which they shall not escape, and then overwhelmed as Sodom was…"

Harris: THE SONG OF THE STEDFAST
Theme: The righteous should trust God in spite of advice to the contrary.
Occasion: Not intimated. Perhaps the hunting and persecution of Saul.

I. ALLUREMENTS. Ver. 1-3. "*How say ye*" (ver. 1).

1. Counsel. Ver. 1. "*Flee as a bird*." Temptations come to distrust God, but the stedfast soul determines to stand true. Many are there to advise that we flee and desert God, but all suggestions or alternatives are speedily spurned.

2. Circumstances. Ver. 2. "*The wicked*." The argument used for flight sounds plausible enough and might be proved good logic. The Psalmist is like a defenseless bird, with no shelter in sight and the hunter near-by.

3. Conditions. Ver. 3. "*If the foundations be destroyed*." The arguments are multiplied to tempt the soul from its trust in God's protecting care. "*There is no hope of justice in this world*," they say, and the wicked would allure the righteous into apostasy.

II. ASSURANCE. Ver. 4-7. "*The Lord is in his holy temple*" (ver. 4).

1. Confidence. Ver. 4. "*His throne is in the heavens*." Here is the answer for those who would entice us away. God is ever the true source of unflinching trust, of loyal devotion and of confident fealty. Perhaps the dome of heaven is the roof of the Psalmist's temple as he composes the song. In any case his confidence is that God's throne is secure and that the soul that trusts in Jehovah has nothing to fear.

2. Chastening. Ver. 5, 6. "*Trieth the righteous*" (ver. 5). Many temptations are the testings of divine love, not to show the saint's weakness nor to prove to God his fealty, but to show to the godly themselves and to the world that looks on, their loyalty that they may be a witness to others. The godly are precious in the eyes of the Lord.

3. Communion. Ver. 7. "*The upright shall see his face*." God's approval is ever the believer's delight, "*I shall be satisfied when I awake with his image*."

G. Campbell Morgan: "This psalm is the answer of faith to the advice of fear. Both are alike conscious of immediate peril. Fear sees only the things that are near. Faith takes in the larger distances. If the things fear sees are indeed all, its advice is excellent. Then the things which faith sees are realized, its determination is vindicated…

Perhaps among all the psalms none reveals more perfectly the strenuous hold of faith. It is the man who measures things by the circumstances of the hour who is filled with fear, and counsels and practices flight! The man who sees Jehovah enthroned and governing has no panic."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When the Foundations begin to Fail**
Introduction: *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do*? Now, the word for *foundation* here is a Hebrew word that appears really only here, and it's used in the sense of social order. **Ps. 82:5** -- It's talking about when the moral social order has been shaken up. We can say it like this, their world was turned upside down. The foundation upon which they stood was failing. And so this is a metaphor then that talks about just moral chaos, moral and spiritual turmoil, upheaval that's happening in society.

What do we do when the law is not upheld? What do we do when morality is undermined? What do we do when family values are crumbling? When it just seems like everything around us has given way? Society as a whole is turning out barbarians because of the discarding of the value system it was built on. To restore its lost value system, America would have to return to its faith in God. There can be no value system where there is no supreme value that transcends man's natural self-centeredness.

David obviously wrote this in a time when he was going through a lot of trouble. We are really not sure about the historical background for this psalm.

Big Idea: **Three responses when the foundations in your life begin to fail**

I. Refuse bad counsel – vs. 1
Prov. 11:14 -- There's safety when you have counselors around you. It's good to have godly people that you can trust. David called his council together and they advised him to flee as a bird to your mountain. The world loves to make Christians their target. On the surface, this looks like good advice. But running from your problems never solves the problem.

God wants you to learn to be victorious over these things. And so David was wise enough to see this, and he was wise enough to know that this was not good counsel. Don't be a slave to your fears because you'll be running all the time. When the foundations are crumbling around you, there's always gonna be people that will tell you things to do that are not what God wants you to do.

II. Remember God is sovereign – vs. 4
Verse 4 gives a picture of absolute authority. God is never caught by surprise. Sovereignty contains three ideas, **ownership, authority, and control**.
Ps. 135:5; 115:3; 103:19
We have a really big God. He's bigger than you can ever imagine, and He's in control. And this means that when we look around and get the very strong sense that the world and our lives are out of control, we have to remember that we're wrong.

God's sovereignty and His providence go hand in hand. What is providence? Providence is God's ability to execute His plan in your life. **Is. 46:9; Job 24:14**

The theologian John J. Murray summed it up like this, the plan of God is perfect, the

plan of God is exhaustive, the plan of God is for my ultimate good, The plan of God is secret. God hides it from me until it happens. I discover it day by day as it unfolds.

Even the sorrows and the bad things that came into Joseph's life, God had control of all of that. And that's where we cling to the promise, we hang on the promise of **Romans 8.28**.

God will test His people. God's eyes penetrate into our hearts. He knows us intimately in our hearts. Why does He test the righteous? To bring out the best in us. Craigie wrote this, the testing of the righteous, though it might involve great hardship, would culminate in purity and the removal of dross. And so God will use even the wickedness of the wicked. To try his own people, to test his own people, God will allow those things, just like in the life of Joseph, all those sins that were committed against Joseph. He will allow that to try Joseph and to try his own people. Spurgeon said, God refines the righteous with afflictions.

God will judge the wicked – vs. 5. Peter said, look, if judgment begins, if it starts in the house of God, if God, when He begins to purge in the judge, if He begins in the church, if He begins in His house, what do you think it's going to be when He works His way out to those who don't know Him? It gets more severe the farther outward He works. He may purify his own people, but he will punish those that are wicked.

And so to emphasize this, the psalmist gives several pictures of God's judgment. There are <u>three pictures</u> that he gives.

- Fire and brimstone – **vs. 6**
- Scorching wind
- Poisoned cup

III. Run to God for refuge – vs. 7

Here David is making a conscious choice to make God his refuge, to run to the Lord. and find his confidence and trust in God alone. Instead of fleeing to a mountain like a bird, David is going to run to God for refuge.

<u>Illustration</u>: six cities of refuge in book of Joshua
No matter where you were, there was a city of refuge that you could run to that was close by. And the roads were never clogged. They had to keep the roads clear and in good order. The gates were never closed in these cities.

Great hymn by Charles Wesley:

Jesus Lover of My Soul. Let me to thy bosom fly,
while the near waters roll, while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past,
safe into the haven guide, and O receive my soul at last.

TEXT: PSALM 12

TITLE: WAR OF WORDS: THE WORD OF THE WICKED VS. THE WORD OF THE LORD

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD'S PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE EXPOSES THE IMPOTENCE OF THE BOASTING OF THE ARROGANT

I. (:1) THE PLIGHT OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES:
(contrasted with vs. 8)
A. The Godly Man
"*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be*"

B. The Faithful
"*For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men*"

II. (:2-4) THE WORD OF THE WICKED
(contrasted with vs. 6-7) – characterized by:
A. Falsehood -- empty talk
"*They speak falsehood to one another*"

B. Flattery -- smooth talk
"*With flattering lips …*"

C. Deceit -- double talk
"*and with a double heart they speak*"

D. Boasting -- big talk
"the tongue that speaks great things"

E. Threatening -- trash talk
"with our tongue we will prevail"

F. Rebellion against the authority of God – bigshot talk
"our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

III. (:5) TRANSITION: THE LORD OF COMPASSION PROMISES DELIVERANCE
A. The Lord Responds Out of Compassion
1. "*Because of the devastation of the afflicted*"

2. "*Because of the groaning of the needy*"

B. The Lord Promises Deliverance and Security
"*'Now I will arise,' says the Lord; 'I will set him in the safety*

for which he longs.'"

IV. (:6-7) THE WORD OF THE LORD

A. Pure words -- like silver refined in the furnace (cf. godly man of vs. 1)

"*The words of the Lord are pure words;*
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."

B. Faithful words -- God will carry out His promise of deliverance
(cf. faithful man of vs. 1)

V. (:8) THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE IMMORAL MAJORITY (FOR THE MOMENT)

A. They Strut About Like Peacocks

"*The wicked strut about on every side*"

B. They are Encouraged by the Climate of Evil

cf. how TV exalts vileness

"*When vileness is exalted among the sons of men*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) We are not the only generation where we look around and lament that "the godly man ceases to be." What type of Help does the Lord offer for such a generation?

2) Analyze the political campaigns for instances of the type of abuses of speech that are detailed in this psalm. Where have we seen those same types of abuses in the church? How diligent are we in guarding our own speech?

3) Meditate on other passages that speak of the Lord's compassion for the afflicted and the needy. Is part of our sluggishness in spiritual growth due to our personal comforts that diminish our longing for the type of spiritual maturity that only the Lord can provide?

4) Are we careful to keep the Lord's Word pure by not adulterating it with our traditions or our speculative interpretations? Do we allow God's Word to speak directly and forcefully without sugarcoating it or trying to make it more palatable?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: Re vs. 6 – "What a contrast between the vain words of man, and the pure words of Jehovah. Man's words are yea and nay, but the Lord's promises are yea and amen. For truth, certainty, holiness, faithfulness, the words of the Lord are pure as

well-refined silver. In the original there is an allusion to the most severely-purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was passed when the greatest possible purity was desired; the dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained; so clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord. The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat."

Perowne: Re vs. 5 and the difference between Poet and Prophet – "Each, though in different ways, was the teacher of that Eternal Truth which he received from God. … Broadly speaking, the difference lay here, that the Poet gave utterance to the longings, aspirations, fears, doubts, anxieties of man's heart; whereas the Prophet was commissioned to address himself directly to the people, as conveying to them the message of God. The one represented, so to speak the human side of the truth—what man feels and is; the other the Divine—what God is and requires. The one speaks for man to God; the other for God to man. Here, however, David, instead of expressing his own feeling of confidence that God will answer him, seems as it were to hear God himself speaking…"

Craigie: "It is generally true that the finest things or qualities within the order of creation are those most vulnerable to debasement or perversion. The more pure or good a thing may be, the more impure or rotten it may be made to become. Love, the greatest quality within creation, may be sadly abused, as the prophets (e.g. Hos 1-3) made clear. And speech, which is so central to relationships between human beings, and between persons and God, may also be radically abused. The psalmist has painted a picture of speech that has been raped—worth has been exchanged for vanity, truth for flattery, and humility for arogance in word and thought. The gift implicit in the tongue has been twisted and tortured to evil purposes by proud mortals."

VanGemeren: Re vs 7-8 – "In response to the assurance of God's word, the psalmist brings his lament to a peaceful conclusion. Regardless of the circumstances of life, God's children are assured of the special protection of their heavenly Father from the evil of the world in which they live. The wicked may turn the world upside down, but God will guard his own…God's guarding his people is a reality even when the wicked walk around as kings. When vv.1,7-8 are read together as an inclusion, the comfort lies in God's protection from an evil generation that is, after all, characterized by human frailty…. The psalm contains no resolution to the problem of evil, but it recognizes that evil is under the full sovereignty of the Lord. He will care for his children, because '*the words of the Lord*' are flawless (v.6)."

TEXT: PSALM 13

TITLE: FAITH IN THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

BIG IDEA:
REJOICING BY FAITH WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH REQUIRES FAITH IN THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

INTRODUCTION:

Patience: "bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint"
"steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity"

I. (:1-2) THE ANGUISH OF TOUGH TIMES THAT PERSIST

Note the tone of Impatience (like little children in a car on a long trip -- "Are we almost there?" "How long?")
Note the 4 cries of "*How Long*" in this section

A. Forgotten by God

"*Wilt Thou forget me forever?*
How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?"

B. Frustrated to the point of despair

"*How long shall I take counsel in my soul,*
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?"

C. Fallen in Humiliation and Disgrace before the enemy

"*How long will my enemy be exalted over me*?"

II. (:3-4) THE APPEAL FOR HELP

A. The Appeal for Attention -- answers the problem of being forgotten

1. Consider
2. Answer

"*Consider and answer me, O Lord, my God*"

B. The Appeal for Deliverance -- answers the problem of frustration and despair

"Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death"

C. The Appeal for Vindication from my enemies -- answers the problem of humiliation and disgrace

1. *"lest my enemy say, 'I have overcome him'"*
2. *"lest my adversaries rejoice when I am shaken"*

III. (:5-6) THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

The connection between:

A. Lovingkindness of the Lord who *"has dealt bountifully with me"* -- no way God

could forget you

B. Faith – "*But I have trusted …*"

C. Rejoicing -- your enemies do not have the last word
"*My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.*
I will sing to the Lord"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Remember how the Father hid His face from His Son while He hung on the cross bearing in His own body our sins? How can we imagine that our Heavenly Father, having paid such a precious ransom for our soul, would ever hide his face from us – the ones clothed with the righteousness of Christ?

2) What type of frustration builds within us when we take upon ourselves the responsibility of trying to figure a way out of our predicament? What are the dangers of "*taking counsel in my soul*"?

3) Do we believe that the Lord has a stake in our victory? He is the one who has pledged to protect and deliver us. Do we think that He will allow His good name and His faithfulness to be maligned by letting our enemies have the last word?

4) Are we actively remembering the Lord's lovingkindness to us in the past in order to give us hope and expectation of deliverance for the future? Is our heart's testimony that the Lord has truly "*dealt bountifully with me*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Perowne: "The rapid transition of feeling, from a depth of misery bordering on despair, to hope, and even joy, is very remarkable."

Murphy: Re vs. 2 – "It was an irksome task to be all the day devising schemes by which he might escape from his still persistent enemy."

Leupold: Re vs. 3 – "'*lighten my eyes*' – implies that he is in danger of having the lamp of life within him go out entirely. When the vital powers grow dim, a Hebrew says his eyes are darkened. When he is refreshed and vitalized he says his eyes are '*lightened*.' Cf. on this usage I Sam. 14:27, 29; Ezra. 9:8. Here the psalmist feels that, unless God intervenes, his life's lamp may go out completely, perhaps because he would fall entirely into the power of his enemy."

Craigie: Re vs. 6 – "The confidence is expressed within the tension which exists between past experience and future hope. The past experience of the psalmist has been one of trust in God's '*lovingkindness*,' namely the faithful covenant love of God which characterized all his dealings with his chosen people. The present reality was of such a nature as to undermine that past experience of trust, but it is in the nature of confidence to transform the present on the basis of past experience and thus to create hope for the future; and so the psalmist can affirm that he will '*rejoice*' in God's deliverance, even though it has not yet come. The actual song of praise would burst forth once deliverance had been accomplished, but the knowledge that deliverance was coming created an anticipatory calm and sense of confidence.""

Delitzsch: Re the progression of thought in the psalm – "The Psalm consists of … three groups of decreasing magnitude. A log deep sigh is followed, as from a relieved breast, by an already much more gentle and half calm prayer; and this again by the believing joy which anticipates the certainty of being answered. This song as it were casts up constantly lessening waves, until it becomes still as the sea when smooth as a mirror, and the only motion discernible at last is that of the joyous ripple of calm repose."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When God Seems Distant**
Introduction: David is going through a trial, it seems to drag on and on, and it seemed like God was nowhere in his life or that God seemed so distant from him or had abandoned him. God hasn't abandoned us, even though you might feel like he has. But we need to go through these trials and these difficulties because all of that is part of the maturing process that God has for all of us.

Background of the psalm:
David is a hero in Israel. We all know that. David is the sweet psalmist of Israel. He's the man who defeated the giant Goliath. All the women sang about David. They said, Saul slain a thousand, but David is ten thousands. And you remember that Saul didn't appreciate that song very much. The Bible says that he was very angry at that saying, that song. And the Bible says that Saul eyed David from then on out. That is, he looked at him with a green-eyed monster of jealousy.

And as a result, Saul became the enemy of David, and David had to run for his life. Now he's the anointed king of Israel, he's gonna be the next king, but now Saul's looking at him as a threat. And so David has to live as a fugitive for many years in his life. In fact, for eight to nine years, did you know that David had to flee and run? He lived in the wilderness, he lived in caves. Wherever he could to flee from Saul, that's where he went.

He even went to a place, you know, now if you go over Israel, you can go to visit a place called Masada, a high fortress, mountain fortress, huge rock. And at one point in 1 Samuel, David refers to hiding at, and the Hebrew word there is Masada, and in Gedi, in the wilderness in Gedi. So he's hiding all over, remaining on the move so that Saul cannot get him.

And one day at a moment of real discouragement, David says to himself, you know, I'm gonna die at the hands of Saul. He said, it's just better for me that I should escape into the land of the Philistines. This is first Samuel 27:1. You know, so he leaves the coast of Israel, he goes into the land of the Philistines, the land of the enemies, by the way, and he settled in a place called Ziklag, and he managed to live at Ziklag for 16 months in relative peace.

But one day David went out on a military mission, and when he returned home, he found the city of Ziklag burning with fire. His wives were kidnapped, all of his children were gone, as well as all of the wives and the children of all the soldiers that were there. And David's men were not merely grief stricken, but they were filled with anger and fury against David. They thought it was all David's fault. And so they were ready to stone David at that time. And in desperation, out of the pain of his heart, David cries out to the Lord.

Now, the psalm really is divided into three stanzas or two verses each. In verses 1 and 2, he states the problem. In verses 3 and 4, he kind of gives the petition. And in verses 5 and 6, it kind of ends up on a note of praise to God. But what this psalm really does for us is it teaches us what we should do when we feel like God is distant, or when we feel like God has abandoned us in some way.

Big Idea: **Three steps that David takes when God seems distant**

I. Express your feelings to the Lord – vs. 1-2

David comes to God with his honest feelings. Now, there's nothing wrong with doing that. We can pour our heart out before the Lord. We don't do this in an irreverent way. Question: "*How long*?" Four times in two verses, David asks this question,

Waiting is one of the most difficult things to do in the Christian life. Sometimes it seems as if God moves so slowly.

A. How long are you going to abandon me? Vs. 1

The greater the task God wants to accomplish with you, the greater the trial He will put you through to make you ready to do His will.

Illustration: Life of Joseph – waiting in prison; Apostle Paul wanting to go to Rome – waiting in prison for years

David spent 8 or 9 years of his life running from Saul. He's just filled with anxiety here. He wants rest in his soul. He was in inner turmoil, and he wanted this turmoil to stop.

B. How long are my enemies going to win over me? Vs. 2

We're wondering, God, where are you? You call out to God and he doesn't seem to answer. You try to figure out how to get out of your circumstance, but nothing works.

You go from the heights of hope to the depths of despair. So many times you kind of go through that emotional rollercoaster that you can't seem to take much more. And David's going through that.

II. Express your fears to the Lord – v. 3-4

A. Fear of abandonment

Lord, please don't abandon me. You know, this is one of the biggest fears that people have is the fear of abandonment.

The worst judgment in Scripture mentioned, I think, is when God abandons someone. This is the wrath of abandonment, we call it. In **Hosea 4:17**.

B. Fear of apathy

You just get to the point to where you just don't do anything anymore. You're completely, totally in despair and apathetic where you just quit in your heart. That's what David means when he says, *lighten mine eyes*. The phrase means, Lord, put the light back in my eyes.

C. Fear of his adversaries

David didn't want the enemies of God rejoicing. God's honor was tied up in David's deliverance.

III. Express your faith to the Lord – v. 5-6

David here expresses his trust and confidence in God despite his circumstances. He has not yet been delivered, but he trusts in God's promise. David makes a choice to put his trust in God at that very moment.

David doesn't give in to what he sees. He doesn't give in to what he feels. He makes a deliberate choice to say, you know what? I choose to trust in God. Yeah, I'm afraid. Yeah, I'm filled with anxiety at times, but I make a deliberate conscious choice that I will trust in the Lord. **Ps. 56:3**

David chose to interpret his circumstances by God's love rather than interpret God's love by his circumstances. And he's trusting in God. And so there's <u>two vital lessons</u> that we need to remember when we're having these feelings like David.

1) God has not forgotten you. He has not forgotten you. God has an unfailing, loyal love to you, his child. Isaiah 49:14 -- It might seem like God has forgotten you, but he hasn't.
2) There's no such thing as instant godliness. We have instant everything in our society, but there's no instant godliness. David was anointed to be king in his teens. He had a strong faith at that time, but David needed to grow in his godliness before God put him on the throne.

A <u>few reasons</u> of why we need to learn to wait and trust in the Lord at these times.

- It makes you more obedient – **Ps. 119:67**
- It deepens your insight into God's Word – **Ps. 119:71**

- To increase your compassion and effectiveness in ministry – **2 Cor. 1:4**
- To learn to wait patiently on God – **Ps. 27:14**
- To make your joy less dependent on circumstances and more on God – **Hab. 3:17**
- To make you appreciate God all the more when He restores you – cf. Job

Conclusion:

The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon was walking through the English countryside with a friend. And he noticed a barn that had a weather vane. And on the top of the weather vane were the words, God is love. And Spurgeon said, you know, this was an inappropriate place for such a message because weather vanes are changeable, but God's love is constant. And the friend said to Spurgeon, he says, no, that's not what that means. He said, what he's saying is, is that the weather vane is saying the truth that no matter which way the wind blows, God is love. And that's the message. No matter which way the winds might blow in your life, God is love and he has not forgotten you. And remember this, if it seems as if God has abandoned you, then join David in trusting in God's mercy.

TEXT: PSALM 14

TITLE: LONGING FOR THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

BIG IDEA:
THE CORRUPTION OF THIS WORLD CREATES A LONGING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I. (:1-3) THE CORRUPTION OF THIS WORLD IS UNIVERSAL AND UNAVOIDABLE

A. The Foolishness of Corruption
1. The Denial of the Fool -- *"There is no God"*
2. The Character of the Corrupt -- *"They are corrupt"*
3. The Conduct of the Corrupt -- *"They have committed abominable deeds"*
4. The Extent of Corruption -- *"There is no one who does good"*

B. The Evaluation of the Lord
1. The Lord is Watching and Evaluating
Perspective: *"from heaven"*
Subjects of Scrutiny: *"sons of men"*
Key Issue: Spiritual Understanding -- *"any who understand"*
Seeking after God -- *"who seek after God"*
2. Fourfold Condemnation
"they have all turned aside"
"together they have become corrupt"
"there is no one who does good"
"not even one"

II. (:4-6) THE WICKED HAVE NO CLUE THAT GOD REALLY IS ON THE SIDE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. The Ignorance of the Wicked (:4)
1. Persecuting the People of God
2. Ignoring God Himself

"*Do all the workers of wickedness not know,*
Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not call upon the Lord?"

B. The Panic that will Grip Them When God Shows His Allegiance (= whose side He is on) (:5)
1. Great Dread – "*There they are in great dread*"
2. God is on the Side of the Righteous
"*For God is with the righteous generation*"

C. The Futility of Fighting Against the Lord (:6)
"*You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted,*

But the Lord is his refuge."

III. (:7) THE RIGHTEOUS LONG FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. The Source of Deliverance

'*Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion*!"

B. The Restoration from Captivity

"*When the Lord restores His captive people*"

C. The Rejoicing

"*Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what ways do I foolishly live as if there were no God?

2) What is the root problem of an atheist? How best can I help such a person?

3) What can I learn about the depravity of man from this passage?

4) How much am I longing for the "*salvation of Israel to come out of Zion*"?
Cf. the conclusion of the Book of Revelation: "Even so Come Lord Jesus."

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: Re vs. 4-6 – "The Corruption of the Priesthood. *No knowledge*. These who lack knowledge of God are perhaps the priests, who eat the shewbread and should call upon God. Instead they are becoming *workers of iniquity* (cf. Hos 1:4-6). Instead of leading God's people, they devour them. The *generation of the righteous* obviously refers to *my people*, while *the poor* have a special place of refuge in God."

Spurgeon: Re the Title – "This admirable ode is simply headed, *'To the Chief Musician by David*.' The dedication to the Chief Musician stands at the head of fifty-three of the Psalms, and clearly indicates that such Psalms were intended, not merely for the private use of believers, but to be sung in the great assemblies by the appointed choir at whose head was the overseer, or superintendent, called in our version, '*the Chief Musician*,' and by Ainsworth, 'the master of the Music.'"

Spurgeon: "The Atheist is *the* fool pre-eminently, and a fool universally. He would not deny God if he were not a fool by nature, and having denied God it is no marvel that he becomes a fool in practice. Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the

very existence of the Most High, so is it also the greatest imaginable folly. To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy; to oppose the common consent of mankind, which is stupidity; to stifle consciousness, which is madness. If the sinner could by his atheism destroy the God whom he hates there were some sense, although much wickedness, in his infidelity; but as denying the existence of fire does not prevent its burning a man who is in it, so doubting the existence of God will not stop the Judge of all the earth from destroying the rebel who breaks his laws; nay, this atheism is a crime which much provokes heaven, and will bring down terrible vengeance on the fool who indulges it. The proverb says, 'A fool's tongue cuts his own throat,' and in this instance it kills both soul and body forever: would to God the mischief stopped even there, but alas! one fool makes hundreds, and a noisy blasphemer spreads his horrible doctrines as lepers spread the plague."

Kidner: "Here the spirit of godlessness reveals itself in two ways: in flouting God's law (1-3) and oppressing His people (4-6); that is, in both direct and indirect contempt of heaven. It is the reckless folly (1a, 2b, 4a) almost as much as the wickedness of it that emerges in the psalm, which '*looks down from heaven*' on the scene as God views it. But the standpoint changes in the last verse to the earthly arena, where persecuted Israel waits longingly for the redress that will surely come…

The assertion, '*There is no God*,' is in fact treated in Scripture not as a sincere if misguided conviction, but as an irresponsible gesture of defiance. In the context of Psalm 10:4 it is expounded as a gamble against moral sanctions; in Job 21:7-15 as impatience of authority; in Romans 1:18ff as intellectual and moral suicide. There are elements of all these in the present passage; already verse 1b shows the outcome of this attitude in relation to the self (*corrupt*; cf. Gn. 6:12), to God (*abominable* refers primarily to Godward offensiveness) and to fellow man (*none…does good*), which are the areas explored in Romans 1, Job 21 and Psalm 10, referred to above."

McGee: "Theme: Depravity of man in the last days—atheistic, filthy, rebellious.

This psalm is linked to the other psalms, especially Psalm 12. In that psalm you will recall that we saw the corruption of the last days. The godly man had ceased, it seemed, and the godless were in control. Corruption, wickedness, and lawlessness abounded. You may think it is a picture of this day, but if I may use the common colloquialism of the street, 'You ain't seen nothin yet.' Wait until the great tribulation comes…

Notice the marvelous arrangement of this psalm made by Bishop Horn. He divides this psalm into three parts: the corruption of the world, the enmity against the people of God, and the longing and prayer for salvation. This is the picture of Psalm 14. It is brief but very important."

TEXT: PSALM 15

TITLE: RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH A HOLY GOD

BIG IDEA:
A LIFE OF INTEGRITY KEEPS YOU CLOSE TO GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Every year for the Christian Athletic Association soccer season I like to pick a fundamental spiritual principle that we can focus on as we relate to the kids and to one another as coaches and referees.

This year I think the concept of "Integrity" would be appropriate.
Simple Definition: "soundness of moral principle and character; uprightness; honesty"

Our nation was built on a foundation of people of Integrity.
But I am afraid that our kids are growing up in a culture where the concept of Integrity has been so abused and hidden that it is difficult to either find or recognize.
(Context = President Bill Clinton scandals)

Our political leaders have abused this fundamental principle and become an embarrassment in many cases. In some instances, our church leaders have abused this principle.

But Integrity cannot be destroyed. It is a gift from God that comes by grace thru faith along with the new life that is ours in union with Jesus Christ. Think of it like a diamond that has been buried in the mud. Once you wash it off and display it, the brilliance still shines as brightly as ever. Think of Integrity as the essence of a life that pleases God.

We have the opportunity to model Integrity before the kids that participate in CAA this season -- and they desparately need some good role models.

Psalm 15 is very short -- only 5 verses -- but it speaks to this issue of Integrity:

I. (:1) QUESTION: WHO HAS THE PRIVILEGE OF CLOSE FELLOWSHIP WITH A HOLY GOD?

"O Lord, who may abide in Thy tent?
Who may dwell on Thy holy hill?

A. Abide in Thy tent

B. Dwell on Thy holy hill

II. (:2) GENERAL ANSWER: One who is characterized by:
"He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart."

A. Integrity -- Internal Character

B. Righteousness -- Outward Deeds

C. Truth -- Thoughts and Speech

III. (:3-5) SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:
A. Integrity of Speech (:3)

"He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;"

1. No Slander
2. No Meanness (to his neighbor)
3. No Gossip (hurting a friend)

B. Integrity of Fellowship (:4a)

"In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honors those who fear the Lord;"

1. Rejects a Reprobate
2. Honors those who fear the Lord
cf. 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18

C. Integrity of Commitment (:4b)

"He swears to his own hurt, and does not change;"

He keeps his word -- even when it costs him something

D. Integrity of Finances (:5a)

"He does not put out his money at interest,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent."

1. No Exploitation
usury, etc.
2. No Dishonesty
Bribes, extortion, etc.

(:5b) CONCLUSION:

"He who does these things will never be shaken"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If you were to ask your children to give examples of how you have proved to them that you are a man of integrity … what examples would they give?

2) Compare how the Lord Jesus perfectly meets all of these criteria.

3) Think of the high standard set forth here of *speaking truth in your heart*. Do we ever lie to ourselves in the quietness of our heart? Do we give a hearing to the lies of Satan? Would we be embarrassed if the thoughts of our heart were broadcast for all to see?

4) When we make a promise or a commitment and then circumstances change so that our promise ends up costing us more than we bargained on, do we stick to our word or do we weasel our way out of the situation? Can our children count on our word?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

VanGemeren: "The '*blameless*' walk is the manner of life characterized by integrity. The word *tamim* signifies a moral way of life. It is not synonymous with '*perfect*' but with an attitude of the heart desirous of pleasing God (cf. 18:24; 101:2,6; 119:1; Matt 5:48; Eph 1:4; Col 1:22). Noah was such a man (Gen 6:8), as was Abraham (Gen 17:1). The walk of integrity was required both before the Flood and before the law was revealed at Sinai. Regardless of what God requires, the blameless man does God's will on earth. Such a man is blessed by the Lord (84:11-12)."

Craigie: "In the history of Christian and Jewish worship, there have emerged two extremes toward which the worshiper may be tempted to move. On the one hand, there have been times when the holiness of God has been stressed so powerfully, that the ordinary mortal has felt it impossible to approach God in worship or prayer. On the other hand, the open access to God in prayer has sometimes been so stressed that admission to God's presence becomes a thoughtless and casual matter. Between these two poles, there is a proper median: there is indeed access to the Holy God in worship and prayer, but it must be employed carefully, not casually, with appropriate preparation and reverence. Psalm 15 provides a guide to such access; it reflects the wisdom, prior to entering the divine presence in worship, of reflecting upon the requirements presupposed of the worshipper."

Spurgeon: Re "*never be moved*" – "No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag

him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place. Like the Lord Jesus, whose dominion is everlasting, the true Christian shall never lose his crown. He shall not only be *on* Zion, but *like* Zion, fixed and firm. He shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Most High, and neither death nor judgment shall remove him from his place of privilege and blessedness."

TEXT: PSALM 16

TITLE: 7 REASONS TO BLESS GOD AS WE FACE DEATH

BIG IDEA:
DEATH OPENS THE DOOR TO THE RICHES OF OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE SECURED BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Remember that this is a Messianic Psalm -- Acts 2:25-28; Acts 13:34-35; True of David in his own experience, but ultimately speaking of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Note:

There is debate as to whether David is asking for deliverance from death or deliverance out of death via the resurrection;

cf. http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/act/act2.htm

Certainly much more is intended here than what David understood himself when he wrote this

1) (:1) GOD IS MY PROTECTOR

RESPONSE: Bless God; Seek Refuge in Him

"Preserve me"
"I take refuge in Thee"

2) (:2-4) GOD IS MY DELIGHT

RESPONSE: Bless God; Boast in Him and in His people

contrasted with the sorrows of those who have rejected loyalty to the true God; we take no delight in them

3) (:5-6) GOD IS MY INHERITANCE

RESPONSE: Bless God; Appreciate the Beauty of His Inheritance

"The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup"
"Thou dost support my lot"
"The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places"
"Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me"

4) (:7) GOD IS MY COUNSELOR

RESPONSE: Bless God; Draw comfort from His instruction

"who has counseled me"
"my mind instructs me in the night"

5) (:8-9) GOD IS MY ROCK

RESPONSE: Bless God; Stand firm

"I will not be shaken"
"My flesh also will dwell securely"

6) (:10) GOD IS MY RESURRECTION

RESPONSE: Bless God; Don't Despair

"Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol"
"Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay"

Wever:
"*leave*" means to abandon
"*sheol*" -- hades, the unseen world, the world of departed spirits of men (not graves, but where the spirits of men go)
"*suffer*" = permit
"*holy one*" = beloved one; true of Christ in the absolute
"*corruption*" = for the body to dissolve

1) God won't allow the body and the spirit to remain separated in death
2) the body won't see corruption before this occurs
3) the united soul and body come into the presence of the living God

7) (:11) GOD IS MY LIFE

RESPONSE: Bless God; Enjoy Him forever

"the path of life"
"fulness of joy"
"pleasures forever"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Can others tell that our delight is in the Lord? Do we enjoy talking about the Lord? Do we make it a priority to spend time alone with Him? Do we consider the Lord to be our ultimate good and our fullness of joy? What hinders us from fully delighting in the Lord?

2) Do we delight in fellowshipping with the saints or do we find them annoying and hard to get along with?

3) Is our testimony that both our present and our future is a work of beauty that the Lord has worked out for our good in His providence?

4) Are we encouraged as we are privileged to look back in time and enjoy the perspective of fulfilled prophecy with respect to God's Holy One not seeing decay, but rising from the dead to offer us eternal life and fulness of joy?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "This song of trust is a wholehearted profession of the joy that comes from faithfulness and loyalty. The author lived in a day when apostasy and idolatry were extensive. Against this background he contrasts his supreme happiness with the plight of those who have slipped into idolatry. His great hope amplifies his present trust in God."

Kidner: Re vs. 1-6 -- "Almost every verse in this half of the psalm speaks of some aspect of single-mindedness: i.e., of throwing in one's lot with God in the realms of one's security (1), welfare (2), associates (3), worship (4) and ambitions (5f)."

Perowne: "Life, in the only true sense, is union with God; and from that springs, of necessity, the idea of immortality. It seems impossible to suppose that David, who here expresses such a fulness of confidence in God, such a living personal relationship to Him, could have ever dreamed that such a relationship would end with death. In this Psalm, and in the next, there shines forth the bright hope of everlasting life. Why should men question this? Even the heathen struggled to believe that they should abide after death. Would they to whom God had revealed Himself, and who were bound to Him in a personal covenant, be left in greater darkness? Impossible. The argument which our Lord used with the Sadducees applies here with especial force – God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They to whom God has made Himself known, they who are one with Him, cannot lose that Divine Life of which they are made partakers. Immortality (and a Resurrection, see on xvii. 15) follows from the life of the spirit…"

Stott: the psalm is "in reality a believer's testimony regarding both his present faith and his future hope. Having taken refuge in God (verse 1), he has found in Him his greatest good (verses 2, 6, 7) and is convinced that even death cannot rob him of that true life which consists of fellowship with God (verses 11, 12)…
Peter himself in his first letter (1 Peter 1:10-12) explained that the prophets did not fully understand to what the Spirit of Christ within them was referring when predicting Christ's sufferings and subsequent glory. We need not therefore assert that David was making a deliberate and conscious prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus which was fully intelligible to himself. It is enough to say that, caught up by the Spirit of prophecy, he was led to write words about the conquest of death and the fulness of life and joy in the presence of God, which would be finally fulfilled not in his own experience but in that of his illustrious descendant."

TEXT: PSALM 17

TITLE: CRY FOR JUSTICE

BIG IDEA:
THE MAN OF INTEGRITY CRIES OUT FOR GOD'S JUSTICE AND PROTECTION WHEN HUNTED BY THE WICKED

I. (:1-2) THE CRY FOR JUSTICE – Why should the Lord give attention?

A. My Cause is a Just Cause
"Hear a just cause, O Lord"

B. My God is Compassionate and Responds to My Cries
"Give heed to my cry"

C. My God Answers the Prayers of His Children
"Give ear to my prayer"

D. My God Will Personally Render Judgment
"Let my judgment come forth from Thy presence"

D. My God Judges Fairly
"Let Thine eyes look with equity"

II. (:3-5) THE MAN OF INTEGRITY – Characterized by:

A. Honesty -- *"not speaking from deceitful lips"*

B. Proven Character
1. Pure in Heart -- *"Thou hast tried my heart"*

2. Nothing to Hide -- *"Thou hast visited me by night"*

3. Blameless -- *"Thou hast tested me and dost find nothing"*

C. Self-control (especially of the tongue)
"I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress"

D. Steadfastness
Keeping on the straight and narrow; avoiding temptations;
guided by the Word of God
"I have kept from the paths of the violent"
"My steps have held fast to Thy paths"
"My feet have not slipped"

III. (:6-9) THE CRY FOR PROTECTION – Based on the Character of God:

A. The Cry Itself

"I have called upon Thee"
"Incline thine ear to me"
"hear my speech"

B. The Expectation of Response -- based on the Character of God
"Thou wilt answer me, O God"
"show Thy lovingkindness"

C. The Protection desired
"O Savior of those who take refuge at Thy right hand"
"Keep me as the apple of the eye"
"Hide me in the shadow of Thy wings"

IV. (:10-12) THE ATTACKING ANIMALS – Described as:
A. Rebels at heart
"those who rise up against them" (:7)

B. Out for their own selfish gain; exploitation
"from the wicked who despoil me"

C. Ganging up unfairly on the righteous
"my deadly enemies who surround me"
"they have now surrounded us in their steps"

D. Heartless; no compassion
"they have closed their unfeeling heart"

E. Arrogant; proud; boastful
"with their mouth they speak proudly"

F. Plotting our destruction
"they set their eyes to cast us down to the ground"

G. Like a lion after its prey
"he is like a lion that is eager to tear"
"and as a young lion, lurking in hiding places"

V. (:13-15) CONCLUSION --
THE TEMPORAL SATISFACTION OF THE WICKED VS.
THE ETERNAL SATISFACTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS
A. Call for the Lord to Judge the Wicked and Deliver the Righteous
1. Judge the Wicked
"*Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low*"

2. Deliver the Righteous
"*Deliver my soul from the wicked with Thy sword,*

From men with Thy hand, O Lord"

B. The Temporal Satisfaction of the Wicked

"*From men of the world, whose portion is in this life;*
And whose belly Thou dost fill with Thy treasure;
They are satisfied with children,
And leave their abundance to their babes."

C. The Eternal Satisfaction of the Righteous

"*As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness;*
I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How has the Lord tested us and what has He found?

2) Meditate on the images used here for God's protection. What a tremendous refuge we have under the wings of the Almighty!

3) Are we spending our life pursuing the things of this world which are shown here to be only satisfying for the briefest of moments? Do we find our portion in this life or in the Lord and life everlasting?

4) Since we will be conformed to the image of Christ in glory, what will it be like to behold Christ's face in righteousness and be satisfied with His likeness when we awake?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "Certain words and their synonyms occur again and again pointing to the unity of the work. *Cry*, *prayer*, *lips*, *mouth*, and *speech* belong in one group. *Ways*, *steps*, *paths*, and *feet* are roughly parallel. God is characterized by several anthropomorphisms. He has ears, a face, eyes, wings, hands, a sword, and a general bodily form, according to the last word of the poem."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 8 – "No part of the body more precious, more tender, and more carefully guarded than the eye; and of the eye, no portion more peculiarly to be protected than the central apple, the pupil, or, as the Hebrew calls it, *'the daughter of the eye*.' The all-wise Creator has placed the eye in a well-protected position; it stands surrounded by projecting bones like Jerusalem encircled by mountains. Moreover, its great Author has surrounded it with many tunics of inward covering, besides the hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes; and, in

addition to this, he has given to every man so high a value for his eyes, and so quick an apprehension of danger, that no member of the body is more faithfully cared for than the organ of sight."

Perowne: Re vs. 10 -- "These men led a luxurious and selfish life … in consequence of which they had become proud and unfeeling."

Leupold: Re vs. 12 – "The description concludes with comparing the spirit animating these enemies to that of ravenous beasts, who on their part cannot be blamed for being so bloodthirsty. But such traits on the part of man testify to the utter degradation of those that manifest them."

Ogilvie: "When we need the Lord's perspective and power in conflict, the psalm helps us regain an assurance of His love and a desire to open our hurting hearts to His healing. When we answer yes to the question of the old gospel hymn, 'Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?' David's words show us how to 'take it to the Lord in prayer.'…

The first thing we do when we are hurt by people, before we make any response, is to spread the whole matter out before the Lord. Allow His eyes to look at all the issues, the mixed motives, and the deeper reasons behind what has hurt us. We can ask, 'Lord, is there anything You are seeking to teach me in what has been said about me? Is there any truth in it? Your evaluation and judgment is all that is ultimately important.'…

The delight of the Lord over us is the antidote for the discouragement caused by people's words. He sees us, knows and cares, and will not forsake us. That unqualified love heals our hurts….

When we listen to the Lord for what He says to us about what people have said to us, we will depend less on them and more on Him for our self-esteem. His approval releases us from clutching to people's opinions. More than longing to be liked we will be liberated to love."

TEXT: PSALM 18

TITLE: SUPERGOD AND SUPERMAN

BIG IDEA:
A SUPERGOD MAKES HIS ANOINTED VICTORIOUS LIKE A SUPERMAN

(:1-3) INTRODUCTION: LOVE THE ROCK OF SALVATION

A. Relationship: Love the Lord – Why?

"my strength"
"my rock"
"my fortress"
"my deliverer"
"the one in whom I take refuge"
"my shield"
"the horn of my salvation"
"my stronghold"

B. Response: Call Upon the Lord – Why?

"*Call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised*."
This is the simple prescription for deliverance from enemies

C. Result: Deliverance – From Whom?

"*I am saved from my enemies*"

I. (:4-6) CRY FOR HELP EVEN WHEN DELIVERANCE SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE

A. God's Anointed was in a Tough Jam

"cords of death encompassed me"
"torrents of ungodliness terrified me"
"cords of Sheol surrounded me"
"snares of death confronted me"

B. God Hears Our Desperate Cries for Help

1. Desperate Cries for Help

"*In my distress I called upon the Lord,*
And cried to my God for help"

2. God Hears

"*He heard my voice out of His temple,*
And my cry for help before Him came into His ears."

II. (:7-15) WHEN OUR SUPERGOD GETS ANGRY HE UNLEASHES HIS SUPER POWERS –
ALL NATURE QUAKES WHEN GOD GETS ANGRY – WATCH OUT!

What happens when God gets Angry? (language of theophany)

A. (:7) The Earth Shakes in Anticipation of God's Angry Rebuke

"*Then the earth shook and quaked;*
And the foundations of the mountains were trembling
And were shaken, because He was angry."

B. (:8) God Breathes Smoke and Fire

"*Smoke went up out of His nostrils,*
And fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it."

C. (:9-10) God Springs Quickly Into Action

"*He bowed the heavens also, and came down*
With thick darkness under His feet.
And He rode upon a cherub and flew;
And He sped upon the wings of the wind."

D. (:11-12a) God's Brightness Hides Behind a Cloak of Darkness as He Approaches

"*He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,*
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds"

E. (:12b-13) God Announces His Arrival with Displays of Power

"*Hailstones and coals of fire.*
The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire."

F. (:14) God Routs the Enemy

"*And He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,*
And lightening flashes in abundance, and routed them."

G. (:15) The Earth Submits to God's Angry Rebuke

"*Then the channels of water appeared,*
And the foundations of the world were laid bare.
At thy rebuke, O Lord,
At the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils."

III. (:16-19) THE LORD RESCUES HIS ANOINTED EVEN FROM THE MOST POWERFUL ENEMIES

A. The Danger

"*out of many waters*"
"*from my strong enemy*"
"*from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me*"
"*They confronted me in the day of my calamity*"

B. The Deliverance

"*He sent from on high*"
"*He drew me out*"
"*He delivered me*"
"*the Lord was my stay*"
"*He brought me forth also into a broad place*"
"*He rescued me*"

C. The Delight

"*because He delighted in me*"

IV. (:20-27) THE LORD REWARDS THE RIGHTEOUS BUT PUNISHES THE PERVERSE

A. The Lord Rewards the Righteous According to Their Righteousness

1. Principle Stated

"*The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness;*
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me."

2. Testimony of Personal Holiness

"*For I have kept the ways of the Lord,*
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all His ordinances were before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.
I was also blameless with Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity."

3. Principle Restated

"*Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness,*
According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes."

4. Examples of the Lord's Justice

a. "*With the kind Thou dost show Thyself kind*"

b. "*With the blameless Thou dost show Thyself blameless*"

c. "*With the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure*"

B. The Lord Punishes the Perverse According to Their Sin

1. "*Crooked*"

2. "*Haughty*"

V. (:28-36) A SUPERGOD MAKES HIS ANOINTED FIGHT LIKE A SUPERMAN

KEY VERSES -- :28-29

A. (:28) The Darkness Yields to God's Light

"*For Thou dost light my lamp;*
The Lord my God illumines my darkness"

B. (:29) Obstacles Present No Problem to God's Warriors

"*For by Thee I can run upon a troop;*
And by my God I can leap over a wall"

C. (:30-36) God Equips His Anointed to Fight Like a Superman

1. God is a Proven Winner

   "*As for God, His way is blameless;*
   The word of the Lord is tried"

2. God is Our Shield and Rock

   "*He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.*
   For who is God, but the Lord?
   And who is a rock, except our God"

3. God Equips Me with Strength

   "*The God who girds me with strength,*
   And makes my way blameless"

4. God Equips Me with Security

   "*He makes my feet like hinds' feet,*
   And sets me upon my high places."

5. God Equips Me with Offensive Weapons

   "*He trains my hands for battle,*
   So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze."

6. God Equips Me with Defensive Protection

   '*Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation,*
   And Thy right hand upholds me"

7. God Makes Me a Winner

   "*And Thy gentleness makes me great.*
   Thou dost enlarge my steps under me,
   And my feet have not slipped."

VI. (:37-45) SUPERMAN TAKES NO PRISONERS -- VICTORY IS COMPLETE

A. (:37-42) Total Destruction of Enemies

1. (:37) Chase and Conquer

   "*I pursued my enemies and overtook them,*
   And I did not turn back until they were consumed."

2. (:38) Shatter and Subdue
   "*I shattered them, so that they were not able to rise;*
   They fell under my feet."

3. (:39-40) Key = Totally God's Doing
   a. Strengthening Me
      "*For Thou hast girded me with strength for battle*"

   b. Subduing My Enemies
      "*Thou hast subdued under me those who rose up against me*."

   c. Scaring My Enemies
      "*Thou hast also made my enemies turn their backs to me*"

   d. Setting Them Up for the Kill (my part was simple)
      "*And I destroyed those who hated me*."

4. (:41) Isolate and Ignore
   "*They cried for help, but there was none to save,*
   Even to the Lord, but He did not answer them."

5. (:42) Beat and Bury
   "*Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind;*
   I emptied them out as the mire of the streets."

B. (:43-45) Complete Submission to God's Anointed

1. Delivered
   "*Thou hast delivered me from the contentions of the people*"

2. Exalted
   "*Thou hast placed me as head of the nations*"

3. Served
   "*A people whom I have not known serve me*."

4. Obeyed
   "*As soon as they hear, they obey me*"

5. Submitted to
   "*Foreigners submit to me.*
   Foreigners fade away, And come trembling out of their fortresses."

(:46-50) CONCLUSION: HYMN OF PRAISE

"*The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock;*
And exalted be the God of my salvation"

"*Therefore I will give thanks to Thee among the nations, O Lord,*
And I will sing priases to Thy name."

A. God Executes Vengeance for Me

B. God Subdues Peoples under Me
"*Surely Thou dost lift me above those who rise up against me*"

C. God Delivers Me from my Enemies
"*Thou dost rescue me from the violent man*"
"*He gives great deliverance to His king*"

D. God Shows Lovingkindness to His People
"*to His anointed, To David and his descendants forever*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Read thru the psalm from the perspective of detailing all of the reasons that the psalmist has found to "Love the Lord" (cf. vs.1). For what reasons do we love the Lord? What is there about the Lord that motivates us to want to know Him better and to want to spend time with Him and to want to share Him with others?

2) Cf. vs. 6 and vs. 41. Note how the Lord hears our cry for help but turns His back on the wicked. Consider what a privilege it is that we have the ear of God.

3) Look at the vivid imagery in vv.7-15. It certainly doesn't pay to get the Lord angry.
Fortunately the Lord does not pour out His wrath on His children. Rather He nurtures and disciplines us in love. How concerned are we for those who are facing the awesome wrath of God for their sin and rebellion?

4) How do we face situations which seem humanly impossible? Do we have the confidence of the psalmist = "by my God I can leap over a wall"? Remember the battle God won for Gideon; remember the walls of Jericho; remember how God spared Jerusalem…

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Murray: Rs vs.1-5 – "'*My strength*.' This is followed by a string of epithets expressive of the security which is in God. To the poetic fancy the different shades of meaning will be obvious. The strength that holds fast is here expressed. 2. '*My cliff* '(2).

This is the cleft rock, that stands conspicuous with its adjoining caves, passes, and glens, that afford refuge from the pursuer. It gives name to Sela or Petra, the cliff city of Arabia Petraea, in which the inhabitants found shelter from surrounding peril. '*My fortress*'(2). This is the hunting lodge, in which the hunter of ancient times ensconced himself to watch his prey. '*My deliverer*', who rescues me from danger. '*My God*' (2), or Mighty One. '*My rock*', on which I stand as a firm foundation and impregnable citadel. '*My shield*', which comes between me and the weapons of the foes. '*Horn of salvation*'. The horn is a weapon of offence and defence. It is used as a figure for any source of power or protection. '*My tower*'(2), that rises above the reach of violence."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 2 – "Dwelling among the crags and mountain fastnesses of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here he compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of trouble. The clefts of the Rock of Ages are safe abodes."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 8 – "A violent oriental method of expressing fierce wrath. Since the breath from the nostrils is heated by strong emotion, the figure portrays the Almighty Deliverer as pouring forth smoke in the heat of his wrath and the impetuousness of his zeal. Nothing makes God so angry as an injury done to his children. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye. God is not subject to the passions which govern his creatures, but acting as he does with all the energy and speed of one who is angry; he is here aptly set forth in poetic imagery suitable to human understandings."

Kidner: Re vs. 7ff – "The theophany (i.e. God made manifest) recalls the deliverance at the Red Sea b7 fire, cloud and the parting of the waters (cf. verse 15); also the phenomena at the mount Sinai, which '*quaked greatly*', '*wrapped in smoke*', when God '*descended upon it in fire*' (Ex. 19:18). There is no description of God's form; we glimpse only what Job calls '*the outskirts of his ways*' (Jb. 26:14)."

VanGemeren: Re vv. 20-29 – "God's Faithfulness to the Faithful. The triumph of faith is expressed here in the realization that the Lord has been faithful, that he has kept his word, and that he rewards the faithful. Faith tastes the goodness of God. The psalmist has argued that the love of God moves heaven and earth for the sake of his own. Now he instructs the hearers (readers) what God expects of his children. The affirmation of his faith(fulness) evokes a desire in the godly to follow the psalmist in his love for God.

This section is composed of two separate parts: man's faithfulness to God (vv. 20-24) and God's faithfulness to man (vv. 25-29)."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Deepen Your Love for God**

Introduction: One of the distinguishing marks of true salvation is the love for God. The lost man, the natural man, does not have a love for God. In fact, the Bible teaches us that there's a hostility and enmity in the heart of lost man towards God. But the moment that person is saved, that hatred turns to love. And the Bible says the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in the heart. Love for God is a distinguishing mark

of a true child of God. The Bible says we love Him because what? He first loved us.

Background of the psalm:
This is really when David is older, he's been king, he's been established for a while on the throne, and what is he doing now in this psalm? He's looking back and he's remembering all of the times that God had delivered him in the times that he was in danger. All of his enemies that had been put down. All of the victories that God had given him. How God had delivered him over and over again from the hand of Saul.

Big Idea: **Three ways that David remembers the deliverance of God.**

I. The Power of the Deliverer

A. Symbols of God's Attributes

In the first 18 verses, David focuses upon the character of God. Notice the different metaphors that David uses for God. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength.

1. My rock – stability, refuge
2. My fortress – safety, protection
3. My deliverer – my Savior
4. My God – my sovereign
5. My Strength
6. My Shield – calls him my buckler
7. My Supply – horn of my salvation
8. My Security – my high tower

B. Swiftness of God's Actions – v. 6-18

God runs to the aid of His child that is in distress. It's a blessing just to read this beautiful poetic language that David uses conveying the idea that God is a mighty deliverer. And he runs to our aid.

II. The Purpose of the Deliverance

God delivered me because he delighted in me, because I was walking uprightly.
You want to kill sin inside of you? Focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Focus on the cross. Focus on what He has done for you. That has a sin-killing effect. There's a person to love. There's a power to live. There's a Holy Spirit that lives inside of us. And that Holy Spirit gives us His power. And when we yield to the Holy Spirit, He helps us to have victory over sin. And then there's a principle to learn. We have the Word of God. When we hide God's Word in our heart, what happens? There's a sin-killing effect. We

mortify sin. We put it to death. But a Christian will learn to do that. Now, they might struggle why they do that, but they're learning. That's what David was doing.

The way you conduct yourselves toward others is the way God will conduct himself towards you. That's the general principle.

If you want to experience the deliverance of God in your life, you have to seek to walk uprightly. You have to seek to please the Lord and obey His Word. And in general, if that's your life, when you call upon the Lord, He will run to be at your side. He will run to help you.

III. The Praise of the Delivered

A. God enlightens him – vs. 28

B. God energizes him – v. 29-31

C. God empowers him – v. 32-33

D. God will exalt you – v. 43-50

Illustration: John Wesley considered himself a bran plucked from the burning.

TEXT: PSALM 19

TITLE: THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
GOD IS SPEAKING ... AM I OBEYING?

I. (:1-6) GOD SPEAKS IN NATURE -- NON-VERBAL NATURAL REVELATION REVEALS THE GLORY OF GOD

A. (:1) Natural Revelation

"*the heavens*"

"*their expanse*"

"publish, declare, proclaim" -- very conspicuous, noticeable revelation; not hidden

B. (:1) Content: The Glory of God ... "*the work of His hands*"

1. What does this content include?
2. Limitations of this revelation

C. (:2) Constant Communication

by day and by night

not just a little bit of communication, but an abundance (pouring forth, bubbling up, flowing...)

D. (:3) Non-Verbal Communication

E. (:4) Universal Communication

F. (:4b-6) Example: The Sun Makes a Statement to All

Ryrie Study Bible: "Even a blind man can feel the heat of the sun"

II. (:7-9) GOD SPEAKS IN HIS LAW -- VERBAL SPECIAL REVELATION REVEALS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

A. (:7) The Law of the Lord

B. (:7) The Testimony of the Lord

C. (:8) The Precepts of the Lord

D. (:8) The Commandment of the Lord

E. (:9) The Fear of the Lord

F. (:9) The Judgments of the Lord

III. (:10-14) GOD'S REVELATION IS INVALUABLE –
WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE?

A. (:10) Worth of God's Revelation = Invaluable and Inviting
1. Invaluable -- Worth more than gold
2. Inviting -- Sweeter than honey

B. (:11) Function of God's Revelation = Warn and Motivate
1. Warning -- Helps me stay on track
2. Motivating -- Helps me strive for the prize of my high calling
("*great reward*")

C. (:12-13) By-product of Immersion in God's Revelation:
God Can Save Us From our Blind Spots as Well
1. Hidden Faults
2. Presumptuous Sins
3. Goal: to be Blameless, Forgiven

D. End Result: Worship that is pleasing to the Lord ("*my rock and my redeemer*")

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What can I learn about God today from nature? I need to open my eyes and ears to God's creation and take away some precious truths that reinforce and serve to illustrate what God has already revealed about Himself in his Word.

2) What is it that I like most about the Word of God? (cf. how the heart of the psalmist overflowed with aspects of God's Word that he found attractive.)

3) Do I really believe that there is "*great reward*" in obeying God's commandments? Every day for devotions I should ask myself, What warnings should I be heeding from God's Word? What commandments do I need to obey? Am I really valuing God's Word above gold and silver?

4) Am I aware that I need God's righteousness and forgiveness applied to my "*hidden faults*" and "*presumptuous sins*"? Do I ask God to search my heart and know me completely?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "The voiceless, visual, universally available knowledge is that behind it all is a glorious God as maker of the world. The world is His handiwork and He is glorious.

From this I have been taught three things. First, nature should lead us to belief in God and His glory as creator and therefore every man who can perceive nature is accountable to honor God and thank Him. Romans 1:19-20 ….

The second thing verse one has shown me is that even after we believe in God it is nature that enables us to really know some of His attributes. C.S. Lewis (whom you all should read) put it like this: "Nature never taught me that there exists a God of glory and of infinite majesty. I had to learn that in other ways. But nature gave the word glory a meaning for me. I still do not know where else I could have found one. I do not see (either) how the 'fear' of 'God could have ever meant to me anything but the lowest, prudential efforts to be safe, if I had never seen certain ominous ravines and unapproachable crags." (The Four Loves, chapter 2)

For myself, I think I can say that I never really felt what it meant to love God until I had the experience of delighting in some awesome natural phenomena – a night sky, a waterfall in the mountain woods, and a sunrise through an Appalachian mist. I believe nature is the prep-school of our affections, readying them to delight in God.

The third thing that verse one has done for me is give me a keen sense of the eternality of God. If God made the universe, then there was a time when only God existed. That in itself begins to stagger my mind. I am tempted to say, besides God there was only nothingness. But that may create the picture of a large space with God by Himself in the center. But that is all wrong. Once there was only God. God was all there was. There was no room for anything else, not even nothingness, for all that was was God."

Stedman: "It takes a seeing eye to perceive what God has said in nature, but that which can be seen is pouring out upon us. We have all felt this. This is why a hush falls upon a group of people who step out under the stars in a night sky, when the moon is riding high and the stars glow with glory. We feel the mystery of the infinite, reaching, calling out to our spirits, and a silence descends upon us. This is why men fall silent before the ebb and flow of the sea, as they sense the resistless, surging power of the sweeping tides. They understand something of the power of God in nature through that. This is why we feel a sense of loneliness and an intimation of infinity when we hear the wind howl, or we watch a storm rage, the thunder and lightning crashing around us. There is something of the voice of God which gets through to us on these occasions…

But the book of nature is only Volume 1. There is also another book, Volume 2, designed to answer the other pressing questions we humans ask: 'Why? What is behind all this? What is the meaning of it all? Where are we headed, and why are we involved in this whole process?' Nature can never answer those questions. That is why those who work exclusively in the realm of nature can never state a satisfactory purpose for life. Nature simply does not embody that knowledge. If this great, throbbing question, 'Why?' is ever to be answered, the answer must come from the lips of God himself. So he has given us a Book, and now the Psalmist presses on to that. In the next few verses he outlines for us the effect of the Word, the written revelation of God, and what it can do in human life…"

Perowne: "This Psalm consists of two distinct parts, in which are contrasted God's Revelation of Himself in Nature, and His Revelation of Himself in His Word. It speaks first of His glory as seen in the Heavens, and then of His glory as manifested in His Law. It may have been written perhaps in the first flush of an Eastern sunrise, when the sun was seen '*going forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a mighty man to run his course*.' The song breathes all the life and freshness, all the gladness and glory, of the morning. The devout singer looks out, first, on the works of God's fingers, and sees all creation bearing its constant though silent testimony to its Maker; and then he turns himself with a feeling of deep satisfaction to that yet clearer and better witness concerning Him to be found in the inspired Scriptures. Thus he begins the day; thus he prepares himself for the duties that await him, for the temptations that may assail, and the sorrows that may gather as a cloud about him."

Morris: "(the psalm) begins by calling attention to the physical universe, verse one stating the testimony of *Space* and verse two that of *Time*.

Each of these two verses uses the structure of Hebrew poetic parallelism to emphasize its theme. In verse one, the terms '*heavens*' and '*firmament*' are synonomous (note Genesis 1:8 – 'God called the firmament Heaven'), and both mean essentially what we mean by our modern scientific term, Space. Thus, the vast reaches of Space everywhere provide the backdrop as it were, for God to '*show forth His power and His work*.' Everywhere throughout the infinite universe occur phenomena declaring His omnipotence and His orderliness, '*the glory of God, and His handiwork*.'

Similarly, verse two speaks of Time, during which ('*day after day*' and '*night after night*') the phenomena in Space perpetually yield information in unending communication between the Creator and His creation. Thus, everywhere in space occur phenomena, energized and ordered, transmitting information eternally through Time.

Modern science recognizes the universe to be a continuum of Space, Time and Energy (or Information), and so does this ancient Psalm.! Everything that happens in Space and Time (call it an 'event,' a 'process,' 'system,' or whatever) involves 'power' doing 'work' and 'communication' transmitting 'knowledge'"

Harris: A SONG OF MEDITATION AND PRAYER
Theme: Meditation on God's two Books, Nature and Scripture.
Occasion: Searching of heart while tending flocks by night.

I. GOD'S WORLD REVEALED. Ver. 1-6. "*The heavens declare*" (ver. 1).
   1. Glory. Ver. 1-4a. "*The glory of God*" (ver. 1).
   2. Greatness. Ver. 4b-6. "*For the sun*" (ver. 4b).

II. GOD'S WORD REVERED. Ver. 7-11. "*The law of the Lord*" (ver. 7).
   1. Praise. Ver. 7-9. "*The law of the Lord is …*" (ver. 7).
   2. Profit. Ver. 10, 11. "*In keeping … great reward*" (ver. 11).

III. GOD'S WORK REQUIRED. Ver. 12-14. "*Cleanse … keep back*" (ver. 12).

1. Purifying. Ver. 12. "*Cleanse thou me*."
2. Preserving. Ver. 13, 14. "*Keep back*" (ver. 13).

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Listen, God is Speaking**
Introduction: What good would it be to have a God who we cannot know and a God who does not speak to us? God does speak. And that is the theme of Psalm 19. The question is, are you listening to him? Perhaps the noise of the world has drowned out the voice of God. Since God is speaking, we have to recognize it, and we have to respond properly

Big Idea: **Three ways in which God speaks**

I. God speaks in disguise – v.1
A. The heavens speak continuously
Natural revelation or General revelation -- God is speaking throughout all the world every day throughout his creation.

1. The heavens tell us that God loves us

All of creation is designed to give. It's constantly giving to us. And these are all gifts from our gracious God. **Ps. 104**

2. The heavens tell us that God is All Powerful

There's no problem that you have is too great for God to deal with.

3. The heavens tell us that God is faithful.

God will keep his word, he never fails. It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Because his compassions, they fail not, they are new every morning. great is His faithfulness. And so each day when the sun rises, it reminds us of the unfailing, faithful mercies of God and His compassion.

B. The heavens speak clearly. Vs. 3
The silent revelation is clearly understood in every language. All of creation bears witness to his loving faithfulness, to his power, to his all-wise ability to create this all-knowing creator. It speaks a language that all people can clearly understand.

C. The heavens speak comprehensively – vs. 4
goes throughout all the earth --

What should our response be? Humble praise
Man is a worshiper. He's going to have to worship something, but if he refuses to worship the true God, he'll make up his own gods and not give the true and rightful God the glory that He deserves. (**Rom. 1**)

II. God speaks in the Scriptures – vs. 7
There are certain things we can't really know just by looking at creation, certain things that creation cannot tell us. I don't think anyone is going to get saved by looking at

stars. Natural revelation, as beautiful as it is, has a limit to it. And so, therefore, God gives us His special revelation.

A. God's Word is Powerful
the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.
God's Word is sufficient – gives us all that we need for our spiritual life.

Scripture is so powerful and comprehensive that it can convert or transform the entire person, changing someone into precisely the person God wants him to be.

B. God's Word is Proven
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple
Sure means unwavering, immovable, reliable, worthy. It is a foundation on which we can build our lives.

C. God's Word is Pleasing – vs. 8
The statues of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
God's word is always right, and it brings joy.

D. God's Word is Plain – vs. 8
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
Pure here means lucid, not confusing or puzzling.
It's not difficult to understand. Now, beloved, there are parts of the Bible that are harder than others, but basically God's word is clear. I think one of the big attacks made on the Bible is, oh, we can't understand what the Bible really means.

There's no excuse for not getting it right. Jesus upbraided the Pharisees for misusing the word of God: *you do err not knowing the scriptures*.

E. God's Word is Pure – vs. 9
The fear of the Lord is clean.
Scripture is without sin, evil, corruption, or error. The truth it conveys is therefore absolutely undefiled. It is without blemish. It is flawless. And it endures forever.

F. God's Word is Precise
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

G. God's Word is Precious
More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.

H. God's Word is Protective – vs. 11
Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

III. God speaks in the soul – vs. 12
A. It brings conviction
God's word in the heart is what transforms us.

David mentions 3 types of sins:

- Hidden sins – **vs. 12**
  These are sins that we may have committed but don't even realize it.
- Presumptuous sins – **vs. 13**
  These are simply willful sins or outright disobedience.
- Sins of word and thought – vs. 14

TEXT: PSALM 20

TITLE: BATTLE HYMN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
WE WILL BOAST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, OUR GOD

I. (:1-5) PRAYER THAT GOD WOULD HELP THE KING IN BATTLE

A. Prayer is the Necessary Preparation for Battle
1. "*day of trouble*" -- comes to all; the king must be alert and anticipate conflict
2. Need for the King to pray himself
3. Need for others to intercede on behalf of the king

B. God has the Necessary Resources to Give Victory
1. He is a God who Answers Prayer
vs. 1 "*May the Lord answer you*"
coupled with vs. 9 = bookends of this psalm
vs. 2 "*May He send you help*"
vs. 2 "*May He support you*"
vs. 3 "*May He remember …*"
vs. 4 "*May He grant you …*"
vs. 4 "*May He fulfill …*"
vs. 5 "*May the Lord fulfill all your petitions*" = Summary of all the above
= mid-point of psalm
2. The God of Jacob has demonstrated His gracious character in past deliverances
look at what God did for Jacob
3. God offers help from a Protected Vantage Point
a. the sanctuary
b. Zion

C. Help is only Available When a Righteous Relationship with God is Maintained
Here: thru the sacrifices offered by the king
meal offerings
burnt offerings

D. Help is Always Consistent with the Heart and Mind of God
1. "*grant you your heart's desire*" -- remember: David was a man after God's own heart
David a type of Christ in this psalm
2. "*fulfill all your counsel*" -- remember: we have the mind of Christ

E. God's People will Rejoice in God's Victory (:5)
"*We will sing for joy over your victory,*
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

II. (:6-8) CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL GIVE VICTORY

A. (:6) God Will Deliver His Anointed Leader

"*Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed;*
He will answer him from His holy heaven,
With the saving strength of His right hand."

B. (:7) Our Confidence Rests in God Alone

"*Some boast in chariots, and some in horses;*
But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God."

C. (:8) The Final Outcome is Not in Doubt

1. "*they have bowed down and fallen*"
2. "*But we have risen and stood upright*"

III. (:9) CLOSING REFRAIN: CRY FOR HELP

"*Save, O Lord;*
May the King answer us in the day we call."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) "*Day of trouble*" (vs.1) can really be a "day of opportunity" for the Lord's anointed. Are we casting our cares on the Lord and expecting Him to give us victory?

2) We don't have to wonder (vs. 3) about whether God has accepted the sacrifice for our sins. Our Passover Lamb was slain once for all time as the propitiation for our sins. Do we find ourselves trying to earn God's favor when we should be thanking Him for His grace?

3) Do we picture our Heavenly Father as desirous of granting our "*heart's desire*" (vs. 4) or as some type of miserly, begrudging God?

4) Where is our true confidence in time of testing? "*Some boast in chariots and some in horses; But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God*" (vs.7). Preparation for battle is still necessary. But we can never put our trust in Saul's sword and shield. Our trust is in the character of God.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Re New Years message – "I never start a new year without a sense of adventure, and also an awareness of peril, of danger. I do not know how you feel, but I feel a little grip of fear, as well as the thrill of excitement, as we look forward to the

new year and a new decade. Standing at the gateway of this new decade makes us feel very much like explorers entering an unknown land where we do not know what lies ahead -- what perils may beset us, or what joys await us. We have passed through "the sobering sixties." What will we call the seventies when we get through them? Will they be the "shining seventies," or the "shattering, saddening seventies"? It is hard to know.

The twentieth psalm is wonderfully suitable for this occasion because this is a song that the people of Israel sang when the king went forth to battle. Before he went out to face the peril and uncertainty of war, they sang this psalm as a prayer for his safety and victory. It was not just a nice custom on their part, as when we gather on New Year's Eve to sing "Auld Lang Syne" and fill our hearts with nostalgia. It was a genuine prayer, an expression of their faith, a song of trust in the power of the living God who would keep the king and his armies in the midst of desperate battle….

For us the sanctuary, obviously, is the Scriptures. There is where we get help. It is there that our minds are illuminated, that we begin to see the world the way it is, not the way it appears to be. There is not one of us who has not already learned that life is not the way it seems to be, that what looks to be the answer and what we are convinced at first is the way things are, often turns out to be exactly the opposite. Life is filled with illusion, with deceit; things are not what they appear to be. Doesn't your heart cry for somebody to tell you the truth, to tell you the way things really are, to open your eyes to what is going on? Well, that is what the Bible is for. That is what it does. And unless you are in the Scriptures there is no help. This is the provision God has made for the help of the God of Jacob to come to you. "May you find help in the sanctuary, in the Scriptures," is the Psalmist's prayer, "that your eyes might be enlightened and you might understand….

Help from the sanctuary, and support from Zion. Zion is another name for Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom, the headquarters. In the Scriptures it stands as a symbol of the invisible kingdom of God with which we are surrounded, made up of ministering angels sent forth to minister to those who are to be the heirs of salvation. In other words, all the invisible help that God can give you in the day of trouble, in the hour of pressure, is made available by prayer.

Kidner: “This ‘*day of trouble*’ is one of impending battle, as the chariots of verse 7 make clear. The shape of the psalm brings the scene before us as the king prepares to march; his prayers and sacrifices offered, his plans prepared and his men grouped with their standards. First there is the congregation’s Godspeed to him (1-5), a corporate invocation of blessing. In reply, a single voice, perhaps of the king himself, tells of the certainty of God’s answer (‘*Now I know …*’, 6-8). Then the people respond with a final prayer for him (9), brief and urgent. It is one of the most stirring of the Psalms, by its awareness of life-and-death issues soon to be resolved. Its companion piece is the next psalm, all exuberance and delight.”

Craigie: “Psalm 20 provides an insight into one dimension of the interrelationship between war and religion. The psalm presupposes that a battle or military campaign is

about to begin, though no details are provided. From a military perspective, such a battle required careful planning, well-trained troops, superior military resources (e.g. chariotry) to those of the enemy, and the courage to fight. But in Israel, something more was required before departure for battle. It was fundamental to the faith of the Hebrews that success in battle depended primarily upon God, not only upon military planning and strategy. And so, before a campaign could commence, there must first be a retreat to the temple. The king, who both led the army and was the representative of God among the people, had a key role to play in the service of the sanctuary. He did not demand divine aid as a royal right; rather, he offered sacrifices to God, indicating on the one hand his unworthiness before God, and on the other hand his need of God's assistance. The sacrifice was a royal act, but the worship of which it was a part involved the people as a whole. All joined in his acknowledgment of unworthiness and prayer for assistance; all shared in the joyful anticipation of victory."

Ironside: "It is an interesting fact that very frequently in the book of Psalms the last verse of the one Psalm is a key to the next one. We see that right here. The last verse of Psalm 19 ends up with the words, '*O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*,' and the 20th Psalm celebrates the strength and the redemption of our God. Then in the same way the last verse of the 20th Psalm says, '*Save, Lord: let the King hear us when we call*.' And the 21st Psalm is the Psalm of the King in His glory. It begins, '*The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord*.' When reading in the Psalms watch for those intimate connections. Sometimes you will get a series of five, six, seven, or nine Psalms all linked like that…"

TEXT: PSALM 21

TITLE: THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING

BIG IDEA:
THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS
1) CELEBRATION -- REJOICING FOR GOD'S KING -- IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE
2) SECURITY -- THRU A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS = "*he will not be shaken*"
3) EXTERMINATION OF GOD'S ENEMIES
4) EXALTATION OF GOD'S POWER

Key Verse: vs.3 '*Thou dost set a crown of fine gold on his head*" -- Coronation Psalm; Ascension Psalm

True of King David in his experience; but especially the second half of the psalm only fulfilled completely in the experience of the Messiah, the King of Kings;
This is very much a Messianic Psalm

I. (:1-6) THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS CELEBRATION

It's time for God's King to Rejoice Because God Has Blessed Him With:

A. Strength

"*O Lord, in Thy strength the king will be glad*"

B. Salvation

"*And in Thy salvation how greatly he will rejoice*!"

C. Satisfaction of his Desires

"*Thou hast given him his heart's desire,*
And Thou hast not withheld the request of his lips."

D. Supreme Power and Riches

"*For Thou dost meet him with the blessings of good things;*
Thou dost set a crown of fine gold on his head."

E. Sustained Life (Eternal Life)

"*He asked life of Thee,*
Thou didst give it to him,
Length of days forever and ever."

F. Splendour (Glory / Majesty)

"*His glory is great through Thy salvation,*
Splendor and majesty Thou dost place upon him."

G. Super-abundant Blessings and Joy

"*For Thou dost make him most blessed forever;*
Thou dost make him joyful with gladness in Thy presence."

II. (:7) THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS SECURITY THRU A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

"*For the king trusts in the Lord,*
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken."

III. (:8-12) THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS EXTERMINATION OF GOD'S ENEMIES

A. (:8) Exposure of God's Enemies

"*Your hand will find out all your enemies;*
Your right hand will find out those who hate you."

B. (:9) Execution by Fire

"*You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;*
The Lord will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them."

C. (:10) Extermination of Offspring

"*Their offspring Thou wilt destroy from the earth,*
And their descendants from among the sons of men."

D. (:11) Eradication of Their Evil Plot

"*Though they intended evil against Thee,*
And devised a plot,
They will not succeed."

E. (:12) Embarrassment of Humiliating Defeat

"*For Thou wilt make them turn their back;*
Thou wilt aim with Thy bowstrings at their faces."

IV. (:13) THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS EXALTATION OF GOD'S POWER

"*Be Thou exalted, O Lord, in Thy strength;*
We will sing and praise Thy power."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we attempt anything in our own strength when even the king, the most

powerful of all men, finds his joy in the strength of the Lord?

2) What references here do you think could only refer to the Messiah in their fullest sense? What tie-ins do you see to King David?

3) How has God frustrated our plans when we were not tuned into His will and submitted to His plan?

4) How have we been giving praise to the Lord for His strength and power?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

VanGemeren: "It seems likely that the psalm contains elements of a royal liturgy that have their setting in the traditions of the Davidic covenant."
Outline:

A. The King's Joy in the Lord's Strength (v.1)
B. God's Gifts to His King (vv.2-6)
C. The King's Response (v.7)
B'. The People's Expectations of the King (vv.8-12)
A'. The People's Joy in the Lord's Strength (v.13)"

Spurgeon: "It is evidently the fit companion of Psalm Twenty, and is in its proper position next to it. Psalm Twenty anticipates what this regards as realized. If we pray today for a benefit and receive it, we must, ere the sun goes down, praise God for that mercy, or we deserve to be denied the next time. It has been called David's triumphant song, and we may remember it as The Royal Triumphal Ode. '*The king*' is most prominent throughout, and we shall read it to true profit if our meditation of him shall be sweet while perusing it. We must crown him with the glory of our salvation; singing of his love, and praising his power. The next Psalm will take us to the foot of the cross; this introduces us to the steps of the throne."

Spurgeon: Re "*crown*" – Jesus wore the thorn-crown, but now wears the glory-crown. It is a '*crown*,' indicating royal nature, imperial power, deserved honour, glorious conquest, and divine government. The crown is of the richest, rarest, most resplendent, and most lasting order – '*gold*,' and that gold of the most refined and valuable sort, '*pure gold*,' to indicate the excellence of his dominion. This crown is set upon his head most firmly, and whereas other monarchs find their diadems fitting loosely, his is fixed so that no power can move it, for Jehovah himself has set it upon his brow."

Harris: THE TRIUMPHAL SONG
Theme: Victory in battle and answer to prayer in hours of need.
Occasion: Not specially named. Some recent conquest.

I. THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY PAST. Ver. 1-7. Praise. "*The king … shall*

joy" (ver.1).

1. Answered Prayer. Ver. 1-3.
2. Added Privileges. Ver. 4-7.

II. THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY PROMISED. Ver. 8-13. Prophecy, "*Thou shalt make them*" (ver. 9).

1. Future Enemies. Ver. 8-12.
2. Final Exaltation. Ver. 13.

TEXT: PSALM 22:1-31

TITLE: PROPHETIC PICTURE OF CRUCIFIXION

BIG IDEA:
THE MESSIAH SUFFERS EXTREME REJECTION (CRUEL CRUCIFIXION) BUT ANTICIPATES THAT GOD'S DELIVERANCE WILL SPARK EVER EXPANDING CIRCLES OF PRAISE AND TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION:

AGONIZING QUESTION:

"*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*" (Matt. 27:46)

The initial cry from the Cross

Wever: "only one answer = Jesus must have been bearing the sins of the world on the cross; He knew that the separating agent was sin;
He wasn't asking for information; he was dying as our representative substitute -- the wrath of God was borne by Him in our stead; we don't know the exceeding awfulness of sin"

I. (:1-5) THE PARADOX OF BEING FORSAKEN BY GOD THE FATHER

A. (:1b) Paradox of Suffering Instead of Deliverance

"*Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning*."

B. (:2) Paradox of God's Silence Instead of Answered Prayer

"*O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer;*
And by night, but I have no rest."

C. (:3) Anchor Amidst Confusion = High View of God

1. High View of God's Character

"*Yet Thou art holy*"

2. High View of God's Position

"*O Thou who art enthroned upon the praise of Israel*"
Picture God seated on a throne that is supported only by the praises of His people

D. (:4-5) Paradox of God's Deliverance in the Experience of the Jewish Fathers

Contrast between:

the experience of Messiah = personally forsaken by God the Father
the experience of the Jewish fathers = cried for help and were delivered

Common Thread: Faith in God

It seems that the God who answers the prayers of sinful man is not answering the prayer of the sinless Messiah

Contrast between:
being forsaken
never being disappointed
(Theme: "*Be not far off*" -- repeated in vs. 11 and vs. 19)

II. (:6-8) THE PUBLIC HUMILIATION AT THE HANDS OF ARROGANT MOCKERS

A. (:6-7) Treated with Contempt

1. Like a Worm Instead of a Man

"*But I am a worm, and not a man*"
The King of kings is not even given the respect due any man

2. "*A reproach of men*"

3. "*Despised by the people*"

B. (:8) Mocked for His Faith

1. Mocked by Body Language

a. "*sneer at me*"

b. "*separate with the lip*"

c. "*wag the head*"

2. Mocked by Verbal Taunts

"*saying, 'Commit yourself to the Lord; let Hm deliver him;*
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.'"

the opposite of fearing the Lord
mocking his commitment to the Lord

III. (:9-10) THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS DEEP ROOTS

A. Rooted in Origination of Existence

"*Yet Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb*"

B. Rooted in Initiation of Faith

"*Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breasts*"

C. Rooted in Continuation of Lifelong Personal Relationship

"*Upon Thee I was cast from birth;*
Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb."

from day 1 that relationship has been present and the Providence of God has directed all his paths

IV. (:11-18) THE PICTURE OF CRUCIFIXION IS PRECISE AND VERY DETAILED

Amazing picture of Crucifixion written 1000 years before such a form of execution was practiced on a regular basis

A. (:11) Refrain: Stick Close; I Need Your Help
"*Be not far from me, for trouble is near;*
For there is none to help."

B. (:12-13) Animal Attacks
1. Giant Bulls = Strength
"*Many bulls have surrounded me;*
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me."

2. Roaring Lions = Viciousness
"*They open wide their mouth at me,*
As a ravening and a roaring lion."

C. (:14-15) Gradual Loss of Strength and Life
1. Dehydration
"*I am poured out like water*"

2. Dislocation
"*And all my bones are out of joint*"

3. Broken and Completely Spent (image of broken piece of pottery)
a. Emotionally
"*My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.*"

b. Physically
"*My strength is dried up like a potsherd,*
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws."

4. Reduced to the Dust of Death
"*And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death*"

realizes that it is ultimately God's doing; Acts 2:23; 1 Cor. 5:21;
It wasn't the cross that killed Christ; Why was the Lord already dead when they broke the legs of the other two?
A man could live for 30 hours on the cross; they eventually would have their lungs collapse; Christ died voluntarily:
"*into your hands, God, I commend my spirit*"

D. (:16-18) Final Humiliation and Indignities
1. Bloodthirsty Beasts

"*For dogs have surrounded me;*
A band of evildoers has encompassed me"

2. Prophetic Piercing
"*They pierced my hands and my feet*." (John 19:34-37)

3. Skeleton Spectacle
"*I can count all my bones.*
They look, they stare at me"

4. Trophy Takers
"*They divide my garments among them,*
And for my clothing they cast lots."

V. (:19-21) THE PLEA FOR HELP IS URGENT

A. (:19) Refrain: Stick Close; I Need Your Help
"*But Thou, O Lord, be not far off;*
O Thou my help, hasten to my assistance."

B. (:20-21) Save Me From My Executioners – Pictured as Ravenous Beasts
"*Deliver my soul from the sword*"

1. From the Dogs
"*My only life from the power of the dog*"

2. From the Lions
"*Save me from the lion's mouth*"

3. From the Wild Oxen
"*And from the horns of the wild oxen Thou dost answer me*"

VI. (:22-31) THE PRAISE AND TESTIMONY FLOW OUT IN EVER EXPANDING CIRCLES

A. (:22-24) Public Praise
1. (:22) Demonstrated by Personal Example in the Assembly
"*I will tell of Thy name to my brethren;*
In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee."

2. (:23) Exhorted by Family Relationship and the Fear of God Throughout the Nation
"*You who fear the Lord, praise Him;*
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel."

3. (:24) Deserved for His Compassionate Response
"*For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;*

Neither has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard."

B. (:25-26) Widespread Sacrifice and Feasting

1. Sacrifice in the Great assembly

"*From Thee comes my praise in the great assembly;*
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him."

2. Feasting Throughout the Land

"*The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;*
Those who seek Him will praise the Lord."

3. Joyous Anthem

"Let your heart live forever!"

C. (:27-31) Global and Perpetual Worship

1. Global Scope of Such Worship

"*all the ends of the earth*"

"*all the families of the nations*"

"*all the prosperous of the earth*"

"*all those who go down to the dust*"

2. Perpetual Timeframe for Such Worship

"*posterity*" = "the coming generation" = "*a people who will be born*"

3. Necessary Elements of Such Worship

"*remember and turn to the Lord*"

"*worship before Thee*"

"*eat and worship*"

"*bow before Him*"

"*serve Him*"

"*declare His righteousness*"

4. Worthy Basis for Such Worship

"*For the kingdom is the Lord's,*
And He rules over the nations."

CONCLUSION:

THE FINAL SHOUT OF VICTORY:
"*He has performed it*" -- "*It is finished*!" (John 19:30)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) It is an insult to God to ever imagine that He has forsaken us. We need to meditate on Christ's sufferings on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. What type of separation from the Father did the Son of God experience? In what sense was He forsaken?

2) "*Yet Thou art holy*." (vs.3) Are we able to maintain a mature perspective on the character of God when we are in pressure situations and painful situations?

3) What contribution do verses 9-10 make to the abortion controversy? to the doctrines of the Sovereignty and Providence of God?

4) When will these prophecies of global repentance and turning to the Lord in worship be fulfilled?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "The psalm has two major divisions. The first twenty-one verses recount for us the sufferings of an unknown sufferer who is all alone and is crying out unto God in his agony. Many scholars assert that these first twenty-one verses represent the thoughts which went through the mind of the Savior as he hung upon the cross, the full range of his thoughts as he was suffering there. From verse twenty-two to the end the sufferer is no longer alone but is in the midst of a large company and is praising God and shouting in victory. It ends with his claiming the worship of the entire world….

It is absolutely impossible to explain that verse on any natural basis. It is clearly a God-given picture of the crucifixion. The Psalmist says that he is surrounded by 'dogs.' This was the common Jewish term for Gentiles, and especially for the Romans. Roman executioners are all around the cross here. He decries the fact that he is surrounded by these alien people. They have stripped him; he is naked. He can see all his bones and, worse yet, he can feel them. And the crowning indignity is that at the foot of the cross they are actually casting lots for his garments. The calloused, hardened Roman soldiers were trying to divide the spoil of his clothing {Matt 27:35, Luke 23:34, John 19:34}. Because they did not want to rip his seamless robe apart, they cast lots for it. It is impossible that this could have been fulfilled by the collusion of the Roman soldiers. Yet here it is, clearly described 1000 years before, so that Jesus' death by crucifixion is unquestionably in view….

The 'sword' would be a symbol for the authority of the Roman government. The 'mouth of the lion' would be the picture of the invisible powers, the satanic forces. In the figure of the 'horns of the wild oxen' it is as though he were impaled upon two great, widespread horns, and he is crying out now in final extremity for help from God. And you recall, this is exactly what the Savior did in his last words as he hung upon the cross. He cried out, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!' {Luke 23:46b RSV}.'If anyone is going to save me, it has to be you, Father. If anyone is going to lift me out of the dust of death, raise me up again, it will be you. I trust myself to you.' And so, in this closing prayer we have reflected his commitment at last to the hands of the Father."

Spurgeon: "This is beyond all others THE PSALM OF THE CROSS. It may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and ends, according to some, in the original with 'It is finished.' For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this Psalm, 'there is none like it.' It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the lachrymatory of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David."

TEXT: PSALM 23

TITLE: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

BIG IDEA:
CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE ARE FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD

INTRODUCTI0N:

Do you ever have a problem with contentment? Who doesn't!
How do you feel when your kids or your wife complain ... = a reflection on your ability to provide and care for your family

The Good Shepherd can be trusted to adequately care for His sheep

(:1) THESIS: "*THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT*"

Develop the concept of shepherding

Application throughout this passage to the undershepherds in the local church (the elders);

What type of care are they providing for the flock?

How can they follow the example of the Chief Shepherd shown here?

I. (:2) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE LIVE IN PEACEFUL TRANQUILLITY

sheltered from the hustle and bustle of a life filled with activity that crowds out quiet meditation;

we need to spend time chewing the cud and meditating on our relationship to the Good Shepherd

A. Green Pastures

"*He makes me lie down in green pastures*"

B. Quiet Waters

"*He leads me beside quiet waters*"

free from anxiety; the Lord knows what we need and He has promised to supply our needs

cf. the music tapes which provide background sounds of running water, etc.

II. (:3a) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE ALLOW GOD TO RECHARGE OUR BATTERIES

"*He restores my soul*"

Our tendency is to get run down; to get burned out; to get used up;

We need God's ministry of restoring our souls before we can continue to minister to others

He gives grace upon grace -- each day we need a fresh supply

III. (:3B) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE ARE CONFIDENT IN GOD'S GUIDANCE

"*He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake*"

We get confused and discouraged and disillusioned, etc. when we feel we are lost and doubt

the hand of God directing us

Remember, God's reputation is at stake; He is very interested in keeping us on the straight and narrow.

Guidance in a life of holiness is more important than guidance in specific amoral options related to our

career, etc.

IV. (:4) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN THE REALITY OF GOD'S PRESENCE WITH US SHIELDS US FROM ALL FEAR

"*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me;Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me*"

The Lord's Protection and Discipline

V. (:5) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE FEAST AS GOD'S GUESTS AT HIS BANQUET TABLE

"*Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;*
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows"

No need to fret about what trouble our enemies can cause. If God be for us, who can be against us?

VI. (:6) CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE GET EXCITED ABOUT GOD'S PROMISED FUTURE BLESSINGS

A. In This Live: "*Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life*"

B. In the Life to Come: "*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are the primary Enemies of Contentment in your life? Are there certain situations or pressures that regularly attack your sense of peace and well-being under the care of the Good Shepherd?

2) In what ways has God caused your cup to overflow recently?

3) Are you spending the necessary time to lie down and meditate beside the still waters? Are you allowing God the opportunity to restore your soul?

4) Do you really believe that the journey through the valley of death leads to a better life for those that have a relationship with the Good Shepherd?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "Well, that is the beginning of what I have learned from Psalm 23. First, from its form, that we ought not speak too long about God with our minds before we turn and speak to God from our heart. We must stir a lot of prayer into the stew of our theology. And also from the form: it is the crises of life that draw us closer to God and turn our theological statements about God's mercy into urgent cries for His help. Second, from the words, 'I shall not want,' I have learned to trust God not for every possible pleasure but for everything that would be good for me: "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." Even the valleys of the shadow of death are only pathways to greener pastures. And finally, from the words, "He restores my soul," I have learned to wait for God in my periods of depression and lifelessness, and to look for hope and beauty and power in His creation, but mostly in His word."

Piper: "But why? Why does the Shepherd pursue you and me with goodness and mercy? What is the Shepherd's motive behind all His provision? As much as it might burst our bubble of earthly shepherd, we must admit and so would they, that they are in the business of shepherding not because of some altruistic concern for sheep, but they are in it for the wool sweaters and for the lamb chops at meal time. But not so with God. His motive is spelled out in verse 3. 'He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.' God's motive is to display the honor of His name. And there is nothing that will better display His honor, His character, His glory, His all sufficiency than to overflow in goodness and mercy toward needy sheep-like people--like you and me."

Stedman: "Because the Lord is my shepherd, I do not lack anything. He satisfies my needs. That is the place to which God wants to bring us. He wants us to be independently dependent upon him, to need him alone. It struck me as I was studying this psalm that there are really only two options in life. If the Lord is my shepherd, then I shall not want; but if I am in want, then it is obvious that the Lord is not my shepherd. It is that simple. If there is emptiness and loneliness and despair and frustration in our lives, then the Lord is not our shepherd. Or, if anyone or anything else is shepherding us, we are never satisfied. … But if the Lord is our shepherd, David says, we shall not want….

The first thing he does is to meet the needs of the inner man, the basic needs that we

have for nourishment within. The basic needs of a flock of sheep are grass and water. Here is the very picturesque scene of sheep bedded down in grassy meadows, having eaten their fill and now totally satisfied, and then being led by still waters. Sheep are afraid of running water; they will drink only from a quiet pool. A good shepherd, particularly in a semi-arid region such as Palestine, knows where the watering holes are. He knows where the grassy meadows are. And so he leads the sheep into places where they can rest and feed, and where they can drink. The picture is one of calm and tranquility, because the basic needs of the sheep are met….

A final note is that the word "follow," in Verse 6, literally means "pursue". David says that God's goodness and mercy shall pursue him, in contrast to the pursuit of his enemies who are out to dethrone and destroy him. David's desire was to go back to the tabernacle and to worship there. God's mercy and kindness ought to evoke the same response from us. We worship, not in a tabernacle, but, as Jesus said, "in spirit and in truth," {John 4:24}. We worship in the inner man, where God dwells. When we see that the Good Shepherd does feed us and does lead us and does protect us, our response ought to be worship -- a recognition of all that Jehovah is, a word of thanks for what he has done, and the statement, "Here is more of myself for you to put to your intended purpose." That is true worship."

Spurgeon: "It is David's Heavenly Pastoral; a surpassing ode, which none of the daughters of music can excel. The clarion of war here gives place to the pipe of peace, and he who so lately bewailed the woes of the Shepherd tunefully rehearses the joys of the flock. Siting under a spreading tree, with this flock around him, like Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, we picture David singing this unrivalled pastoral with a heart as full of gladness as it could hold."

Spurgeon: Re "*shadow of death*" – "it is not the '*valley of death*' but the '*valley of the shadow of death*,' for death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid."

Ogilvie: "Here's what I give as a seven-day prescription for learning how to trust the Lord with our fears and anxieties wrapped up in the problems we face. Memorizing them, praying them each day, will make them a part of the fabric of your thinking and feeling:

The Lord Will Work for Me!
The Lord Will Provide for Me!
The Lord Will Keep Me Going!
The Lord Will Guide Me!
The Lord Will Protect Me!

The Lord Will Heal Me!
The Lord Will Pursue Me!"

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Follow the Leader**
Introduction: How can we summarize all the Christian life? I think one way we can do that, I'm sure there's many ways to do it, but one way we can do that is by saying this, simply follow the leading of your shepherd. If you follow the leading of your shepherd, you know what? You're going to be blessed.

When God calls you sheep, that's not necessarily a compliment. You say, why is that? Well, sheep are not very intelligent creatures. You don't find trained sheep. Sheep are animals that don't have a really good sense of direction. Sheep don't really have a really good defense system. They're easily disturbed. They're very nervous creatures. they get stressed out very easily. It doesn't take much to cause fear into sheep. So another way to say this, the sum of all this is to say that sheep are absolutely dependent upon a shepherd.

In Psalm 23, what we're actually going to see are really two analogies. We're going to see in the first part of the Psalm, God is a shepherd and we are his sheep. And then in the second part of the Psalm, it kind of switches metaphors. God is a king. and we are his guests. So let's look at this. But what I want you to see here from Psalm 23 are **seven blessings that we receive when we follow the leading of our shepherd and our king.**

I. Provision – vs. 1
He doesn't take care of your greeds. He takes care of your needs. I have found in my life, God doesn't just give me what I need. He gives me more than that. He just keeps pouring out one blessing after another, after another.

II. Peace – vs. 2
We all need to learn to rest in the Lord and to find peace in God. And that comes from our shepherd. He is the one who brings rest to our soul. You either live with a sense of anxiety or you live in peace and rest. in your soul.

How does he provide this peace? Well, one of the ways he does it is his own presence. When sheep know that their shepherd is close by, then they are not stressed, they are not fearful. He was there with them.

His presence, but also his pasture. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. You see, God leads you to a pasture where you will be fed.

III. Purity – vs. 3
One shepherd reported that he had one sheep that was so weighed down with heavy wool, it became cast down every three days. And so he would have to go and turn that sheep. Turn it. And that's the word, that's the imagery that David may be using here. Our shepherd comes and he gently turns us, and he puts us back on our feet, and he

places us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Work of sanctification.

IV. Protection – vs. 4

Sometimes when we follow God's leading, he'll ask us to walk through difficult valleys. He'll lead us through times of darkness and dryness. In the Hebrew, there's a play on words here. The word for evil is ra. The word for shepherd is ra'a. I don't need to fear Ra, because Ra is my shepherd. Since God is our shepherd, we don't have to be afraid when death comes.

V. Plenty – vs. 5

My cup runneth over. And these are just, it's a symbol of the blessings that God just keeps just bestowing upon us.

VI. Power – vs. 5

We can't live this Christian life without the Holy Spirit. He is our source of strength. He is our power. But the Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift. And as we follow the leading of God and yield ourselves to His Spirit, that Holy Spirit works mightily in us. And we operate not in our own strength, but we operate in God's strength and in His power.

VII. Pleasantness – vs. 6

Spurgeon called this God's two ambassadors, goodness and mercy. He said on this journey of life, God gives us two ambassadors that follow us around, and they're called goodness and mercy.

Sermon preached by Jonathan Edwards: The Pleasantness of Religion – Argument: We should be Christians because of the sheer pleasure that it brings. We enjoy blessings because by doing that, we are delighting in God.

TEXT: PSALM 24

TITLE: PRAISE ANTHEM: THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

BIG IDEA:
WORSHIP USHERS THE KING OF GLORY INTO HIS RIGHTFUL DOMAIN

INTRODUCTION: A Psalm of David

A Messianic Psalm in that it pictures the Triumphal Entry of Christ to usher in His kingdom of victory and glory; Background probably in the OT conveying of the ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem to its rightful place in the tabernacle; this was a difficult journey and it is instructive to study the many stumbling blocks before that journey was successfully completed.

The Form involves a chorus responding at different points … almost like a responsive reading today.

I. (:1-2) OWNERSHIP RIGHTS BELONG TO GOD THE CREATOR

A. Extent of those Ownership Rights:

the earth *and* *all it contains*
the world *and* *those who dwell in it*

B. Explanation of those Ownership Rights:

"*He has founded it upon the seas*"
"*He has established it upon the rivers*"

Speaks of God's Sovereignty; He has ultimate control and ownership of what he has created

II. (:3-4) WORSHIP PRIVILEGES BELONG TO THOSE WHO MEET GOD'S STANDARD FOR HOLINESS

Ultimately: only the Messiah qualifies

A. The Awesome Question:

"*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?"*
"*Who may stand in His holy place*?"

Awesome question being asked in light of the history of the ark of the covenant; represented the power and presence and holiness of God

B. The Simple Answer:

"*He who has clean hands*"
"*a pure heart*"

"*has not lifted up his soul to falsehood*"
"*has not sworn deceitfully*"

Study the Holiness of the Life of Christ

III. (:5-6) GRACIOUS GIFTS BELONG TO THOSE WHO PERSEVERE IN SEEKING GOD

A. God Gives the Best Gifts
"*a blessing from the Lord*"
"*righteousness from the God of his salvation*"

B. To those who Persevere in Seeking God
(cf. alternate translation offered by Doug Goins, Discovery Publishing, Peninsula Bible Church website:
"*This generation is seeking him, They are seeking your face, O Jacob*."
i.e. none is found to step forward and accept the challenge of being completely holy)

C. Even to Jacob

IV. (:7-10) THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY BELONGS TO THE COMING KING OF GLORY = THE LORD OF HOSTS

A. Identified as the "*the Lord strong and mighty*" = "*the Lord mighty in battle*"

B. Identified as "*The Lord of Hosts*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we have the appropriate sense of stewardship of God's creation … recognizing Him as the Creator and owner? Do we find ourselves clinging to material possessions that really are owned by God anyway?

2) Do we put a priority on holiness and preparation of the heart as a prerequisite for our worship? If our conscience alerts us to a problem in our relationship with God or man, do we address that problem before presuming that God will receive our worship?

3) Look at the value that God places on truth as opposed to falsehood and deceit. Do we find ourselves getting caught up in manipulating people by putting a false "spin" on the truth or packaging things up in a way to portray ourselves in a more favorable light? Are we really people of integrity?

4) Do we exult in anticipation of the King of Glory exercising His dominion over all the earth in a visible fashion? Are we looking eagerly for the entrance of that mighty Lord of Hosts?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Perowne: "This Psalm is no doubt prophetic or rather typical in its character. It has been appointed by the Church as one of the Psalms for Ascension Day; and most fitly, in its Christian application, celebrates the return of Christ as the King of Glory to His heavenly throne, and the inauguration of that dominion which He thence exercises in the world. It will be fully accomplished when the doors of all hearts, all temples, and all kingdoms, shall be thrown wide before Him; when He shall be acknowledged upon earth as He is acknowledged in heaven."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 5 – "The reward for a walk of integrity is the enjoyment of God's presence by his '*blessing*' and '*vindication*'. The '*blessing*' is the status of God's favor extended to his loyal servants, who enjoy the promises of the covenant (cf. Num 6:23-26). The Lord who '*lifts up his face*' in blessing (Num 6:26) also promises that his loyal ones will '*lift up*' (NIV '*receive*') a blessing, wherever they may be. It is the Lord's blessing and is, therefore, not subject to feelings, circumstances, or outside influence (cf. 15:5b). Moreover, he receives '*vindication*' … from his Savior-God. His Redeemer will help, provide justice, and grant the ultimate vindication only to those who are faithful to him (cf. 5:8; 22:31; 36:10; Isa 45:8; 46:13; 51:6). The Savior will not only bless but will also protect his people."

Stott: "Although the whole earth is the Lord's, there is a certain hill which is His in a special sense. Called the '*hill of the Lord*' (verse 3) and '*his holy place*', it is Mount Zion where the ark, the symbol of His presence, was housed. But who may ascend there into His holy presence (verse 3)? The answer, which is reminiscent of Psalm 15, expresses that union of worship and morality which is constantly insisted on in the Bible.

The only worship which is acceptable to God is that offered by people who have '*clean hands and a pure heart*' (verse 4), that is, who are holy in thought and motive as well as in deed. Moreover, their holiness characterizes their relationship with both God and others…"

Maddux: Outline:

I. Divine ownership.
   - A. Of the earth and its fulness.
   - B. All peoples.
   - C. Priority by right of creation.

II. Divine fellowship.
   - A. Who may worship?
     1. Those in the Lord's place.
     2. Prerequisites:
        - a. Clean hands.
        - b. Clean heart.
        - c. Clean tongue.
   - B. Rewards to acceptable worshipers.

1. Blessings.
2. Salvation.
3. Righteous affinity.

III. Divine visitation.
   A. Preparation – The open door.
   B. Hospitality accepted.
   C. A host to Majesty.
      1. A King of Glory.
      2. Mighty covenant-keeping God.
      3. Mighty in battle.
      4. The Lord of multitudes.
         a. Divine purpose.
         b. Prophetic.

Craigie: "There are few themes more central to the Old Testament literature than the kingship of God. It is a concept rooted in creation and elaborated in historical experience, and the presence of the theme in Israel's earliest poetry (Exod 15:18) is indicative of its centrality throughout the history of Israel's religion. Psalm 24 is one of the central texts for understanding the breadth and the significance of the concept; the kingship of the Lord is not merely a religious affirmation—it is a basis of worship and praise. Those who worship are those who recognize the kingship, who accept the rule of the sovereign God. But the genius of the psalm lies in the linking together of cosmological belief and historical experience; the link is achieved, from a literary perspective, by the composition of the psalm from fragments of hymn and liturgies. From the perspective of cosmology, the world is created and thus represents order (vv 1-2); that order was established by God the King. But historical experience, characterized as it is by war and conflict, suggests a different reality, namely that the world is marked in actuality by chaos. The psalm offers a resolution of the dilemma. It is God, the Creator of order, who is also the Warrior of Israel, subduing the military threats (the chaos) that undermine Israel's orderly existence. Order in creation, and victory and peace in historical existence, are part and parcel of the same concept: God is King. And both evoke from Israel the worship that belongs to God. But just as the order of creation is a moral order, symbolized by God's '*holy place*' (v 3), so too the peace and victory achieved by the Warrior King belonged to Israel only so long as they possessed '*innocent hands and a pure heart*' (v 4). The recognition of the kingship of God must result in the worship of God by those who recognize his royal authority; to worship presupposes moral integrity—and that, in a sense, is the central point in the psalm. There could be no separation between the Creation, deliverance in historical experience, and moral integrity; if there were, chaos would triumph again. Thus there is a certain logic attached to the traditional use of this psalm within Christianity on the celebration of Ascension Day. As the psalm affirms the origin of God's kingship in creation (vv 1-2) and the advent of the Warrior King in the worship of the temple (vv 7-10), so in its later usage it affirmed the victory achieved by Jesus Christ in death and resurrection annd anticipated the ultimate and triumphant Advent of the King."

TEXT: PSALM 25

TITLE: WAITING ON THE LORD

BIG IDEA:
THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD CAN WAIT ON THE LORD:
FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY AND
FOR PERSONAL GUIDANCE

I. (:1-3) WAIT ON THE LORD FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY
SO THAT FAITH MIGHT BE VINDICATED
"*Let me not be ashamed*"

David's historical context was more one of needing deliverance from physical enemies. As the standard bearer for the nation Israel, he was concerned with God's reputation and the vindication of his own faith.
Our struggles tend to be more in the spiritual realm where we need victory over sin and weakness in our own lives:
"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24)

"*I lift up my soul*" -- sometimes our soul is weighed down and depressed; we need to lift it up to God

The longing of David's heart ("*Let me not be ashamed*") is reassured by remembering God's Harvest Law:
1) God's Faithfulness to Deliver:
Key: "*none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed*"
2) God's Faithfulness to Judge:
"*Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed*"

II. (:4-7) WAIT ON THE LORD FOR PERSONAL GUIDANCE
BASED ON GOD'S GOODNESS
"*Remember Thou me*"

Request for Personal Guidance:
"*Make me know thy ways*"
"*Teach me Thy paths*"
"*Lead me in Thy truth and teach me*"

Based on God's Goodness:
His compassion
His lovingkindnesses

Key: "*For Thee I wait all the day*"

III. (:8-11) WHY DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO WAIT ON THE LORD?

A. (:8-9) PERSONAL GUIDANCE Is the Response of a Good God to Humble Sinners

B. (:10-11) SPIRITUAL VICTORY Is the Response of a Faithful God to Obedient Servants

Key: "*Keep His covenant and His testimonies*"

IV. (:12-15) THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE KEY TO PROSPERITY AND DELIVERANCE

Because the Fear of the Lord is the basis for Humility and Obedience

A. (:12-13) The Lord's Personal Guidance Results in Prosperity for Those who Fear the Lord

B. (:14-15) The Lord's Secret for Spiritual Victory Brings Deliverance to Those who Fear the Lord

There is no formula for victory like a recipe for making a cake or directions for fixing a broken car;
There is a secret aspect of the Lord's grace and favor and sovereignty involved

Key: "*My eyes are continually toward the Lord*"

V. (:16-22) WAIT ON THE LORD AND ASK FOR HIS PROTECTION AND DELIVERANCE

A. (:16-18) Appeal #1

Request:

- Turn to me
- Be gracious to me
- Bring me out of my distresses
- Look upon my affliction and my trouble
- Forgive all my sins

Reason:

- I am lonely and afflicted
- I am in a heap of trouble ("*the troubles of my heart are enlarged*")
- I need forgiveness

B. (:19-20) Appeal #2

Request:

- Look upon my enemies
- Guard my soul
- Deliver me
- Do not let me be ashamed

Reason:

I have many enemies
They hate me with violent hatred
I take refuge in Thee

C. (:21-22) Appeal #3

Request:

Personal: Preserve me
National: Redeem Israel out of all of his troubles

Reason:

Integrity and Uprightness

CONCLUSION:

Key: *'For I wait for Thee"*

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is our root problem if we are experiencing shame and embarrassment?

2) Do we truly wait upon the Lord for guidance and direction or do we plow ahead in our own wisdom?

3) Note the emphasis in the psalm on pardon for sin. Since it lies at the core of the psalm, it has special impact on the chiastic arrangement (see outline below).

4) What is the "*secret of the Lord*" mentioned in vs. 14"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "I want to do three things with Psalm 25:
1. Describe the situation of the psalmist, so that you can identify with him.
2. Show you what he asks God for, so that you can learn from his prayer.
3. Point out some of the reasons he is confident of God's help.

1. The elements of his situation.
They boil down to three things that he is struggling with: fear, loneliness, guilt and confusion. Let me start with the trouble that comes from outside and move to the trouble that rises from within….

2. The content of his supplication.
There are at least 18 petitions in this psalm. And what David does in these petitions is come to God with every aspect of his situation.

He asks God to guard his life and deliver him from the foes (v. 20). He asks God to turn to him and be gracious and relieve his loneliness (v. 16). He asks God not to remember the sins of his youth (v. 7) but to pardon his guilt (vv. 11,18). And in verses 4 and 5 he asks God to take away his uncertainty and confusion by making him know God's ways and leading him in truth.

In other words David comes to God with his fear and his loneliness and guilt and confusion and pleads with God to make things right and to lead him in the way of love and faithfulness (v. 10)….

3. The basis of his expectation.
And what we see when we look at the basis of his hope for guidance is that the essence of it is a spiritual condition. The prerequisite of divine guidance is not the quest for messages, but the quest for holiness."

Alden: "The author of Psalm 25 employed two fascinating literary devices. The psalm is an alphabetic acrostic. It is also an elaborate chiasmus.
Every verse, with only minor exceptions, begins with each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet… Here is the chiastic outline:

1 A *"I lift up my soul unto them"*
2 B *"Let not shame"*
3 C Treacherous shamed
4-5a D Three petitions for guidance
5b E Psalmist's salvation
5c F *"I wait"*
6 G.1 *"God's mercy"*
7 G.2 God's goodness implored
8-9 H God's instruction of the meek
10a I God's faithfulness
10b I' The faithful
11 J *"Pardon me"*
12-13 H' Instruction of God-fearers
14-15 G.1' *"God's friendship and covenant"*
16a G.2' *"Have mercy"*
16b F' *"I am desolate"*
17a E' Psalmist's troubles
17b-19a D' Three petitions for salvation
19b C' Psalmist's enemies
20 B' *"Let not shame"*
21 A' *"I wait for thee"*
22 J' "Redeem Israel"

Such an elaborate arrangement could not have been accidental. Perhaps this was an aid

to memory just as the acrostic feature was. But imagine the ingenuity of the poet who put this together with these two features intermingled and still produced such a meaningful psalm!"

G. Campbell Morgan: "The sob of a great sorrow sounds throughout this psalm. The circumstances of its writing were those of desolation, affliction, distress, travail, as the latter part especially shows. Yet the main content is one full of help to all who are in sorrow. It is far more than a wail saddening all who read it. It is the voice of hope and confidence, and tells of succour and of strength.

There are three movements in it. The first (vers. 1-7), and last (vers. 16-22) are prayers uttered out of great need. The central (vers. 8-15) is contemplation and declaration of the goodness of God. Thus structurally the psalm is beautiful. Its central glory is a revelation of God's goodness and patience (vers. 8-10). Then a sob at the heart of everything (ver. 11). Immediately an account of the blessedness of the man who trusts. The opening verses contain the prayer of a distressed soul, whose thought of God is revealed in the central portion. The closing verses are the earnest cry of that soul to such a God, and in such confidence the details of the experience of suffering are named."

TEXT: PSALM 26:1-12

TITLE: PASSING THE ULTIMATE TEST

BIG IDEA:
THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THE MAN OF INTEGRITY

I. (:1-7) INTEGRITY IS THE BASIS FOR VINDICATION =
A SUCCESSFUL APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT

A. Desired Verdict = Vindication
"*Vindicate me, O Lord*"

B. Necessary Examination
"*Examine me, O Lord, and try me;*
Test my mind and my heart"

C. Grounds for Innocence
1. Overview
a. Consistent Integrity (Walked the Walk)
"*I have walked in my integrity*"

b. Unwavering Faith (Kept the Faith)
"*And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering*"

c. Secure Relationship
"*For Thy lovingkindness is before my eyes*"

d. Careful Obedience
"*And I have walked in Thy truth.*"

2. Specific Examples
a. Separation from Sinners
"*I do not sit with deceitful men,*
Nor will I go with pretenders.
I hate the assembly of evildoers,
And I will not sit with the wicked."

b. Sacrifice for Sin
"*I shall wash my hands in innocence,*
And I will go about Thine altar, O Lord"

D. Thanksgiving and Testimony
"*That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,*
And declare all Thy wonders."

II. (:8) INTEGRITY ALLOWS ONE TO BE AT HOME IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"*O Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house,*
And the place where Thy glory dwells."

III. (:9-11) INTEGRITY SEPARATES ONE FROM THE FATE OF THE WICKED -- DELIVERANCE AND GRACE SHOULD BE THE EXPECTATION INSTEAD

A. Description and Destiny of the Wicked

1. Description of the Wicked

"*sinners*"
"*men of bloodshed*"
"*In whose hands is a wicked scheme*"
"*And whose right hand is full of bribes*"

2. Destiny of the Wicked

"*Do not take my soul away*"

B. Description and Destiny of the Man of Integrity

1. Description of the Man of Integrity

"*I shall walk in my integrity*"

2. Destiny of the Man of Integrity

a. Enjoying Redemption

"*Redeem me*"

b. Enjoying God's Grace

"*be gracious to me*"

IV. (:12) INTEGRITY RESULTS IN CONFIDENCE AND TESTIMONY BECAUSE OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE AND GRACE

A. Confidence: "*My foot stands on a level place*"

B. Testimony: "*In the congregations I shall bless the Lord*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Can we be satisfied with a life of integrity, or are we always craving for the attention and praise of men? This is a good test as to whether our orientation is to really please our Lord (when no one can see what we are doing but Him) or whether we are more motivated by being a man-pleaser.

2) What does Vindication accomplish? Isn't it enough that the Lord sees our obedience and will reward us accordingly?

3) How can we reach out with the gospel to sinners without associating with them in a manner that would compromise our goal of holiness? What was the example of Jesus in this regard?

4) Is our worship characterized by holiness? Do we "*love the habitation of God's house*?" Do we "*bless the Lord*" publicly as we have opportunity?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "In each of Psalms 26-28 the Lord's house comes into view. In Psalm 26 the worshipper, as he approaches, is searched by God's demand for sincerity (cf. Pss. 15 and 24) and, in the last verse, rejoices to have found access. In Psalm 27 he sees this house as sanctuary from his enemies, and as the place of vision, face to face with God. In Psalm 28 he brings forward his petition, spreading his hands as a suppliant towards the holy of holies, and receives his answer."

Spurgeon: Re "*Judge me, O Jehovah*" – "A solemn appeal to the just tribunal of the heart-searching God, warranted by the circumstances of the writer, so far as regarded the particular offences with which he was wrongly charged. Worried and worn out by the injustice of men, the innocent spirit flies from its false accusers to the throne of Eternal Right. He had need have a clear case who dares to carry his suit into the King's Bench of heaven. Such an appeal as this is not to be rashly made on any occasion; and as to the whole of our walk and conversation, it should never be made at all, except as we are justified in Christ Jesus . . ."

Leupold: "'*Prove me to be right*.' This is said in the face of charges, spoken or assumed, that the writer has been a hypocrite, and that the ills than now befall him are proof of this fact. But the man has served God in sincerity to the very best of his ability … He has lived his life as in the sight of God in all sincerity and still does so. It is God's verdict that counts; that he knows right well, and so he appeals to the Supreme Court for an inspection. but at the same time, since he has been living his life as before God's eyes, he can say with assurance: '*Tried is my heart and my mind*.' This second statement may appear to be a bold claim, but the writer is about to offer evidence for what he claims. It must be remembered that he always claims that he is not what his opponents claim he is."

Yates: Re vv.8-12 – "A Prayer for Vindication. '*Gather not my soul with sinners*.' His plea is not that he may avoid death, but that he may avoid being grouped with the ungodly, whom he has so carefully avoided in life. In this prayer for special treatment, he prays for God to *redeem* and *be merciful* to him because he is going to continue to walk in integrity, stand firmly, and bless the Lord publicly."

Alexander: Re vs. 6 – "*'I will wash in innocence my hands, and will compass thy altar, O Jehovah!'* To the negative professions of the two preceding verses he now adds a positive declaration of his purpose. Not content with abstaining from all share in the counsels of the wicked, he is fully resolved to adhere to the service of the Lord. He will cleanse himself from all that would unfit him for that service, and then cleave to the sanctuary where God dwells."

Harris: A SONG OF AVOWED INTEGRITY
Theme: False accusations and slander bring longing for vindication and protection.
Occasion: No clue. Some think upon the assassination of Ishbosheth.

I. REQUEST. Ver. 1-3. "*Examine me*" (ver.2).

1. Protestation. Ver. 1. "*I have trusted in Jehovah*." The avowal of innocence when falsely accused, which does not, however, exclude a due sense of sin. He longs for vindication.

2. Prayer. Ver. 2. "*Prove me.*" God's tribunal is just, and the Psalmist feels safe to trust himself to the divine Will for testing.

3. Profession. Ver. 3. "*I have walked in thy truth.*" Here we have the assurance of a true soul that has been severely tried and is still confident that God sees and knows, and that he will take account and deliver.

II. REVULSION. Ver. 4-8. "*I hate the assembly of the wicked*" (ver. 5).

1. Restriction. Ver. 4, 5. "*I have not sat*." His sincerity is shown by his complete separation from the ways and the haunts of the wicked. He has persistently kept aloof from evil-doers and has shunned even their companionship.

2. Repairing. Ver. 6. "*So will I compass thine altar*." He seeks the proper approach to God through the appointed sacrifices…

3. Regard. Ver. 7, 8. "*I love thy habitation*" (ver. 8). He shows his sincerity also by his ardent devotion to God's house…

III. RESOLUTION. Ver. 9-12. "*As for me*" (ver. 9).

1. Prayer. Ver. 9, 10. "*Gather my soul*" (ver. 9). Thinking now of the reaping-time, the Psalmist declares his desire that he may be gathered with the godly when the harvest comes.

2. Purpose. Ver. 11. "*I will walk in mine integrity.*" He resolves also to be upright and is conscious that he can do it only through the redeeming grace of God.

3. Position. Ver. 12. "*My foot standeth.*" The song ends with a confident note of security. Beginning with a minor key, it closes in a paean of praise and thanksgiving.

TEXT: PSALM 27

TITLE: SEEKING GOD'S FACE

BIG IDEA:
THOSE WHO SEEK GOD'S FACE CONFIDENTLY EXPECT DELIVERANCE

INTRODUCTION:

THE SECRET OF THE SEEKER -- How can he be so confident when the enemies are so terrible and the goodness of the Lord is nowhere to be seen?

I. (:1-3) THE LORD IS THE ANSWER TO ALL MY FEARS (NO PANIC)

A. (:1) The Lord is the Source of My Confidence

1. *My light and My salvation* -- the Lord makes me tick -- my reason for living
   Whom shall I fear? -- no place for darkness or death
2. *The defense of My live* -- the Lord keeps me ticking
   Whom shall I dread? -- no place for panic or dread

B. (:2-3) No Enemy Can Rob Me of My Confidence

1. (:2) Evildoers = my adversaries and my enemies
   "*When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,*
   My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell."

2. (:3) Army waging war against me
   They have no chance of succeeding against God
   "*Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear;*
   Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident."

II. (:4-6) THERE IS A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEEKING GOD'S FACE AND CONFIDENTLY EXPECTING DELIVERANCE (GOD'S PERSPECTIVE)

A. (:4) The Lord is the Focus of My Seeking

1. The Concentrated Focus
   concentrated prayer -- "*One thing I have asked from the Lord*"
   concentrated effort -- "*that I shall seek*"
2. The Defined Focus
   Enjoyment of the Lord's presence
   "*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*"

   Meditation on the Lord's person
   "*to behold the beauty of the Lord*"
   "*to meditate in His temple*"

B. (:5) The Lord will Protect Me from Harm

1. The Stronghold of His tabernacle

2. The Stronghold of His tent
3. The Stronghold of His cliff

C. (:6) Deliverance Prompts Sacrifices and Songs of Praise
"*And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me;*
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."

III. (:7-10) SEEKING GOD'S FACE ENGAGES THE STRUGGLE OF FAITH (RELENTLESS PRAYER)

A. (:7) The Plea for Help
"*Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice,*
And be gracious to me and answer me."

B. (:8) The Pursuit of God's Face
"*When Thou didst say, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to Thee,*
'Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek.'

C. (:9-10) The Impossibility of Rejection
"*Do not hide Thy face from me,*
Do not turn Thy servant away in anger;
Thou hast been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the Lord will take me up."

IV. (:11-12) SUBMITTING TO GOD'S DIRECTION IS ONE OF THE KEYS TO DELIVERANCE (SECURE PATHWAY)

A. (:11a) The Submissive Seek God's Teaching
"Teach me Thy way, O Lord"

B. (:11b) The Submissive Seek God's Guidance
"And lead me in a level path, Because of my foes."

C. (:12) The Submissive Can Expect God's Deliverance
"Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence."

V. (:13-14) FAITH IS THE VICTORY (CONFIDENT PATIENCE)

A. (:13) Believe in the Goodness of the Lord (to be manifested in this lifetime!) this is the protection against Despair
"*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see*
the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

B. (:14) Persevere in Believing that God will come and Deliver
Requires patient waiting
"*Wait for the Lord;*
Be strong, and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the Lord."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is your response when faced with panic situations? How quickly are you able to refocus on God and draw confidence from His presence and goodness and protection?

2) In what sense is the Lord "*my Light*"?

3) What practical steps can we take to "*behold the beauty of the Lord*" and to "*meditate in His temple*"? What are some of the distractions that draw us away from seeking His face? (cf. how single-minded the psalmist was in this endeavor)

4) In what sense is "*waiting upon the Lord*" an active vs. a passive exercise?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: Re vs. 3 – "Before the actual conflict, while as yet the battle is untried, the warrior's heart, being held in suspense, is very liable to become fluttered. The encamping host often inspires greater dread than the same host in actual affray. Young tells us of some – 'Who feel a thousand deaths in fearing one.' – Doubtless the shadow of anticipated trouble is, to timorous minds, a more prolific source of sorrow than the trouble itself, but faith puts a strengthening plaister to the back of courage, and throws out of the window the dregs of the cup of trembling. '*Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident*.' When it actually comes to push of pike, faith's shield will ward off the blow; and if the first brush should be but the beginning of a war, yet faith's banners will wave in spite of the foe. Though battle should succeed battle, and one campaign should be followed by another, the believer will not be dismayed at the length of the conflict. Reader, this third verse is the comfortable and logical inference from the second, confidence is the child of experience. Have you been delivered out of great perils? Then set up your ensign, wait at your watch-fire, and let the enemy do his worst."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 4 – "Boldness of faith is not naïve belief. The external difficulties are little in comparison with the psalmist's deep desire to experience more fully the presence of God. In God's presence fear is banished. The longing for God's

temple expresses the intensity of the psalmist's seeking after God himself (cf. Matt 6:33). The enjoyment of God's presence assures the evident goodness and love of God (cf. 23:6)."

Stott: "The psalm ends as it began with an expression of serene confidence. The author has come through his tunnel of darkness. His faith has been sorely tried, but now it triumphs; *I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living* (verse 15). He who ardently desired to see with the eye of faith the beauty of the Lord (verse 4) is sure that, before he dies, he will see the same Lord's goodness displayed in his own circumstances. So certain is he of this that he urges *others to wait for the Lord* (verse 14), that is, to trust patiently in Him. It is not enough to urge people to *be strong* and *take heart* (verse 14). These would be empty sentiments unless they are both prefaced and followed by the other injunction to wait for the Lord. Courage can be no more than a Stoic virtue. It is only Christian when it is the fruit of a quiet confidence in God."

Ogilvie: Re: the problem is not one of needing more faith – "Most of us have been raised with the idea that faith is something we must produce before God will act. Therefore, if He does not act immediately we diagnose the difficulty as our lack of faith. Such a belief exposes a profound misunderstanding of God as well as the nature of faith. If God is all knowing, all powerful, and all loving, would He wait for us to conjure up the right qualifications? More than that, the Bible is undeniably clear that faith is a gift, not something we produce. Faith is a gift from God to us. The quality of our faith is not what prompts God to act. Faith does not produce an intimate relationship with God; an intimate relationship with God issues in faith. Faith is the outer manifestation of an inner heart in communion with God. The more of Him that dwells in our hearts, the more faith we will have for our problems. Faith is our response to the loving presence of a God who comes to us in our problems.

When problems pile up, our need is not to have more faith to get God to solve them, but to seek God for Himself. Problems are an alarm signal of our need for Him. When we are distressed and cast desperately about for faith to endure, we miss the end by focusing on the means. God is the source and end – '*the author and finisher*' – of faith.

… In Psalm 27, the psalmist teaches me what to do when life dishes out more problems than I can take. The psalmist's first response when faced with dangers and difficulties was not to list what he needed to get God's help, but instead to describe what God could give him to face his need. His problems were like a dinner bell, alerting him to the realization of his hunger and thirst for the living God.

Psalm 27 is divided into two parts: Verses 1-6 show how the psalmist comes to grips with his problems and realizes his need for God; verses 7-14 reveal the content of his communion with God and the gift of faith that results….

The key word in the Psalm is *heart*. The Hebrew understanding of heart included intellect, emotion, and will. The psalmist's heart was troubled by the dangers around him because of his enemies. In this magnificent psalm we witness a human heart as it experiences first panic, then perspective, then power, and ultimately, the gift of peace through faith in the goodness of God.

We all long for the faith the psalmist had at the end of the psalm. He was determined to wait on the lord, to trust His timing, and to quietly expect His intervention. What we need to experience, however, are the steps he went through to arrive at that sublime staying power of endurance. We can experience that if we say and do what he did. The gift of faith will be given, courage will be engendered, and endurance will result."

Harris: A SONG OF HOPE
Theme: The blessing that comes from putting trust in God no matter what the situation may be.
Occasion: The writer was pursued by enemies and excluded from the Temple. 1 Sam. 22:22 may be the background. Cf. Ps. 52.

I. CONFIDENCE IN GOD. Ver. 1-3. "*In this I will be confident*" (ver. 3).
   1. Defense. Ver. 1.
   2. Deliverance. Ver. 2, 3.

II. COMMUNION WITH GOD. Ver. 4-6. "*Dwell in the house of the Lord*" (ver. 4).
   1. Protection. Ver. 4, 5.
   2. Praise. Ver. 6.

III. COMPASSION OF GOD. Ver. 7-12. "*Then the Lord will take me up*" (ver. 10).
   1. Goodness. Ver. 7-10.
   2. Guidance. Ver. 11, 12.

IV. COMFORT FROM GOD. Ver. 13, 14. "*He shall strengthen thine heart*" (ver. 14).
   1. Support. Ver. 13.
   2. Strength. Ver. 14.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Overcoming Fear**
Introduction: What is your fear tonight? What is the thing that causes you to fear?

There are different kinds of fears. First of all, there's what I would call a holy fear. And this is the fear of the Lord. And this is a fear that you never want to overcome. You always want to have the fear of the Lord. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is a reverential attitude that leads to right actions.

There's a healthy fear. You say, what do you mean by a healthy fear? You know, not all fear is harmful. There's a sense of a healthy fear, and this is a fear that keeps you from doing dangerous things.

A harmful fear is a debilitating fear. It hinders us from doing what we ought to do. It is a fear that destroys the peace of mind. It robs us of rest. This is the fear that's the sand in the machinery of life. And so that we don't do what we ought to do.

David had real dangers in his life, and he had to learn to overcome fear. David is still running from Saul. David is going to tell us very simply in Psalm 27 how to overcome fear.

Big Idea: **We overcome fear by seeking the Lord. Four ways that we seek the Lord and can overcome our fear.**

I. We overcome our fear by seeking the Lord only. Vs. 1

God is my protector. He is my deliverer. Light, I'm sure would be very precious to David living in a cave and living in darkness. or living under the cover of night, fearing attack. He says, the Lord is my light. He didn't need to be afraid of darkness. He didn't need to be afraid of his weakness.

There were 400 rough and tough warriors that he had with him. But listen, David was not looking to that army to help him. David was looking to God and God alone.

II. We need to seek the Lord worshipfully. Vs. 4

Two elements in this worship:

First of all, he wanted to behold the beauty of the Lord, to get caught up in the beauty of God. Now, to be caught up in the beauty of the Lord simply means to be caught up with the very being of God. We will overcome our fears to the extent that we focus on the Lord and are captivated with His glorious, glorious beauty.

- Behold in the Word

Secondly, to inquire in His temple – the public place of worship. There is something about worshiping God in his house. There's no replacement for it.

III. We overcome our fear by seeking the Lord prayerfully. Vs. 7

God is so gracious and so condescending that God invites you and He invites me to seek His face? Prayer is not just going to God with a list of things and then leaving. Prayer is seeking God himself.

IV. We overcome our fear by seeking the Lord confidently. Vs. 13

We would say it like this. Unless I had confidence to know that God would help me, then I would be done for. It would be over for me. Unless I had confidence to know that God is taking care of me and will watch over me, then, man, it's just over for me. Game over. I'm done for.

The Hebrew verbs in verse 14 are singular. It's like David is talking to himself. Look at verse 14. *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say on the Lord.* Who's David talking to in verse 14? He's talking to himself. He would preach to himself. He wouldn't listen to those negative thoughts when they come into his mind. He would say, no, wait on the Lord.

TEXT: PSALM 28

TITLE: MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD IS NOT DEAF TO THE CRIES OF HIS PEOPLE

I. (:1-2) THE CRY FOR A HEARING

A. (:1) The Rock Has Ears

"*To Thee, O Lord, I call;*
My rock, do not be deaf to me,
Lest, if Thou be silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the pit."

B. (:2) The Holy Sanctuary Receives Cries for Help

"*Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to Thee for help,*
When I lift up my hands toward Thy holy sanctuary."

II. (:3) THE CRY FOR FAIRNESS
DON'T TREAT ME THE SAME AS THE WICKED

A. Workers of Iniquity

"*Do not drag me away with the wicked*
And with those who work iniquity"

B. Deceitful, Malicious Neighbors

"*Who speak peace with their neighbors,*
While evil is in their hearts."

III. (:4-5) THE CRY FOR JUSTICE
REPAY THE WICKED WHAT THEY DESERVE

A. The Standard for Payment:

"*according to their work*"
"*according to the evil of their practices*"
"*according to the deeds of their hands*"

B. The Reason for no Mercy or Grace:

"*they do not regard the works of the Lord*"
they do not regard "*the deeds of His hands*"

C. Summary: "*He will tear them down and not build them up*"

IV. (:6-7) THE LORD HAS HEARD MY CRIES
MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD

A. Blessings of Answered Prayers

connection between faith and deliverance

"*Blessed be the Lord, Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.*
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped"

B. Songs of Thanksgiving from the heart
"*Therefore my heart exults,*
And with my song I shall thank Him."

V. (:8-9) THE LORD WILL HEAR THE CRIES OF HIS PEOPLE
THEIR STRENGTH AND THEIR SHIELD

"*The Lord is their strength,*
And He is a saving defense to His anointed.
Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever."

Ryrie: "The Lord provides the strength of a fortress and the care of a shepherd"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we direct our cries for help to the Lord or do we seek help first from other sources? Do we complain to others instead of casting our cares on Him who cares for us? Are we so inhibited emotionally that we can't even express the cries of our heart to our spouse and our Lord?

2) Is our heart filled with hope because we appeal to a God who hears our prayers? Or is our heart filled with cynicism and hopelessness because we feel that God has turned a deaf ear towards our prayers? Have we maintained a spirit of thanksgiving to help fuel our hope for the future?

3) "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*" we learn from Proverbs. How especially hurtful must be the false pleasantries of supposed friends who "*speak peace with their neighbors, While evil is in their hearts.*" Have you experienced such disappointments? Have you been able to move beyond those experiences or have you become bitter over them?

4) Do we encourage others with our testimony regarding how the Lord is our "*strength and shield*" and can be for them as well? Does our heart truly exult in remembrance of how the Lord has helped us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

VanGemeren: "The hymnic thanksgiving to the Lord (vv.6-9) contains both a blessing and a prayer. The psalmist thanks the Lord in anticipation of the response to his prayer (vv.6-8). In the last verse he concludes his prayer with an intercession on behalf of God's people (v.9; cf. 25:22). The psalm is associated with David and portrays the Lord as caring for his people through his '*anointed one*' (v.8). It is not clearly a messianic psalm, nor is it a royal psalm (so Eaton, Psalm, pp. 86-88). However, it shares with the royal psalms the expectation that the Lord will rule victoriously over his people.

The structure of Psalm 28 follows the main structural division according to genre: lament (vv.1-5) and thanksgiving (vv.6-9). The expository structure permits a further division of each:

A. Personal Prayer (vv.1-2)
  B. Prayer for Justice (vv.3-5)
  B'. Trust in God's Justice (vv.6-8)
A'. Personal Intercession (v.9)"

Spurgeon: Re vs. 1 – "A cry is the natural expression of sorrow, and is a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and his ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation, and shall use language of firm resolve like that in the text…"

Craigie: "The words of prayer were accompanied by actions, so that both mind and body were engaged in the ritual proceedings. The suppliant's hands were lifted and directed toward the holy place, in a gesture typical of supplication in the Near East in general … It may be that the hands were raised in a gesture symbolizing the anticipation of receiving something in the hands, namely the divine response to prayer. But the reference to the '*pit*' (v1) suggests an alternate symbolism; the psalmist is like one standing on the edge of the pit of death in danger of falling in, and his hands are stretched out in desperation. If God would only answer his prayer, it would be as though he had taken his hands and rescued him from that threatening abyss."

Perowne: "The earnestness of the cry is to be measured not only by the greatness of the peril which threatened, but by the faith which cleaves to God, knowing that in Him only is there help."

TEXT: PSALM 29

TITLE: THE MAJESTY OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
WORSHIP THE LORD FOR HIS MAJESTY

INTRODUCTION:

On March 23, 1743, when "The Messiah" was first performed in London, the king was present in the great audience. When the majesty of the Lord was proclaimed by the words of the Hallelujah Chorus, "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth", everyone was so deeply moved that they rose as one to their feet--including the king -- to show their respect and to worship the Sovereign of the Universe. That began the tradition of standing throughout the Hallelujah Chorus.

Countries like older England that have an impressive tradition of royalty and a reigning king that is accorded the utmost respect and allegiance have a better understanding of majesty than we do today in the United States. Our leaders are subjected to intense scrutiny and often harsh criticism and unjustified attacks. One doesn't get the sense of majesty and respect in the tone of a Sam Donaldson or a Dan Rather as they interact with our leaders. Instead our leaders are the subject of laughter and ridicule as our comedians make a living off of their perceived weaknesses and mistakes.

Our view of God has suffered from our failure to capture a sense of His Majesty. The God of contempory evangelicalism is a very personal God--someone with whom we can enjoy intimate fellowship. He is our best friend and the one to whom we can bring all of our troubles. We have a great high priest who became flesh and blood so that He can be a perfect mediator between God and man. But in stressing our closeness to God we have lost sight of His majesty -- the great gulf that exists between God and us because of His greatness. He is not like us -- God is not limited like we are in His wisdom, in His presence, in His power, in His effectiveness. He is eternal, infinite, almighty.

Our hymns reflect this emphasis on a personal God who is very much like ourselves. The short, catchy, repetitive tones of our popular choruses lack the organ pealing of the traditional hymns of the faith that proclaim such a greater depth about the character of our God. Our prayers reflect this emphasis--we are having a

conversation with a friend that is right here sitting beside us rather than approaching the throne of grace of the God who sits on High -- not that He is distant from us in space, but that He is far above us in greatness and deserves our reverence and adoration. The majesty of God should be directly tied to the fear of God.

Packer in Knowing God has a chapter on the Majesty of God that is very helpful. He notes that our lack of the sense of the Majesty of God is one key reason why our faith is so weak and our worship so flabby. We don't have a God who is big enough to solve our problems. We don't have a God who is worthy of time and effort expended in prayer and praise and adoration. We have a God that we have remade in our own image instead of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who reigns in Supremacy over the universe.

How can we reshape our thinking to meditate upon God's greatness? One way which touches our senses as well as our intellect is to compare God with natural powers and forces that we have experienced and that we already regard as great and awesome.

I. (:1-2) WORSHIP THE LORD FOR HIS MAJESTY =
HIS GLORY AND STRENGTH
Call to Worship

A. The Name of the Lord Gives Testimony to His Majesty -- lit. YHWH (pronounced Yahweh) 18 times in this short psalm this is the most significant name for God in the OT – 3 fold signif.:

1. the active, self-existent one
(connected with the verb "to be" in Exod. 3:14)
uncreated, responsible to no one
Life is in Him and only He can give and sustain life

2. the eternal one (Ps.90:1-2)

3. Israel's Redeemer (Exod. 6:6) and the all-sufficient one to meet our every need

His name is associated with God's holiness; His hatred of sin; and His gracious provision of redemption

B. The Nature of His Priests Gives Testimony to His Majesty

1. "*O mighty ones*" -- referring to angels, the celestial spirits most familiar with God's glory "sons of God" (Job 2:1)

2. "*in holy array*" or "*in the beauty of holiness*"

Is. 6:1-7 gives a picture of what this type of worship on the part of the angels means -- refers probably to the Lord's holiness -- worship the Lord for the splendor of His holiness (cf.Rev.4)

His priests are to ascribe to Him Majesty -- echo back the Majesty they see God demonstrate

We have been elevated by God to a priestly status -- what are we doing to give testimony to God's glory and power? Are we doubting God? complaining about what the Master of the Universe is doing in our life?

The Lord is not interested in the church worshipping in a fancy cathedral. He saw to it that the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. God wants our holy lives to be the sphere for the simplicity of spiritual worship.

C. The Nature of God Gives Testimony to His Majesty

1. Glory -- preeminence "the heavens declare the glory of God" Ps.19

In this Psalm we will see the glory of God revealed in an awesome thunderstorm.

2. Strength -- omnipotence; able to do as He pleases; thus He is able to give us the strength that we need in the storms of life

II. (:3-9) THE LORD DEMONSTRATES HIS MAJESTY IN THE SEVEN THUNDERS ("THE VOICE OF THE LORD") OF A THUNDERSTORM

constantly emphasizing both the Lord's power and His glory

David is describing a mighty thunderstorm that begins over the waters of the Mediterranean to the West of the nation Israel -- sound carries exceptionally well over water. It must have been a fearsome thing to have been caught out in the waters in a small boat when one of these storms erupted!

The storm breaks in full fury over the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion (Mt. Hebron) -- the strongest wood known to them -- God snaps the trees off like toothpicks.
It takes a lot of strength to knock over huge trees.

The storm is not being driven by God's anger and judgment, but by His majestic power in the mountains and the forests; the storm effects all of nature.

Finally the storm passes out of sight and sound into the desert of Kadesh.

The only response is what the angels declare in God's celestial temple: "Glory" -- there's not a whole lot you can say; you can't add to the impressive testimony given by God Himself -- you can just agree with it and confess it.

III. (:10-11) THE LORD EXERCISES HIS MAJESTY IN PROVIDING FOR HIS PEOPLE

The opening of the Psalm showed us the heavens opened and the throne of God in the midst of angelic songs of praise; now at the close of the Psalm we see the benefits to God's people on earth from God ruling in Majesty, seated on His throne.

We are reminded of the great flood of Noah's day --- that first instance where God dispensed the rains from heaven -- we saw the terrible effects of that deluge and yet the gracious provision of God for His people in the form of the ark to bring them to safety and in the symbol of the rainbow to remind them of His mercy.

The Lord provides the two things His people need the most:

A. Strength
Humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God

Transition: usually strength would be associated with destruction or the inability to control such power and use it for productive means (cf.problem with nuclear power -- how to harness and use it for good); but with God His strength is coupled with the provision of Peace; not chaotic.

B. Peace
What is troubling you today -- Cast all of your cares upon Him

CONCLUSION:
THE STORMS OF LIFE MUST BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF THE MAJESTY OF GOD

Is. 40:12-31 the greatness of God emphasized along with its practical application;

God speaking to a people whose mood is the mood of many Christians today: discouraged people, fearful people overwhelmed with problems, secretly despairing in their hearts even while their lips sing of the glories of their God, people who have given up hope that God will keep His promises -or at least there will be no strength and no peace until heaven

Application:
1) (:25) Don't make the mistake of thinking that God is like us

2) (:27) Don't imagine that God has abandoned you
He is the eternal God, not a temporary God or a part-time God;
Not Queen for a Day;
Never resign yourself to thinking that the God of Majesty has left you high and dry.

3) (:31) Wait upon the Lord for His strength and His peace
He will exchange our weakness for His strength;
with apparently no effort the eagle mounts high in the sky -- so the people of God will mount up from the depths of their griefs and difficulties.

4) The Lord Jesus laid aside His Majesty in the Kenosis (Phil. 2) -- He is coming again in full majesty and glory and power-- read Rev. 19:6-9

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we reshape our thinking to meditate on God's greatness? How can we recapture a proper sense of God's Majesty?

2) What do we learn about God from the different names used by the authors of Scripture to refer to God?

3) What is the overall impact of the sevenfold use of the phrase "*the voice of the Lord*" in the heart of the psalm?

4) What comfort and reassurance do we gain from contemplating how the Lord sat as King back at the flood and anticipating the Lord continuing to sit as King forever?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "The towering majesty of the Lord dominates this poem, with the opening scene in heaven, where supernatural beings pay Him homage; with the violent sweep of the thunderstorm in from the sea, down the whole length of Canaan and away into the desert; and the serene climax in which, as the thunder recedes, the Lord appears enthroned in judgment over this world but in blessing among His people."

Maddux:

I. Proper perspective.
    A. God is mightiest in strength.
    B. God is most glorious.
    C. God is due the best in worship.
II. Proper perception.
    A. God's Word has creative power.
    B. God's Word has sustaining power.
    C. God's Word has moving – changing – power.
    D. God's Word has dividing – judging – power.
III. Proper position.
    A. God is above all in serenity.
    B. God is above all in sovereignty.
IV. Proper possession.
    A. God-given strength.
    B. God-given security.

Leupold: "Now comes the practical climax to which all this has been consistently building up. The same Lord, whose control of the forces of nature is absolute, wields this control for the good of His people. He will grant them '*strength*' whenever they need it; '*He will bless His people with peace*.' On this note of reassurance the psalm closes. Conclusions such as these every true member of the people of God reaches when he reflects upon a storm that occurs with its resounding thunders. We can well understand why the church in days of old used to instruct her children to read this psalm during the time of a storm. The classic remarks of Delitzsch may well be recorded here: '*Gloria in excelsis* is the beginning, and *pax in terra* [*peace on earth*] the close.'"

VanGemeren: "The subject of the psalm is the demonstration of God's glory in nature, but its impact is the opposite. It gives a sense of tranquility and awe. Yahweh, our God, is powerful in his glory. He can and does protect his people. He opens heaven up so as to unleash his blessings of protection, victory, and peace (cf. 28:8-9; 46:1-3; Num 6:24-26). There is quietness within the storm for those who belong to the people of God. Brueggemann views this psalm as a basis for Israel's new life of hope. He writes: 'The new order requires the honoring of God, but it also requires the capacity and power to reorder life. That is cause for singing on earth, as in heaven.'"

Morris: Re vs. 10-11 – "'*The Lord sitteth upon the flood*.' There are ten Hebrew words translated '*flood*' in the Old Testament, but the word here is *mabbul*, a word used uniquely to refer to the worldwide cataclysm in the days of Noah. In fact, this is the only place in the Bible where this word is used except in the story of the great Flood in Genesis 6-9, where it is always used. ..

Psalm 29 begins with a two-verse prologue introducing the angels of heaven, and finally concludes with a two-verse epilogue, giving their last chorus of praise and victory. The seven verses between record the seven-times sounded '*voice of the Lord*' and the global renovations proceeding therefrom…

And so the final verse of the psalm is a word of comfort and encouragement to all those of His creatures who trust Him. No matter what future attacks may be made

against God's people by man or demon, '*the Lord will give strength unto His people*.' Even in the future fiery judgment of the world, God is as able to keep His people through the fire as He was through the Flood. *'The Lord will bless His people with peace*.'"

Meyer: Re vv.10-11 -- "God's supremacy is the subject of these closing words. He sits upon the clouds as on a throne or chariot. He is King of Nature and of Grace. He is in the strength of the storm, and in the halcyon peace that breaks out like a smile, when the storm has passed; and He can give both to his people. It has been truly said that the Psalm begins with *Gloria in excelsis*! and ends with *Pax in teris*! '*Glory to God*' implies '*peace on earth.*'"

TEXT: PSALM 30

TITLE: PRAISING GOD FOR SHATTERING OUR SELF-CONFIDENCE

BIG IDEA:
TRANSFORMATION FROM MOURNING TO DANCING IN THE MORNING: PRAISING GOD JUSTIFIES OUR EXISTENCE

INTRODUCTION:

Why should God bless me (show favor and grace to me) and give me victory over my enemies?

That I might praise Him and have a testimony to others about His faithfulness

(God's strategy for dealing with pride and self-confidence)

I. (:1) THESIS -- DELIVERANCE LEADS TO PRAISE

Goal of Satan = Defeat Us and Frustrate Us so as to shut us up and Eliminate our Praise and Testimony

He wants to make a mockery of us and of our God

"Your God cannot save you ..."

"*I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up,*
And hast not let my enemies rejoice over me."

II. (:2-3) GOD IS THE SOURCE OF OUR DELIVERANCE:

A. (:2a) OUR HELP

"*O Lord my God,*
I cried to Thee for help"

B. (:2b) OUR HEALING

"*And Thou didst heal me*"

C. (:3a) OUR RESCUE

"*O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol*"

D. (:3b) OUR PROTECTION

"*Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit*"

III. (:4) THE PROPER RESPONSE IS PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

(we are godly because He is Holy)

"*Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones,*
And give thanks to His holy name."

IV. (:5) THE TEMPORARY SORROW OF CHASTENING CANNOT BE COMPARED TO THE ABIDING JOY OF GOD'S FAVOR

"*For His anger is but for a moment,*
His favor is for a lifetime;
Weeping may last for the night,
But a shout of joy comes in the morning."

V. (:6-10) THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION -- FROM MOURNING TO DANCING IN THE MORNING

A. (:6) PROSPERITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

"*Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,*
'I will never be moved.'"

B. (:7) CHASTENING AND REPENTANCE

"*O Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;*
Thou didst hide Thy face, I was dismayed."

C. (:8-10) SUPPLICATION AND REASONING

1. (:8) Supplication

"*To Thee, O Lord, I called,*
And to the Lord I made supplication."

2. (:9) Reasoning

"*What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?*
Will the dust praise Thee? Will it declare Thy faithfulness?'

3. (:10) Supplication

"*Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me;*
O Lord, be Thou my helper."

VI. (:11-12) THESIS: DELIVERANCE LEADS TO PRAISE

A. (:11) DELIVERANCE

"*Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;*
Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness"

B. (:12) PRAISE

"*That my soul may sing priase to Thee, and not be silent.*
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) "*His anger is for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime*." Do I tend to dwell more

on those momentary experiences of discipline or on the abundant grace and forgiveness of sins and favor which I constantly enjoy? Do I hold grudges and resentment against others or am I able to let go of those emotions and truly love others?

2) How do I respond to prosperity? Do I forget the Lord and His goodness in providing for me? Do I imagine that success or riches came from my own doing? Do I need God to take me down a notch like He did to Nebuchadnezzar?

3) How adept at I am reasoning with God in my prayers? Can I see things from God's perspective and present a case that makes sense in terms of the ultimate plan and glory of God?

4) Am I as expressive in my dancing as I am in my mourning? Do I know how to let loose and sing praises with a spirit of gladness and rejoicing?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ryrie: "This psalm relates the experience of one who has just escaped death by being delivered from a serious illness. His remarkable recovery produces joyful thanksgiving and causes him to reflect on the lessons he has gained from his suffering….

Prior to his sickness, he had boasted, in a spirit of self-sufficiency. His pride collapsed with the crush of illness. However, the sickness had the effect of opening his eyes to his dependence upon God, so that he cried for mercy and healing."

Craigie: "In his health and prosperity, he had come to a position of self-confidence, thinking that what he had was a consequence of his own achievement. … He had indeed been prosperous and upright, like the mighty mountains, not for anything he had done, but simply because of divine favor. The moment God turned his face away, disaster struck…. His self-confidence had suddenly been shattered by the awareness of mortality….

He perceived … that sickness was not merely judgment in the sense of retribution, but a correctional judgment that restored him to his senses and gave him back a knowledge of the necessity of God-confidence, not arrogant self-confidence."

VanGemeren: "The restoration experience is like morning light (v.5). The light ('*the morning*') is a metaphor for healing, restoration, and blessing. The effect of restoration changes weeping into joy. The psalmist knows that the change did not result from his own efforts, because he was totally incapable of changing his lot (vv.1-3). Rather, it is by the '*favor*' of the Lord that he was restored."

Harris: A SONG OF DEDICATION
Theme: Chastened by sorrow and brought from the gates of death.
Occasion: Not certain. May be 1 Chron. 21; or more likely 2 Sam. 5:8-12; 7:1.

I. GRATITUDE FOR DELIVERANCE. Ver. 1-3. "*I will extol thee*" (ver. 1).
   1. Healing. Ver. 1, 2.
   2. Health. Ver. 3.

II. GROUNDS FOR PRAISE. Ver. 4, 5. "*His anger is but for a moment*."
   1. Holiness. Ver. 4.
   2. Happiness. Ver. 5.

III. GRACE FOR SELF-CONFIDENCE. Ver. 6, 7. "*Thy favor*" (ver. 7).
   1. Presumption. Ver. 6.
   2. Punishment. Ver. 7.

IV. GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER. Ver. 8-10. "*I made supplication*" (ver. 8).
   1. Solicitude. Ver. 8.
   2. Succor. Ver. 9, 10.

V. GLADNESS FOR SORROW. Ver. 11, 12. "*Girded me with gladness*" (ver. 11).
   1. Gratification. Ver. 11.
   2. Gratitude. Ver. 12.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Divine Reversals**
Introduction: We serve a God who delights in doing new things. He delights in delivering us from trouble. He delights in turning circumstances around for us. He's a God of divine reversals, we could say. James Boyce titled this psalm, **A Litany of Uplifting Contrasts.** The major lesson really that we learn from this psalm is when God does turn things around for us, we should publicly give praise and thanksgiving to God for doing that.

Psalm 30 really has four stanzas to it. We can really kind of divide it like this. Verses 1 to 5, that's praise. And then verses 6 and 7, that's David's confession. And verses 8 through 10, it's David's supplication where he makes prayer to God. And then in verse 11 and 12 is David's testimony. And the phrase that we see repeated throughout this psalm is thou hast, or we could say you have. And he is emphasizing what God has done. God, this is what you have done. The most striking feature of Psalm 30 is its remarkable set of contrasts.

Big Idea: **Four divine reversals where God rescued David and he did something new in his life.**

I. A new healing from death to life. Vs. 1
He pictures himself as kind of teetering on the edge of the pit. You ever hear the expression, you know, this person has one foot in the grave and the other foot on a banana peel. That's kind of the similar situation that David is describing.

David describes three things that God did for him:

1) He lifted him up – vs. 1
It's a word used to speak of pulling a bucket up out of a deep well. The well here seems to be a picture of death. And the idea is that David is like that bucket being lowered down deep into that dark well. He's getting closer and closer to death. And it seems like all is lost.

David recognizes that it's God who's at the top of the well with a rope, lifting him up out of the grave, out of the pit. And God will not allow David's enemies to rejoice over him. And this is why David is filled with thanksgiving.

2) He healed him – vs. 2
The word for healed here is the Hebrew word *rafa*. It's the same word used in Exodus 15, 26, where God said, *I am the Lord that healeth thee*. I love the fact that one of God's names in the Old Testament is *Yahweh Rapha*, the God of healing.

II. A new hope from night to morning. Vs. 4
David's conviction is that God's favor always outweighs his disfavor (vs. 5). We might go through a nighttime of pain and sorrow through trials, but God is quick to remove the nighttime of suffering and give joy.

If you sow a tear into the soil, what you're gonna get back is rejoicing. That's a reversal. You reap more than you sow. He is able to reverse our tears and make them sources of joy.

III. A new heart from pride to humility. Vs. 6
In our prosperity, we begin to boast. We think that there's something about us that's the reason all this is happening instead of really because of God and his grace. David was numbering the people to find out how strong his military was instead of just simply trusting and leaning on the Lord. And God had to humble David.

IV. A new happiness from silence to singing. Vs. 11
Once David knew he was forgiven and accepted, he moved from the attitude of a funeral to a feast. He took off the sackcloth of sadness and he put on the garments of gladness. You know, in scripture, a dramatic alteration of one's life is marked by a change of clothing. We have a lifetime of grace to prepare us for an eternity of worship.

TEXT: PSALM 31

TITLE: *HANGING ON*

BIG IDEA:
CLINGING TO HOPE IN PROLONGED TIMES OF TROUBLE

Context: Trouble in the form of unwarranted persecution

7 STEPS:

I. (:1-3) TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD
"*In Thee, O Lord, I have taken refuge*"
Goal: "*Let me never be ashamed*"
(chiastic structure)
A. 2 Reasons for Hope
1. The righteousness of God -- deliverance and no shame
"*In Thy righteousness deliver me*"
2. The name of God -- He will lead and guide
"*For Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and guide me*"

B. 2 Resources for Hope -- physical images of strength and security
1. "*A rock of strength*" -- my rock
2. "*A stronghold to save me*" -- my fortress
Summary: "*For Thou art my rock and my fortress*"

II. (:4-5) HANG ON TO THE ONE WHO WILL RESCUE YOU
Goal: "*pull me out of the net*"
(chiastic structure)
A. 2 Expectations of Rescue
1. "*thou wilt pull me out of the net*" -- set by devious schemers (vs. 4)
2. "*thou hast ransomed me*" -- saved by the God of truth (vs. 5)

B. 2 Expressions of Security
1. "*Thou art my strength*" (vs. 4)
2. "*Into Thy hand I commit my spirit*" (vs. 5)
Messianic quote by Christ on the cross

III. (:6-8) STAND TALL IN THE SPACE GOD HAS CARVED OUT FOR YOU
Goal: "*Thou hast set my feet in a large place*"
A. Stand Tall by Fixing Your Faith in the Lord
rejecting "*vain idols*"

B. Stand Tall by Rejoicing in the Lord's Lovingkindness and Compassion
1. He knows my pain
"*my affliction*"

"*the troubles of my soul*"

2. He keeps me safe -- He has not "*given me over into the hand of the enemy*"

IV. (:9-13) DON'T DESPAIR

Goal: "*Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress*"

Deep Distress -- Yes; Despair -- Never!

A. Emotional Sorrow and Sighing

"*My eye is wasted away from grief*"

B. Ph ysical Suffering

"*My soul and my body also.*
For my life is spent with sorrow,
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away."

C. Relational Reproach and Rejection (vs.11)

"*Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,*
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances;
Those who see me in the street flee from me."

D. Root Problem: Insignificance (vs.12)

a dead man – "*I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind*"
a broken vessel – "*I am like a broken vessel*"

E. Vicious Attacks (vs. 13)

"*For I have heard the slander of many,*
Terror is on every side;
While they took counsel together against me,
They schemed to take away my life."

V. (:14-18) EXPECT DELIVERANCE

Goal: "*Thou art my God*"

A. Antidote to Despair = Faith

Faith = the Victory that overcomes the world 1 John 5:4

B. God is On My Side and In Control

1. God is on my side -- "*Thou art my God*"
2. God is in control -- "*My times are in Thy hand*"

If my time isn't up then my enemies can't kill me

C. Prayer for Deliverance and for God's Favor (vs. 15b-16)

1. For Deliverance (vs. 15b)

my enemies = those who persecute me

2. For God's Favor (vs. 16)

shown to God's servant
out of God's lovingkindness

D. Bring Shame Upon the Wicked but Deliver Me (vs. 17-18)
1. The wicked don't call on the Lord for help
2. The wicked speak with lying lips (Remember: God is a God of truth)
3. The wicked speak arrogantly against the righteous
4. The wicked speak with pride and contempt
(Remember: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble)

VI. (:19-22) PRAISE GOD

Goal: "*Blessed be the Lord*"

A. Praise for God's Goodness – "*How great is Thy goodness*"
1. For those who fear God – "*Which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee*"
2. For those who take refuge in God – "*Which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee*"

B. Praise for God's Protection
1. "*In the secret place of God's Presence from the conspiracies of men*"
2. "*In a shelter from the strife of tongues*"

C. Praise for God's Lovingkindness
in a besieged city
"*Blessed be the Lord, For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city*."

D. Praise for God's Listening Ear
easy to imagine that we have somehow been separated from the love of God
Remember Rom. 8 -- nothing can separate us from the love of God
no reason to get alarmed and anxious despite our desparate situation

"*As for me, I said in my alarm, 'I am cut off from before Thine eyes'; Nevertheless Thou didst hear the voice of my supplications When I cried to Thee*."

VII. (:23-24) KEEP HOPING

Goal: "*Be strong, and let your heart take courage all you who hope in the Lord*"

A. Keep Hoping by Loving the Lord with your whole heart
"*O love the Lord, all you His godly ones*!"

B. Keep Hoping by Resting in the Faithfulness and Justice of God
because "*the Lord preserves the faithful*"
"*and fully recompenses the proud doer*"

C. Keep Hoping by Fortifying Your Courage

"*Be strong and let your heart take courage*"

cf. charge of Moses to Joshua about taking the promised land -- Joshua 1:9

"*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*."

cf. David's charge to Solomon -- 1 Kings 2:2 (1 Chron. 22:13; 28:10)

"I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man."

cf. Hezekiah's charge to the Jews in Jerusalem under attack by Sennacherib king of Assyria -- 2 Chron. 32:7

"*Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles*."

Psalm 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord."

Is. 35:3-4 -- Coming of the Millennial Kingdom

"*Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you*."

Hag. 2:4 -- people depressed over the comparison between the rebuilt temple under Zerubbabel and the glorious temple of Solomon's days

"*But now take courage, Zerubbabel...and work; for I am with you...My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear*"

The audience of this Psalm = "*All you who hope in the Lord*" vs. 24

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we ever plead "weakness" as an excuse if the Lord is our "*strength*"? (vs. 4)

2) How can we ever be weighed down with pressure and anxiety when we understand that "*Thou has set my feet in a large place*"? (vs. 8)

3) How can we get impatient with the Lord's timetable in delivering us and showing

us His favor when we know that "*My times are in Thy hand*"? (vs. 15)

4) How can we be overwhelmed with the "badness" of our circumstances when we know that our God has stored up vast resources of "*goodness*" for those who fear Him?" (vs. 19)

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTIONS:

VanGemeren:
I. Prayer (vv.1-18)
A. Prayer for Yahweh's Righteousness (vv.1-5)
B. Expression of Trust (vv.6-8)
A'. Prayer for Yahweh's Favor (vv9-13)
B'. Expression of Trust (vv.14-18)
II. Thanksgiving (vv.19-24)

Kidner: "An unusual feature of this psalm is that it makes the journey twice over from anguish to assurance: first in 1-8 and again in 9-24. It is hard to say whether this points to a renewed onslaught, when 'the clouds return after the rain' (a common enough spiritual experience), or whether the crisis of the opening verses is recalled, to be explored a second time in greater depth.

31:1-8 The hunted man
1-6 His prayer of faith
7,8 His praise
31:9-24 The rejected man
9-13 His isolation
14-18 His prayer of faith
19-24 His final act of praise"

Alden: "The end of verse 13 marks a minor turning point in the psalm. In verse 14 the frustration and pessimism immediately give way to exuberant, positive faith. The little words '*but God*' make all the difference in the world. Though the enemies surround, though mortal life is in the balance, though personal sins weigh heavily, though the dawn appears never to come, yet we trust. And we say with David, '*Thou art my God. My times are in thy hands.*'"

Spurgeon: Re vs. 12 – "All David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance: he had been the saviour of his country, but his services were buried in oblivion. Men soon forget the deepest obligations; popularity is evanescent to the last degree; he who is in everyone's mouth to-day may be forgotten by all to-morrow. A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the Psalmist's case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them. '*I am like a*

broken vessel,' a thing uselesss, done for, worthless, cast aside, forgotten. Sad condition for a king! Let us see herein the portrait of the King of kings in his humiliation, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **My Times are in Your Hands – vs. 13-14**
Introduction: As Christians, we need to learn what the Bible has to say about dealing with stress, because one of the realities of our modern world is this thing of stress. Look at the stress David was experiencing. People were trying to kill him. But then add to that friends had turned against David. They had slandered him. They managed to turn friends and neighbors against David. Look at verse number 11. To add to all of that, look at verse number 10 for my life is spent with grief and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of mine iniquity, my bones are consumed. David. knew that a lot of the problems that were coming about in his life were because of his own sin, and he was feeling the weight of the guilt of sin in his own life. So you add all these things together, you could say that David was really in a pressure cooker.

Big Idea: **Our response to stress should be personal trust in a personal God. So I want you to see just three lessons real quick from this psalm that we can gather.**

I. The Reality of Stress – "*my times*" – vs. 15
David's times and our times are marked by instability. We don't know what a day is going to bring. The word times actually refers to uncontrollable, uncontrollable changes in life, things that may come our way that we have no control over. Some changes are predictable while others are unpredictable and unannounced.

A. The time to prepare for stress is before it hits.
It's obvious from Psalm 31 that David knew God in a very personal, practical, and thorough way. Note the many attributes of God that David recites throughout the psalm. David begun to know God through his word, through tending his father's sheep. He had a lot of time to focus on God. And David became what the Bible calls the man after God's own heart. So that when the crisis hit, David had resources in God to lean on. Prov. 1:20-33

B. Even if our stress is the consequence of sin, we can take refuge in God.
If we bring our sins to God and confess them, of course God is merciful, he will forgive. But beloved, that does not mean that you will not feel the consequences of sin. It's significant that David's enemies were still condemning him long after God had forgiven him. Scripture says that the sin of adultery brings a reproach that will never be wiped away.

We must never condone sin, but we must be careful not to judge or reject repentant sinners when they come for forgiveness.

C. God will never allow us to go through more stress than we can bear if we trust in Him.

II. The Resource for Stress – God's hand -- vs. 15

David knew that his life was in the hand of God. And because of that, because God was sovereign over all of his life, there's a sense in which David was invincible until God was done with him.

Although God is sovereign, He's transcendent, yet He's also personal. He's imminent. He's right here with us. God is not severe and distant, off in some corner of the universe saying, I ordained it, now you grit your teeth and endure it.

III. The Response to Stress – *But I trusted in Thee* – vs. 14

Personal trust in the sovereign, personal God gives us inner stability in the midst of outer instability. That's where we get our strength. That's what helps us in the times of stress. Trust is the vital link that connects God's sovereign love with my distress.

A. Trusting in God is Spiritual Resignation

Just turning things over to God, putting them in God's hands. Take your hands off the situation. What we need to do all of us together is to stop trying to manage the universe. And guess what? Just give that over to God. That's not our job. That's his job.

B. Trusting in God is Willful Determination

C. Trusting in God is a Personal Application

It's one thing to have good theology. It's another thing to embrace it and make it practical in your own life. Trust is a continual appropriation. Trust is actively, personally laying hold of the character of God as revealed in his word and applying it to your own situation in your own life.

TEXT: PSALM 32

TITLE: CONFESSION IS THE BEST MEDICINE

BIG IDEA:
CONFESSION OF SIN CONVERTS THE QUICKSAND FOR SUFFERING INTO THE CONCRETE FOR BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:
one of the 7 penitential psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143)

I. (:1-2) FORGIVEN SINS = THE CONCRETE FOR BLESSING (THE FIRM FOUNDATION)

A. Even the worst sinner has the potential to experience Incredible Joy
cf. the Beatitudes

B. The Nature of Sin (note different Hebrew words used)
1. Transgression; rebellion against God
2. Missing the mark; wandering from the way
Implies that an absolute standard exists
any deviation would be sin
3. Twisted nature of sin; guilt; perversion

C. The Nature of Forgiveness (note different Hebrew words used)
1. "to carry, lift up, bear" -- pictures sin as a crushing burden
2. "to cover" --
3. "to think, account, plan, impute, reckon"

II. (:3-4) UNCONFESSED SINS = THE QUICKSAND FOR SUFFERING

A. Consequences of Unconfessed Sins
1. Physical Suffering
2. Emotional Suffering
3. Spiritual Suffering

B. The Heavy Hand of God's Chastening -- look who you are up against!

C. Given the Consequences, Why do people Fail to confess their sins and get right with God?

III. (:5) CONFESSION OF SIN = THE ONLY ANTIDOTE FOR GUILT AND JUDGMENT

A. The Process of Confession
1. Must be directed towards God (not some human priest)
2. Requires Humility
3. Requires Openness
4. Requires Agreeing with God about the nature of the offense

5. Requires Recognition of God's standards and their application to me

B. The Application of Forgiveness
   1. God is Faithful and Just to respond to such a confession
   2. Forgiveness extends to the personal guilt that had been causing such suffering

IV. (:6-7) DELIVERANCE IS POSSIBLE -- BUT MUST BE SOUGHT IMMEDIATELY

A. The Time to Seek Deliverance is NOW -- before the final flood waters of judgment

B. The Security Provided by Deliverance is Precious

V. (:8-10) DON'T BE AN IDIOT!

A. Respond to Wise Counsel -- don't be a stubborn mule

B. Choose Blessing Rather than Suffering

VI. (:11) JUMP FOR JOY!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we truly hate sin? Are we conscious of the offense sin is to a holy God?

2) Isn't it a great thing and a wonder that sinners can be called "*Blessed*!?"

3) Have we experienced the tremendous burden of a guilty conscience through trying to hide our sin and cover up our wrongdoing? Were there any physical symptoms accompanying that spiritual and emotional anguish?

4) Are we taking advantage of the Lord's offer to instruct and teach and guide us or are we being headstrong and stubborn like the "*horse or mule which have no understanding*?"

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "First, the prerequisite of receiving forgiveness is confession or acknowledgment of our sin to the Lord from a spirit free of deceit (vv. 5 and 2). When you put these two things together, acknowledgment of our sin and not deceiving God, a very precise meaning for confession emerges. Confession to God is not merely admitting our sin as real but also rejecting our sin as repulsive. There is deceit in the spirit of the person who admits with his mind that he sins but feels no revulsion in his heart at those sins:

his bad temper and irritability, his hypercritical attitude, his gossiping, his lukewarm love for Christ, his failure to discipline his children, his dishonesty on tax forms and financial reports, etc. This is deceit because sin is repulsive and horrid in God's eyes and ought to be hated and shunned. So to come to God admitting to sin and feeling no grief or repugnance is to come with deceit, for what you are acknowledging is not really acknowledged as sin. The prerequisite therefore of divine forgiveness is admitting our sin as real and rejecting our sin as repulsive,

My second question was, Why is this necessary? Why doesn't God, in His great grace just forgive all sin in everybody, no strings attached? Why does there have to be in every individual's case the prerequisite of confession? Every sin we commit is an insult to God, a slap in His face, whether we see it that way or not. This has to be seen if we are to understand the dynamics of confession and forgiveness. When two people offer you contrary advice for how to live and stake their character on the wisdom of their counsel and you choose to follow one and not the other, you defame the other's character. It is inevitable. And that is what we do to God every time we sin instead of following in His way.

Now the aim of all forgiveness is to restore a damaged relationship. God's aim is to bring His people into perfect harmony and union and fellowship with Himself for His glory and their joy forever. To that end He is willing to forgive the insults that threaten to ruin that fellowship through sin. But can there be fellowship when one of the parties in a relationship is perpetually devoted to offending and insulting the other? Conceivably God could disregard such continued insults for an eternity. But what for? That wouldn't bring about union with His people and so neither His glory nor their happiness would be achieved. Only the perpetuation of sin and defamation of God's character.

The only way for God to reach the goal of glorifying His name and making His people happy is not just to overlook sins but to change sinners. That is what God was doing with David and that's what He is doing through Christ with us who believe. And this is why there is a prerequisite for forgiveness. God demands that we turn from sin with repugnance because He is in the business of not just covering our sins but also of shaping our characters. The person whose sins will be forgiven is the person who hates His own sinning and is on the way to Christ-likeness. If this were not God's way there would be no heaven of holiness to hope for, no company of just men made perfect, and no divine glory unsullied by the insults of unpunished creatures."

VanGemeren: "The expository structure may be outlined as follows:

A. Blessing of Forgiveness (vv.1-2)
  B. Lesson From Experience (vv.3-5)
    C. God's Protection (vv.6-7)
      D. Promise of Wisdom (v.8)
  B'. Lesson From Experience (v.9)
    C'. God's Protection (v.10)
A'. Rejoicing in Forgiveness (v.11)"

Leupold: "We offer the following outline of the contents of the psalm:
a) The theme: the blessedness of forgiveness (vv.1,2)
b) The wretchedness of impenitence, recorded as a personal experience (vv. 3,4)
c) A summary statement of the entire experience (v.5)
d) An exhortation to the godly to avail themselves of this privilege (vv.6,7)
e) A divine exhortation not to continue in impenitence (vv.8-9)
f) An exhortation to all who have shared in this experience to rejoice over it (vv.10,11)"

Stott: "Wrong-doing is *transgression*, indicating a positive offence, a trespass, the stepping over a known boundary; and *sin*, a negative missing of the mark, an omission, the failure to attain an ideal; and "*iniquity*" (Revised Standard Version), that inward moral perversity or corruption of nature which we call 'original sin.'
Forgiveness is threefold too. The Hebrew word translated *forgiven* in verse 1 apparently means to remove or to lift. Sin is also *covered*, put out of sight; and therefore the Lord refuses to reckon it against the sinner. Forgiveness is thus regarded as the lifting of a burden, the covering of an ugly sight, and the cancelling of a debt."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Godly Man's Picture – vs. 6**
Introduction: Series called Echoes from Puritan Pulpits.
Thomas Watson: wrote a book – *The Godly Man's Picture*.
Portrait of godliness. Godliness consists in an exact harmony between holy principles and practices. That's so true. The godly man prays, the godly man seeks God, the godly man repents, he loves, he obeys. Watson said this, godliness is the sacred impression of God upon the soul.

Big Idea: **Four Guidelines**

I. The Condition of Godliness
A penitential psalm -- written when David had repented of a sin in his life, a certain failure that had taken place in his life, and he confessed that failure, and he was penitent towards God. A Maskil psalm was meant to give someone insight or to give them instruction.

Godliness is something that God does in us. It is a work of God. It is something supernatural.

II. The Cry of Godliness
A godly man is a praying man. Not occasionally praying, not formally praying just in public when you're in church. But he's a man who lives constantly near the mercy seat of God. He's constantly seeking God. He's constantly crying unto the Lord. And so he would say that godliness expresses itself in prayer. Prayer is the breath of spiritual life. What breathing is to us physically, prayer is to the godly man spiritually. It's like breathing.

Prayer is the language of dependence. We are, a godly person, since they know their corruption and they feel their weakness, they sense the continual need of grace in their life, then it is the language of dependence. We pray because we express our absolute dependence upon God. But also, prayer is the channel of communion.

You pray because you delight in God. Because you want to sense his presence in your life. Because love always seeks an expression. It loves God. Silence toward God, he says, would be unnatural to a regenerate heart. So you're gonna wanna talk to him. But also prayer is the outlet of a burdened heart. And Watson understands that godliness does not remove sorrow, but it redirects it. The godly man feels sin more deeply. Sometimes people say, man, you know, I feel like the closer I walk to the Lord, the more sinful I feel.

Prayer is also evidence of adoption. Remember the passage, we all know this, that the spirit stirs our heart whereby we cry out what? Abba, Father. It shows the spirit of adoption. And he would also say that prayerlessness exposes counterfeits. Very simply, if you don't pray, then he says that, you know, it's not real. Godliness is impossible without prayer, he would say. Where prayer is absent, he says grace is absent, and repentance is counterfeit, and religion is external.

III. The Character of Godliness – The Marks of a Godly Man

A. A godly man is a man of knowledge

There are 4 specific things that he knows:

1) God's holiness
2) His own sin
3) Christ's sufficiency
4) The world's vanity

B. A godly man loves the Word

You have a spiritual affinity for God's Word because the Word of God is the voice of God. And the Word of God reveals Christ, and the Word of God sanctifies us. And this is why we love it so and why we love to return to that garden and walk through it again. Reading is taking in the food, meditation is chewing it, obedience is the strength drawn from it.

C. A godly man hates sin

Hypocrites hate sin for its consequences. But a godly man hates sin for its nature. Not just the consequences of what it does in our life, but because of what sin by nature is.

D. A godly man is humble

Godliness doesn't inflate a man, it lowers him. Humility is a right estimation of God and self produced by spiritual illumination. When the Holy Spirit has illuminated your heart, you know what you see, you see God as he is and you see yourself the way you are. And if that happens, you can't help but be humbled by that.

E. A godly man loves God

He obeys because he loves. He serves God because he loves God. He prays because he loves God.

F. A godly man is passionate for Christlikeness

Godliness is not static. That is, there's gonna be constantly changes in your life. What kind of changes? Spiritual growth. You deepen, you mature. You bear fruit. You learn to fight spiritual battles. You're constantly changing. And you're constantly asking the question to yourself, how may I be more like Christ? Christlikeness is the aim of the godly person, to be conformed to the image of Christ.

G. A godly man loves the saints

He loves the church. He prays for the church. He supports the church.

H. A godly man weeps over sin

I. A godly man is a heavenly-minded man

IV. The Call of Godliness

Seek the Lord while he may be found.

TEXT: PSALM 33

TITLE: SONGS OF JOY

BIG IDEA:
BECAUSE WE CAN COUNT ON GOD,
OUR HEART SHOULD OVERFLOW WITH SONGS OF JOY

I. (:1-5) SONGS OF JOY ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE GOD IS DEPENDABLE

A. VARIETY OF EXPRESSION OF JOY

1. Variety of Nature of Expression
   Songs of Joy
   Praise
   Give Thanks
   Sing a New Song
   Shout of Joy

2. Variety of Accompaniment
   with the lyre
   with the harp of ten strings

B. QUALITY OF THE EXPRESSION OF JOY
1. spontaneous ("*shout of joy*")

   but also

2. skillfully crafted ("*play skillfully*") -- not slipshod or careless

C. CHARACTER OF THE JOYOUS
1. Righteous ones
2. the Upright

D. CHARACTER OF THE GOD WHO MADE THEM JOYOUS -- HE IS DEPENDABLE

1. His Word is Dependable ("*Upright*") -- It can be counted on
2. His Works (Plans) are Dependable
   "*done in faithfulness*"
3. His Standards and Judgments are Dependable
   "*He loves righteousness and justice*"
4. His Lovingkindness can be counted on
   "*the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord*" = everywhere you look!

II. (:6-9) GOD'S WORD IS DEPENDABLE
CREATION IS AN AWESOME TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF GOD'S
WORD --
FEAR GOD BECAUSE HIS WORD IS POWERFUL AND DEPENDABLE
"*He spoke and it was done*" = "*He commanded, and it stood fast*" (vs.9)

A. Creation of the heavens and all their host
-- by the Word of the Lord
-- by the breath of His mouth

B. Creation of the boundaries and depths of the sea on the earth

C. Creation is intended by God to be an Awesome Testimony
1. "*Let all the earth fear the Lord*"
2. "*Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him*"

III. (:10-12) GOD'S PLANS (WORKS) ARE DEPENDABLE

A. God's Enemies Are Unable to Carry Out Their Plans
1. "*The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations*"
2. "*He frustrates the plans of the peoples*"

B. God's People Can Count on God Carrying Out His Plans
1. "*The counsel of the Lord stands forever*"
2. "*The plans of His heart from generation to generation*"

What a blessing to be included in the company of God's people by the sovereign choice of God!

IV. (:13-19) GOD CAN BE COUNTED ON TO SAVE THOSE WHO ARE COUNTING ON HIM

A. God Sees the Basis for Our Confidence
He knows the orientation of our heart = the object of our trust

1. God has the best vantage point for such observation
"*looks from heaven*" = "*His dwelling place*"
no limitations on God
2. God as the Creator has the ultimate understanding of the heart of man

B. God is not fooled by the False Confidences that are attractive to man
-- "*the king is not saved by a mighty army*"
-- "*a warrior is not delivered by great strength*"

-- "*a horse is a false hope for victory*"

-- "*nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength*"

C. God is looking for those who fear Him and hope in His lovingkindness
"*the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,*
on those who hope for His lovingkindness"

D. God Can be Counted on to Deliver from Death and Preserve from Danger
"*to deliver their soul from death,*
And to keep them alive in famine"

V. (:20-23) OUR HEART OVERFLOWS WITH SONGS OF JOY BECAUSE OUR HOPE AND TRUST ARE IN THE LORD

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) "*Praise is becoming to the upright*." (vs.2) Think of how much attention we give to our appearance. Shouldn't we be far more concerned with adorning our hearts with what is most appropriate and attractive?

2) What does this psalm contribute to our understanding of *creation ex nihilo*? God spoke and it was done. By His Word He brought everything into existence out of nothing.

3) Isn't it comforting that the emphasis on the Lord's knowledge of all things (vs. 13-22) is directed towards His understanding and care for us – to deliver us from danger?

4) What are some of our potential false sources of hope and confidence – ones we need to guard against just like the psalmist had to be careful not to put his trust in his army or horses (vs.16-17)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "To delight ourselves in God is most truly to extol him, even if we let no notes of song proceed from our lips. That God is, and that he is such a God, and our God, ours for ever and ever, should wake within us an unceasing and overflowing joy. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly."

VanGemeren: "Although Psalm 33 is commonly classified as a hymn of praise to the Lord 'as Creator' (Brueggemann, pp. 28-38), Craigie rightly specifies the principal

theme as praise of God's creative activities in the realms of nature and human history (*Psalms 1-50*, pp. 270-71). The psalm begins with an ascription of praise to Yahweh (vv. 1-3) and moves through a catalog of divine perfections (vv.4-5) to a contemplation of the power, purpose, and love of the Lord (vv.6-19). The conclusion focuses on a trusting expectation of God's goodness on behalf of his own (vv.20-22).

The structure reveals a cyclical pattern by which each generation is encouraged to praise the Lord for past and present evidences of his love. Consequently, each generation is to expect the Lord to give further reason for praise as the eyes of faith are fixed on him and on a renewal of his love."

Kidner: Re vs. 4-9 – "His creative word: His *word* and His *work* (4) are inseparable, for His words are never empty. This is the reason for the outburst of praise above. To know that nothing came into existence but by God's command (6,9) is to be confronted with pure creation, not iron necessity, since God acted in freedom; but confronted also with a universe, the work of a single, self-consistent mind. This is liberating (1-3) and humbling (8); it is also an invitation to research (111:2); but above all, the wealth of moral terms here (4,5) makes it clear that God is far more to us than Maker. The remarkable verse 5b goes even further than Isaiah's vision of a world full of God's glory. Like Exodus 33:18, 19, it prepares us to see His glory in terms of goodness; and this goodness embraces all His works (cf. 145:9). It is the secret of the psalmists' enthusiasm for the created world, an enthusiasm which is increased rather than diminished by their sense of its smallness in comparison with Him (see the bold similes of verse 7, and cf., e.g., 104:1-9; Is. 40:12), whose mastery of it is effortless."

Alden: "Christians constantly need to be reminded of God's sovereignty. As verse 4 teaches, all God's doings are right and faithful. God is not prompted by selfishness or greed. He sets the standard of righteousness. All truth, all right, all justice are measured against His norm. Entire studies could be made on each of the key words in verses 4 and 5: *right*, *faithfulness, righteousness*, *justice*, and *lovingkindness*.

Perhaps even better than Genesis 1, the section beginning with verse 6 and ending with verse 9 teaches that God created the world out of nothing simply by speaking. The term *Word* suggests the second person of the Trinity (Jn 1:1-3). The word *breath* in verse 6b might even allude to the third person of the Trinity since *breath*, *wind*, and *spirit* are the same word in Hebrew. The term occurs in Genesis 1:2."

Morris: Re vs 9 – "There was no process of creation, no time involved. God's Word is omnipotent, and when He speaks in creative power, the result is instantaneous. there is obviously no possibility of 'evolution' insuch an act of fiat creation. The entities created by God were created complete and mature and functioning right from the start. '*For He commanded and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever*' (Psalm 148:5,6)."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Discipline of Worship**
Introduction: Spiritual disciplines are those habits, those godly habits that we instill in our life that will produce godliness. It is really replacing bad habits with good godly habits. This psalm is a call to all the people of God to come and to worship the Lord.

And the verbs in this psalm are plural, which means this is talking about worshiping in community.

Big Idea: **Four crucial elements in our worship**

I. The People of Worship – vs. 1
It's the righteous, it's the people of God that are being called to worship Him. God is looking for people that will truly worship Him, in spirit and in truth (**John 4:23**).

Rom. 12:1 -- Real worship is recognizing all the mercies that God has given us. And in return, we give ourself to Him.

Rev. 5:11-14 -- If you don't like worship, you're not going to like heaven because we're going to be doing a lot of that there all the way through eternity.

You know who worships God? The obedient, those who walk uprightly. That's why in Jesus' ministry, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they pretended to worship God, with their lips, but their life totally betrayed that. Jesus said this, you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, the people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and they honored me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. God wants people that will worship him with their heart, with their whole life, not just with their lips
Ps. 22:22, 25; Ps. 89;7; Heb. 10 – *not forsaking the assembly . . .*

II. The Participation in Worship – vs. 2
A new song means that every praise song should emerge from a fresh awareness of God's presence. Ps. 40:3; 96:1

So I see singing. I see serving. They're playing their instruments here. This is the first time in the Psalms that musical instruments are mentioned as being employed for worship. Certainly nothing wrong with that. It's wonderful. The Psalms endorse using musical instruments in worship, and they should be played with skill. done their best unto the Lord. And the idea, the principle is whatever gifts that God has given us, we employ these gifts in honor of God and worship of who He is.

III. The Purpose of Worship –
The word worship means to give honor, to give reverence. The word means to bow down, to prostrate. The Greek word for worship means to kiss towards. It's the idea of just adoration, submission. Stephen Charnock said, it's nothing else but a rendering to God the honor that is due unto him.

Four reasons why God is worthy:
1) Because of His righteous character
For the word of the Lord is right and all his works are done in truth – **vs. 4**
He is the standard of what is right.
He is righteous in all His ways.
The earth is filled with the goodness of the Lord.

2) Because of His creative word – **vs. 6**
Everything that was made was done by divine fiat.
Everything that is visible came out of nothing. That's creation *ex nihilo*.

3) Because of His sovereign control – **vs. 10**

4) Because of How He Delivers us – **vs. 13**

IV. The Product of Worship – vs. 20-22
There's an exchange that takes place. As we wait on the Lord, as we hope in the Lord, as we worship the Lord, you know what God does? He helps us. In **verse 24**, "*our soul waited for the Lord. He is our help. for our hearts shall rejoice in him.*" There's an exchange. We worship him, and in response, he builds our faith, he rejoices our heart, he refreshes our soul. Always when we focus on God and we worship God, we get something back. and it's always wonderful.

TEXT: PSALM 34

TITLE: FEAR THE LORD AND BE DELIVERED FROM ALL YOUR FEARS

BIG IDEA:
THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD PRAISE HIM CONTINUALLY
FOR HIS DELIVERANCE FROM DESPERATE SITUATIONS

I. (:1-3) PRAISE = OUR PRIMARY MISSION

Do you ever wonder what God's will is for your life? To Praise Him all the time!

A. (:1) Bless the Lord for Rescuing You /
Don't Blame the Lord for your Predicament
"*I will bless the Lord at all times;*
His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

B. (:2) Boast in the Lord /
Don't Boast in Yourself
"*My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;*
The humble shall hear it and rejoice."

C. (:3) Beckon Others to Join You in Worship /
Don't Become a Lone Ranger
"*O magnify the Lord with me,*
And let us exalt His name together."

II. (:4-7) DELIVERANCE = GOD'S ANSWER TO THOSE WHO CRY FOR HELP

A. (:4) Deliverance from Fears /
Seek the Lord
"*I sought the Lord, and He answered me;*
And delivered me from all my fears."

B. (:5) Deliverance from Shame /
Look to the Lord
"*They looked to Him and were radiant,*
And their faces shall never be ashamed."

C. (:6) Deliverance from Troubles /
Cry for Help
"*This poor man cried and the Lord heard him,*
And saved him out of all his troubles."

D. (:7) Deliverance from Dangers /
Fear the Lord

"*The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him,*
And rescues them."

III. (:8-14) THE FEAR OF THE LORD = THE KEY TO DELIVERANCE

A. (:8) The Fear of the Lord is Consistent with the Goodness of the Lord

"*O taste and see that the Lord is good;*
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"

B. (:9-10) The Fear of the Lord Guarantees God's Providential Care

"*O fear the Lord, you His saints;*
For to those who fear him, there is no want.
The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;
But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing."

C. (:11-14) Instruction in the Fear of the Lord

"*Come, you children, listen to me;*
I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

1. (:12) Prognosis for the Fear of the Lord

enjoy a good, long life
"*Who is the man who desires life,*
And loves length of days that he may see good?"

2. (:13-14) Prescription for the Fear of the Lord

a. (:13) Guard what you say

"*Keep your tongue from evil*"
"*and your lips from speaking deceit*"

b. (:14a) Guard what you do

"*Depart from evil*"
"*do good*"

c. (:14b) Guard your relationships

"*Seek peace*"
"*and pursue it*"

IV. (:15-18) DELIVERANCE = GOD'S ANSWER TO THOSE WHO CRY FOR HELP

A. (:15-17) To the Righteous -- but not to evildoers

1. God's eyes are Attentive

"*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous*"

2. God's ears are Attentive

"*And His ears are open to their cry*"

3. God's face set Against Evildoers

"*The face of the Lord is against evildoers,*
To cut off the memory of them from the earth."

4. Summary: God Delivers the Righteous
"*The righteous cry and the Lord hears,*
And delivers them out of all their troubles."

B. (:18) To the Humble -- but not to the proud
1. "*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted"*

2. "*And saves those who are crushed in spirit*."

V. (:19-22) DELIVERANCE = NO PROBLEM NO MATTER HOW DESPERATE THE SITUATION

A. (:19-21) Desperate Situation
1. (:19) Multitude of Afflictions
"*Many are the afflictions of the righteous;*
But the Lord delivers him out of them all."

2. (:20) Maximum Physical Danger
"*He keeps all his bones;*
Not one of them is broken."

3. (:21) Many wicked enemies
"*Evil shall slay the wicked;*
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned."

B. (:22) Guaranteed Deliverance
"*The Lord redeems the soul of His servants;*
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Verses 1-4 could be the theme of the Book of Psalms. Are we rallying our brothers and sisters in the Lord to worship and praise the Lord whole-heartedly? Do we actively boast in the Lord for the deliverances He has accomplished on our behalf?

2) Consider the application of vs. 8 – "taste and see that the Lord is good" to our remembrance time at the Lord's Supper. The one who has manifested His goodness in offering His life on our behalf will surely not withhold from us any good thing.

3) What type of legacy of a good name and reputation will you leave behind when the Lord takes you home? (cf. the lack of remembrance which is a form of God's judgment on the wicked – vs. 16)

4) Why do the righteous have so many afflictions (vs. 19)? Are we actively taking

refuge in the Lord? How do we go about that? The great thing about being brokenhearted and crushed in spirit (vs. 18) is that we are then ripe for God's blessing.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alexander: "The incident referred to is recorded in 1 Sam. xxi. David, having fled from Saul into the land of the Philistines, was brought into the presence of Achish king of Gath, from whom he had reason to expect retaliation from injuries formerly received, and therefore pretended to be mad, an expedient which, in spite of its dubious morality, it pleased God to allow to be successful. In grateful recollection of this undeserved deliverance, not without some compunction with respect to the means by which he had secured it, David seems, at a later period of his life, to have composed this psalm for popular instruction, to which it is peculiarly adapted by its clearness and simplicity, as well as by its alphabetic form, which is a valuable aid to the memory."

Craigie: "In the context of OT theology, one of the psalm's most profound insights concerns the instruction on *the fear of the Lord* (v.12). This fear is not only the foundation of the wisdom tradition, but it is also one of the biblical doctrines most easily abused or misunderstood. The fear of the Lord is indeed the foundation of life, the key to joy in life and long and happy days. But it is not a guarantee that life will be always easy, devoid of the difficulties that may seem to mar so much of human existence. The fear of the Lord established joy and fulfilment in all of life's experiences. It may mend the broken heart, but it does not prevent the heart from being broken; it may restore the spiritually crushed, but it does not crush the forces that may create oppression. The psalm, if fully grasped, dispels the naivete of that faith which does not contain within it the strength to stand against the onslaught of evil."

Stott: "One of the notable features of this psalm is its combination of worship and witness. In answer to prayer the psalmist has been marvellously delivered by God from some great peril, and his gratitude brims over now in praise, now in exhortation to others to taste and see the Lord's goodness for themselves. He describes himself as '*boasting in the Lord*' (verse 2). That is, he ascribes his salvation to the Lord, and because he does so out loud, those who hear him will give the glory to God too. C.H. Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, said: 'The first ten verses are a hymn, and the last twelve a sermon.' …

To fear God is not, of course, to be frightened of Him, Its meaning here is plain from its equivalents, namely, to '*seek*' Him (verse 4), to '*call*' to Him (verse 6) and '*take refuge*' in Him (verse 8), acknowledging our helplessness and looking to Him for deliverance (compare Luke 1:50)."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Live Each Day**
Introduction: It gives us instructions on how to live each day of our life. It's a very thorough psalm, and this is called an acrostic psalm. You never know what a day is going to bring. You never know what kind of close call you're going to have. And

David has one of those kind of close calls. Go to 1 Samuel real quick. Look in chapter 21. Let's look a little bit about what happened behind the writing of this psalm. So by David pretending to be insane, he was protecting himself, but he was really using a lie to protect himself, using deception to do that. And so he's basically kicked out of Gath.

Big Idea: **Four things we need to decide to do each day of our life.**

I. Praise the Lord – vs. 1

David, again, understood that his deliverance was from God. He's not boasting in his own cleverness or in his own ingenuity or skill to escape. He's boasting in God. And that's what praising God is all about. It's not boasting about what we have done, but what God has done.

A. Praising the Lord is Personal

No one can praise God for you.

B. Praising the Lord is Perpetual

"*at all times*" -- Someone said if you're having difficulty in your prayer life, pull out some groans and shove in a few hallelujahs.

C. Praising the Lord should be Purposeful

II. Seek the Lord – vs.4

The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

> "Why does God manifest his presence to some and let multitudes of others struggle alone in the half-light of imperfect Christian experience? Of course, the will of God is the same for all. He has no favorites within his household. All he has ever done for any of his children, he will do for all his children. The difference lies not with God, but with us. The problem is, is that we're not seeking God, we're not pursuing after God."

The more we get to know God, the more that we want to know of God. Matthew Henry is right when he said, "whenever there is true grace, there is a desire for more grace." And so we should seek the Lord.

Let me give you some reasons why David gives:

1) Because He delivers us from our fears

2) He saves us from our troubles

The Hebrew word is a word for a tight place or a difficult situation. **Ps. 34:19**

3) He satisfies us with His goodness

God's grace looks good, but it tastes even better. But the only way you're gonna know that is to experience it for yourself.

III. Fear the Lord – vs. 9, 11

Deut. 5:29 – Def.: the fear of the Lord is a reverential attitude that leads to right actions.

1) Desiring what is good -- If you want to fear the Lord, do what is right – **vs. 12**

2) Refusing to lie – **vs. 13**

3) Depart from evil – **vs. 14**

4) Seek peace and pursue it – **vs. 14**

5) Remember God is watching – **vs. 15**

6) Remember God judges sin – **vs. 16**

IV. Trust the Lord – vs. 17

The word here means to take refuge in.
The time to trust God is when you are broken.

TEXT: PSALM 35

TITLE: CALLING IN THE HEAVY ARTILLERY

BIG IDEA:
UNDESERVED, MALICIOUS, PERSONAL ATTACKS
CALL FOR DIVINE VINDICATION

INTRODUCTION:

When have you come under vicious, unjustified personal attack? What were the circumstances?
How did you feel as your attackers heaped slander upon slander to try to ruin your good name and cause you great harm?

-- like vultures circling in for the kill
-- like poachers lining you up in the sites of their rifles
-- like mockers painting you with the unfair brush of shame and disgrace

cf. David being hunted by Saul and villified by all around him; no friends standing with him; all alone with nowhere to turn for help

I. (:1-10) THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAN TURN THE TABLES ON OUR ATTACKERS

A. (:1-3) Calling in the Heavy Artillery

1. Calling on God to Engage the Attackers
   Contend
   Fight
2. The Weapons of Defense
   buckler and shield
3. The Weapons of Offense
   spear and battle-axe

B. (:4-6) Chasing them with the Angel of the Lord leading the pursuit

1. Their evil plans
   "*seek my life*"
   "*devise evil against me*"

2. Their embarrassing predicament
   "*ashamed and dishonored*"
   "*turned back and humiliated*"
   "*like chaff before the wind*"
   "*their way be dark and slippery*"

3. Their energetic pursuer = the angel of the Lord
   "*driving them on*"
   "*pursuing them*"

C. (:7-8) Catching them in their own nets of destruction

1. Unjustified attacks

"*without cause they hid their net for me*"
"*without cause they dug a pit for my soul*"

2. Unexpected retribution

"*let destruction come upon him unawares*"
"*let the net which he hid catch himself*"
"*into that very destruction let him fall*"

D. (:9-10) Response to Deliverance = Refrain of Praise

1. Awesome God -- "*Who is like Thee*"

"*my soul shall rejoice in the Lord*"
"*it shall exult in His salvation*"

2. Awesome Deliverance -- saving against all odds

"*delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him*"
"*and the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him*"

II. (:11-18) MALICIOUS PERSONAL ATTACKS MAKE NO SENSE WHEN THEY ARE UNDESERVED

Contrast:

A. My Compassion When They Were in Need

"*my clothing was sackcloth*"
"*I humbled my soul with fasting*"
"*my prayer kept returning to my bosom*"
"*I went about as though it were my friend or brother*"
"*I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother*"

VS.

B. Their Malicious Personal Attacks When I was Vulnerable

"*malicious witnesses rise up*"
"*they ask me of things that I do not know*"
"*they repay me evil for good to the bereavement of my soul*"
"*at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together*"
"*the smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me*"
"*they slandered me without ceasing*"
"*like godless jesters at a feast, they gnashed at me with their teeth*"

C. (:17-18) Response to Deliverance = Refrain of Praise

III. (:19-28) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

A. (:19-21) Plea for Vindication against those:

1. "*who are wrongfully my enemies*" and "*rejoice over me*"

2. "*who hate me without cause*" and "*wink maliciously*"
3. who speak against me with deceitful slander
4. who bear false witness against me

B. (:22-23) The Judge Who Sees All Cannot Remain Silent

C. (:24-26) Plea for Vindication

D. (:27-28) Response to Deliverance = Refrain of Praise
1. Corporate Refrain of Praise

2. Personal Refrain of Praise

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we have any examples in our own life of how the Lord has rescued us from those who attacked us without cause? How did the Lord deal with them?

2) What do we do when we experience the frustration of the psalmist who tried to humble himself and seek the Lord in prayer, but found that "*my prayer kept returning to my bosom*"? Sometimes does it seem like we are just praying to our four walls?

3) This is one of the "*How long*" psalms (cf. vs. 17). Why do you think God's clock doesn't always correspond to our clock?

4) Do we really have a sense that the Lord "*delights in the prosperity of His servant*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

VanGemeren: "The context in which the psalm arose is not certain as the language of this psalm shifts between legal and military. Whether the psalmist had been maligned and required vindication of his name or whether the problem was of international proportion … is not clear. There is sufficient ambiguity in the psalm that it may be classified as an individual lament.
The varied metaphors (legal, judicial, martial, and hunting) add to the colorful expressions in the psalm. The prayer may be divided into three sections (vv.1-10, 11-18, 19-28), each of which in a repetitive and overlapping manner calls on the Lord to act on behalf of the psalmist. Because of the individual and general nature of the prayer, it expresses in words the feelings of our hearts whenever injustice comes into our lives."

Leupold: Re Outline:

a) Prayer that God may arise in the singer's behalf and repay those who have wrongfully attacked him (vv. 1-10).
b) The singer's true sympathy for the misfortune his foes once suffered which is but poorly rewarded by them now (vv. 11-18).
c) Prayer that God may bestir himself against these false friends and vindicate the psalmist's righteousness (vv. 19-28).

Kidner: Re vv. 11-18 – "Other psalms will plumb still further depths by describing the treachery of bosom companions (e.g. 41:9; 55:12-14). Here the wound, which is hardly less painful, is the spite and ingratitude of men who were not close friends but had been treated '*as though*' they were (14); such had been David's care for them: a concern as genuine as that of Romans 12:15 or of the Good Samaritan. In return, it is as though the Samaritan himself now fell among thieves, only to find his former protégé his chief tormentor."

Perowne: "How are we to account for such prayers for vengeance? We find them chiefly in four Psalms, the seventh, thirty-fifth, sixty-ninth, and one-hundred and ninth, and the imprecations in these form a terrible climax. In the last no less than thirty anathemas have been counted. Are these the mere outbursts of passionate and unsanctified feeling, or are they the legitimate expression of a righteous indignation? Are they to be excused as being animated by the 'spirit of Elias?" a spirit not unholy indeed, but far removed from the meekness and gentleness of Christ; or are they the stereotyped forms in which the spirit of devotion may utter itself? Are they Jewish only, or may they be Christian also? An uninstructed fastidiousness, it is well known, has made many persons recoil from reading these Psalms at all… Some have tried to reconcile them with a more enlightened conscience, by regarding such words not as the expresson of a wish, but as the utterance of a prediction; the Hebrew optative, which is distinct enough from the simple future, absolutely forbids this expedient. Others again would see in them expressions which may lawfully be used in the soul's wrestling of righteous zeal for God's honour, and remind us that if we do not sympathize with such zeal, it may be not because our religion is more pure, but because our hearts are colder.

Now the real source of the difficulty lies in our not observing and bearing in mind the essential difference between the Old Testament and the New. The older dispensation was in every sense a sterner one than the new…The Jewish nation … had been steeled and hardened by the discipline which had pledged it to a war of extermination with idolaters… it is conceivable how even a righteous man, under it, feeling it to be his bounden duty to root out evil wherever he saw it, and identifying, as he did, his own enemies with the enemies of Jehovah, might use language which to us appears unnecessarily vindictive. To men so trained and taught, what we call 'religious toleration,' was a thing not only wrong, but absolutely inconceivable…

These imprecations are not the passionate longing for personal revenge. The singer undoubtedly sees in his enemies the enemies of God and his church. They that are not with him are against God. And because the zeal of God's house even consumes him, he prays that all the doers of iniquity may be rooted out. The indignation therefore is righteous, though it may appear to us wrongly directed, or excessive in its utterance."

TEXT: PSALM 36

TITLE: WICKED SCHEMERS ARE IGNORANT OF THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS WILL PROTECT US AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE WICKED

I. (:1-4) EVIL SCHEMES FILL THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FORSAKEN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. The Root Problem = No Fear of God

1. "*There is no fear of God before his eyes*" (:1)
2. "*He does not despise evil*" (:4)

B. The Development of Evil Schemes -- Where do they come from and Why?

1. The Pleasure of Evil (:1-2)
   a) Attractive
   b) Deceitful

2. The Practice of Evil (:3)
   a) In Word
      "*wickedness*"
      "*deceit*"
   b) In Deed
      "*ceased to be wise and to do good*"

3. The Pursuit of Evil (:4)
   "*He plans wickedness upon his bed*"
   "*He sets himself on a path that is not good*"

II. (:5-9) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS FILLS THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO SEEK HIS PROTECTION

A. Extent of the Lord's Lovingkindness (coupled with Faithfulness) and Righteousness (coupled with Judgments) (:5-6)

How far does it extend?

1. As High as you can imagine = the sky is the limit!
   "*to the heavens*"
   "*to the skies*"
   "*like the mountains of God*"

2. As Deep as the deepest seas -- "Thy judgments are like a great deep."

B. Value of the Lord's Lovingkindness (:7)

How valuable is it?

1. Precious -- "How precious is Thy lovingkindness"

2. Protective -- "the children of men take refuge ..."

C. Satisfying Nature of the Lord's Lovingkindness (:8-9)

1. Abundant -- all you could ever want
2. Satisfies the appetite
3. Unlimited blessings
4. Life-giving and sustaining = "*the fountain of life*"
5. Light of Wisdom and Holiness

III. (:10-12) THE WICKED WILL BE DEFEATED IN THEIR EVIL SCHEMES

A. The Perseverance of God's Lovingkindness (:10)

B. The Frustration of the Evil Schemes of the Wicked (:11)

C. The Utter Defeat of the Wicked (:12)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What input does this psalm give as to why people sin?

2) How are God's attributes of lovingkindness and faithfulness made more concrete and explained through analogies to nature?

3) What type of concern does God demonstrate for animals? (vs. 6f)

4) How can we best draw streams of living water from our Fountain of Life?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "Through verse 4 the servant of the Lord delineates the wicked man's thought pattern. He begins with a certain godlessness. Then pride pervades his thinking. Soon he is convinced that his sin will not be discovered or punished. He proceeds to voice his plots, which are neither wise nor good. Having worked out the iniquity while lying in bed, he then executes his wicked chicanery."

Kidner: “This is a psalm of powerful contrasts, a glimpse of human wickedness at its most malevolent, and divine goodness in its many-sided fullness. Meanwhile the singer is menaced by the one and assured of victory by the other. Few psalms cover so great a range in so short a space.”

Maddux:

I. Estate of the wicked for deep-seated sin.
    - A. A turning aside.
    - B. God means nothing.
    - C. Full of self-praise.
    - D. Loss of self-esteem.
    - E. Evil, unreliable words.
    - F. Omitted wisdom.
    - G. Good deeds missing.
    - H. Repose filled with evil thinking.
    - I. Detours from the good way by design.
    - J. Has no aversion for evil.

II. Estate of God in abundant mercy and compassion.
    - A. Faithfulness to the heights.
    - B. Righteousness in strength.
    - C. Judgments to the depths.
    - D. Preservation for all creation.
    - E. Excellent in lovingkindness.
    - F. Inspires trust.
    - G. Satisfies longings.
    - H. Source of real pleasure.
    - I. Fountain of life.
    - J. Light of the world.

III. Estate of prayer in outreach.
    - A. Compassion to continue.
        1. To those who know God.
        2. To upright in heart.
    - B. Guard against pride.
        1. Foot of oppression.
        2. Hand of opposition.
    - C. Rewards to enemy.

Perowne: Re vs. 5 – “Words seem to fail him when he would speak of the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of God. (See the same attributes associated in like manner in xxiii. 4,5, and there also in connection with God’s providential care of His creatures.) The universe itself is too little to set forth their greatness. (Comp. ciii. 11; Eph. ii. 18.)

Harris: THE SONG OF GOD’S MERCY

Theme: When the Psalmist contrasts the wicked with the righteous, and contemplates the goodness of God.

Occasion: None indicated.

I. FAILURE OF THE WICKED. Ver. 1-4. "*No fear of God*" (ver. 1).

1. Creed. Ver. 1, 2. "*Saith within his heart*" (ver. 1).
2. Conduct. Ver. 3, 4. "*Deviseth iniquity*" (ver. 4).

II. FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Ver. 5-12. "*Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies*" (ver. 5).

1. Praise. Ver. 5-9. "*Thy lovingkindness*" (ver. 5).
   (1) Preservation. Ver. 5-7. "*Thou preservest man and beast*" (ver. 6).
   (2) Provision. Ver. 8, 9. "*Satisfied with thy fatness*" (ver. 8).
2. Prayer. Ver. 10-12. "*O continue*" (ver. 10). A grateful heart will turn from praise to prayer.
   (1) Oversight of the Godly. Ver. 10, 11. "*Lovingkindness unto them that know thee*" (ver. 10).
   (2) Overthrow of the Godless. Ver. 12. "*They are thrust down*."

TEXT: PSALM 37

TITLE: FOCUS ON THE FINISH LINE!

BIG IDEA:
2 CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED:
PEACEFULLY PERSEVERE VS. FRANTICALLY FRET
Or put more simply:
WAIT VS. WORRY

INTRODUCTION:

The middle of a race is no time to stop running and evaluate where you stand!

THE APPARENT PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED SHOULD NEVER DISTRACT THE RIGHTEOUS FROM:

APPRECIATING THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN THE PRESENT
AND
ANTICIPATING THE PROSPERITY OF GOD IN THE FUTURE
(AND HIS JUDGMENT AGAINST THE WICKED)

I. (:1-6) DEAD GRASS VS. SHINING LIGHT

5 Keys to Staying Focused on the Finish Line (not being Distracted):

A. (:1-2) Peaceful Spirit (Song: "It is Well with My Soul")

1. Don't get eaten up with Worry or Envy

"*Do not fret because of evildoers*"

"*Be not envious toward wrongdoers*"

talking primarily about personal attacks of the wicked against you

2. Don't let the vision of the present blind you to the vision of the future

Dead Grass is Worthless

Spurgeon: "Who envies the fat bullock the ribbons and garlands which decorate him as he is led to the slaughter?"

B. (:3A) Active Faith (Song: "Trust and Obey")

"*Trust in the Lord*"

"*Do good*"

Don't go into a shell and wait for your fortunes to turn;
the time to manifest faith is when the pressure is on;
Pressure/trials are not an exemption from sacrificially doing good;
Doing good is a good remedy for worry -- take the focus off your own situation and concentrate on meeting the needs of others

C. (:3B) Contented Life (Song: "Moment by Moment")

"*Dwell in the land*"
"*Cultivate faithfulness*" (or feed on faithfulness)
Don't doubt the ability of the Lord to provide for His flock and to shepherd us;
Discontentment causes us to charge around trying to obtain something we think God is withholding from us

D. (:4) Focused Desire (Song: "Fill all my Vision")

E. (:5-6) Submitted Will (Song: "All the Way my Saviour Leads Me")
personal vindication comes from the Lord, not from us proclaiming our own righteousness;
we can be at peace even when we are under attack

II. (:7-11) FLASH IN THE PAN VS. LASTING INHERITANCE

III. (:12-15) BOOMERANG EFFECT -- the plots of the wicked
The wicked are really digging their own grave

IV. (:16-22) SMOKE VS. SUBSTANCE
TEMPORAL ABUNDANCE VS. ETERNAL ABUNDANCE

V. (:23-26) THE HELPING HAND -- the path of the righteous
"*the Lord is the One who holds his hand*"

VI. (:27-34) EXECUTION VS. EXALTATION

VII. (:35-40) NO LEGACY VS. PROSPEROUS POSTERITY

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are all of the things that the psalmist says we SHOULD do and all of the things we are told NOT to do when we are faced with such injustice?

2) Why will those who are striving after godliness face more conflict than those who are running with the crowd? What are some of the special pressures that you face that you would not have to wrestle with if you were unsaved?

3) How can we quiet our hearts to wait upon the Lord when we are tempted to lash out in impatience and complain against the Lord's providence?

4) How has the Lord enabled us to be generous in our giving to others? How has he used our family and children to be a blessing to others? (cf. vs. 26)

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "The English reader does not appreciate the alphabetic outline of Psalm 37 but it is nevertheless there…Besides being alphabetic, the psalm is also an elaborate chiasmus. Here is that outline:

1-8 A The righteous are exhorted to ignore the wicked and trust God.
9 B Wait and inherit the land.
10-15 C The righteous inherit but the Lord destoys the plotting wicked.
16 D The poor are blessed though poor.
17 E The Lord upholds the righteous.
18a F The Lord guides the righteous.
18b G The righteous inherit.
19 H The righteous get.
20a I The wicked perish.
20b J The wicked are like a sacrifice.
20c J' The wicked are like a sacrifice.
21a I' The wicked give not.
21b H' The righteous give.
22 G' The blessed inherit.
23 F' The Lord guides the righteous.
24 E' The Lord upholds.
25-26 D' The blessed may be poor but not forsaken.
27-33 C' The Lord loves the righteous who will live and inherit, but the plotting wicked will die.
34 B' Wait and inherit the land.
35-40 A' God destroys the wicked but saves the righteous.

A simpler outline based on broad themes might be this:

A. Counsel for the meek (1-11)
B. Warning for the wicked (12-20)
C. Reward for the righteous (21-31)
D. Contrasts of retributions (32-40)"

Briscoe: "When Being Good Doesn't Seem to Pay – Few things are more infuriating than seeing rogues go free while honest men suffer. There is nothing more disturbing than knowing that the hard hit will get hit harder while the protected will get more protection. This is particularly true if you are trying to do the right thing and it goes sour on you while people around you are not even trying to do right and life is sweet for them…

Through all the difficulties of spiritual experience, the Lord will bring His people to an inheritance which '*shall be forever*' (v. 18). This is a blow to all the forces that oppose the saints, for these forces can't win. They can frustrate and infuriate and intimidate, but they can't obliterate because the Lord has reserved the final triumph for

Himself. All the agencies of opposition that have unjustly worked in disregard of God's principles will finally be thwarted. One day they will have to watch those they despised and oppressed rejoicing in the glory…

God is thinking of perfecting people for glory rather than protecting people from unpleasantness. In fact, He may use the injustice and the unpleasantness as a lesson to lead us further in our relationship with Him."

Harris: A SONG OF SECURITY

Theme: Perplexity over the character and seeming prosperity of the wicked and assurance of security for the righteous.

Occasion: None suggested.

I. PERPLEXITIES. Ver. 1-8.
   1. Character of the Godless. Ver. 1, 2.
      (1) Description. Ver. 1. "*Workers of iniquity.*"
      (2) Destiny. Ver. 2. "*Cut down*."
   2. Confidence of the Godly. Ver. 3-8.
      (1) Trust. Ver. 3-5. "*Trust in the Lord*" (ver. 3).
      (2) Triumph. Ver. 6-8. "*Bring forth righteousness*" (ver. 6).

II. PROBLEMS. Ver. 9-34.
   1. The Lot of the Godless. Ver. 9-15.
      (1) Doom. Ver. 9, 10. "*Cut off*" (ver. 9).
      (2) Destiny. Ver. 11-15. "*Sword shall enter their own heart*" (ver. 15).
   2. The Lot of the Godly. Ver. 16-34.
      (1) Plenty. Ver. 16-19. "*A little better*" (ver. 18).
      (2) Peace. Ver. 20-34. "*He delighteth in his way*" (ver. 23).

III. PROVIDENCES. Ver. 35-40.
   1. Judgment. Ver. 35-37.
      (1) Extinction. Ver. 35, 36. "*He could not be found*."
      (2) Exaltation. Ver. 37. "*Happy end*."
   2. Justice. Ver. 38-40.
      (1) Destruction. Ver. 38. "*Destroyed together*."
      (2) Deliverance. Ver. 39, 40. "*The Lord shall deliver them*" (ver. 40).

TEXT: PSALM 38

TITLE: HANGING ON BY A THREAD

BIG IDEA:
CLINGING TO HOPE WHEN BURDENED BY SIN AND ATTACKED BY ENEMIES

I. CLINGING TO HOPE WHEN BURDENED BY SIN = A HEAVY HEART (38:1-10) / A SICK PUPPY

A. The Discipline from God (:1-3) (result of my sin)

B. The Pain of it All (:4-8)

C. The Glimmer of Hope (:9)
The Lord sees:
My Desires
My Sufferings

D. The Depths of My Suffering (:10)
"*my heart throbs*"
"*my strength fails me*"
"*and the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me*"

II. CLINGING TO HOPE WHEN ATTACKED BY ENEMIES = A HELPLESS TARGET (38:11-20) / A SITTING DUCK

A. The Isolation from all Human Encouragement and Help (:11)
"*My loved ones*"
"*my friends*"
"*my kinsmen*" (relatives)

B. The Treachery of Sneak Attacks (:12)

C. the Focus on Clinging to Hope (:13-16)
not being frightened by threats
not trying to present arguments to defend myself

D. The Precarious State of My Anxiety (related to my sin) (:17-18)

E. The Power and Motivation of my Enemies (opposed to righteousness) (:19-20)

III. DESPARATE CRY TO GOD FOR HELP (38:21-22)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Can we always find a direct cause and effect relationship between our physical ailments and some type of sin or discipline of the Lord? What type of physical consequences have we experienced in the past that we could link directly to sin?

2) Are we a "fairweather friend" that backs away from intimacy when we feel that the other party is experiencing the heavy hand of God?

3) Have we learned how to close our ears to the attacks of others and focus our attention on seeking God's deliverance?

4) Is "waiting for the Lord" usually a painful process? How can we best alleviate the pain and persevere?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ellison: "David's real quality is seen in v. 16. He is not really concerned with his illness or even with his sin, but with the possibility that God's name should be blasphemed through him, but cf. 2 Sam. 12: 9,14. Anyone who has this desire enthroned in his heart will find that suffering is only a God-given means by which we come to know His will and do it, even though it may involve a specific recognition of sins and turning from them as we have in Psa. 51."

Maddux:

I. Conviction.
   A. Brings contrition.
   B. Feels Lord's punishment.
II. Prayer for equity.
   A. Overwhelmed.
   B. Over-burdened.
   C. Over-taxed.
III. Evidence of prayer.
   A. God has petitions before Him.
   B. God knows depths of remorse.
IV. Dismal outlook.
   A. Forsaken by friends.
   B. Forsaken by loved ones.
   C. Forsaken by relatives.
   D. Enemies show no pity.
V. Unmoved by opposition.
   A. God is the only hope.
   B. Confident of answered prayer.
VI. Honest confession.
   A. Self-insufficiency.

B. Sin acknowledged.
C. Adversaries abound.
D. Grace abounds more.

Kidner: "The suffering is multiple. There is a burden of guilt, made all the more crushing by a foul disease, and this in turn has estranged the sufferer from his friends, and given his enemies the chance to plot his ruin. So confession to God mingles with a sense of man's injustice, and the penitent is also a suppliant for justice."

VanGemeren:
A. Prayer for Reconciliation (vv.1-4)
B. Pain of Anguish (vv.5-12)
C. Prayer for Vindication (vv.13-16)
B'. Pain of Injustice (vv.17-20)
A'. Prayer for Reconciliation (vv.21-22)

Gaebelein: "Casting himself in all his deep distress upon the Lord, he becomes like a deaf man, who hears not the taunts of the wicked, nor the surmisings of his friends. He is like a dumb man, who cannot answer back. And here is a valuable lesson. It is a good thing to act like a deaf and a dumb man when the false accusations, the sneers and the taunts of the enemy are heaped upon us."

Phillips:
I. David's Sin (:1-4)
A. The Consequences of It (:1-3)
1. Divine Anger (:1-2)
2. Daily Anguish (:3)
B. The Consciousness of It (:4)
II. David's Suffering (:5-8)
A. Disgusted (:5)
B. Distressed (:6)
C. Diseased (:7)
D. Disturbed (:8)
III. David's Sorrow (:9-14)
His sorrows were:
A. Spiritual (:9-10)
B. Social (:11-12)
C. Silent (:13-14)
IV. David's Supplication (:15-22)
A. Lord, Hear Me (:15-16)
B. Lord, Heal Me (:17-18)
C. Lord, Help Me (:19-22)
1. Consider What My Situation Is (:19-20)
2. Consider Who My Saviour Is (:21-22)

Olsen: "…an examination of my own life and the lives of hundreds of others has led me

to the conclusion that with few exceptions when a believer gets into trouble it is because of his own disobedience to the Word of God. What should be our attitude in such situations? Exactly that which David manifested in this Psalm. Pour out our heart to the Lord, confess our sin before Him, be sorry for it, quit it by His grace, and ask Him to dominate our life, place our case in His hands, and trust Him for the forgiveness He has promised and the cleansing He has assured and the strength He will give. Then go on rejoicing in the knowledge of a Saviour who saves unto the uttermost all those who come unto Him."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Saying Goodbye to Guilt**
Introduction: There's an objective side to guilt, and what I mean by that is that it is a moral concept, and it is basically the violation of a law. If a person is told that they're guilty of violating a legal or moral law, then they bear guilt because of that. That's an objective way of looking at guilt. But then there's also a subjective way, and subjectively guilt as an emotion or as a feeling comes from within. The declaration of guilt comes from without when you're declared guilty or you know that you violated a law. The emotion of guilt comes from within. And it is the feeling of shame, perhaps, is one way that we could say it. The emotion that comes from understanding that you have violated some moral principle or some law. And so these two things are really inseparably linked. The feeling of shame comes with the actual action. And just to give you the simple dictionary definition of guilt, it says, an awareness of having done wrong or committed a crime accompanied by feelings of shame and regret. The problem today is in modern psychology and psychiatry is that they try to deal with the subjective side of guilt without dealing with the objective side. Most psychiatrists today and other so-called experts, they characterize guilt as this groundless emotion that has the potential of taking all the fun out of life.

Big Idea: **Two important factors that we need to understand about overcoming guilt in our life.**

I. Don't Ignore the Pain of Guilt
Feelings that Guilt Produces
1) Sense of God's Displeasure – **vs. 1**
2) Conviction – **vs. 2**
3) Restlessness – **vs. 3**
4) Emotional turmoil – **vs. 4**
5) Physical illness – **vs. 5**
6) Depression – **vs. 6**
7) Feelings of Hopelessness – **vs. 9**
8) Paranoia – **vs. 11**

He's insecure about the people all around him, about his friends and his family and certainly his enemies. He's starting to think about everyone who's out to get him. They want to see him fall.

II. Understand the Purpose of Guilt
Any solution to try to deal with guilt that does not deal with a person's relationship with

God is self-defeating.

A. Mistaken ways to deal with guilt

1) Deny that you are really guilty – Sigmund Freud
2) Just try to be a better person
3) Just compare yourself to others

B. What is guilt designed to do?

1) Humble you – bring you to the end or your rope
   Don't blameshift or resort to victimization

2) Drive you to God – **vs. 15**

3) Develop repentance in us – **vs. 18**

TEXT: PSALM 39

TITLE: OUR RESPONSE TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD

BIG IDEA:
HOW TO TRANSFORM SULLEN DESPAIR INTO SUBMISSIVE DESPERATION

INTRODUCTION:

One test of a good father = How well do you discipline your children? By discipline I don't just mean the actual spanking itself (the execution of the appropriate punishment for the given infraction)... I mean much more than that. Discipline refers to the entire process of training and correcting and nurturing in right behavior.

Cf. inconsistent discipline of the best human father with the perfect discipline of our heavenly father;

Why don't we appreciate it like we should? One of the difficulties is that His discipline is often stretched out over time rather than packaged in quick, neat bundles...often we cannot interpret His purposes when we are in the midst of the process.

Def. of Discipline: A father's loving use of pain coupled with instruction and nurturing to correct some area of sin, weakness, or immaturity.

Connection to Suffering and Sin

cf. Job -- not always related to sin (but it is here in David's case)

The Instruments God uses to apply His discipline to our lives:

1) Circumstances = health, finances, job satisfaction and security
2) People = especially those over us in authority where we must submit to unfair treatment and from whom we cannot easily escape

We need to learn how to correctly respond to the Discipline of the Lord

cf. historical situation of David -- starts out Psalm 39 in the pits of Sullen Despair

I. 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SULLEN DESPAIR (:1-4)

A. A Perspective of Unfairness

We think initially that our suffering is undeserved or out of proportion -- especially in light of the prosperity of the wicked

The first step to recovery is admitting that God's discipline is at work -- and it is at work because we deserve it

B. Reliance on Self-Effort Rather than the Grace of God

"*I will watch my ways*"

"*I will keep my tongue from sin*"

"*I will put a muzzle on my mouth*"

cf. admirable New Year's Day resolutions
James 3 -- we cannot even control our tongue

C. Sullen Silence is Never Productive; It always makes things Worse
1. Worse in terms of our testimony before others
"*not even saying anything good*"
2. Worse in terms of our own heart condition
sullen silence boiling over in anger

D. Sullen Silence Leads Only to Despair (:4)

Does not sound like a path of life that anyone would willingly pursue; yet we do it all the time; But God is patient with us

How does the psalmist get turned around?

II. TWO APPROACHES TO REALITY THAT ARE BOTH HONEST AND HUMBLING (:5-10)

A. Meditating on the Brevity of Life and Futility of the Human Condition Makes us Desperate for Deliverance from the Lord

Life is short / Life is empty apart from God's favor / I am desperate for deliverance NOW

1. Various images of Brevity
a. a mere handbreadth = one of the shortest natural measures
(the width of 4 fingers closed together)
b. the length of my life is nothing compared to the eternal God
(hardly even a dot on the eternal timeline)
c. like a breath
d. a mere phantom (shadow) -- no substance

2. Futility characterizes all of mankind
"*he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it*"

so much effort for something unsatisfying and fleeting
cf. Eccles.

3. Turning point = vs. 7 -- the Hinge of the Psalm
If life is so short and so futile, the only possible hope for deliverance must come from the Lord

Tone of desperation -- Why do we wait to rely on the Lord as a last resort?
God delights in helping desperate people

B. Recognizing the Loving Hand of our Heavenly Father in All of our Sufferings Gives

Hope (:9-10)
"*you are the one who has done this*"
"*it is your scourge*"
"*the blow of your hand*"

It still hurts! But there is a loving purpose behind it and there is an end to the suffering;

There is Hope because the same hand of God that gives the spanking is strong enough to deliver us

III. 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBMISSIVE DESPERATION (:11-13)

A. Rooted in a Perspective of Divine Justice (:11)
no longer crying out "Unfair, Unfair"

1. Proper cause and effect relationship between our sin and the Lord's discipline
"*you rebuke and discipline men for their sin*"
It makes sense = we reap what we sow

2. Apart from God, man's life is futile -- and that is how it should be
"*you consume their wealth like a moth*"

3. Apart from God, man's life is fleeting and lacks substance

B. Humbled Enough to Persistently Seek God's Mercy and Grace

Hear	*my prayer*
Listen	*to my cry for help*
Be not deaf	*to my weeping*

C. Guaranteed God's Protection as Citizens of His Kingdom

D. Hopeful of Renewed Joy and Abundant Life in the Life -- To say Nothing of Eternity (:13)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How easy is it for the wrong words to slip out of your mouth? What type of a guard do you set on your tongue when you are in volatile situations? (cf. James 4) When is it better just to be silent? But when we suppress our feelings, how does the intensity build up within us?

2) Cf. the images used to emphasize the brevity of our life here on earth. ("*every man at his best is a mere breath*", etc.) What are some of the practical applications of this hard reality?

3) The wicked interpret God's discipline upon His children as a sign of His wrath. How can we better receive and respond to His loving hand of correction? Note the connection here between sin and suffering.

4) Does the brevity of our life encourage us to persevere in hoping in our God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ellison: "In Isa. 40:6-8 the very transitoriness of man is proclaimed as a comfort (Isa. 40:1), for nothing less than that will really make man rest on God, for only in God's hand is a brief life worth while. So the psalmist turns to God in trust (7-11) and asks for forgiveness and vindication from the scorn of the atheist—'*fool*' is here *nabal*, the worst of the words so translated. The sadness of the closing section (12,13) must be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament. Even in the New Testament death is recognized as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26); an exhausting illness late in life brings home as perhaps nothing else how much one would like to do for God and one's family, and how impossible it will be to do it.

There is an idea abroad that a Christian should not be ill. Much illness among Christians is probably unnecessary, but there can be no doubt that illness and bodily weakness are among God's potent methods for teaching us to see life in its true perspective."

Phillip: "This Psalm is probably a continuation of Psalm 38. David is still in the same dreadful plight of a man who has been stricken by God. However, in this psalm the mood has changed. David is no longer outraged at the dreadful thing which has seized upon his flesh. Instead, he has become more thoughtful, able to look at his plight more objectively, able even to philosophize upon his condition."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 8 – "'*Deliver me from all my transgressions*.' How fair a sign it is when the Psalmist no longer harps upon his sorrows, but begs freedom from his sins! What is sorrow when compared with sin! Let but the poison of sin be gone from the cup, and we need not fear its gall, for the bitter will act medicinally. None can deliver a man from his transgressions but the blessed One who is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins; and when he once works this great deliverance for a man from the cause, the consequences are sure to disappear too.. The thorough cleansing desired is well worthy of note …"

Perowne: "'The most beautiful,' says Ewald, ' of all elegies in the Psalter.' It is the sorrowful complaint of a heart, not yet subdued to a perfect resignation, but jealous with

a godly jealousy, lest it should bring dishonour upon its God, and longing for light from Heaven to scatter its doubts. The holy singer had long pent up his feelings; and though busy thoughts were stirring within him, he would not give them utterance. He could not bare his bosom to the rude gaze of an unsympathising world. And he feared lest, while telling his perplexities, some word might drop from his lips which would give the wicked an occasion to speak evil against his God…. And when at last, unable to repress his strong emotion, he speaks, it is to God and not to man. It is as one who feels how hopeless the problem of life is, except as seen in the light of God. It is with the deep conviction of personal frailty (ver. 6) and sinfulness (ver. 9), as well as of the frailty and sinfulness of all men. It is with the touching sadness of one who cannot be comforted. And yet the weeping eye is raised to heaven, and amidst all his grief and perplexity, notwithstanding all that is so dark and cheerless in the world, pilgrim and stranger as he is, the Psalmist can still say, 'My hope is in Thee.'"

Harris: AN ODE OF SORROW AND SUBMISSION
Theme: A period of great distress and affliction, when the heart was tempted to rail at God's providences, but was made submissive by musing on God's love.
Occasion: None noted.

I. SILENCE. Ver. 1, 2. "*Dumb with silence*" (ver. 2).
   1. Resolve. Ver. 1a. "*I will take heed*."
   2. Repression. Ver. 1b. "*I will keep my mouth*."
   3. Reaction. Ver. 2. "*My sorrow was stirred*."

II. SPEECH. Ver. 3-6. "*Then I spake with my tongue*" (ver. 3).
   1. Anguish. Ver. 3. "*My heart was hot*."
   2. Abridgment. Ver. 4, 5. "*My days are as an handbreadth*."
   3. Admission. Ver. 6. "*Knoweth not*."

III. SUBMISSION. Ver. 7-13. "*My hope is in thee*" (ver. 7).
   1. Plaintive. Ver. 7, 8. "*Make me not*" (ver. 8).
   2. Passive. Ver. 9-11. "*I was dumb*" (ver. 9).
   3. Prayerful. Ver. 12, 13. "*Hear my prayer*" (ver. 12).

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod – vs. 9**
Introduction: Thomas Brooks – wrote book -- *The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod* – "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didest it*." This book that he wrote became really one of the most famous and widely read reprinted Puritan works of all time.

What does he mean by smarting rod? He calls suffering and affliction the smarting rod. Smart is the old English word meaning hurt or stinging or painful. It's to feel a sharp pain. It's the pain that you felt when your mother broke off a switch and used it on you. We can all relate to that, right? That sting, that's the word smart in Old English.

What does he mean by mute Christian? That's the next question. The word mute simply

means to be silent, and it comes from the word here, the verse that we read, verse nine, I was dumb, and it doesn't mean to be intellectually dumb here, it just means quiet. The rest of the verse helps us understand. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth.* And it just means that we are silent. When affliction comes, we are silent. And by silent, it doesn't mean literally speechless. It's not the idea here. It means that we are submissive to the rod when we have to endure it. It means that we do not complain, we do not grumble, we don't stubbornly react in anger to the smarting rod when it comes. Our muteness or silence is an expression of our faith and our trust in God. So we're silent when it comes.

Modern title: the silent Christian under the painful affliction.

Big Idea: **Some reasons why we are to be silent under the smarting rod.**

I. Because God is the author of the affliction – vs. 9-10
We can draw comfort knowing that it's directly from God's hands. If pain came by chance, or from the malice of men, or from blind fate, then the Christian would have every reason to despair. But because we know that the suffering comes from God, we know it has a purpose.

II. Because the rod comes from love – Rev. 3:19
We see this in the life of Joseph, right? He understood at the end, he could look back and say, you may have meant it evil, but God meant it for good. He saw the loving hand of God, and the betrayal, and the slavery he was forced to face, and the imprisonment, and the false accusation, and the years of delay, and the deep sorrow.

III. Because God measures every stroke, every affliction – 1 Cor. 10:13
Every trial that you go through, God's put a limit on it, He's put boundaries on it, and He'll give you grace in the midst of it. We see this in the life of Job.
Ps. 103: 13-14; Is. 27:8

IV. Because afflictions are the way to holiness – Is. 27:8-9; Ps. 39:11

V. Because afflictions prevent greater evils.
Affliction stops sin before sin destroys us.

Example of Jacob: Why did God cripple him? To prevent Jacob from living his life in self-sufficiency and deceit. Before that, he was constantly lying. He was a deceitful person. God had to dislocate something in order to get him to teach him to be a man of integrity and to trust in God. It's better to worship God as a cripple and have a close, intimate walk with God than to have a whole body and walk away from God.

Example of Miriam: God gave Miriam, in Numbers chapter 12, leprosy. Why? Her temporary affliction protected her from a permanent posture of rebellion. And God will sometimes have to do that with us.

Example of the Prodigal Son: it was the pigsty that delivered him from the cemetery.

VI. Because murmuring is a greater evil than suffering – Ps. 73:15
What he means is, if I said everything that I was thinking out loud, it would really offend a lot of people. which is a lesson, don't say everything that you think, especially when you're going through a trial. Don't complain out loud. He said, if I did that, I would offend people.

Example: children of Israel complaining in the wilderness --
When God delivered the children of Israel from Pharaoh. They murmured in the wilderness. They turned the miracle into a funeral, and God brought judgment. They complained about the manna. They complained about the water. They complained about the leadership. They complained about timing. They complained about hardship. God said, how long do I have to endure with this ungrateful congregation that murmur against me? And their murmuring, not their suffering, that's what cost them the promised land. It was their murmuring. Murmuring made a short victory march, it turned it into a death march because for 40 years they had to wander in the wilderness.

God hates murmuring because it challenges his sovereignty, it questions his wisdom, it insults his goodness, mocks his timing, it accuses his motives.

VII. Because Christ was silent under His suffering – Is. 53:7
Matt. 26:63; 1 Pet. 2:23
His suffering was infinitely greater than any we could ever bear. His pain was physical, it was emotional, it was spiritual, judicial. What God lays upon us is a light affliction.

He was silent under a suffering that he did not deserve.

His silence accomplished our salvation.

TEXT: Psalm 40:1-17

TITLE: PATIENCE AND PRAISE FROM THE PITS

BIG IDEA:
ANTICIPATING DELIVERANCE FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER ALLOWS US TO PRAISE HIM FROM THE PITS AS WE WAIT FOR HIM TO RESPOND TO OUR CRIES

INTRODUCTION:
Father's Day Message – we are to learn of our heavenly Father from analogy to our earthly father. Let's imagine that we are 7 years old and we happen to fall into some terrible quicksand – no way that we can rescue ourselves. But we call out to our father for help and deliverance. What is our expectation? What type of heavenly Father do we imagine that we have?? One who is deaf to our cries? One who is powerless to help? One who would stiff us when we ask for help? And yet we remember that our father did not always give us everything we wanted when we asked for it – had a bigger picture in mind; had his own timing and wisdom that was more mature than our selfish desires for immediate gratification.

We need to understand this beloved psalm on its many different levels:
- First there is the personal experience of David, the psalmist.
- Then there is his role of leader over God's people so that deliverance can be seen on a wider scale.
- Then there are the numerous Messianic references. Clearly the many NT quotations identify this as a Messianic Psalm; however, just as clearly the references to personal sin do not allow us to treat the entire text from this perspective.
- Then there is the personal application to our own experience and the variety of pits that we find ourselves in from time to time.

6 CONSTANTS IN THE EQUATION FOR DIVINE DELIVERANCE – SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

I. (:1-3) PATIENCE IS STILL A VIRTUE -- ANSWERING THE COMPLAINT OF THE IMPATIENT DESPARADO
Key = we need to "*Wait patiently for the Lord*"

Illustration: old Sunday School lesson taught by Julie and I: "*Patience is a good thing*" – keep coming back to that simple principle

Patience does not mean giving up and doing nothing –

Cole: It's not a passive, ho-hum kind of waiting, like you do at the doctor's office when you thumb through a bunch of magazines to pass the time

here the Psalmist is actively praying and seeking the Lord – takes effort and concentration and discipline and focus
Most of all it takes maintaining the right type of positive attitude – still holding on to the

character of God and being thankful

Illustration: our testimony of waiting on the Lord to have children
Instant society – we want it now; don't want to have to wait for anything

3 Lies of the Devil that will lead us to despair: Answered here by the faithful anticipation of the psalmist:

A. (:1) The Lord has Forgotten Me = I am all Alone; abandoned; deserted (remember last message)

"*He inclined to me*" Picture of God leaning down to listen and respond; love relationship; cf. the movie -- "You're leaning" --

"*and heard my cry*"

Cf. the plea of Christ from the Cross – "*My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me*?"

B. (:2) There is no Way Out – I am sinking in quicksand – No Hope

"*He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay*"

"*He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm*"

Cole: Your pit could be poor health, the loss of your job, former friends that turned against you, an unfaithful mate, rebellious children, or any other overwhelming problem. You may be responsible for being in your pit, or you may be a victim of the sins of others.

Resurrection Theme

If you struggle and thrash around violently in the quicksand you just sink faster

Illustration: think of joy of coal miners being rescued from some devastating cave-in; buried alive but somehow protected and preserved and delivered by the grace of God

C. (:3) I am a Defeated, Loser – I have no Testimony; I am a Laughing Stock

"*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God*"

"*Many will see and fear, and will trust in the Lord*"

I am just going to shut up and be sullen and a negative person

Spurgeon: [Of the song of triumph of Christ in His resurrection:]
Justice magnified and grace victorious; hell subdued and heaven glorified; death destroyed and immortality established; sin overthrown and righteousness resplendent; what a theme for a hymn in that day when our Lord drinketh the red wine new with us all in our heavenly Father's kingdom! Even on earth, and before his great passion, he foresaw the joy which was set before him, and was sustained by the prospect.

Think of the new song that accompanied our **salvation experience** – talk about lifting us up out of the pits – we were dead in our trespasses and sins

The impact of our testimony and our praise on others is significant

II. (:4-5) PROVIDENCE IS STILL AT WORK –

THE FUTILITY OF SEEKING HELP FROM ANYONE BUT THE LORD

"*How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust*"

But you say he does not look all that blessed when you see his circumstances – but look at the peace in his heart – "It is well with my soul"

Similar to the tone of **Psalm 1**

A. (:4) All Other Options Promise But Can't Deliver

1. The Proud – Boasts of being able to help

"*and has not turned to the proud*"

Cole: The proud are those that boast in their own abilities. They don't recognize or admit any personal weakness. Rather, by their own ingenuity and effort, they will get out of their crisis on their own.

Think of the pride of **worldly humanism** with all of its esteemed professors – offering the self help mantra – the power is within you; just believe in yourself; you can do anything you set your mind on; unleash the power

Is. 2:11 "*The proud look of man will be abased and the loftiness of man will be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day*."

2. The Liars – Make all types of false promises; any type of idolatry

"*nor to those who lapse into falsehood*"

Think of the **false gospels** that are out there today – promising health, wealth and fulfillment in life – but totally oriented around a self-centered world view rather than one that magnifies the one true God

Is. 5:18-21 6 woes or judgments leveled against the unresponsive people of Israel

Is. 47:13 "*You are wearied with your many counsels; let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you*."

Is. 66:2 "*But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word*."

Those are the alternatives to putting our trust completely in the Lord – not very impressive **Satan** is the ultimate Arrogant One; the ultimate Liar – just as he approached Adam and Eve in the Garden to deflect their trust away from their loving Heavenly Father; He is actively trying to do the same in our lives – make us exalt our will over God's; make us believe in a lie instead of the truth revealed by God

B. (:5) God's Marvelous Providential Care has No Rivals

1. His amazing Providential Care

"*Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which Thou hast done*,"

"*And Thy thoughts toward us*"

We see His wonders in Nature – What is man that thou art mindful of him?? An amazing thing

Psalm 8 – the majesty of the Lord and yet His establishing of the dignity and worth of man

We see His wonders in our own experience in terms of past deliverances – God remains faithful and will help us today

2. No Comparison

"*There is none to compare with Thee*"

"*If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count*"

Lot of arithmetic in this short psalm – keep this thought in mind when we come later to our sins which are also beyond counting

Is. 46:5, 9 – none can compare with the true God

III. (:6-8) PLEASING GOD IS STILL THE MOTIVATION – RELIGIOUS FORMALISM CANNOT BE SUBSTITUTED FOR JOYFUL OBEDIENCE

A. (:6) Rejection of Religious Formalism

"*Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast not desired*"

"*Burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required*"

The people had come to put their faith in what had only been intended to be symbolic and a shadow of the true sacrifice that Christ would offer up:

- once for all (rather than continually)
- effectual (rather then symbolic)
- the blood of the perfect God-Man (rather than the blood of animals)

All about just checking the box and performing external acts

Isaiah 1:10-17 – Sometimes the Lord gets fed up and has had just enough of religious hypocrisy

William Barrick: v. 6 Sacrifices and Offerings

- The first two celebrate communion with God.
- The second two deal with the removal of the effects of sin.
- Together the two sets mark the extremes of the entire sacrificial system and thereby represent it as a whole.

What type of religious formalism are people trusting in today?

B . (:7-8) Joyful Obedience from the Heart in Response to the Revealed Will of God

1. Enlightenment

"*My ears Thou hast opened*" (:6)

Too many people live their lives with their ears plugged with spiritual wax; can't hear the message that God wants to deliver to them; not interested in discerning God's will
Revelation is only half the equation; we must have our ears opened to understand and receive the message

Daniel Cresswell: The literal translation is, *mine ears hast thou digged (or pierced) through*; which may well be interpreted as meaning, "Thou hast accepted me as thy slave, " in allusion to the custom Ex 21:6 of masters boring the ear of a slave, who had refused his offered freedom, in token of retaining him. [Unlikely translation, because a different Heb word is used in that case.]
Barrick: "Ears" (plural; v. 6) rules out the practice of voluntary slavery demonstrated by the practice described in Exodus 21:6, since both ears were not pierced in that ceremony.

Understanding of God's revealed will:
"*In the scroll of the book it is written of me*"
"*Thy law is within my heart*"

2. Willingness to Obey (even to the extent of dying on the cross)
"*Behold, I come*"
Supreme commitment

Look at the response of God's servants down through the ages: Abraham responded to the call of God; Samuel listened to the voice calling him in the nighttime; Isaiah responded: "*Here am I, send me*" – but all of these responses of joyful obedience from the heart pale in comparison to the resolve of the Son of God Himself

3. Joy in Obedience
"*I delight to do Thy will, O my God*"

"*Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross*" (Heb. 12:2)

Messianic Significance – Heb. 10:1-7

Spurgeon: Herein is the essence of obedience, namely, in the soul's cheerful devotion to God: and our Lord's obedience, which is our righteousness, is in no measure lacking in this eminent quality. Notwithstanding his measureless griefs, our Lord found delight in his work

IV. (:9-10) PUBLIC TESTIMONY IS STILL THE RESPONSE – (THE METHOD FOR COMMUNICATING THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO GOD'S PEOPLE)

HIDING GOD'S GOODNESS TO US WOULD BE UNNATURAL

A. Righteousness

"*I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation*;"
"*Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest*."
"*I have not hidden Thy righteousness within my heart*;"

Not enough to just have a good attitude in our heart; how will God get the glory from His providential care of us … from enabling us to persevere in difficult times … from delivering us from impossible afflictions?? We must open our mouth and give testimony to His grace and love and power in our own experience

Our focus should be on the attributes of God and how He has proven them out in our experience

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?? God taught this lesson to Abraham **Gen. 18:25**
Has God done what is right and just in your experience … or is your testimony that God treats you unfairly or harshly?? What are you saying about the Goodness of God in how you respond to your circumstances??

B. Faithfulness and Deliverance

"*I have spoken of Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation*;"

C. Lovingkindness and Truth

"*I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth from the great congregation*."

Look who the **target audience** is for this testimony – it is the Lord's people who need the encouragement to persevere and continue to wait patiently for the Lord's deliverance in their experience – emphasis here is not on evangelism but on building up the saints

V. (:11-12) PRESERVATION IS STILL NEEDED – THE DANGERS AND PRESSURES OF SIN NEVER CEASE IN THIS WORLD

A. (:11) Preservation Guaranteed by God's Gracious Character

1. Compassion

"*Thou, O Lord, wilt not withhold Thy compassion from me*;"

2. Lovingkindness

"*Thy lovingkindness*"

3. Truth

"*and Thy truth will continually preserve me*."

B. (:12) Preservation Needed Because of Man's Sinful Character

1. Countless Sins

a. Sins of others and calamities in general

"*For evils beyond number have surrounded me*"

b. Personal sins

"*my iniquities have overtaken me*"
"*they are more numerous than the hairs of my head*"

2. No Hope

"*so that I am not able to see*"
"*and my heart has failed me*"

VI. (:13-17) PETITION FOR DELIVERANCE IS STILL APPROPRIATE

A. (:13) Urgency of the Petition for Deliverance

1. Based on God's Will

"*Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me*"

2. Based on My Circumstances (no time like the present)
"*Make haste, O Lord, to help me*"

B. (:14-16) Effect of Deliverance

1. Shame God's Enemies
"*Let those be ashamed and humiliated together Who seek my life to destroy it*;"
"*Let those be turned back and dishonored Who delight in my hurt*."
"*Let those be appalled because of their shame Who say to me, 'Aha, aha*!'"

2. Encourage God's Friends
"*Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee*."

3. Glorify God = the Ultimate Goal
"*Let those who love Thy salvation say continually, 'The Lord be magnified*!'"

C. (:17) Urgency of the Petition for Deliverance

1. Based on my Need
"*Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me*."

2. Based on my Faith
"*Thou art my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God*"

CONCLUSION:

So as you celebrate Father's Day today, let's give some thought to praising our Heavenly Father for His marvelous care and deliverance of us from whatever might be the pits of our earthly experience.

- Let's wait patiently for our Heavenly Father to act in our circumstances
- Let's put our trust only in the Lord and in His Providence – not looking to the proud or to liars
- Let's examine our motives to make sure we are pleasing God from the heart rather than just going through some religious rites
- Let's be quick to give public testimony to God's people of the new song He has put within our hearts
- Let's remain humble in understanding our constant need for God's preservation in light of our own sins and the pressures of the evil world around us
- Let's continue to petition the Lord for deliverance with the goal that He would be magnified

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we grow bitter when the Lord asks us to patiently wait?

2) Do we envy unbelievers for their status or possessions, etc.?

3) Do we recognize obedience and commitment to doing the will of God as acts of worship?

4) God always looks at the heart – at our sincerity and faith. Do we try to impress God with religious form and external observances rather than allowing God to search our hearts and bring us to our knees in repentance?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "One of the great benefits of reading the Psalms is that they present us with patterns of life that the godly go through in every age. And in doing that they encourage us that we are made of the same stuff as the saints of old and they give us guidance how to follow the pattern of godliness through to the end.

One of the patterns of life recurring in the Psalms is getting in the pits and getting out again. And my favorite statement of this pattern comes from David's experience found in Psalm 40….

Verses 1-3 present a pattern of life at least part of which every Christian knows about first hand. My goal tonight, though, is that we all be enabled to follow the whole pattern all the way through to its exciting conclusion. David leads us through six stages of his experience and I want us to follow him closely. First, David is in a muddy pit; second, he cries to God for help; third, he waits for the Lord; fourth, God draws him out of the pit to safety; fifth, God gives David a new song to sing (probably the one we are reading); sixth, many others come to trust God when they see this pattern of life. The
king's pit, the king's cry, the king's patience, the king's rescue, the king's song, and the king's influence."

Stott: "Salvation provokes within us, however, more than a God-ward response of spiritual worship and moral obedience; it teaches us also to care for our fellows, that they too may hear of God's grace. So the psalmist asserts repeatedly that he has not concealed God's *love* and … *truth* (that is, faithfulness) *from the great assembly* but has publicly declared it (verses 9-10). When God sets our feet on the rock and puts His law in our ears and in our hearts, we cannot keep our lips from making His goodness known."

Spurgeon:
Mark the figure of inclining, as though the suppliant cried out of the lowest depression, and condescending love stooped to hear his feeble moans. What a marvel is it that our Lord Jesus should have to cry as we do, and wait as we do, and should receive the Father's help after the same process of faith and pleading as must be gone through by ourselves!

Steven Cole: **When You're In the Pit**
When you're in the pit, wait intently on the Lord and proclaim His goodness when He answers.

Application Questions:

1. How can we determine the balance between trusting completely in the Lord versus using legitimate means or methods?
2. Why is pragmatism ("if it works, it must be okay") dangerous? Do ungodly methods sometimes "work"?
3. Study Genesis 41:1 and Acts 24:27 in their contexts. Why does God make His choice servants wait, especially when they could accomplish so much if they were free?
4. Read the story of King Saul (1 Samuel 15). Why was he tempted not to wait on the Lord, but

to take matters into his own hands? What were the consequences?

Doug Goins: Verse 4 talks about the secret of blessedness or happiness. He is saying, "Happy is the person who has learned to trust God for everything in life." That trust means they have made some choices: first, to reject the influence of anyone who encourages them to appeal to personal pride, self-confidence, independence, self-improvement, or natural ability. And second, to reject the influence of those who embrace the lie, or idolatry (these terms are interchangeable), of, say, materialism or education. They have rejected the worship of something other than God, expecting that to give them fulfillment and happiness. Instead, the happy person has learned to depend on God's activity in them and nothing else, including their own resources.

Ray Stedman: **A Song of Resurrection**
That is a beautiful description of the experience of resurrection. None of us has ever been resurrected. There is a great difference between what happened to Lazarus and what happened to Jesus. Lazarus was really resuscitated; he was restored to this life almost as though he had been given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. But Jesus was resurrected. He was the firstborn from the dead. He stepped into a whole new experience of life that God had designed from the beginning for humanity. That is what the Messiah is describing here. The result is, He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

William Barrick:
I. Patience Rewarded (vv. 1-3)
II. Blessing Recounted (vv. 4-5)
III. Obedience Required (vv. 6-8)
IV. Good News Reported (vv. 9-10)
V. Confession Registered (vv. 11-12)
VI. Deliverance Requested (vv. 13-17)

Other Titles:
"Out of the Mire and Into the Choir"
"From the Pits to Praise

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Doing the Father's Will**
Introduction: Have you ever considered the Christmas story from the lips of Jesus Christ himself? Psalm 40 has been called the Christmas Psalm because really it looks forward to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. 10:5 = NT commentary on this passage -- the writer of Hebrews says these are the words of Jesus. at the incarnation when he came into the world.

Big Idea: **Four important factors about Jesus Christ when He came into this world.**

I. His anointed purpose – vv. 7-8
Jesus at a very young age understood his exact purpose. His purpose was to come and to do the will of his father. **John 6:38**

He understood that He would be the sacrifice for sin. He knew that He was the Lamb slain from the foundations of the earth.

"*but my ears have you opened*" -- What the psalmist is describing is a custom that would take place in the Old Testament. You see, when a Hebrew bought a slave, according to the law, he

could own that slave for six years. On the seventh year, he had to release that slave. So on the seventh year, when the slave was released, the slave would have some options. He could go out and live his own life. He could go find his own land to work. He had many options in front of him. One of the options that he had was that he could work for his master. He could choose to be a slave to his master for the rest of his life. Now, if the slave saw that his master was a good master, he was a gracious and kind and loving master. In fact, he never felt like a slave at all under his care. He felt more like a son. A lot of times the slave would choose to say, I've looked at all of my options and I think my best option is to indenture myself to my master forever. He would choose to be a slave to his master for the rest of his life. And when that happened, This is what would take place. The slave would freely yield himself to his master. What they would do is he would stand against a wooden doorpost with his earlobe exposed. The master would take a little kind of like an awl and a hammer, and he would pierce the ear. of that servant against the doorpost. And what would happen is the blood would run down that wooden post and a little mark was put there on his ear. That mark was called a stigmata. And when anyone saw a servant that had that mark on his ear and sometimes with an earring in it, that was a sign that this was a man who had chosen to serve his master forever out of love. That was what would happen. His ear would literally be opened. And what the servant was saying is, I'm yielding myself to you, to my master for the rest of my life. He willingly served his master.

When Jesus came to this earth, God the Father gave Jesus a body, and Jesus, this body that was prepared by the Father, Jesus yielded that whole body to the will of God. And one day Jesus would be pressed against a wooden post, and his hands would be pierced, and his feet would be pierced. And those marks, by the way, we're gonna see those marks in heaven one day. The only man-made thing in heaven are the marks on the hands and the feet of Jesus. They are the stigmata, they are the marks that Jesus was completely, totally dedicated to doing the will of the Father.

II. His atoning power – vs. 6

These Old Testament sacrifices, the blood of those sacrifices could not wash away sin. They could not pay for sin. Those animals couldn't do that. They could never take away sin. They were never meant to do that. What were the Old Testament sacrifices meant to do? They were meant to point to Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament sacrifices, they were like credit card purchases. Because when a person brought their sacrifice to the altar, and God looked upon that sacrifice, God was satisfied insomuch that it was saying to him that one day in the future, these sins will be paid for. And this sacrifice that took place now is pointing to a day when all the sins of the world would be paid for. and they would be paid for in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who has the power to take away sin.

What happens when you get saved? He takes all of his righteousness and he puts it on your account. That's the active obedience of Jesus. What's the passive obedience? That's when Jesus simply submitted himself to go to the cross, to suffer and die for sin. With his passive obedience, he removed the guilt of our sin. With his active obedience, he transferred to our account righteousness.

III. His absolute pleasure – vs. 8

"*I delight to do Thy will*"

There was no hesitation in Jesus about freeing us from the bondage of sin.

TEXT: PSALM 41

TITLE: BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

BIG IDEA:
BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY

(amplification of the Beatitude from Matthew 5:7)

I. (:1-3) THE MERCIFUL WILL BE SUSTAINED BY THE MERCY OF GOD

A. His Character: The Merciful = The Helper of the Helpless
more blessed to give than to receive
consider the Lord Jesus who though He was rich, for our sakes became poor

to "consider" the helpless involves much more commitment than simply giving money
there must be personal involvement (takes time and messy interaction)

B. His Reward: The Mercy of God
1. Mercy will be repaid with more abundant mercy in your day of trouble
As you sow you shall reap
mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2)
make no mistake: even the best of men run into days of trouble
2. Long life and good reputation
"*keep him alive*"
"*he shall be called blessed upon the earth*"
3. Protection from the malicious scheming of enemies
"*do not give him over to the desire of his enemies*"
4. Recovery from serious sickness
"*In his illness, Thou dost restore him to health*"

II. (:4-9) THE MERCIFUL WILL BE BETRAYED BY FALSE FRIENDS

A. Personal Sin Makes One Vulnerable to the Attack of False Friends

B. Personal Sin Makes One Eligible to Appeal to the Grace of God
"*be gracious to me -- for I have sinned against Thee*"

C. False Friends Take Delight in Attacking the Merciful
1. Slander
"*speak evil against me*"
2. Malicious Intent
"*When will he die, and his name perish*?"
3. Flattery and Lies
"*When he comes to see me he speaks falsehood;*
His heart gathers wickedness to itself"
4. Gossip and Scheming

"*All who hate me whisper together against me;*
Against me they devise my hurt"

D. False Friends Paint the Lord's Temporary Discipline as the Lord's Unpardonable Curse

E. The Closer the Friend, the More Painful the Attack
cf. Judas vs. Jesus

III. (:10-12) THE MERCIFUL WILL SEE THEIR INTEGRITY VINDICATED

A. The Vindication of Resurrection
"*be gracious to me and raise me up*"

B. The Vindication of Retribution
"*that I may repay them*"

C. The Vindication of Silencing One's Enemies
"*my enemy does not shout in triumph over me*"
Proof that God is "pleased with me"

D. The Vindication of Confirmed Integrity
"*Thou dost uphold me in my integrity*"

E. The Vindication of Fellowship with a Holy God
"*and Thou dost set me in Thy presence forever*"

BENEDICTION TO THE FIRST BOOK OF THE 5 BOOKS OF PSALMS (:13)
patterned after the five books of the Law

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What other beatitudes can you find in the Psalms? Check your concordance for the usage of the word "*blessed*".

2) Trace the Messianic references as alluded to in the NT. What types of parallels do you see between the experience of the psalmist and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas?

3) How would we respond if our best friend turned against us? How can we wait upon the Lord for His deliverance?

4) How can the psalmist express a desire to "*pay back*" his enemies (vs.10)? How does this fit with the NT teaching of "Bless your enemies"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "A simple chiastic outline fits Psalm 41.

Praise to God (1-3)
Prayer for mercy (4)
Trouble from the enemy (5-9)
Prayer for mercy (10)
Triumph over the enemy (11-12)
Praise to God (13)"

Kidner: Re vv11-12 – "The last word. David knew his imperfections well enough (cf. verse 4) not to imagine himself always in the right, as his meekness towards Shimei made very plain (2 Sa. 16:11). So his relief at being vindicated is heartfelt. What is equally revealing is the chief ingredient of that relief: the sense of renewed fellowship, *that thou are pleased with me.* And his ambition confirms it, being centred not in himself but *in thy presence for ever*. '*For ever*' is not always as absolute an expression as it sounds to us; but whether David was looking beyond this life (cf. 16:11) or not, the answer would not disappoint him."

Kidner: Re vs. 13 – "Doxology to the First Book of Psalms. Each of the five books ends with an outburst of praise, clinched by a double Amen (here and at 72:19; 89:52), an Amen and Hallelujah (106:48) or, finally, what is virtually a double Hallelujah (150:6), indeed a whole psalm of doxology. For all its fluctuations of mood, the Psalter constantly returns to its keynote, identified in its Hebrew title, '*Praises*'."

VanGemeren: "The psalm reflects on the blessedness of the godly, even when they suffer on account of sin (v.4). The psalm affirms that the Lord knows the '*integrity*' of heart and that he will have compassion on his own (v.12)."

Spurgeon: "Jesus Christ betrayed of Judas Iscariot is evidently the great theme of this Psalm, but we think not exclusively. He is the antitype of David, and all his people are in their measure like him; hence words suitable to the Great Representative are most applicable to those who are in him. Such as receive a vile return for long kindness to others, may read this song with much comfort, for they will see that it is alas! too common for the best of men to be rewarded for their holy charity with cruelty and scorn; and when they have been humbled by falling into sin, advantage has been taken of their low estate, their good deeds have been forgotten, and the vilest spite has been vented upon them."

Spurgeon: Re vs 1 – "'*Blessed is he that considereth the poor*.' This is the third Psalm opening with a benediction, and there is a growth in it beyond the first two. To search the word of God comes first, pardoned sin is second, and now the forgiven sinner brings forth fruit unto God available for the good of others. The word used is as emphatic as in the former cases, and so is the blessing which follows it. The poor intended, are such

as are poor in substance, weak in bodily strength, despised in repute, and desponding in spirit. These are mostly avoided and frequently scorned. The worldly proverb bequeaths the hindmost to one who has no mercy. The sick and the sorry are poor company, and the world deserts them as the Amalekite left his dying servant. Such as have been made partakers of divine grace receive a tenderer nature, and are not hardened against their own flesh and blood; they undertake the cause of the down trodden, and turn their minds seriously to the promotion of their welfare. They do not toss them a penny and go on their way, but enquire into their sorrows…"

TEXT: PSALM 42

TITLE: HOPE IN GOD

BIG IDEA:
CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD IS THE ONLY ANSWER FOR THE SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS OF THE ISOLATED BELIEVER (PART 1)

INTRODUCTION:

(must be read in conjunction with Psalm 43 as a unit)

I. (:1-4) QUESTION FROM THE SCOFFERS TO THE ISOLATED BELIEVER: "WHERE IS YOUR GOD?"
Cut off from the worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem
and from the fellowship with the people of God

A. (:1-2) The Thirst of Isolation
cf. Solitary confinement; cf. Severe drought
"*When shall I come and appear before God*?" in the temple at Jerusalem

B. (:3) The Tears of Isolation
my situation is not very impressive
the contrast between my low estate and the majesty I claim for my God leads others to scoff and mock: "*Where is Your God*?"

C. (:4) The Tantalizing Memories of Former Fellowship and Worship Experiences

II. (:5-8) QUESTION FROM THE BELIEVER TO HIS OWN THIRSTY SOUL: "WHY ARE YOU IN DESPAIR?"
Cut off from the enjoyment of the lovingkindness of the Lord;
overwhelmed with sorrow

Like a tennis match:
1) a powerful devastating serve that puts you in a difficult position
2) followed by a desparation return that just makes it over the net

A. (:5) Despair Countered by Hope

B. (:6) Despair Countered by Hope

C. (:7-8) Waves of Sorrow Countered by Lovingkindness and Joy

III. (:9) QUESTION FROM THE BELIEVER TO HIS GOD: "WHY HAST THOU FORGOTTEN ME?"
Cut off from God's answered prayer and deliverance from enemies

REVIEW:

1) (:10) "WHERE IS YOUR GOD?"

2) (:11a) "WHY ARE YOU IN DESPAIR, O MY SOUL?"

3) "WHY HAST THOU FORGOTTEN ME?

ANSWER: (:11B)

"*HOPE IN GOD, FOR I SHALL YET PRAISE HIM,*
THE HELP OF MY COUNTENANCE, AND MY GOD."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When we seem to have trouble finding God and are weighed down by our circumstances, do we have specific memories of past mountain-top spiritual experiences that give our heart courage and hope?

2) Have we tried to actively praise God out loud even though our emotions are crying out in the opposite direction? Have we experienced that phenomena of our emotions catching up to our actions? Do we see hoping in God as an active commitment of our will?

3) Do we expect God to ultimately act on our behalf (vs. 11) and quiet the taunts and mocking of our enemies?

4) Have we learned the secret of looking away from our problems and up to our God who remains our Rock and one who pours out His steadfast love upon us daily?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "If you refer to the inscription with which this psalm opens, you will find that it is addressed to the Choirmaster, and is called a Maskil of the Sons of Korah. These inscriptions are part of the inspired record; they belong with the psalm and indicate something vital about it. Maskil is the Hebrew word for teaching. This Psalm is intended to teach something to us. What? Judging by the repeated refrain, it is intended to teach us how to handle our blue moods, the times when we get up in the morning and say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?…

The answer to each blue mood is, 'Hope thou in God;' i.e., wait for God. He is working out his purposes and if you hang on you will yet praise him…

What a word of triumph! Now he understands that what God is doing is driving him step by step to the ultimate refuge of any believer in any time of testing: the word of God. It is the truth of God coupled with the light. The truth is God's word; the light is your understanding of it. What he is crying out for is an understanding of the word as he reads it; light, breaking out of these marvelous promises, to encourage and strengthen his heart. He says, 'If you will do that, God, then my heart will be filled with joy and with gladness, and I will praise you with the harp; for you, O God, are my God, my personal God.' What a revelation that is….

That is what this Psalmist is saying. When you can't shake the blues, and you have a depression of spirit that nothing seems to relieve; when you have tried to remember the past, and tried to recall the unshakable, unchangeable relationships that exist between you and God, but nothing helps; then there is nothing left but to rest upon his word, his truth, and to allow that to heal the heart. So the Psalmist closes again with the refrain that catches up the whole meaning of this song, {Psa 43:5 RSV}"

Ogilvie: "The feeling of the absence of God is one that we've all had at times. That experience is most poignant in our personal spiritual lives. We know times of great joy and companionship with God, then suddenly, life changes. We are faced with new challenges, difficult surroundings, new people, and problems we've not dealt with before. Only then do we realize that our experience of God has been dependent on sameness, familiar surroundings, and a carefully ordered life.

Yet, there are also times when the strange feeling of the absence of God comes over us when there is no logical explanation. One of the most important discoveries in living is that the feeling of God's absence may actually be our emotional response to His presence manifested in a new way, demanding new growth and maturity in our relationship with Him…

The psalmist was in the region of Mount Hermon, far to the north of Jerusalem and all the customary practices of the temple. His references in verse 6 and 7 establish that. There at the foot of Mount Hermon, the metaphor of God's might in the past, and at the head-waters of the River Jordan, the psalmist longed to be back in Jerusalem. He remembered the joyous processions to the temple, the feasts and festivals, and the stirring worship of the Lord that had come to mean so much to him (see v.4).

What was he doing away from Jerusalem? My theory is that he was probably a part of a forced march of exiles being transported away from Jerusalem into a strange and foreign land. The troubling question on his mind seemed to be, 'How can I find God away from the people and the familiar surroundings of Jerusalem where I've known and loved him?' His enemies taunted him with their own question: 'Where is your God?' Soon it became his own anxious query. 'Indeed, where are You, God?'"

Stott: "The cure for spiritual depression – Each stanza, in which the author describes his sorrowful plight, concludes with the same splendid refrain … It is remarkable to note how the author speaks to himself. He will not give in to his moods. He takes himself in hand and reproaches himself for his depression. He recognises that his soul is weighed down as by a crushing burden, and inwardly distrubed like the raging of the

sea (Psalm 46:3). But why? he asks himself. Within his repeated self-questioning is an implied rebuke. Instead of answering his own questions, or excusing himself, he immediately prescribes his remedy: he must trust or '*hope*' in God. He must give up his introspection and self-pity, his wistful reminiscences and his pained resentment at the mockery of his enemies.

The cure for depression is neither to look in at our grief, nor back to our past, nor round at our problems, but away and up to the living God. He is our help and our God, and if we trust Him now, we shall soon have cause to praise Him again. Thus, as one writer sums up, 'faith rebukes despondency and hope triumphs over despair.'"

Wiersbe: … "these psalms (42 & 43) help point the way to victory over discouragement and depression. From his own experience, the writer says to us, 'If you want to overcome depression, then you must make some radical changes in your outlook on life.'

1) Stop looking at yourself and start looking at God!

… basically, depression is selfish.

He was discouraged because his plans had not been fulfilled (42:4) … his feelings had not been relieved (42:3) … his questions had not been answered …"

2) Stop looking at the past and start looking at the future.

The important thing is not just to remember the past, but to remember God in our past (Ps. 42:6). It is helpful to look back and see what God has done. We cannot recapture the past, but we can trust the same God who has never failed or forsaken us …

have hope because of

- God's deliverance
- God's presence and protection
- God's direction in our lives
- God is our joy

3) We must stop searching for reasons and start resting on promises.

There are at least 13 questions asked in Psalms 42 and 43…

- God promises to care
- God promises to be faithful
- God promises to forgive and cleanse
- God promises to be our strength and refuge
- God promises to lead us and receive us"

Briscoe: "When Depression Blankets You Like a Cloud" …

I know of no better cure for depression than praise. Not the empty noise that some people seem to mistake for praise. Nor do we need the evasion of truth and the escape into unreality that some call victory. But the intelligent concentration of the mind on the Lord, to such a degree that the heart becomes warm from the truth the mind is pondering, can work wonders…

When a believer sinks into spiritual depression, it is because of lost hope, lost confidence, lost trust. Next time that happens to you, here's what to do:

- Examine the causes of depression.

- Remind your will of the need to act positively.
- Channel your mind into thoughts of God.
- Say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God.'

Get your trust where it belongs, and God will get your depression where it belongs—in the depths of the sea."

Holwick: LONGING FOR GOD; SEEKING GOD

I. Meaning of Psalm 42.

A. I originally thought it was about seeking God.

1) Panting of deer...

B. But psalm is deeper.

1) Someone who seeks God, but can't find him. God is silent.
2) Spiritual depression.

II. Brief outline of psalm.

A. Three (3) stanzas.

1) [Last one is Psalm 43, which goes with it.]
2) [Same refrain: 42:5; 42:11; 43:5]

B. Repeated themes in each:

1) He pours out his feelings of discouragement.
2) He turns to thinking about God.
3) He pulls himself together in faith.

III. Letting go of feelings.

A. The writer has deep yearnings.

1) All of us have yearnings that only God can fill.
2) Bertrand Russell was a famous agnostic at turn of century.

Russell's description of inner longing:

"The center of me is always and eternally a terrible pain
- a curious, wild pain -
a searching for something beyond what the world contains,
something transfigured and infinite,
the beatific vision - God.

I do not find it, I do not think it is to be found,
but the love of it is my life;
it's like passionate love for a ghost.
At time it fills me with rage, at times with wild despair;
it is the source of gentleness and cruelty and work;
it fills every passion I have.
It is the actual spring of life in me."

a) Russell sought God, but never found him.

3) The Psalmist really knew God, but felt cut off from him.
a) Drought.
1> Emphasis is not on water so much as panting.
A> Deer caught in harsh drought.
2> Long ordeal - When can I meet with God? 42:2
A> Empty ordeal - Where is your God? 42:3,10

b) Death of Samuel Beckett.
1> Writer of "Waiting for Godot."
A> Characters in play wait for Godot (=God).
B> He never shows up.

2> People want faith, answers to life's questions.
A> Philosophers say it is useless.
B> There are no answers, only chance occurrences.

3> Society: Your God is not there - forget Him!

B. Believers may feel this way, too.
1) The psalm writer is honest with God about his feelings.
a) Tears for food. 42:3
b) God has forgotten him. 42:9
2) Christians can get depressed.
a) Hard to pray.

IV. Use mind as well as feelings.
A. He remembers worshipping God in the Temple. 42:4
1) He cannot go now, but he gets strength from remembering.
a) Is worship a joy or a waste for you?
2) Be close to God when it's easy, or he may drift away.

B. He remembers personal experiences of God's grace. 42:8
1) Past, present (NIV), or future (KJV)?
a) Hebrew has no tenses.
b) Negative context suggests past or future sense.

2) He knows love and joy of God.
a) Even if he doesn't feel it now.

3) This memory follows feelings of drowning. 42:7
a) Deep calling to deep - rushing waterfalls of Jordan.
b) Jews hated water.
1> Jonah was so desperate he fled on a boat.
2> Jonah quotes these words inside great fish.

C. It is important to remember God's workings in your life.

V. Pull yourself together in faith.
A. After thinking it through, do something.
1) The Psalmist "hopes in God." 42:5, 42:11
2) Torn between heaven and earth.
a) Active, not passive.

B. He is discouraged, but doesn't give up.
1) He still sees God's hand in his life.
a) Even hard things.
b) "Your waterfalls, your waves." 42:7
2) He still prays.

VI. Jesus and Psalm 42.
A. He hungered after God.
1) "Zeal for your house has been my undoing."

B. He knew spiritual depression, separation from God.
1) "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

C. He knew physical suffering, on the cross.

D. He kept the faith to the end and did not give up hope.

G. Campbell Morgan: "Notice carefully the heroism of the man. He makes his trouble and disquietude the occasion of remembering God. Out of the place of his exile he turns his thoughts to God. The result is not a deadening of his sense of sorrow, but rather a setting of it in right relationship to God. Trouble has come in cataracts and waves and billows, but they are all God's own. '*Thy cataracts … Thy waves … Thy billows*.' When sorrow is set in this relationship, there is a consciousness of love in the day time; there is in the night a song and a prayer. The trouble is still there, the oppression and reproach of the enemy, but courage and hope continue also, and the conviction of coming deliverance. It is a wonderful psalm, and has been the song of many an afflicted yet trusting soul."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Lifting Up of the Downcast**
Introduction: But I think if we're honest, all of us would say that we've all had to deal with seasons of depression. in our life from time to time, seasons that will come. William Bridge -- preached a series of sermons on the verse, **Psalm 42:11**. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? 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.*" Now that is a **refrain** that we see three times in these two chapters, the same exact verse (**42:5; 43:5**). That's why some people treat Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 together as either twin psalms or one psalm.

I. The Reality of Depression

4 Different categories of depression:

1) Physical
2) Temperamental -- that there are just some people that are more given in their personality to be in melancholy.
3) Circumstantial
4) Spiritual

"*cast down*" – down in the dumps
Why are you so sad? Why are you so discouraged? That's part of what being depressed is, your feeling of helplessness or hopelessness, that there's no real future in mind for you, and so you give in to negative thoughts.

"*disquieted*" -- the word here means roar or noise. It means a murmuring. And the Hebrew term conveys the idea of an unpleasant sound, a commotion or a clamor. It can be used to refer to unpleasant music in the soul.

II. The Reasons for Depression

Bridges:

- Consciousness of sin
- Hiding of God's face

Reasons from the Psalm:

A. Forced absence from the temple of God where God was worshiped – 42:1-2
He feels exiled spiritually. He missed his own temple. He missed being around people he loved. He missed corporate worship.

B. Taunts of unbelievers – vs. 3, 10

C. Memory of better days – vs. 4
Now, there's nothing wrong with looking into the past, but you can't let the past pull you down. And you can't let the past weigh you down in present sorrow. That's not a good use of the past. The key to it is that when we look to the past, we look at it through God, and we look at what God did, and we praise God for what He did. And we also praise God that He's got blessings for us yet in the future. But we don't look at the past in a way that will cause us to be depressed or to be cast down. That's what the psalmist is doing here.

This is self-pity. Self-pity is the opposite of having faith. Someone said self-pity is crying on the devil's shoulder. Stop comparing your circumstances that you're in now with the past that maybe were seemingly better to you. And by the way, you ever notice how that our memories are a little bit defective? and selective, we remember all the good things about the past, we don't remember some of the bad things.

D. Overwhelmed by the trials of life – vs. 7

E. Failure of God to act quickly on his behalf – vs. 9
Sometimes God will withdraw himself from his children. Why? So that we will run to him, that we will depend upon him, so that we will trust him all the more.

III. The Remedy for Depression
There's a lot of false cures. When people don't know how to deal with their depression, they try to manage it on their own.

A. Know how to handle yourself – don't give in to your emotions
The remedy is a deliberate, faith-filled self-address. Why are you depressed? Why are you? So what he's doing is, rather than listening to himself, he's talking to himself. All right, he's preaching to himself.

Now, following the lead of William Bridge, Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote a book called *Spiritual Depression*, and he read a lot of the Puritans, and so really, he gets his ideas from that book from William Bridge. And Martin Lloyd-Jones, again, says the same thing. We must talk to ourselves instead of allowing ourselves to talk to us. He writes, do you realize what this means? I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow ourself to talk to us instead of talking to ourself. Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you're listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.

B. Turn on yourself -- Make a deliberate choice to trust in God.

C. Wait on God to give you renewed sense of joy

TEXT: PSALM 43

TITLE: CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD

BIG IDEA:
CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD IS THE ONLY ANSWER FOR THE SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS OF THE ISOLATED BELIEVER (PART 2)

INTRODUCTION:

(must be read in conjunction with Psalm 42 as a unit)

(Review of Questions from Psalm 42)

I. (:1) QUESTION FROM THE SCOFFERS TO THE ISOLATED BELIEVER:
"WHERE IS YOUR GOD?"
Cut off from the worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem
and from the fellowship with the people of God

II. (:2a) QUESTION FROM THE BELIEVER TO HIS GOD:
"WHY HAST THOU REJECTED ME?"
Cut off from God's answered prayer and deliverance from enemies

II. (:2b,5) QUESTION FROM THE BELIEVER TO HIS OWN THIRSTY SOUL:
"WHY ARE YOU IN DESPAIR?"
"*Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy*?"
Cut off from the enjoyment of the lovingkindness of the Lord;
overwhelmed with sorrow

Look at how the Psalmist deals with all of these questions as a unit:

A. (:1) Character of the Scoffers
1. ungodly
2. deceitful
3. unjust

B. (:1) Need for Vindication and Deliverance
"*Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case*"
"*deliver me*"

C. (:2) Character of God = Grounds for Vindication
my God is Strong: '*Thou art the God of my strength*"
He needs to demonstrate to those around me that He is strong on my behalf

D. (:2) Painful Present Reality = Oppression rather than Deliverance
"*Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy*?"

E. (:3) Pathway to Vindication and Deliverance = God's Truth
"*send out Thy light and Thy truth*"

F. (:4) Restoration to Public Worship and Praise
"*to God my exceeding joy*"

ANSWER: (:5B)
"*HOPE IN GOD, FOR I SHALL AGAIN PRAISE HIM, THE HELP OF MY COUNTENANCE, AND MY GOD.*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What would be the attributes of the best possible defense attorney? How does the Lord surpass these expectations in functioning as our devoted Advocate?

2) How can we improve our sensitivity and receptivity to the Lord's work of guiding us by His *light and truth*?

3) Having been delivered by the grace of God, have we made worship at the altar of God within His holy sanctuary our number one priority?

4) Why do we sink down into depression and despair when we can so easily focus our hope on God, "*the help of my countenance, and my God*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Phillips: Rumblings in the North
I. The Adversary He Fought (:1-2)
- A. Desire (:1a)
- B. Danger (:1b)
- C. Discernment (:2a)
- D. Doubt (:2b)

II. The Advance He Sought (:3-4)
- A. In His Personal Motivation (:3)
  1. To Apprehend the Truth
  2. To Appropriate the Truth
- B. In His Public Ministry (:4)
  1. To Lead the People in Sacrifice
  2. To Lead the People in Song

III. The Advice He Bought (:5)
Let me examine the reason:

A. Why I Am Sad
B. Why I Am Safe
C. Why I Am Sure

Leupold: Re vs. 3 – "'*Light*' is best thought of as a figure of God's mercy or His '*steadfast love.*' Darkness seems to have settled upon us when we are deprived of the assurance of God's mercy. Light seems to shine into our life when we know ourselves to be in God's favor. '*Truth*' is appropriately combined with light, for truth implies absolute steadfastness and thus indicates the continuance of God's mercy. Both may have been envisioned by the writer as guardian angels of a sort who are walking along at his side. This is, then, another way of saying: Let me again become assured of Thy gracious favor, O Lord."

Yates: "Two desires alternate here – the desire for freedom from persecution and the desire to go to the Temple."

Alden: "Psalm 43 begins with a plea for justice and an appeal for deliverance from deceitful and unjust men. The ungodly nation in verse 1 may be the Babylonians, who captured the psalmist and his people. Verse 2 is similar to Psalm 42:9 in that the latter halves are identical.

The appeal of verse 3 is addressed to God. The verse has been misapplied and used as an injunction to Christian witness and missions. The psalmist is in the dark and surrounded by deceitful men. Against this background he prays for some word from God to give him direction. He wishes to go to Jerusalem, God's holy hill, and to God's dwelling place there. Then he wants to go to the altar and join the orchestra that praises God."

Spurgeon: Re vs.1 – "'*O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man*.' Deceit and injustice are boon companions: he who fawns will not fear to slander. From two such devils none can deliver us but God. His wisdom can outwit the craft of the vilest serpent, and his power can overmatch the most raging lion. Whether this was Doeg or Ahithophel is small matter, such double distilled villains are plentiful, and the only way of dealing with them is to refer the matter to the righteous Judge of all; if we try to fight them with their own weapons, we shall suffer more serious injury from ourselves than from them. O child of God, leave these thine enemies in better hands, remembering that vengeance belongeth not to thee, but to the Lord. Turn to him in prayer, crying, '*O deliver me,*' and ere long you shall publish abroad the remembrance of his salvation."

TEXT: PSALM 44

TITLE: TEMPORARY DEFEAT

BIG IDEA:
GOD SOMETIMES GIVES TEMPORARY DEFEAT TO SET THE STAGE FOR MAGNIFYING HIS GLORY THRU DELIVERANCE

INTRODUCTION:
Israelite patriot being trampled over and seemingly ignored by God;
Tone: mingling of faith and sorrow
God's might as shown in deeds both of mercy and justice should be called to mind in troublous times as a stay to our fainting faith

I. (:1-3) ISRAEL'S HISTORY PROVES THAT GOD DOES GIVE VICTORY
A. HISTORY PROVIDES PERSPECTIVE

1. Dangerous to just live in the present
like a horse with blinders on; like tunnel vision;
evidence of a lack of maturity = living like a child; true wisdom views the present in the context of the big picture

2. 1 Peter teaches us to focus on the future = Live for Eternity

3. we need to learn the lessons of history because history provides perspective -- 3 main lessons:

B. HISTORY PROVES THAT THE PROBLEM IS NOT ALWAYS WEAKNESS ON MY PART --

since the victories of God's people in the past were not achieved by their strength and power

C. HISTORY PROVES THAT THE PROBLEM IS NEVER WEAKNESS ON GOD'S PART--

since God has demonstrated His power in the past and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever

D. HISTORY PROVES THAT THE SECRET TO VICTORY IS GOD'S FAVOR = THE LIGHT OF HIS PRESENCE UPON WHOM HE CHOOSES

II. (:4-8) BECAUSE THE GOD OF ISRAEL IS OUR GOD AND LEADER WE SHOULD BE CONFIDENT EVEN WHILE WE ARE EXPERIENCING TEMPORARY DEFEAT
A. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE IS ONE OF CONFIDENCE (:4-5)

the omnipotent Commander-In-Chief is our King and God and can command victory any time He wants to

B. OUR BASIS FOR CONFIDENCE (:6,8)

1. Not trusting in our own resources

2. But boasting in our God --
commitment to always giving thanks to our God

C. OUR ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HISTORY (:7), (:9-16) OUR GOD HAS LED US INTO PAINFUL, EMBARASSING DEFEAT

The Psalmist is not blind to reality. He calls defeat "defeat". The Psalmist does not deny the sovereignty of God, but gives testimony to it.

THE CYCLE OF DEFEAT

Rejection by God (executed by our enemies) -- should lead to humbling

Defeat

Retreat

Abuse
plundering of resources
ridicule -- leading to shame and disgrace

Leads to further Rejection by our family, friends, & neighbors

Tone of amazement -- How could God inflict such undeserved suffering on His own people – allowing the world to mock God as well?

v.12 "*Thou dost sell Thy people cheaply,*
And hast not profited by their sale."

IV. (:17-22) DEFEAT HAS NOT COME FROM SIN OR LED TO SIN

A. DEFEAT HAS NOT LED TO SIN -- We have patiently endured more than could be expected and yet have remained loyal (:17-18)

B. OUR GOD HAS CHOSEN TO LEAD US INTO A DESPERATE SITUATION (:19)

D. DEFEAT HAS NOT COME FROM SIN -- Since we know God can read our hearts like an open book, we have not been trying to fool God (:20-21)

E. CONCLUSION: THE CAUSE AND RESULT OF OUR DEFEAT MUST BE FOR GOD'S GLORY

"*for Thy sake*" we are under such intense persecution (:22)

V. (:23-26) PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE SO THAT GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED FOR HIS UNFAILING LOVE (cf. Mark 4:36-41)

A. THE LORD'S DELAY IN DELIVERING US SEVERELY TESTS OUR FAITH

During the prolonged time of pressure, don't expect to understand WHY the Lord is delaying His help

B. WE CAN BE CERTAIN THAT THE LORD WILL NOT REJECT US FOREVER

Defeat is only temporary (we may be tempted to doubt even this basic truth)

C. GOD IS OUR ONLY SOURCE OF DELIVERANCE

D. OUR ONLY ARGUMENT IS THE CHARACTER AND PROMISES OF GOD

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) You have heard the expression: "It is better to be lucky than good." The biblical counterpart would be: "It is better to be favored by God than favored by the oddsmakers." How had Israel learned this lesson throughout her history? (vs. 3)

2) Have we boasted about our God to someone this week? (vs.8) (Cf. how aggressive the world is in boasting about things that are Vanity.)

3) In what ways have you experienced brokenness and humiliation?

4) How strong is our confidence in our own innocence and integrity? Can we testify with the psalmist that we have not "*forgotten the name of our God*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wever: Psalm teaches us much about:
Position of God = in sovereign control over His people
Person of God = His attributes
cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Heb. 2:10; Heb. 5:8-9

It's all right to say, 'Lord, I don't understand it, but I will trust you anyway.'

It's better to say, 'Thank you Lord for letting this suffering come into my life because I know you are using it to conform me to the image of your Son and to make me a more efficient, more effective servant.'

Receive the suffering with joy and thanksgiving -- James 1:2;
1 Thess. 5:18 – '*My grace is sufficient for you.*'"

Phillips: How to Pray for One's Country

I. Israel's Previous History (:1-8)
   A. The Facts of That History (:1-3)
   B. The Force of That History (:4-8)

II. Israel's Present Helplessness (:9-22)
   A. The Military Disaster Confronting the Nation (:9-16)
      They were being:
      1. Defeated (:9-10)
      2. Deported (:11-12)
      3. Derided (:13-16)
   B. The Moral Dilemma Confronting the Nation (:17-22)
      1. The Religious Revival It Had Experienced (:17-19)
      2. The Remarkable Resolve It Had Expressed (:20-21)
         a. Challenging God on All Counts (:20-21)
         b. Choosing God at All Costs (:22)

III. Israel's Positive Hope (:23-26)
   A Call Upon God to:
   A. Regard His People (:23-25)
   B. Rescue His People (:26)

VanGemeren: "The questions of faith express the conviction that a chasm exists between the promises of God and reality. It is out of their deeply felt need and, to some extent, out of wonder that the people of God ask, '*Why do you sleep*?' It is not that they believe that their God is asleep (cf. 121:4). It emphasizes their need of his immediate attention to their plight. They plead with him to '*awake*,' i.e., rouse himself up as the Divine Warrior (cf. 7:6)."

Clarke: "Reversals of fortune are not necessarily due to specific sins (cf. Job) but are a necessary part of our discipline and bring greater profit than material success. Facts of the past often afford joy for the present, and hope for the future (1-3). Divine grace, not our goodness, gives the inheritance; God's power not our proficiency gains us our possessions (3). We must use the weapons, but the victory is His (6-7); cf. 2 Cor. x. 3-4. A study of Israel's history encourages prayer (4), trust (5-6), and praise (8). Note the sixfold '*Thou*' (9-14) recognising that Israel's circumstances were due to God's disciplinary action. If we suffer, let us be sure it is for Christ's sake and not our own sin (22); cf. 1 Peter iii. 17; iv. 15-16."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **God, Where Are You?**
Introduction: We know that the Bible says God never sleeps, but as James

Montgomery Boyce wrote in his commentary, maybe not, but he seems to, at least at times, he seems to be sleeping when his people cry out to him in their troubles. You ever feel that way? Like God, you're not paying attention, it seems like you need to be wakened. And then also he accuses God of hiding. Look at verse 24. *Why hidest thou thy face and forgetest our affliction and our oppression*? Again, have you ever felt that way? God is hiding from us, or He's hiding from me, and I can't seem to locate Him in my prayer. I can't seem to locate Him in my trial that I'm going through. Well, if you have had thoughts like that, if you've asked the question, God, where are you?
Then this psalm is a psalm that's designed to encourage you and to help you in times like this.

Big Idea: **Three realities we need to remember about God when we're going through these trials and it seems like God is asleep or he's hiding or we can't seem to find him.**

I. (:1-8) God's Helpful Providence
God is able to give victory when it looks like defeat is certain. **Vs. 1**
This psalm was written on the heels of a humiliating defeat for the people of God. It was a time of national disgrace and crisis. They were suffering a great loss.

A. (:**1-3**) He looks back and he remembers the days when God gave Israel victory.
If there was victory, it was the Lord because of his strength.

B. (:**6-7**) What God did for our fathers, he will do for us.

II. (:9-22) God's Hidden Purposes
God is at work even in our suffering. The psalmist begins to really pour out his complaint to the Lord. I mean, he really just bears his heart to God.

The psalmist recognizes that God is sovereign, God's in control, and the suffering and the defeats that they were going through were not accidental. God is in control of all things. And sometimes God will allow his people to go through dark trials.

Vs. 15 -- The whole thing was puzzling to the psalmist. It was bewildering to him.

Different categories or reasons for suffering

Vs. 22 is key -- *we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter* – quoted in NT

If you're wondering where is God and I'm going through all this, remember God hasn't stopped loving you. Nothing can separate you from His love. You remember that God has called upon you to suffer, even though you might not understand why. but just to trust Him. Another thing to remember when you're going through something like this is to remember that you can entrust your soul to God who is a faithful creator.
1 Pet. 4:19

III. God's Hopeful People – vs. 23ff

So in this last part of the psalm, the psalmist is crying out in light of his circumstances. He's saying, God, wake up, God, come to our aid, God, help us. And there's a bit more of an intensity that we see here in the psalmist where he's crying out to the Lord with all his heart. And this is really what God is trying to produce in us. You know what God's trying to bring in us? A holy desperation for him. You know what the problem is? We act like we don't need God enough. We depend on so many other things instead of God. And God wants to produce in his people a holy desperation for him.

TEXT: PSALM 45

TITLE: CELEBRATION OF THE ROYAL WEDDING

BIG IDEA:
A MAJESTIC BRIDEGROOM AND A BEAUTIFUL BRIDE PRODUCE MEMORABLE PRINCES

(:1) INTRODUCTION
Celebration of the Royal Wedding = "*A Good Theme*"; a love psalm;
a miniature Song of Solomon
Note how many unpleasant themes comprise the bulk of our daily news and discourse

Speaks in part of the historical context with the king of Israel
Speaks ultimately of the love relationship between Christ and His Bride = the Church

Note how the king is addressed as God in vs.6; but then distinct from God in vs. 7

I. (:2-9) ADMIRATION FOR THE BRIDEGROOM = THE KING

Matthew Henry: "The transcendent excellences of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal Bridegroom"

A. (:2) Summary = Blessed by God
1. He is Handsome
"*fairer than the sons of man*" ("Fairest Lord Jesus!")
2. He is a Communicator of Grace to others
"*Grace is poured upon Thy lips*"
3. He is Blessed by God forever

B. (:3-5) A Mighty, Majestic, Conquering King

"*for the Cause of Truth and Meekness and Righteousness*"

1. Celebrating His Might

2. Celebrating His Majesty

3. Celebrating His Victory

C. (:6-7) A Throne of Eternal Righteousness

D. (:8-9) All of the Royal Accessories

II. (:10-15) ADMIRATION FOR THE BRIDE
A. (:10) Her Devotion

Leaving Her Household to Cleave to the King

B. (:11a) Her Beauty

C. (:11b) Her Submission

D. (:12) Her Wedding Gifts

E. (:13-15) Her Glorious Wedding Night

CONCLUSION (:16-17)

Celebration of the Royal Offspring

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do words flow easily from our hearts in praise of our King, as the words flow easily from the pen of this ready writer?

2) If power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely (as is so often seen in human rulers), how much more will the victorious Lord of the Universe's beauty be magnified and thus demonstrated in His kindness and grace?

3) Do we have a sense that Christ delights in His bride just as the bridegroom here is said to "*desire her beauty*"? The queen is described as "*all glorious within*."

4) How does this psalm speak of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless him abundantly and rise up a numerous and prosperous line of descendants from his house?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "… here in Psalm 45 we will be looking at the King in his beauty. It is a beautiful glimpse of the perfection of the character and the beauty of Jesus Christ.

As were all the psalms, this one was built around a historic occasion. It evidently was originally written on the occasion of the marriage of a king, probably King Solomon, many scholars feel, at the time of his marriage to the daughter of the king of Tyre, which is mentioned in the book of Chronicles. But here is a description which goes far beyond the earthly wedding service. These words could never be limited to an earthly king; they clearly go beyond that. Even the Jewish commentators on this passage recognize that this is a picture of Messiah….

The final section of this division of the Psalm sets before us the relationship that he desires. What is this all about? Why this marvelous story of One who is fairer than the sons of men, and whose lips are filled with gracious words, who is able to strike the shackles of slavery from people and set them free, and who combines in his own being the character of God and man in a marvelous mystery of union? What is he after, what does he want? Well, the Psalmist tells us. He has come to get married. He has come for a bride…

This describes a marriage service. And traced for us here is a remarkable series of preparations. First of all, he has prepared himself. The writer says, '*Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia*.' Now, these are burial spices. You remember that when the women went to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, they carried with them a quantity of spices -- myrrh and aloes – in order to wrap the body of the Lord and preserve it in its death. And yet here these same spices are present at the wedding. What does this mean? Well, that this marriage is made possible out of death, that somehow out of death comes this fragrant incense which makes glorious the scene of the wedding….

Then, he has prepared a place. We read of where this wedding is to take place: '*From ivory palaces*' …

And finally the bride herself is prepared: '*...at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.*'"

Alden: "Psalm 45 describes a royal wedding. It is also Messianic, for Hebrews 1:8-9 quotes verses 6-7. Among other things, the title indicates that this is a love song…. This psalm was probably composed for the wedding of a king, but several of the grandiose terms point beyond to the union of God and His people…

Many Old Testament writers were doubtlessly not clear in their own minds about the first and second advents of Christ. They did not realize that God planned the interim of the Church age, in which Christ's kingdom would be only spiritual. When He returns, that Kingdom will then be political as well as spiritual. Many of the terms in Psalm 45 refer to the earthly, socio-political kingdom that Christ will one day set up. Mention of sword and scepter point to this millennial kingdom. Likewise the wedding is viewed in Christian theology as an eschatological event, not one which happened at the first advent…

Verses 2-9 describe the groom and verses 10-16 pertain to the bride. In ancient Semitic weddings the man was more important than the woman. He was dressed elaborately. All the guests waited to see his clothing and his attendants. The grand march played for his arrival, not the bride's – a reversal of our custom."

Leupold: Re vs. 9 – "It would appear that, though the writer set out to write a marriage ode, he became so enraptured by the thought of the person and the destiny of the bridegroom that he dwelt on that subject rather at length until he reached this point where the basic picture emerges quite clearly. The scene portrayed seems to catch the very moment when the bridegroom steps forth for the nuptials. The verse is at the same

time preparatory for the remarks that are to be made with reference to the queen. She appears at the right hand of the king with ornaments of the best Ophir gold. She has a retinue of noble attendants; kings' daughters are among the ladies of honor though the latter, strictly speaking, are in this verse described as his ladies of honor. In this portrayal everything is made to center about the bridegroom—rather than about the bride as is so often the case in modern weddings."

Scroggie: "In addressing the Bridegroom attention is called first, to his beauty (2); then, to his victorious advent (:3-5); next, to his character and office (6, 7); and finally, to his glory and majesty (8, 9). Consider the application of verses 6, 7 in Heb. i. 8, where it is seen that the Bridegroom is Christ (cf. St. Matt. xxv. 1-13)."

TEXT: PSALM 46

TITLE: GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

BIG IDEA:
SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF EXTREME PRESSURE DERIVE FROM RELYING ON GOD'S POWER, PRESENCE AND PREEMINENCE

INTRODUCTION:

God's people down through the ages have known the pressure of being under attack. The nation of Israel has continually been threatened with extinction and yet God has remained faithful to those who are the true Israel and put their trust in Him. Even today when the United Nations gathers to hear the political messages from the leaders of various nations, it seems that the peace and security of the nation of Israel takes center stage. Remember the attack of the Assyrian King Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah – **2 Kings 18-19**. We are going to review this story as the backdrop for the message of Psalm 46.

As God's people today, we experience different forms of pressure and attack every day. There is much that distracts our attention from **security** and **confidence** in our God. Our hearts are easily disturbed and blown about with the winds of anxiety and fear. We need to be anchored in dependence upon the one who has promised to be with us and to never leave us or forsake us.

SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF EXTREME PRESSURE DERIVE FROM RELYING ON GOD'S POWER, PRESENCE AND PREEMINENCE

I. (:1-3) THE FORTRESS OF GOD'S POWER PROTECTS AGAINST ALL ATTACKS --
WE WILL NOT FEAR

A. (:1) The Security of Our Fortress is God Himself

1. Our Refuge = Hiding place / Fortress
   "*God is our refuge*"

I always liked visiting forts as a child; we are fortunate to be located near one of the most famous – Fort McHenry
David knew what it meant to rely on God as his refuge – his hiding place from the pursuit of King Saul and his troops; or again from the pursuit of his wayward son Absalom and his henchmen
I like the picture the Lord Jesus presented of **Matt. 23:37** as He laments over unrepentant Jerusalem, the city of God – "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children*

together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings"

2. Our Strength
"*and strength,*"

We are commanded to strengthen ourselves in the Lord
It is important to know the limitations of trusting in your own strength and to know the source of your strength

3. Our Deliverer
"*A very present help in trouble.*"

God is with us – this is the refrain throughout the psalm – surprising not to find the refrain verses repeated here at the end of the first strophe
God is available to us
God is accessible at just the right time when we need Him the most

Heb. 4:16: "*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*."

B. (:2a) The Steadfastness of Our Confidence is God's Power
"*Therefore we will not fear,*"

How much of our life is disrupted by Fear and Anxiety??

Satan attacks us with this weapon of fear to paralyze us and keep us from stepping out in faith and aggressively trusting the Lord to accomplish great things for Him

Lord Jesus constantly addressed this weakness of fear and anxiety in the hearts of His disciples

- **Matt. 10:28-31** "*Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" Fear of God is the anecdote for the negative fear of men
- **Luke 12:22-34** Message about seeking first the kingdom of God and not being anxious about the provision of your physical and material needs – "*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.*"
- **John 14:1** as Jesus comforts His disciples in light of His soon departure: "*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me*."

What could we accomplish for the Lord if we were freed from Fear?

- Fear of failure
- Fear of attacks
- Fear of inadequacy
- Fear of people's opinions
- Fear of financial ruin or of the loss of our health

We need to cycle back to meditating on the person of God as our **Refuge**, our **Strength** and our **Deliverer**

Remember what God did for King Hezekiah and the city of Jerusalem against the unbelievable odds of the forces of King Sennacherib of Assyria

C. (:2b-3) The Sufficiency of God's Power Withstands Even the Strongest Attack
Pictured as the Powerful Forces of Nature
"*though the earth should change, And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.*"

What would happen if our world were **turned upside down** by some type of catastrophic event? Here the mountains are pictured as being cast into the sea; The mountains symbolize what should be impregnable and beyond all attack; and yet here they are consumed by the roaring and foaming waters of the sea which now exhibits a sense of swelling pride in having seized control; World would buffet us and beat against us with powerful forces

Look at the natural disasters we have witnessed in the world recently:
The tsunami in Japan; earthquakes of various magnitude and devastation, floods like Katrina; threat of nations using nuclear weapons … all of these pale in comparison to what will happen when God pours out His wrath at the end of the age

Whatever pressure and attacks we might face can never be as great as what the psalmist pictures here; yet his point is that **God's Power** to protect His people is sufficient even against such a great adversary; therefore, **we must not Fear!**

We will never be disappointed if we put our trust in the Lord and His saving power; so let's not fear but be strong in our security and confidence in the Lord, our Fortress

"A Mighty Fortress is our God"

II. (:4-6) THE RIVER OF GOD'S PRESENCE STEADIES US AMIDST ALL TURMOIL -- WE WILL NOT BE MOVED

A. (:4-6a) The Joy of Our Life is Appreciating the Presence of God
"*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her,*"

The symbolism of the river connotes the life giving power and presence of God
Reminds us of **Rev. 22:1-2** "*Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life*"

John 7:38 "*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit*"

(cf. ministry of John Piper – Desiring God)

The Holiness of God must be honored

Psalm 15 "*O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.*"

The Privilege of Fellowship with a Holy God – He makes His dwelling place with us; the Most High = the Transcendent one – is also the Immanent one who is with us every day

Immanuel – God incarnate; God in the flesh has made His home in our midst; in fact His Holy Spirit has come to dwell within us

B. (:4-5) The Steadfastness of Our Confidence is God's Presence

"*she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns*"

Lam. 3:22-25 "*The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail, They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I have hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.*'"

God wants us to be Steadfast; not to be shaken or moved from our spiritual center by the winds of pressure or by trials or attacks or opposition

Things might look dark in the night – but we need the confidence that when the morning dawns, God's Power and Presence are there to help us

C. (:6) The Futility of Resisting God

"*The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted.*"

King Sennacherib experienced that futility

Psalm 2 REBELLIOUS WORLD LEADERS MUST BOW DOWN BEFORE GOD'S ANOINTED RULER OR BE BROKEN BY GOD'S WRATH

I. (:1-3) THE FUTILITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE RULE OF GOD -- FORGET IT!

A. (:1) It Doesn't Make any Sense
B. (:2) There is No Safety in Numbers
C. (:3) Resolutions of Rebellion are Doomed to Failure

II. (:4-6) THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE -- NO PROBLEM!

A. His Position -- sits reigning in the heavens -- Majesty
B. His Mocking of their feeble resistance
C. His Wrath in promising judgment
D. His Triumph in establishing His King over all the earth

III. (:7-9) THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANOINTED KING -- THE SON OF GOD -- IT'S A DONE DEAL!

REFRAIN (:7)

"*The Lord of Hosts is with us;*
The God of Jacob is our stronghold"

"Like a River Glorious is God's Perfect Peace"

The futility of resisting God transitions to the final strophe

III. (:8-10) THE MIGHTY WORKS OF <u>GOD'S PREEMINENCE</u> PUT AN END TO ALL STRIVING --
WE WILL NOT BE DEFEATED

A. (:8-9) The Destruction of All Opposition

"*Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire.*"

These mighty works of God are here viewed as works of judgment and destruction as He puts down all opposition

He is the one who has already secured our victory; how futile to try to put up opposition against His kingdom

But for His people, how sad if they do not have security and confidence in God's ultimate triumph

B. (:10a) The Quiet Security and Confidence in Resting in God Alone

"*Cease striving and know that I am God;*"

This is a message to both friends and foes – "*Be still and know that I am God*" Usually we think of that in application to ourselves – How we need to quiet our hearts before God and rest in Him; but here it is in the context of Him putting down all attacks and all opposition – like the context of Psalm 2

To us, it does not mean "let go and let God" but to stop trying to rely on the arm of the flesh and look to God to accomplish our salvation; we still need to work out our salvation in fear and trembling … but we also need to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord

C. (:10b) The Exaltation of the Lord

"*I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.*"

Bow the knee now before it is too late – "*at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*." **Phil. 2:10-11**

On that day we will reign with our Lord and Savior; we will be exalted at the end as well and share in His triumph and kingdom

RERAIN (:11)

"*The Lord of Hosts is with us;*
The God of Jacob is our stronghold"

"O Worship the King"

CONCLUSION:

Goldingay: "Yahweh is not only a means of escape from pressures and trials. He is also Lord over them. He is not an escape from history, but the one who is working out his purpose in history. And he is therefore not just a Saviour to be trusted, but also a Lord to be acknowledged. Thus, the psalmist goes on: *Stop fighting, and acknowledge that I am God*.'"

SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF EXTREME PRESSURE DERIVE FROM RELYING ON GOD'S POWER, PRESENCE AND PREEMINENCE

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some fears that you have conquered? How did you gain the victory?

2) Do we truly take time to be still before the Lord and to sense His presence with us? Have we learned how to relax and count on the Lord's strength? Can we stand unmoved, despite turmoil all around us?

3) Do we experience the joy of the river that flows thru our lives giving ever-renewing waves of union with our God?

4) Is there any doubt that the Commander of the armies of heaven is adequate for whatever challenge might face us? He is the one that has pledged to come and rescue us!

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "If you let yourself be still this morning and know that God is God, that he will be exalted among the nations, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, that your life here is very short, then you will see what your life is supposed to be. God will make your unique significance plain.

And you will follow his lead if you believe that he is your refuge and strength, which is what verse 1 says: "God is our refuge and strength." People turn away from the risks of significance and choose the brief security of success because they don't really believe this--that God is their strength, and God is refuge, and God is their defender and their refreshment….

This is the secret this morning to whether you will choose significance or mere success: The risks of significance turn out to be no risk at all if you believe that God is your refuge and strength and defender and refreshment. I pray that you will believe it and that God will make plain the path of significance."

Ogilvie: "An untroubled heart can triumph over troubles based on three firm convictions: The Lord is on our side, by our side, and gives us peace inside. This is the triumphant message of the forty-sixth psalm… Many biblical scholars agree that this psalm was written after the Lord stepped in to save Jerusalem from Sennacherib's siege. The historical background helps us to appreciate how the Lord intervenes in our troubles, on time and in time. It shows us again the sublime adequacy of the Lord in the midst of trouble…

Peace is the result of knowing that we have adequate resources to face anything. If we discover that from the trouble we go through, we can be still in whatever happens to trouble us in the future."

Lucado: "… there was one instruction in the music (speaking of taking music lessons as a young boy) I could never obey to my teacher's satisfaction. The rest. The zigzagged command to do nothing. Nothing! What sense does that make? Why sit at the piano and pause when you can pound?

'Because,' my teacher patiently explained, 'music is always sweeter after a rest.'

It didn't make sense to me at age ten. But now, a few decades later, the words ring with wisdom—divine wisdom."

Briscoe: "When Your Stresses are Greater Than Your Strengths –

'*Be still and know that I am God'* (v. 10). It is not too difficult to be cool, calm, and collected when there is nothing to give you a headache. Composure is relatively simple when there is nothing to 'decompose' you. But to be able to react to the unexpected in this unnatural way is difficult. So far as I know, there is only one way of doing it. That is to be so accustomed to being 'still' in the Lord's presence that it becomes an intuitive reaction.

A well trained soldier will 'freeze' instantly if he hears some sound that he is not

expecting. It takes long hours of training to enable him to 'freeze' quickly enough to save his life. That's how it is with the one who would 'be still' in the Lord when the unexpected happens…

To understand that God is a refuge when you are under stress is the first step. But the second step is to relate the stress to Him and seek His protecting and preserving grace. He will act on your behalf and thereby show to you another aspect of His Being. You will become aware in a practical sense of His 'refuge' qualities. And accordingly, you will know Him in a fuller way…

Be still therefore. Give yourself time to know God. Respond to what you know. Review what He has done and relate Him to your stresses—and see His peace reign in your heart."

Morgan: "NAMES OF GOD -- JEHOVAH SABAOTH -- THE LORD OF HOSTS
INTROD:

Today is Reformation Day -- cf. Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

The Reformation brought 3 things:

1. Word of God was put into the language of the people -- Sola Scriptura was the cry
2. Justification by faith was the great truth that was rediscovered and taught
3. Sovereign power of God over the affairs of men and nations was recognized

I. MEANING OF THE NAME --

Rom. 9:29 -- "hosts" = multitude, crowd -- viewed as an army

Used 270 times in the OT -- hosts of heaven under the control of the Supreme Commander;

God = ruler of His creation; His hosts do His command; especially has application concerning

God's sovereignty over the affairs of nations (1 Sam. 17:45; Psalm 24:10)

Is. 9:7 -- God will see that this is brought to pass

Used 60 times in prophecy of Isaiah; 70 times in Jeremiah; 50 times in Zechariah

II. APPLICATION TO US (PSALM 46:7,11)

A. Message to the nations (:8-10) = those who do not confess Him as Lord
   1. "*See*" what God has done and what He is going to do
   2. "*Hear*" "*Be Still*" -- stop what you are doing

B. God's Message to His People (:1-6) -- two promises:
   1. God's presence with His people
   2. God's protection over His people

Personal Application:

How personal -- He is the God of Jacob as well; He can take the most crooked man and make him a prince with Him

1. He is our refuge = our hiding place
2. He is our strength
3. He is our help = right where I need it; at just the right time"

Harris: THE PSALM FOR STORM-TOSSED SOULS

Theme: A time of distress and discouragement when thoughts of God were a solace to

the soul. So Luther's "*A mighty fortress is our God*."
Occasion: One of two events: Jehoshaphat's deliverance, 2 Chron. 20; or the destruction of Sennacherib's army.

I. GOD'S POWER. Ver. 1-3. "*Our refuge and strength*" (ver. 1).
   1. Refuge. Ver. 1.
   2. Repose. Ver. 2, 3.

II. GOD'S PRESENCE. Ver. 4-7. "*In the midst of her*" (ver. 5).
   1. Consolation. Ver. 4, 5.
   2. Comfort. Ver. 6, 7.

III. GOD'S PEACE. Ver. 8-11. "*Maketh wars to cease*" (ver. 9).
   1. Providence. Ver. 8-10.
   2. Protection. Ver. 11.

G. Campbell Morgan: "The system of the song is worth noting. It is divided into three parts. The first (vers. 1-3) is the challenge of confidence. The second (vers. 4-7) tells the secret of confidence. The third (vers. 8-11) declares the vindication of confidence.

The challenge announces confidence in God as refuge and strength, and very present help, and defies fear even in the midst of the wildest upheavals. In days when tempests shake loose all solid things, and the restless waters roar and surge till mountains shake, the soul is confident.

The secret of the confidence is the consciousness of the nearness of God. He is a river of gladness in the midst of the city. What matters the tumult around?

The vindication of confidence is to be found in observing His activity in all surrounding things, from this place of safety and strength within the city. The twice repeated refrain (vers. 7, 11) is full of beauty as it reveals the twofold conception of God which is the deepest note in the music. He is the King of all hosts. He is the God of the individual. Scholars believe, and with every reason, that the refrain should also occur between verses 3 and 4. This certainly perfects the literary form, and adds to the beauty of the psalm."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Overcoming Panic**
Introduction: Martin Luther literally went through a time when he was just in fear for his life, running for his life. And during that time, Psalm 46 became a tremendous comfort to him. This became his favorite psalm. And as a result of this psalm, he actually began to write a hymn -- *A mighty fortress is our God*. God became the refuge for Martin Luther. There's going to come times when all hell seems to break loose on you. And you may panic. You may run to panic palace. Well, don't run to panic palace. Instead, **run to God for refuge**.

Big Idea: **Three beautiful analogies or three metaphors that the psalmist gives us that talks to us about how God is our helper. How God is the one who will get us out of the troubles that we face in life.**

I. Don’t fear. We have a refuge.

A. You don’t have to fear a crisis because God will help you

Vs. 1 -- Don't be afraid of the crisis when it comes, when you're in a tight spot.

B. You don’t have to fear a change, because God is an unchanging refuge.

Vs. 2 -- Look, you don't have to fear, even when changes happen. God wants our security to be in Him. **Ps. 102:11**

C. You don’t have to fear a catastrophe because you have a God who is your refuge – vs. 2

II. Don’t think. We have a river that we can go to for refreshing. Vs. 4

Ps. 1; 36:8; John 7:37

He is the one sustaining us, satisfying us, strengthening us.
That river brings us security.
That river is sovereign and in control of everything.

III. Don’t fret. We have a ruler. Vs. 8

Two commands:

- Watch God work. Come and see; Come and behold
- Rest in His sovereignty. Be still and know that He is God

TEXT: PSALM 47

TITLE: A GREAT KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

BIG IDEA:
IN THE ARENA OF NATIONS, GOD IS THE KING OF CAPTURE THE FLAG

RESPONSE: JOIN IN SINGING THE WORLD ANTHEM (not just the National Anthem) OF:

"*ALL PRAISE TO HIM WHO REIGNS ABOVE IN MAJESTY SUPREME*"
(Blessed Be the Name)

INTRODUCTION:

Remember the game: Capture the Flag

In the realm of earthly kingdoms, God will ultimately prove victorious as:

"*a great King over all the earth*"

"*for the shields of the earth belong to God*"

Looks forward to the Messianic Kingdom as God once again exalts the Jewish nation, and all the other nations of the earth bow in submission to the reign of the Messiah from the throne of David

I. (:1-4) GET EXCITED ABOUT THE REIGN OF GOD

A. (:1) Excited Enough to Set Aside All Inhibitions and Express Our Joy

1. "*Clap your hands*"
2. "*Shout to God with the voice of joy*"

B. (:2) Excited Because the King of all the Earth is Awesome

"*the Lord Most High is to be feared*"

C. (:3) Excited Because the King of the Nations Has Made His People Victorious

nothing like victory to get people all excited

D. (:4) Excited Because the Reign of God Means a Rich Inheritance for Us

II. (:5-9) SING PRAISES TO THE ONE WHO REIGNS OVER THE NATIONS

A. (:5-7) His Reign Begins With His Victorious Ascension

B. (:8-9) His Reign Extends From His Holy Throne

CONCLUSION:

"His name shall be the Counselor, The mighty Prince of Peace,
Of all earth's kingdoms Conqueror, Whose reign shall never cease."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Since "*God is the King of all the earth*" ("*a great king*" – vs. 2), how should this help to break down ethnic and nationalistic barriers to the spread of the gospel?

2) If we are commanded to "*Sing praises with a skillful psalm*" (vs. 7), (NIV: "*sing thoughtful praises*"), how can we make sure that both our emotions and our intellect are engaged in the process of worship? To emphasize one to the exclusion of the other would be a serious mistake.

3) What aspects of God's sovereignty are stressed in this psalm? Have we submitted all of our life to His Lordship?

4) How can we encourage others by reminding them that God has reserved His choicest blessings for those who love Him (vs. 4)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "The opening verse hints at the exuberance with which God's ancient people praised Him. In view of the disdain many Christians have for handclapping and other expressions of rhythm accompanying hymn singing, and in view of the total inappropriateness of applause for God in our worship patterns, this verse is an interesting commentary on the way God's chosen people worshiped Him in olden times. Perhaps the church is not excited enough about the things God does. Maybe our worship is too solemn…"

Phillips: Re vs. 4 – "'*the excellency of Jacob whom He loved*.' The word '*excellency*' can better be translated '*pride*.' The nation of Israel was Jehovah's pride. It was the object of His love. What do you think of that! There is no way to explain it. Think of the persistent rebellion, apostasy, unbelief, and wickedness of the nation. Remember, God had just handed ten of the tribes over to the Assyrians and had allowed most of Judah to feel the Assyrian scourge—all because of the apostasies and sins of these two once-blessed nations. Yet so great will be Israel's ultimate restoration, devotion, and response that Hezekiah—speaking with the last days in mind—actually calls the nations the object of God's pride. God will one day say to the angels as He points to Israel—'There, what do you think of that!'"

Kidner: Re vv. 8-9 – "One throne, one world. The vision of the psalm takes in a whole new area in the final verse. So far, God's relation to the world at large has been presented as that of a '*great king*' (2), i.e., an emperor, whose own people are distinct from the outer circle of his subjects (3f). Now, with a single word, the real end in view comes into sight. The innumerable *princes* and *peoples* are to become one people; and they will no longer be outsiders but within the covenant: this is implied in their being called the people of the God of Abraham. It is the abundant fulfilment of the promise

of Genesis 12:3; it anticipates what Paul expounds of the inclusion of the Gentiles as Abraham's sons (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3;7-9).

But characteristically the psalm relates this to its theme, the kingly glory of God … '*he is highly exalted*.' This was, in different words, the climax of 46:10, above and beyond 46:9. It is the point to which everything is moving."

Clarke: "Messiah's Millennial Monarchy

I. Exhortation to Praise (1-2).
   1. The Rejoicing (1). Universal Summons.
   2. The Reason (2). Universal Sovereignty.

II. Exhibition of Power (3-4).
   In the Restoration of Israel. Selah.

III. Exaltation of God (5).

IV. Exhortation to Praise (6-8).
   1. The Rejoicing (6). Universal Summons.
   2. The Reason (7a). Universal Sovereignty.
   3. The Rejoicing (7b). Universal Summons.
   4. The Reason (8). Universal Sovereignty.

V. Expression of Allegiance (9abc).
   By the Representatives of Gentiles.

VI. Exaltation of God (9d)."

TEXT: PSALM 48

TITLE: THE CITY OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
THE CELEBRATION OF THE CITY OF GOD

I. (:1-3) WORSHIP GOD FOR HIS ENTHRONEMENT IN HIS ROYAL CITY

A. Call to Worship

"*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised*"

B. City of God's Enthronement

"*the city of our God*"
"*His holy mountain*"
"*Mount Zion in the far north*"
"*beautiful in elevation*"
"*the joy of the whole earth*"
"*the city of the great King*"
her royal palaces = impenetrable fortress because of the presence of God

II. (:4-8) THE SIGHT OF THE CITY OF GOD STIRS PANIC IN THE ENEMY KINGS

A. Panic despite their collected forces

"*the kings assembled themselves*"

B. Panic that causes them to flee in terror

C. Panic that causes them anguish, "*as of a woman in childbirth*"

D. Panic that can find no safe refuge

"*With the east wind Thou dost break the ships of Tarshish*"

E. Panic that knows the reality of the victory of the City of God

III. (:9-11) WORSHIP GOD FOR HIS LOVING AND RIGHTEOUS REIGN

A. Loving Reign

lovingkindness -- in the midst of Thy temple

B. Call to Worship

"*As is Thy name, O God,*
So is Thy praise to the ends of the earth"

C. Righteous Reign

righteousness
judgments

D. Call to Worship

"*Let Mount Zion be glad,*
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice"

IV. (:12-14) THE SIGHT OF THE CITY OF GOD STIRS CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD

A. Confident in Defense

Walk around the city and take a good look:

"*Count her towers*"
"*Consider her ramparts*"

B. Confident in Posterity

"*Go through her palaces;*
That you may tell it to the next generation"

C. Confident in Eternity

"*For such is God,*
Our God forever and ever"

D. Confident in Guidance

"*He will guide us until death*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Is our faith as strong in the Lord's guidance in our lives (vs. 14) as it is in the Lord's protection and deliverance?

2) Do we associate "joy" with "holiness" (vv.1-2), or do we associate Puritanical "sternness" with holiness? How do we balance joy with reverence towards a God who is awesome?

3) Does the greatness of our God inspire corresponding greatness of praise and worship on our part?

4) When we see here the panic of the most powerful enemies before God's power and judgment (vv. 4-8), does our confidence and courage in the Lord's ability to protect us increase accordingly?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ellison: "Tarshish (7) is linked with the word for smelting metal. Places where metal ores were obtained were called Tarshish, and the ships of Tarshish which carried the ore

were of necessity large. So the name came to be used generally of the largest ships, and stood for the pride of man in his manufacturing skill (Isa. 2:16)."

Craigie: "the procession was designed to imprint upon the mind and heart of the worshipers a more profound reality, that of the Living God. 'This is God': that is to say, this mountain is in a sense God. The mountain as such was not, of course, deity; the point of the words was to press home the symbolism of what was seen, so that it might be converted into a sense of reality. God's presence and protection were as eternal and real as the rocks and structures of Mount Zion and its city. The symbolic procession was a means by which the sensory perceptions could feed and strengthen faith in that grreater, but intangible, reality, namely God."

Gaebelein: "This Psalm belongs to the series which began with the forty-second. It is therefore closely linked with the preceding one. It is a a millennial Psalm, and celebrates Messiah's complete victory over all the enemies of His people. It is a great thanksgiving Psalm. Expositors have seen in this Psalm the praise for God's care over Jerusalem when the army of Sennacherib was threatening (2 Kings 18:14 and Isa. 36) and others apply it to the time of Jehoshaphat. But it is obvious that its fulfillment belongs to the future. All the fomer deliverances of Jerusalem foreshadow the final great deliverance when the hordes of Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38-39) gather against it."

Phillips: "The love of God in saving Jerusalem from the Assyrians is all the more remarkable when we consider the fearful moral and spiritual state of the country at that time. Only Hezekiah, Isaiah, and a handful of others really stood for God. The rest of the people had long been infected by the idolatrous beliefs and practices of the surrounding pagan peoples. Yet God dealt with them in love."

Yates: "City of our God. The two themes within this section – the greatness of God and the glory of his city, complement one another. Not only is the Lord great, he is the *great King* and exceedingly worthy to be praised. The close connection of this psalm with the preceding ones suggests that perhaps it is the apocalyptic Jerusalem as the center of the Messianic kingdom that is described. However, it is possible that the siege by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. is referred to in verses 4-8 (cf. Isa 37:33-37)."

Goldingay: Re vs. 11 – "Joy and gladness stem from justice and judgment! The people of God rejoice in that righteousness of God which makes him act righteously and fulfill a righteous purpose in the world—a righteous purpose which will mean triumph for his people when their enemies wrongly oppress them or when they are themselves the means of his bringing judgment upon God's enemies, but which will also mean receiving judgment themselves when they go against him. And the people of God are glad about God's acts of judgment, those moments when he exercises his authority and makes his decisions and effects his will—decisions which will again mean triumph for his people when they are right with him, but may mean trouble when they themselves deserve judgment. But so long as Israel stays with God, then justice and judgment are the same thing as the keeping of God's commitment of which the psalmist spoke earlier (9). They mean that God is actively on their side as their defender and vindicator."

TEXT: PSALM 49

TITLE: YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

BIG IDEA:
THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS VS. THE FALSE SECURITY OF THE FOOLISH

(:1-4) INTRODUCTION: THIS WORD OF WISDOM APPLIES TO EVERYONE

A. Exhortation to Listen Carefully (Listen Up!)
"*Hear this*"
"*Give ear*"

B. Scope of Application (No Partiality)
1. Worldwide Application
"*all peoples*"
"*all inhabitants of the world*"

2. Economic Class Application
"*both low and high*"
"*both rich and poor*"

C. Value of this Teaching
word of wisdom and understanding

D. Form of Communication
"*a proverb*"
"*a riddle*"

I. (:5) FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION: WHY SHOULD I LET THE APPARENT PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED BOTHER ME?

"*Why should I fear*?"

II. HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. Redemption is Costly:
"*God will redeem my soul*" (:15)

B. Eternal Fellowship with God is Secure
"*God will receive me*" (:15)

III. FALSE SECURITY OF THE FOOLISH

A. (:6-9) Redemption is Costly:
No amount of money can buy Redemption

You cannot trust in your wealth

B. (:10-12) Death is Universal

The Wise to the Stupid -- they all die and leave their wealth behind

The Proud try to ignore this harsh reality
they imagine that their wealth will enable them to live forever

But in the end all die -- just like animals

IV. (:16-20) ANSWER TO THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

"*Do not be afraid* !"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) The truths of God are universal and cut across all social and economic and geographic strata (vv.1-2). How does this encourage us in our mission to go into all the world and make disciples of all men?

2) What comparisons can you draw between the questions raised in this psalm and the themes addressed in the Book of Ecclesiastes? How does the perspective of the psalmist go beyond the limited answers provided by Solomon?

3) To what extent is our security and value system tainted with a reliance upon wealth, wisdom or power rather than solely on God? We know intellectually that "You can't take it with you"; but do our day-to-day decisions reflect that reality?

4) Why should we "not be afraid when a man becomes rich (vs. 16)?" Why would we even be tempted to be afraid? What dynamic is at work here?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alden: "The book of Ecclesiastes, in a manner of speaking, is a commentary on verse 10. Rich or poor, wise or foolish, all men die, and that which they have must be left behind. How or by whom their inheritance will be used is something hard to control.

Some people build monuments to themselves – grave-stones, churches, schools – and even name streets, cities, and countries after themselves. Such means do not preserve their souls (v. 11) regardless of how hard they work or how rich they become. Verse 12 repeats the inevitable truth – men die like beasts. This verse forms a conclusion to the first stanza and is repeated at the end of the psalm.

It is folly for a person to think he will not die. It is stupid to welcome the

congratulations of men without reckoning with the judgment of God. The end is like that of a sheep in the slaughterhouse. Houses and wealth will be consumed in the fires of destruction."

Phillips: "Worthless Wealth

I. The Subject of Riches Formally Introduced (:6)
    A. The Poet Is Introduced (:1-4)
        1. His Proclamation (:1-2)
        2. His Promise (:3-4)
    B. The Problem is Introduced (:5-6)
        1. The Wickedness That Dogs a Man's Heels (:5)
        2. The Wealth That Devours a Man's Hopes (:6)

II. The Subject of Riches Fully Investigated (:7-20)
    A. Worldly Wealth Produces Spiritual Blindness (:7-12)
        1. The Rich Man Confuses Truth with Error (:7-9)
            a. What He Cannot Purchase (:7)
            b. What He Cannot Perceive (:8)
            c. What He Cannot Prevent (:9)
        2. The Rich Man Confuses Time with Eternity (:10-12)
            a. What He Sees (:10)
            b. What He Says (:11)
            c. What He Shows (:12)
    B. Worldly Wealth Promotes Spiritual Banality (:13)
    C. Worldly Wealth Provokes Spiritual Bankruptcy (:14-20)
        The rich fool is:
        1. Robbed of His Future (:14-15)
        2. Robbed of His Fortune (:16-18)
        3. Robbed of His Faith (:19-20)"

Phillips: "This psalm is about poor rich people – people who have money, but that is all they have. Family, fortune, friends, and future – nothing matters but money. These people are the orphans of eternity. When life's moorings are untied they will be cast adrift to be tossed upon the waves of a shoreless sea – without chart or compass, without sun or star, forever driven before the howling winds of God's wrath deeper and deeper into the dark."

Yates: Re vv. 5-12 – "'*Wherefore should I fear*.' The psalmist deals in a different way with the age-old problem of the prosperity of the wicked. He says, Why worry? With this premise he goes on to discuss the problem with a confident rather than a pessimistic attitude. He never accuses God of injustice, but continually points to the fate of those who trust in their wealth. All must come to the end of life and all must leave their wealth behind."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 14 – "As dumb, driven cattle, they are hurried to their doom, and are penned in within the gates of destruction. As sheep that go whither they are driven, and follow their leader without thought, so these men who have chosen to make this world

their all, are urged on by their passions, till they find themselves at their journey's end, that end the depths of hades... Death like a grim shepherd leads them on, and conducts them to the place of their eternal pasturage, where all is barrenness and misery. The righteous are led by the Good Shepherd, but the ungodly have death for their shepherd, and drives them onward to hell. As the power of death rules them in this world., for they have not passed from death unto life, so the terrors of death shall devour them in the world to come. As grim giants, in old stories, are said to feed on men whom they entice to their caves, so death, the monster, feeds on the flesh and blood of the mighty."

G. Campbell Morgan: "This is the song of a principle, and the psalmist commences by calling peoples of all castes and classes to give attention. It denies the power of material wealth, and affirms that of uprightness. There are two things which wealth cannot do. It can neither help a man to escape death, nor can it ensure the life of the one possessing it. The passion of the heart for immortality is manifest in the building of houses and the naming of the land. It is all useless. They are no more able to secure personal immortality thus than are the beasts which perish. …

The teaching of the song is simple and sublime, present and perpetual. Right is mightier than wealth. It reaches farther, and accomplishes more. Wealth passes away empty-handed. Righteousness sings, even in death, of redemption, and a morning of dominion."

TEXT: PSALM 50

TITLE: GOD WILL NOT FORGET THOSE WHO FORGET HIM

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S INDICTMENT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE FOR:
INSINCERE WORSHIP &
UNRIGHTEOUS CONDUCT

I. (:1-6) CALL TO JUDGMENT: *"God Himself is Judge"*

A. Character of the Judge
1. the Mighty One = God = the Lord
2. the Holy King = perfection of beauty
out of Zion = the holy, royal city
3. the Righteous Judge

B. Summons to Come to the Courtroom
1. Summons Issued by God
a. He will no longer keep silent
b. He is a God to be feared
1) fire devours before Him
2) It is very tempestuous around Him

2. Summons Addressed to Everyone
a. To the witnesses:
1) the heavens
2) all of the earth
b. To those being judged = Israel = God's people
"my godly ones"
those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice

II. (:7-13) INDICTMENT FOR INSINCERE WORSHIP
External Sacrifices Cannot Absolve a Heart that is not Thankful!

God does not NEED our sacrifices ("the world is mine and all it contains")

III. (:14-15) THE KEY TO DELIVERANCE = THANKSGIVING + OBEDIENCE

IV. (:16-21) INDICTMENT FOR UNRIGHTEOUS CONDUCT
Lip Service Cannot Absolve a Life that Disregards God's Law

V. (:22-23) THE KEY TO DELIVERANCE = THANKSGIVING + OBEDIENCE

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Is it surprising that both “beauty” and “fiery judgment” are ascribed to God within the same context (vv.2-3)?

2) Of what value is ritual if it is not accompanied by righteousness? How much of Christendom holds on to the form of godliness while denying its power? (2 Tim. 3:5) (Clarke: “God listens to the language of the life, not of the lip.”) Does our walk match our profession? Is our worship sincere?

3) How is God’s judgment of His own beloved children different than His judgment upon the wicked?

4) What type of unethical and wicked behavior is described in vv.18-20 as that which God despises? Is there anything that escapes God’s notice and realm of accountability? When do we make false assumptions based on the silence of God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: “So Zion meant the place where God was present and near to His people. But that's not all. It follows that the Zion became the place from which the people expected help. Zion became the source of deliverance and salvation….

But because sin became rampant among the people and because divine judgment was inevitable, even on Zion (Lamentations 2:15), it became more and more obvious, especially to the prophets that Zion, the city of David, the earthly Jerusalem was not the ideal city. They began to see more clearly that this Zion pointed forward to a future Zion and upward to a heavenly Zion. Or to put it another way, if imperfect Zion is the place of God's presence on the earth, then there must be a perfect Zion where God dwells in heaven (cf. Acts 7:48f). And if imperfect Zion is the place of God's presence on the earth now, then all the promises of complete and perfect reign on the earth must mean that there will some day be a new and ideal Zion on the earth where God rules over all the nations. In other words the old Jerusalem points upward to a heavenly Zion, and forward to a future Zion….

In Psalm 50 what we have is a courtroom scene. The roof of the courtroom is heaven above, and the floor is the earth beneath. God himself is the judge. Verse 4b: he is there to judge his people; and verse 6b: "God himself is judge." God is the clerk of court. Verse 5: he calls the defendants to the bench: "Gather to me my faithful ones." And God is the chief witness. Verse 7: "Hear O my people and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you." So from that verse you can also see that the defendants in the trial are God's own people.

Once the scene is established (in verses 1-7) there comes the indictment, the sentence, the rationale or explanation for the indictment and sentence, the prescribed correction

and a statement of the ultimate goal that the judge is trying to accomplish in this trial."

Stedman: "What the Psalmist is telling us is that when God judges he will do two things: he will burn up the trash and garbage of life, and then he will empower us. He will catch us up in the greatness of his strength, and we will be able to do things we never could do before….

Thanksgiving is the first thing he wants in worship. A thankful heart.

The second thing is, an obedient will. '*Pay your vows to the Most High*.' Notice the kind of obedience it is. It is not something forced upon you; it is something you have chosen for yourself. A vow is something you decide to give, a promise you make because of truth you have seen….

The third thing God wants is a prayerful spirit.

> '*and call upon me in the day of trouble;*
> *I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*' {Psa 50:15 RSV}

He wants us to recognize where the source of power is. Power comes from him….

Now there is a second class of people God deals with mentioned in Verses 16 and on:… In every congregation there are not only the superficial, who need to be rebuked and challenged to be real; there are also some who are essentially false, hypocrites, who use all the right words and frame their lives in Christian form, but are basically ungodly, or to use the term here, wicked. That is what wickedness is. It is forgetting that God lives and exists. It is to rule him out of your life, to be ungodly and so, wicked. The judge sees these also…

They are identified as being wicked by three marks.

First, they hate discipline. They want only their own way….

Second, they admire evil and they enjoy the friendship of those who do evil….

Then, third, the wicked possesses an ungoverned tongue; he says whatever he feels like saying. He has a tongue that lies, which frames deceit, one that cuts down others, slicing away, jabbing at another's reputation."

Beisner: "What are these high crimes against the Covenant? There are two: contempt for worship, and thus for the God who is the only proper object of worship (verses 7-15), and contempt for fellowmen, demonstrated by violation of God's laws for human relations (verses 16-21). God will charge His people with empty formalism on the one hand, and lawless hypocrisy on the other."

Alden: "God makes it very clear that He neither needs nor really wants sacrifice. In this

respect the psalm shares the insightful theology of Isaiah and Amos. God's first requirement is integrity. Sacrifices only show a worshiper's overt obedience.

Even for Christians it is often easier to do the overt thing rather than have a heart right toward God. To some people, regular attendance at the church services is more important than the 'weightier matters of the law.' To others, giving to missions is far easier than being a missionary to unsaved relatives and neighbors. So for the ancient people of Israel, sacrifice replaced true service, and burnt offerings substituted for inward piety."

Phillips: "The Judgment of Israel

I. The Judgment of Israel Is Impending (:1-6)
    A. The Sudden Announcement (:1)
    B. The Solemn Appearing (:2-3)
    C. The Sobered Assembly (:4-6)
        1. The Jury Is Present (:4)
        2. The Jew is Present (:5)
        3. The Judge Is Present (:6)

II. The Judgment of Israel Is Imperative (:7-23)
    A. The Weighing of the Proof (:7-21)
        1. Dead Works Judged (:7-15)
            a. The Peerless Name of the Accuser (:7)
            b. The Punishable Nature of the Accusation (:8-12)
            c. The Proven Need of the Accused (:13-15)
        2. Downright Wickedness Judged (:16-21)
            a. The Worst Kind of Blasphemy (:16-17)
            b. The Worst Kind of Behavior (:18)
            c. The Worst Kind of Betrayal (:19-20)
            d. The Worst Kind of Belief (:21)
    B. The Warning of the People (:22-23)
        1. The Suspended Sentence (:22)
        2. The Promised Pardon (:23)"

Phillips: Re vs. 1 – "'*the mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken*.' There are three titles for God here – El, Elohim, Jehovah. *El* is God as the *mighty* One, the awful One, in whom all the attributes and excellence of deity are concentrated; *Elohim* is God as the *majestic* One, the God of creation, the God of suns and stars and galaxies and of the planet earth; *Jehovah* is God as the *merciful* One who reveals Himself to men and signs contracts with them. This is the One who summons the nations to witness the judgment of the Jews: the God of might, majesty, and mercy."

TEXT: PSALM 51

TITLE: A BROKEN SPIRIT

BIG IDEA:
A BROKEN SPIRIT PLEADS FOR FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

INTRODUCTION:
a penitential psalm

I. (:1-4) A BROKEN SPIRIT CONFESSES SIN

A. A Broken Spirit Appeals to the Grace of God (:1)
God's Grace is Rooted In:
1. His lovingkindness (:1)
2. His compassion (:2)

B. A Broken Spirit Understands the Nature of Sin (:1d-2)
1. transgressions = a breaking of the law
2. iniquity = deviation from what is right
3. sin = missing the mark

C. A Broken Spirit Does not Make Excuses (or deny the reality) (:3)
"*I know my transgression*"
"*My sin is ever before Thee*"

D. A Broken Spirit Submits to the Righteousness of the Judge (:4)

II. (:5-9) A BROKEN SPIRIT FINDS HOPE IN CLEANSING AND FORGIVENESS

A. (:5) Our Sinful Nature Presents a Problem

B. (:6) God's Design is Inner Righteousness
from a spring of:
truth
wisdom

C. (:7) Cleansing Is the Answer

D. (:8) A Broken Spirit Can be Restored to Wholeness and Joy

E. (:9) Forgiveness is the Answer

III. (:10-13) PLEA FOR RESTORED FELLOWSHIP AS BASIS FOR MINISTRY

A. Cleansing is Necessary

B. Enjoyment of the Presence of God

C. Power of the Holy Spirit within

D. Joy of Salvation

E. Opportunity for Ministry to other sinners

IV. (:14-17) PLEA FOR REMOVAL OF GUILT AS BASIS FOR WORSHIP

A. Forgiveness is Necessary

B. Praise is Appropriate

C. External Sacrifices are not Sufficient

D. A Broken and Contrite Heart is the Starting Point

V. (:18-19) PERSONAL RESTORATION (to Fellowship and Ministry and Worship) QUALIFIES A LEADER TO PETITION FOR NATIONAL RESTORATION

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What role should "*guilt*" play in the life of a believer? How does God bring us to the point of conviction of sin?

2) How would you define a "*broken spirit*"?

3) How is the role of the Holy Spirit the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament? How is it different?

4) How did the Roman Catholic Church ever get caught up in the doctrine of penance – given the clear teaching of Scripture in this psalm?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "That is what David is saying. 'I see now,' he says, 'that sin is not just a surface problem that can be handled lightly; it is a deep problem. It has stained my whole nature. Unless I find some solution for this polluted nature I will never be able to keep from falling back into sin again.' So now he begins to pray for help in the inward life, which is where God wants truth to be found.

In these next verses we find outlined an eight-fold path that one must follow to keep from falling back into a repeated pattern of sin.

Follow these carefully. Each is important.

First, he cries, '*Teach me wisdom in my secret heart*.' 'Give me,' he says, 'an understanding of the facts of life. Show me reality, show me the way things really are.' In other words, help me to understand the truth about myself, that I am a fallen being and that this pollution has penetrated my whole nature…

The second thing is,

> *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;*
> *wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*. {Psa 51:7 RSV}

Hyssop is a sponge-like plant that grew in Israel which was used to apply the blood of the offering to the altar, or the doorpost, or whatever. To be purged with hyssop is a figurative expression that declares the need for a blood sacrifice….

Then the third step,

> *Fill me with joy and gladness;*
> *let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice* {Psa 51:8 RSV}

The Hebrew here really means, make to hear – '*Make me to hear joy and gladness*.' In other words, 'Say something to me, God' …

The fourth step is,

> *Hide thy face from my sins,*
> *and blot out all my iniquities.* {Psa 51:9 RSV}…

Now look at the fifth step.

> *Create in me a clean heart, O God,*
> *and put a new and right spirit within me.* {Psa 51:10 RSV}

See the progress he is making here? He sees he must deal with this old life, this old heart, his old past, that it must be put to death. 'But Lord,' he says, 'I'm tied to it. If this old life and old heart naturally incline me toward evil, and I, doing what comes naturally, do that which is wrong, then obviously what I desperately need is a new heart which naturally does good.'…

The sixth step follows:

> *Cast me not away from thy presence,*
> *and take not they holy Spirit from me.* {Psa 51:11 RSV}

Some have interpreted this to mean that the Old Testament saints could lose their

salvation once they possessed it. I do not think it means that at all. What the psalmist is praying for here is the assurance that the Holy Spirit would be with him…

The seventh step,

Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, [That is, believing all this to be true, put back into my heart that gladness and joy which comes from being accepted of you. And finally,] *uphold me with a willing spirit*. {Psa 51:12 RSV}

Give me a will that wants to do what you want me to do even though I may struggle at times. It takes all eight of these steps to keep on walking free from sin…"

Beisner: "The three words David uses for sin are rich in instruction. First, sin is '*transgression*' (verse 1)—it is, as Alexander MacLaren defines it, 'rebellion, the uprising of the will against rightful authority—not merely the breach of abstract propriety or law, but opposition to a living Person, who has right to obedience'…

Second, sin is '*iniquity*,' or '*distortion*' (verse 2). It is a twisting of the soul, a corruption of the character…

Finally David uses the word '*sin*' (verse 2), what MacLaren describes as 'missing an aim'…

True penitence is a present, constant, painful recognition of one's sin and the mess it makes of one's relationshp with God. It is not a mere intellectual awareness that one has sinned, but the awful realization that one's sin grips him and drags him down into the flood of God's wrath. The man convicted of sin cannot escape its torment until he has experienced reconciliation with God. David felt that. That is why he insists, ' … I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me' (verse 3)…

What a wonderful threefold by threefold picture we have in Ps. 51:1-9: a God of mercy, love and compasion responds to a penitent man of transgression, iniquity, and sin by blotting out, washing, and declaring clean!

Here are nine practical lessons all Christians can learn from David's example:

First, no one is too holy to fall. David was a man of outstanding virtue and deep dedication to God…

Second, we may learn from David the right way to receive reproof and correction from others…

Third, we can share David's estimation of God's judgment. It mattered not to him what men thought…

Fourth, we can share David's horror at sin. We can learn to see it not only as isolated acts, but as the warp and woof of our nature, to think of it not as trivial but as the ugly, monstrous rebellion and corruption that it really is. Like David, we can refuse to make excuses for it, but rather acknowledge that it is an offense against God…

Fifth, we can join David in making confession, repentance, and (insofar as it is possible) restitution public. What reason have we to hide our sins but pride?

Sixth, we can learn from David never to despair of forgiveness. No one is so sinful that he will not find pardon and cleansing if he goes to God with a broken and contrite

heart…

Seventh, David's example teaches us that assurance of forgiveness is not always easily gained, but must sometimes be sought long and hard…

Eighth, we must never be satisfied with pardon alone, but must press on toward practical righteousness – day-by-day conformity with God's moral Law. And we will be helped toward that by remembering our sins so that we may be humbled by them, and by asking God daily to renew a steadfast and willing spirit within us…

Finally, David let God's grace bestowed on him stir him to bring that grace to others."

Stott: "In praying for pardon, David uses two vivid metaphors. First, he asks God to *blot out* his transgressions (verses 1,9). The verb denotes the removal of writing from a book (see for example Exodus 32:32). He seems to think of his sins as a list of offences of which he is accused or a catalogue of debts which he cannot pay. He pleads that the entry be erased.

Secondly, he acknowledges that his sins have defiled him and prays that God will *wash* and *cleanse* him (verse 2), until his black stains are removed and he becomes *whiter than snow* (verse 7). Since in certain Old Testament rituals a bunch of hyssop was dipped in blood or water, which was then ceremonially sprinkled, the word *hyssop* is used in verse 7 as a symbol of cleansing.

But David knew his need of purity as well as pardon. God demanded *truth in the inner parts* (verse 6); yet David's very nature was corrupt (verse 5). Only the creative power of God could make him a new person. So he prayed*: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me* (verse 10). He longed, that is, for a new nature with new and pure desires, and for a spirit both *steadfast* (verse 10) and *willing* (verse 12). He seems to have known too, before the full New Testament revelation had been given, that such a new nature and spirit could be imparted to him only by the Holy Spirit Himself (verse 12).

If God in mercy would grant him both a clean conscience and a clean heart, the sorrow which his sin had caused would be turned into *joy* and *gladness* (verse 8, compare verse 12)."

Ferguson: "Effects of sin:
- Sin brings guilt
    cf. quote from Lady Macbeth:
        'out damned spot:
        Here's the smell of the blood still.
        Not all the perfumes of Arabia
          will sweeten this little hand.'
- Sin creates defilement
- Sin causes spiritual helplessness. It makes us unstable.
- Sin brings us into danger
    His sin has made him liable to the danger of the wrath of God"

Lucado: "Man by himself cannot deal with his own guilt. He must have help from the outside. In order to forgive himself, he must have forgiveness from the one he has offended… You can't be good enough to deserve forgiveness… You need a Savior."

Briscoe: "… knowing the immensity of my failure had not altered His attitude toward me one fraction. It seemed as if I had a new vision of the grace and wonder of God. He actually loved me as I was and intended to work with me as I was. Then and only then was I open to discover more of the resources that were mine in Christ. You could call my experience a '*renewal of the right spirit*.'"

Holwick: WHEN YOU'VE REALLY BLOWN IT

I. All of us are sinners.
  A. Sin pervades our lives.

  B. David was different.
    1) Famous story of his adultery.
      a) Adultery not so bad....
      b) Callous murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah.
      c) Afterwards David acted like nothing had happened.
        1> Until the prophet Nathan confronted him.
    2) He knew what it was to really blow it.

  C. This psalm reflects David's repentance before God.
    1) It is remarkable for its honesty.
      a) One proof of Bible's inspiration.
      b) Other religions make their heroes look perfect.
      c) The Bible makes them just like, or worse, than us.
    2) David answered to no man, but he answered to God.
      a) Kings could get away with this sort of thing.
    3) The time may come when you dramatically fail God.
      a) Turn to this psalm.

II. How David dealt with his sin. Psalm 51
  A. Five principles of repentance when you've blown it.

I. Appeal to God.
  A. David trusts in God's love and compassion. 51:1
  B. "Love" is a word of covenant.
    1) David knew he had a trusted relationship with the Lord.

II. Repentance.
  A. Confession.
    1) Say you are sorry.
    2) Confront your sin in an honest way.
      a) It affects us.
        1> David admitted that sin ran through his life. 51:3,5
      b) It affects other people.
      c) Most of all, it affects God. 51:4

1> He loves us at all times. 51:1
2> But our sin breaks our closeness to him.

B. Change direction.
Genuine repentance requires a change in the direction of our lives.

C. Don't wait to repent.
1) God disciplines us for sin.
2) David waited and faced the tragic results.
a) The baby died.
b) His other sons rebelled against him.

III. Restoration.
A. Verses 6-9 are future tense of anticipation, not pleas.

B. Accept God's forgiveness.
1) Inward place - means "heart." 51:6
2) Hyssop - the cleansing of lepers. 51:7
3) Wash me - thoroughly cleansing clothes.
4) Hear joy - the restoration in society. 51:8
5) Crushed bones rejoice - means "dance."
6) Blot out iniquity - erase from a book. 51:9
a) Youthful offenders have crimes purged at 18 after good behavior.
b) God blots out our sins immediately if we are in relationship with Christ.

C. Think of cross of Jesus.
1) He suffered that we might be forgiven.
2) When we sin and don't repent, we nail him to cross again.

IV. Inward Renewal.
A. Focus moves to salvation.
1) Instead of despairing, David prays.

B. Create a pure heart. 51:10
1) David is asking for a miracle.
2) In Christ we become "new creations." 2 Cor 5:17

C. Don't take Holy Spirit away. 51:11
1) David feared this due to Saul's experience.
2) Christians have promise that God will never let go of us.

D. Restore me to joy of salvation. 51:12

V. Outward Action.

A. Teach others God's ways. 51:13
1) God teaches us through hard experiences.
2) Be open and honest with others.
3) Many are not attracted to Jesus because Christians are phony.

B. Praise God with lips. 51:14-15
1) God wants to be worshipped...
2) "In spirit and truth."

C. Sacrifice of a broken, contrite spirit. 51:16-19
1) Get right with God in your heart first. 51:16
2) Then worship him in church. 51:19
a) (Religious practices are not rejected.)

TEXT: PSALM 52

TITLE: UPROOTED TRASH TALKERS VS GREEN OLIVE TREES

BIG IDEA:
THE VICIOUS ATTACKS OF THE WICKED
CAN NEVER CANCEL OUT THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD

I. (:1-4) EXPOSING THE VICIOUS ATTACKS OF THE WICKED FOR WHAT THEY ARE

A. (:1) The Wicked Boast in Empty Victories
1. Their Heart is bent on Evil
2. Their Opinion of themselves is Inflated
Sarcasm = "*o mighty one*"
3. The Lovingkindness of God can never by cancelled out

B. (:2-4) The Wicked Pursue Deceit and Destruction

the tongue = especially strong weapon (cf. James 4)

II. (:5-7) EXECUTING THE WICKED TO THE DELIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. (:5) The Execution of the Wicked
Certain
Final

B. (:6-7) The Delight of the Righteous
1. Increases their fear of God
2. Vindicates their commitment to trust in God
a. Derision towards the arrogant wicked
b. Refutation of their Worldliness = their world view
1) They refused to trust in God
2) They chose to trust in their riches
3) They pursued their own evil desires

III. (:8-9) EXPLAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS
(in the lovingkindness of God)

A. Image of Fruitfulness and Blessing
"*I am like a green olive tree in the house of God*"

B. Explanation of World View of the Righteous
1. They trust in the lovingkindness of God
2. They give thanks
3. They wait on God for ultimate deliverance and blessing

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why is it so popular (and considered a valid form of humor) for people to cut others down and use their tongue as a "*sharp razor*" for the purpose of "destruction"? Are we careful to use our tongue as a fountain of blessing?

2) Note God's forbearance and lovingkindness as we see that the wicked:
- loves evil more than good
- practices falsehood rather than speaking the truth
- boasts in evil

But God's wrath will eventually fall and fall swiftly and fall severely.

3) What's so good about a "*green olive tree*"? What type of growth and fruit is God producing in our lives as we worship in His presence?

4) Is our life characterized by continually giving God thanks for all His wonderful works ("*Thou hast done it*") and for His faithfulness in coming through for us according to all of His attributes ("*I will wait on Thy name, for it is good*")?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Phillips: "There was a man on Saul's payroll by the name of Doeg. Doeg was an Edomite, a black mark on any man's name in Israel in later years, for the Edomites, although close kin to the Israelites, were bitter enemies of the people of God. Herod the Great, who massacred the babes of Bethlehem, was an Edomite. Doeg was an Edomite. Yet somehow, despite his alien background, he had attained high rank in Israel, for he was chief of Saul's herdsmen. Any hatred King Saul harbored against David was magnified and intensified in the heart of Doeg. It was an excellent way to ingratiate himself with the king. Since his loyalty was always open to question, he must be more loyal to Saul than Saul's own sons. A dangerous and ungodly man was Doeg."

Olsen: "Up to the past week I labored under the impression that the word '*Maschil*' simply meant instruction or learning. In other words, this is an instructive Psalm. But during the past week I came across a very interesting explanation of the word. A certain contemporary writer, a brilliant Jew who resides in Paris, is quite a favorite of mine… it was interesting to learn that he viewed the word '*Maschil*' as we would the word '*parable*.'

You will recall that our Lord constantly spoke in parables during His public ministry. Parables are illustrations. Our Lord spoke in parables in order to illustrate certain truths or principles. Thus, wherever the word '*Maschil*' appears as a heading to a Psalm, we can apply this principle, and examine it as a poem with a moral.

Here is a story, the record of an actual happening, but it is not written as mere history. It has some underlying principles, most extraordinarily presented, which reveal the mind and purpose of God. Thus, as we approach this Psalm we learn that while the

facts apply to David in his controversy with Doeg, the principle of God's hatred for sin is apparent. His insistence upon the recognition by the sinner of his sin, as well as God's dealing with him, as a sinner, are also amply demonstrated.

Then too we discover an individualism in this Psalm, which clearly indicates that God deals with this race as individuals and, finally, that there is judgment expressed against the wicked, while marvelous promises are given to the righteous…

David said, '*I am like a green olive tree in the house of God*,' reminding us of the olive leaf which is green above, but silver below. The spiritual mind revels in this symbolism, as it recalls that silver was used for redemption money. Underneath, therefore, was redemption, whereas, above, was vibrating, pulsating life.

From the time of the flood, the olive branch has been a symbol of peace. But what is even more interesting is this—when Solomon built the temple, cedar wood was used throughout, yet when it came to the Holy of holies, the two cherubim, whose outstretched wings reached from wall to wall, were made of the wood of the olive tree; and for the entrance in that holy place, where only the high priest could go, once a year, and then only with the blood of the sacrifice, he made the doors of olive wood. Every student of Scripture knows too that olive oil has been used throughout, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit…

(David) reveled in the glory of being in the very presence of the Holy One, at peace with God and filled with the Holy Spirit, because of the redemption provided for him."

Kidner: "The olive is one of the longest-living trees; here the point is doubly reinforced, for he pictures an olive '*in full sap*' (Weiser), and one that grows in a sacred courtyard (was this another reminiscence of the sanctuary at Nob?), where no-one will tamper with it, still less '*uproot*' it (cf. 5c)."

Gaebelein: "This is now the language of the godly, who suffer first, and are gloriously delivered by the coming of the King. Their comfort and assurance is that they are like a green olive tree. As is well known, the olive tree is a picture of Israel in covenant relation with Jehovah. As the olive is ever green, so is the covenant. They trust in the mercy of God and will not be ashamed before Him."

VanGemeren:

A. The Folly of Evil (vv. 1-4)
    B. God's Complete Judgment (v.5)
    B'. Wisdom Derived From God's Judgment (vv.6-7)
A'. The Blessing of Righteousness (vv.8-9)

"The righteous learn a lesson from the judgments of God (see Ps 49). A man who lives and acts independently from God, trusts in himself, and betters himself at the expense of others will be brought down. He may think of himself as a strong man … He may trust in his wealth (cf. Prov 11:28) and feel himself strong as he exploits and destroys. The wicked may turn away from the Lord as his stronghold and turn to the fleeting security of power, riches, and ill-gotten gains. But when his riches, house, and power are taken away, his life falls apart."

TEXT: PSALM 53

TITLE: DEPRAVITY LAMENTED

BIG IDEA:
CORRUPTION AND DEPRAVITY CREATE A LONGING FOR THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:
See Psalm 14 notes

I. (:1-3) PICTURE OF WORLDWIDE CORRUPTION AND DEPRAVITY
A. Total Foolishness = Denial of God
living as a practical atheist
denial of accountability and judgment

B. Total Corruption and Depravity
1. Corrupt in Character
2. Corrupt in Behavior

C. Universal Rejection of God and of His Righteousness
"*no one who does good*"

II. (:4) THIS PICTURE MAKES NO SENSE
Has everyone lost their mind?
How foolish can they be?
No fear of God
"*workers of wickedness*"

III. (:5) GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL COME AS A TOTAL SURPRISE
A. Switch from "No Fear" to "Great Fear"
(cf. Line of clothing)

B. Switch from "Conquering Army" to "Scattered Bones"

C. Switch from "Pridefully Rejecting God" to "Shamefully Rejected by God"

IV. (:6) LONGING FOR THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM OF GOD
A. Return of the Promised Messiah

B. Restoration of the Righteous Kingdom

C. Rejoicing of God's People

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is the essence of *foolishness* according to God? How do we sometimes act as a practical fool (despite our faith in God)?

2) Apart from God's initiative in drawing people to a saving knowledge of Himself, can anyone really be characterized as a sincere "*God-seeker*"? Ultimately, who is really seeking whom?

3) Isn't it encouraging that God is "*looking down from heaven*" and is concerned with judging "*corruption*" and those who "*have committed abominable injustice*" and the "*workers of wickedness*"? Do we have a similar heart that longs to see righteousness established in the land? What rejoicing when God "*restores His captive people*"!

4) Is the restoration of the Jewish nation as certain as the "*coming of the salvation of Israel out of Zion*"? What is referred to in verse 6?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: "'*Maschil*' again points to special instruction for the remnant in the last days. The character, conduct and confounding of Antichrist and his followers are shown. While godless at heart, they outwardly own a political 'god' for their own ends, 2 Thess. ii.4; Dan. xi. 36-37, 38; Rev. xiii.15… Alternative title, 'The Atheism of the Antichrist.'"

Perowne: "This Psalm is only another version of the Fourteenth Psalm, from which it differs in two particulars: first, in its use of the Name of God, which here is Elohim instead of Jehovah, a peculiarity which is characteristic of all the Psalms in the Second Book: next, in the remarkable deviation, ver. 5[6], from the language of the parallel passage, ver. 5,6 of Psalm xiv."

Perowne: Re vs. 5 -- "*where no terror was*" – These words are not in Ps. xiv. and are somewhat difficult to explain. Do they mean no terror *within*, or terror *without*? Taken with what follows, and supposing the Psalm to have been adapted to some such occasion as the destruction of Sennacherib's army, they might mean, 'suddenly, in the midst of their proud security, when *they were free from all apprehension*, they were smitten with terror.' Others understand it of *external* occasion of terror. They were seized with a sudden panic, where there was really *no object to occasion alarm*."

Maddux:

I. The Godless generation.
   - A. Denial of God's existence.
   - B. Iniquity in every act.
   - C. No goodness found.

II. God's reconnaissance.
    A. Looked for understanding.
    B. Sought for soul yearning.
    C. Found generation of backsliders.
        1. Filthy living.
        2. No goodness.
        3. Spiritual ignorance.
        4. Use up God's people.
        5. Disregard God.
    D. Saw fear-filled people.
        1. Forgot God's providence.
        2. Forgot God's deliverance.
        3. Forgot God's disdain for enemies.
III. A yearning plea.
    A. Call for salvation from Zion.
    B. Call for restoration.
    C. Pledge of rejoicing.

Phillips: "The Downfall of Israel's Foes
I. A Wicked World (:1-4)
    A. The Foolish Man (:1)
        1. His False Concepts
        2. His Foul Conduct
        3. His Faulty Character
    B. The Forgetful Man (:2)
    C. The Filthy Man (:3)
    D. The Fierce Man (:4)
II. A Warring World (:5)
    A. The Dread Which Overtakes the Foe
    B. The Defeat Which Overtakes the Foe
    C. The Disgrace Which Overtakes the Foe
III. A Wonderful World (:6)
    A. Salvation
    B. Security
    C. Song"

Gaebelein: "As previously stated, these Psalms in this section (Psa. 52-55) give a prophetic picture of the coming great tribulation, when the man of sin, the final, personal Antichrist will rule during the last seven years of this present age. The fifty-third Psalm shows the moral conditions of these years of trouble. The evil is rapidly increasing and the God defiance and God opposition are reaching their predicted climax. Viewed in the light of present day events, the increasing infidelity in the very midst of Christendom, merging into Atheism, this Psalm has a most significant meaning."

Meyer: "WITHOUT GOD – A revision of Psalm 14. Twice is ATHEISM denounced in the Psalter. Line must be on line, precept on precept…

1. THE SEAT OF ATHEISM. –It is not in the head, but in the heart. And men keep on boasting of it, in the hope of making themselves believe it, and in order to keep their courage up.
2. THE ATTITUDE OF ATHEISM.— Its eyes are downward; if they were lifted for a moment, they would see God looking down.
3. THE UNIVERSALITY OF PRACTICAL ATHEISM. – Let each beware (Heb. 3:13).
2, 3. THE EVIL EFFECTS OF ATHEISM. – On the understanding and affection, so that corruption is bred through the entire nature (Rom. 3:10-17).
4. THE CRUELTY OF ATHEISM. – '*Who eat up my people*.' He who has no care for God is not likely to have much care for man. The prayerless man is an atheist in heart: '*he calls not upon the Lord*.'
5. THE CAUSELESS FEARS OF ATHEISM. – How often have the enemies of God been seized with inexplicable panic! (Prov. 28:1; II Kings 7:6,7.).
6. THE DIVINE ANSWER TO THE ATHEIST. – Even now the existence of God's ancient people is a marvellous reply to the taunts of his foes: but how dumb and silenced they will be when they see Israel restored as a nation, and when the saints shall possess the earth!"

TEXT: PSALM 54

TITLE: VINDICATE ME BY THY POWER

BIG IDEA:
GOD IS THE ONE WE LOOK TO FOR DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION

INTRODUCTION:

I Samuel 23 -- David hiding in the wilderness; betrayed by the Ziphites

I. (:1-3) WE LOOK TO GOD IN PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION

A. (:1) Basis for Our Appeal: Seeking God's Honor
Because of Who God is

1. Name of God -- Deliverance
2. Power of God -- Vindication

B. (:2) Address of Our Appeal: Seeking God's Attention

"*Hear my prayer, O God*"
"*Give ear to the words of my mouth*"

C. (:3) Circumstances of Our Appeal: Seeking God's Victory over:

1. Strangers
2. Violent men

Assessment: "*They have not set God before them*"

II. (:4-5) WE LOOK TO GOD IN FAITH FOR DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION

A. Faith in God as our Deliverer

1. Faith in God as our Helper
2. Faith in God as our Sustainer

B. Faith in God as our Vindicator
destroying my foes in His faithfulness

III. (:6-7) WE LOOK TO GOD IN THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION

A. Thanksgiving for Goodness of God to Deliver

B. Thanksgiving for Personal Satisfaction resulting from Vindication

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When we get into a predicament (even if it is largely of our own making) do we have the confidence that God will hear our prayers and deliver us? What type of power is there in the name of God? (vs. 1)

2) When we "*set God before us*" (vs. 3), how should that influence our conduct? What did the psalmist mean by this expression? Do we view God as "*our Helper*" and "*Sustainer*"?

3) In what ways would we like the Lord to vindicate us? Are we casting ourselves completely upon His power for that vindication? (vs. 2)

4) What good is sacrifice (or thanksgiving) that does not come from a willing, cheerful spirit? (Remember: God loves a cheerful giver!)

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "This psalm arose out of testing experiences that followed those of Psalm 52. To be betrayed by Doeg the Edomite had been hardly a surprise (1 Sa. 22:22), but now David finds himself rejected by men of his own tribe (1 Sa. 23:19ff.; 26:1ff), in spite of his rescue of one of their border towns from the Philistines (1 Sa. 23:1ff.). In this dangerous and disillusioning situation he turns again to God."

Yates: "This appeal for help is based upon God's revealed character (his *name*) and his revealed power (his *strength*). The adversaries are called *strangers* (*zarim*) according to the Massoretic Text, while certain manuscripts designate them as proud or insolent men (*zadim*)."

Phillips: "David was a hunted fugitive, fleeing from place to place, never more than a step away from death. At court informers whispered lies into Saul's jealous ears and kept his hatred and suspicion of David inflamed. Some of these men were hirelings, some were envious former companions of David. David never felt safe and, as the heat of pursuit increased, he found he could not trust even those who should have been at his side. The Ziphites, whose little town lay fifteen miles southeast of Hebron and within the boundaries of the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, were a case in point.

They betrayed David on two separate occasions (1 Samuel 23:19-23; 26:1-3). This was '*the most unkindest cut of all*.' That Saul should suspect him and seek to slay him was inexcusable but understandable. But the Ziphites should have at least maintained a friendly neutrality. Instead they curried favor with Saul by betraying David—all for the sake of Saul's worthless goodwill."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 5 – "The resolution of the prayer lies in the conviction that God is just. He will not permit his children to suffer without vindication. The imprecation is not vindictive but expressive of trust in divine justice. Evil must be repaid. The people of God believed in the boomerang effect of sin: '*Let evil recoil*.' The faithlesssness of

the opponent stands in contrast to God's faithfulness. They are enemies who defame him. The Lord is faithful in his relationship to his people; therefore the psalmist is calm, trusting that this God will protect him from his adversary."

Olsen: "When a man appeals to the name of the Lord he will experience deliverance from the power of inescapable death. When one is hemmed in by circumstance, as David was on this occasion, there is only one thing to do. To look around will bring disappointment. To seek a way out through a friend is to experience disillusionment. But to look up and call upon the name of the Lord is to enjoy victory."

TEXT: PSALM 55

TITLE: PRESSURE SITUATIONS

BIG IDEA:
HOW TO HANDLE PRESSURE SITUATIONS = CASTING OUR BURDEN ON THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

David was an expert at handling pressure situations; we're not talking about sports (that's all about competition and fun), but rather about the serious types of pressure that threaten our very life;

It is possible for pressure to build up to such an extent that we just snap and have a nervous breakdown; all of us are very fragile and in need of the grace of God.

How should we handle pressure situations?

Talking here about the pressure of persecution and physical attack -- people are trying to kill David;
Same principles apply to other types of pressure (financial, job-related, relationships falling apart)

I. (:1-3) PRESSURE SITUATIONS ARE PRAYER SITUATIONS

This point is fundamental and most important -- Where do we turn for help?
Remember how the Israelites were always getting in trouble for turning to Egypt for help?
"*Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God*" -- Psalm 20:7

A. Prayer Seeks an Answer from God

Sometimes we go through the motions of prayer because we know it is the right thing to do, but we don't really expect God to answer;

Sometimes we are so vague in our request that we would not even recognize an answer, were God to provide one.

Intensity of this prayer was such that David was wrestling with God like Jacob wrestled with the angel = "I will not let you go until you bless me" Gen. 32:26b

B. Prayer Requires All of our Focus and Concentration

The pressures around us distract us and make us restless -- making it more difficult to complete tasks and be productive. At times, we are almost dysfunctional, but we can still focus on God in prayer.

C. Prayer is the Best Response to Unfair Attacks

We are powerless to turn our enemies into friends (temptation is to hate our enemy)

teaching of Jesus: Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you
temptation = to go around and badmouth our enemy to others

We are powerless to convert the wicked to righteousness
temptation = to get self-righteous and forget that the grace of God has made us what we are

We are powerless to remove the pressure of unfair troubles
temptation = to try to escape on our own

We are powerless to quiet the anger of unfair grudges (temptation is to get angry in return)

That's why we must turn to God in prayer

II. (:4-8) PRESSURE SITUATIONS OFFER NO EASY ESCAPES

David was in a real bind and no SuperMan (or SuperBird) was going to suddenly appear and carry him away to safety

A. The Fear can be Crushing (:4-5)
anguished heart
terrors of death
fear and trembling
horror has overwhelmed me

B. The Fantasy of an Easy Escape is Attractive (:6-8)
"wings like a dove" = SuperBird to the rescue
fly away to paradise = somewhere out in the wilderness where no trouble can attack me
not much of a ministry perspective here

the only place of refuge is right in the midst of the pressure situations but under the loving, protective care of the Great Shepherd;
hidden in the cleft of the Rock of Ages

III. (:9-11) PRESSURE SITUATIONS SURROUND US WITH NOTHING BUT TROUBLE

A. Violence and Strife

B. Iniquity and Mischief

C. Destruction

D. Oppression and Deceit

Not a pretty picture

"Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues" = reference to what God did at the Tower of Babel incident where he completely frustrated the mission of the pride of men;
there are many surprising ways for God to show Himself strong on our behalf and win the victory

Living Bible:
"O Lord, make these enemies begin to quarrel among themselves; destroy them with their own violence and strife"

David recognizes he faces attacks from those who are prideful and arrogant = those who do not hesitate to attack the anointed of God;
cf. Time when Saul and his men were about to capture David after the Ziphites had betrayed him;
God sent a diversionary attack of the Philistines against Israel to cause Saul to retreat back to counter that threat
(1 Samuel 23:24-29)

IV. (:12-15) PRESSURE SITUATIONS HURT THE MOST WHEN WE ARE BETRAYED BY A CLOSE FRIEND

A. When Trouble comes from Expected Sources, We can Brace Ourselves
an enemy = then I could bear it
one who hates me (who has exalted himself against me) = then I could hide myself from him

B. When Trouble comes from Unexpected Sources, We are Defenseless
a man my equal
my companion and my familiar friend
we who had sweet fellowship together
walked in the house of God and in the throng

V. (:16-21) PRESSURE SITUATIONS DRIVE US TO OUR KNEES TO CAST OUR BURDEN ON THE LORD

A. God will not Forsake us, but will Save us
friends might turn on us; but we can always turn to God for help

B. God will Respond to Persistent Prayer
evening and morning and at noon
He will hear my voice

C. God will Win the Battle and give me Peace
despite the vast numbers against me

D. God still Sits Enthroned and in Control

E. God Is not Deceived by the Treachery of Men
Living Bible (:20-21)
"This friend of mine betrayed me, who was at peace with him. He broke his promises. His words were oily smooth, but in his heart was war. His words were sweet, but underneath were daggers."

CONCLUSION (:22-23)
CAST YOUR BURDEN UPON THE LORD AND HE WILL SUSTAIN YOU

no easy, magical escape (like SuperBird); but He will give you the grace to persevere through the trial

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In pressure situations do we turn to the Lord in prayer or do we get overwhelmed with terror?

2) Do we look for an easy escape or look to God for the grace to persevere?

3) Have we ever felt the sting of betrayal by a close friend? Have we found the Lord to be that friend that sticks closer than a brother?

4) Have we truly learned how to cast our burden on the Lord and allow Him to sustain us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: Re vs. 1 – "'*Hide not thyself from my supplication*.' Do not stop thine ear, or restrain thy hand. When a man saw his neighbour in distress, and deliberately passed him by, he was said to hide himself from him and the Psalmist begs that the Lord would not so treat him. In that dread hour when Jesus bore our sins upon the tree, his Father did hide himself, and this was the most dreadful part of all the Son of David's agony."

Leupold: Re vv. 6-8 – "His wish was: '*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and dwell somewhere*.' For even in those days the dove must have been known for her ability to cover a great distance in her flight. The greater the distance the psalmist could have put between himself and the present distress, the happier he would be. Some quiet place of refuge like a cleft in the rock would have been such a welcome shelter againt the '*strong wind and the tempest*' that were, figuratively speaking, raging

around him. Such flight is not cowardice but a natural desire to escape from what is most painful."

Kidner: Re vv. 9-11 – "The forces of anarchy: While any good citizen is distressed at social breakdown, David as king is directly challenged. His prayer is perceptive, and a lesson to us: he remembers how God dealt with Babel (9a), another arrogant city, by exploiting the inherent divisiveness of evil. He prayed a similar prayer when the too-clever Ahithophel became the counselor of Absalom (2 Sa. 15:31). In this part of the psalm, further, David's personal trials make way for his public concern. This is God's city, whose *walls* should be the reassurance of His people (48:12ff.), not the parade-ground of rebels and terorists (10), and whose *market place* (11) should be above reproach (144:14). The prayer is on strong ground."

VanGemeren: Re vv. 20-21 – "In contrast to the Lord's fidelity is the treachery of the wicked. He may stab his friends in the back (v.20a; lit., 'he stretches his hands against those with whom he is at peace'; NIV, 'his friends'; cf. Dahood: 'his closest ally,' *Psalms*, 2:37). He has no regard for the '*covenant*,' i.e., for any commitments and promises (v.20b). He is unreliable, *as 'his speech is smooth as butter, … his words are more soothing than oil'* (v.21; cf. Prov 5:3). This man is a hypocrite in that he knows how to win friends, but in his heart he has no loyalty. Instead he is a bellicose man, loving '*war*' rather than peace (cf. 52:2)."

Ogilvie: "Three Things 'Escape Artists' Need to Know:
1. Be sure you know what you mean by 'rest'. '*If I had the wings of a dove, I would fly away and rest*,' says the psalmist. What is rest? In the context of the Scriptures, rest is not geography but a condition of the soul. Rest is a relationship with the Lord—His peace indwelling us…
2. When we want to 'get away from it all,' we need to remember that wherever we go, we'll bring our greatest problem with us.
3. Define for yourself a reason great enough to stay in the battle. One of the major things a crisis does to a nation is that it draws the people into a cause greater than any of us.

The Point of Change

Notice the magnificent thing that happened to the psalmist. Once he confessed the fact that he wanted to fly away, be at rest, and he poured out all his anger and frustration, he found his deepest need was for the Lord. After his venom was emptied, his mood suddenly changed. He said to himself and to the congregation of Israel, '*Cast your burden on the Lord,/ And He shall sustain you;/ He shall never permit the righteous to be moved*' (v.22). When our trust is ultimately in Him, and we dare to live out His will in the crises of life, He will give us what we need.

There is a great difference between '*the wings of a dove to fly away'* and '*the wings of an eagle*' that give the power to soar until we get perspective. The eagle can fly with mighty strength, but it does not fly away."

Ferguson: "We have all said it, each in our own way. Our own resources are inadequate for the situation. In any case, the situation is simply too hopeless in and of itself. Flight

is our only hope. If only we had the wings of a dove!

That is how most of us respond, even if the flight on '*the wings of a dove*' takes a different shape for us today.

What 'wings' do you fly on? What desert place do you make for in order to shelter?

Some of us escape into work, others into leisure; some seek relief in pleasure. Some live in the past--its sorrows as well as its joys and triumphs, others find relief by constant planning for the future. Some escape into lethargy, others into inactivity. The list of 'avoidance' tactics is almost endless…

'*But as for me, I trust in you* (v.23).'"

G. Campbell Morgan: "This is the outcry of a man of faith in sore peril. The emotional nature is moved to its very centre, and tides of deep feeling surge through his soul. He has been cruelly betrayed by his familiar friend who would seem to have been at the head of a conspiracy against him.

It is really a revelation of how fellowship with God leads ultimately to the victory of faith. There are three movements manifest. The first is that of fear. Appeal is made to God out of a consciousness of fearfulness, trembling, horror. So terrible is this fear that he would fain fly away and escape it all (vers. 1-8). The troubled heart then breaks forth into fury. So mean is the method of the foe that the anger of the man is aroused, and he cries for vengeance against the oppressor (vers. 9-15). He then appeals to God, and at once declares that he is delivered. The wrong of the wicked is no less, but calmly stated in the light of God it is a burden to be cast upon Him, and the conviction of His deliverance is created. Fear only leads to desire for flight. Fury only emphasizes the consciousness of wrong. Faith alone creates courage."

Martin: "One can easily see that the psalmists do not picture life as without trouble or affliction. God's Word strikes the keynote of realism; there is nothing escapist about its presentation. Nevertheless there is true escape for the believer, escape which consists not in denying the existence of trouble but in transcending it through dependence upon God. In this psalm we find:

Supplication in Distress (vv. 1-5)
Longing for Escape (vv. 6-8)
Violence and Strife in the City (vv. 9-11)
A False Friend (vv. 12-15)
God's Deliverance (vv. 16-18)
Description of the Wicked (vv. 19-21)
The End of the Righteous and the Wicked (vv. 22, 23)"

TEXT: PSALM 56

TITLE: WHEN I AM AFRAID I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN THEE

BIG IDEA:
ONLY FAITH IN GOD CAN CONQUER FEAR OF MAN

INTRODUCTION:

Fear is a powerful, paralyzing force

I. (:1-2) FEAR OF MAN IS THE NATURAL REACTION TO PERSISTENT OPPRESSION

A. How does it feel to be Trampled Upon all day long?

"*Be gracious, O God, for man has trampled upon me*"
"*My foes have trampled upon me all day long*"

B. How does it feel to be Oppressed all day long?

"*Fighting all day long he oppresses me*"
"*For they are many who fight proudly against me*"

That is why we need the Grace of God!

II. (:3-4) FAITH IN GOD IS THE SPIRITUAL REACTION TO FEAR OF MAN

A. Faith in God Requires an Active Commitment

"*When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee*"

B. Faith in God Produces an Attitude of Invincibility

"*I shall not be afraid.*
What can mere man do to me?"

That is why we need the Word of God!

Refrain: "*In God whose word I praise*"

III. (:5-7) PERSISTENT OPPRESSION CREATES A VERY REAL DANGER

Don't underestimate the danger of the situation

A. The Tactics of Oppression

1. Misrepresentation

"*they distort my words*"

2. Malicious Schemes

"*their thoughts are against me for evil*"

3. Manifold Variations

a. Open Attack
b. Secret stalking

B. The Overturning of Oppression
1. "*cast them forth*"
2. "*put down the peoples*"

That is why we need the Wrath of God!

IV. (:8-11) IF GOD IS ON OUR SIDE MAN'S ATTACKS ARE FUTILE

A. God is Totally Aware of Our Pressures and Trials
"*Thou hast taken account of my wanderings*"
"*Put my tears in Thy bottle*"

B. God Will Respond to Our Cries for Help by Frustrating Our Enemies

C. Key to Victory = God is on Our Side
"*God is for me*"

That is why we need the Word of God!

Refrain: "*In God, whose word I praise,*
In the Lord, whose word I praise"

Review (:11)
Faith in God Requires an Active Commitment
"*In God I have put my trust*"

Faith in God Produces an Attitude of Invincibility
"*I shall not be afraid*"

V. (:12-13) THANKSGIVING IS THE ONLY RESPONSE TO DELIVERANCE

A. Thanksgiving Because God Keeps His Promises
"*Thy vows are . . . upon me, O God*"

B. Thanksgiving Because God Has Delivered Us
"*delivered my soul from death*"
"*Indeed, my feet from stumbling*"

C. Thanksgiving Because God Allows Us to Continue to Live In His Presence
"*So that I may walk before God in the light of the living*"

That is why we need the Promises of God!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we ever feel that people are walking all over us and trampling us down? What types of attacks are pictured here? What are some of the methods of attack that are described? How is the character of the attackers described?

2) Do we combine praise (thanksgiving) and trust in our defense against fear? Why do we fail at times and allow fear to have dominion over us? (vv.4, 10, 11)

3) Do we take comfort in the knowledge that God is taking account of all of our suffering and abuse and "*wanderings*" (vs. 8)? Note the two images of God's compassionate accounting system:

- "*Put my tears in Thy bottle*"
- "*Are they not [written] in thy book*"

God has not forgotten or abandoned us!

4) The final word on the conflict is so simple and yet so powerful: "*This I know, that God is for me*" (vs. 9). Why should we ever be insecure in worrying about who else is on our side?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: "FAITH FETTERS FEARS

I. PRAYER. PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE (1-4).
   1. Appeal (1-2). The Cry and the Cause.
   2. Assurance (3).
      Profession of Trust (4). Refrain.

II. PLAINT. PERIL OF DEATH (5-11).
   1. Appeal (5-8). The Cause and the Cry.
   2. Assurance (9).
      Profession of Trust (10-11). Refrain.

III. PLEDGE. PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE (12-13).
   1. Acknowledgment (12). The Consecration and the Cause.
   2. Anticipation (13).
      (a) Preservation.
      (b) Purpose."

VanGemeren: "Difficult as life is, the pslamist has learned to '*trust*' in the Lord. Fear is there, but he expresses it positively. He neither feeds his fear nor stares at his problems but looks to his Redeemer who will deliver him."

Kidner: "To have fled from Saul to Gath of all places, the home town of Goliath, took the courage of despair; it measured David's estimate of his standing with his people. And now this has failed, and he is doubly encircled. So far, his own followers were

very few; the four hundred of 1 Samuel 22:10 were yet to be gathered. The psalm is the first of two which flowered from this crisis. It breaks through into thanksgiving at the end, which was to become the unclouded theme of Psalm 34."

Phillips: "WHEN FEAR MEETS FAITH

I. GOD IS MERCIFUL (:1-4)
   A. David's Foes (:1-2)
      1. Their Perpetual Animosity (:1)
      2. Their Personal Animosity (:2)
   B. David's Faith (:3-4)
      1. When He Would Exercise It (:3)
      2. Why He Would Exercise It (:4)

II. GOD IS MINDFUL (:5-11)
   A. Of David's Trials (:5-7)
      1. The Pressure of His Enemies – Sore! (:5-6)
      2. The Punishment of His Enemies – Sure! (:7)
   B. Of David's Tears (:8-9)
   C. Of David's Trust (:10-11)

III. GOD IS MIGHTY (:12-13)
   The thought made David:
   A. Happy in His Soul (:12-13a)
   B. Heedful of His Steps (:13b)"

Spurgeon: "David was no braggart, he does not claim never to be afraid, and he was no brutish Stoic free from fear because of the lack of tenderness. David's intelligence deprived him of the stupid heedlessness of ignorance, he saw the imminence of his peril, and was afraid… We are strange beings, and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight, where light and darkness are both present, and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. If I fear man I have only to trust God, and I have the best antidote. To trust when there is no cause for fear, is but the name of faith, but to be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant and pressing, is the conquering faith of God's elect. Though the verse is in the form of a resolve, it became a fact in David's life, let us make it so in ours. Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals, or spirituals, from men or devils, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage."

TEXT: PSALM 57

TITLE: WORSHIP FROM THE CAVE OF DANGER

BIG IDEA:
IN THE MIDST OF DANGER WE CAN WORSHIP GOD
FOR HIS KINDNESS AND TRUTH

I. (:1-3) GOD'S KINDNESS AND TRUTH WILL SHELTER ME FROM DESTRUCTION

A. (:1) Take Shelter in God

"He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock"

1. God's Shelter is Gracious
2. God's Shelter is Safe

"*under the shadow of Thy wings*"

a. Room for me
b. No room for destruction

B. (:2) Cry Out for God's Help

"*God who accomplishes for me*"

Not my working for God but God's working for me

C. (:3) Look for Deliverance from God's Kindness and Truth

1. Deliverance comes from heaven

Keep looking up

2. Deliverance turns the tables on my enemies

Won't they be surprised!

3. Deliverance is packaged in kindness and truth

Spiritual power different than natural power

II. (:4-6) THE FIERCE TREACHERY OF MY ENEMIES IS NO MATCH FOR THE EXALTED GLORY OF MY GOD

Who do they think they are messing with?

A. (:4) My Enemies are Fierce (and they are close)

Bent on destroying me:

1. like lions (cf. Daniel in lions' den)
2. breathe forth fire
3. teeth are spears and arrows
4. tongue = a sharp sword (contrast the Word of God)

B. (:5) Refrain: My God is Exalted and Glorious

"*Be exalted above the heavens O God, let thy glory be above all the earth*"

No contest!

C. (:6) My Enemies Are Destroyed in Their Own Treachery

III. (:7-10) MY HEART REMAINS FOCUSED ON WORSHIPING GOD FOR HIS KINDNESS AND TRUTH

A. (:7) Unwavering in Private Worship

B. (:8) Enthusiastic in Worship

C. (:9) Expressive in Public Worship

D. (:10) Focused on God's Kindness and Truth

(:11) CONCLUSION = REFRAIN: My God is Exalted and Glorious

"*Be exalted above the heavens O God, let thy glory be above all the earth*"

Charles Wesley wrote,

"Jesus, Lover of my soul
Let me to Thy bosom fly
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide
Till the storm of life is past."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Have you ever wondered how many times the Lord has sheltered you under the shadow of His wings while destruction passed close by?

2) When people trample on us unfairly, it is helpful to remember that we are in good company. The Lord's faithful saints have always had to endure unjust abuse. But they have also always had the recourse of turning to God in prayer for deliverance and vindication.

3) Note the description in vs. 4 of the viciousness of David's attackers. What a far cry from the Lord's design of man that he should breathe forth hatred and violence! Are we using our tongue to build others up and to be a fountain of blessing or of cursing? Does our soft answer turn away the wrath of others?

4) No matter how low the enemy tries to push us down, there is always the opportunity for the Lord to be lifted up high and exalted by our reaction and by His deliverance.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "That's what Psalm 57 has to teach us this morning--the essential impulses of worship. There are four that I want us to look at and experience.

Q True worship comes from the impulse to hazard things for the name of God.
Q True worship comes from the impulse to humble ourselves under the hand of God.
Q True worship comes from the impulse to hope in the triumph of God.
Q True worship comes from the impulse to hail God among the peoples.

Where these are missing, no building will make worship real. And where they are present, the building can become a powerful meeting place of God."

VanGemeren: Outline:

I. Lament (vv.1-4)
A. Prayer for Protection (v.1)
B. Prayer for Vindication, Love, and Fidelity (vv.2-3)
C. The Enemies (v.4)
Refrain (v.5)
II. Thanksgiving (vv.6-10)
C'. The Enemies (v.6)
A'. Thanksgiving for Strength (vv.7-8)
B'. Thanksgiving for Love and Fidelity (vv.9-10)
Refrain (v.11)

Leupold: Re the title – "The '*destroy not*' may be a sort of keynote that indicates the dominant thought of the psalm. The very phrase occurs in Deut. 9:26 when Moses intercedes for Israel. So David may have been thinking of the harm Saul's savagery had done to Israel and was praying to God to overrule these evil results. The Septuagint and the Targum support the use of this statement. This is also a '*mystery poem*' or *mikhtam* as is the preceding psalm. The only comment still called for regarding the expression, '*when he fled from Saul, in the cave,*' is that here, as so often, it is most amazing to note that in the midst of such trying experiences a man should have been able to maintain such a firm confidence and to think such devout and courageous thoughts."

Leupold: "It is amazing to note how often godly men of Old Testament times encountered bitter and relentless foes, who already at that time attempted character assassination. This psalm is an example of such calumny."

Spurgeon: "We may infer from the spirit of the Lord's prayer, that the Lord will spare us as we spare our foes. There are four of these '*Destroy not*' Psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous, and they all have probably a reference to the overthrow of the Jews, on account of their persecution of the great Son of David: they will endure heavy chastisement, but concerning them it is written in the divine decree, '*Destroy them not*.'"

TEXT: PSALM 58

TITLE: SURELY THERE IS A GOD WHO JUDGES ON EARTH

BIG IDEA:
WICKED RULERS WILL GET WHAT'S COMING TO THEM =
THE WRATH OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Imprecatory Psalm
"*Vengeance is mine*" saith the Lord

Answers the Questions:

Is there a God who really judges?
Can wicked rulers get away with injustice and lies?
Will the righteous ever be rewarded?

I. (:1-2) WICKED RULERS CANNOT HIDE THEIR MORAL BANKRUPTCY

A. (:1) They May Claim Integrity

1. Speaking righteousness?
2. Judging uprightly?

ASIDE: They Always Have an Inflated Opinion of Themselves

Note the change in address:

"*O gods*"
"*O sons of men*"

B. (:2) They Always Show Their True Colors

1. Planning unrighteousness in their wicked hearts
2. Administering violence instead of justice

II. (:3-5) WICKED RULERS ARE HOPELESSLY IN BONDAGE TO SIN

Why should we expect righteousness from them?
Why should we be surprised at their wickedness?

A. They Have Been Shackled in Sin Since Birth

"*estranged from the womb*"
"*go astray from birth*"

Nothing but wickedness and lies

B. They Cannot be Restrained in Their Wickedness

like a poisonous serpent that cannot be trained

III. (:6-9) WICKED RULERS ARE HELPLESS BEFORE THE WRATH OF GOD

Various Images of God's Vengeance and Judgment:

A. (:6) Shattering their teeth

they might seem like powerful young lions, but they are powerless before the wrath of God

B. (:7a) Flashflood = "*flow away like water that runs off*"

C. (:7b) Headless Arrows

D. (:8a) Withering Snail

E. (:8b) Miscarriages of a Woman

8 months of suffering with no fruit for her labor

F. (:9) Summary: Sudden and Complete Destruction

IV. (:10-11) THE DESTRUCTION OF WICKED RULERS IS A NECESSARY TESTIMONY TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD

Answers a lot of fundamental questions
We need that type of forceful testimony

A. (:10) Response of the Righteous: Rejoicing in Their Vindication and Deliverance

B. (:11) Response of the World: Morality Matters

1. Surely there is a reward for the righteous
2. Surely there is a God who judges on earth

Wicked rulers will get what's coming to them!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How terrible are the judgments facing the wicked? How fearsome is the devastating power of the wrath of God once it is unleashed against wickedness? (vv.6-9)

2) How deep-rooted is the poison of wicked judges? How can they imagine themselves to have any ounce of integrity when they have been characterized by speaking lies all their life? (vv.1-5)

3) How can the righteous rejoice at God's execution of the wicked? What attributes of God are glorified in His exercise of vengeance? How does this help the righteous patiently endure unjust suffering until the day when God rights all wrongs? (vv.10-11)

4) Does God want His children motivated by the prospect of future rewards (vs.11)? How prominent a theme in Scripture is this concept of future reward?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: "CORRUPT COURTS CONDEMNED
I. JUDGES EXPOSED (1-5). THE SIN PROBED. The Unrighteous Judges.
1. Accusation of Judicial Corruption (1-2). By the Psalmist.
2. Assertion concernng the Wicked (3-5).

II. JUSTICE EXPECTED (6-9). THE SENTENCE PREDICTED.
1. Appeal to the Lord (6-8). Invocation.
2. Address to the Lawless (9). Intimation.

III. JUDGMENT EXECUTED (10-11). THE SATISFACTION PRODUCED.
The Righteous Judge.
1. Approbation by the Righteous (10).
2. Admission of Just Retribution (11). By the Peoples."

Phillips: "THE DISHONEST JUDGE
I. JUSTICE VIOLATED (:1-5)
A. The Unjust Judge Examined (:1)
B. The Unjust Judge Exposed (:2-5)
1. The Source of His Wickedness (:2a)
2. The Scope of His Wickedness (:2b-3)
a. Ingrown in the Nation (:2b)
b. Ingrained in Their natures (:3)
3. The Stubbornness of His Wickedness (:4-5)

II. JUSTICE VISUALIZED (:6-9)
The fate of the unjust judge is likened to:
A. A Disarmed Lion (:6)
B. A Drying Stream (:7a)
C. A Destroyed Weapon (:7b)
D. A Dissolving Snail (:8a)
E. A Discontinued Pregnancy (:8b)
F. A Disrupted Meal (:9)

III. JUSTICE VINDICATED (:10-11)
A. Irrepressible Praise (:10)
B. Irrefutable Proof (:11)"

Gaebelein: "Their destruction is represented under six similitudes. The teeth of the lions are terrible instruments to crush and to tear. So the wicked have torn the

righteous. God in judgment will break their teeth. Then the similitude of a flood of waters. They come in a mighty rush, threatening to sweep everything away; but the torrents are scattered; they melt away and disappear. So the enemy came upon the godly like a flood, but God deals with them and they are no more. Then the snail which dissolves in passing. It carries its shell house with it and as it passes along it marks its path with slime. There are certain snails … which actually dissolve in the heat of the sun. And so the judgment of God will deal with the enemies. Here also is mentioned the similitude of an arrow aimed, but it is cut off, it reaches not its destination, it falls aimlessly to the ground. So the efforts of God's enemies will come to naught through God's intervention. Then the untimely birth of a woman, an abortion. It passes away and can never see the light of the sun… And the final similitude is the pots and thorns. The twigs of the bramble bush are used to heat the pots, but before they can burn and produce the needed heat, a whirlwind comes and they are scattered. So it shall be with the wicked, the lawless, the enemies of God and of His people (verses 10-11)."

Perowne: "This Psalm is a bold protest against unrighteous judges. It opens with an indignant expostulation on their deliberate perversion of justice, whilst they pretend to uphold it. It lays bare their character and that of those whom they favour, as men thoroughly, habitually, by their very nature, corrupt. And finally, because they are thus beyond all hope of correction or amendment, it calls upon God to rob them of their power and to bring all their counsel to nought."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 11 -- "Two things will come out clearly after all—there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile faith's foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad thereat."

Harris: THE SONG OF A FINAL JUDGMENT
Theme: Wide-spread corruption, but the assurance of swift retribution.

I. PROTEST. Ver. 1-5.
   1. Unrighteous. Ver. 1, 2. "*In heart ye work wickedness*" (ver. 2). Those in authority are unjust in judgment and unholy in practice.
   2. Unprincipled. Ver. 3. *"Go astray as soon as … born*." Under such misrule wrong-doers flourish, and from birth they are utterly without principle to govern.
   3. Unconcerned. Ver. 4, 5. "*Will not hearken*" (ver. 4). They have all disregarded the voice of God in wooing and in warning. Hence they are beyond reach and irreclaimable.

II. PUNISHMENT. Ver. 6-8.
   1. Destruction. Ver. 6. "*Break their teeth.*" The Psalmist calls for just retribution. Seeing they cannot be reclaimed, he prays that they may be rendered powerless.
   2. Dissolution. Ver. 7. "*Let them melt away*." Their career will be short and then they will disappear.

3. Decomposition. Ver. 8. "*Pass away*." Under a bold figure he sees how they must disintegrate by their own evil-doing which will prove not only futile but suicidal.

III. PRAISE. Ver. 9-11.

1. Retribution. Ver. 9. "*He shall take them away*." God will intervene and that right speedily; thus shall the righteous be delivered.
2. Rejoicing. Ver. 10. "*The righteous shall rejoice*." The joy is not over the fate of the wicked, despite the weird symbolism used. It is the satisfaction that comes in knowing God will bring order out of chaos, that *as a man sows so shall he reap*. The doom of the evil-doer is ample vindication, for the salvation of the godly is sure.
3. Reward. Ver. 11. "*There is a reward for the righteous*." God's judgments are right and will triumph, so that the prosperity of the godly will be final and eternal.

TEXT: PSALM 59

TITLE: GOD IS MY STRONGHOLD

BIG IDEA:
THE STRONGHOLD OF GOD IS OUR REFUGE FROM FIERCE ATTACKERS

INTRODUCTION:

This week I had the opportunity to visit Cochises' Stronghold in the desert outside of Tucson, AZ. Very Impressive; a place of safety and refuge; no good way for the enemy to attack

I. (:1-5) FIERCE ATTACKERS DRIVE US TO THE STRONGHOLD OF GOD

A. (:1-4) Desire for Protection from Fierce Attackers (in the Stronghold of God)

1. Appeal to God for Deliverance

Deliver me / set me securely on high (:1)
Deliver me / Save me (:2)
Arouse Thyself to help me / and See (:4)

2. Attack of Enemies (their character and strategy)

my enemies
those who rise up against me
those who do iniquity
men of bloodshed
those setting an ambush for my life
fierce men launching an attack against me
they run and set themselves against me

3. Absolution from Guilt (I don't deserve this!)

not for my transgression
nor for my sin
for no guilt of mine

B. (:5) Desire for Punishment of Fierce Attackers

1. Appeal to God for Action

a. Appeal is addressed to God

O Lord God of hosts
the God of Israel

b. Appeal calls for action

Awake to punish

2. Appropriateness of Punishment = they are Guilty

the nations have been treacherous in iniquity

II. (:6-15) FROM THE STRONGHOLD OF GOD WE CAN SAFELY WATCH THE FRUSTRATION AND DESTRUCTION OF OUR ENEMIES

A. (:6-7) Howling and Belching = Unrestrained Foraging of our Enemies
ignorant that God hears and that they will be held accountable

B. (:8) Laughing and Scoffing = The response of our God

C. (:9-10) Watching and Looking = Our response from the safety of the Stronghold of God
1. Watching for God to Intervene (God's lovingkindness towards us)
2. Looking at our Enemies being Destroyed (God's strength in action)

D. (:11-13) Scattered and Destroyed = The Destruction of our enemies

E. (:14-15) Howling and Growling = The Frustration of our enemies

III. (:16-17) FROM THE STRONGHOLD OF GOD WE CAN JOYFULLY PRAISE HIM FOR HIS STRENGTH AND LOVINGKINDESS

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How high is the Lord able to lift us up to protect us in His stronghold from all attacks? How impressive are the highest mountains which we have been privileged to see?

2) Why do packs of dogs howl? growl? prowl? What does this teach us about the character and lifestyle of the wicked? Why do they never find satisfaction and contentment? How should we be the exact opposite?

3) How much trouble are you in when God is laughing at you?

4) How can we sing and testify to God’s strength and lovingkindness?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: Re vs. 16-17 -- “Notice how this psalm begins: "To the choirmaster." Why? David had suffered. Out of his suffering had been born a song. And it was going to be sung well! It was going to be sung the way he wanted it sung. ‘According to Do Not Destroy.’ Nobody today knows what that means. But of this we may be sure: the choirmaster knew! There was a choir. There was a choirmaster. There was a song born of suffering. And there was a way to sing this song. Do it this way choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy….

David was delivered in the day of distress and he sang of the might and mercy of God…. When will you really sing of the might and mercy of God? I mean really sing from the bottom of your heart?

The answer is, you will sing when you suffer for Jesus Christ, and find in the midst of that suffering that the might and the mercy of God are your refuge and strength."

Phillips: "BEWARE OF THE DOGS

I. DAVID'S DANGER (:1-9)
- A. His Plea (:1-2)
- B. His Panic (:3-5)
  1. What Concerned Him (:3)
  2. What Controlled Him (:4)
  3. What Consoled Him (:5)
- C. His Peril (:6-9)
  1. How He Viewed the Peril of His Situation (:6-7)
  2. How He Vanquished the Peril to His Soul (:8-9)

II. DAVID'S DELIVERANCE (:10-17)
- A. His Protection (:10-15)
  1. His Confidence (:10)
  2. His Conviction (:11-15)

     He wanted:

     a. His People to Be Able to Recognize God's Judgment (:11-12)

     b. His Persecutors to Be Able to Recognize God's Justice (:13-15)
- B. His Praise (:16-17)"

Perowne:

I. (1) A cry to God for help against enemies; a description of their persevering malice; an assertion of the Psalmist's own innocence, and the confiding of his cause to God as the Judge. Ver. 1-5.

(2) A further account of the machinations of the wicked; the confident assurance of their discomfiture, and an expression of trust in God. Ver. 6-9.

II. (1) This part opens with a renewed expression of trust in God, especially with reference to the issue of the struggle with his enemies; it repeats the story of their malice, and also the prayer for their punishment, in such a way that God may be acknowledged as the Judge of the earth. Ver. 10-13.

(2) It closes with the curse upon the wicked, and with joyful acknowledgment of God's goodness to the Psalmist. Ver. 14-17.

TEXT: PSALM 60

TITLE: RAISE THE BANNER OF THE LOVE OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
WE NEED TO RALLY ROUND THE BANNER OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST IN ORDER TO GAIN THE VICTORY THAT GOD DESIRES FOR US

INTRODUCTION:

King David is struggling with the painful reality of personal and national defeat. Things are going poorly; God has turned aside His favor and disciplined His children by causing them to experience hard times. There are rumblings of discontent and contention throughout the land. But David refuses to give up and allow the flag of God's covenant people to be trampled underfoot by the everpresent adversaries. Secure in his position as the "beloved" of God, he clings in hope and faith to his conviction of ultimate triumph through the right hand of God.

I. (:1-3) THE VISION FOR VICTORY MUST SPRING FROM A HEART THAT IS
BROKEN OVER THE REALITY OF OUR CURRENT PROBLEMS AND FAILURES

II. (:4-5) THE BANNER OF GOD'S LOVE MUST BE DISPLAYED FOR ALL TO SEE IN ORDER FOR VICTORY TO BE REALIZED

III. (:6-8) GOD WANTS US TO MAKE OUR BOAST IN HIM AS WE SHARE IN THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

IV. (:9-12) THE KEY TO VICTORY IS TO PLACE ALL OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD RATHER THAN IN MAN

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When we are staggered by defeat, how do we pick up the pieces and press on in our walk with God? Without sinking into despair, how can we deal with the fact that God has been directly involved in using our enemies to discipline us?

2) How can we get a new vision of the holiness of God? (vs.6)

3) How does God exult in His ownership of His precious children and His dominion over His enemies?

4) Have we completely renounced reliance upon men as "*vain*"? do we have the

confidence that "*through God we shall do valiantly*?" (vv.11-12) Why shrink back from the battle given such a conquering leader? Onward Christian soldiers!

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: "THE LAND FOR THE LOYAL
I. GOD'S PEOPLE CHASTENED (1-4). PENITENT LAMENTATION.
"*Thou hast cast us off*." Divine Displeasure Apprehended.

II. GOD'S PROTECTION CRAVED (5). POWERFUL SUPPLICATION.
"*Thy beloved ones … save*!" Divine Deliverance Asked.

III. GOD'S PROMISE CLAIMED (6-8). PERTINENT CITATION.
"*God hath sworn by His holiness*." Divine Declaration Adduced.

IV. GOD'S POWER CONTEMPLATED (9-12). PRAYERFUL ANTICIPATION.
"*Thou … who didst cast off*." Divine Deliverance Assured."

Phillips: "WHEN KINGS GO FORTH TO WAR
I. DAVID'S CONSTERNATION (:1-5)
A. A National Defeat (:1-3)
1. A Spiritual Disaster (:1)
2. A Strategic Disaster (:2)
3. A Sobering Disaster (:3)
B. A Notable Deliverance (:4-5)
1. God's Banner is Seen (:4)
2. God's Beloved is Saved (:5)

II. DAVID'S CONQUEST (:6-9)
A. How David Quelled His Fears (:6-8)
1. Reasserting the Sovereignty of the Nation of Israel (:6-7)
2. Reaffirming the Subjection of the Neighbors of Israel (:8)
B. How David Questioned His Future (:9)

III. DAVID'S CONCERN (:10-11)
A. The Painful Truth to Realize About Israel's Weakness (:10)
B. The Practical Truth to Remember About Israel's Weakness (:11)

IV. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE (:12)"

VanGemeren: "There are sad moments in the history of the people of God. God has promised to be with his people but in his own inscrutable wisdom, he seems to abandon them. This psalm raises the issue of divine abandonment and challenges the godly to abandon themselves to the love and compassion of a wise God."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 4 – "Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself his servants, and commissioned them for his service, presenting them with a standard to be used in his wars. '*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee*.' Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord's favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God most have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When God Throws a Shoe**
Introduction: I thought throwing shoes was a game that we invented. You can imagine my shock one day when I was reading through this psalm and learned that God sometimes throws his shoe. We see this in chapter 60, verse eight, where God says, Moab is my wash pot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe. It turns out that throwing shoes has an ancient history to it. I was reading about this in Victoria, England, when people, when a bride and groom would get married, people used to throw old shoes at them to start their, as they began, you know, went out and started their honeymoon, they would throw shoes at them. And the reason they did that, quote, one writer said, we throw old shoes after young married folk in order to express our wishes for their good fortune. Not sure how that all worked out.

But also you can go farther back than that with regard to throwing shoes. This goes all the way back to, of course, the Old Testament times in the ancient world. It was considered an insult. If you go to the Middle East ancient days, it was an insult because a shoe was considered an unclean object because of its contact to the ground. And to throw it at someone was a sign of disdain and protest.

Now the question is, why does God throw his shoe? God is portraying himself in the form of a man because God wants to communicate important things about himself. And Edom here in this chapter is portrayed as a disobedient servant to whom God casts his shoe. And really this poetic metaphor in verse eight is a beautiful summary of the message of the whole psalm where God again is portraying things about himself that's important for us as people to know and to understand.

Why does God throw his shoe? Metaphorically, why does he do this?
A. Well, to warn us about his displeasure, we could say. This is a sign of God's displeasure. Edom, again, was like a servant that earned the displeasure of Almighty God, and so God casts his shoe at Edom. You don't want to fall into disfavor with Almighty God. That's a dangerous place for anyone to be. In fact, this whole psalm here is a prayer for God's favor to be restored to Israel.

When we don't take sin seriously, when we play with sin, when we refuse to forsake sin in our lives, when we do things that we know are displeasing in God's sight. then we fall into disfavor with God. Now as a result of Israel's falling into disfavor, God allowed

the enemy of the Edomites to invade them.

When we sin and we live in disobedience, **God casts us off.** You could say like an old shoe. But also, **God will break us.** Look in verse 1. Thou hast scattered us. The word scattered here means to break down. And sometimes God needs to break us.

But then **God will turn away from us**. Look again in verse one. Thou hast been displeased, O turn thyself to us again. Now, I propose that the worst thing that can happen to a Christian is when God turns away from us and he allows us to struggle on our own. And then we see really how weak and how helpless we truly are.

But then **God will shake us up**. Look at verse 2. Thou has made the earth to tremble. Thou has broken it. And here is the imagery of an earthquake to illustrate that what is secure to us, appears secure to us, I should say sometimes is not. An earthquake comes suddenly, it comes destructively, it shakes up everything, it does great damage.

And then also **God will bring bewilderment**, bewildering calamity into our lives. Look again in verse three. Thou has showed thy people hard things. Thou has made us to drink the wine of astonishment. And this metaphor expresses the confusion that comes by calamity. They stagger about like a drunken person. This is the effect that calamity might have on someone's life. This is what David is describing happened to the people after they are attacked by Edom. They're bewildered. They're staggering around in shock like drunken people.

B. <u>To Remind us about His Sovereignty</u>
When God casts his shoe at Edom, it was not only to show his displeasure, but to communicate the fact that he is the sovereign king over all the nations. This mighty nation that defeated Israel is nothing to God. That nation that gave Israel so much trouble and so much sorrow, God said, it's nothing to me. Casting a shoe at Edom stands for God having absolute power and control over our problems and our enemies, and he can give us victory over those things.

C. <u>To teach us that He is the only source of victory.</u>
How is this mighty nation, Edom, gonna be defeated? This nation that basically horrified Israel, that shook them to their very core. This nation that left them in bewilderment, staggering around like a drunken man. How are they gonna defeat this nation? Will it be by their own strength? Of course not. Israel's so weak, they need a warrior to go and fight their battle. Who is gonna help them? Who are they gonna call?

Many times in the history of the nation of Israel, when a mighty nation bullied them, you know what they would do? They would do political alliances with another nation and try to get help from another king of another nation to help them. But the new king of Israel, David, He was a different man. The Bible says he was a man after God's own heart.

So look at verse number nine. David is the one speaking here and he asked these

questions. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom? Remember David was up north fighting against the Syrians. Now he comes back down to Israel and he's facing the Edomites. He sees what happened. He sees the defeat of the people. He sees the bewilderment. And David the king, the leader, asked the question, who's going to help us out of this? Who's going to fight this battle?

The answer was obvious. Look at verse 10. He was the kind of leader who looked to and trusted in Almighty God. David knew that through repentance and confession that they could gain the favor of God through depending upon God. That's the place God wants us, fully dependent and trusted on him. They could get back into the favor of God and God could turn that situation around. God could defeat their enemy. But notice in verse 10 where he says, you know, or excuse me, verse nine, who will bring me into the strong city? What city is he talking about there? Well, remember, this is the nation Edom and the fortified city of Petra or Sila. but was probably what he's referring to. This is the capital of Edom. And what David was gonna do, David was going to attack the enemy with the help of God. He was gonna go to that city. And he was making it clear that he was trusting God alone for the victory. He didn't trust in himself, he didn't trust in his capable officers or valiant soldiers, but he trusting God fully in the Lord alone.

David really is teaching us <u>two lessons</u> here. First of all, **only God can give victory.** Again, David's speaking about the city of Petra, this fortified city. This was one of the most impregnable mountain cities in that whole area on that other side of Jordan.

The second thing is **we have to ask for it**. We have to ask for victory. You know, sometimes people say they want victory, but I wonder if you're not asking God for it. If you're not seeking God and praying and pleading with God for it, we have to ask Him for it.

I'm telling you by the authority of the Word of God, God will give you grace and strength to overcome your enemy if you will trust Him.

TITLE: PSALM 61

TITLE: THE ROCK OF REFUGE

BIG IDEA:
THE FAINT-HEARTED APPRECIATE GOD AS THEIR SOLID ROCK OF REFUGE

I. (:1-4) PRAYER FOR REFUGE CONNECTS THE FAINT-HEARTED WITH THEIR TOWER OF STRENGTH

A. (:1) Prayer Seeks an Audience with God
"*Hear my cry, O God*"
"*Give heed to my prayer*"

B. (:2a) God is Never Out of Range of Our Prayers
cf. Cell phones today where you hit a bad cell

1. God can seem far away from us
"*From the end of the earth I call to Thee*"

2. Our faith can seem to be very weak
"*when my heart is faint*"

C. (:2b-4) God Can be a Tower of Strength to Provide Refuge

1. the Rock that is higher than I

2. a Refuge for me

3. a Tower of Strength against the enemy

4. a Tent of Fellowship and Worship where I can safely dwell

5. a Refuge in the Shelter of Thy Wings

II. (:5-8) PRAISE FOR REFUGE MUST BE REINFORCED WITH DAILY FAITHFULNESS

A. (:5a) Praise is the Proper Response to Answered Prayer
"*For Thou hast heard my vows, O God*"

God responds to faithfulness

B. (:5b-7) Praise is the Proper Response to God's Gift of Preservation
1. Preservation to enjoy godly posterity

2. Preservation to enjoy a long and successful life

3. Preservation to enjoy fellowship with God by faith

4. Preservation thru the twin shepherds of lovingkindness and truth

C. (:8) Praise is the Proper Response to the Opportunity for Continued Faithfulness

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we perceive God as being always as close as just a prayer away? When have we been so far off the beaten trail that we felt we were at "*the end of the earth*"? (vv.1-2)

2) How hard is it to climb to the highest mountain peak we can imagine vs. how easy is it for God "*to lead us to the rock that is higher*"?

3) What type of "vows" had David made to the Lord (vv.5,8)? What types of commitments have we made?

4) What specific blessing was David expecting from God? Is our hope in God too general, or are we looking to God for specific blessings?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:

I. Outreach of Prayer – Anxiety
   - A. To God – Right Objective
   - B. From extremity – Right Extent
   - C. For inner strength – Right expanse

II. Object of Prayer – Ask
   - A. For sure foundations – Right perspective
   - B. From experiences – Right witnessing
   - C. To make vows – Right choices

III. Outcome of Prayer – Answer
   - A. To know assurance – Right faith
   - B. For national tranquility – Right patriotism
   - C. From the heart praise continually – Right gratitude

Phillips: Re "*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*" – "These are the words of a man aware of his own failure and frailty. Sorrows surged around him like the rolling billows of the sea. He was going under and could find neither help nor hiding place in himself or in his friends, any one of whom would have died for him. Indeed, some already had.
David was facing the bitterest of all experiences. He realized that he had been his

own worst enemy. If he had not sinned with Bathsheba years ago none of these sorrows would be swirling now around his soul. He longed for God to lift him above his troubles."

Yates: "Note that the writer prays for three things – for prolonged life, for an extended reign, and for the blessings of mercy and truth. His confidence that God will answer makes him determine to pay daily vows of thanksgiving."

Olson: "It was an outstanding English clergyman who made the suggestion to a group of ministers that if they wished to preach to filled churches they should preach to broken hearts. What tragedies we humans experience. How often we find ourselves in trouble. At times we do not seem to know where to turn. How thankful we should be that David in this Psalm told us where a broken-hearted individual may go."

TEXT: PSALM 62

TITLE: HE ONLY IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION

BIG IDEA:
SECURITY MUST BE FOUND IN GOD ALONE

INTRODUCTION:
Where do people look for security?

I. THESIS STATEMENT / REFRAIN -- TESTIMONY OF A MAN OF FAITH
SECURITY MUST BE FOUND IN GOD ALONE (:1-2)
Heb. word "alone" occurs 6 times at the beginning of verses 1,2,4,5,6,9
A. Single Focus of Security -- Sourced in God Alone
B. 3 Images of Security -- Picturing Rest and Salvation
1) Rock -- Security of Steadfastness, Stability
2) Salvation -- Security of Deliverance
3) Fortress -- Security of Protection
C. Confident Boast of God-sourced Security -- "*I will never be shaken*"

II. SECURITY TESTED BY UNFAIR, JEALOUS, AND DECEITFUL ATTACKS (:3-4)
A. Unfair Attacks
1) Unfair in terms of excessive length of time -- "*How long*"
2) Unfair in terms of excessive unbalance in the number and strength of the attacking forces (i.e. unfair sides) attacking one man who is very vulnerable
B. Jealous Attacks -- confident boast of these envious attackers
"they fully intend to topple him from his lofty place" (NIV)
C. Deceitful Attacks

III. THESIS RESTATEMENT / REFRAIN -- AMPLIFIED AND APPLIED EXHORTATION TO CONTINUE IN SUCH STRONG FAITH -- SECURITY MUST BE FOUND IN GOD ALONE (:5-8)
A. Restatement / Refrain
emphasis switches from God as security for salvation to God as security for future hope
B. Amplified (:7)
C. Applied to Others (:8)
1. Trust in Him
2. Pour out your heart to Him

IV. SECURITY CANNOT BE FOUND ANYWHERE ELSE (:9-10)
A. Not from Men (or relationships)
1) Lowborn -- men of low degree
2) Highborn -- men of rank

Key: don't look to others to provide what you should be looking
to God for Him to provide

B. Not from Possessions

1) Ill-gotten
extortion
stolen goods

2) Legitimately earned
Key: don't set your heart on your possessions; don't look to
wealth for security

V. SECURITY CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN GOD BECAUSE OF HIS UNIQUE CHARACTER (:11-12)

there is none other like God

A. We have God's Own Testimony Confirmed Twice Over By Our Experience

1) His Power -- He alone is able to provide security

2) His Love / His Goodness -- He alone cares about us and wants to provide us with that security

B. We can count on God's Justice

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Explain different ways that people try to add other forms of security into the picture rather than relying on Christ alone. How are we tempted to rely on wealth rather than on the Lord?

2) What are some of the images of security found in this psalm? Does my attitude throughout the day reflect the security of trusting in God alone as my stronghold or the instability of "*a leaning wall*" or "*a tottering fence*"? (vv.2-3)

3) "*Why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come*?" (NIV) What is the most difficult part for me of "waiting in silence for God only":

- the "waiting" element
- the "in silence" element
- the "for God only" element?

4) What privilege does wealth or power or position gain in the sight of God? How do both men of "low degree" and "men of rank" (vs 9) raise false expectations on the part of the godly?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ogilvie: "The psalmist had been raised with the truth that God only was the source of

powr for salvation, security, and strength. Then he went through an experience that made the conviction of others the rock foundation of his life. The incident happened when he was under debilitating attack and criticism by his enemies. He had to defend his faith.

In marshaling all he believed and comparing it with what his opponents believed, he was more sure than ever. He was forced to see the immense difference between trusting in God's power and nothing else and a vague cultural religion that depended on wealth, position, and human power…

Those who trust in God only, have Him and everything else; those who trust in Him and anything else, end up without Him and nothing else."

Lucado: "you will never be completely happy on earth simply because you were not made for earth. Oh, you will have moments of joy. You will catch glimpses of light. you will know moments or even days of peace. But they simply do not compare with the happiness that lies ahead."

Kidner: "This psalm stands high among the many fine fruits of adversity in the Psalter, for it was evidently composed while the pressure was still intense (3), and it shows the marks of growing confidence and clarity as it proceeds. The secret that David learnt alone (1) he impressed again on himself (5) and urged on others (8), drawing out finally the lessons of experience and revelation for our benefit and God's honour. It has the immediacy of a prayer that still awaits an answer, and of convictions newly confirmed and deepened."

Phillips: BE STILL, MY SOUL

I. DAVID'S ADVERSARY

He Addresses Himself to His Situation (:1-4)

A. Where His Defense Lies (:1-2

1. His Salvation Is in God (:1-2a)
2. His Security Is in God (:2b)

B. Where His Danger Lies (:3-4)

1. His Enemies Were Pushing Against Him (:3)
2. His Enemies Were Plotting Against Him (:4)

II. DAIVD'S ADVICE

He Addresses Himself to His Soul (:5-7)

A. Be Still (:5)

B. Be Sure (:6)

C. Be Strong (:7)

III. DAVID'S ADMONITION

He Addresses Himself to His Subjects (:8-12)

A. The Question of Trust (:8-10)

1. Trusting Aright (:8)

a. When We Should Trust the Lord

b. Why We Should Trust the Lord

2. Trusting Amiss (:9-10)
    a. Trusting in Men (:9)
    b. Trusting in Might (:10a)
    c. Trusting in Money (:10b)

B. The Question of Truth (:11-12)
1. The Word of God (:11)
2. The Ways of God (:12)
    a. It Is a Merciful Way (:12a)
    b. It Is a Moral Way (:12b)

VanGemeren: "The '*hope*' in the Lord (v.5) receives its proper focus because of the underlying faith in God, who can protect and defend his own (cf. 18:2). Faith is the antidote to despair (cf. 37:7). Silence in the presence of the Lord will speed God's deliverance, as Calvin observes. 'Never, as if he had said, will he frustrate the patient waiting of his saints; doubtless my silence shall meet with its reward; I shall restrain myself, and not make that false haste which will only retard my deliverance'. (2.423)."

Harris: A SONG OF CONFIDENT TRUST
Theme: The longing of the Psalmist's heart to lead men to trust in God.
Occasion: Not given. Probably the time of Absalom's rebellion.

I. THE SALVATION OF GOD. Ver. 1-4. "*From him cometh my salvation*" (ver. 1).
1. Reliance. Ver. 1, 2. "*I shall not be greatly moved*" (ver. 2). The soul that cleaves to God need never come into panic, but may know the joy of true calm.
2. Retribution. Ver. 3, 4. "*Ye shall be slain, all of you*" (ver. 3). God will justly recompense, and none shall escape who assail his servants. True faith believes in spite of appearances.

II. THE SECURITY OF GOD. Ver. 5-8. "*He only is my rock*" (ver. 6).
1. Testimony. Ver. 5, 6. "*My expectation is from him*" (ver. 5). Faith becomes strong when it waits on God in communion and rests on him for succor and support.
2. Trust. Ver. 7, 8. "*Trust in him at all times*" (ver. 8). Only the soul that has known by experience can bid others find that abiding-place.

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. Ver. 9-12. "*Power belongeth unto thee*" (ver. 11).
1. Impotence. Ver. 9, 10. "*Lighter than vanity*" (ver. 9). Such is the inability of man to help himself, much less aid others. His utter emptiness is realized when the human is contrasted with the Divine. Man's littleness then becomes manifest and his impotence understood.

2. Impartiality. Ver. 11, 12. "*According to his work*" (ver. 12). The omniscience of God is added to his omnipotence. Power alone might deal unjustly, but God knows and cares, and none come to him in vain. He is not only the soul's true judge, but the refuge of all who put their trust in him.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Forgotten Sola = God Alone**
Introduction: I did a sermon series on the five solas of the Reformation. The word sola is a Latin word that means alone. And this became the battle cry for the Reformation. around the word alone all the issues were centered and that really they still are. And so the five solos was a term that was designated to point out the five great foundational rallying cries of the gospel. They are as follows, sola scriptura, which means scripture alone, sola gratia is grace alone, sola fide is faith alone, Sola Christus is Christ alone, and Sola Deo Gloria is glory to God alone. And these five solos were developed in response to the perversions of the truth, specifically the truth of the gospel that were taught by the corrupt Roman Catholic Church.

What I want to speak about today is the forgotten sola, I want to call this. Long before the Reformers were emphasizing the importance of the word alone in their theology, David saw the value of trusting God alone. And this is the message of Psalm 62. In life's most threatening times, you will be at peace if you place your trust in God alone as your salvation and your refuge.

This psalm comes out of a trial for David. Some think it was when his son Absalom rebelled and David had to flee for his life. Others think it was when David was ruling over Judah and Hebron and the forces of Saul were plotting against him. Either way, it was a time of darkness and danger for David.

David is surrounded by his enemies. They were treating him as if he were a leaning wall or a tottering fence. You ever see a wall that's leaning, ready to fall down? All it needs is just one good push. And this would probably be a stone wall back in David's day. Here is David, he's like this leaning wall, he's about to crumble and fall over. This is according to their enemies. And they were attacking him, they were looking for his total defeat. Yet in spite of all the hostility, in spite of the dark circumstances, David is not worried, he's not anxious, he is at peace, and he's trusting in God.

One commentator, Leupold, writes, there is scarcely another psalm that reveals such an absolute and undisturbed peace in which confidence in God is so completely unshaken. and into which assurance is so strong that not even one single petition is voiced throughout this psalm.

And to quote another great expositor, Alexander McLaren, he says this, that one word alone is the record of conflict and the trophy of the psalmist's victory. This is something that, as Christians, we need to learn as well. Our problem is not that we do not trust in God, at least sometimes or in some sense . . . when it comes to living each day, We forget to trust in God alone for daily needs or in daily living. We trust God, but we want

to add something else to trust as well. You know, we trust God and someone, or we trust God and something. And that's not really fully trusting in God alone. This is the reason we don't have confidence and peace the way David had it. David emphasizes this word alone to demonstrate that his faith isn't in God plus something else. It is in only God.

Big Idea: **I want you to see three ways that David expresses his faith in God alone.**

I. God Alone is the Source of My Protection

A. Waiting Silently – vs. 1

The silence is what David intended here in this verse. It really shows his submission to God. It shows that he believes in the promises of God. It shows that he's submitted to the sovereignty of God. He suppresses every desire to murmur or complain. He's just waiting submissively before the Lord. He's not waiting with an anxious spirit. He's not waiting with worry. He's not waiting with complaining. He has total peace as he waits and he trusts in God to fulfill his desire.

B. Waiting Securely – vs. 2

He's my rock, he's my fortress, he's my salvation.

II. God Alone is the Source of My Peace – vv. 5-6

A. He talks to himself

Peace is the byproduct of pouring out your heart to God in prayer. And notice what David does. First of all, he talks to himself. Because of our depraved nature, our depraved mind, our depraved heart, that our sin nature or even our human nature is constantly giving us negative thoughts. You ever experienced that? Where you're bombarded with one negative thought after another, after another. And the next thing you know, if you begin listening to all of those negative thoughts that your own depraved nature is giving you, or sometimes even the devil can add a little bit in there. And the next thing you know, you're going to be restless. You're going to be filled with anxiety. There's going to be no peace. There's going to be doubt. There's going to be distress. But what does the Bible tell us to do? It tells us to rebuke ourselves at that time. Speak to yourself. Don't listen to yourself. Preach to yourself. Remind yourself of who God is.

B. He talks to others – vs. 8

David wants others to know the peace that he has. So he says to these people, look, people, put your trust in God at all times.

III. God Alone is the Source of My Power

Here in this last stanza, he looks at his enemies in relation to God. And by comparing his enemies to God, what he sees is, you know, they're nothing.

A. Here's what not to trust in

1. Don't trust in man's rank – vs. 9

Don't put your trust in men at all, whether they be people of low degree or whether they

be people of rank, no matter how powerful they may seem, it's an illusion. If you add them up all together, it comes to vanity.

2. Don’t trust in man’s robbery – vs. 10

Trust not in oppression. and become not vain in robbery

3. Don’t trust in man’s riches – vs. 10

B. <u>Here’s what to trust in</u>

Only God is great, only God has power, but also God is merciful.

TEXT: PSALM 63

TITLE: SATISFYING A THIRSTY SOUL

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE

I. (:1) WILDERNESS WANDERINGS CREATE A THIRST FOR GOD

Key = to keep earnestly seeking after God

II. (:2-5) RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS MOTIVATES
PRAISE FROM A SATISFIED SOUL

Key = A Renewed Vision of Who God is
His Power
His Glory
His Lovingkindness

III. (:6-8) REMEMBERING GOD'S TRACK RECORD (OF PROVIDING HELP) SUSTAINS MY HOPE

Key = Meditate on God's past faithfulness = "Thou hast been my help"

Keep singing for joy
Keep clinging to God

IV. (:9-11) IN THE END THE GOOD GUYS WILL WIN

Key = Wait for God to sort things out; the truth will be vindicated in the end and lies will be exposed

A. The Bad Guys Will Lose

1. Who are the bad guys?
"*those who seek my life, to destroy it*"
those who speak lies

2. How will they lose?

"*will go into the depths of the earth*"
"*they will be delivered over to the power of the sword*"
"*they will be a prey for foxes*"
"*the mouths of those who speak lies will be stoppped*"

B. The Good Guys Will Win

1. Who are the good guys?
   The king
   those who swear by him

2. How will they win?
   They will rejoice in God
   They will glory in God

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What tends to increase the intensity of my longing for God? How does this help me to understand how God works in my life? (v.1)

2) How can being connected to the lovingkindness of God be said to be "*better than life*" (vs. 3)?

3) What secrets of contentment can we learn here? (vs. 5)

4) How does the devil attack us with lies and deceit? (vv.9-11) How can we bank on supporting godly leaders in whatever realm of authority we find them?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "When David says, 'O God, thou art my God,' he reasserts the rock under the quicksand of his own emotions. When he cries, 'O God, thou art my God!' he doesn't mean that he is always lifted above the pangs of soul-thirst. When he says, 'O God, thou art my God,' he means at least these two things: 1) when he thirsts he will seek to slake his thirst on God alone and not on anything else: 'O God, thou art my God.' And he means 2) that when he seeks his God, God will be there and meet his need. 'O God, thou art my God!'…

But once this foundation is established, what appears in the psalm is that God is savored in at least two ways, and therefore worship takes at least two forms. Verses 1-4 describe the savoring of God through thirsting. And verses 5-9 describe the savoring of God through feasting. In other words in verses 1-4 the vision of God is not clear and present and satisfying and so David faints for it. But in verses 5-9 the vision of God is present and rich and David is eats his fill with satisfaction….

When you understand the essence of worship to be the genuine savoring of God, whether through fainting or feasting, thirsting or bursting, you can't treat it lightly any

more. It becomes the very center-piece of life. It becomes radically God-centered. It becomes intense and earnest. It becomes for most people the only hour in the week when they become silent with reverence and awe before the power and glory of God."

Ellison: "the Wilderness of Judah is also called Heshimon or Desolation, and there are few more desolate places in the world. Thirst and the longing to see something green must at times have become almost an obsession. That was how David longed for fellowship with God (1), not a mere transient gleam of glory divine, but the satisfying fullness he had once enjoyed in the sanctuary (2). At the same time it was no mystic union he longed for. God remained for him '*the other*,' who always bestows His '*steadfast love*' (3). On his rough couch or standing watch as sentry he could feast on God (5,6). It was what God had done that filled his heart with song (7,8), not because he desired the gifts, but because they revealed the character of the Giver. In God's light his enemies had become insignificant. They were bound to perish because they had set themselves against God (9,10)."

Phillips: "KNOCKED DOWN BUT NOT KNOCKED OUT

I. HOW DAVID LONGED FOR GOD (:1-3)
   - A. Where He Was (:1)
   - B. What He Wanted (:2)
   - C. Why He Worshiped (:3)

II. HOW DAVID LIVED FOR GOD (:4-8)
   - A. He Worked for God (:4)
   - B. He Witnessed to God (:5)
   - C. He Waited for God (:6-7)
   - D. He Walked with God (:8)

III. HOW DAVID LOOKED FOR GOD (:9-11)
   - A. He Looked for Victory (:9-10)
      1. His Foes Doomed (:9)
      2. His Foes Defeated (:10a)
      3. His Foes Devoured (:10b)
   - B. He Looked for Vindication (:11)"

Gaebelein: (quoting Donne on the Psalms) – "As the whole Book of Psalms is *oleum effusum* (as the spouse speaks of the name of Christ in Solomon's song), an ointment poured upon all sorts of sores, a cerecloth that supplies all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds; so are there certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command all our affections, that apply themselves to all necessities. The sixty-third is one of those; the Church should meet every day to sing this Psalm. Accordingly Chrysostom testifies, that it was ordained and agreed by the primitive fathers, that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm."

Morgan: "THE SOUL'S PROGRESS --
"*MY SOUL*" (63:1,5,8) MARKS A SPIRITUAL PROGRESSION

I. THIRST (:1)
Background: 2 Samuel 15:23-25
David was in desert territory; the wilderness of Judah (Is. 55:1) -- this is where salvation begins
63:3 "*when my soul thirsteth for thee*"
even while he's praying his prayer is being answered
II. SATISFACTION (:5)
Progress then follows = a thirst that continues on in continual pursuit for more of God;
When we remember what God has done in the past, we rejoice (:7)
III. PRESSING ON (:8)
Philippians 3:12 -- looking for spiritual progress

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Seeking God**
Introduction: What are you seeking after the most in your life? That's the question I'd like to ask you. What is the priority of your life? What is the thing that you're seeking after earnestly, eagerly, and diligently? Psalm 63 shows us that the priority of David was God. This psalm was written during the time in his life when Absalom had rebelled against him. You can find the details of that in 2 Samuel chapter 24-26. David is in the wilderness desert. He's fleeing for his life. He's running from his own son. He feels disgraced. He feels rejected. He has an uncertain future.

David mourns over his separation from the sanctuary of God (v.1-2). The sanctuary was to draw near to God himself because that sanctuary symbolized the presence of Almighty God. And David loved going to that place of worship. He delighted in it. There's not one word of temporal needs here. Derek Kidner has a helpful outline here about the whole psalm. It's

I. God my desire, verses one to four,
II. God my delight, five to eight, and
III. God my defense, verses nine through 11.

Big Idea: **Seeking God should be our most important priority.**

I. The Meaning of Seeking God
A. It means to have an intimate personal relationship with God (:1)
Now there's a vast difference between knowing about a person and knowing a person.

B. It means to desire Him more (:1).
The word was used of wild donkeys looking eagerly for food, and so the point is, to seek after God means that you go after God with an intense desire.

So to seek after God means there's always more, because God is an infinite person.

C. It means to pursue God alone, to fill the emptiness in your life.
David knew that it's God who satisfies our heart, not things. Not the offices we might hold. Not the possessions that we have.

II. The Marks of Seeking God

What does the person look like who seeks after God?

A. Inner Satisfaction

B. Inner Joy

C. Inner Stability (:7-8)

D. Inner Perspective (:9)

He knew in time that God would vindicate him and the truth would be vindicated as well. And so he wasn't worried about it. They'll have an inner perspective to be able to see things correctly.

III. The Manner of Seeking God

A. by putting love for God at the center of your relationship with him.

He's putting God right in the center of his relationship. God, you are the center of my life. My life revolves around you. I'm totally focused and dependent on you.

And then he says, *my soul follows hard after you* in verse number eight. And really the word *follow hard* is a Hebrew word which means cleave or cling to. My soul clings to you. I'm holding on to you, God. With everything I have, it speaks of an affection. You're clinging to God because of your deep affection for him. This was used to describe Ruth who was clinging to her mother-in-law. We're clinging to the Lord.

B. by spending consistent time alone with God.

David made it a priority.

C. By integrating him into every area of your life (:11).

TEXT: PSALM 64

TITLE: TURNING THE TABLES

BIG IDEA:
THE WICKED ARE THE ONLY LOSERS WHEN THEY TRY TO AMBUSH THE RIGHTEOUS

I. (:1-2) HIDE ME FROM SECRET ATTACKS

A. Hear my voice
Bring our complaints to God as prayers for deliverance

B. Preserve my life
"*from the dread of the enemy*"
Not just deliverance from their attacks, but from being paralyzed with fear in worrying about the prospect of being attacked

C. Hide me
1. "*from the secret counsel of evildoers*"
2. "*from the tumult of those who do iniquity*"

(Transition to the next point: the nature of those who are attacking me: evildoers; those who do iniquity)

II. (:3-6) (because) MY ENEMIES ARE ACTIVELY PLOTTING TO AMBUSH ME

A. The Powerful Weapon of the Tongue
"*sharpened their tongue like a sword*"
"*aimed bitter speech as their arrow*"

B. The Treacherous Cowardice of Concealment
"*shoot from concealment at the blameless*"
relying on sudden surprise attacks against the blameless

C. The False Security of Concealment -- they deny accountability (to God and to the Law)
Alleviates their fear of God
Multiplies their evil purposes without restraint
False assumption: "Who can see them?"

D. The Terrible Injustice of Attacking the Blameless
"*they devise injustices*"
carefully conceived plots

III. (:7-8) GOD WILL TURN THE TABLES ON MY ENEMIES

A. God is a Straight Shooter
His arrows will hit home

B. The Wicked Shoot Themselves in the Foot
"*their own tongue is against them*"

Transition: "*all who see them will shake the head*"

IV. (:9-10) (so that) EVERYONE WINS WHEN THE WICKED ARE DEFEATED
A. All Men Win
1. Fear God
2. Declare the work of God
3. Consider what He has done

B. The Righteous Especially Win (= the upright in heart)
1. Glad in the Lord
2. Take refuge in Him
3. Glory in Him

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If we are supposed to do all things "without grumbling or complaining," why does God listen to the complaint of the psalmist? What type of complaint is this?

2) Which is more dangerous and debilitating to the righteous: the actual attacks of the wicked or the "*dread of the enemy*"? Which do we experience more often?

3) If the wicked are busy sharpening their tongue like a sword, are we equally diligent in using our tongue to speak gracious words of healing and blessing? How are we using our tongue? How can we sharpen it for righteousness? What differences are pointed out in this psalm between the righteous and the wicked?

4) How can man imagine he can get away with murder? No matter how "*deep*" the thoughts of his heart and mind, the Lord sees right through him. Are there times when we imagine that we can hide our inward thoughts from God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:
I. Hear voiced prayer.
A. If according to His will, he hears.
B. If He hears, we have answer.
II. Preserve from fear.
A. Fear of fear itself.

B. Fear of enemy.

III. Hide from evil.
- A. Secret.
- B. Rebellious.
- C. Sharp words.
  1. Like whetted swords.
  2. Like arrows.
- D. Bolstered in evil.
- E. Planned snares.
- F. Presumptuous.
- G. Thought out.
- H. Deep-seated.

IV. Courage in God's judgment.
- A. Unannounced.
- B. Sudden.
- C. Self-condemned.
- D. No 'fair-weather' friends.

V. God's work known.
- A. All shall fear.
- B. All shall witness.
- C. All shall wisely consider.
- D. Righteous shall rejoice, trust, glory.

Spurgeon: Re vs 7 "*But God shall shoot at them with an arrow*" – "They shoot, and shall be shot. A greater archer than they are shall take sure aim at their hearts. One of his arrows shall be enough, for he never misses his aim. The Lord turns the tables on his adversaries, and defeats them at their own weapons."

Kidner: Re vs. 7 -- "Everything speaks of the swiftness and aptness of the judgment. It is all over in a verse and a half (7, 8a), in contrast to the long, laborious scheming which it frustrates; and the conspirators are dispatched by their own weapons. Note the *arrow(s)* (3, 7), the attack that comes *suddenly* (4, 7), and the use of their own sharp *tongue* against them (3, 8)."

Tate: "This psalm of complaint and judgment sets forth the demonic nature of much human behavior and the profound depths of human nature from which it stems. The speaker in the psalm has encountered treacherous and destructive actions by other people in society. These evildoers act with contempt for others and are bound together in alliances of the wicked, where they encourage one another to persist in their evil designs. The evildoers work with no superficial wit but with the sagacity of practice and well-honed animosity. They are devious and often attack without warning. The blameless are often not 'able to discover the quarter from which the weapon was shot, nor detect the hand which forged the arrowhead, or tinged it with the poison' (Spurgeon, II, 83)."

TEXT: PSALM 65

TITLE: THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S HORN OF PLENTY

BIG IDEA:
THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S POWER AND BLESSING --
BOTH IN NATURE AND IN OUR LIVES --
QUIETS OUR HEART IN AWE AND EXCITES OUR HEART IN PRAISE

INTRODUCTION:
Thanksgiving is a time for us to step back and to consider how good we really have it. Especially to give thanks to God for His Abundant Goodness. God is good and because He is the All-Powerful Sovereign of the Universe He is also able to do good and to shower us with blessings. That combination of blessing and power is the picture we have of God in Psalm 65.

We need to be reminded to focus on giving God thanks because our society presents 2 very real threats to thanksgiving:

1) First: We live in a very negative age -- in a very critical society--where scandal is what grabs our attention... where the expose is the ultimate in journalistic success. Whether it's this week's can of worms on Sixty Minutes or the latest church split tragedy or the fall of another visible Christian leader, there are always an abundance of negatives that compete for our attention.
2) Secondly: We live in a very prosperous society -- you would think that would be an encouragement to give God thanks, but it actually presents a special trap -- to sit around all fat and happy thinking that we deserve all of this abundance -- to actually complain that we don't have as much as someone else and to forget the goodness of God.

This Psalm also addresses 3 problems in contemporary Christianity:

1) We are too busy to worship -- can't quiet our hearts before the Lord. We have more leisure time but it is so crammed with leisure activities that we have less leisure for quiet meditation.
2) We view God too much on a buddy-buddy basis and have lost a vision for His majesty and His greatness. Yes, Jesus is a friend of sinners, but He is also the Master of the Universe.
3) We are too emotionally inhibited and sophisticated to praise God the way we should.

I. THE BLESSING OF GOD OVERCOMES THE POWER OF SIN AND FULFILLS OUR EVERY LONGING (:1-4)

A. Desperate Sense of Need must be the starting point (:3a)

"*iniquities prevail against me*" -- you might think that he is talking about the sins of his enemies in opposing him, but the psalmist is really talking about his own sins since he moves on to talk of the blessing of forgiveness;

In the case of Israel, personal sin had great consequences for the success of the nation. So there is also an element here of threat from outside powers. Not only the individual but also the nation needs to experience God's power of deliverance.

The point of desperation should be the starting point for recovery and thanksgiving rather than for a slide down into despair. But what makes the difference between desperation that leads to despair and desperation that results in thanksgiving and joy? Casting one's hope in God

Ps. 38:15 -- no matter how bad it gets, no matter how bad I look in the eyes of others, no matter what enemies might be scheming to do me in, I actively hope in God and am confident that God hears and will answer and will deliver me. I am counting on God's grace, on His favor to make the difference.

B. We have a God to turn to who hears our prayers and forgives our sin

Here's a beautiful characterization of The Sovereign of the Universe: "*the one who hears prayer*" (:2;3b)
people don't know much about what God is supposed to be like, but at least they know that if He is really God, He answers prayer

We can so easily take the privilege of prayer for granted. We know that God hears and that we can come to Him whenever we want. Imagine a situation where God takes a holiday from hearing prayer-- where He announces: "For this next week, I am not available to hear your prayers" -- No one to turn to in our hour of need; No one to calm our anxious fears; no one to intercede to help our loved ones
How different would your life be if God cancelled prayer for a week or would you just be rolling on by yourself without much change?

importance of prayer -- remember the battle against Amalek in Exod. 17, when Moses held up his hand (symbolic of intercessory prayer), the Israelites prevailed against their enemies -- he required the help of Aaron and Hur

"*to Thee all men come*"
Going beyond national holiday -- universal note in this Psalm

(:2,5,8) -- God's blessing is not limited to some special geographical area, but extends worldwide

coming to God is all that is required on our part -- but even that response is graciously motivated by God first choosing to reveal Himself to us and to shower us with His love and to draw us to Himself

Why don't people come to God? Maybe they picture God as a Scrooge rather than a Spring of Blessing? Maybe they don't believe God is powerful and can really be trusted? Why don't we come to God for help in certain areas of our lives? We don't want to resign ourselves and submit to the will of God

C. The Blessing of God -- His Presence and His Favor -- overcomes the sin which overcomes us and satisfies us completely (:4)

this verse is rich in theology -- election, God's effectual call, adoption into God's family

Think of the blessing of God associated with the manifestation of His presence throughout the OT:

only the High Priest could come into the Holiest of Holies, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement

remember the time the ark of the Covenant was stored at the house of Obededom for 3 months after God had struck down Uzzah for trying to steady it with his hand -- his sin was described in 2 Sam.6:7 as one of irreverence; God blessed the household of Obededom so King David finally repented and returned the ark to Jerusalem

think of the Shekinah glory in the temple of God

It's important that we remember that this church building is still not the house of God where God manifests His presence. WE are the temple of God -- individually and corporately -- the presence of God is within us!

It's not this building that we are to treat with special reverence; it is our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ. What tremendous access we have to God.

One day we will be satisfied with that! O that we would be satisfied today with the presence of God and His favor.

true contentment -- not because we grit our teeth and get by, but because we have the full abundance of everything that really counts.

the freedom of access we have to God's presence must not lessen our sense of reverence and godly fear

D. Only response must be Awe and Praise (:1)
"*and to Thee the vow will be performed*"

II. THE POWER OF GOD LEAVES THE WHOLE WORLD IN AWE OF GOD'S GREATNESS (:5-8)

3 Examples where we can see the Awesome Power of God:

A. The Awesome Power of God is Seen In Answering the Prayers of His People (:5).
remember, the One we have come to is the One who hears prayer!

B. The Awesome Power of God is Seen In The Wonders of God's Creation (:6).

C. The Awesome Power of God is Seen In His Sovereignty Over All Earthly Kingdoms (:7) -- pictured by His Sovereignty over all of Nature

the sea is a commonly used figure in the Bible for the nations -- especially unruly nations who stand in opposition to God and His people and His program

our country represents just such a sea; we need to be restored to the fear of God

God's Sovereign rule encourages us in times of international unrest

D. The Only Response to the Awesome Power of God Must Be Awe and Praise. The Awesome Power of God Quiets Our Heart in Awe and Excites Our Heart In Praise (:8).

III. THE SUPERABUNDANT PROVISION OF GOD OVERFLOWS IN NATURE AND IN OUR LIVES (:9-13) (both a Physical and a Spiritual Provision)

a simple clear picture of God providing a harvest blessing that is significant by virtue of its superabundance
not much elaboration needed here -- only the connection between physical and spiritual blessing must be explained
in OT we see God promising great material, physical blessing to Israel if the nation would only respond in obedience.
God wanted the whole world to look at Israel and see a picture of His Goodness and Provision
important distinction in NT times where the emphasis is on spiritual

blessing in terms of the inner fruit of the Holy Spirit -- not to say that there wasn't signif. spiritual blessing in the OT or signif. material provision to us in the NT, but it is a matter of emphasis. Therefore, when you have the Health and Wealth Gospel preachers of today emphasizing a "Name it, Claim It" type of Get-Rich-Quick Christianity we should see the error.

Some try to make a case for Jesus being blessed with abundant wealth while here on earth. Certainly He did have a treasurer and money did flow thru His ministry to provide for the needs of His followers and to provide blessing for the needy, but we never see Him stockpiling reserves for His own security. He always lived in moment-by-moment dependence on His heavenly Father for His daily bread.

He is described as the one who left behind riches and became poor so that we might be spiritually rich.

Perhaps the clearest example for me is the life of Peter, who denied that he had any silver or gold, but recognized that he had something of far greater value.

We need to read this psalm that drips with the fatness of crops and flocks, and translate it into our context of far more valuable spiritual blessings

Tone of shouting for Joy dominates over awe at the end -- moving beyond meditation and reflection to active expression of worship and praise

Conclusion:

The Beauty of giving God thanks is that He totally deserves it. We don't have to overlook certain flaws and make an effort to concentrate on His good features. He is totally good and can withstand any scrutiny from anyone. Christ came and demonstrated the goodness of God so that those around him could not help but call Him Good Master, Good Teacher, although Christ had to rebuke the people for not recognizing His true Deity: "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." Even His most critical enemies could do no better than invent feeble charges -- charges that Pontius Pilate could easily see through as he concluded: "I find no fault in Him."

But that's just the point. God doesn't want us just to call Him Good. He wants us to believe that He is Good and that He has showered blessing and power down upon us -- not just in a general sense in nature, but in very specific ways:

He has forgiven our sins and freed us from the dominion of sin;

He has chosen us and brought us into intimate fellowship so that His presence actually dwells within us -- individually and in His body the church

He vindicates us against our enemies -- awesome deeds of judgment

He provides us abundantly with every good thing and allows us to

enjoy His harvest in peace and security because of His strength

Hopefully, this has been a reminder of How good we do have it. We can never drain the fountain of God's blessing. The stream of God is still full of water. God's desire is to open up the windows of heaven and rain down so much blessing that our hearts will be silenced in reverent awe as well as stirred to shouts of joy.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do so many people stumble over the concept of God's sovereign election? Are they missing out on some of the blessing associated with realizing that they are the ones "*whom Thou dost choose and bring near to Thee*"? (vs.3)

2) What are some of the incentives to contentment in this psalm? What does it take to truly satisfy us? (cf. vs. 4)

3) Is our faith strengthened by images of God's power and might derived from nature?

4) This psalm drips with the richness of the blessing of God. If God is able to "*make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy*" (vs. 8) why are we so often downcast in spirit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:

I. God's Due.
    A. Praise.
    B. Vows.
II. God's deeds.
    A. Ovrthrows power of sin.
    B. Forgives our transgressions.
    C. Chooses us for fellowship.
    D. Answers our S.O.S.
    E. Establishes limitless confidence.
    F. Undergirds the Earth.
    G. Controls the seas.
    H. Quiets disturbed people.
    I. Determines the days.
    J. Mindful of earth's needs.
        1. Supplies rain.
        2. Provides grain.

3. Gives abundant harvest.
4. Sends regular seasons.
5. Prospers entire farm.
6. Brings forth rejoicing.

Kidner: "The climax of this psalm, a stanza as fresh and irrepressible as the fertility it describes, puts every harvest hymn to shame as plodding and contrived. Here we almost feel the splash of showers, and sense the springing growth about us. Yet the whole song has this directness, whether it is speaking of God in His temple courts (1-4) or in His vast dominion (5-8) or among the hills and valleys which His very passing wakens into life (9-13)."

VanGemeren:

A. In Praise of God's Presence (vv.1-3)
    B. The Blessedness of God's Presence (v.4)
A'. In Praise of God's Rule (vv.5-8)
    B'. The Blessedness of God's Rule (vv.9-13)

Spurgeon: Re vs. 4 – "It comprehends both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship. First, we are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. Furthermore, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his Spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped-up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house, and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God."

TEXT: PSALM 66

TITLE: OUR AWESOME GOD

BIG IDEA:
OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD:
WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP AND PRAISE

I. (:1-4) AWESOME IN HIS WORKS OF POWER

Hymn: "O Worship the King, All Glorious Above"

A. (:1-2) The Glory of His Name Calls for Glorious Praise

B. (:3) The Greatness of His Power Calls for Joyful Submission
even God's enemies will fear Him to the extent that they will fake obedience

C. (:4) The Grandeur of His Reign Calls for Universal Praise

II. (:5-7) AWESOME IN HIS WORKS OF PROVIDENCE

Hymn: "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"

How can God's people ever accuse Him of not caring about them? Of forgetting them?
His works of Providence are Awesome towards His chosen people

A. (:5-6) The Saved need to Remember the Lesson of the Exodus
"*He turned the sea into dry land*" of safe passage

Live in hope and joy, not in dread and complaining

B. (:7) The Rebellious need to Remember the Lesson of the Exodus
He turned the dry land into a sea of destruction

1. God has not Changed
"*He rules by His might forever*"

2. God has not Closed His Eyes
"*His eyes keep watch on the nations*"

III. (:8-15) AWESOME IN HIS WORKS OF PURIFYING SOULS

Hymn: "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above"

A. (:8-9) The Process of Preservation Calls for Praise and Testimony
"*who keeps us in life*"

"*and does not allow our feet to slip*"

B. (:10-12) The Process of Purifying our Souls Calls for Thanksgiving
"*Thou didst bring us out into a place of abundance*" (Thanksgiving theme)

Story of Squanto:
"Most of us know the story of the first Thanksgiving- at least, we know the Pilgrim version. But how many of us know the Indian viewpoint?

No, I'm not talking about some revisionist, p.c. version of history. I'm talking about the amazing story of the way God used an Indian named Squanto as a special instrument of His providence.

Historical accounts of Squanto's life vary, but historians believe that around 1608-more than a decade before the Pilgrims landed in the New World-a group of English traders, led by a Captain Hunt, sailed to what is today Plymouth, Massachusetts. When the trusting Wampanoag Indians came out to trade, Hunt took them prisoner, transported them to Spain, and sold them into slavery. But God had an amazing plan for one of the captured Indians-a boy named Squanto.

Squanto was bought by a well-meaning Spanish monk, who treated him well and taught him the Christian faith. Squanto eventually made his way to England and worked in the stable of a man named John Slaney. Slaney sympathized with Squanto's desire to return home, and he promised to put the Indian on the first vessel bound for America.

It wasn't until 1619-ten years after Squanto was first kidnapped-that a ship was found. Finally, after a decade of exile and heartbreak, Squanto was on his way home.

But when he arrived in Massachusetts, more heartbreak awaited him. An epidemic had wiped out Squanto's entire village.

We can only imagine what must have gone through Squanto's mind. Why had God allowed him to return home, against all odds, only to find his loved ones dead?

A year later, the answer came. A shipload of English families arrived and settled on the very land once occupied by Squanto's people. Squanto went to meet them, greeting the startled Pilgrims in English.

According to the diary of Pilgrim Governor William Bradford, Squanto "became a special instrument sent of God for [our] good . . . He showed [us] how to plant [our] corn, where to take fish and to procure other commodities . . . and was also [our] pilot to bring [us] to unknown places for [our] profit, and never left [us] till he died."

When Squanto lay dying of a fever, Bradford wrote that their Indian friend "desir[ed] the Governor to pray for him, that he might go to the Englishmen's God in heaven." Squanto bequeathed his possessions to his English friends "as remembrances of his

love."

Who but God could so miraculously weave together the lives of a lonely Indian and a struggling band of Englishmen? It's hard not to make comparisons with the biblical story of Joseph, who was also sold into slavery-and whom God likewise used as a special instrument for good."

(Source: Prison Fellowship Ministries)

C. (:13-15) The Payment of Vows Calls for Sacrifices of Praise

IV. (:16-20) AWESOME IN HIS WORKS OF ANSWERING PRAYER

Hymn: "Is Your Burden Heavy?"

Potential Problem: "*If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) The word "*awesome*" has become so commonplace in our vocabulary that it has lost some of its impact. What images or analogies help you to reflect on the greatness of God?

2) Do we ever respond to the God of the Universe with "*feigned obedience*" (vs. 3) rather than the real thing? What is the difference between the fear of God as demonstrated by God's enemies vs. the fear of God shown by those who truly worship Him?

3) What difficulties and pressures has God brought into your life as part of His refining and purifying process? How has the result been to bring you "*into a place of abundance*" (vs. 12)?

4) What are some of the types of problems that put up a wall between God and us in our prayer life (cf. vs. 18)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux: Call to Worship
I. Time of rejoicing.
II. All inclusive.
III. Songs of praise to GLORIFY.

IV. Perspective look at God.
    A. Power in creation.
    B. Power over enemies.
    C. Power in worship.
    D. Power in providence.
    E. Power in Regality.
V. Our GOD – Exalt, Extol, Exclaim HIM.
VI. Our GOD – our Keeper.
    A. Holds our souls in life.
    B. All-weather shod.
VII. Our GOD – our assayer.
    A. Tested us by fire:
        1. Snares and strongholds.
        2. Deep-seated misery.
        3. Defeat by enemy.
        4. Floods.
    B. The pay-off a bountiful release.
VIII. Our gratitude.
    A. Present in God's House.
    B. Payment of difficult vows. (Made under stress.)
    C. Complete, full worship (no half-measures).
    D. Competent testimony.
        1. Soul health.
        2. Laudatory vigor.
        3. Separation from sin.
        4. Prayers heard and answered.
        5. Ever-present mercy.

Kidner: "This is a thanksgiving psalm, in which the focus sharpens from corporate praise, to which the whole earth is summoned (*Come and see* …, 3) by an Israel celebrating its redemption, down to the thanks of one individual, who brings his offerings and summons the faithful (*Come and hear* …, 16) to listen to his story, a miniature of theirs. We may picture the scene of public worship, perhaps at Passover or at a victory celebration, in which the corporate praise gives way to the voice of this single worshipper, who stands with his gifts before the altar, and speaks of the God whose care is not only world- and nation-wide, but personal: *I will tell what he has done for me* (16)."

VanGemeren:
A. Universal Praise of God's Kingship (vv.1-7)
    B. Community Praise of God's Kingship (vv. 8-12)
        C. Individual Thanksgiving (vv. 13-20)

Spurgeon: "Praise is the topic, and the subjects for song are the Lord's great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverances, and all his dealings with his people, brought to a close by a personal testimony to special kindness received by the prophet-bard

himself.”

TEXT: PSALM 67

TITLE: WHEN GOD BLESSES US

BIG IDEA:
WHEN BLESSINGS COME DOWN, PRAISE AND RESPECT SHOULD GO UP

I. (:1-3) GOD'S PEOPLE SEEK BLESSINGS SO THAT GOD MAY BE KNOWN AND PRAISED

A. The Nature of God's Blessings
1. Be Gracious
2. Bless Us
3. Cause His face to shine upon us

How should we seek these blessings? Through Prayer

B. The Purpose of God's Blessings
1. That God may be Known
a. Thy Way be known on the earth
b. Thy salvation among all nations

2. That God may be Praised by all the peoples -- Refrain v.3

Why should we seek God's blessings?
Not primarily for our own comfort and benefit and prosperity

II. (:4-5) THE NATIONS SHOULD:
APPRECIATE BLESSINGS
RESPECT GOD
PRAISE GOD

A. (:4a) Blessings Should Bring Gladness and Joy (Response = Appreciation)

B. (:4b) Blessings Depend Upon God's Righteous Judgment and Guidance (Response = Respect)

C. (:5) Blessings Should Stimulate Praise (Response = Praise)

III. (:6-7) GOD'S PEOPLE RECEIVE BLESSINGS SO THAT GOD MAY BE FEARED (= KNOWN AND RESPECTED)

A. The Nature of God's Blessings
Tangible, material blessings
The fruit of the earth

From a Personal God in the context of a Personal Relationship ("God, our God")

B. The Purpose of God's Blessings

that God may be Feared = Known and Respected by the nations

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why do we desire God's blessings upon our life and family? Are we actively seeking God's blessing through prayer?

2) What does it mean for God "*to cause His face to shine upon us*" (vs. 1)? Does our countenance (speaking from our heart) radiate God's presence to others?

3) Are we looking forward to that day when the peoples of all nations will fear and praise the true God?

4) Do we associate righteous judgment (vs. 4) with praise and joy?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "1. The first question is: What is the great purpose of God revealed in this prayer? The answer is plain from the Psalm: God's purpose is to be known and praised and enjoyed and feared among all the nations of the earth….

2. Now the second question is based on the first one: What is it that God aims to make known about himself among all the nations? If his purpose is to be known, we should ask, known for what?

The Psalm give four answers. And we only have time to mention them rather than make extended comments about them.

First, God aims to be known as the one and only true and living God. I gather this from the fact that an inspired Israelite poet is praying that his God will be known and praised instead of all the gods of all the other peoples of the earth….

Second, God aims to make known that he is a God of justice, that he does what is right. I see this in verse 4: 'Let the nations be glad an sing for joy, for thou dost judge the peoples with equity.' When it comes to the judgment of the nations, God will not be partial. No one will be condemned for the color of his skin, or the size of his brain, or the place of his birth….

Third, God aims to make known that he is a God of sovereign power. I get this from the last part of verse 4: 'Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou dost judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.'…

Finally, God aims to be known as a gracious God. The only true God, who is just in all his judgment and sovereign in all his rule, is a God of grace. I get this from verse 1: 'May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon the earth and thy salvation among all nations.'"

Stott: "When read as a whole, Psalm 67 teaches us that there is some justification for praying for ourselves, that there are unselfish reasons for praying the selfish prayer *God bless us*. Two such motives are given – immediate and ultimate.

The knowledge of God – The first reason why we desire that God shall bless us is in order that through us His salvation may be known to all humankind (verses 1,2)…

The worship of God -- … We need to look beyond the salvation of the nations to its ultimate purpose, which is that they too should come to worship and praise God. We should desire their salvation not just that they shall know Him for themselves, but that they shall praise Him for Himself. The greatest incentive in all evangelism is not the need of human beings but the glory of God; not that they shall receive salvation, but that they shall give to God the honor that is due to His name, acknowledging and adoring Him for ever. We cannot be content until every convert has become a worshiper."

Maddux:

I. Prayer of futurity.
    A. For mercy.
    B. For blessings.
    C. For full acceptance.
II. Purpose of futurity.
    A. To make God known.
    B. To bring salvation to all.
    C. To get acclaim from all.
    D. To get praise for God from all.
III. Judgment of futurity.
    A. Righteous judgment – No appeals needed.
    B. Righteous rule – God rules.
    C. Righteous praise – from all nations.
IV. Prosperity of futurity.
    A. God always outgives – materially and spiritually.
    B. God blesses.
        1. Man's response spontaneous.
        2. Man's response contagious.

Kidner: "If a psalm was ever written round the promises to Abraham that he would be both blessed and made a blessing, it could well have been such as this. The song begins at home, and returns to pause there a moment before the end; but its thought always flies to the distant peoples and to what awaits them when the blessing that has reached '*us*' reaches all."

TEXT: PSALM 68

TITLE: THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S VICTORY PROCESSION ESTABLISHES HIS PEOPLE AND SCATTERS HIS ENEMIES

INTRODUCTION:

Commentators point to a wide range of forms included in this psalm so that it has been classified "as a medley of songs and hymns". (Wycliffe Bible Commentary)

Looking at God's repeated victories throughout the history of the Jewish people, culminating in ultimate eschatological victory.

Repeated use of name of God = Elohim (23 times in simple form) as well as "the whole cornucopia of divine names" (Keil-Delitzsch)

Words and midi tune for Psalm 68: 1,3-4 found at following website:
http://www.lascoe.com/music/LetGodArise.htm (Tom Lascoe)

I. (:1-4) THEME INTRODUCED = GOD'S VICTORY PROCESSION:
ESTABLISHES HIS PEOPLE
AND SCATTERS HIS ENEMIES

A. Let God Arise and Lead His Victory Procession

B. Let God's Enemies Scatter = "*let those who hate Him flee before Him*"
"*as smoke is driven away, so drive them away*"
"*as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before God*"
(cf. Numbers 10:35)

C. Let God's People be Established and Exult Before Him
"*let the righteous be glad*"
"*let them exult before God*"
"*rejoice with gladness"*
"*sing praises to God's name*"
pave the way for God's victory parade

II. (:5-6) A HOLY GOD:
LEADS THE HELPLESS INTO VICTORY AND PROSPERITY
BUT LEAVES THE REBELLIOUS TO STARVE IN THE DESERT

A. Leads the Helpless into Victory and Prosperity

1. Father of the Fatherless

2. Judge for the Widows

3. Home for the Lonely

4. Freedom and Prosperity for the Prisoners

B. Leaves the Rebellious to Starve in the Desert

III. (:7-10) THE PRESENCE OF GOD AT THE HEAD OF HIS VICTORY PROCESSION CAUSES HEAVEN AND EARTH TO QUAKE

A. The Heavens Quake
drop rain at the presence of God
"*Thou didst shed abroad a plentiful rain*"

B. The Earth Quakes
Sinai itself quakes at the presence of God
brought water from the rocks

C. God's People Established in Prosperity (:10)
Based on the Goodness of God and His gracious provision
Prosperity extended even to the poor

IV. (:11-14) THEME REPEATED: = GOD'S VICTORY PROCESSION: ESTABLISHES HIS PEOPLE AND SCATTERS HIS ENEMIES

A. God Commands the Victory
great celebration and proclamation (:11)

B. God's Enemies Flee and are Scattered
"*Kings of armies flee*" (:12a)
"*the Almighty scattered the kings there*" = like snow falling in Zalmon (:14)

C. God's People are Established and Enjoy the Spoils of Victory
"*she who remains at home will divide the spoil*" (:12b)
the God of Majesty protects His sheep and causes them to prosper (:13)

V. (:15-18) THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF GOD IS ESTABLISHED ON HIGH

A. The Majestic Presence of God Will Withstand All Attacks of Envy or Pride
"*Surely the Lord will dwell there forever*"

B. The Majestic Presence of God Enjoys Universal Support

1. Supported by the chariots of God

2. Supported by those whom He has conquered

3. Supported by all men (even the rebellious)

VI. (:19-23) GOD RESCUES HIS PEOPLE BUT SHATTERS HIS ENEMIES

A. God Rescues His People

"*daily bears our burdens*"
"*God is our salvation*"
"*God is to us a God of deliverances*" = "*escapes from death*"

B. God Shatters His Enemies

"*Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies*" =
"*the hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds*"
God brings His enemies back to a place of accountability and destruction

VII. (:24-27) THE VICTORY PROCESSION ENTERS THE SANCTUARY WITH THE KING AND HIS ROYAL COURT

Benjamin and Judah represent the southern tribes
Zebulun and Naphtali represent the northern tribes

VIII. (:28-31) THE ENTHRONED KING DEMONSTRATES HIS STRENGTH BY SCATTERING HIS ENEMIES AND RECEIVING TRIBUTE FROM THEM

A. "*He has scattered the peoples who delight in war*"

B. "*Kings will bring gifts to Thee*"
"*Envoys will come out of Egypt*"
"*Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God*"

IX. (:32-35) THE GOD OF STRENGTH AND MAJESTY IS WORTHY OF OUR HYMNS OF PRAISE

"*O God, Thou art awesome from Thy sanctuary ...*
Blessed be God!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we eager to see "*God arise*" (vs.1) and spring into action? Are we confident that God is on our side?

2) Do we share God's heart for being a father to the fatherless, for pursuing justice for widows, for making the lonely feel part of a family, for seeking deliverance and prosperity for those in bondage (vv.4-6)?

3) Do we struggle along carrying our own burdens when we have an all-powerful God who desires to "*daily bear our burdens*" and be to us "*a God of deliverances*" (vv.19-20)?

4) How do God's enemies fare in the face of His strength and power? Is our mood that of the psalmist in vs. 35: *"O God, Thou art awesome from Thy sanctuary. The God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to the people. Blessed Be God*!"

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux: The God of the Sanctuary and of Sinai

I. In His presence.
   - A. Enemies scattered.
     1. Fled away.
     2. Blown away.
     3. Melted away.
   - B. Enemies perish.
   - C. Righteous rejoice.
     1. Exaltation and gladness.
     2. Sing praises.
        a. Excellent Name.
        b. Cares for helpless.
        c. Delivers from oppression.
        d. Repays rebellious.
     3. Prepare a way of HOLINESS.

II. In His Leadership.
   - A. A leader – not a driver.
   - B. Heaven and earth acknowledge it.
   - C. Provides every need.
   - D. Victorious in battle.
     1. Women sang victor's song.
     2. Divided spoil.
   - E. Spiritual estheticism.
   - F. The God of all mountains.
     1. Horeb – Sinai.
     2. Bashan.
     3. Nebo.
     4. Ebal – Gerizim.
     5. Zion – Moriah.
     6. Horns of Hatton.
     7. Hermon.
     8. Olives.
     9. Carmel.
     10. Calvary.

III. In His Sanctuary.
   - A. Bears burdens daily.
   - B. God of Salvation.

1. Deliverances.
2. Freed from death's dominion.
3. Overcomes enemies repeatedly.

C. Impels and compels worship.
1. Congregations.
2. All tribes – Smallest, farthest, royal.
3. 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost of the earth.'

Kidner: Re vv.5-6 – "Protection of the helpless and judgment on the lawless are marks of true kingship, human and divine, even according to the heathen; so these two verses fitly round off the praise of the kingly deliverer. But the ark brings its reminder of the exodus to bear on this as well. That deliverance was the classic provision for the homeless, liberation for the prisoners and chastening for the rebels."

VanGemeren: Re vv. 7-18 – "The prayer and the hopeful praise (vv.1-6) receive greater intensity as the community reflects on the Lord's past acts on behalf of Israel. They reflect on the wilderness experience, when God went ahead of his people (v.7; see the allusion to the ark of the covenant in v.1). They thank the Lord for having guided them through the wilderness into Canaan (vv.7-10), for having given them the Land of Promise (vv.11-14), and for having made his abode on Mount Zion (vv.15-18). The thanksgiving encompasses several major moments of the history of redemption: (1) Exodus, Wilderness Wandering, Mount Sinai, and settlement (vv.7-10); (2) Conquest (vv.11-14); and (3) the establishment of the theocracy in Jerusalem (vv.15-18).

Spurgeon: Re vs.6 – "'*God setteth the solitary in families*.' The people had been sundered and scattered over Egypt; family ties had been disregarded, and affections crushed; but when the people escaped from Pharoah they came together again, and all the fond associations of household life were restored. This was a great joy. '*He bringeth out those which are bound with chains*.' The most oppressed in Egypt were chained and imprisoned, but the divine Emancipator brought them all forth into perfect liberty. He who did this of old continues his gracious work. The solitary heart, convinced of sin and made to pine alone, is admitted into the family of the First-born; the fettered spirit is set free, and its prison broken down, when sin is forgiven; and for all this, God is to be greatly extolled, for he hath done it, and magnified the glory of his grace. '*But the rebellious dwell in a dry land*.' If any find the rule of Jehovah to be irksome, it is because their rebellious spirits kick against his power. Israel did not find the desert dry, for the smitten rock gave forth its streams; but even in Canaan itself men were consumed with famine, because they cast off their allegiance to their covenant God. Even where God is revealed on the mercy-seat, some men persist in rebellion, and such need not wonder if they find no peace, no comfort, no joy, even where all these abound. Justice is the rule of the Lord's kingdom, and hence there is no provision for the unjust to indulge their evil lustings: a perfect earth, and even heaven itself, would be a dry land to those who can only drink of the waters of sin…. When a man has a rebellious heart, he must of necessity find all around him a dry land."

TEXT: PSALM 69

TITLE: THE PAIN OF REPROACH

BIG IDEA:
THE PAIN OF REPROACH CAN BREAK THE HEART OF THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT GOD CAN STILL DELIVER

INTRODUCTION:

Certainly David experienced the pain of much unjustified persecution; but this psalm has clear Messianic implications throughout (with the exception of v.5 which acknowledges some wrongdoing on David's part -- even though it is wrongdoing that does not justify these attacks)

I. (:1-4) WAITING FOR GOD TO DELIVER CAN SEEM HOPELESS

A. (:1-2) Drowning Seems Inevitable

"*waters have threatened my life*"
"*I have sunk in deep mire and there is no foothold*"
"*I have come into deep waters and a flood overflows me*"

B. (:3) Cries for Help Have Gone Unanswered

"*I am weary with my crying*"
"*my throat is parched*"
"*My eyes fail while I wait for my God*"

C. (:4) My Attackers are Numerous, Powerful, and Unprovoked

1. My attackers are numerous
   "*more than the hairs of my head*"
2. My attackers are powerful
3. My attackers are unprovoked
   "*those who hate me without a cause*"
   "*what I did not steal …*"

II. (:5-12) REPROACH AND ALIENATION ARE BYPRODUCTS OF ZEAL FOR GOD'S GLORY

A. (:5-6) Humble Desire not to Dishonor God

1. Recognition of Personal Wrongdoing
   God is aware of my folly
   but my wrongdoing does not justify this persecution
2. Request not to be a stumblingblock to the godly

B. (:7-9) Reproach and Alienation come from following hard after God

1. Following hard after God:
   a. Seeking God's Glory
      "*for Thy sake I have borne reproach*"
   b. Passionate Service (no lukewarm approach here)

"*zeal for Thy house has consumed me*"
(But make sure it is truly zeal for God's glory and not reproach because of our zeal for ourselves)

2. Reproach and Alienation
    a. Reproach and Dishonor
    b. Alienation from my brothers

C. (:10-12) Examples of Reproach and Alienation
1. Reproach and Alienation because of my efforts to humble myself before God
"*wept in my soul with fasting*"
"*made sackcloth my clothing*"
2. Reproach and alienation from Elders and respected leaders
(those "*who sit in the gate*")
3. Reproach and alienation from drunken bums
("*I am the song of the drunkards*")

III. (:13-19) PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

A. Submission to God's Timing
"*at an acceptable time*" (:13)

B. Appeal to God's Lovingkindness and Compassion (:13b,16)

C. Tone of Desperation = a man about to drown (:14-15)

D. Tone of Urgency ("*answer me quickly*") (:17)

E. Appeal to God's Honor (:18-19)
my dishonor and reproach must be reversed or God will be dishonored by my enemies

IV. (:20-21) THE PAIN OF REPROACH CAN BREAK THE HEART OF THE RIGHTEOUS SO THAT NO MAN CAN PROVIDE COMFORT

No sympathy or comfort
Just gall for my food and vinegar for my thirst

V. (:22-28) PLEA FOR GOD'S WRATH

A. (:22) Turn the Tables on Their Prosperity
"*may their table before them become a snare*"
"*when they are in peace, may it become a trap*"

B. (:23) Smite them Physically
"*may their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see*"
"*And make their loins shake continually*"

C. (:24) Pour out Your Wrath

"*Thine indignation*"
"*Thy burning anger*"

D. (:25) Wipe them from the face of the earth
"*May their camp be desolate*"
"*May none dwell in their tents*"

E. (:26) They have tried to exploit God's discipline of His children
"*they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself hast smitten*"
"*they tell of the pain of those whom Thou hast wounded*"

F. (:27-28) Wipe them out from the book of life
"*may they not come into Thy righteousness*"
"*May they be blotted out of the book of life*"

VI. (:29-36) PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE

(vs. 29 repeats the Prayer for Deliverance)

A. Praise has more Potential than Sacrifice to Revive the Hearts of the Needy

B. Universal Praise befits the ultimate Restoration of Zion

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we avoid the panic associated with drowning? Look at all the references to water and to drowning. How can remaining steadfast in such times demonstrate to others that you are not derailed by "fear of men"?

2) Meditate on the Messianic references (cf. vs. 9). How extreme must have been the pain of the reproach He bore for us (cf. vv.20-21)? How do reproach and slander connect us with the suffering of Christ? Study the verses on persecution in the NT.

3) Remember times when we have tasted the greatness (vs. 13) and the goodness (vs. 16) of the Lord's lovingkindness and compassion. How can we draw strength and comfort from those experiences?

4) What types of praise and sacrifice please the Lord in a special way? (cf. vv. 30-34).

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "When David says, 'I will magnify God with thanksgiving,' he does not mean: 'I

will make a small God look bigger than He is.' He means: 'I will make a big God begin to look as big as He really is.' We are not called to be microscopes, but telescopes….

But you can't magnify what you haven't seen or what you quickly forget. Therefore, our first task is to see and to remember the greatness and goodness of God. So we pray to God, 'Open the eyes of my heart,' and we preach to our souls, 'Soul, forget not all His benefits!'…

What must the human telescope do in order to cause God to appear as great as He really is? Our text in Psalm 69:30 answers: 'I will magnify God with thanksgiving.' When we give thanks to him from our hearts, God is magnified. Gratitude glorifies God…."

Kidner: "This psalm reveals a vulnerable man: one who could not shrug off slander, betrayal or self-accusation (5), as a hard or self-absorbed person might, and whose sense of justice had not been dulled. His prayers and curses both alike spring from this personal and moral sensitivity, and the New Testament sees Christ prefigured in the singer's zeal for God's house and in his sufferings (9; cf.. 21). But the very juxtaposition of David cursing his tormentors and Jesus praying for His, brings out the gulf between type and antitype, and indeed between accepted attitudes among saints of the Old Testament and the New."

Tate: "The actions of the suppliant's enemies are described with graphic detail, and the petitions for punishment of the enemies in vv 23-29 are equally strong. The enemies are the kind of people who would put poison in the food of a meal intended for comfort, or offer sour and bitter vinegar to a person weakened by thirst (v 22). Indifferent to the actions of God which leave some smitten and wounded for his own purposes (v27; cf. Isa 53), they tell cruel stories about the problems of God's '*wounded ones*.' They are cruel where they should be merciful. When a stroke comes to any in the providence of God, the friends of the afflicted normally gather around them and comfort them, but these wretches hunt the wounded and vex the sick. 'They lay bare the wounds with their rough tongues. They lampoon the mourner, satirize his sorrows, and deride his woes' (C.H. Spurgeon, II, 183). It is not surprising to find petitions for harsh punishment of the enemies—they deserve what is asked…"

Perowne: "This has usually been regarded as a Messianic Psalm. No portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more frequently quoted in the New, with the exception of Psalm xxii. When Jesus drives the buyers and sellers from the Temple, John ii. 17, His disciples are reminded of the words of ver. 9a. When it is said, John xv. 25, that the enemies of Jesus hated him without a cause, and this is looked upon as a fulfilment of Scripture, the reference is probably to ver. 4 (though it may be also to xxxv. 19). To Him, and the reproach which He endured for the sake of God, St. Paul (Rom. xv. 3) refers the words of this Psalm, ver. 9b, '*the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me*.' In ver. 12 we have a foreshadowing of the mockery of our Lord by the soldiers in the praetorium, Matt. xxvii. 27-30; in ver. 21, the giving of the vinegar and the gall find their counterpart in the scenes of the Crucifixion, Matt. xxvii. 34. In John xix. 28 there is an allusion, probably, to ver. 21 of this Psalm (and to xxii.

15). The imprecation in ver. 25 is said, in Acts i. 20, to have been fulfilled in the case of Judas Iscariot, though, as the words of the Psalm are plural, the citation is evidently made with some freedom. According to Rom. xi. 9, 10, the rejection of Israel may best be described in the words of ver. 22, 23.

It will be observed that many of these quotations are made generally, by way of illustration and application, rather than as prophecies which have received fulfilment. Enough, however, remains to justify the Messianic sense of the Psalm, provided our interpretation be fair and sober. The broad principle laid down in the Introduction to the Twenty-second Psalm applies here. The history of Prophets and holy men of old is a typical history. They were, it may be said, representative men, suffering and hoping, not for themselves only, but for the nation whom they represented. In their sufferings, they were feeble and transient images of the Great Sufferer, who by His sufferings accomplished man's Redemption: their hopes could never be fully realized but in the issue of His work, nor their aspirations be truly uttered save by His mouth. But confessions of sinfulness and imprecations of vengeance, mingling with these better hopes and aspirations, are a beacon to guide us in our interpretation. They teach us that the Psalm is not a prediction; that the Psalmist does not put himself in the place of the Messiah to come. They show us that here, as indeed in all Scripture, two streams, the human and the Divine, flow on in the same channel. They seem designed to remind us that if Prophets and Minstrels of old were types of the Great Teacher of the Church, yet that they were so only in some respects, and not altogether. They bear witness to the imperfection of those by whom God spake in time past unto the fathers, in many portions and in many ways, even whilst they point to Him who is the Living Word, the perfect Revelation of the Father."

TEXT: PSALM 70

TITLE: HELP!

BIG IDEA:
HURRY UP AND RESCUE ME!

(cf. Psalm 40:13-17 – minor variations)

I. (:1) HURRY UP AND RESCUE ME!
A. Hurry Up
Keyword = "*Hasten*"
Often God does not seem to move quickly enough for us
B. Rescue Me
Deliver me
Help me

II. (:2-3) TURN THE TABLES ON THE BAD GUYS = those who are out to get me
A. Let them be ashamed and humiliated
B. Let them be turned back and dishonored

III. (:4) HAPPY THANKSGIVING FOR THE GOOD GUYS
A. Who are the Good Guys?
those who seek God
those who love Thy salvation
B. What constitutes a Happy Thanksgiving?
opportunity to rejoice and be happy in God
opportunity to praise God continually: "Let God be magnified"

IV. (:5) HURRY UP AND RESCUE ME!
Why? I am afflicted and needy
A. Hurry Up
do not delay

B. Rescue Me
my help
my deliverer

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why isn't delivering me immediately always God's #1 priority?

2) Can you picture the ultimate shame and humiliation of those who presently seem so shameless and brazen in mocking the righteous?

3) What will truly be the extent of our rejoicing when we see Jesus?

4) Do we appreciate how God specializes in helping the afflicted and the needy?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:
I. Urgency of prayer – Calls for haste.
II. Necessity of prayer – Calls for deliverance.
III. Retributive prayer.
    A. Make enemies ashamed.
    B. Confound the enemy.
    C. Throw enemies for a loss.
    D. Bring dishonor to enemies.
IV. Reasonableness of prayer.
    A. Enemies' evil desires.
    B. Enemies' arrogancy.
V. Reward to worshipers.
    A. Gladness of heart.
    B. Exaltation.
    C. Self-evaluation.
    D. Faith in the Deliverer.

Tate: "The prayer begins with an urgent plea to God for help, help which is needed quickly. This short psalm is dominated at its beginning and at its end by emphasis on God's hastening to deliver: '*hasten…hurry…hasten…do not delay*.' The prayer implies a period of painful and uncertain waiting for God to act on the part of a person who has been under attack from those who do not share his or her commitments. They gloat over the discomfort of the suppliant with their '*Aha! Aha!*'"

Murphy: Re parallel to Psalm 40 – "The recurrence of the Psalm shows that a fomer composition may be adapted to a new occasion, when similar circumstances turn up. It favours also the hypothesis, that the Psalter consists of several books collected at several intervals, as the same piece would scarcely be given twice in the same collection."

Spurgeon: Re "*But I am poor and needy*" – "Just the same plea as in the preceding Psalm, verse 29: it seems to be a favourite argument with tried saints; evidently our poverty is our wealth, even as our weakness is our strength. May we learn well this riddle."

TEXT: PSALM 71

TITLE: ASSISTED LIVING BUT NO RETIREMENT

BIG IDEA:
SPIRITUAL WARFARE DOES NOT ALLOW FOR RETIREMENT IN OUR OLD AGE

INTRODUCTION:

Retirement is not an option in the Christian life as we struggle against sin and against the enemies of our soul. We are called to persevere in the faith, and that requires active effort on our part. Despite following the Lord faithfully from our youth, we receive no free passes in our old age. We are even more responsible to testify to the Lord's righteousness and power in continuing to give us the victory and deliver us from our enemies.

I. (:1-6) OLD AGE IS NOT A TIME TO LIVE IN THE PAST -- WE MUST CONTINUE TO FIGHT THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND TAKE REFUGE IN GOD AS OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

A. God is still our Refuge

"*In Thee, O Lord, I have taken refuge*" (:1)
"*Thou art my rock and my fortress*" (:3b)

B. God is still our Deliverer

"*In Thy righteousness deliver me, and rescue me;*
Incline Thine ear to me, and save me." (:2)
"*Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,*
Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man" (:4)

C. God is still our Hope

"*Let me never be ashamed*" (:1b)
"*For Thou art my hope; O Lord God, my confidence from my youth*" (:5)

D. God is still our Sustainer

"*By Thee I have been sustained from my birth;*
Thou art He who took me from my mother's womb;" (:6a)

(:6b) Response: "*My praise is continually of Thee.*"

II. (:7-11) OLD AGE MAKES US LOOK WEAK AND VULNERABLE -- BUT GOD WILL NOT FORSAKE US
(despite how our situation might look to our enemies)

A. (:7) Surprising Resiliency: When we are weak God shows His strength

"*I have become a marvel to many; For Thou art my strong refuge*"

B. (:9) Sobering Reality: When we grow old we do grow weak

"*Do not cast me off in the time of old age;*
Do not forsake me when my strength fails."

C. (:10-11) Scheming Treachery
"*For my enemies have spoken against me;*
And those who watch for my life have consulted together,
Saying, 'God has forsaken him; Pursue and seize him,
for there is no one to deliver.'"

(:8) Response: "*My mouth is filled with Thy praise, And with thy glory all day long*."

III. (:12-21) OLD AGE OFFERS GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO TESTIFY TO GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SAVING POWER

A. (:12) Cry for Help
"*O God, do not be far from me; O my God, hasten to my help*!"

B. (:13) Cry for Vengeance
"*Let those who are adversaries of my soul be ashamed and consumed;*
Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, who seek to injure me."

C. (:14a) Proclamation of Confidence
"*But as for me, I will hope continually*."

D. (:15-21) Proclamation of God's Righteousness and Saving Power

(:14b) Response: "*And will praise Thee yet more and more*"

IV. (:22-24) OLD AGE IS A TIME TO EXULT IN NEW VICTORIES -- WITH YOUTHFUL SHOUTS OF JOY

Response of continual Praise

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do our plans for retirement center around praising and serving our Lord?

2) Do we use old age as an excuse to withdraw from our privilege and responsibility of bearing witness to the Lord?

3) How does this psalm demonstrate the Lord's faithfulness throughout all of the different seasons of our life – taking us from the womb to the rocking chair?

4) What "*mighty deeds*" has the Lord accomplished for us and our family?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "The Song of the Mid-Life Crisis -- … This psalm was written by a saint who wanted to end well, a man who realized that old age presented its own special dangers and demands even in the life of a believer. He knew that the mature years of life not only created problems, but also revealed them—problems that have been hidden in the heart of all during life…

For most of us, getting older creates new problems and makes new demands on us. Yet each challenge is an opportunity for spiritual growth for ourselves and encouragement for others. Through our lives, younger believers can see the strength and power of the Lord."

Maddux:

I. Well-placed trust.
    A. In God.
    B. No coercion.
II. Well-placed request.
    A. Freedom from confusion.
    B. Deliver in righteousness.
        1. Way of escape.
        2. Listening ear.
        3. Rescue.
    C. Continuous abiding place.
III. Well-placed confidence.
    A. Rock of defense.
        1. For strength.
        2. As foundation.
        3. In attack.
    B. Fortress for security.
    C. Source of hope.
        1. Found early in life.
        2. Recognized pre-existence.
        3. Source of wonder.
IV. Well-placed praise.
    A. Mouth filled with it.
        1. No room for other utterance.
        2. No time for idle talk.
        3. Continuous.
    B. True testimony.
        1. Redeeming the time.
        2. Use God's strength.
        3. Acknowledge God's Righteousness.
        4. In revival.
        5. All of life.
        6. All means.

7. Warning to wicked.

Kidner: Re vv.17-21 – "In taking up the theme of God's lifelong care of him, the singer strikes the same note of mingled confidence and pathos as in verses 5-9, but now with a livelier interest in the future. There is much to be done: he is eager to do it. Once again Psalm 22 seems to prompt his praying: now it is the buoyant ending of it which he makes his own, catching the same eagerness to pass on his story to posterity. Cf. 18b with Psalm 22:22, 30f."

Spurgeon: "We have here THE PRAYER OF THE AGED BELIEVER, who in holy confidence of faith, strengthened by a long and remarkable experience, pleads against his enemies, and asks further blessings for himself. Anticipating a gracious reply, he promises to magnify the Lord exceedingly.

DIVISION: -- The first four verses are faith's cry for help; the next four are a testimony of experience. From verse 9-13, the aged saint pleads against his foes, and then rejoices in hope, verses 14-16. He returns to prayer again in verses 17 and 18, repeats the confident hopes which cheered his soul, verses 19, 20, 21; and then he closes with the promise of abounding in thanksgiving. Throughout, this Psalm may be regarded as the utterance of struggling, but unstaggering, faith."

TEXT: PSALM 72

TITLE: SPECIAL REQUESTS FOR THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

BIG IDEA:
THY KINGDOM COME (IN THE PERSON OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS RULE) / SHOWERS OF BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

Clearly a Messianic Psalm; the prayers of David (partially and typically fulfilled in Solomon) repeated as the prayers of Solomon with the ultimate Son of David clearly in view

I. (:1-4) MAY HE JUDGE THE PEOPLE OF GOD WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BRING JUSTICE TO THE AFFLICTED

The Source of that Righteousness and Justice = God

MAY HE BRING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE TO THE AFFLICTED (:4)
- VINDICATE THE AFFLICTED
- SAVE THE CHILDREN OF THE NEEDY
- CRUSH THE OPPRESSOR

II. (:5-7) MAY HE COME DOWN LIKE SHOWERS OF BLESSING

Who Benefits from these Blessings?
Those who fear God (:5)
the Righteous

MAY THE RIGHTEOUS FLOURISH AND PEACE SPREAD ABUNDANTLY (:7)

III. (:8-11) MAY HE RULE THE ENTIRE WORLD AND RECEIVE GIFTS FROM ALL KINGS

IV. (:12-15) MAY HIS REIGN BE CHARACTERIZED BY COMPASSION TOWARDS THE POOR AND NEEDY

Responsibility of those who have been delivered:
pray for him continually
bless him all day long

V. (:16) MAY THERE BE MATERIAL PROSPERITY

VI. (:17-19) MAY HIS NAME BE BLESSED AND HIS GLORY FILL THE EARTH

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we actively praying that the judgments of our rulers would reflect the righteousness of God? (For it is only God who can give the king His judgments – verse 1.)

2) How does the psalm employ the language of nature (the sun, the moon, the mountains, the rain, the fruitful grain) to illustrate the beneficial reign of the righteous king?

3) How does our blessing of the name and reign of the Messiah spill over to reap blessings on ourselves (cf. v.17)?

4) Are we looking forward to that day when all the earth will be "*filled with His glory*" (vs.19)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "This radiant psalm has won itself a special place among English-speaking Christians through two fine hymns; James Montgomery's 'Hail to the Lord's Anointed', and Isaac Watts' 'Jesus shall reign'. Both of them translate the terms of earthly Israelite empire into those of Christ's dominion. The New Testament nowhere quotes it as Messianic, but this picture of the king and his realm is so close to the prophecies of Isaiah 11:1-5 and Isaiah 60-62 that if those passages are Messianic, so is this. Language that would otherwise be no more than courtly extravagance makes sober sense with this reference. This is not to say that it was a purely visionary composition. As a royal psalm it prayed for the reigning king, and was a strong reminder of his high calling; yet it exalted this so far beyond the humanly attainable (e.g. in speaking of his reign as endless) as to suggest for its fulfilment no less a person than the Messiah, not only to Christian thinking but to Jewish. The Targum at verse 1 adds the word 'Messiah' to 'the king', and there are rabbinic allusions to the psalm which reveal the same opinion…"

Isaac Watts: "Jesus shall Reign"

"Jesus shall reign wheree'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

VanGemeren:

A. Prayer for Davidic Kingship (v.1)
B. Hope for Righteousness and Justice (vv.2-4)
C. Prayer for Longevity and Universal Rule (vv.5-11)

B'. Hope for Righteousness and Justice (vv.12-14)

C'. Prayer for Longevity and Universality (vv. 15-17)

A'. Praise of God's Kingship (vv.18-20)

Perowne: "The prayer is that God would give His righteousness to the king, so that he may rule and judge righteously and his righteous government produce righteousness, and therefore peace, among the people.

The difference betweeen the JUDGMENTS of God in the first clause, and the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God in the second, is this: the former refers to *the several decisions* which the king may be called upon to pronounce, and the prayer is that these may be so in accordance with the will of God, that they may be as if uttered by His mouth; the second refers to the inner mind and spirit, the wisdom and discernment, which should be the reflex of the Divine mind.

This is the very idea of justice, as Hengstenberg observes, when the decisions of the earthly judge are in perfect accordance with those of the heavenly: but this can only be when there rests upon the former "the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' To One only was this Spirit given without measure. In One only was this idea realized…"

Alexander: "A glowing description of the reign of the Messiah, as righteous, ver. 1-7, universal, ver. 8-11, beneficent, ver. 12-14, perpetual, ver. 15-17, to which are added a doxology, ver. 18,19, and a postscript, ver. 20."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 6 – "'*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass*.' Blessings upon his gentle sway! Those great conquerors who have been the scourges of mankind have fallen like the fiery hail of Sodom, transforming fruitful lands into deserts: but he with mild, benignant influence softly refreshes the weary and wounded among men, and makes them spring up into newness of life. Pastures mown with the scythe, or shorn by the teeth of cattle, present, as it were, so many bleeding stems of grass, but when the rain falls it is balm to all these wounds, and it renews the verdure and beauty of the field; fit image of the visits and benedictions of '*the consolation of Israel.*' My soul, how well it is for thee to be brought low, and to be even as the meadows eaten bare and trodden down by cattle, for then to thee shall the Lord have respect; he shall remember thy misery, and with his own most precious love restore thee to more than thy former glory. Welcome Jesus, thou true *Bien-aime*, the Well-beloved, thou art far more than Titus ever was – the Delight of Mankind."

Harris: A PRAYER FOR THE REIGN THAT BRINGS PEACE

Theme: A reign of righteousness and peace that shall endure throughout all generations.

Occasion: None noted. Clearly Messianic in outlook.

I. PROSPERITY. Ver. 1-7. "*Righteous flourish*" (ver. 7).

1. Righteousness. Ver. 1-5.
2. Refreshment. Ver. 6, 7.

II. POWER. Ver. 8-11. "*Dominion from sea to sea*" (ver. 8).

1. Witness. Ver. 8, 9.
2. Worship. Ver. 10, 11.

III. PRESERVATION. Ver. 12-14. "*He shall save the souls of the needy*" (ver. 13).
1. Deliverance. Ver. 12, 13.
2. Delight. Ver. 14.

IV. PERPETUITY. Ver. 15-17. "*His name shall endure for ever and ever*" (ver. 17).
1. Wealth. Ver. 15.
2. Worship. Ver. 16, 17.

V. PRAISE. Ver. 18-20. "*Blessed be his glorious name for ever and ever*" (ver. 19).
1. Works. Ver. 18.
2. Worth. Ver. 19, 20.

G. Campbell Morgan: "This is a great psalm of the Theocracy. Incidentally the whole perfect order is revealed. God high over all, enthroned and in all actively governing. The king, appointed by God and gaining his guidance from Him, so reigning over his own people as to succour the needy, spoil the oppressor, and secure the prosperity of the righteous; and so reigning that the beneficial influence of the kingship and kingdom are felt over all the earth. Submission to him is followed by the deliverance of the poor and helpless, and universal peace and prosperity.

This is the Kingdom for which the world still waits. It is a perfect order which has never yet been recognized and obeyed. This was surely all in the view of Jesus when He taught us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. The one King has come, and men would not have Him to reign. Therefore, notwithstanding all the best and highest efforts of man without Him, the needy are still oppressed, and peace and prosperity are postponed. The song of this psalm is to us a prophecy of hope. We have seen the King, and we know the perfect Kingdom must come, for God cannot be defeated."

TEXT: PSALM 73

TITLE: THE ANTIDOTE FOR THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

BIG IDEA:
STICK CLOSE TO GOD AND BITTERNESS WON'T STICK TO YOU

INTRODUCTION:

Bitterness is a tough enemy to get rid of. The more you give it a foothold, the more it festers and grows and contaminates your whole being.

I. HOW DOES BITTERNESS WORM ITS WAY DEEP INTO OUR HEART?

A. (:1-2) WE FORGET THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO US PERSONALLY

"*Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart*!"

"These are the true Israel, not the ceremonially clean but the really so; those who are clean in the inward parts, pure in the vital mainspring of action. To such he is, and must be, goodness itself." Spurgeon

We need to guard the heart, for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23) Remember that it is not what enters into the mouth that defiles a man, but rather that which proceeds out of the heart of man (including envy) (Mark 7:18-23)

We think that our stumbling and backsliding has somehow separated us from the Goodness of God. We lose sight of God's Grace.

Meditate on the Goodness of God; Requires Faith

B. (:3-9) WE ENVY THE APPARENT EASY LIFE OF THE WICKED

Contrast: "The Few, the Proud, the Marines"
Here we have: "The Proud, the Prosperous, the Painless, the Plump"

1. The Proud

"*the arrogant*"
"*pride is their necklace*" -- they should be ashamed, but instead they glory in their pride

Pride leads to violence and oppression:
"*the garment of violence covers them*"
"*they mock and wickedly speak of oppression*"
"*they speak from on high*"

No accountability; no fear of God:
"*they have set their mouth against the heavens*"
"*their tongue parades through the earth*"

2. The Prosperous
   "*the prosperity of the wicked*" -- everything seems to go their way
   they don't seem "to be in trouble as other men"
   "*Nor are they plagued like mankind*"

   "he ploughs least, and yet has the most fodder" -- Spurgeon

3. The Painless
   "*there are no pains in their death*"
   they not only have it easy in life, they have a nice easy, comfortable death

4. The Plump
   "*their body is fat*"
   "*their eye bulges from fatness*"
   "*the imaginations of their heart run riot*"

no check on their appetites
"their very greediness is exceeded" -- Spurgeon

C. (:10-14) WE QUESTION THE VALUE OF TRYING TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE
   Our Christian world view comes under attack

1. We Drown Ourselves in Self-Pity (:10)

(vs. 10 is a puzzle: does it refer to the people of God or to the wicked? Seems best to refer it to the people of God)

2. We become Near-Sighted (opening the door to the temporal perspective of the wicked) (:11)
   Will God hold people accountable?
      How does God know who is living godly or wickedly?
      "*Is there knowledge with the Most High*?"
   Must maintain an eternal perspective

3. We become Materialistic -- envying the apparent prosperity of the wicked (:12)

4. We become Works-Oriented (:13) Key verse for this section:
   "*Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure,*
   And washed my hands in innocence"

5. We despise the Discipline of the Lord (:14)

II. (:15-24) HOW CAN GOD CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE SO THAT WE STOP

FEEDING THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS?

A. (:15) Protecting us from Apostasy

Asaph comes close to spreading bitterness among God's people

it is not always wise to say what you are thinking; we need to consider the impact of our words on other people -- especially our brothers and sisters in Christ;
we need to keep a check on our tongue (James 4)

B. (:16) Protecting us from Despair

"*When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight*"

C. (:17) Providing us with an Eternal Perspective (Key verse for the psalm; the turning point)

1. Obtained within a context of worship and devotion

"*Until I came into the sanctuary of God*"
cf. Wildlife sanctuaries -- place of safety and protection

2. Shows us the Final Destiny of the Wicked

"*then I perceived their end*"

D. (:18-20) Previewing for us the Destruction of the Wicked

1. Their present prosperity is Precarious (:18)

- God has set them there (they can't even take credit for their prosperity)
- Slippery places (God set them there for destruction, not for blessing)
- God will cast them down to destruction

2. Their destruction will be sudden, complete, and terrifying (:19)

3. The Wrath of God will Awake and blow them away (:20)

"Let them flaunt their little hour, poor unsubstantial sons of dreams; they will soon be gone; when the day breaketh, and the Lord awakes as a mighty man out of his sleep, they will vanish away. Who cares for the wealth of dreamland? Who indeed but fools? Lord, leave us not to the madness which covets unsubstantial wealth, and ever teach us thine own wisdom." -- Spurgeon

E. (:21-24) Piloting us through the Confusion of Life

1. Without God's Guidance, this world makes no sense (:21-22)

bitterness
ignorance
like a senseless animal

2. With God's Guidance, we arrive safely at glory (:23-24)

Staying close to God is the key

Close enough where God takes us by the hand and leads us
Guides us with his counsel
Receives us safely into glory

III. (:25-28) HOW CAN WE STAY CONNECTED TO THE GOODNESS OF GOD?

A. (:25) Total Desire Focused on God
"*Whom have I in heaven but Thee*?"

"he turns away from the glitter which fascinated him to the true gold which was his real treasure" -- Spurgeon

B. (:26) Total Dependence Focused on God as:
1. "*the strength of my heart*"
2. "*my portion forever*"

C. (:27) Healthy Fear of God's Judgement

D. (:28) Close Fellowship for the purpose of Testifying to others
"*the Nearness of God is my Good*"
"*I have made the Lord God my refuge*"

Testifying to "*all Thy works*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we ever find ourselves envying the seemingly easy life and prosperity of the wicked? Do we make it a habit to compare our fortunes with others? Do we think material prosperity is our divine right?

2) Do we think that God is good to His people in general, but somehow not good to us? What are the roots of bitterness in our life? How do we fight off the temptation to bitterness?

3) When have we been tempted to doubt the value of trying to live a godly life and of trying to sacrificially minister to others? How did the Lord rescue us from such feelings of futility?

4) How does wealth compare to the satisfaction and contentment of having God as our portion (v.25ff)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: “The key to the book of Leviticus is the tabernacle, the sanctuary, which is a detailed picture of the person of Jesus Christ and his work. As such, it is also a picture of man, as God intended man to be. I have long thought that the most revealing book on human psychology is the book of Leviticus. It corresponds quite closely to the book of Hebrews; in fact, the two should be read together. This third book of psalms also corresponds to the book of Leviticus. In this section of the Psalms you will find the sanctuary mentioned many times and the help available there. Thus it is fittingly introduced by this seventy-third Psalm which is the story of a problem experienced by an Old Testament believer which had almost wrecked his faith but he found a solution to it when he went into the sanctuary….

How do we enter the sanctuary today? According to the New Testament, we ourselves are the sanctuary. God lives in us. To draw near to him is to enter the sanctuary. As we expose ourselves to his truth in the Scripture, or by fellowship with other Christians are caused to face truth we have forgotten, or by prayer directly to God, we enter the sanctuary, and, thus, change our thinking from natural to spiritual thinking….

He discovered, first of all, that without God men cannot have inner strength. God has set them, he says, in ‘*slippery places*,’ and makes them ‘*fall to ruin*.’ This is always true of the ungodly. They seem to be getting along fine, outwardly, but inwardly it is quite a different story. This explains why we so frequently read of some prominent person, whom everyone is acclaiming, who suddenly and unexpectedly commits suicide. Movie stars have done this frequently. Why is this? It is because inside they had been set in slippery places. There was nothing to hold onto. Though outwardly they maintained a facade of happiness, inwardly they began to fall apart and at last they come to an end. They can no longer stand life; they can no longer stand themselves. We see this happening so frequently today; those who have maintained an outward facade of prosperity and carefree living are inwardly torn up, despairing, and suddenly come to an end.

Then this man learned that without God the ungodly are plagued by fears and terrors, ‘*how they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors*!’ I have had people who were non-Christians tell me that though outwardly they seemed to be composed and at ease, inwardly they were often gripped by terrible fears. They have learned to hide these, learned how to keep them from showing on their faces, but to a private counselor they freely admit how terribly frightened they are, especially afraid to face the fact of death….

Then he learned that the ultimate end of these people was to be forgotten. ‘*They are like a dream when one awakes, and on awaking you despise their phantoms*.’ We all know how this is. We have a bad dream, frightening and terrible. Perhaps you are being pursued by a monster, or you are running down the street naked. It is a terrible dream and seems so real; you are upset by it, your emotions are so stirred that it actually wakes you up. You lie there palpitating, sweating, but in a few moments it is all gone. As soon as you awake you forget the dream; it is only a vague memory. That, says the Psalmist, is like the ungodly, those men and women who persist in rejecting God's love

and grace. What happens to them? They make a splash for the moment of their life, but after
they are gone they are soon forgotten."

Beisner: "When we make our own happinesss, or even the happiness of those we love, the measure of God's justice, we will always conclude that He is less than perfectly just. For our lives are less than perfectly happy in this world. But when we make the display of God's justice the ultimate measure of the goodness of creation – when we see that God made all things for his pleasure, not theirs, that justice is revealed in judgment as well as in reward, that the justice of God's final judgment on the wicked is made the more clear by their ingratitude in prosperity, and that the justice of His final reward to the righteous is made more clear by their contentment and praise in distress – then we can stand firm in our faith that God is both just and good, and we can endure our trials patiently as we anticipate the rewards to come."

Stott: "When we are perplexed by the problems of God's providential rule in the world, we are neither to look at the wicked with envy nor at ourselves in bitter self-pity. Nor should we give up looking for any solution and lapse into despair, but rather fall on our knees and look at God. Then 'from the secret place of the Most High we see things as God sees them' (Campbell Morgan).

The solution (verses 17-27) – Our problems are aggravated because we are narrow-minded and short-sighted. It is a question of perspective. A mountain which appears menacing when we stand at its foot and it towers above us, shrinks into harmless insignificance when we view it from a distance or from the air. So the problem of God's providence cannot be solved in the limited context of time and earth; its solution awaits the next world and eternity."

Ogilvie: "Dante described those in the purgatory of the envious as being 'beggars with their eyes sewn shut.' Envy is always a hungry beggar, who never has enough. Our eyes register our comparisons of what we have with what others have achieved. Think of what wonders we miss when our roving eyes are focused on the wrong things.

Envy hits all of us at times. It comes when we refuse to accept the unique and special wonder each of us is by God's grace. Envy is really an unstable state of grace, putting our eyes on other people rather than on God. We forget how wondrously He has blessed us in spite of everything, and we are kept from getting to work in the use of the talents and gifts entrusted to us."

Wiersbe: "Asaph was envious of their pride, their prosperity and their popularity….

The important thing about life is not where you are, but where you are going. Asaph saw the future judgment of the wicked…"

Ferguson: "Later Asaph tells us he ended up with a grieved heart and an embittered spirit (v.21). Now he saw what he had done in its true light: he had behaved like a brute beast (v.22), 'senseless and ignorant.' He thought he could solve his problem by answering his question, 'Why are these things happening?' He learned that his problem could only be resolved by remembering who he was: a creature, with limited

understanding, yet one who belonged to a God of infinite understanding who could be trusted to fulfill his own perfect purposes…

He had coveted the circumstances of the ungodly; now he sees how unreliable and temporary those circumstances are. All he wants in heaven and on earth is to know that God is his and he is God's."

Harris: A LOFTY VIEW OF LIFE

Theme: The prosperity of the wicked and the persecution of the righteous. This has ever been the stumbling-block of good men. Cf. Ps. 37.

Occasion: None stated in the Psalm.

I. THE SOUL'S CONFLICT. Ver. 1-14. THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

1. Confidence. Ver. 1. "*God is good to Israel*." It is often true of these psalms, that the beginning is the conclusion reached. In spite of appearances, God's providences are just and right.
2. Confession. Ver. 2. "*My feet were almost gone*." He was in peril of an eclipse of faith through pondering too long over the moral government of God. It is a great moment when one is aware of the peril and realizes its consequences.
3. Comparison. Ver. 3-12. "*When I saw the prosperity of the wicked*" (ver. 3). The problem was how to reconcile observed facts with God's goodness. The wicked were exempt, exultant, and egotistical.
4. Conclusion. Ver. 13. "*I have cleansed my heart in vain*." The more he meditated, the more he was tempted to say, "Goodness is vain, the righteous suffer, the ungodly are immune."
5. Chastening. Ver. 14. "*Chastened every morning*." It is hard for him to get a sense of balance and true values.

II. THE SOUL'S CONQUEST. Ver. 15-28. THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

1. Resolution. Ver. 15. "*If I say, I will speak thus*." It is not always wise to speak our inward toughts, lest we stumble others. The Psalmist, therefore, resolved on silence.
2. Revelation. Ver. 16, 17. "*Then understood I their end*" (ver. 17). It may be as he was entering the holy place of God's eternity he caught a glimpse of the divine purposes for him, or more likely he went to the Temple for worship, and taking his problems to church, found peace. God is the answer to all our fears.
3. Retribution. Ver. 18-20. "*Casteth them down in their own destruction*" (ver. 18). Now he understands what a miserable end awaits the ungodly, and that end is not always here and now. He needs a lofty view of life.
4. Reassurance. Ver. 21-26. "*God is the strength of my heart*" (ver. 26).

The
Psalmist is glad he did not adopt a low view of life. The inward struggle
is over and peace has come.

5. Rest. Ver. 27, 28. "*I have put my trust in the Lord God*" (ver. 28). He has
come into the place of communion and found refuge and rest in the covert of God's abiding presence.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Danger of Treasuring Things Above God**

Introduction: People go to great lengths and expense to search for buried treasure. What is the thing that you treasure most of all? Remember what Jesus said, wherever your treasure is there will your heart be also. So what do you spend your time and energy and effort working for?

Big Idea: **We should never treasure anything in our life more than God.**

I. When we treasure things above God, we become envious of the wrong people.

A. He sees the Prosperity of the ungodly

I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
He saw the lifestyle of the wealthy wicked, and he wanted what they had.

Pity party -- Oh God, you're good to all these other people, but as for me. You're not really that good to me.

B. He sees the Peace of the ungodly (vs. 4)

There's no struggle when it comes time for them to die. They kind of glide into eternity. They seem like they have no worries or problems like other people. They enjoy good health while the godly suffer sickness and sometimes don't even have enough money, it seems like, to pay doctor bills.

C. He sees the Pleasures of the ungodly (vs. 7)

D. He sees the Profanity of the ungodly (vs. 8)

They pontificate like they were deities speaking oracles and they're speaking down to others. And they also blaspheme the true God. They challenge God with their speech.

E. He sees the Privileges of the ungodly (v. 10)

They're just getting away with everything.

And look at his conclusion about this section. Look at verse 12 when he says, Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. This is his conclusion. Boy, they really have it good. They have it better than me. You see, what he's doing here is the reason he's thinking this way, and this is all wrong thinking. The reason he's thinking this way is because he's totally got his eyes off of God. And he's

looking at the things of the world. He's looking at the treasures of the world. He's looking at what these have. And he's valuing that above God.

II. When we treasure things above God, we will not value spiritual virtues (vs. 13)

Here now, he's really in dangerous territory because now he's questioning the value of living a holy life. Based on the evidence he could see around him, he came to some wrong conclusions. And again, this is because he took his eyes off of the Lord.

III. When we treasure things above God, we lose sight of the eternal (vs. 17)

Once he goes into the sanctuary, things begin to change. He went to worship.

When I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. Whose end? He's talking here about the ungodly. They're one breath away from utter terror.

Different Perspective.

Penitence of his Heart – vs. 21

Conclusion:

I find that a lot of those hymns [in this old hymn book he found] were written by Charles Wesley. There's a lot of hymns that he wrote that we are kind of out of circulation now. But much like Asaph, Charles Wesley was very gifted in writing spiritual songs. And when it came time for him to die, at the end of his life, he was meditating on Psalm 73 -- specifically the verses that we read, **verse 25**, "'*Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there's none upon the earth that I desire besides Thee*.'"

And these were the words that he wrote, and these were his last words. He dictated these words to his wife. The last words that he said were this, "'In an age and feebleness extreme, What shall a sinful worm redeem? Jesus, my only hope thou art, strength of my failing flesh and heart. Oh, could I catch a smile from thee and drop into eternity." And then he died. He went into eternity. And so may this psalm remind us to live with this eternal perspective, and may we never treasure anything above God. May we learn that He's worthy of all of our worship. May we treasure Him above all things in our life.

TEXT: PSALM 74

TITLE: CONSIDER THE COVENANT

BIG IDEA:
THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH FOR GOD TO ABANDON HIS PEOPLE TO DEFEAT AND REJECTION

I. (:1-11) GOD'S PEOPLE APPEAR TO BE DEFEATED AND REJECTED

A. Images of Defeat and Rejection

1. Rejected (:1)
2. Smoked by God's Anger (:1)
3. Ruined (:3)
4. Damaged (:3)
5. Smashed (:6)
6. Burned (:7;8)
7. Defiled (:7)
8. Subdued (:8)
9. Cut off from God (:9-11)

B. Searching Questions of Defeat and Rejection

1. The Why Questions
   "*Why hast Thou rejected us forever*?" (:1)
   "*Why does Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture*?" (:1)
   "*Why dost Thou withdraw Thy hand, even Thy right hand*?" (:11)

2. The How Long Question
   "*How long, O God, will the adversary revile, and the enemy spurn Thy name forever*?" (:10)

C. Expectation of Deliverance based on Covenant Relationship

1. "*the sheep of Thy pasture*" (:1)
2. "*Thy congregation which Thou hast purchased of old*"
   "*which Thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of Thine inheritance*"
   "*and Mount Zion where Thou hast dwelt*" (:2)

3. "*the sanctuary*" (:3; 7)
"*the meeting place*" (:4; 8)
"*the dwelling place of Thy name*" (:7)

II. (:12-17) GOD HAS A HISTORY OF DRAMATIC DELIVERANCES AND DISPLAYS OF POWER

A. (:12) My Relationship to this God
"*God is my King from of old*"

B. (:13-14) God's History of Dramatic Deliverances
pictures reflecting God delivering His people at the Exodus

C. (:15-17) God's History of Displays of Power

III. (:18-23) GOD'S NAME IS AT STAKE

A. God's Enemies are Mocking Him
"*the enemy has reviled*"
"*a foolish people has spurned Thy name*"

B. God's People are Afflicted and in Danger
"*Do not deliver the soul of Thy turtledove to the wild beast*"
"*Do not forget the life of Thine afflicted forever*"

C. God needs to Arise and Defend His Name and His People
1. Remember ... Do not Forget
a) God's enemies are mocking Him (:18)
God's People are Afflicted and in Danger (:19)
b) God's enemies are mocking Him (:22,23)

2. "*Consider the Covenant*" (:20)

3. "*Arise, and plead Thine own cause*" (:22)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can God be angry with His own people when Jesus has offered Himself as the propitiation for our sins?

2) What types of consequences for our sins have we had to endure long after we had taken steps towards repentance?

3) How can we take encouragement from the trials and tribulations of God's people down through history? What do we know of the struggles of believers in the past couple of centuries?

4) What types of argumentation does the psalmist use to try to elicit the grace and favor of God? On what does he base his appeal for restoration and blessing?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beisner: "Psalm 74 then, written during the height of Judah's humiliation either under the Babylonians or under Antiochus IV, is an urgent appeal to God to honor the provisions of His covenant, to observe that His people suffer contrary, it seems, to those provisions, and to respond by delivering them. The outcome of everything the psalmist prays for hangs on God's faithfulness to His promises."

Ellison: "The complaint of the psalm is not that God had given over His people and with them His Temple and honour to the enemy. They knew that the punishment was deserved. But once the survivors had repented, they thought that God would reverse the position at once. They ignored both God's word (Jer. 25:11; 29:10; 27:7) and the possibility of a Divine purpose behind the delay. In fact, a long exile was a spiritual necessity for Judah at the time, just as times of weakness play their part in the Church's history.

Asaph has three arguments with which to move God. First he appeals to God's loyalty to His covenant (1-3, 20, 21); then he reminds God of His own honour (10, 11, 18, 22, 23); finally he expresses the confidence that God has the power to act (12-17). In these verses God's power and activity as Lord of creation and history are woven together."

Maddux:

I. Perpetual question.
    A. Why God deserts?
    B. Why God is angry?
II. Perpetual plea.
    A. Remember Thy people.
        1. Purchased.
        2. Inherited.
        3. Redeemed.
        4. Indwelt.
    B. Undertake retribution.
        1. Set feet aright.
        2. Enemy violated sanctuary.
            a. Defiled righteous.
            b. Evil advertised.
            c. Boasted prowess.

d. Destroyed the beautiful.
e. Destroyed places of worship.

3. God's people unmarked, unled, unlearned, unsettled, unnerved.

III. God positionized.

A. My King.
B. My Salvation.
C. My Creator.
D. My Protector.
E. My Provider.

IV. God petitioned.

A. Remember the enemy.
1. Reproaches.
2. Blasphemes.

B. Prevent wicked victory.
C. Remember covenant.

Spurgeon: Re vs. 3 – "'*Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations*.' The ruin made had already long been an eyesore to the suppliant, and there seemed no hope of restoration. Havoc lorded it not only for a day or a year, but with perpetual power. This is another argument with God. Would Jehovah sit still and see his own land made a wilderness, his own palace a desolation? Until he should arise, and draw near, the desolation would remain; only his presence could cure the evil, therefore is he entreated to hasten with uplifted feet for the deliverance of his people. '*Even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary*.' Every stone in the ruined temple appealed to the Lord; on all sides were the marks of impious spoilers, the holiest places bore evidence of their malicious wickedness; would the Lord forever permit this? Would he not hasten to overthrow the foe who defied him to his face, and profaned the throne of this glory? Faith finds pleas in the worst circumstances, she uses even the fallen stones of her desolate palaces, and assails with them the gates of heaven, casting them forth with the great engine of prayer."

TEXT: PSALM 75

TITLE: HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

BIG IDEA:
GOD IS COMING AS JUDGE TO PUT DOWN THE WICKED AND EXALT THE RIGHTEOUS

(:1) INTRODUCTION:

A. The Righteous Anticipate Judgment with Praise
"*We give thanks to Thee, O God*"

B. Judgment is Near
"*Thy name is near*"

C. Judgment is Included in God's "Wondrous Works"
"*Men declare Thy wondrous works*"

I. (:2-3) GOD CONTROLS THE FINAL JUDGMENT

A. God Controls The Timing
"*an appointed time*"

B. God Controls The Criteria
"*judge with equity*"

C. God Controls the Universal Reaction
"*the earth and all who dwell in it melt*"

D. God's Right to Control the Final Judgment Derives from Creation
"*It is I who have firmly set its pillars*"

II. (:4-5) GOD WARNS THE WICKED TO REPENT OF THEIR PRIDE

Boasting
Exalting self
Speaking with insolent pride

III. (:6-8) GOD IS THE ONLY JUDGE THAT MATTERS

A. Exaltation Cannot Come from Worldly Powers
from the east
from the west
from the desert

B. God is the Only Judge that Matters = "*God is the Judge*"

C. God is Sovereign in Putting down one and Exalting another

D. The Wicked are Destined to Drink the Cup of God's Wrath

(:9-10) CONCLUSION:

(:9) PRAISE

"*I will declare it forever*"

"*I will sing praises to the God of Jacob*"

(:10) REVIEW

He will cut off the horns of the wicked

He will lift up the horns of the righteous

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we find it frustrating or comforting to know that God has an "*appointed time*" (vs. 2) for judging and making things right? Why do we struggle with submitting to God's timetable?

2) Do we consider judgment to be part of God's "*wondrous works*" (vs.1)? Why or why not?

3) What characteristic features of the boastful and the proud are mentioned in this psalm? When do we find ourselves acting in this way?

4) Since "God is the Judge" (vs. 7), why are we so concerned with how others evaluate us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ellison: "God is all-sovereign (10-12). The statement of v. 10, seriously misunderstood by the AV(KJV), is one of the most important in the Psalter. It affirms that '*the wrath of men*', i.e. their rebellion against God, is made by God to redound to His glory. He can even take the extreme overflowing of man's rebellion, '*the residue of wrath*,' and make of it a jewelled chain to ornament Himself with. We, placed as we are among our fellow-men, are almost deafened by the sounds of man's hatred against God. From God's exalted position it is seen working towards God's final triumph."

Kidner: "Joy in God's great reversals, his '*putting down one and lifting up another*' (7), is a note which this psalm shares especially with the magnificat and the Song of Hannah. It is happily placed to follow the plea of 74:22f. that God will bring His case to court. Here He is no reluctant plaintiff but the Judge: the case will open when He chooses (2), and be settled without compromise."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 3 – "The Lord is in control, even when it seems that everything is falling to pieces. The emphatic use of *'I'* is complementary to that of v.2. He is the great Judge-Ruler, who will not permit wickedness, evil powers, and the arrogant to undermine the foundations of his kingdom. The quaking of earth and peoples is a metaphor for the erosive effects of evil. Immorality undermines the stability of earth and society (cf. 11:3). In the experiences of the wickedness and arrogance of a Babylon or a Nazi Germany, the Lord proclaims that He graciously upholds His creation. The pillars … shore up the moral order, preventing His creation from collapsing (cf. 104:5).

Spurgeon: Re vs. 6 – "There is a God, and a providence, and things happen not by chance. Though deliverance be hopeless from all points of the compass, yet God can work it for his people; and though judgment come neither from the rising or the setting of the sun, nor from the wilderness of mountains, yet come it will, for the Lord reigneth. Men forget that all things are ordained in heaven; they see but the human force, and the carnal passion, but the unseen Lord is more real by far than these. He is at work behind and within the cloud. The foolish dream that he is not, but he is near even now, and on the way to bring in his hand that cup of spiced wine of vengeance, one draught of which shall stagger all his foes."

Perowne: Re "*lifting up*" – "The word is evidently an emphatic word in the Psalm; it is the same which occurs in ver. 4 and 5, and again in ver. 7 and ver. 10… in its Hebrew sense, does not mean '*promotion*,' as we commonly understand it, but deliverance from trouble; safety; victory. The image, in particular, of lifting up the head or the horn (the last, borrowed from wild beasts, such as buffaloes in which the horn is the symbol of strength), denotes courage, strength, victory over enemies."

TEXT: PSALM 76

TITLE: BROKEN ARROWS

BIG IDEA:
GOD CONFIRMS HIS MAJESTY BY DELIVERING THE HUMBLE FROM THE ATTACKS OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO FEAR HIM

I. (:1-3) GOD DEFENDS HIS DWELLING PLACE AGAINST ALL WEAPONS OF WARFARE / GOD THE DEFENDER

A. God Dwells Among Those who Know Him

1. "*God is known in Judah*"
2. "*His name is great in Israel*"
3. "*His tabernacle is in Salem*"
4. "*His dwelling place also is Zion*"

B. God Breaks All the Weapons of Warfare

1. "*the flaming arrows*"
2. "*the shield*"
3. "*the sword*"

II. (:4-7) GOD DECLARES HIS MAJESTY BY REBUKING PROUD ATTACKERS / GOD THE DECLARER (REBUKER)

A. Declares His Majesty

"*Thou art resplendent*"
"*More majestic than the mountains of grey*"

B. Rebukes Proud Attackers

the stouthearted
the warriors
rider and horse

C. Terrifies the Strongest Warrior

III. (:8-10) GOD DELIVERS THE HUMBLE BY MAKING THE WRATH OF MEN PRAISE HIM / GOD THE DELIVERER

A. The Sound of Judgment Quiets the Earth

1. Judgment Comes from Heaven
2. The Earth Listens in Fearful Silence
3. The Humble Hear and are Saved

B. The Wrath of Man Praises God

IV. (:11-12) GOD WILL DESTROY THOSE WHO REFUSE TO HONOR HIS MAJESTY / GOD THE DESTROYER

A. It Pays to Give to God

1. Fulfill your Vows
   He is the Lord God
2. Bring Gifts
   He is worthy to be feared

B. God's Paybacks are Inescapable

C. (No matter how powerful you are) The Only Answer = Fear God

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is involved with the concept of God being "*known*" in Judah?

2) What is so special to God about the city of Jerusalem? Why?

3) How does God's defeat of the armies of Sennacherib fit this picture?
(2 Kings 18:13-19:37; Isa. 36-37)

4) What types of "*vows*" have we fulfilled in our relationship with the Lord?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacDonald: "God designated Jerusalem, the city of peace, as His capital, Zion's hill as His dwelling place. And that is where He smashed the armaments of the foe—the glistening arrows, the shields, the swords, and all the other weapons.
This city set upon a hill is more majestic than the mountains of prey, that is, than the great Gentile governments that have plundered her. And by metonymy this means, of course, that the God of Jerusalem is more glorious than any power that might lift its hand against Judah."

Kidner: Re vs. 2 – "Not His '*abode*' but His '*covert*' or '*lair*' is the bold expression here, with its tacit comparison of the Lord to a lion (cf. Je. 25:38, and see on Ps. 27:5, with the references there; also, for His defence of Jerusalem, Is. 31:4)."

Kidner: "The occasion that springs to mind here is the elimination of Sennacherib's army overnight by the angel of the Lord (Is. 37:36). The LXX brings in an allusion to it in its version of the title, and no event could be more strongly suggested by this than by verses 5f.

VanGemeren: Re vs. 10 – "All acts are under God's sovereign control. Even the most hostile acts against his rule will bring him '*praise*' (cf. Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:28). Yahweh turns man's rebellious expression of anger to his glory. Yes, whatever rebellious expression remains (NIV, '*the survivors of your wrath*') is to his glory. The Lord has

armed himself … against man's rebellious hostility ('*wrath*'). When Yahweh goes out as a man of war (Isa 59:17-18), his opponents with all their wrath (hostile acts) will submit to his lordship."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 12 – "'*He shall cut off the spirit of princes*.' Their courage, skill, and life are in his hands, and he can remove them as a gardener cuts off a slip from a plant. None are great in his hand. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe. '*He is terrible to the kings of the earth.*' While they are terrible to others he is terrible to them. If they oppose themselves to his people, he will make short work of them; they shall perish before the terror of his arm, '*for the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name.*'"

Ryrie: "This hymn of thanksgiving records the voice of the people (vv. 1-3), the victory of God (vv. 4-10), and the vows of the people (vv. 11-12)."

Harris: A JUBILANT WAR-SONG OF TRIUMPH ACHIEVED
Theme: Some occasion when attack had been made upon Jerusalem and repulsed.
Occasion: Not known. Perhaps Sennacherib's invasion.

I. THE ABODE OF GOD. Ver. 1-3. "*In Salem is his tabernacle*" (ver. 2).
    1. Judah. Ver. 1.
    2. Jerusalem. Ver. 2, 3.

II. THE ACTS OF GOD. Ver. 4-6. "*At thy rebuke*" (ver. 6).
    1. Defeat. Ver. 4, 5.
    2. Destruction. Ver. 6.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF GOD. Ver. 7-9. "*Thou didst cause judgment*" (ver. 8).
    1. Reverence. Ver. 7.
    2. Repose. Ver. 8, 9.

IV. THE APPRECIATION OF GOD. Ver. 10-12. "*That ought to be feared*" (ver. 11).
    1. Praise. Ver. 10.
    2. Presents. Ver. 11, 12.

TEXT: PSALM 77

TITLE: WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOD?

BIG IDEA:
THE REALITY OF MY TROUBLES CAN NEVER CONTRADICT THE GREATNESS OF GOD

(Hymn: "How Great Thou Art")

INTRODUCTION:

Do you ever find yourselves asking the question: WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOD? Certainly the Christians of the first century who were suffering persecution must have been tempted to ask that question. The Book of 1 Peter helps us all put suffering for the cause of Christ into the proper focus. Yet any believer who is diligently trying to follow Christ but finds himself confused and troubled wrestles with this same question:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOD?

Intellectually, we know the answer -- There's nothing wrong with God.
But (...examples of difficult situations)

THE REALITY OF MY TROUBLES CAN NEVER CONTRADICT THE GREATNESS OF GOD

I. (:1-9) SEEKING AFTER GOD CAN INCREASE YOUR PAIN

God never asks us to deny reality. We are not called to be Stoics and to grit our teeth and say that it doesn't hurt.
That's more the approach of Christian Science or some other cult -- just tell your mind that there is no pain and maybe you can ignore it.

Remember the message of 1 Peter -- following after Christ is not a free pass to escape all suffering in this world;
In fact, just the opposite:

All those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer; will experience persecution; will find themselves in situations where they are tempted to ask "What's Wrong with God?"

We need to seek after God for deliverance, but sometimes seeking after God can actually increase our pain!

A. When you know God is listening but not delivering (:1)

We know what the Scriptures teach about prayer -- Ask and He will answer; Seek and you will find; Knock and the door will be opened --
Tremendous promises about answered prayer; about persevering in prayer

1 John 5:14-15 "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him"
So that's the catch: It has to be a request that is in accordance with His will;
that just changes the question slightly: What's wrong with the Will of God?

Our Understanding of the power of prayer Leads to expectations that God will do this or that; If I were God, this is how I would solve the present crisis;
We know God is listening -- He doesn't turn a deaf ear to our cries for help; He cares about us;
Why doesn't He do something?

Why do I seem stuck in my present situation?

B. When you refuse God's comfort and choose to complain instead (:2-3)

It takes faith to believe in the character of God = His goodness and love for you -- when your circumstances are so difficult. Remember, He is the God of all Comfort;
it is easy to reject that comfort and get all stirred up

There is no joy in Muddville, mighty Casey has struck out; that sinking feeling when your last chance for success and deliverance has just struck out

C. When your troubles just won't go away and there is no relief from the pressure (:4)

can't even get any rest or sleep; can't even close the eyes
pressure welling up inside; not even any ability to voice the concerns and get some relief that way

Troubles are designed to bring us closer to God
Illustr: cf. How a vine clings to an oak tree -- wrapped around it; when the storm comes -- 2 possibilities:

1) if the storm hits the vine directly, it just presses it closer to the oak tree
2) if the storm hits from the other side, the oak tree protects the vine

In some of the storms of life, God intervenes and shelters us; while in others He allows us to be exposed, so that we will be pressed more closely to Him -- B. M. Launderville

D. When you compare your present distress with your former joy (:5-6)

2 possibilities here:
1) bitterness -- pity party = I used to have it so much better than I ever will again
cf. The new temple vs. the old temple
Ezra 3:12 comparing the glory of the Temple of Solomon with the smaller, less spectacular temple built under Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:3)
2) hope - God has blessed me this way in the past; I know He can bless me that way again

E. When you question God's love for you (:7-9) -- 6 troubling questions

1) Will the Lord reject forever?
2) Will He never be favorable again?
3) Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?
4) Has His promise come to an end forever?
5) Has God forgotten to be gracious?
6) Has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?

Some real pain here if we entertain the possibility that God has written us off; imagine you have a terminal illness; How do you answer these questions?

(the lament of this psalm could be the cry of a rejected nation rather than just of one poor soul)

This is primarily why we still believe that God has a future for physical Israel -- that God will someday literally fulfill the promises made to His people the Jews back in OT times; their unfaithfulness can never negate the faithfulness of God; He will come through on His promises; He will not cast them off forever.

Illustration:

A young man was trying to establish himself as a peach grower. He had worked hard and invested his all in a peach orchard which blossomed wonderfully; then came a hard frost. He did not go to church the next Sunday, nor the next, nor the next. One of the elders went to visit him to find out what was wrong. The young man explained: "I'm not coming to church. Do you think I can worship a God who cares for me so little that He will let a frost kill all my peaches?"

The elder answered wisely: "God loves you better than He does your peaches. He knows that while peaches do better without frosts, it is impossible to grow the best men without frosts. His object is to grow men, not peaches." - Christian Worker's Magazine

Rom. 8 – "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus"

Issue = God's Unchanging Character and Faithfulness to His Word

II. (:10-12) TRANSITION: COMMITMENT TO MEDITATE ON THE GREATNESS OF GOD

A. Reality of My Troubles BUT

B. Commitment to Meditate on the Greatness of God

III. (:13-20) THE GREATNESS OF GOD CANNOT BE DENIED

A. Redemption -- Deliverance for the saints of old (:13-15)

Holiness of God

Redemption by the Power of God (Red Sea experience in mind)

the Great God who works wonders

cf. The 7 wonders of the ancient world and then compare the wonders which God works (History Lesson)

1) the pyramids of Egypt at Giza -- built as tombs for Egyptian kings = the oldest and best preserved of the 7 wonders; built around 2600 - 2500 BC

2) the hanging gardens of Babylon; king had married a mountain princess and wanted her to feel at home with an extensive brick terrace about 400 feet above the ground; slaves had to work in shifts in order to irrigate the flowers and trees with water from the Euphrates River

3) the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

built about 550 B.C. -- the temple was entirely marble, except for its tile-covered wooden roof; a whole bunch of fancy columns

4) the statue of Zeus at Olympia, Greece -- made about 435 B.C. -- 40 feet high -- showed Zeus on his throne; gold and ivory used

5) the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus -- huge white marble tomb -- built about 350 B.C.

6) the Colosus of Rhodes -- huge bronze statue honoring the sun god Helios -- about 120 feet tall

7) the Lighthouse of Alexandria

(primarily associated with honoring the dead or exalting false gods) -- not very impressive from God's perspective

What type of wonders does God work??
Creation
Flood
Destruction of Sodom; turning Lot's wife to salt
Appearance to Moses in the flaming bush
Plagues in Egypt
opening up the waters at the Red Sea
Pillar of cloud and fire to lead the Israelites in the wilderness
providing manna in the wilderness; sandals didn't wear out
Thundering and lightning on Mt. Sinai in the giving of the law
Fall of Jericho

designed to judge the wicked and deliver and care for the righteous

B. Greatness Acknowledged in Nature (:16-19)

C. Greatness Displayed in Providential Leading of His People (:20)

CONCLUSION:

Nothing is wrong with God!
God is Great and greatly to be praised!

God wants to bring us through our troubles in a way that will give us a testimony that will bring praise and glory and honor to His name; He has not written us off; He is building our character so He can use us in more powerful ways

POEM

If God can hang the stars on high,
Can paint the clouds that drift on by;
Can send the sun across the sky,
What could He do through you?

If He can send a storm through space.
And dot with trees the mountain's face;
If He, the sparrow's way can trace
What could He do through you?

If God can do such little things
As count our hairs, or birds that sing.
Control the universe that swings,
What could He do through you?
-- G.E. Wagoner

"Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah"
"Saviour Like a Shepherd Leadeth Me"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What was it that changed the attitude of the psalmist so drastically between verses 10 and 11?

2) What was God's purpose in initially being unresponsive?

3) In what way is it helpful to remember the "good old days"? In what way is it unproductive?

4) Which of the six searching questions in vv.7-9 is your favorite when you are feeling the blues? What other questions do you tend to stir into the pot?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "It is evident that he is confronted here with two problems, not just one. There is, first of all, the distressing circumstances that have brought him to God, reflected in Verses 1-2; but, in Verses 3-4, there is a second kind of problem that grows out of the

first: there is the apparent failure of God to respond to his plea for help. Of the two problems, this is the greater one. That is why he says in Verse 3, '*I think of God, and I moan*...' It only makes him feel worse. Why does not God do something? This is the cry that comes welling up out of the depths of his anguish. "I think of God and it makes me ask, Why doesn't he help me? I moan, I meditate, and my spirit just melts away….

This whole psalm is nothing more than a wonderful commentary, told through the experience of one man, on that verse I have already quoted to you from the New Testament. '*There has no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape* [not to escape from the pressure, but to escape from the defeat caused by the pressure], *that you may be able to bear it*,' {cf, 1 Cor 10:13 KJV}…

The sign of a Christian's growing up is that he becomes stable, steady, dependable. He still has the feelings, but they do not govern him any longer. His is no longer an up-and-down experience, up one moment and down the next, but he becomes steady, stable, dependable, faithful, reliable as God is.

We would never get to that place if God instantly responded to us. We would depend upon our feelings for everything. So God deliberately hides himself at times. If you are going through an experience like that it will help to realize that it is because God is teaching you a lesson you need to know. Thus he forces us to operate as man was intended to operate: from the head, not from the heart; with all the facts, not merely a part of them; beginning with God in our thinking, and not with man, or ourselves; moving from meditation to prayer, and not the reverse; realizing that the way we were intended to operate was first, to think about God and then on that basis, to pray unto him with confidence and quietness and expectation. That is the way God intended man to live."

MacDonald: "Someone has described the flow of thought here in four words:

Sighing (vv. 1-4)
Sinking (vv. 7-10)
Singing (vv. 11-15)
Soaring (vv. 16-20)

… the psalm is an illustration of the well-known aphorism:

Occupation with self brings distress.
Occupation with others brings discouragement.
Occupation with Christ brings delight."

Kidner: Re vs. 7-9 – "This is a clear example of the value of confessing one's doubts to God. As the broad misgivings of verse 7 are spelt out more precisely in verses 8f. their inner contradictions come to light, and with them the possibility of an answer. If *steadfast love* is pledged in His covenant … it can hardly disappear, or his promises come to nothing. The words *for ever* and *for all time* underline the point."

Leupold: “Two extremes are to be avoided as we delve deeper into the lesson that is presented. One is to regard the material offered in the psalm as though it presented a complete solution, ready and final in all its parts, as though before the end of the psalm is reached the poet had fully recovered his balance. Such an approach is scarcely warranted.

The other extreme is to insist that the tension described in the first half of the psalm is still present in unmitigated force by the time the end of the psalm is reached. We have indicated our position by the wording that we gave to the title of the psalm.: ‘Faith Waning and Faith Partially Restored.’ That is another way of saying that we regard the writer as being well along on the road to recovery by the time the end of the psalm is reached. He has discovered a remedy; he has applied it; it has begun to work; a sure bit of solid ground has been recovered; from this vantage point the writer will be able presently to rehabilitate himself spiritually.”

G. Campbell Morgan: “The message of the psalm is that to brood upon sorrow is to be broken and disheartened, while to see God is to sing on the darkest day. Once we come to know that -- our years are in His right hand, and there is light everywhere, and the song ascends.”

TEXT: PSALM 78

TITLE: LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

BIG IDEA:
THE LESSONS OF HISTORY CAN HELP US ESCAPE THE FUTILITY OF CYCLES OF DISOBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLINE

(:1-8) INTRODUCTION - LESSONS OF HISTORY NEED TO BE SHARED WITH THE NEXT GENERATION

A. (:1-4) Lessons of History Communicate a Positive Message
1. It is important to listen closely to the Lessons of History
a. To understand the message
"*instruction*"
"*the words of my mouth*"
b. To understand the hidden nature of the format
"*parables*"
"*dark sayings*"
2. It is important to communicate faithfully the Lessons of History
a. Requires faithfully receiving the message from our fathers
b. Requires faithfully passing it along to our children
3. The Positive Message involves Praising the Lord for:
a. "*His strength*"
b. "*His wonderful works that He has done*"

B. (:5-8) Lessons of History Compel Faith and Obedience
1. It is important to listen closely to the Lessons of History
Based on God's ordained revelation - so we need to take it seriously and pay attention
"*established a testimony*"
"*appointed a law*"
2. It is important to communicate faithfully the Lessons of History
a. Commanded by God to do so
b. the only way the next generation will know
3. Lessons of History Compel Faith
helps us to "*put our confidence in God*"
helps us "*not to forget the works of God*"
4. Lessons of History Compel Obedience = "*keep His commandments*"
Obstacles to Obedience:
stubborness
rebellion
unprepared heart
unfaithfulness
Obedience frees us from the futility of cycles of Disobedience and Discipline

I. (:9-22) FIRST LESSON OF HISTORY:
MIRACLE OF DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE IN EGYPT

A. (:9-11) Question: Are we willing to fight the battle for which God has equipped us?
The sons of Ephraim were not willing
despite being equipped with bows

Prescription for Defeat:
1. "*turned back in the day of battle*"
2. "*did not keep the covenant of God*"
3. "*refused to walk in His law*"
4. "*forgot His deeds and His miracles*"

B. (:12-16) Miracles of Deliverance
1. Miracles in the land of Egypt (to force Pharoah to let the people go)
these are described in more detail in vs. 42-53

2. Miracle in dividing the Red Sea

3. Miracle of leading them
with the cloud by day
with a light of fire by night

4. Miracle of providing water from a rock

C. (:17-20) Failure to Trust and Obey
Has God just delivered us to leave us out in the wilderness to die?

Putting God to the test: "*by asking food according to their (selfish) desire*"
Challenging God to provide bread and meat just as He had provided water

D. (:21-22) Anger of God Kindled

II. (:23-) SECOND LESSON OF HISTORY:
MIRACLE OF PROVISION IN THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

A. Question: How can a window of God's blessing also be a rod of God's discipline?

B. Miracles of Abundant Provision
1. Bread from heaven: manna = "bread of angels"
2. Meat from heaven: winged fowl

God gave them what they wanted until they were sick of it

C. Failure to Trust and Obey
"*they still sinned*"
"*they did not believe in His wonderful works*"

D. Anger of God Kindled
killed some of their best people

(:34-39) ASIDE: GOD'S DISCIPLINE ALWAYS TEMPERED BY COMPASSION

A. (:34-35) Hard Times bring about Repentance

B. (:36-37) Repentance was never Complete or Lasting

C. (:38-39) God's Compassion saved His people from Total Destruction
"*remembered that they were but flesh*"

(:40-53) EXPANDED DETAILS ABOUT THE MIRACLES SURROUNDING REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT

A. (:40-41) Overview
Israel's repeated failures are even more painful to God in light of the abundance of miracles He performed on their behalf

What is it that Israel failed to remember:

B. (:42-53) Further Details about the Miracles of Deliverance from Egypt

III. (:54-64) THIRD LESSON OF HISTORY:
MIRACLE OF CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND OFFSET BY FUTILITY OF CAPTIVITY OF ARK OF COVENANT

A. Question: How could a nation not remain loyal to a God who had done so much for them?

B. (:54-55) Miracle of Conquering the Promised Land
1. God brought them to the land He had set aside for them
2. God drove out the other nations who were living in the land
3. God divided up the land as a permanent inheritance for the 12 tribes

C. (:56-58) Failure to Trust and Obey - especially surprising in light of all that God had done for them
1. Disobedience
"*they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God*"
"*they did not keep His testimonies*"
2. Unfaithfulness
"*they turned back and acted treacherously*"
"*they turned aside like a treacherous bow*"
3. Idolatry
"*they provoked Him with their high places*"
"*aroused His jealousy with their graven images*"

D. (:59-64) God's Anger Kindled

(:65-72) CONCLUSION: FUTURE HOPE RESTS ON THE SHEPHERDING

LEGACY OF KING DAVID

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do you consider the historical portions of God's revelation to be dry and difficult to digest? Do you know how to look for analogies between the experiences of the OT saints and the temptations and difficulties that face us today?

2) Remember the importance of oral tradition for a people that did not have the type of access to books that we have. Have we been faithfully passing down the record of God's dealings in history to our children (the next generation)? Certainly it is valuable to read the stories aloud; but it is also valuable to retell the stories in our own words as vividly as possible – making the applications and highlighting the points that we feel would be most helpful.

3) What is the difference, if any, between the stubbornness shown by Pharoah in refusing to submit to God despite the power of the plagues and our own stubbornness in continuing to fall into cycles of disobedience and need for discipline?

4) What attributes of God are featured in this psalm? Note the intensity with which these attributes are portrayed.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "The Psalm was apparently written by Asaph, who was a Levite and a music leader in the service of King David (I Chronicles 16:4-5). It is a long Psalm (72 verses) and tells the history of Israel's disobedience and God's repeated mercy on them from the time of the Exodus, when God brought them out of Egypt, until the time of David. In one sense it is a depressing Psalm, because it shows us how mysteriously stubborn and rebellious our own hearts are. But in another sense the Psalm inspires hope for sinners because of how mysteriously longsuffering and gracious God is.

The first 8 verses set the stage and let us in on what the Psalm is intended to accomplish.
We will divide these 8 verses into three parts. First, we will deal with verse 5 and we will call it GOD'S WORK. Second, we will deal with verses 1-4 and call it ASAPH'S ACT. Third, we will deal with verses 6-8 and call it God's aim…

GOD'S WORK…
1. First, God has revealed his will. He has given a testimony and a law….
2. But before we turn to that, notice one other thing in verse 5, namely that God not only established a testimony, but he also commanded us to teach it to our children….

ASAPH'S ACT

Now the second section of the Psalm that we look at is verses 1-4, which we will call Asaph's act. We call it Asaph's act because these verses describe what Asaph does in response to God's work in verse 5. In a word, Asaph obeys the command of verse 5 and makes known God's will and work to the next generation…

GOD'S AIM…
First, that they should have knowledge of God….
Second, the aim of education should be that children come to put their hope in God….
Third, the aim of education is obedience….”

Piper: “So how then do our children fit into the New Covenant community called the church, if they are not members by virtue of their physical birth? The way I would put it is like this: the children of Christians are beloved wards of the New Covenant community. They are kept by a spiritual guardianship awaiting the day of their awakening to faith in Christ. Their attachment to a Christian family at the natural level, obliges a community foster care at the spiritual level. Very special, clear, biblical, obligations bind us to our children not because they are covenant members before they have faith, but because God gives us a special mandate to lead them to faith.”

To be born into a New Covenant family does not make a child a member of the New Covenant community; it makes the New Covenant community the spiritual guardian of the child.

Which sets the stage now for the mandate of that guardianship. What does God require of us? What is our calling as parents and as a community of Christians toward our children?”

Leupold: Re vv. 32-39 – “the writer summarizes God’s judgments and Israel’s reactions to them by showing in particular how even the repentance of Israel was but shallow and unsatisfactory and, therefore, not a cure of the traditional attitude. Conseuently the same procedure was followed time and again.”

MacDonald: “We must remind ourselves that Israel’s history is only a mirror of our own. And if anything, we are more culpable than they because our privileges are so much greater. Living in the full blaze of Calvary’s love, why should we ever complain, or rebel, or limit the Lord, or fail to be thankful? Yet we stand condemned. We have provoked the Holy One of Israel times without number. We have grieved Him by a thousand falls. We have murmured and grumbled in spite of countless blessings.

God’s patience is not inexhaustible. There comes a time when He allows us to taste the bitterness of our backsliding. If we despise His grace, we will experience His government. If we refuse to serve Him faithfully and loyally, He will find others to do it. We will miss the blessing, and will never find a better master to serve.”

VanGemeren: “The wisdom motif of vv.1-4 introduces a didactic psalm. The psalmist is concerned to show how Ephraim lost its special status of blessing and prominence (cf. Gen 48:15-20; 49:22-26; Deut 33:13-17) in favor of Judah. Out of Judah King David was chosen to shepherd God’s people, and in Judah God had chosen to dwell (vv. 68-72). On the one hand,

the didactic element of the psalm has parenthetic undertones, as it shows the folly of rebellion and disobedience. While on the other hand, it has a kerygmatic purpose, demonstrating the bliss of David's kingship."

Spurgeon: "Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise providence. Unspiritual persons may sneer about fancies and mysticisms, but Paul spake well when he said 'which things are an allegory,' and Asaph in the present case spake to the point when he called his narrative '*a parable*'.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Plea for Family Worship**
Introduction: Why do young people, when they get to a certain age, leave and they not come back? Do you actually think we need better programs? Is that the answer? Parents at home have spent zero time cultivating the heart of that child with regard to spiritual things. God organized the human race through families, and he's dealt with them through the headship, that is the father. And so God expects fathers to take the initiative in doing this spiritual training.

Big Idea: **Four Elements of Family Worship**

I. The theological foundation of family worship
Our family life reflects the life of the Holy Trinity. God wanted to share the overflow of what was going on there between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with us. Just as God is the center of the heavenly family called the Trinity, even so God must be the center of the earthly family.

Various examples:
- Noah
- Abraham
- Joshua
- Families in Judges
- Moses

Modes of teaching:
- Formal Teaching
- Informal Teaching

II. The historical fathers of family worship.
These are men throughout history that have tried to instill this godly discipline and habit into the church. In the Westminster Confession, this statement is made, God is to be worshiped and everywhere in spirit and in truth as in private families daily and secret each one by himself.

Did you know that there was a time in church history when churches used a book called the Directory for Family Worship? And it was a guide that contained 14 divisions, including sections on the reasons for family worship, proper use of scripture, the responsibility of father to lead

family worship, and directions for family prayer. In the preamble of the book, church pastors and elders were required to keep the heads of households accountable to this responsibility. And if they failed, they were to be admonished privately. and any husband or father who continued to neglect his spiritual responsibility to the family, the director for family worship gave these instructions. This is what it said you're supposed to do. He is to be gravely and sadly reproved by the session.

We could go on to English Puritans. Horton Davies wrote a classic book on the worship of the English Puritans of the high esteem in which family worship was held by the Puritans. And then there are men like Richard Baxter. He was a man who placed a great faith, a great, excuse me, emphasis on family worship. and maintained that not only scripture, but reason and experience pointed to the necessity of family worship together. And he wrote this, and now I appeal to reason, conscience, and experience, whether this employment, talking about family worship, be not more suitable to the principles, ends, and hopes of a Christian than idleness, or vain talk, or cards, or dice, or dancing, or alehouse haunting, or worldly business, or discourse. So translation, this is a whole lot better than playing Monopoly.

And then there's Jonathan Edwards. We know that name. George Marston wrote, he began the day with private prayers, followed by family prayers. Again, that was his custom every day. And then there's Samuel Davies. He was the president of Princeton after Jonathan Edwards, a very godly man. And this is what he said, quote, if you love your children, If you would bring down the blessing of heaven upon your families, if you would have your children make their houses receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves, I deceit, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God and your families from this day to the close of your lives. Make it a habit every day, he said. J.W. Alexander, another godly minister, actually wrote a book called Thoughts on Family Worship. Really one of the best books on the whole subject said this, laying aside all flattering words, I may say plainly that I regard the neglect of family worship as springing from lukewarmness and worldliness in religion. And then Spurgeon, again, he said this, if we want to bring up a godly family, who shall be a seed to serve God when our heads are under the clods of the valley? Let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship.

III. The spiritual fruit of family worship. Ps. 78:1-11

It's the psalmist saying, look, what God has done, tell this to your children. Make sure that you teach your children about the greatness of God, the majesty of God, and to honor God. Tell them what he has done.

Look in Psalm 78, verses 9 and 10. Notice what happens when we fail to do this, fail to pass on the works of God to our children and said, the children of Ephraim being armed and carrying bows turned back in a day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in his law and forgot his works and his wonders that he had showed them. And so I don't want my children to turn back in a day of battle. I want all of our children to be faithful warriors of the cross and not to retreat. And so we have to faithfully teach them.

Here's the next thing in verse six, it will prepare our children to teach their children.

But then another thing is our children will place their hope in God. Look at verse seven, that they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

IV. The practical framework for family worship.

- read the Bible together
- then there's also catechism
- sing a song together
- simply memorize scripture
- pray together

TEXT: PSALM 79

TITLE: HOW LONG? AND WHY?

BIG IDEA:
WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCIPLINED, THEY CRY OUT FOR THE ANSWERS TO 2 SEARCHING QUESTIONS:
HOW LONG? AND
WHY?

I. (:1-7) WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCIPLINED THEY ASK, "HOW LONG?"

vs. 5 "*How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou be angry forever*?"

A. (:1-3) The Extreme Severity of the Discipline Raises Questions

1. Seen in its Extent: nothing remains sacred and protected; everything is defiled
   a. Extends to the People of God
      "*the nations have invaded Thine inheritance*"
   b. Extends to the Temple of God
      "*They have defiled Thy holy temple*"
   c. Extends to the City of God
      "*They have laid Jerusalem in ruins*"

2. Seen in its Humiliation: even in death there is no closure to the shame and desecration
   a. dead bodies = "*food for the birds of the heavens*"
   b. flesh = eaten by "*the beasts of the earth*"
   c. blood = "*poured out like water round about Jerusalem*"
   d. "*there was no one to bury them*"

B. (:4) The Compromised Testimony of the Discipline Raises Questions
1. "*We have become a reproach to our neighbors*"

2. "*a scoffing and derision to those around us*"

C. (:5) The First Searching Question: How Long?
The Long Duration of the Discipline Raises Questions

1. "*Wilt Thou be angry forever*?"

2. "*Will Thy jealousy burn like fire*?"

D. (:6-7) The Seeming Inequity of the Discipline Raises Questions
Shouldn't God's wrath fall instead on those that do not know God?

II. (:8-13) WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCIPLINED THEY ASK, "WHY?"

vs. 10 "*Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'*"

A. (:8-9) Plea for Forgiveness and Deliverance

1. Shorten Your Memory
   "*Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us*"

2. Lengthen Your Compassion
   "*Let Thy compassion come quickly to meet us*"

3. Glorify Your Name
   "*for the glory of Thy name*"
   "*for Thy name's sake*"

B. (:10a) The Second Searching Question: Why?
vs. 10 "*Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'*"

C. (:10b-12) Plea for Vengeance

1. Based on the extreme suffering inflicted

   shedding the blood of God's servants
   the groaning of the oppressed prisoners
   those who are doomed to die
   those who have suffered severe reproach

2. Based on the Greatness of God's Power

3. Based on Glorifying God's Name

D. (:13) Prospect of Praise

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How bleak does the Lord allow the situation to get (especially in times of discipline) before He steps in and defends the reputation of Himself and His people?

2) How much serious attention do we give to the fact that our God is an extremely *jealous* God – jealous for our loyalty and obedience?

3) What type of appeals does the psalmist make here? What type of argumentation does he use? Do our prayers reflect thoughtful dialogue or just emotional cries?

4) What are all of the blessings associated with being God's people and the "*sheep of His pasture*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "The gloom is almost unrelieved, but never reaches despair; it is in fact largely the product of bewilderment that God's 'great power' (11) should be withheld so long from His people. In other words it is a cry of faith in perplexity, not of fundamental doubt."

Maddux:

I. Fruits of faithfulness.
    A. Heathen in possession
        1. Defiled temple.
        2. Destroyed the city.
        3. Desecrated the slain.
        4. Decried human life.
            a. Blood ran as water.
            b. Bodies unburied.
    B. Derided by neighbors.
    C. Desolate cry of abandonment.

II. Prayer for retribution.
    A. Pour out wrath.
        1. Heathen desired no ken of God.
        2. Heathen called not on His Name.
    B. Remember not our sins.
        1. Former iniquities.
        2. Mete to us tender mercies.
        3. Depths of despair.
    C. Help us!
        1. For Thy Name's sake.
        2. Deliver us.
        3. Cleanse us.
    D. Answer our doubts.
        1. Heathen derision.
        2. Apprise heathen by revenge.
        3. Recognize plight of prisoners.
        4. Preserve by Thy Power.

III. Pledge of praise.
    A. We, Thy sheep.
    B. In Thy pasture.

C. Thanksgiving forever.
D. Praise to next generation.

VanGemeren: "The heart-rendering '*how long*' is a cry from a wounded people (cf. Rev 6:10). Having received a severe blow as a people, they ask not why but how long they must suffer. God is angry because of their sins. With the intensity of his anger bearing down on them, they suffer greatly. His jealous anger (119:139; Nah 1:2) is so great that it is likened to a consuming fire. For a similar question, see 89:46…

The question (v.5) serves as a transition from lament (vv.1-4) to prayer (vv.6-9). In view of the atrocities of the nations against God's community and in view of the gravity of Judah's suffering, the psalmist prays for divine vindication for his people (cf. Jer 10:25). There is no spirit of raw vengeance but rather of justice. Justice must be done because of the conduct of the heathen. They had no regard for God. They did not know him intimately (NIV, '*acknowledge*'). They did not call on his name (cf. 75:1). Instead they have desecrated and destroyed God's land and people (v.7), leaving his people desperate (cf. 142:7)."

Leupold: "…when God's saints are in exceedingly painful distress, not every remark that they may happen to make is to be regarded as necessarily being normative and exemplary; or if it is extreme in one way or another is not to be criticized for its want of balance. Extreme difficulties beget extreme statements, which the writer himself may deplore in calmer moments, and which we should neither defend nor harshly criticize."

TEXT: PSALM 80

TITLE: IS GOD SMILING DOWN ON YOU?

BIG IDEA:
SEEKING GOD'S FAVOR IS THE FIRST STEP IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

I. (:1-3) SEEKING THE FAVOR OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Trying to get God's attention ("*Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel*")
tender, compassionate shepherd

A. (:1a) The Good Shepherd Can Provide Guidance and Direction
"*Thou who dost lead Joseph like a flock*"

B. (:1b) The Good Shepherd Is Enthroned in Majesty
"*Thou who art enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!*"

C. (:2) The Good Shepherd Can Exercise His Power
"*stir up Thy power, And come to save us*!"

(:3) Refrain: "*O God*":
restore us
cause Thy face to shine upon us
save us

II. (:4-7) SEEKING THE FAVOR OF THE MASTER DISCIPLINARIAN

"*O Lord God of hosts*" = the Commander in Chief
stern, uncompromising leader
high expectations
wants to see commitment, sincerity, obedience

A. (:4) The Master Disciplinarian Can Get Pretty Angry
"*How long wilt Thou be angry with the prayer of Thy people*?"

B. (:5) The Master Disciplinarian Can Dish out some Painful Lessons
"*Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears,*
And Thou hast made them to drink tears in large measure."

C. (:6) The Master Disciplinarian is Still Concerned with the Big Picture
appeal to His zeal for glory and honor

(:7) Refrain: "*O God of hosts*"
restore us
cause Thy face to shine upon us

save us

III. (:8-19) SEEKING THE FAVOR OF THE GREEN-THUMBED GOD

A. (:8-11) There was nothing wrong with the Initial Planting and Rapid Growth

1. Initial Planting

"*Thou didst remove a vine from Egypt;*
Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst plant it.
Thou didst clear the ground before it"

2. Rapid Growth

"*And it took deep root and filled the land.*
The mountains were covered with its shadow,
And the cedars of God with its boughs.
It was sending out its branches to the sea,
And its shoots to the River."

B. (:12-13) The Present State of Distress is Very Surprising

no protection
easily oppressed and exploited by anyone

C. (:14-18) Plea for Renewed Attention

1. Seeking God's attention
2. Based on what God has invested thus far
   "*the shoot which Thy right hand has planted*"
   "*the son whom Thou hast strengthened for Thyself*"
3. Based on the desperate condition of the plant
4. Based on God's potential to strengthen
5. Based on the ultimate goal = a people who will not turn back, once revived

(:19) Refrain: "*O Lord God of hosts*" (notice the progression in this form of address in the 3 repetitions of the refrain)

restore us
cause Thy face to shine upon us
save us

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What do we learn about the character of God and His providential care for His people from the images of God as:

Shepherd of Israel
the one enthroned above the cherubim
the God of hosts
the Husbandman of the vine

2) What special things do we do or say to try to gain God's attention and spur Him into acting on our behalf? If we know that God never slumbers or sleeps, why do we need to implore Him to wake up and act on our behalf?

3) What are some of the special nurturing steps that God has performed in our lives? What type of godly shepherding and loving care has He provided for us?

4) When have we been most vulnerable to our enemies (with our walls broken down)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "Here is another expression of national lament in a time of distress. The psalmist has sincere interest in the Northern Kingdom either as an outsider or as an inhabitant of that area."

Kidner: Re vs. 19 – "So the psalm ends with the refrain…, now at its fullest with the addition of the name Yahweh (Lord), and with its thought enriched by the history just reviewed and by the call and grace of God re-emphasized."

MacDonald: "The appeal is addressed to the Shepherd of Israel, a name of God which appeared in Jacob's blessing of Joseph—'the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel' (Genesis 49:24). It was He who led Joseph like a flock from Egypt to Canaan. It was He who in the glory cloud was enthroned upon the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy seat in the most holy place. But now it seems that He has deserted Israel, and the sanctuary has been destroyed, thus the prayer for Him to shine forth in mercy and favor before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. These were the three tribes that were in the vanguard of the procession when the Kohathites carried the ark. Here they represent all of Israel. They desperately desire God to stir up His might (perhaps we would say 'to flex His muscles') and to move in to their rescue. They appeal that He restore them from captivity. If only His face would shine on them in compassion, their deliverance would be assured."

Maddux: Re "Marks of neglect:

A. Protective fence removed.
B. Passers-by have free reign.
C. Predatory devastation.
D. Deserted by owner.
E. Fire and ax damage."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 2 – "It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so is it with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the

same breath; these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up a prayer for all the sections of the one church."

Tate: "The petitions in vv 2-3 use four imperatives: '*Give ear*', '*shine forth*', '*rouse*', and '*come*'. The parallel with the deliverance from Egypt is striking. In the call of Moses, Yahweh says, 'I have seen, I have heard, I am concerned, so I have come to lead' (Exod 3:7-8). The speaker illustrates a strong faith based on the firm foundation of tradition (Weiser, 547). He longs for Yahweh to appear in theophanic glory and '*shine forth*' as he did at the beginning of Israel (Exod 25:10; Deut 33:2; Pss 50:2; 94:1). By implication, the cause of the present calamity is the *absence* of Yahweh, with resultant darkness and devastation (Dahood, II, 555-56). The metaphor is bold! God must be sleeping! Therefore, he must '*rouse himself*' and '*come.*'"

TEXT: PSALM 81

TITLE: OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE AND GOD WILL FILL IT!

BIG IDEA:
OUR REDEEMER INVITES US TO CELEBRATE
THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION

I. (:1-5) REDEMPTION SHOULD BE REMEMBERED WITH SONGS OF JOY

A. Expressons of Joy

1. Manner

"*Sing for joy*"
"*Shout joyfully*"

2. Addressed to:

"*God our strength*"
"*God of Jacob*"

3. Accompanying instruments

"*timbrel*"
"*sweet sounding lyre*"
"*harp*"
"*trumpet*"

B. Special Days of Remembrance

1. When?

"*new moon*"
"*full moon*"
"*feast day*"

2. Why?

"*statute for Israel*"
"*ordinance of the God of Jacob*"
"*He established it for a testimony in Joseph*"

3. Unusual Language of Redemption deserves special memorial

II. (:6-10) REDEMPTION SHOULD KEEP US LOYAL TO GOD FOR FUTURE BLESSINGS

A. (:6-7) Past Deliverances

1. Relief

"*I relieved his shoulder of the burden,*
His hands were freed from the basket."

2. Rescue (in response to desperate prayer)

"*You called in trouble, and I rescued you;*
I answered you in the hiding place of thunder;

I proved you at the waters of Meribah."

B. (:8-9) Warning about Remaining Loyal
1. Urgency
Hear
Listen
2. Uniqueness
"*Let there be no strange god among you;*
Nor shall you worship any foreign god."

C. (:10) The God of Past Redemption is the God of Future Blessing
1. Past Redemption
"*I, the Lord, am your God,*
Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;"
2. Future Blessing
"*Open your mouth wide and I will fill it*."

III. (:11-16) DESPITE FAILURE, THE BLESSINGS OF GOD ARE STILL OFFERED TO THOSE WHO WOULD OBEY

A. (:11-12) Stubborn Disobedience Always Leads to Failure
1. Stubborn Disobedience
"*did not listen*"
"*did not obey*"
2. Failure
"*So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,*
To walk in their own devices."

B. (:13-14) Repentance and Obedience Always Lead to Victory
1. Repentance and Obedience
"*Oh that My people would listen to Me,*
That Israel would walk in My ways!"
2. Victory
"*I would quickly subdue their enemies,*
And turn My hand against their adversaries."

C. (:15) The Wicked Cannot Fool God and Escape Punishment
"*pretend obedience to Him*"

D. (:16) The Righteous Will Be Satisfied with the Blessings of God
"*the finest of the wheat*"
"*honey from the rock*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How do those who disallow drums as an appropriate accompanying instrument for worship deal with the inclusion of drums, trumpets, etc. in verse 2? Are we legalistic at times in our definitions of what is appropriate in worship and what is not? How should we make such determinations?

2) What types of "*burdens*" has the Lord lifted from your shoulders? What types of burdens are you still struggling under? Do we really sense that obedience to the Lord's commandments is an easy and pleasant path rather than a heavy and wearisome path?

3) Are our hearts open and responsive to our God so that our mouths are *wide open* in expectation of the Lord filling us with every blessing?

4) What difficulties have you experienced in your life because of stubbornness?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Perowne: "There could be no grander conception of the true significance of the religious feasts of the nation than this. They are so many memorials of God's love and power, so many monuments set up to testify at once of His goodness, and of Israel's ingratitude and perverseness, so many solemn occasions on which he comes as King and Father to visit them, to rekindle anew their loyalty and their affection, and to scatter amongst them the treasures of His bounty. To give this interpretation to the Festivals, to put in its true light the national joy at their celebration, appears to have been the object of the Psalmist. If so, it is a matter of secondary importance what particular Festival or Festivals were chiefly before his eye."

Alexander: Re vs. 16 – "The fat of wheat, its richest part of finest quality, another transfer of animal attributes to vegetable objects … Honey from the rock, some suppose to mean wild honey; others, with more probability, honey supplied by miracle, like the water from the rock in the desert. All these strong expressions are borrowed from Deut. xxxii. 13,14, and are imitated likewise in Ps. cxlvii.14, Isa. xxxiv. 16. Wheat and honey, by a natural and primitive association, are here put for the necessaries and the luxuries of human sustenance, and these again for the highest enjoyment and prosperity."

MacDonald: "He had warned them that the pathway of blessing lay in faithfulness to Him as the one true God. His prohibition of idolatry was unmistakable. After reminding them how He had brought them out of the land of Egypt, He made the marvelous promise that if they opened their mouth wide, He would fill it (v.10). This promise has sometimes been wrongly used by preachers to justify any lack of preparation; all they have to do is open their mouth and the Lord will give them a message. But that is not the meaning at all. The thought is that if they came to God with great petitions, He would grant them. There is nothing good that He would not do for an obedient people."

Kidner: Re vs. 3 – "This word for *trumpet* is *shophar*, the ram's horn such as sounded the attack at Jericho and Gideon's battle, and which announced certain festal days. Here the reference to *the new moon*, or '*the new month*' (NEB), points to the seventh month, which was the climax of the festal year and was ushered in with the sound of this horn (Lv. 23:23) on the first day. On the tenth there followed the Day of Atonement, and on the fifteenth, i.e. *at the full moon*, began the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles (Lv. 23:34)."

Yates: Re vv 11-16 – "A Divine Lament. '*But my people would not hearken*.' The prophetic utterance continues as a lament over Israel's ingratitude. The cry of verse 13 intensifies the grief of the lament. How different things would have been if only Israel had walked in God's ways! Then she would have had victory and blessings instead of defeat and misery."

Harris: A SONG OF WORSHIP AND WARNING
Theme: A call to worship, and a warning against neglect of God.
Occasion: Either the Feast of Trumpets, Tabernacles, or Passover. Cf. 2 Chron. 35.

I. CALL TO WORSHIP. Ver. 1-5. "*In the time appointed*" (ver. 3).
   1. Summons. Ver. 1-3. "*Sing … make a joyful noise*" (ver. 1). The worship of Israel included joyful singing and music and it was ever a memorial of redemption.
   2. Statute. Ver. 4. "*A law of the God of Jacob*." These festivals were by divine appointment and were binding on the tribes. God was the Author and Giver of this law.
   3. Symbol. Ver. 5. "*For a testimony*." This festival of worship became a witness of God's love and power and set forth by sign and type deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

II. CHIDING FOR WAYWARDNESS. Ver. 6-12. "*They walked in their own counsel*" (ver. 12).
   1. Ingratitude. Ver. 6, 7. "*I delivered thee*" (ver. 7). The Lord gently rebukes them for their forgetting so soon his redeeming grace. This waywardness would have been impossible if they had been grateful and hearkened to his will.
   2. Idolatry. Ver. 8-10. "*No strange god be in thee*" (ver. 9). The idolatry they had seen in Egypt had been brought to Canaan in spite of prohibitions against it. Not until the exile were they purged of that sin.
   3. Independence. Ver. 11, 12. "*Israel would have none of me*" (ver. 11). The refusal of Israel to hear the voice of God either in wooing or warning and the willful walking of the people in direct opposition to his commands was the nation's undoing. The spirit of apostasy makes man think he can do without God.

III. COST OF WANDERING. Ver. 13-16. "*O that my people had hearkened … walked*" (ver. 13).
   1. Safety. Ver. 13, 14. "*Subdued their enemies*" (ver. 14). God laments over the

loss to Israel by this attitude, and his compassion sees them as finding security only in him.

2. Shelter. Ver. 15. "*Endured forever*." The nation would have been firmly established in the shelter of his care.
3. Satisfaction. Ver. 16. "*Should I have satisfied thee*." Famine would have been unknown; the land would have yielded its sweet supplies. The cost of wrong-doing is always greater than the sinner knows.

TEXT: PSALM 82

TITLE: HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

BIG IDEA:
UNJUST RULERS WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE SUPREME JUDGE WHO IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY

(:1) INTRODUCTION -- CALL TO ORDER IN THE COURTROOM
the Judge is God Himself (in the midst of His own congregation)
the unjust rulers and unjust judges are the subjects of judgment

I. (:2-4) CASE AGAINST THE UNJUST RULERS
A. What They Have Been Doing Wrong
judge unjustly
show partiality to the weak

B. What They Should Be Doing Instead

vindicate the weak and fatherless
do justice to the afflicted and destitute

rescue the weak and needy
deliver them out of the hand of the wicked

II. (:5-7) CONDEMNATION OF THE UNJUST RULERS
A. (:5) Ignorance is No Excuse
"*They do no know nor do they understand*"
"*They walk about in darkness*"

B. (:6-7) Privilege and Rank Offer No Escape

(:8) CONCLUSION -- CALL TO JUDGMENT
Right to Judge based on Ownership

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does this psalm invest the concept of the "Supreme Court" with new significance for you? Think of how arrogant some judges can be and yet they ultimately will be held accountable before the Highest of Authorities.

2) In contexts where we are responsible to make judgments (our family, our job, etc.) are we objective in listening to all of the evidence and weighing both sides or do we show partiality based on some other considerations?

3) Where does our hope lie to right the injustices of society and to take up for the cause of the weak, the afflicted, the defenseless, the orphans and widows?

4) In what sense can the ruling authorities of this world be referred to as "*gods*"? (Examine Romans 13 and the concept of the derived authority under which such judges operate.)

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ryrie: "Like Psalm 58 this also relates to the unjust judges who stand before God's judgment seat (v.1) accused of injustice (vv.2-5), and who hear the divine verdict of death (vv. 6-7). The psalmist petitions God to extend His just judgment throughout the earth (v. 8)."

Kidner: "The crux for the interpreter is the repeated reference to '*gods*,' who are reprimanded for injustice. Our Lord's reference to verse 6 in John 10:34f. leaves their identity an open question. On one view (e.g. Delitzsch, Perowne, Briggs) they are human judges, given this title as God's deputies. This rests chiefly on Exodus 21:6; 22:8f…

A second view is that these '*gods*' are '*principalities and powers*', the world rulers of this present darkness (cf. Eph. 6:12). There are a few Old Testament references to such potentates, good and bad (Is. 24:21; Dn. 10:13, 20f; 12:1), for whom the New Testament uses the term 'angels' (Rev. 12:7)."

MacDonald: "But despite all the Lord's warnings, there seems to be no hope of improvement. As if in an aside in verse 5, He sighs that they fail to act with knowledge and understanding. Since they themselves are groping around in darkness, there is scant hope of their helping others who need direction. And as a result of their failure to act righteously and wisely, the foundations of society are shaken. Law and order have all but vanished…

It is Asaph calling upon the Lord to intervene in the affairs of men, bringing righteousness and justice to replace coruption and inequity. The prayer will be answered when the Lord Jesus returns to reign over the earth. At that time, as the prophets predicted, justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field (Isaiah 32:16). The earth will enjoy a time of social justice and freedom from graft and deceit."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 5 – "When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in the course of law the world is indeed out of course. When 'Justices' justice' becomes a by-word it is time that justice dealt with justices. Surely it would be well that certain of '*the great unpaid*' should be paid off, when day after day their judgments show that they have no judgment. When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than

poor men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them.”

TEXT: PSALM 83

TITLE: GOD IS NO SLEEPING GIANT
(He's a Giant but He's not Sleeping!)

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S ENEMIES FACE SHAME AND DESTRUCTION
WHEN GOD SPRINGS INTO ACTION

(:1) INTRODUCTION -- CALL FOR ACTION
"*Do not remain quiet*"
"*Do not be silent*"
"*Do not be still*"

I. (:2-8) GOD'S ENEMIES CONSPIRE TO DESTROY GOD'S PEOPLE (CONSPIRACY)

A. (:2) Pride Talks a Good Game
makes an uproar
exalts themselves

God's enemies forget that they are opposing the God of the Universe

a lot of arrogance and bluster
cf. Tower of Babel incident = don't try to exalt yourself or make a name for yourself

B. (:3-8) Plans of Conspiracy can appear very Threatening

1. (:3a) Diabolical Plans ("*shrewd plans*")
shrewd, sneaky, crafty, deceitful

2. (:3b) Delusionary Plans -- Directed against God's Precious People
Comforting to know that God's people are precious to Him
"*Thy people*"
"*Thy treasured ones*"

3. (:4) Destructive Plans
wipe them out
erase their memory

4. (:5-8) Defiant Plans

Unity is no problem for the enemies of God
conspired together
with one mind

Lots of willing Partners (list of surrounding nations)

II. (:9-17) GOD'S ENEMIES WILL BE CONSUMED BY SHAME AND DESTRUCTION (CONSUMPTION)

A. (:9-12) Examples from History of God's Destruction of Enemies (study Judges)

1. Midian

2. Sisera and Javin at Kishon

3. Oreb and Zeeb

4. Zebah and Zalmunna

Fatal Flaw in all these examples: Fighting against God, His People, Their Land
"*let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God*"

B. (:13-15) Examples from Nature of God's Destructive Force

1. whirling dust / chaff before the wind

2. fire that burns the forest / flame that sets the mountains on fire

3. tempest / storm

C. (:16-17) Destiny = Shame and Destruction

(:18) CONCLUSION -- CONFIRMATION OF THE MAJESTIC RULE OF GOD OVER ALL THE EARTH

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some of the false assumptions made by the proud and arrogant when they fight against God?

2) What can we learn from studying the book of Judges about the specific enemies of Israel mentioned in this psalm? In what sense were they deserving of the judgments decried against them?

3) How do the forces of nature remind us of the destructive power of God's judgments – before which even the most powerful are blown away?

4) Does our life reflect the peace of being in submission to the Most High who rules over all the earth (v.18)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Tate: "The psalm serves as a paradigmatic prayer of lament and complaint for a people surrounded by hostile nations and threatened with overwhelming force. The psalm reminds us that the greatest resource of the people of Yahweh is prayer, which appeals both directly to him and is based on his powerful acts of intervention and deliverance in the past… Israel relies on a passionate intercession in which two features stand out: the remembrance of ancient salvation, and the controlling motive of serving God's glory."

Maddux: "Prayer for Vengeance:

I. Recognize the need for vengeance.
    A. God should speak out against His enemies.
    B. God should take some action.
II. Reasons for vengeance.
    A. Enemies clamor defiance.
    B. Enemies exalt self.
    C. Enemies craftily counsel against God's people.
    D. Enemies planned annihilation of God's people.
    E. Enemies confederated for strength.
III. Method of vengeance.
    A. Victory as in the past.
    B. Make enemy like a wheel.
    C. Make enemy as chaff (stubble).
    D. Set enemy afire – leave to burn.
    E. Let storms confound enemy.
    F. Humiliate enemy.
IV. Results of vengeance.
    A. Enemies may seek God.
    B. Nonrepentant perish.
    C. Magnify God before all men."

MacDonald: "Strong language? Yes, strong but not unjustified. When the honor of God is at stake, love can be firm. These singers of the ancient people were all inspired supremely with a passion for the honor of God. With them, as with the prophets, selfish motives were unknown. Selfishness sings no song, and sees no visions. On the other hand, a passion for the glory of God is capable of great sternness as well as great tenderness (G. Campbell Morgan)."

VanGemeren: "The psalm is composed of prayer, lament, and imprecations on the enemies. The structural development is concentric:

A. Prayer for God's Action (v.1)
    B. Plottings of the Enemies (vv.2-4)
        C. Greatness of the Opposition (vv.5-8)
        C'. Great Acts of God in Israel's History (vv. 9-12)

B’. Shaming of the Enemies (vv. 13-16)
A’. Prayer for God’s Action (vv.17-18)”

Spurgeon: “The following attempt to versify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law;
Make bare thine arm on Zion’s hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.

As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against thy Son their armies lead.

Though they’re agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel’s growing might.

By Kishon’s brook all Jabin’s band
At thy rebuke were swept away;
O Lord, display thy mighty hand,
A single stroke shall win the day.

Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase!
Come, sacred fire, the forests burn!
Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn!

That men may know at once that thou,
Jehovah, lovest truth right well;
And that thy church shall never bow
Before the boastful gates of hell.”

TEXT: PSALM 84

TITLE: 3 GUARANTEED BLESSINGS

BIG IDEA:
LOOK TO THE LORD AS THE SOURCE OF EVERY BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:
Alan Campbell: "This psalm is a celebration of the house of God, in all its glory and in all its beauty. It arises out of a heart that has come to love God's dwelling-place, and that delights to be where God is honoured in the sanctuary."

I. (:1-4) LOOK TO THE LORD AS YOUR SANCTUARY
"*How blessed are those who dwell in Thy house*" (:4a)
the sons of Korah were talking about the Temple; the place where the presence of God dwelt among the people;
How important is the presence of God to us?

A. (:1) Are you attracted to the right things? Check out Your Value System
"*How lovely are Thy dwelling places*"
where God dwells it is by definition a lovely place;
that's why Christians are beautiful people (even with all of our blemishes);
to some extent the beauty of the presence of the Lord shines through and radiates to others

B. (:2a) Are you seeking after the best things? Check out Your Ambitions
"*longed*" / "*yearned*"

C. (:2b) What gives you the greatest joy? Check out Your Heart's Focus
"*sing for joy*"

D. (:3) Significance of a Sanctuary
Def: a sacred or holy place (like a temple or church)
1. A Home = Place of Family Relationship and Protection
cf. Wildlife sanctuary
"His eye is on the sparrow" I know He's watching me

2. An Altar = Place of Sacrifice and Worship and Service

Response: "*They are ever praising Thee*" (:4b)

II. (:5-7) LOOK TO THE LORD AS YOUR STRENGTH
"*How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee*" (:5a)

A. (:5b) Spiritual Strength means No Clogged Arteries (obstacles to fellowship)
"*in whose heart are the highways to heaven*"
importance of being connected to God with no blockage

B. (:6) Spiritual Strength Transforms Desolation Into Fertility

Valley of Baca (cf. Tucson Desert, golf course) valley of weeping or of desolation;
Cf. Experience of David at Ziklag (1 Sam. 30) -- look how he strengthened himself in the Lord in the most difficult of circumstances

C. (:7a) Spiritual Strength Must be Continually Renewed
"*They go from strength to strength*"

Response: "*Every one of them appears before God in Zion*" (:7b)
completion of pilgrimage to the house of God

III. (:8-12) LOOK TO THE LORD AS YOUR SUPPLIER
"*How blessed is the man who trusts in Thee*!" (:12)

Supplier = the one who gives you what you need
As a company we deal with many different suppliers -- looking at the quality of their products,
how quickly they respond, how well they service what they sell, pricing, stability of their company
(will they still be around in 2 years)

A. (:10-11a) Review -- Look to the Lord as Your:
1. Sanctuary (:10)
"*tents of wickedness*" cf. Las Vegas (lots of glitter and glamour)

2. Strength (:11a) "*sun and shield*"

B. (:11b) God's Nature is to Give -- Not Withhold

C. (:11b) God's Gifts are the Best
1. Grace and Glory

2. Every Good Thing

(:8-9) Response: Prayer
Hear / Give ear
Behold / Look upon

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What types of "beatitudes" are expressed in this psalm?

2) If the house of the Lord is receptive to the nesting swallow, how much more should we feel at home in the dwelling place of the Lord?

3) How would you describe the armies which the Lord of hosts commands?

4) Why do we waste time striving after worldly status and position when just being a doorman in the house of God is far preferable?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "The first thing the Psalmist sees is an inner beauty that God creates by his presence: '*How lovely is your dwelling place, O God!*' = why he's excited about being in the presence of God. The place where God lives, the heart where God dwells, becomes a lovely place, a beautiful spot….

The second thing is, he creates a compelling hunger. '*My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord*.' Have you ever felt this way? Have you known a deep-seated longing to have more of the glory of God, more of the sense of his presence in your life? Have you fed upon his Word and been satisfied, and yet as you went away, felt a hunger for more?…

Then the third thing is the joyful vitality that the presence of God gives. '*My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God*.' This is an exciting experience and is exactly what God has meant life to be. You may have been a Christian for many years, but if you have not yet found this kind of excitement you haven't yet touched the possibilities and resources of a Christian life. This is not an artificial excitement. … It is not something put on -- it is not a mask -- but it is the real thing. This Psalmist is struggling to set before us the reality of the excitement of God's presence."

Ogilvie: "… the psalmist wanted to establish that the way to Jerusalem had to be made through a difficult, dry valley that offered no water for tired and thirsty travelers. All there was on first observation were scrawny balsam trees, craggy rocks, and no water. The Valley of Baca became metaphorical for the problems that had to be endured to get on to Jerusalem. For us, the implication is of all the difficult, problematical things that confront us in the pursuit of our purpose…

Those with a pilgrim's heart expect the blessing of the Lord and prayerfully anticipate His intervention. They see springs where there have been no springs!…

The greater our purpose, the greater our positive expectation of blessing. When we seek His will and His specific direction of what to pray, He gives us exactly what we need in the problems that confront us. We can unwrap the problem, take it apart, grapple with it as a stepping stone to greater growth, and allow the Lord to show us His solution. Our optimism is not based on our cleverness or the creative skill of others, but on what God can and will do to guide us through the problem."

MacDonald: “The application I like best is that of a godly pilgrim who is downright homesick for heaven. Let us look at the Psalm from this viewpoint.

What place can be compared in loveliness to the dwelling place of God! It is a place of unparalleled beauty, unique splendor and unutterable glory. But let us be clear on this point. The place is used, by a figure of speech known as metonymy, for the Person who lives there. And so when the psalmist says ‘My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord,’ he was really yearning to be with the Lord Himself. He says as much in the next sentence, ‘…my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.’…

Now the psalmist breaks out into impassioned prayer. It is addressed first to the Lord God of hosts, then in the next breath to the God of Jacob. As Lord God of hosts, He is the sovereign over the vast multitude of angelic beings. As the God of Jacob, He is the God of the unworthy one, the God of the cheat. Just think! The God of innumerable angels in festal gathering is also the God of the worm Jacob. The One who is infinitely high is also intimately nigh. And that is the only reason why you and I will ever enter His presence.”

VanGemeren: “It is not unlikely that the psalmist also speaks of the highway, the Valley of Baca, and the water as metaphors of the experience of fellowship and blessedness after a prolonged period of adversity. The strength and joy of the godly stems from their hope in God. Faith in God is ultimate and transforms weak people into those who ‘go from strength to strength’ (v.7) and the Valley of Baca into springs and pools, as expressive of God’s blessings (v.6). The object of the search is communion with God (‘in Zion’). As faith approaches the presence of God, it goes from ‘strength to strength’ (cf. 2 Cor 3:19).”

Carr: Re vv.10-12 -- IF I ONLY HAD ONE DAY

Introd: (V. 10a) - Consider for a moment that you only had one day to live. What would you do with that one day? …

It seems to me that David is saying that if he only had one day in which to live, that he would spend it serving the Lord.

If I Only Had One Day, I'd Want To:

I. (V. 10) BE FOUND IN MY PLACE

A. In My Place Of Service - David tells us that he had rather be the lowly door keeper in the House of God than to enjoy the all the wealth and luxury of evil. In other words, David says that he would rather be found serving the Lord than serving the Devil!

B. In My Place Of Surrender - The words "*my God*" seem to infer a sense of devotion to God. David is saying that he wants to be found in his place, surrendered to the perfect will of God for his life. In other words, he wants to die on the battlefield faithfully serving the Lord who sought him and bought him out of sin and destruction.

C. In My Place Of Satisfaction - David is telling us by his decision that he believes the Lord's worst is still better than the devil's best!

II. (V. 11) ENJOY GOD'S PROVISIONS

A. His Presence - David calls the Lord a sun. Like the sun above, the Lord is ever with His children, Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20. Like the sun above, the Lord is ever providing comfort for the journey. God lights our way, He warms our way and gives

guidance to us along the way. Just as the suns delights the hearts of men, so the Lord delights the hearts of His children!

B. His Protection - The Lord is also called a shield. Just as He provides warmth and light for our journey, He also provides protection for His people in the way. The Psalmist tells us that we are protected by the Angel of the Lord, Psa. 34:7. He is above us to give us what we need and He is all around us to protect us as we journey toward Heaven. Thank God that we are kept by His power - 1 Pet. 1:5

C. His Promises - Now the Psalmist tells us that the Lord will give Grace and Glory. This is a two-fold promise to every child of God. We are promised His grace while we travel and His glory when we arrive at home. There is help for today and hope for tomorrow. God is simply promising to get us home safely!

D. His Plenty - Here we are reminded that the Lord delights in providing for the needs of His children, Luke 12:32 …

III. (V. 12) SHARE GOD'S PROMISES

G. Campbell Morgan: "This is a pilgrim psalm. It falls into three strophes divided by Selahs. The first describes the pilgrim's hope (vers. 1-4); the second, the pilgrim's experience (vers. 5-8); the third, pilgrim's prayer (vers. 9-12).

The hope of the pilgrim is centred in the dwelling-place of God….

The lessons of the psalm for all the pilgrims of hope are first, that the heart should be set upon the upper things; secondly, that faith may dig wells in driest places and find the living Water; and finally, that pilgrimage develops strength, rather than produces weakness, as these conditions are fulfilled."

TEXT: PSALM 85

TITLE: THE RESTORATION OF GOD'S GLORY BRINGS PEACE AND PROSPERITY

BIG IDEA:
PAST RESTORATION TO THE PEACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE IS A FORETASTE OF FUTURE MILLENNIAL BLESSING

I. (:1-3) A LOOK AT THE PAST:
RESTORATION IS POSSIBLE ... GOD DID IT IN THE PAST

A. (:1) Restoration Requires God's Favor
"*Thou didst show favor to Thy land*"
"*Thou didst restore the captivity of Jacob*"

B. (:2) Restoration Requires God's Forgiveness
"*Thou didst forgive the iniquity of Thy people*"
"*Thou didst cover all their sin*"

C. (:3) Restoration Requires God's Forebearance
"*Thou didst withdraw all Thy fury*"
"*Thou didst turn away from Thy burning anger*"

This gives us HOPE

II. (:4-7) A LOOK AT THE PRESENT:
RESTORATION IS NEEDED ... GOD HAS BEEN ANGRY FOR A LONG TIME

A. (:4a) The God of Salvation is the God Capable of our Restoration

B. (:4b-5) The God of Righteous Anger is the God Capable of our Restoration

C. (:6) The God of Family Joy is the God Capable of our Restoration

D. (:7) The God of Lovingkindness is the God Capable of our Restoration

This motivates us to PRAY

III. (:8-13) A LOOK AT THE FUTURE:
RESTORATION IS COMING ... GOD WILL REIGN ON THE EARTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. (:8) Restoration Means Peace for the Godly

(Aside: Warning -- Don't turn back to your folly)

B. (:9a) Restoration Means Deliverance for the God-fearers

C. (:9b) Restoration Means the Glory of God's Presence on the Earth

D. (:10-11) Restoration Ultimately Means the Reign of the Messiah King
Harmony of Lovingkindness and Truth
Harmony of Righteousness and Peace
Harmony of Earth (Truth) and Heaven (Righteousness)

E. (:12) Restoration Means Prosperity
"*the Lord will give what is good*"
"*our land will yield its produce*"

F. (:13) Restoration Means Clear Sailing

This focuses our ANTICIPATION

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How often do we tend to need the reviving work of God in our lives? (cf. how frequently the children of Israel cycled thru such experiences)

2) When our situation looks hopeless, remember that the Lord never gave up on His chosen people as we can see from this psalm. What are the answers to the rhetorical questions raised in vv.5-6?

3) What elements of this psalm would we do well to incorporate into our prayers?

4) How is the Lord able to balance the demands of lovingkindness, truth, righteousness and peace into one harmonious whole?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beisner: "The six verbs in these three verses (:1-3) – 'showed,' 'restored,' 'forgave,' 'covered,' 'set aside,' 'turned'—all are in the perfect tense. They show that the psalmist views God's actions as finished and irrevocable. The favor God has shown he will not suddenly take away; the fortunes restored will not be withdrawn. His anger will not suddenly burn again over sins once forgiven…

When we, like the psalmist, pray for the completion of God's work in us, when we pray for God to fill our hearts with repentance and to keep us from falling back into sin, we too can be confident that He will speak *shalom* to us, that we will be filled with His love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace (Ps. 85:10). We will gain confidence that He who has begun a good work in us – and in the whole Body of Christ – 'will carry it on to completion until the day of

Christ Jesus' so that we 'may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God' (Phil. 1:6, 10-11)."

Maclaren: "The psalmist needs all the encouragement he can get from the past. For the present, despite the recent turn of events, looks hopeless. A part of the nation had returned indeed, but to a ruined city, a fallen Temple, and a mourning land, where they were surrounded by jealous and powerful enemies. Discouragement had laid hold on the feeble company; enthusiasm had ebbed away; the harsh realities of their enterprise had stripped off its imaginative charm; and the mass of the returned settlers had lost heart as well as devout faith."

VanGemeren: "In the context of some national catastrophe, the people of God cry out for deliverance from adversity. Since they already seem to have experienced the outpouring of God's wrath and the depth of his mercy in forgiveness (vv.1-3), it is most likely, though not certain, that the psalm is a postexilic composition.

The genre of the psalm fits that of a national lament, composed in four parts: (1) proclamation of God's past acts (vv.1-3); (2) lament and prayer for restoration (vv.4-7); (3) anticipation of God's salvation (v.8); and (4) the words of hope (vv.9-13)."

MacDonald: "Spiritual declension results inevitably in a loss of joy. Broken fellowship means that the believer's song is gone. Rejoicing cannot co-exist with unconfessed sin. So here the prayer goes winging up to heaven, *'Wilt Thou not Thyself revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee*?' The Spirit's renewal sets the joy-bells ringing once again. Every great revival has been accompanied by song."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **We Need Revival**

Introduction: I am concerned about our country. I'm grateful to God for it was his providential hand that brought our country into being. We know that. But I also see a nation that is drifting away from God. And I really believe, beloved, that what we need in our country desperately is we need revival.

In order to understand what revival is, let me first of all tell you <u>what revival is not</u>.

- Revival is not just evangelism
- and it's not just emotionalism

So what is revival? Revival is the extraordinary movement of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of people. It is God drawing His erring people back unto Himself, people who have gotten away from the Lord that are His. It is God bringing them back. In fact, the word for revival, it comes from the word life. It's giving life and vitality where it has been lacking. Revival is for believers who already have God's life in them, but they're being revived.

When true revival comes, there's always **certain marks**. There are certain things that we see that indicate to us that revival is happening. One of those, it'll be <u>extraordinary prayer</u>.

It'll be marked by <u>extraordinary conviction and repentance</u>. There'll be people that will

turn from maybe a pattern of sin that they have been involved with in their life and it's causing them to move away from God. There'll be conviction. There'll be a crying out.

Revival will be marked by an extraordinary love and unity. There'll be an outpouring of love among the people of God.

There'll be this extraordinary worship. There'll be a passionate worship of God.

There'll be extraordinary witness and service for God. Did you know that during the Great Awakening, that's when a lot of these movements began, like the American Mission Board and the Sunday School Board and the desire to reach foreign missions? All of those things came out of the great awakening during a time in our country, because when God moved, there was a desire on the people of God to get out and to serve the Lord so much more. And when real revival comes, there'll be an extraordinary spiritual awakening among the lost.

Let me just give you the definition from J.I. Packer in his book, *The Quest for Godliness*. He said this, we may list as marks of revival an awesome sense of the presence of God and the truth of the gospel, a profound awareness of sin leading to deep repentance and a heartfelt embrace of the glorified, loving, pardoning Christ. an uninhibited witness to the power and glory of Christ, with a mighty freedom of speech, expressing a mighty freedom of spirit, joy in the Lord, love for his people, and a fearing of sinning. And from God's side, an intensifying, speeding up of the work of grace, so that men are struck down by the word and transformed by the Spirit.

The key verse in Psalm 85 is verse number 6 -- *will thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?* Here he is praying for a spiritual revival to take place among his nation. I think perhaps the best explanation of when this was written was when the exiles were returning home to Jerusalem And they saw the shape that the city was in. But not just the city that was in ruins, but also the people that were there were in ruins spiritually and morally. The whole nation was in such a sad shape. And as they got into Jerusalem, the reality of the situation began to set in. The temple was in a heap of ruins. There was no really heart for the things of God. There was apathy all over the place. And this psalmist here wanted God to move.

Big Idea: The psalmist here is seeking God desperately for revival. And I want you to see **three ways in which he does it.**

I. Acknowledging – The History of Revival (:1-3)

The psalmist is acknowledging what God has done in the past. And what God has done in the past is an indicator of what God wants to do in the present and in the future.

When God's people get serious about the word, about listening, about submitting to God, then revival will come. But we see this pattern of Almighty God. He restores His people, He forgives His people, as we see in verses two and three. By the way, I know that there are people out there that say, you know, America was never really a Christian nation. These are these revisionist historians who don't want to acknowledge that America was ever a Christian nation. We were a nation built upon the principles of the word of God, but it's sad to know that we've moved so far from that now.

II. Asking – The Hunger for Revival

Look in verse number four. "*Turn us, O God, of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Will thou be angry with us forever? Will thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Will thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice*?" Notice he's seeking God. He's asking God to bring revival. And what we see is in these next few verses, the psalmist passionately praying and pleading with God for his reviving hand.

We need to seek His face with all our heart. And so the psalmist prays, Lord, turn us, turn us, give us this spirit of repentance. We need it. But then show us, in verse number 7, show us thy mercy, O Lord. And grant us thy salvation.

III. Anticipating – The Hope of Revival

Look down at verse number eight. "*I will hear what the Lord will speak. For he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints, but let them not return again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven*."

Having acknowledged what God has done, and having prayed and asked God to bring revival to his nation, now the psalmist does something that the prophet Habakkuk did one time. He just waits on God now. He's waiting for the answer. He just is patiently looking to the Lord. Remember Habakkuk after he poured his heart out, Habakkuk said in Habakkuk 2.1, "*I will take my stand at my watch post, station myself on the tower, look out, and I will wait to see what God's gonna do.*"

I'm just gonna wait now. He's praying, he's seeking the face of the Lord, and he's waiting for God to answer his prayer. But then he, in verses eight and nine, what the psalmist does is he begins to kind of use his sanctified imagination. And he begins to imagine what would happen if revival did come. What would happen? And he's thinking, surely his salvation is nigh. Surely God is gonna hear this prayer. Surely God is gonna answer. And surely a glory will come back and dwell in this land once again.

<u>When revival comes</u>

- Truth and mercy will meet – they meet at the Cross -- at the cross, mercy and truth met together, and they embraced, and righteousness and peace kissed each other.
- Blessings will come. We'll be blessed materially, as we have in years past. (vs. 12)

TEXT: PSALM 86

TITLE: ONE GOD, ONE HEART, ONE REQUEST

BIG IDEA:
WHEN UNDER ATTACK, THE HEART OF THE GODLY SEEKS ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE ONE TRUE GOD

I. (:1-10) ONE GOD --
"*In the day of my trouble I shall call upon Thee*"

A. (:1-4) The Godly Seek God's Help in Times of Trouble
1. The Nature of the Request
a. Attention: "*Incline Thine ear ... and answer me*"
b. Deliverance: "*Do preserve my soul*" = "Save"
C. Grace: "*Be gracious to me*"
d. Joy: "*Make glad the soul*"
2. The Nature of the Person Addressed (analyze the names of God used here)
"*O LORD*"
"*my God*"
"*O Lord*"
3. The Nature of the Difficulty = Hard Times
"*afflicted and needy*"
crying out for help = in danger; under attack
needs to be lifted up out of the pit of trouble
4. The Nature of the Seeker
"*a godly man*"
"*Thy servant who trusts in Thee*"

B. (:5-10) The One True God is the Only One Able to Deliver / His Uniqueness
"*There is no one like Thee among the gods*"
"*Thou art great and doest wondrous deeds*"
"*Thou alone art God*"

1. Good
2. Ready to forgive
3. Abundant in lovingkindness
4. The One who Hears and Answers Prayer
5. Without any rivals or legitimate competition
6. Unique in His works of power
7. Worthy of Receiving Worship and Glory from the nations He has created

II. (:11-13) ONE HEART --
"*Unite my heart to fear Thy name*"
"*I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart*"

A. Our Hearts should respond in Undivided Allegience to the Revelation of God's Truth

B. Our Hearts should respond in Whole-hearted Thanksgiving to the God of Majesty

C. Our Hearts should appreciate God's lovingkindness in delivering us from such Deep Trouble

III. (:14-17) ONE REQUEST --

"*Show me a sign for good*"

A. The Nature of Our Attackers

"*arrogant men*" -- not humble and submissive to God
"*a band of violent men have sought my life*" -- not peaceful and loving
"*they have not set Thee before them*" -- not seekers after God

Therefore, God's name is at stake

B. The Nature of Our Defender

"*merciful and gracious*"
"*slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth*"

C. The Nature of the Encouragement We Seek

1. God's Favor: "*Turn to me, and be gracious to me*"
2. God's Strength: "*Oh grant Thy strength to Thy servant*"
3. God's Deliverance: "*save the son of Thy handmaid*"
4. God's Assurance: "*Show me a sign for good*"
   Condemnation for my attackers
   Comfort for me

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we appreciate the positive consequences of our desperate situation ("*afflicted and needy*" vs. 3) that causes us to draw closer to God and turn to Him for help?

2) Do we really have a confidence in the Goodness of God – that He longs to "*make glad our souls*" (vs. 4)?

3) Does the "*uniqueness*" of our great God motivate our heart to be missionary-minded in proclaiming God to others?

4) What types of special "*signs for good*" (vs. 17) has God been gracious to show us when we are under hostile fire?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: Re vs. 8-10 -- "God is great and does wondrous things: he is more powerful than all the gods and he is more powerful than all the nations. The gods will be defeated and the nations will come and bow down and give him glory. On God's side you cannot lose."

Leupold: "Two features of the psalm are distinctive … It stresses the universal extent of the kingdom of the Lord (v.9) as do a few other Scripture passages of the Old Testament (cf., Zeph. 2:11; Zech. 14:9, 16; Ps. 22:29). This may well be regarded as a Messianic note, for it touches upon a fact that is to be realized in the kingdom of the Messiah. Then in v.11 it dwells in a unique fashion upon the unity of purpose which should characterize a man's relation to his God."

Kidner: Re vs. 11 – "The last line, *'unite my heart to fear thy name,'* is a penetrating climax, confessing in a single phrase the disintegrated state of man which is shown elsewhere in Scripture in many forms, from insincerity (see on 12:2) and irresolution (Jas. 1:6ff.) to the tug-of-war which Paul describes in Romans 7:15ff. His concern is not with unifying his personality for its own sake; the lines meet at a point beyond himself, the fear of the Lord.

> 'Direct, control, suggest, this day,
> All I design, or do, or say,
> That all my powers, with all their might,
> In Thy sole glory may unite.' " (Thomas Ken, 'Awake my soul')

VanGemeren: "The psalm may be divided into five strophes, each consisting of a prayer for mercy and a confession of the Lord (vv.1-5, vv.6-10, vv.11-13, vv.14-15, vv.16-17). Each confession begins with an emphatic reference to the Lord: '*Truly you*' (vv.5,10; NIV, '*you*,' '*for you*'), '*None like you*' (v.8; NIV placed after '*among the gods*…'), '*Truly your love*' (v.13; NIV, '*For … your love*'), '*But you*' (v.15). The concluding prayer contains a resolution of hope, as the psalmist focuses on the effect of God's love toward him and a final confession of his confidence in God, beginning with an emphatic form: '*for you*' (v.17c)."

TEXT: PSALM 87

TITLE: THE CITY OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
THE CITY OF GOD IS DESTINED FOR GLORY

"*Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God*." (:3)

INTRODUCTION:

City of God = place where God has chosen to dwell
cf. our body = the temple of the Holy Spirit

ode to Zion as the center of worship for the world

I. (:1) FIRM FOUNDATION OF THE CITY OF GOD -- REMEMBER OUR ROOTS

Foundation associated with:

A. Holiness

B. Majesty

II. (:2) FAVORED STATUS OF THE CITY OF GOD -- REVEL IN GOD'S LOVE

A. Supremely Loved by the Lord

B. Permanent Home of God's People

III. (:3) FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE CITY OF GOD -- REST IN GOD'S PROMISES

IV. (:4) FORMER ENEMIES OF THE CITY OF GOD -- RELATE TO THE CONVERTED

Rahab (Egyptians)
Babylon
Philistia
Tyre
Ethiopia

concept of the future Jerusalem being the mother of all peoples

V. (:5-6) FAMILY OFFSPRING OF THE CITY OF GOD -- RANKED AMONG THE PRIVILEGED

Work of God in:

A. Regeneration

B. Rooting and Establishing
Eternal Security of those born there

VI. (:7) FOCUSED JOY OF THE CITY OF GOD -- REJOICE IN GOD'S PRESENCE

CONCLUSION:
WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO THE CITY OF GOD?
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?
WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF YOUR JOY?

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If God's electing love towards Jerusalem is so vast, imagine how much more His delight in His children!

2) What types of "*glorious things*" remain to be fulfilled for the city of God?

3) Apparently it was a great honor for a Jew to have been born in Jerusalem. What is special about our pedigree? How much value do we put on our privilege of having been born into the royal family of God?

4) Do we find our "*springs of joy*" in association with dwelling at home in the city of God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacDonald: "Archaeologists and historians have long wondered why Jerusalem should have been established where it was, and why it should have become great. It enjoys none of the physical features which favoured the advancement and prosperity of other important cities in the world. It stands at the head of no great river. It overlooks no great harbour. It commands no great highway and no cross-roads. It is not close to abundant sources of water, often the major reason for the establishment of a settlement, though one main natural spring offered a modest supply. It possesses no mineral riches. It was off the main trade routes. It held no strategic key to the conquest of vast areas prized by the ancient warring empires. Indeed it was blessed with neither special economic nor topographic virtues which might explain why it should have ever become more than a small, anonymous mountain village with a fate any different from that of most contemporary villages which have long since vanished. (from work by Teddy Kolick and Moshe Peariman).

The reason for its greatness, of course, is that it was chosen by God. He founded it upon the holy mountain, and He loves its gates more than all the other cities or towns in the land. And its greatest glory is still future--when it will be the capital of the Messianic

Kingdom, the royal city of the long-awaited King. This Psalm looks forward to that day when glorious things will be spoken of Zion, the city of God."

Yates: "The concept of the future Jerusalem as the mother of all peoples is developed in Isa 60; 66:7-13,20,23; and referred to in Gal 4:26 and Heb 12:22."

Leupold: "'*All my springs arise in you*' … The '*springs*' are apparently the deep sources or roots of one's being. Passages like Is. 12:3; Hos. 13:15; Ps. 36:9 may be compared.

So this psalm is a psalm that is full of Messianic anticipation, rich in evangelistic hopes, and deeply grounded in the insight that the inner sources of a man's life are transformed when he becomes a true citizen of Zion."

Ryrie: "In this psalm of praise of Jerusalem, the psalmist describes the glories of Zion (vv. 1-3), the nations and Zion (vv. 4-6), and the joy in Zion (v. 7)."

TEXT: PSALM 88

TITLE: LIFE IN THE PITS: A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

BIG IDEA:
THE LONELINESS OF BEING FORSAKEN BY GOD AND MAN MAKES LIFE IN THE PITS INTOLERABLE

INTRODUCTION:

This is the saddest psalm in the psalter; no glimmer of hope; for once we are left in the same state of despair as at the beginning of the psalm

We know God's promise that He will never leave us or forsake us; the Lord is our Helper (Heb. 13:5-6);
yet sometimes it seems that God has forsaken us

Tension between what we know intellectually about the character of God and how He relates to us and what we feel in our heart in the desparation of the present crisis

(cf. experience of Christ which was unique because He was bearing our sins in His own body on the cross:
"My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?")

I. (:1-3) SOMETIMES GOD LETS US EXPERIENCE LIFE IN THE PITS

A. Prayers for Deliverance can go Unanswered (:1-2)
even though we know that God hears our prayers

B. Troubles can be Compounded so that it is more than we can bear (:3a)
even though we know that there is no temptation to great to bear (1 Cor. 10:13)
"*for my soul has had enough troubles*"

C. Life in the Pits can bring us within an inch of Death (:3b)
"*my life has drawn near to Sheol*"

II. (:4-9) LIFE IN THE PITS BRINGS THE LONELINESS OF SEPARATION

A. Separation from Personal Resources (:4)
No Physical Strength
No Personal Prosperity
No Prospect for Recovery

"*I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit*; I have become like a man without strength"

People look at me and conclude: "He's down the tubes" -- no hope of recovery

B. Separation from Life Itself -- written off as good as dead (:5a)
"*forsaken among the dead*"
"*like the slain who lie in the grave*"

C. Separation from the Favor of God (consequence of being dead) (:5b) -- No Grace (Part 1)
"*Whom Thou dost remember no more*"
"*And they are cut off from Thy hand*"

even though we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8)

D. Separation at the Deepest Possible Level (:6)
"*Thou hast put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths*"
There are the pits ... and then there are the lowest pits

E. Separation from the Favor of God (Part 2) (:7) -- Wrath of God
"*Thy wrath has rested upon me*"
"*Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves*"

even though we know that we shall be saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9)

F. Separation from all my Friends (:8)
"*Thou hast removed my acquaintances far from me*" -- Separated
"*Thou has made me an object of loathing to them*" -- Despised
"*I am shut up and cannot go out*" -- Imprisoned

G. Separation from the Favor of God (Part 3) (:9) -- No Response
Persistent prayers go unanswered

even though we know that God will respond to persistent prayers

III. (:10-12) LIFE IN THE PITS RAISES QUESTIONS OF DESPAIR

How can God be Glorified once I am dead?

A. "*Wilt Thou perform wonders for the dead*?" (:10)
"*Will the departed spirits rise and praise Thee*?

B. "*Will Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave*?" (:11)
"*thy faithfulness in Abaddon*?"

C. "*Will Thy wonders be made known in the darkness*?" (:12)
"*and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness*?"

Never underestimate the power of God

IV. (:13-18) SOMETIMES WE CAN'T SEE ANY LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

A. Never Give Up! (:13)

no matter how long we remain in the pits, continue to cry out to the Lord for help

B. Questions of Despair have no easy answer (:14)

"*O Lord, why dost Thou reject my soul*?"

"*Why dost Thou hide Thy face from me*?"

C. The Pain of Loneliness and Separation is Very Real (:15-16)

1. Life in the Pits can drag on for a long time

"*I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on*"

2. The Wrath of God can Overwhelm me like a Flood

3. Separated from family and friends, I suffer alone

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When was the last time you experienced "*life in the pits*"? Did you think about the fact that God was right there with you?

2) Can you think of any people you know who are especially lonely and could use some eoncouragement?

3) Do we ever write people off as "*down the tubes*" when God has not forsaken them and still wants us to minister to them?

4) What are some of our typical "*Questions of Despair*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "This lament and prayer of an individual completely engulfed in gloom and despair ends without an answer or even a glimmer of hope…His trouble is so serious that he is as good as dead. Nothing is left for him but the grave and Sheol. His most descriptive term for Sheol is *the pit* (v. 4), a place of darkness where the dead are cut off from God's hand. He seems to feel that the Lord no longer remembers him, since he is counted with the dead."

Kidner: "With darkness as its final word, what is the role of this psalm in Scripture? For the beginning of an answer we may note, first, its witness to the possibility of unrelieved suffering as a believer's earthly lot. The happy ending of most psalms of this kind is seen to be a bonus, not

a due; its withholding is not a proof of either God's displeasure or His defeat. Secondly, the psalm adds its voice to the '*groaning in travail*' which forbids us to accept the present order as final. It is a sharp reminder that '*we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies*' (Rom. 8:22f.). Thirdly, this author, like Job, does not give up. He completes his prayer, still in the dark and totally unrewarded. The taunt, '*Does Job fear God for naught*?', is answered yet again. Fourthly, the author's name allows us, with hindsight, to see that his rejection was only apparent … His existence was no mistake; there was a divine plan bigger than he knew, and a place in it reserved most carefully for him."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 18 – "'*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*.' Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine-press, and all his garments wre distained with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones."

VanGemeren: "The dialogue between the psalmist and his God can only be understood from the perspective of faith, in which the godly are free to share their frustrations with their heavenly Father…The emotions and suffering expressed by the psalmist are close in spirit to those of Psalm 22. In the tradition of the church, these psalms were linked together in the Scripture reading on Good Friday.

The structure of the psalm discloses a certain repetitiveness due to the psalmist's preoccupation with his suffering.

A. Prayer for Help (vv.1-2)
  B. The Experience of Dying in Life (vv.3-5)
    C. It Is the Lord's Doing (vv.6-9a)
A'. Prayer for Help (vv.9b-12)
    C'. It Is the Lord's Doing (vv.13-14)
  B'. The Experience of Dying in Life (vv.15-18)

(Re vv. 15-18) The lament concludes by tying together the major themes. First, the psalmist has suffered for a very long time ('*from my youth*,' v.15). Second, he is completely engulfed by adversity, not seeing any way of escape ('*swept over me … surround me … completely engulfed me*,' vv.16-17; cf. 42:7). Third, he is exhausted to the point of '*despair*' because of his inability to cope with the Lord's '*terrors*' (v.15; cf. 55:4-5) and acts of '*wrath*' (v.16). Fourth, he knows that the Lord is sovereign even in calamity (v.18). Fifth, he is abandoned to himself and to his God. All alone he prays for deliverance, having no other recourse, not even his '*closest friend'* (v.18; cf. v.8).

Though the psalm ends on a lament, faith triumphs, because in everything the psalmist has learned to look to '*the God who saves'* (v.1). The '*darkness*' (v.18; cf. v.12) of grief is reminiscent of death; but as long as there is life, hope remains focused on the Lord. Brueggemann is right when he writes, 'Psalm 88 stands as a mark of realism of biblical faith. It

has a pastoral use, because there are situations in which easy, cheap talk of resolution must be avoided' (*Message of the Psalms*, p. 81)."

Beisner: "many people who suffer loss go on for years without experiencing God's 'sweet and all-encompassing presence.' What can we do to experience Him? There is no magic formula, no guaranteed method. We can remove the obstacles of unbelief and sin, but the timing is His. That, as much as anything, is the message of Psalm 88: keep hoping, keep waiting, keep trusting, keep praising despite all pains. God is our Master, not our slave. We cannot force our Lover to come, but we can be ready when He does."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When Darkness Is Your Only Friend**
Introduction: This is one of the darkest psalms in all the Bible – a lament psalm. Roughly half of the whole book of Psalms are made up of these Lament Psalms. And the typical pattern of a lament psalm goes like this.

- First of all, the first stage is pain or perplexity. This is where the psalmist will address God, and he'll tell God about all of his sorrows, all of his problems, how he's overwhelmed.
- Then the second part of the psalm is prayer, we could say. This is where the psalmist asks God to hear his prayer. He goes before the Lord, and then he thanks God. for hearing and for answering that prayer.
- And then the last part of the Lament Psalm normally is a section called Praise. And this is where they will begin to praise the Lord. Perhaps there was a lapse in time, perhaps there was time between the prayer and the praise where the Lord actually did answer and the Lord did bring victory. And so there's a little gap there. But the last part of the psalm, however, is just normally a praise. Always in the lament psalms, they end on a positive note.

That's normally the pattern. So you have <u>pain</u>, then you have <u>prayer,</u> then you have <u>praise</u>.

Psalm 88 is the only lament psalm that doesn't fit the pattern. It just ends with a bleak picture. The last word in verse 18 is the Hebrew word *koshek,* darkness. He speaks about life in darkness, life in the depths. He talks about death being imminent.

The subtitle, basically in the Hebrew, Mahalath and Lenoth. Mahalath means sickness, Lenoth means for singing or for humbling. And really, so this psalm was really a psalm that is referring to a sad song, a somber song, and that's supposed to really humble the person. that sings it, or to bring them low before the Lord. There's two possibilities for the identity of **Heman** referenced in the subtitle.

- This could be the son of Joel, who was a temple musician during the reign of David. That's probably the most likely candidate.
- The second choice is Haman, the son of Mahal, one of the wise men during the reign of King Solomon. He's found in 1 Kings 4.31.

He was a servant of God. He was faithful in the house of God. He was called one of the sons of Kohalath, which means he was in the temple. His ministry was to write music of praise and worship to God. So he was, you could call, a full-time servant of the Lord. But he was also a man who was suffering intensely, and he didn't understand why.

Big Idea: **Four responses to the darkness that he was facing.**

I. A Spiritual Response – Go to the Lord by faith

He was fervently praying. He believed God could hear his prayers. He believed in a God who could do wonders. Even though he spoke like he was ready to give up, he still didn't give up. He was still calling on the Lord.

II. An Emotional Response – Tell the Lord how you feel – vs. 3

There's no place for hypocrisy in personal prayer. You understand that? You can't fool God. He knows how you feel. I think we should be transparent to God. He believed that God was sovereign, that God was in control of his life.

Tell Him about your life of sin. Tell Him of your vain attempts to make yourself better. Tell Him of your many failures. Tell Him of your false hopes. Tell them of all your blunders and mistakes, and then say, Lord, I do not even know how fully to understand my own case, but thou dost. Do with me according to thy own wisdom and prudence, and save thy servant, I beseech thee.

III. A Logical Response – Defend your case before the Lord – vs. 10

In essence, what's the argument that he's using here? God, how can I serve you if I'm dead? How can I help you if I'm in the grave? I can't praise you out of the grave. I can't serve you when I'm in the grave. And so, Lord, Heal me, help me.

Faith goes and lays your case before the Lord and claims the mercy and the loving kindness that you need.

IV. A Practical Response – Wait for the Lord's Answer – vs. 15

Remember that in the time of waiting, He doesn't forget us, and He gives us grace to deal with what we're going through. Waiting faith is the hardest kind of faith in the Christian life

TEXT: PSALM 89

TITLE: FAITHFUL AND TRUE

BIG IDEA:
CAN GOD BE COUNTED ON TO KEEP HIS PROMISES?

I. (:1-4) GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS AND FAITHFULNESS REFLECTED IN HIS PROMISE OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

A. The Unchanging Character of God Spurs an Unchanging Pattern of Praise

1. Praise for God's Lovingkindness

"*forever*"
"*to all generations*"
"*built up forever*"

2. Praise for God's Faithfulness

established "*in the heavens*"

B. The Promise of the Davidic Covenant is Based Totally on God's Initiative

1. Initiated with God's Elect people = David and his seed ("*My chosen*" / "*My servant*")

2. Sealed with God's Oath ("*I have sworn*")

3. Guaranteed down through the ages

"*establish your seed forever*"
"*build up your throne to all generations*"

II. (:5-10) NOBODY CAN COMPARE TO THE LORD IN POWER AND MAJESTY

A. Testimony of the Heavens = the Lord is Unique in Power and Majesty

"*the assembly of the holy ones*" / "*sons of the mighty*" / "*council of the holy ones*"
these are references to angels

B. Testimony Confirmed by the Lord's Control over Nature (:9)

C. Testimony Guaranteed by Destruction of all Enemies (:10)

III. (:11-29) THE LORD WILL ESTABLISH THE THRONE OF DAVID IN POWER AND MAJESTY

A. (:11-13) The Lord is Able to Keep His Promise Because:

1. He is the Creator and Owner of All (:11-12)

2. He has a strong Right Hand (:13)

B. (:14-18) The Throne Established by God Brings Blessing and Security

1. Blessing

a.. The Blessing of God's Character in Action
Righteousness and Justice
Lovingkindness and Truth

b. The Blessing of the Presence and Favor of God

2. Security

a. The Security of God's Strength

b. The Security of God's Protection

C. (:19-29) The Promise of the Davidic Covenant Spelled out in Detail

1. (:19-20) Selection of David

2. (:21-23) Strengthening and Protection against Enemies

3. (:24-27) Exaltation to the Heights of Majesty and Power
all done in accordance with God's faithfulness and lovingkindness (:24)

Messianic fulfillment

4. (:28-29) Permanent Fulfillment Guaranteed

IV. (:30-37) EVEN TRANSGRESSIONS WILL NOT ANNUL GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

A. (:30-32) Temporary Discipline -- YES

1. Nature of Unfaithfulness
"*forsake My law*"
"*do not walk in My judgments*"
"*violate My statutes*"
"*do not keep My commandments*"

2. Nature of Discipline
"*visit their transgression with the rod*"
"*and their iniquity with stripes*"

B. (:33-35) Permanent Rejection -- NEVER
"*I will not break off My lovingkindness from him*"
"*nor deal falsely in My faithfulness*"
"*My covenant I will not violate*"
"*nor will I alter the utterance of My lips*"

Read my lips!
"*Once I have sworn by My holiness*"
"*I will not lie to David*"

C. (:36-37) Promise Repeated (so there can be no doubt)

1. Application of the Promise -- Relates to:
his descendants
his throne

2. Duration of the Promise -- "*endure forever*" / like the sun

3. Guarantee of the Promise: by the witness of the unchanging sun and moon

V. (:38-45) IT SURE LOOKS LIKE GOD HAS RENEGED ON HIS COVENANT WITH DAVID

"reneged" = to play the wrong card; to go back on one's word

A. The Despair of Rejection (rather than Favor)

B. The Despair of Wrath (rather than Lovingkindness)

C. The Despair of Humiliation and Reproach (rather than Glory and Majesty)

D. The Despair of Destruction and Defeat (rather than Protection and Victory)

VI. (:46-51) WHEN WILL GOD TURN AROUND AND FULFILL HIS PROMISE?

A. (:46-48) The Critical Issue of Timing ("*How long, O Lord*?")

B. (:49-51) The Critical Issue of Reputation
God and His people are being reproached

God's faithfulness is at stake

(:52) DOXOLOGY "*Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.*"
This is actually the close of Book III of the Psalms

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What things are described as being "*forever*" in this psalm? What did the concept of forever mean to the psalmist?

2) How has God demonstrated His faithfulness in your life? What promises of God have been most precious to you?

3) How has God taken the initiative to gift you in a special way for ministry and to equip you to bear fruit for Him? How did God take the initiative in David's life and cause him to be successful?

4) When things look their bleakest and the promises of God seem to come up short, can we still rejoice with the psalmist: "*blessed by the Lord forever*!"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Perowne: "There can be little doubt that this Psalm was written in the latter days of the Jewish monarchy, when the throne of David had fallen or was already tottering to its fall, and when the prospect for the future was so dark that it seemed as if God had forgotten His covenant and His promise…

The Psalm opens by a reference to the Promise given to David, 2 Sam. vii. 8, etc. This Promise, and the attributes of God on which the Promise rests, and which are the great pledge of its fulfilment, form the subject of the Poet's grateful acknowledgment, before he passes to the mournful contrast presented by the ruin of the house of David, and the blighting of his people's hopes. He turns to the glorious past, that by its aid he may rise out of the grief and discouragement of the present. He takes the Promise, and turns it into a song. He dwells upon it, and lingers over it. He dwells on that which is the ground and pillar of the Promise—the faithfulness of God—and then he first lifts his loud lament over the disasters which have befallen his king and people, speaking out his disappointment, till his words sound like a reproach; and next pleads earnestly with God that He would not suffer his enemies to triumph."

Maddux: "God Extolled:

I. His Characteristics.
    - A. Merciful.
    - B. Faithful.
    - C. Covenant keeping.
    - D. Incomparable Wonder-Worker.
        1. In strength.
        2. In control.
        3. In conquering.
        4. In possession.
        5. In judgment.
        6. In joy.
        7. In glory.
        8. In protection.
    - E. Awe inspiring.
        1. To be feared.

2. To be held in reverence.

II. God's Covenant.
- A. In the call.
- B. In the selection.
- C. In anointing.
- D. In establishment.
- E. In strength.
- F. In defense.
- G. In exaltation.
- H. In dominion.
- I. In response.
- J. In inheritance.
- K. In permanence.
- L. In justice.

III. Covenant breaking.
- A. Man accuses God.
- B. Anointed cast off.
  1. Object of wrath.
  2. Crown repudiated.
  3. Protection removed.
     a. Common spoil.
     b. Reproach of neighbors.
     c. Enemy victors.
  4. Glory dimmed.
  5. Strength shortened.
  6. Shamed before all.

IV. Plea for Remembrance.
- A. Remember covenant.
- B. Remember man's frailties.
- C. Remember man's reproach.
- D. Remembered praise."

MacDonald: "To outward appearances it may have seemed that God had forgotten the Davidic covenant. Judah was invaded by the Bbablonians and carried off into exile. No one has sat on the throne of David from that day to this. But God had not forgotten. Almost two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus was born in David's royal city. He was the adopted son of Joseph, and since Joseph was in the direct line of the kings of Judah, Jesus inherited the legal right to the throne of David through him (Matthew 1). Jesus was the real son of Mary, and since Mary was a lineal descendant of David through Nathan, our Lord is of the seed of David (Luke 3:23-38). So the covenant is thus fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. David's throne is perpetuated through Him, and since He lives in the power of an endless life, there will always be a descendant of David to sit upon the throne. One day, perhaps soon, He will return to earth to take His rightful place on the throne of David and reign as David's greatest Son."

TEXT: PSALM 90

TITLE: TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS

BIG IDEA:
SINCE OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED, WE SEEK PERSPECTIVE FROM THE GOD OF ETERNITY

INTRODUCTION:

Written by Moses = "the man of God": certainly he had a unique perspective to offer on life;
had seen and experienced much; yet his life too was finite and full of disappointment;
he struggled with unfulfilled dreams of wanting to enter into the promised land;
spent his last 40 years wandering in the wilderness

What constitutes the "Wilderness Experience" in your life?

I. (:1-2) OUR POINT OF REFERENCE MUST ALWAYS BE THE GOD OF ETERNITY

A. The God of Eternity is the God who Offers Himself as Our Home

B. The God of Eternity is the God of Creation

C. The God of Eternity is the God who is Sovereign over History

II. (:3-6) WE NEED GOD'S PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE OF OUR FINITENESS

A. God is Sovereign in dictating our Lifespan

B. God's Perspective on Time is Vastly Different than Ours

C. Man is Limited by the Cycle of Finiteness

III. (:7-12) WE NEED GOD'S PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE OF OUR SINFULNESS

A. Our Sin is the Cause of God's Anger

B. Our Days are Numbered

C. Our Opportunities are Limited

Key = having God's perspective = "*a heart of wisdom*"

IV. (:13-17) WE NEED GOD'S PERSPECTIVE IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE JOY AND FULFILLMENT

A. (:13-15) God's Perspective Includes the Joy of Future Restoration to Blessing
sing for joy
be glad all our days

B. (:16-17) God's Perspective Includes the Fulfillment of Faithfulness to our Calling
"confirm the work of our hands"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When you are suffering from boredom and the monotony of life, what types of negative thoughts keep coming back to haunt you? How is God's perspective different in those particular areas?

2) What are the benefits of keeping in mind the brevity of life?

3) How was Moses able to keep his sanity during those long years of waiting for the Lord to use Him in some type of ministry? How did he remain faithful to the Lord during those years?

4) How confident are we in the Lord's ability and desire to pack our days on this earth full with joy and blessing?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "We have come now to the psalm which introduces the fourth book of Psalms, the ninetieth. You may be interested to learn that this is the oldest, i.e., the earliest, of the psalms. According to the inscription, this was written by Moses, and is one of possibly two psalms which Moses wrote. Some scholars feel that he also wrote Psalm 91, which ties in somewhat with Psalm 90. But there is little question but that Moses is the author of this ninetieth psalm. This is probably the pattern psalm upon which others are based. It corresponds to the book of Numbers in the Pentateuch.

The book of Numbers is the book of wilderness wanderings, the story of the failure of man, and it is most fittingly introduced by this ninetieth Psalm. It is very likely that Moses wrote this psalm at the end of the wilderness wanderings, just before he died. This is, in my judgment, one of the greatest of the psalms. In its scope, its range of thought, and its vastness of concept, it is a marvelous statement of divine glory….

Surely here is the greatness of God. He is the God of history. He is the God of creation. But beyond all that, he is the God of eternity. He is beyond and above his creation. He is greater than the universe he produced, and before it existed, he was. In fact the Hebrew here is again very interesting. It suggests the translation 'From the vanishing point in the past to the vanishing point in the future,' thus, from everlasting to everlasting God exists. How great he is!…

Three things about God mark the limits of life for man. These are the three greatest facts of human existence:

First, we must live within the sovereignty of God. It is God who controls human life. As the Psalmist points out, '*Thou turnest man back to the dust, and sayest, 'Turn back, O children of men*!'' God sets the limits to life. There are certain things he will not let us do….

But there is another relationship which concerns the Psalmist, God's wrath….

So the Psalmist faces the fact that God allows his wrath, his moral integrity against sin, to be manifest precisely because it affords him opportunity for the exercise of his love….

In the last section the Psalmist moves to the third of these relationships. It is a declaration of what a heart of wisdom will bring us to. It is the declaration of God's love for man….

Here then, are the three great facts that relate to God and man: God's sovereignty, within the limits of which we all live, whether we like it or not; God's wrath, which we all experience, whether innocent or guilty, because we are living in a world in which God is allowing man's sin to have its full expression. But in the midst of all this is the glory and wonder of God's love, manifesting itself to us in terms of these qualities of satisfying love: recompensing joy, hereditary healing, visible beauty, and meaningful labor. All is available to those who love him."

Beisner: "The focus of Psalm 90 is verse 12: '*Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*.' What is '*a heart of wisdom'*? It is no mere intellectual understanding, but moral perception and action. It comes only to those who call out for it, who cry for it to God, and it makes a man 'understand what is right and just and fair – every good path.' When wisdom enters the heart, it protects from evil and saves from the ways of wickedness (Prov. 2:2-12; see also Jas. 1:5-6).

Finally, what does it mean '*to number our days aright*'? It begins with contemplating hourly 'the fleeting character and brevity of our lifetime.' Such contemplation should remind us of God's eternity, our frailty, and the coming judgment on our sin. And that reminder, in turn, should lead us to what Matthew Henry once called 'the practice of serious godliness' – that is, to glorifying God through sincere obedience to all of His commands; loving Him and our fellowman, and following the example of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve (Mt. 20:28). Wasn't that the sort of life Moses lived?"

Stott: "The brevity of life should still constrain us to get a heart of wisdom, namely to make God our refuge, to find rest in His love and fruitful labor under His blessing."

Lucado: "Psalm 90 is the only psalm specifically attributed to Moses. He may have written others, but we know for sure he wrote this one. Remember Moses? Most think of him as a man of action, an aggressive leader, point man in the exodus, outspoken giver of the law. But it is easy to overlook the repetitious, monotonous routine he endured. Between ages forty and eighty, Moses led his father-in-law's flock of sheep in the desert. Following the exodus, he led the Hebrews for another forty years as they wandered across and around the wilderness. I'd say he knew about the blahs. Same terrain, same scenes, same route, same ornery people, same negative outlook, same complaints, same miserable weather, same everything! The prayer he wrote could have been his means of maintaining sanity!…

Frequently, our problem with boredom begins when we fall under monotony's "spell"… How to cope? We must direct our attention (as Moses does) to (a) the right object and (b) the right perspective …"

Morris: Re vs. 4 – "This verse has often been combined with II Peter 3:8 by modern commentators, and then both used to justify the notion that the six days of creation in Genesis correspond to the evolutionary ages of geology. Such strained exegesis is contradicted by the contexts of both verses, and there is no good evidence that Peter was even referring to Moses' statement at all. In Psalm 90, Moses is contrasting the brevity of man's life—even those antediluvian men who lived almost a thousand years –with the changeless and ageless Creator."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Teach Us to Number Our Days**
Introduction: I call this a psalm for the new year. This is just a beautiful psalm that really helps us to reflect and focus on the gift that God gives us, the gift of time.

I once read that the clocks in London, on all the big clocks that are there in London, chime every 15 minutes. That could get to be a little bit irritating, I guess you would think. But I wonder who invented that. Well, I also read it was the Puritans who invented that. did that on purpose, they were concerned with the way that they were using time. And so they wanted it to be that every 15 minutes the big clocks would chime, and because they wanted it to be a reminder that you should not waste time. Time is passing by.

The newly formed nation of Israel was condemned to die in the wilderness. And that tragedy was followed by the death of Miriam, Moses' sister. And then later on, Moses' brother Aaron, in Numbers chapter 20, he died. So think about this. For a time in Moses' life, people around him were dying all over. It was estimated that one and a half million Jews died in the wilderness for the next 40 years. Moses was surrounded with death. I mean, that's a lot of graves in the wilderness when you think about this. People that Moses saw and knew, he watched them die. People that were perhaps loved by him. he saw them die. People that he had known for many years, he saw them die. And all of this caused Moses to begin to reflect deeply about the brevity of life, the surety of death, and the holiness of God against the sinfulness of man. He thought deeply about time. He thought deeply about eternal values. And the result is that Moses writes this psalm here

Now, we can divide this psalm up into <u>four stanzas.</u>

- Verses 1 and 2 really focus on the eternal nature of God.
- Verses 3 through 6 talk about the mortal nature of man.
- And verses 7 through 11 in this psalm, it's really about God's wrath over man's sin. That's one of the reasons for man's mortality is because of God's wrath against man's sin.
- And then verses 12 to 17 is really a prayer for God's mercy and grace.

But the central theme in Psalm 90 is verse 12 -- *teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* In other words, since this life is so unpredictable and short, teach us what we need to know **to make each day count**.

<u>Big Idea</u>: **Four truths that we need to think about that will help us to realize the value of time that God gives us and to number our days wisely.**

I. The Timeless Nature of God – vv. 1-2

The incommunicable attributes of God -- these are attributes that God does not share with us. These are the things that make God transcendent. They make God God. They are unique to God alone. And one of those attributes is mentioned in verse number two. *From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* **God is eternal**. And we could define this as saying God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being. He sees all time equally, vividly, yet God sees events in time, and yet God acts in time.

God lives outside of time. Time is not the same to God. Job 36:26. We really can't understand that God has just always existed. He was always there. Reveals Himself to Moses as **I am**. There are so many incommunicable attributes wrapped up in that one statement where God said, **I am**. We could say His independence, His aseity, as theologians like to use the word, that is to say that God is not dependent on anything outwardly or externally. externally for his own happiness and fulfillment, God is fully independent in that way.

Also: His immutability; His Unity; and His eternality.

I think of time as like this transparent tube, you know, that just God sees it from the beginning to the end and in the middle, all in one vivid viewing of all of time. God sees it all vividly at one moment, and yet God condescends to act in moments of time.

II. The Temporary Nature of Man – vs. 3

We have a tendency to think things are just going to continue on the way they are. No, they change. And we're all going to become dust one day.

Moses uses <u>three analogies</u> here to teach us how quick life is.

1) Like a flash flood – vs. 5
2) Like falling asleep – vs. 5
   Death is like sleep that comes upon a weary person. It doesn't matter what you do. You can try to find a way to fight it off, but it's gonna come to all of us, to every one of us.
3) Like grass withering away – vs. 6

1 Chron. 29:15; Job 7:6-7; Ps. 102:3

III. The Terminal Nature of Sin

God's wrath was really killing a lot of people in the desert. Moses saw God's wrath punishing unbelieving people every day. They were dying all around them. Again, 1.2 million people dying in a space of 40 years. That's 30,000 dying every year. If you space it out evenly, that's about 82 per day.

The reality of death ought to make us think about our sin, and it ought to motivate us to make sure that we are reconciled to a holy God. God sees our sins. There are very few people who think seriously about God's holiness and His wrath against sin in this world and in our life.

IV. The Transformational Nature of Prayer

We need to follow the pattern of praying that Moses gives us here as we number our days.

A. Pray that we value each day. **Vs. 12**

B. Pray for God's Wisdom for each day
It's just doing the right things and making the right decisions.

C. Pray for God's mercy for each day. Vs. 13-15

D. Pray to see God's hand at work – vs. 16

E. Pray that we experience God's favor each day – vs. 17
The things of this world are so temporary and fleeting, but God's blessings are permanent. They're real and they're things that we carry with us. And so Alexander McLaren said, the only thing that will secure lifelong gladness is a heart satisfied with the experience of God's love.

But the ultimate lesson of this whole psalm is that the one thing that gives meaning to this temporal life is that we have a relationship with an eternal God.

TEXT: PSALM 91

TITLE: THE UNTOUCHABLES

BIG IDEA:
NO FEAR WHEN YOU DWELL IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

INTRODUCTION:

cf. theme of "NO FEAR" promoted on athletic apparel, TV commercials, etc.

cf. concept of product warranties and guarantees

How close are you living to God?

I. (:1-4) LIVING CLOSE TO GOD GUARANTEES PROTECTION FROM ATTACK

A. Description of Living Close to God (:1-2)

what does it involve?

1. Staying at Home in the Presence of the Almighty God (:1)
   a. "*dwells*" / "*abides*"
   b. "*shelter*" / "*shadow*"
   c. "*the Most High*" / "*the Almighty*"

2. Trusting in the Protection that only God can Provide (:2)
   "*my refuge*" / "*my fortress*"

B. Danger of Attack (:3)

1. From "*the snare of the trapper*"

2. From "*deadly pestilence*"

C. Dynamics of God's Protection 9:4)

1. God's Providential Care
   "*He will cover you with His pinions*"

2. Man's Responsibility = Seek God's Protection
   "*under His wings you may seek refuge*"

3. God's Guarantee
   "*His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark*"

II. (:5-10) LIVING CLOSE TO GOD GUARANTEES NO FEAR OF DESTRUCTION

A. Not Afraid of Anything: (:5-6, 10)

"*terror by night*"
"*arrow that flies by day*"

"*pestilence that stalks in darkness*"
"*destruction that lays waste at noon*"

"*No evil will befall you*"
"*Nor will any plague come near your tent*"

B. No Matter What might Happen to Others (:7-8)
Distinction between the righteous and the wicked
Look at all the destruction all around you and yet you are still spared

C. Because You are Living Close to God (:9)
you have made God / the Most High:
your refuge
your dwelling place

III. (:11-13) LIVING CLOSE TO GOD GUARANTEES THE MINISTRY OF GUARDIAN ANGELS

A. Guardian Angels keep you Insulated from Attack
"*they will bear you up in their hands*"
"*lest you strike your foot against a stone*"

B. Guardian Angels make you Invincible over your Attackers
"*You will tread upon the lion and cobra*"
"*the young lion and the serpent you will trample down*"

IV. (:14-16) LIVING CLOSE TO GOD GUARANTEES DELIVERANCE THAT LASTS

A. Two Essentials for Living Close to God

1. Loving God

2. Knowing God ("known my name")

B. Nature of Deliverance

"*deliver*"

"*set him securely on high*"

"*rescue*"

"*salvation*"

C. Blessings of Deliverance that Last

God's Answered Prayer

God's Presence in time of Trouble

God's Continued Favor ("*I will honor him*")

God's Promise of Abundant Life ("*with a long life I will satisfy him*")

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In questioning one's faith, people often take comfort and assurance in the fact that their desperate needs were met in Christ, as verification of their salvation. Where do Christians look for assurance when they have no such past and nothing of consequence to reference?

2) As Christians, we are not to fear any danger or disaster. Does this mean we will not experience these hardships?

3) How can you make God Most High your place of safety and refuge? Do angels still play an active part in securing that place for you?

4) As part of a maturing Christian walk, can God's promises be accessed in more than one way?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: Re vs. 13 – "'*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and dragon shalt thou trample under feet*.' This also is a promise for protection against the most dangerous animals—even dragons. This word (Hebrew *tannin*) actually means '*dragon*,' not '*snake*,' as is evident from its other occurrences. It most likely refers to some extinct reptile such as the dinosaur, which had no doubt survived the Flood long enough to be well known to the ancient world. Other references to dragons in the bible and in ancient traditions all over the world, as well as to the behemoth and leviathan (see, especially, Job 40,41), together with recent discoveries of fossilized human and dinosaur footprints in the same rock formations, as well as of dinosaur pictographs made by early tribesmen, all confirm the implication (evolutionists' claims notwithstanding) that men and dinosaurs once lived contemporaneously."

Maddux:

I. Safely abiding.
   A. In a secret place.
   B. Provided by the Most High.

C. Under the Shadow.
    1. Not shady behavior.
    2. Shelter not stealth.
    3. Reserve not renegade.

D. Permanent security

II. Safely trusting.

A. Personal choice.
    1. Not verbal only.
    2. A committal of trust.

B. Positive protection.
    1. No entrapment.
    2. No devastating disease.
    3. Protective covering.
    4. God's Truth is armor.
    5. Fear is ruled out.
    6. Witness to enemy defeat.
    7. Ward of angels.
    8. Conquer natural world.

III. Safely proclaimed.

A. God responds to love.

B. God promises deliverance.

C. God positionizes His own.

D. God answers prayer.

E. God is at hand in trouble.

F. God gives life – now and eternal.

Kidner: Re the changes in personal pronoun marking the 3 divisions –

I. 1,2 My Refuge

II. 3-13 Your Refuge

A. 3-6 Versatile Protection

B. 7-10 Individual Protection

C. 11-13 Miraculous Protection

III. 14-16 God's Pledge

On God's side, the eight expressions in 14-16 for what he undertakes are not only eight aspects of the whole. There is perhaps a certain progress traceable from the thought of His initial deliverance to that of His abiding companionship ('*with him*') and crowning gifts of glory, length of days … and a salvation no longer waited for but seen.

Spurgeon: Re "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High*" – "The blessings here promised are not for all believers, but for those who live in close fellowship with God. Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary and the mercy-seat, yet all do not *dwell* in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and enjoy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence. Those who through rich grace obtain unusual and continuous communion with God, so as to abide in Christ and Christ in them, become possessors of rare and special benefits, which are missed by those who follow afar off, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Into the secret place those only

come who know the love of God in Christ Jesus, and those only *dwell* there to whom to live is Christ. To them the veil is rent, the mercy-seat is revealed, the covering cherubs are manifest, and the awful glory of the Most High is apparent: these, like Simeon, have the Holy Ghost upon them, and like Anna they depart not from the temple; they are the courtiers of the Great King, the valiant men who keep watch around the bed of Solomon, the virgin souls who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Holwick: THE LORD IS ON YOUR SIDE

I. Avianca plane crash on Long Island.
  A. Celeste and I watching TV.
    1) News bulletin announces plane crash on Long Island.
    2) First images are of a young child being put in an ambulance.
      a) Many killed, but some walked away without a scratch.
      b) One witness called it a night of miracles.
    3) Most of us imagine ourselves in that situation.

  B. Psalm 91 is for such times of danger.
    1) When you feel hemmed in, this psalm can give courage.

II. Four names of God reveal his strength.
  A. Most High. Cuts every threat down to size. 91:1
  B. Almighty (Shaddai). The patriarchs' God.
  C. The Lord (Yahweh). The "I Am" who assured Moses. 91:2
  D. My God. General term, but intimate.

III. God's protection.
  A. Broad protection.
    1) Human/natural. Snare, pestilence. 91:3
    2) Mind/body. Terror, arrows. 91:5
    3) Unseen/seen. Night, day. 91:5
    4) Soft/hard. Bird, shield. 91:4
      a) Jesus as mother hen in Matthew 23:37.

  B. Individual protection.
    1) "You" is emphatic. "To you it will not draw near." 91:7
    2) God is a super body-guard.
      a) Thousands fall on either side, but we are safe.

  C. Miraculous protection.
    1) Unseen powers - angels - protect us. 91:11
      a) They are sent to minister to God's people. Hebrews 1:14

    2) God's servants are not mere survivors but victors.
      a) They trample the enemy under foot. 91:13

IV. Paradox of God's protection.

A. Vietnam chaplain.
After fierce fire-fight, assured survivors God was with them.
Instead of assurance, they felt uneasy.
Were their dead buddies rejected by God?

B. Will true Christians never be hurt?
1) It is not a charm against trouble.
a) Psalm 91 is a statement of God's exact control.
b) Nothing can touch us - except by God's permission.
2) It is not a promise of no trouble.
a) It is deliverance in the midst of trouble.

C. Other passages reveal same paradox.
1) Romans 8:28 and 8:35.
a) All things work for good.
b) But does not exclude "nakedness, danger, sword."
2) Luke 21:16 and 21:18.
a) Not a hair of head will perish, yet some will die.

V. Jesus and promises of Psalm 91.
A. Satan used 91:11 as a temptation. Matt 4:6
1) (Only verse Satan ever quoted)
2) Temptation of arrogance - use your power!

B. Jesus used the power when needed.
1) After temptation in desert. Matt 4:11
2) At garden of Gethsemane. Luke 22:43

C. Jesus refused the power for self-advantage.
1) Legions of angels available, but he chose arrest.
Matt 26:53-54
2) He warned apostles of danger of pride. Luke 10:19-20
a) They have power over serpents and injury.
b) But our pride is in God saving us.

VI. Application to Christians.
A. God can miraculously deliver from trouble.

B. But His will may be for us to suffer.
1) Ultimately our souls cannot be touched, only our bodies.

VII. Conditions of protection.

A. Make God your dwelling. 91:9

B. Love and obey God. 91:14

Harris: GOD THE SANCTUARY OF BELIEVERS
Theme: The fellowship of the Believer with God.
Occasion: Unknown, unless Mosaic authorship as Psalm 90.

I. STATE OF THE GODLY. Ver. 1, 2. "*Dwelleth in the secret place*" (ver. 1).

When God's people dwell in the inner sanctuary, they are overshadowed, as the mercy-seat was covered by the outstretched wings of the cherubim over which stood the Shekinah.

II. SAFETY OF THE GODLY. Ver. 3-8. "*Under his wings*" (ver. 4).

God is the soul's refuge, and safety is found from secret and open perils. Neither foe, famine, nor pestilence can overtake those who are "*under his wings*." God is a strong defense and his faithfulness is sure so that his people are protected.

III. SANCTUARY OF THE GODLY. Ver. 9, 10. "*No evil befall thee*" (ver. 10).

Since God is the soul's spiritual dwelling-place, the godly are spared much that comes to others, and no evil thing can come near their earthly abodes.

IV. SECURITY OF THE GODLY. Ver. 11, 12. "*To keep thee in all thy ways*" (ver. 11).

The believer may dwell, then, in peaceful security, for all God's servants are guarded by angels which are as a garrison round about and which carry his weight as a nurse holds up and guides a convalescent patient from danger of stumbling.

V. SUPREMACY OF THE GODLY. Ver. 13-15. "*I will set him on high*" (ver. 14).

Not only the angels support, but God spreads his wings over those who are his and, protecting them from assaults of such as would assail, lifts them up to a place where even angels cannot bring them, a place safe above the danger, where the soul can live in communion with him and hear his answering voice.

VI. SALVATION OF THE GODLY. Ver. 16. "*Show him my salvation*" (ver. 16).

At the end he shall find, who puts his trust in God, that "*length of days*" are his, not only in this world, but in the world to come. In that day God will reveal the salvation he has provided for his children and they shall find refuge in him forever.

TEXT: PSALM 92

TITLE: A GLAD HEART SINGS A JOYFUL SONG

BIG IDEA:
WHEN IT COMES TO JOY, THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE IT ALL OVER THE WICKED

I. (:1-4) THE BEST INSTRUMENT OF PRAISE IS A HEART FILLED WITH JOY

A. The Value of Praise

"*It is good to give thanks*" and "*to sing praises*"

B. The Testimony of Praise

1. To His Lovingkindness

in the morning I anticipate that His mercies are new every day and will continue

2. To His Faithfulness

in the evening I reflect on His goodness throughout the day

C. The Instruments of Praise

lute
harp
lyre

D. The Object of Praise

"*to the Lord*"
"*to Thy name, O Most High*"

to the Lord who has done great works on our behalf to make us glad

II. (:5-9) THE WICKED CAN'T COMPREHEND THE GOD OF MAJESTY AND ARE DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION

A. They Can't Comprehend the God of Majesty

1. He is Majestic in His Works

"*How great are Thy works*"

2. He is Majestic in His Wisdom

"*Thy thoughts are very deep*"

3. He is Majestic in His Worship

"*on high forever*" and deserves our worship

Why can't they comprehend?

they are senseless = have no knowledge
they are stupid

B. They Are Destined for Destruction

1. Their Temporary Prosperity sets them up for Destruction
   "*sprouted up like grass*"
   "*flourished*"

2. Their Destiny is in contrast to the Permanent Reign of the God of Majesty
   "*But Thou, O Lord, art on high forever*"

3. Their Character Determines Their Destiny

   a. Their Character = Wicked
      enemies of God
      those who do iniquity

   b. Their Destiny = Destruction
      will perish
      will be scattered

III. (:10-15) THE RIGHTEOUS GROW STRONG AND FRUITFUL IN THE PRESENCE OF THE GOD OF MAJESTY

A. Their Growth and Strength Come from the Lord

1. Planted by the Lord

2. Grow like a cedar in Lebanon

3. Flourish like a palm tree

4. Exalted in power like the horn of a wild ox

B. Their Growth and Strength Are in the Presence of the Lord

"*in the house of the Lord*"

"*in the courts of our God*"

C. Their Mature Growth Yields the Fruit of Continued Testimony to the Lord

1. Old Age does not diminish the fruit

   still full of vitality: "*full of sap and very green*"

2. Old Age only matures the Testimony

"*the Lord is upright*"

"*He is my rock*"

"*there is no unrighteousness in Him*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) The psalmist tells us the deep and profound thoughts of God are impossible for the foolish and stupid to comprehend. As a Christian with God's Spirit in you, are there any of God's thoughts that are still restricted from your searching out and understanding them?

2) Why do evildoers and wicked people seem to succeed in life, apart from God's blessing?

3) How do the cries of your enemies impact you? Are you able to pray for them and their needs, even if they are seeking to harm you? What would God have you do?

4) Are physical limitations or advancing years any excuse to not be active about the Lord's work? What type of ministry or service can you envision doing in your later years?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Re vv.1-3 – "The propriety of praise of God…
'*Good*' seems to be a rather colorless word for describing how '*salutary*' and '*delightful*' (Kirkpatrick) it is to praise the Lord. Luther interprets well when he renders the word *koestlich* (*precious*). For to tell the truth, one of the finest undertakings that can occupy any man at any time is to praise the Lord. It is not inappropriate to assert that man was essentially created for this purpose. The angels appear to fulfill this purpose much more perfectly than does man. To have the day that is to be '*sanctified*' set apart for this holy occupation is most fitting though it may never have been the original purpose of the author of the psalm to set it apart for use on the Sabbath. The verb for '*singing praises*' in the second member of the verse comes from the root from which the distinctive Hebrew word for '*psalm*' is derived."

Yates: "An individual with great confidence in the righteous judgment of God here expresses his thanksgiving. His confidence goes beyond theory or formal theology, for it is derived from personal experience. The use of the psalm as a hymn for the weekly observance of the Sabbath is attested by ancient Jewish sources. The notation in verse 3 of the instruments to be used shows that it was probably designed for corporate worship."

Kidner: Re vv.12-13 – "*Flourish*, in both verses, is the same verb as '*sprout*' in verse 7, making a telling contrast to it which is intensified by the further details of the picture. The palm tree is the embodiment of graceful erectness; the cedar, of strength and majesty. Their natural dignity and stability are enhanced here by the honoured place they are pictured as occupying and the protection they accordingly enjoy (cf. 52:8). Setting metaphor aside, the connection between the house of the Lord and flourishing of the righteous is explained in the promise of Isaiah 40:31 (AV): '*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength …*'"

Maddux: Praises to God Commended

I. It is a joyous experience.
    - A. In thanks.
    - B. In singing praise.
    - C. In showing God's attributes.
        1. Steadfast Love.
        2. Faithfulness.
    - D. In orchestration.
    - E. In appreciation.
        1. Source of joy.
        2. Theme of songs.

II. It is based on facts.
    - A. In magnitude.
    - B. In depth of meaning.
        1. Beyond mental rebel.
        2. Beyond mental poverty.
        3. Presages God's pay day.
    - C. In exaltation eternally.
    - D. In triumph.
        1. Enemies defeated.
        2. His own people preserved.
            a. In defensive strength.
            b. In providence.
            c. In witnessing power by sight and hearing.
    - E. In provision.
        1. Continuous thriving.
        2. Continuous acceptance.
        3. Continuous fruitage.
        4. Continuous undergirding.
        5. Continous holiness.

TEXT: PSALM 93

TITLE: THE EVERLASTING KING

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD REIGNS FOREVER IN MAJESTY AND STRENGTH

I. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE ROYAL GARMENTS
- A. Clothed in MAJESTY
- B. Girded with STRENGTH

II. THE EXTENT OF THE ROYAL REIGN
- A. Forever
- B. Over All

III. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROYAL SUPERIORITY
- A. "*the world is firmly established, it will not be moved*"
- B. "*the Lord on high is mighty*"
  - above the floods
  - above the pounding waves
  - above the mighty breakers of the sea

  - There can be no question Who is in charge
  - No such thing as a Power Struggle when it comes to the Reign of the Lord

IV. THE EXECUTION OF THE ROYAL WILL
- A. Confirmation of Decrees and Testimonies
- B. Consistency of Character = Holiness

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) God's majesty is an inherent part of His nature. Can anything add or detract from that majesty?

2) When you are in the ocean, you have no control over its movement and power, or your position in it. In this psalm, we see God portrayed as even more powerful than the ocean. Does the prospect of a relationship with such an all-powerful being scare you and circumvent any intimacy you might have with Him?

3) Does it matter to you, that in such a relationship you have no control over your position in it?

4) Why do Christian denominations continue to introduce new laws and precepts for the laity to follow, when God says His laws remain the same?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux: The Lord, Our King
I. Clothed regally.
    A. With majesty.
    B. With strength.
    C. With completeness.
II. Established securely.
    A. In permanent world.
    B. By powerful waves of floods.
    C. At dissipation of natural force.
IV. Proved sufficiently.
    A. Because of testimonies.
    B. Because of befitting holiness.
    C. Because of perfect future.

VanGemeren: "God's reign is evident in his creation (i.e., both earth and sea) and in his acts of redemption. The rule of God is visible, as his glorious mantle spreads out all over his kingdom. '*Robed in majesty*' is a poetic expression for the glory associated with all of Yahweh's works. His works reveal the nature of the Great King: His glory and strength. His '*strength*' is a metaphor for his power in subduing all things to his control and is derived from military language…"

Spurgeon: Revivals of religion described.
I. God reigns.
II. His power is felt.
III. His kingdom is established.
IV. Opposition is overcome.
V. The word is valued.
VI. Holiness is cultivated.

Yates: Re vs. 5 – "God's kingship and might are evidenced by his moral laws or decrees. Permanence and immutability characterized the holiness God imparts to his house."

Perowne: Re vs. 5 – "The transition is abrupt, from the Majesty of God as seen in His dominion in the world of nature, to His revelation of Himself in His word. At the same time there is a connection between the two, as in xix. God who rules the world, He whose are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, has given His testimonies

to His people, a sure and faithful word, and has Himself come to dwell among them, making His house and His people holy.”

TEXT: PSALM 94

TITLE: THE GOD OF PAYBACKS

BIG IDEA:
THE GOD OF PAYBACKS WILL EXECUTE VENGEANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS TIMETABLE

INTRODUCTION:

"Vengeance is mine", says the Lord
Paybacks can be Hell

I. (:1-7) THE JUDGE OF THE EARTH OPERATES ON HIS OWN TIMETABLE

A. (:1-3) The Righteous Grow Impatient

1. Demand Vengeance
   a. Based on God's character as Judge of the earth; as God of Vengeance
   b. Based on the character of the proud = deserving of judgment

2. Question God's Timetable
   How can God continue to allow the wicked to get away with murder?

B. (:4-7) The Wicked Grow Increasingly Arrogant

1. Arrogant in Their Speech
   a. Putting others down
   b. Puffing themselves up

2. Arrogant in Their Opposition to God's People
   they don't realize who they are messing with
   "*Thy people*"
   "*Thy heritage*"

3. Arrogant in Their Exploitation of the Helpless = the very ones God has pledged to protect
   the widow
   the stranger
   the orphans

4. Arrogant in Their Denial of Accountability = major mistake on their part
   "*The Lord does not see*"
   "*Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed*"

II. (:8-11) THE WICKED WILL NOT ESCAPE UNPUNISHED

A. (:8) False Security is a Sign of Stupidity

"*senseless*"
"*stupid ones*"

B. (:9) The Creation is Accountable to the Creator
"*He who planted the ear*"
"*He who formed the eye*"

C. (:10) The Nations are Accountable to the God of History
"He who chastens the nations"

D. (:11) Man Has No Enduring Substance Apart from the God of Eternity
"*they are a mere breath*"

III. (:12-16) THE RIGHTEOUS NEED TO SUBMIT TO THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE AND TAKE A STAND AGAINST EVILDOERS

A. (:12-15) Submit to the Lord's Discipline

1. Discipline is a form of Blessing
"*whom Thou dost chasten*"
"*And dost teach out of Thy law*"

2. Relief in the midst of Oppression is Possible
"*relief from the days of adversity*"

3. God's Precious Promises Provide Hope
a. Promise of God's Presence
"*the Lord will not abandon His people*"
"*Nor will He forsake His inheritance*"

b. Promise of God's Righteous Kingdom
"*judgment will again be righteous and all the upright in heart will follow it*"

B. (:16) Take a Stand Against Evildoers

IV. (:17-23) GOD IS A REFUGE TO THE RIGHTEOUS BUT A DESTROYER OF THE DESPOTS

A. Refuge to the Righteous
1. the Lord is my Help -- saving me from death

2. the Lord's Lovingkindness upholds me

3. the Lord replaces my Anxieties with Hope and Joy

4. the Lord has been my Stronghold = the rock of my refuge

B. Destroyer of the Despots

1. Their Throne of Destruction stands Opposed to God

2. Their Decrees of Violence stand Opposed to the Righteous and the Helpless

3. Their Wickedness and Evil will be Their Downfall = Destroyed by the God of Vengeance

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Evildoers boast about the crimes they commit and the suffering they inflict. Is it wrong to pray an imprecatory prayer against the wicked?

2) How would you answer someone who doubts God's involvement and concern in one's own life, and uses senseless tragedies as his justification?

3) Is there a difference between God's punishment and His correction? Is it possible for the wicked to be happy and learn under God's rebuke?

4) Can unjust leaders claim that God is on their side when their laws permit injustice?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "A Plea for Vengeance
1-7. The Judge Sought. '*Shew thyself…lift up thyself*.'
8-11. The Unwise Rebuked. '*Understand, ye brutish … ye fools*.'
These two epithets classify the oppressors as cruel and lacking in common sense. The direct address (v.8) drives home the point that God is aware of all that goes on in the world.
12-15. The Righteous Vindicated. '*Blessed is the man*.'
16-23. The Judgment Realized. '*Who will rise up for me against the evildoers*?''

Maddux:
I. Vengeance belongs to God.
A. Imperative in prayer.
1. God, show Thyself.
2. God, exalt Thy Judgeship.
3. God, exercise Thy Judgeship.
B. Impatience in prayer.
1. How long shall evil win?
2. How long shall wicked talk abound?
3. How long shall wicked boast last?
C. Paradox in vengeful outlook.
1. God's people spoiled.

2. God's heritage exploited.
3. The defenseless are victimized.
4. False security in ignorance.
    a. Think God does not know.
    b. Think God will disregard if He knows.
5. Futile warning.
    a. Creator of ears hears.
    b. Creator of eyes sees.
    c. Curator of justice indicts.
    d. Omniscient God teaches.
    e. God's Omniscience reveals Man's empty thoughts.

II. Retributive action.
  A. God's chastisement pays.
    1. Brings blessedness.
    2. Teaches divine law.
    3. Gives rest from adversity.
    4. Produces pit of destruction.
  B. God's people not cast off.
    1. Inheritance not forsaken.
    2. Justice returned to the righteous.
    3. Upright in heart follow justice.
    4. Recruits called.
        a. God calls for standard bearers.
        b. Righteous call for help.
    5. Oppressed helped.
        a. Soul not silenced.
        b. Slipping feet stayed.
        c. Meditation brought soul delight.
    6. Evil rulers out of God's fellowship.
        a. Framers of mischief by law.
        b. Aggressors against the righteous.
        c. Condemners of innocent.
    7. God is bulwark for His own.
        a. Refuge.
        b. Protection.
  C. God's justice is sure.
    1. Evil pays back evil.
    2. Wickedness brings obliteration.

Tate: "It is worth noting that Ps 94:12-15 is found almost at the exact center of Pss 90-99. The message of these verses is central both for Ps 94 and for the entire section of Pss 90-99. These psalms were intended for the flagging faith of Israelites who were living under long-continued '*evil days*,' days '*passed in your [God's] wrath*' (90:9), when the vision of the future had grown dim and hope had waned. Some had turned to cruel and violent ways, making common cause with foreign oppressors, and disdaining the power of

Yahweh. Thus these psalms are designed to revitalize faith and create a new awareness of the kingship of Yahweh."

Spurgeon: "The writer sees evil-doers in power, and smarts under their oppressions. His sense of the divine sovereignty, of which he had been singing in the previous Psalm, leads him to appeal to God as the great Judge of the earth; this he does with much vehemence and importunity, evidently tingling under the lash of the oppressor. Confident in God's existence, and assured of his personal observation of the doings of men, the Psalmist rebukes his atheistic adversaries, and proclaims his triumph in his God: he also interprets the severe dispensation of Providence to be in very deed most instructive chastisements, and so he counts those happy who endure them. The Psalm is another pathetic form of the old enigma—'Wherefore do the wicked prosper?' It is another instance of a good man, perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good."

TEXT: PSALM 95

TITLE: THANKSGIVING DAY

BIG IDEA:
KEEP YOUR HEART TENDER FOR PRAISING THE LORD JOYFULLY AND WORSHIPPING THE LORD HUMBLY

(some major points and commentary from John Cobb)

I. (:1-5) PRAISE THE LORD JOYFULLY

A. (:1-2) Call to Praise the Lord Joyfully

1. "*Let us*" -- Corporate emphasis; not enough to praise the Lord on your own
2. Emphasis on Attitude = Joy, Thanksgiving
3. "*To*" the rock of our salvation
   not just about Him
   safe place of refuge -- look at all the times the Lord delivered Israel
4. Privilege of coming before His presence

Application: The Lord is worthy of our best praise; we need to spend time daily with Him; we need to be excited in our corporate worship

B. (:3-5) Reason: -- The Greatness of God

1. As compared to other little gods like the idols worshipped by the other nations
   cf. 1 Samuel 5:2ff Dagon no match for the King above all gods

2, As compared to any of the wonders or powers of Nature
   - the depths of the earth
   - the peaks of the mountains
   - the sea
     cf. Jonah 1:9ff the Lord able to quiet the sea and cause the panicked pagan sailors to worship Him
   - the dry land

II. (:6-7A) WORSHIP THE LORD HUMBLY

A. (:6a) Call to Worship the Lord Humbly (worship; bow down; kneel)

B. (:6b-7a) Reasons:

1. The Lord created us -- every life is a gift from God; He has a plan for each one of us
   Who are we to criticize our Maker
2. He cares for us daily as a shepherd takes care of the sheep
   protecting us
   feeding us

III. (:7b-11) WARNING: KEEP YOUR HEART TENDER

A. By Listening to the Lord daily

B. By not hardening your heart through unbelief and bitterness
Historical Reminder -- don't repeat the national disaster of Meribah
Complaining: Is the Lord still with us? He doesn't seem to be taking care of us

C. By remembering the Lord's gracious provision in the past instead of testing the Lord

D. By not getting the Lord angry at you
God hated that generation with contempt -- "loathed"
they erred in their heart
they do not know God's ways

E. By Focusing on the Goal = entering the promised Rest

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) We are to praise the Rock who saves us. How does the image of a rock help your understanding of being saved and the assurance of your salvation?

2) Everything and everyone belongs to God and is under his care. What can you learn from God's shepherding stewardship of you, that you can apply in your stewardship responsibilities within the family He's placed you?

3) When God tells you to listen to what He says, what is it He is really telling you to do?

4) Can you be stubborn in heart but still pleasing to God and helpful to others?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "The supreme thing in worship is to learn how to rest in God. Rest means to depend upon God's activity and not mine. Hebrews defines it, 'he that has entered into rest has ceased from his own works,' {cf, Heb 4:10}. That is what rest is. It is really mental health, peace of heart, peace of mind, a sense of living out of adequacy. That is what God wants for you and me. He wants us to be adequate, to be able to cope with whatever may come. That adequacy is his provision for us. It will come to us as we hearken to his word. There are many things that we need to learn about this, and his word will guide us along the way. But if we do not hearken to his words we can worship for forty years and at the end of it we shall have so hardened our hearts that God may finally say, 'You shall not enter into my rest,' {also cf, Heb 3:11}."

Ogilvie: “The heart, in the Hebrew sense used in the Psalms, means our intellect, will, and emotions—that inner dimension which affects the person we become outwardly. Our capacity to think, decide, and express emotions is the point of contact we have with the Spirit of God. With our hearts we can comprehend the greatness of God, decide to do great things for Him and by His power, and become great people who are able to express His love, forgiveness, and compassion.

… Our desire is to discover wholeness in which our thought, will, and emotions are under the control and guidance of the Spirit.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will be speaking of the heart in this broader, more inclusive sense. My goal is for us to avoid either soft heads or hard hearts. Rather, when life presents its usual blend of delights and difficulties we can gain the Lord’s perspective, receive His power to do His will, and become channels of His passion in the expression of emotional warmth and joy…

What is a hardened heart? It is the intellectual rigidity, the volitional obstinance, and the emotional unresponsiveness that blocks what the Lord has to say to us in any day.”

Maddux: “A Call to Worship

I. Communion in worship.
   - A. In song.
   - B. In joyous shout.
   - C. In thanksgiving.
   - D. In *all* worship.

II. God is worthy of worship.
   - A. In greatness.
   - B. In regality.
   - C. In sustaining power.
   - D. In creative power.

III. Invitation to worship.
   - A. In willingness.
   - B. In humility.
   - C. In recognition.
   - D. In acknowledgment.
   - E. In timeliness.
   - F. In remembering.

IV. Unacceptable worship.
   - A. Rebellious in heart.
   - B. Stubborn in testings.
   - C. Determined in blindness.
   - D. Retentive in error.
   - E. Irreligious in knowledge.
   - F. Forbidden in rest.”

Clarke: “REACHING REDEMPTION REST

I. THE GLAD WORSHIP OF THE PEOPLE (1-7b). THE SUMMONS.
   1. The Exhortation (1-2).
   2. The Foundation (3-5). Jehovah’s Relation to the Earth.

Sovereign Control. '*For*.'

3. The Exhortation (6).
4. The Foundation (7ab). Jehovah's Relation to Israel. Shepherd Care. '*For*.'

II. THE GREAT WISH FOR THE PEOPLE (7c). THE SOLICITUDE. An Invitation of Grace.

III. THE GRAVE WARNING TO THE PEOPLE (8-11). THE SERMON.

1. The Exhortation (8). Time = To-day (implied from 7).
2. The Foundation (9). Place '*Where*.' Sin Perpetrated.
3. The Explanation (10). Time = Forty years.
4. The Frustration (11). Place '*Where*.' Sin Punished."

TEXT: PSALM 96

TITLE: THE GREATNESS OF GOD

BIG IDEA:
GREAT IS THE LORD AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED –
FOR HIS GLORY AND STRENGTH

I. (:1-6) CALL TO THE WHOLE EARTH:
TO SING PRAISES TO THE LORD FOR HIS GLORY AND STRENGTH

A. Tone of Praise:
1. New and Fresh
"*a new song*"

2. Good News
"*Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day*"

B. Content:
1. His glory
"*Splendor and majesty*"

2. His wonderful deeds
"*Strength and beauty*"

C. Key: "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised*"

D. Proof: His Uniqueness established by His Role as Creator of the heavens
"*He is to be feared above all gods*"
Why? idols vs. Creator

II. (:7-10) CALL TO THE NATIONS:
TO WORSHIP THE LORD FOR HIS GLORY AND STRENGTH

A. Tone of Worship:
1. Holiness
"*Worship the Lord in holy attire*"

2. Fear of God
"*Tremble before Him, all the earth*"

3. Humility and Thanksgiving
"*Bring an offering, and come into His courts*"

B. Content:
1. Glory
"*the glory of His name*"

2. Strength

C. Key: "*the Lord Reigns*"

D. Proof: God is fully in Control

1. "*the world is firmly established, it will not be moved*"

2. "*He will judge the peoples with equity*"

III. (:11-13) CALL TO NATURE: TO REJOICE IN THE LORD FOR HIS RETURN TO THE EARTH TO REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. Tone of Rejoicing

1. Gladness and Joy

2. Exultation and Shouting:

B. Content: Glory and Strength as Coming King

C. Key: "*He is coming to judge the earth*" (and to govern)

D. Proof: He will reign in accordance with His character

1. "*He will judge the world in righteousness*"

2. "*And the peoples in His faithfulness*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Every Christian has a daily responsibility to proclaim God's salvation, and to tell of His glory and the miracles He performs. Do you share the good news of what God has done for you? How are you able to do this tactfully and on a consistent basis?

2) God knows that idols are powerless, worthless, and of no benefit to man. Why then does He concern Himself over their existence? What about idols is offensive to God?

3) The psalmist tells us that God's holiness is beautiful and causes us to worship and reverence Him. How does God reveal His holiness to you? When do you feel closest to Him and most worshipful?

4) The earth is going to rejoice when the Lord returns. If you are alive at that moment, will you also be rejoicing or will you be concerned about the impending judgment? What can you do now to be ready for the Lord's return?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: "This has been called, 'A Missionary Melody.' The nation (Israel), the 'nothings' (idols), the nations (Gentiles) and nature are all seen here witnessing to the supremacy of Jehovah. Fresh mercies demand fresh thanks (1). Our praises should be renewed with each returning day (2). We may appeal to the works of creation as proof of Jehovah's reality and power (5)."

Kidner: Re vs. 11 – "The belief of fallen man that righteousness, truth (i.e., dependability), the rule of justice, and the Lord Himself are the enemies of joy, is scouted by this passage. Where God rules (it implies), His humblest creatures can be themselves; where God is, there is singing. At the creation *'the morning stars sang together'*; at His coming, the earth will at last join in again; meanwhile the Psalter itself shows what effect His presence has on those who, even through a glass, darkly, already see His face."

Spurgeon: quoting John Gill Re vs 3 – "*'Declare his glory'* – what a glorious person the Messiah is; the brightness of his Father's glory; having all the perfections of Deity in him; how the glory of God appears in him, and in all that he has done; and especially in the work of redemption, in which the glory of divine wisdom, power, justice, truth, and faithfulness, love, grace, and mercy, is richly displayed; say what glory he is advanced unto, having done his work, being highly exalted, set at the right hand of God and crowned with glory and honour, and what a fulness of grace there is in him, for the supply of his people; and what a glory is on him, which they shall behold to all eternity."

Gaebelein: "The next Psalms, from the ninety-sixth to the one hundredth celebrate prophetically the manifestation of Jehovah and His reign on and over the earth. We call them the singing Psalms. The groans have ceased, and the singing has begun, because '*Jehovah reigneth.*' Ritualistic denominations use these Psalms as if all is now found accomplished in Christendom, but they overlook the prophetic feature. So do many of our psalm-singing Presbyterians, who spiritualize these Psalms and read into them the spiritual reign of Christ in the Church. But these Psalms are prophetic throughout. They look forward to the day when He appears, when the Messianic kingdom as revealed to David in a previous Psalm (the 72) has come, when righteousness and peace are enthroned through Him, who is the King of righteousness and the King of peace."

TEXT: PSALM 97

TITLE: THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD

BIG IDEA:
THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD MAKES THE RIGHTEOUS GLAD AND THE WICKED TREMBLE

I. (:1-6) THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD HAS COSMIC IMPLICATIONS

The Simple Truth ="*The Lord Reigns*"
-- looking forward especially to fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom when that reign on earth will be evident

A. The Whole Earth Rejoices
"*let the earth rejoice*"
"*let the many islands be glad*"

B. The King on His Throne Is Awesome

1. Awesome in Mystery
"*clouds and thick darkness surround Him*"

2. Awesome in Holiness
"*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne*"

3. Awesome in Judgment
"*Fire goes before Him*"
"*and burns up His adversaries round about*"

C. The Whole Earth Trembles
"*His lightnings lit up the world*"
"*the earth saw and trembled*"
"*the mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord,*
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth"

D. All People Witness the Testimony of His Glorious Reign

II. (:7-9) THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD DESERVES LOYAL WORSHIP

The Simple Call = "*Worship God*"

A. God's Perfection Makes Idolatry a Disgrace
"*Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images*"
"*who boast themselves of idols*"

B. God's People Delight in Worshiping the Righteous King

"*Zion heard this and was glad*"

"*the daughters of Judah have rejoiced"*

"*because of thy judgments, O Lord*"

C. God's Position Is Unrivaled

"*Thou art the Lord Most High over all the earth*"

"*Thou art exalted far above all gods*"

III. (:10-12) THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD INSPIRES HOLINESS AND JOY

A. Love for God Must Issue in Holy Living

"*Hate evil, you who love the Lord*"

B. Aside: God's Love for Us Includes Preservation and Deliverance

"*Who preserves the souls of His godly ones*"

"*He delivers them from the hand of the wicked*"

C. Joy and Thanksgiving Should Overflow

"*Light is sown like seed for the righteous*"

"*and gladness for the upright in heart*"

"*Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones*"

"*And give thanks to His holy name*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) God rules over all He has created, and He is not hesitant in making that fact known. How has God made His kingship visible to you? What is most attractive to you about God as King, and what aspect remains a mystery?

2) God is portrayed many ways in Scripture, such as: a holy and righteous judge, a victorious and powerful king, a loving father, the creator of all things and the sustainer of life. A limited view of God results in a limited and unbalanced response by us to Him. How have you chosen to relate to God? What role do you see Him playing in your life? Can that role be expanded to result in a deeper personal commitment by you to God, that would bring with it greater glory for Him?

3) Why do people who love the Lord hate evil? Do we see non-believers as evil people living in darkness apart form the light of God's love, or is it their actions and words that are evil and not the people themselves?

4) Why would joy be the result of honesty? If honesty causes us to possess joy, why do we dread the honest confrontation that is necessary to expose sin in another's life, even when God has directed us to do so?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacDonald: "As the Psalm opens, the Lord Jesus Christ has taken His throne. The crowning day has come. And there is world-wide rejoicing. The distant isles and coastlands have never known such gladness.

The King's arrival is described in symbolical terms that inspire the deepest reverential awe. First of all, He is swathed in clouds and thick darkness—a reminder that our Lord is often mysteriously hidden from the eyes of men and majestically inscrutable as to His ways. How little we know of Him! Then righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. His is the ideal government—a beneficent monarchy—where there are no miscarriages of justice, no perversions of justice, no perversions of the truth.

Great sheets of fire sweep before Him, consuming those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8). The lightnings of His judgments illuminate the countryside. People look on in terror. This is the time when 'every mountain and hill shall be made low' (Isaiah 40:4), in other words, when everything that lifts itself against the knowledge of God shall be humbled."

Yates: Re vv.7-12 – "The manifestation of God as King makes evident a sharp contrast. Those who worship idols are put to shame, while the worshipers of the Lord are made glad. With this contrast in mind, the conclusion follows that Israel has a distinct duty to God. Those who rejoice at the coming of the King must even now love the Lord, hate evil, rejoice, and give thanks."

Leupold: "The rather simple progression of thought set forth in the psalm is as follows;
a) What manner of king the Lord is (vv. 1-3)
b) Past evidence of His mighty rule (vv. 4-6)
c) The twofold reaction His kingship calls forth (vv.7-9)
d) How the Lord's saints appropriate this truth (vv. 10-12)"

Spurgeon: "'*The Lord reigneth.*' This is the watchword of the Psalm—Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith. Saints draw comfort from these words, and only rebels cavil at them."

Spurgeon: quoting Henry Grove Re vs. 12 – "'*Rejoice in the Lord.*' I. Our rejoicing in the Lord denotes our taking a very sincere and cordial pleasure in whatever relates to the ever-blessed God, particularly his existence, perfections, and providence; the discoveries of his will to us, especially in his word; the interest we have in him, and the relations wherein we stand to him; his continual protection, guidance and influence; his gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship; and, finally, the hope he has given us of fulness of joy, in his beatific and most glorious presence above. II. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys; otherwise it is a joy.

unworthy of him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us. III. Whatever else we rejoice in, we are to rejoice in such a manner, that we may be properly said to rejoice in the Lord, even when other things are the immediate occasions of our joy."

TEXT: PSALM 98

TITLE: NEW SONG OF CELEBRATION

BIG IDEA:
BREAK OUT OF YOUR RUT AND SING A NEW SONG OF SHOUTS OF JOY

Important theme throughout the Psalms:
33:3 "*Sing to Him a new song*"
40:3 "*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to out God*"
96:1 "*Sing to the Lord a new song*"
98:1 "*Sing to the Lord a new Song, For He has done wonderful things*"
144:9 "*I will sing a new song to Thee, O God*"
149:1 "*Sing to the Lord a new song*"

INTRODUCTION:

Stuck in a rut is a bad place to be. Our Old Song gets tiresome to us -- and you can believe that the Lord is sick of it too. What we need is to sing the New Song that the Lord has put in our heart. The song of Joy. The song of Enthusiasm. The song of Praise. The song of Victory.

I. (:1-3) CELEBRATING THE VICTORY OF THE KING:

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OLD SONG AND THE NEW SONG

A. Boredom vs. Excitement

"*For He has done wonderful things*"

1. The Old Song is one of Boredom
   example of Solomon in Ecclesiastes -- "Vanity of vanity"

2. The New Song is one of Excitement
   the Magnificat -- song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55)
   How excited do you think Mary was?
   How excited do you think Hannah was? (1 Samuel 2:1-10)

B. Defeat vs. Victory

"*His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him*"

1. The Old Song is one of Grumbling and Defeat
   cf. The children of Israel as God delivered them from bondage in Egypt and brought them into the promised land:

   a. Despairing when they reached the Red Sea, pursued by the Egyptians
      Exod. 14:10-14

   b. Grumbling because they had no water Exod. 15:22-24

c. Grumbling because they had no food Exod. 16:3

d. Grumbling again about lack of water Exod. 17:3

e. Grumbling again because they didn't like the menu Num. 11:1-10

f. Negative report of the spies: We can't take the land Num. 13:28-31

2. The New Song is one of Victory
song of Moses: Exod. 15:1-21

cf. Faith of Caleb and Joshua Num. 13:30

C. Pride vs. Dependence
"*The Lord has made known His salvation;*
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations"

1. The Old Song is one of Pride
cf. Nebuchadnezzar -- Daniel 4:28-30

2. The New Song is one of Dependence

D. Loneliness and Disappointment vs. Love and Security
"*He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel*"

1. The Old Song is one of Loneliness and Disappointment

2. The New Song is one of Love and Security
cf. Book: Song of Solomon

E. Ignorance vs. Enlightenment
"*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*"

1. The Old Song is one of Darkness and Ignorance

2. The New Song is one of Light and Enlightenment

II. (:4-6) CELEBRATING THE REIGN OF THE KING

A. With Shouts of Joy

B. With Songs of Joy

C. With Instruments of Joy
lyre / sound of melody

trumpets / sound of the horn

III. (:7-9) CELEBRATING THE RETURN OF THE KING TO JUDGE (TO MAKE ALL THINGS RIGHT)

A. Global Anticipation by all those who will benefit

1. All of God's Creation = "*the world*"
   let the sea roar and all it contains
   let the rivers clap their hands
   let the mountains sing together for joy

2. All of God's People = "*those who dwell in it*"

B. Global Judgment
   with righteousness
   with equity

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What must you do in order to bring before the Lord new and different songs than you've sung in the past?

2) The Lord has shown Himself to be powerful, able to save and bring about victory. Can you recognize God's power and victory in areas of your life that needed His saving grace?

3) If God causes nature to move -- out of praise for Him -- does He expect anything less from us when we worship?

4) What will be God's yardstick for judging the world when He comes?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:

I. Praise in song.
   A. A new song required.
   B. Past experiences are augmented.

II. Inspiration for song.
   The marvels of God's doings.
   1. Victory through holiness.
   2. Salvation manifested.
   3. Righteousness openly revealed.

4. Mercy remembered.
5. Truth brought to mind for Israel.
6. Revelation to all.

III. Magnitude of song.

A. All the earth to take part.
B. Not to be soft-pedaled.
C. Praise by voice.
D. Praise by instruments.
E. Praise by natural forces.
    1. By wind-tossed sea.
    2. By all denizens of earth.
    3. By sounds of storm.
    4. By echoes of hills.
F. Praise in judgment.
    1. The Lord brings righteousness in judgment.
    2. The judgment is in equity.

Scroggie: "Old songs become new when the heart sings them with new joy, born of a new experience. The old song was that which celebrated the deliverance form Egypt (Exod. xv. 2, 6, 11, 12), but this new deliverance makes this song new."

Leupold: "…such judgment is a matter for which God is greatly to be praised, in other words, judgment has something constructive about it. It accomplishes so much of lasting good that men should rejoice exceedingly that the Lord does judge. The servile fear of the unregenerate and the typical approach of our day to the very idea of judgment are quite foreign to the thinking of this psalm."

Spurgeon: Re vv.4-6 – "In these three verses we are taught how to praise the Lord… Every tongue must applaud, and that with the vigour which joy of heart alone can arouse to action. As men shout when they welcome a king, so must we. Loud hosannas, full of happiness, must be lifted up. If ever men shout for joy it should be when the Lord comes among them in the proclamation of his gospel reign. John Wesley said to his people, 'Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.' … Let every form of exultation be used, every kind of music pressed into the service till the accumulated praise causes the skies to echo the joyful tumult. There is no fear of our being too hearty in magnifying the God of our salvation; only we must take care that the song comes from the heart; otherwise the music is nothing but a noise in his ears, whether it be caused by human throats, or organ pipes, or far-resounding trumpets. Loud let our hearts ring out the honours of our conquering Saviour; with all our might let us extol the Lord who has vanquished all our enemies, and let our captivity captive. He will do this best who is most in love with Jesus."

TEXT: PSALM 99

TITLE: THE REIGN OF A HOLY KING

BIG IDEA:
3 DISTINCTIVES OF THE LORD'S REIGN AS A HOLY KING

I. (:1-3) HE REIGNS IN MAJESTY -- SOVEREIGNTY

A. Majesty is Based on Greatness and Uniqueness

1. "*The Lord reigns*" -- He is the only one who reigns; He reigns supreme

2. "*He is enthroned above the cherubim*"

3. "*The Lord is great in Zion*"

4. "*He is exalted above all the peoples*"

5. He has a "*great and awesome name*"

B. The Only Response to Majesty is Awe and Praise

1. Awe
   "*let the peoples tremble*"
   "*let the earth shake*"
2. Praise
   "*let them praise Thy great and awesome name*"

REFRAIN (:3) "*Holy is He*"

II. (:4-5) HE LOVES JUSTICE -- RIGHTEOUSNESS

"*justice*"
"*equity*"
"*justice and righteousness*"

REFRAIN (:5) "*Exalt the Lord our God,*
and Worship at His footstool;
Holy is He"

III. (:6-9) HE ANSWERS PRAYERS -- FAITHFULNESS

A. God's Appointed Leaders Call Upon God for Help

Mose and Aaron: priests
Samuel: prophet

B. God Answers the Cries for Help / Deliverance / Wisdom

C. Revelation Implies a Commitment to Obedience

"*He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud*"
"*They kept His testimonies and the statute that He gave them*"

D. Forgiveness Is Part of the Total Package
In order for God to answer the prayers of sinners, He must first forgive them

REFRAIN (:9)"*Exalt the Lord our God,*
And Worship at His holy hill;
For holy is the Lord our God"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Not only is God holy, but His name is holy as well, and is to be praised and feared for what it signifies. What does His name mean to you? Do you give His name, and the use of it, less respect than God Himself?

2) Does God's sense of fairness and justice take into account man's frailties and inabilities? If God dealt fairly with you, what justice would He impart?

3) As a Christian today, do you have an advantage over Moses, Aaron and Samuel in the way in which you can approach God?

4) How can God be forgiving and still discipline you for your wrongs?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux: "The Lord Reigneth
I. The people stand in awe.
A. The King is fixed.
B. The earth moves.
C. The Lord is great.
1. In Zion.
2. In exaltation.
3. In Name.
4. In Holiness.
5. In strength.
6. In judgment.
7. In equity.
8. In execution.
9. In righteousness.
D. Worship in humility.
II. The past gives testimony.

A. The law – The Law Giver.
B. The priesthood.
C. The prophet-judge.
D. Their answered pleas.
E. God spoke to them.
    1. In cloudy pillar.
    2. In forgiveness.
    3. In chastisement.

III. The present calls for worship.
A. The object of worship.
B. The place of worship.
C. The motive for worship."

Kidner: "So the theme of holiness, enriched by its unfolding in the two stanzas of the psalm, returns in a refrain which is a partner to verse 5. It is not without point that the motto phrase, '*Holy is he*!' (3, 5), is now expanded and given warmth, to read (in its actual word-order) '*For holy is the Lord our God*!' The majesty is undiminished, but the last word is now given to intimacy. He is holy; He is also, against all our deserving, not ashamed to be called ours. Well may we worship."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 4 – "God is the king, the mercy-seat is his throne, and the sceptre which he sways is holy like himself. His power never exerts itself tyranically; he is a sovereign, and he is absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only… Justice is not merely established, but executed in God's kingdom; the laws are carried out, the executive is as righteous as the legislative. Herein let all the oppressed, yea, and all who love that which is right, find large occasion for praise. Other nations under their despots were the victims and the perpetrators of grievous wrong, but when the tribes were faithful to the Lord they enjoyed an upright government within their own borders, and acted with integrity towards their neighbours. That kingcraft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings."

Heber: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee:
Holy! Holy! Holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, Blessed Trinity."

TEXT: PSALM 100

TITLE: THE GRATEFUL LIVING
(the name of our Praise Group -- as opposed to the Grateful Dead)

BIG IDEA:
WE ARE GLAD AND WE ARE GRATEFUL
BECAUSE HE IS GOD AND HE IS GOOD

INTRODUCTION:
A Psalm for Thanksgiving; How do you spend Thanksgiving?
What type of thankful tone do you bring with you to worship God each Lord's Day?
What's the condition of our heart? Is it truly Glad and Grateful?
What's the expression of our lips?
Do we serve God cheerfully and joyfully or out of a sense of drudgery?

I. (:1-2) WE ARE GLAD -- 3 Ways to Express Our Gladness to the Lord
1. "*Shout joyfully to the Lord*"

2. "*Serve the Lord with gladness*"

3. "*Come before Him with joyful singing*"

II. (:3) BECAUSE HE IS GOD
1. Statement of Fact: "*Know that the Lord Himself is God*"

2. Confirmed by Creation: "*It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves*"

no such thing as a "self-made man"

3. Confirmed by Ownership: "*We are His people and the sheep of His pasture*"
Ownership is a good thing here:
Security in being "*His people*"
Provision for the needs of the sheep by the Good Shepherd

III. (:4) WE ARE GRATEFUL
1. Expression of Thanksgiving and Praise
"*Enter His gates with thanksgiving*"
"*And His courts with praise*"

2. Expression of Thanksgiving and Praise
"*Give thanks to Him*"
"*bless His name*"

IV. (:5) BECAUSE HE IS GOOD
1. Statement of Fact: "*For the Lord is good*"

2. Confirmed by His lovingkindness: "*His lovingkindness is everlasting*"

3. Confirmed by His faithfulness: "*And His faithfulness to all generations*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of songs does God want you to bring before Him?

2) We are to serve God with joy and with a song in our heart. Is our service to God meaningful when done only out of a sense of obedience apart from being joyful?

3) God calls Himself our shepherd and refers to us as His sheep. Do you live your life with that kind of dependence on God, that a sheep would have for its shepherd? How can you develop a greater dependence on Him?

4) Why would you sing God's praises and thanksgiving before men and not just before God, to whom the praise is directed?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stott: "We are summoned to worship Him not just because he has made us and taken us to Himself to be his own, but because He will stay by us. The heavenly potter will never discard His work; He will persist in fashioning it into a vessel that is beautiful and useful. The heavenly shepherd will never abandon his sheep; He will make them lie down in green pastures and lead them beside still waters. His goodness and mercy will follow them all the days of their life. The vessel is safe in the potter's hand. The sheep are safe in the shepherd's arms."

Ogilvie: "The psalm makes a strong case for gladness as the sure sign that we are living by grace and not our efforts. We are reminded that God is in charge, that we belong to Hm, and that His mercy is everlasting….

The best gift we can give others is to recapture the goodness of the Lord for us. That will overflow in a joyous attitude and countenance that will inspire and encourage others."

Maddux: "Earthwide Call to Godward.

I. To praise God joyfully.
II. To serve God with gladness.
III. To come to God with singing.
IV. To know our Lord and God.
V. To acknowledge our Creator.
VI. To worship God completely.
    A. At His place.

B. With praise.
C. With thanksgiving.
D. With reverence.
E. For His goodness.
F. For His steadfast love.
G. For everlasting TRUTH."

Clarke: "It might be well if Christians knew more of the abandonment to holy joy expressed in these psalms. Such worship must be spontaneous and not imitated, cf. Eph. v. 19. Perfection and rest are both found in God. All service should be joyous (2)."

Scroggie: "In Psalm xcix, the two dominating notes are holiness and sovereignty; here, they are gladness and universality. GLADNESS. We cannot always sing, but we should not always sigh. In the music of life are minor notes, but there should also be swelling notes of triumph. Six times in three verses is this note of gladness struck (1, 2, 4). And with good reason, having regard for the God who claims our praise. UNIVERSALITY. The Psalm begins and ends on this note: '*all the earth*' (1); '*all generations*' (5). We should take time to be impressed by this, because it was not until more than five hundred years later that the door of the gospel was opened to the Gentiles. Clearly, then, the Psalm is prophetic, and reaches beyond even our time to the day when the prayer shall be fulfilled, 'Hallowed be Thy naem, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'"

Carr: A CALL TO THANKSGIVING
I. (V. 1-2) OUR ENTRANCE INTO HIS PRESENCE
II. (V. 3) OUR ENLIGHTENMENT CONCERNING HIS PERSON
There is:
A. A Word About His Power
B. A Word About His Purchase - The Psalmist says that "*we are His people*."
C. A Word About His Provisions - This verse reminds us that we are His flock. As such, we are under the protective oversight of the Good Shepherd.
III. V. 4-5 OUR EXPRESSION OF HIS PRAISES
A. Praise Should Be Visible - The Psalmist said that we are to enter His gates and His courts with praise. This isn't an activity that was to be done in a corner where one could be hidden from the view of others. Simply put, there should be no shame attached to our worship of the Lord.
(Ill. It may help us to look at Hebrew worship practices and see how they visibly praised the Lord.
1. Clapping - Psa. 47:1, "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." This does not convey the idea of applause, but of a sudden, loud clap that draws attention to the fact that God is receiving praise from a worshiper.
2. Lifting of Hands - Psalm 63:4, "Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."; Psalm 134:2, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD." When the hands were lifted toward Heaven, it was a sign of adoration and praise. It was symbolic of lifting up the Lord and glorifying Him.

3. Dancing - 2 Sam. 6:14, "And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod." When David contemplated the presence and greatness of the Lord, he got a case of happy feet and praised the Lord unashamedly before all those present.)

B. Praise Should Be Vocal - In verses 1 and 2, the Psalmist used words like "noise" (which means to shout) and "singing". Neither of these can be done in silence! True praise to God manifests itself in a vocal expression!

C. Praise Should Be Volitional - That is, it is to be an act of the will. According to verse 5, God is good, He is faithful and His truth will stand forever. When these things are considered then we are to make a rational decision to praise His Name because of the reality of who He is.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Celebrate the Goodness of God**

Introduction: From day one, Satan has been on a campaign to smear the truth about God's goodness so that people will not follow him. Did you know that Satan is on a campaign to give God bad press? He wants people to look at God negatively. In short, we give God good press while Satan is out there trying to give God bad press. And we give God good press by the way we live and the way that we act. We show the world that God is good, and we also show the world this by how we respond to his goodness to us. And so our job as believers is to give good press to our good God, by not spinning or bending the truth, but by conveying by our demeanor and by our words how excellent He truly is.

The word praise means confession. And in this case, it means to confess the character and the works of God. Chiastic structure to the whole Psalm:

Verses 1 and 2 are three commands to worship God.

The very central verse, verse 3, is a call to know God.

And then the last two verses, 4 and 5, are again three commands to worship God.

Another way of looking at it is to note that there are four verses of exhortation followed by one verse giving the reason for the exhortation.

Or there's another way to look at this. There are **seven commands** that tell us how we should respond to the goodness of God.

1. Verse one, shout joyfully.
2. Verse two, serve him.
3. Verse 2B, come before him.
4. Verse three, know God.
5. verse four, the first part, enter into his gates
6. and then give thanks and
7. bless his name.

Verse five gives the reason behind all these commands. *For the Lord is, what, good, and his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations.*

God's Goodness Demonstrated in His Character

So what are the reasons why we do this? Because God's goodness is demonstrated in his character. For the Lord is good. Goodness is just who God is. That's who he is. He's a good God.

His goodness is one of his many beautiful attributes. The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good and that all that God is. And all that he does is worthy of our praise and worthy of our approval. And the psalmist connects the goodness of God with the goodness of his actions. Just a few verses

God's Goodness Demonstrated in His Love
God's goodness is demonstrated, as the psalmist said here, in his character. But also it's demonstrated in his love. Look again in verse 5. *For his mercy is everlasting*.
Hesed = It really is a loyal love that will not let you go.

God's Goodness is Demonstrated in his Faithfulness.
Look again in verse number five. *and his truth endureth to all generations*. The word truth here, steadfastness or firmness or faithfulness. God is faithful. God is dependable. God does not change.

God doesn't have a bad day. He's changeless. His truth endures to all generation. He's not moody. where one day he acts different towards us, and the next day, another way. All his attributes are eternal, and he is true. He is faithful to his covenant promises. He is true to all his revealed purposes. He does not change in his purpose, and his plan, and his promises.

Big Idea: Three proper ways that we respond to the goodness of God.

I. With Joy – vv. 1-2
We should be joyful people. It was Martin Lloyd-Jones who wrote that unhappy Christians, to say the least, are a poor recommendation for the Christian's faith. He went on to say, you know, the devil's one object is to depress God's people so that if he can do that, he takes away your witness in the world because if you're a depressed, unhappy person, you're not a good witness for God. And so that's what the devil wants to do. In other words, he was saying an unhappy Christian is giving God bad press.

God wants his people to serve him with joy and gladness. But then another thing we see here, joy in the Lord should be **expressive, contagious**, should be expressed in how we serve the Lord, but joy in the Lord should be expressed in how we sing

II. With Submission – vs. 3
Verse 3 describes a relationship of submission to God, and submission is directly related to our thankfulness. If you're grumbling and griping about your circumstances, you're not subject to God's sovereign hand in your life. You don't really believe that he should be in control, that he should be sovereign over your life. You're implying that you could do a better job than God at running your life if God would just give you a chance to make the decisions and run your own life.

Why do we submit to Him? Well, three reasons here in verse three.
- We submit because He's the only God.
- we submit because he's the creator.

that means that he's also the judge. He makes the rules. He gets to write the rules and he gets to say what's right and what's wrong.

- We submit to him because he's the shepherd.

III. With Thankfulness – vs. 4

Why do we come to God's house and assemble together, pray? Because we're thankful. We bless his name. Bless his name means to praise him for who he is as revealed in his word and through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so do you recognize how good God is, and do you respond the right way to his goodness?

TEXT: PSALM 101

TITLE: INTEGRITY IN LIVING AND IN RULING

BIG IDEA:
GODLY LEADERS NEED TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

INTRODUCTION:

Very timely topic given the lack of integrity in U.S. politics; sunk to new depths under President Clinton
But compare church politicians as well

Psalm of David with Messianic application to the Millennial Kingdom

(think of application to various contexts of ruling -- including running your own business; church elders)

I. (:1-4) COMMITMENT TO PERSONAL INTEGRITY = HOW THE LEADER LIVES

It is not enough to just put on a good show in one's public life

A. Commitment to Personal Integrity Built on the Proper Foundation
"*Lovingkindness and justice of the Lord*"

B. Commitment to Personal Integrity Essential for God's Blessing
in fact it leads to an Expectation of that blessing

"*I will give heed to the blameless way*" (cf. similarity to requirements for elders)
"*I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart*"

"*When wilt Thou come to me*?" = expectation of God's presence and blessing

C. Commitment to Resist the Enemies of Personal Integrity

1. Looking at Junk = "*worthless thing*"
outright immoral things
time-wasters that have no lasting value

2. Giving in to Temptation to Backslide

3. Seduced by a perverse heart

4. Losing one's innocence over knowing evil

II. (:5-8) COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY = HOW THE LEADER RULES

A. Fight Against Slanderers

B. Fight Against the Proud and Arrogant

C. Show Favoritism to the Faithful = "*He who walks in a blameless way*"

D. Reject All Liars
"*He who practices deceit*"
"*He who speaks falsehood*"

E. Destroy the Wicked = "*all those who do iniquity*"

Realm you need to guard:
"*my house*" = house of David
"*the city of the Lord*"
"*the land*" = belongs to the Lord

"*Every morning*" = this is a constant battle; you must keep your discernment antenna active at all times

No Tolerance policy for evil

(Difference between personal wrongs -- remember Moses was the meekest of all men -- and how to respond in situations involving your responsibility to rule the organization)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can you live a blameless life and be innocent of wrongdoing? Is it possible to have a perfect heart?

2) We are told to live apart from the wicked. In living such a separated life, does that keep you from being effective in sharing the Gospel with those who need it most?

3) Jesus lived his life among sinners. Was that because He had no choice, being the only one to ever live a perfect life? How do Jesus' interactions with sinners compare with the counsel given in this psalm?

4) As Jesus' followers, how can we love the wicked without being influenced by them?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "Verses 2-4 are a statement of the king's ideals for his personal standards of loyalty to God, and verses 5-8 describe something of how he views his relationship with his subjects. The psalm could well have been used at the king's coronation, and thereafter at appropriate festivals."

Barnes: "These same principles, he says, should govern him in a higher relation – as a sovereign and monarch; for they were principles which were as needful in administering the government of a nation, as in a family; they were principles which a good man should take with him to all the public duties of life, whatever might be his rank, ver. 8."

Beisner: "The three great principles that David declares will regulate his conduct as king are these: lovingkindness or mercy (Hebre: *hesed*), justice or judgment (Hebrew: *mishpat*), and blamelessness, integrity, or innocence (Hebrew: *tamiym*). From his commitment to these principles, David declares, will flow all of his actions as king.

David discusses these principles in reverse order from how he introduces them. In verses 2-4, he tells what he means by blamelessness and how he will achieve it; in verses 5-8, he turns to justice and mercy, focusing in verse 5 on the practical effects of justice and in verses 6-8 on the effects of mercy (though, as we shall see, justice and mercy are so closely intertwined that the two ideas overlap in this psalm). At the close of verse 8, he hints at the grand design of it all by mentioning '*the city of the Lord*' – it appears that his goal is to make that city shine with righteousness, the wicked being cut off from it and the faithful exalted in it."

Scroggie: "We may safely asume that David wrote it at the beginning of his reign, and at the time when he had resolved to bring the Sacred Ark to Jerusalem from the house of Obed-edom (2 Sam. vi. 1-15). He had said: 'How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?' (2 Sam. vi. 9); and here he says: '*O when wilt Thou come unto me*?' (2). As by iniquity the Ark had been absent from the royal city, so only by righteousness could it be replaced. On such a course David resolves. This is indicated by the recurrence of '*will*' nine times, and of '*shall*' six times, and this decision is made in dependence upon the Lord.

The Psalm is in two main parts (1-4, 5-8); the first being personal, and the second, relative; the first, relating to the king's heart and home, and the second, to his court and city. First that which is within; then, that which is without. First what is private; then, what is public. First attention must be given to oneself; and then to others. This is the true and inevitable order. There cannot be a pure Court where there is a corrupt King; and no ruler can require that of his people which he declines to exhibit in his own person. If we would promote integrity around us, we must cultivate it within usl The home is the foundation of the State, and the heart is the basis of the throne. A true life is the noblest law."

TEXT: PSALM 102

TITLE: A GLIMMER OF LIGHT IN THE GLOOM OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

BIG IDEA:
THE LONELINESS AND DESPAIR OF SPIRITUAL SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CAN ONLY BE OFFSET BY A VISION OF THE ETERNALITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

I. (:1-7) THE SILENCE OF LONELINESS MAKES OUR HEART WASTE AWAY

A. (:1-2) NOTHING IS MORE FRUSTRATING THAN THE SILENCE OF GOD

Looking for Answers
Looking for Deliverance
Looking for Help

Lessons:

- Don't be surprised when times of spiritual loneliness and despair come
- God is not obligated to answer our cries for help immediately
- Don't confuse the silence of God with a lack of love or compassion
- Try to direct your vision to the larger, eternal picture rather than the immediate difficult circumstances

B. (:3-5) 3 IMAGES OF PHYSICAL SUFFERING COUPLED WITH DESPAIR

Burning up physically / wasted life
possibly some type of fever
"*my days have been consumed in smoke*" – sense of life being quickly burned up in meaningless emptiness (cf. Ecclesiastes)

Heart withered away / heart smitten like grass

Loss of appetite and loss of weight / loudness of groaning
the only noise is my own groaning

C. (:6-7) 3 IMAGES OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

1) a Pelican in the Desert
this is a sea bird; out of place and lost in the desert

2) an Owl in the Desert
an Owl should be in the forest; a suitable example of a lonely, isolated existence

3) a Lonely Bird on a housetop
birds like to fly in flocks; not sit abandoned alone on a housetop
somehow got separated from the flock in the migration and now sits alone

(everybody says I'm a "strange bird"!)

"*I lie awake*" – not even able to get any comfort or relief in sleep – tormented by being stuck alone in the pit of despair

(keep waiting for that email of encouragement and rescue … but it never comes)

II. (:8-11) THE HUMILIATION OF REJECTION COMPOUNDS THE DESPAIR

A. (:8) REPROACH OF ENEMIES
deride me
use my name as a curse

B. (:9) GRIEF AND ANGUISH FROM WITHIN
"*I have eaten ashes like bread*"
"*And mingled my drink with weeping*"

C. (:10) REJECTION BY GOD
1. Why? "*Because of thine indignation and Thy wrath*"
personal sin and responsibility is part of the equation

2. How? "*For Thou hast lifted me up and cast me away*"
no accident that you ended up in solitary confinement

D. (:11) REALITY: THE CLOCK IS TICKING
"*My days are like a lengthened shadow*"
"*I wither away like grass*"

III. (:12-17) THE PRAYER OF THE DESTITUTE FINDS ITS ANSWER IN THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF GOD'S PROGRAM

A. (:12) THE ETERNALITY OF GOD PUTS THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE
"*Thou, O Lord, dost abide forever*"
"*And Thy name to all generations*"

B. (:13) THE SUCCESS OF GOD'S PROGRAM COMES AT THE APPOINTED TIME
Based on God's Grace and Compassion
(talking here about God's Program for the nation of Israel involving restoration and millennial kingdom blessings)

C. (:14-15) THE REACTION TO THE REIGN OF GOD

1. His Servants rejoice and identify with the fortunes of Jerusalem
"*find pleasure in her stones*"
"*feel pity for her dust*"

2. The Nations
- "*fear the name of the Lord*"

- respond to the glory of God

D. (:16-17) THE ANSWER TO THE PRAYER OF THE DESTITUTE
"*built up Zion*"
"*appeared in His glory*"

IV. (:18-22) SOMETIMES FUTURE BLESSING MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER IMMEDIATE PERSONAL BLESSING

A. (:18) FUTURE PERSPECTIVE
"*for the generation to come*"
"*That a people yet to be created*"

B. (:19) HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE
"*He looked down from His holy height*"
"*From heaven the Lord gazed upon the earth*"

C. (:20) COMPASSIONATE PERSPECTIVE
"*to hear the groaning of the prisoner*"
"*to set free those who were doomed to death*"

D. (:21-22) MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE

V. (:23-28) MY WEAKNESS AND BREVITY CONTRASTED WITH HIS IMMUTABILITY AND ETERNALITY

A. MY WEAKNESS AND BREVITY

B. HIS IMMUTABILITY AND ETERNALITY
(see Hebrews 1:10-12 for the Messianic quotation)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Given that our life is so brief and our days are often "*consumed in smoke*", what can give our life significance and permanence? Can we remember any previous times of crisis where God delivered us? What does the present crisis teach us about God's character and our need to depend on him? When you feel overwhelmed, how you respond is a good indication of the amount of faith and trust you are placing in God to help you live your life. The psalmist knew he had access to God and was bold in approaching Him as a child would, demanding immediate attention and deliverance from his suffering. Do you do likewise, or do you grumble, complain and despair without hope? Knowing God's help is available and seeking it are two different things.

2) Meditate on the images of the three different birds in vv.6-7. In such times of loneliness when we feel so out of place and destitute, let's remember another bird = the sparrow. "His eye is on the sparrow and I know He cares for me." What are some of

the other biblical examples of the silence of God?

3) Can we appreciate the fact that some of God's promises are "*written for the generation to come*" (vs. 18)? What can help to give us an eternal perspective rather than always demanding immediate gratification?

4) What are some of the practical applications of the doctrine of the immutability of God? God never changes, but remains the same forever. Does His constancy lead you to praise Him and approach Him often for your own stability? Or do you feel discouraged seeing such a difference between your finite changeability and God's changelessness?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "The psalm is best understood as the prayer of an individual Israelite who sees an analogy between his own plight and that of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is in ruins, but God will restore it; the psalmist is in distress and God will deliver him. To this end, the psalmist makes his plea to the God who is eternal, the psalmist being weak and transient."

Barnes: "This plaintive poem was written by some pious exile towards the expiration of the seventy years of captivity, during which the people of Israel were detained in Babylon. The holy land was now lying desolate and uncultivated; its towns and cities were demolished; Jeruasalem was a heap of ruins ... In the midst, however, of this intense and accumulated grief, the devout author seeks to draw for himself and his distressed compatriots some consolation from the unchangeable existence, the universal providence, and the faithful promises of God… He at length takes refuge in the eternity of God, and the everlasting continuance of his kingdom…"

VanGemeren: "This psalm is classified as one of the seven penitential psalms (Pss 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). Some of these psalms are so designated because of their confessional nature; others are classed in this category because of their use within the Christian community. Psalm 102 is an example of the latter. It emphasizes the suffering and discipline often associated with sin (cf. vv.10, 23-24). The psalm exemplifies the literary genre of an individual lament. This lament arises out of an exilic situation, when the godly together with the wicked had been exiled from the land. For other exilic psalms, see 42, 43, 74, 79, 137…

A. Introductory Prayer (vv.1-2)
    B. Lament (vv.3-11)
        C. Promises (vv.12-22)
    B'. Lament (vv.23-27)
A'. Concluding Perspective (v.28)"

Yates: Re vv.12-22 – "The Restoration of the Nation. '*But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever*.' In contrast to the psalmist's transitory nature (v. 11), God endures. It is upon this truth that Zion's restoration is based."

Kidner: "Traditionally miscalled a penitential psalm (the fifth of the seven …), this is in fact the cry of one whose sufferings are unexplained, like Job's. As the title implies, it is a prayer which others who are near the end of their endurance can echo, finding words here that lead them '*into a larger place*'.

The troubles, to begin with, are private griefs, but later they are transcended by concern for Zion, whose destiny is glorious yet painfully slow in coming to fulfilment. A final passage draws out the contrast between the human time-scale and the Lord's eternity, bringing the psalm to a majestic conclusion which is quoted in praise of Christ in the opening chapter of Hebrews."

Ferguson: "Once overwhelmed with melancholy and pessimism, filled with uncertainty, and broken by his sense that God's face was hidden from him forever, he now looks forward, even beyond his own life span, with joyful anticipation and a deep sense of security in the glorious promises of his Lord…"

TEXT: PSALM 103

TITLE: BLESS THE LORD!

BIG IDEA:
FOUR PERSPECTIVES THAT ENCOURAGE US
TO KEEP ON BLESSING THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Opposite of Blessing the Lord = Cursing the Lord

cf. Job -- Satan kept hammering away at him with the Goal of trying to get Job to Curse God;
Finally even his wife gave up and cried out: "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" Apparently Blessing God instead of Cursing Him is a matter of personal integrity.

What helps us to keep on Blessing God?

FOUR PERSPECTIVES THAT ENCOURAGE US
TO KEEP ON BLESSING THE LORD

I. (:1-5) REMEMBER HIS BENEFITS PACKAGE

cf. Benefits Package offered by employer at work; too often we forget and take these things for granted; but they come at a high price for the employer

A. Pardons Iniquities

we could stop here and we would have said enough

B. Heals Diseases (both physical and spiritual)

C. Redeems from the Pit

not just from the eternal Pit of Hell
but from many temporal pitfalls along the way (cf. Pilgrim's Progress)

D. Crowns us with

1. Lovingkindness
2. Compassion

These are the two attributes of God that will be stressed in this Psalm

E. Satisfies us with Good Things

not exactly the picture of a mean old Scrooge

What does it take for God to satisfy you?
Cf. The children of Israel after being delivered from Egypt -- very tough to satisfy

them

Result: "youth is renewed like the eagle"
Freedom / Power

II. (:6-14) EXPECT GOD TO CONTINUE TO CARE FOR US AS A LOVING AND COMPASSIONATE FATHER

"it matters to Him concerning us" 1 Peter 5:7 He cares for us

A. Justice for the Oppressed

B. Intimacy for His Children
Revelation
Friendship / Companionship / Fellowship

C. Compassion and Grace

D. Patience and Longsuffering

E. Abundant Lovingkindness

F. Complete Forgiveness

Explanation: How can God deal so kindly with us sinners?
He is our Creator and knows us completely
cf. Priestly ministry of Christ -- the mediator who knows us completely

Response: Continue to fear God as children should fear Parents (reverential awe)

III. (:15-18) FIND SIGNIFICANCE IN OBEYING THE ETERNAL GOD

A. Brevity of Man -- when viewed apart from God
Image of the grass / the flower of the field
Flourishes for just a short time and then is gone with no trace

B. Lovingkindness of God -- Lasts Forever
(part of His righteousness)

C. Obedience is the Key Link
"*those who fear Him*"
"*those who keep His covenant*"
"*who remember His precepts to do them*"

IV. (:19-22) CELEBRATE HIS SOVEREIGN REIGN ALONG WITH ALL WHO SUBMIT TO HIS WILL

A. The Blessing of the Lord's Sovereignty

(people discuss this topic like it is a negative characteristic; Rather extremely positive)

"*The Lord has established His throne in the heavens*"
"*And His sovereignty rules over all*"
"*In all places of His dominion*"

B. The Response to the Lord's Sovereignty = Bless God!

1. His angels (great passage for theology of angels)
   mighty in strength
   who perform His word = Obeying the voice of His word

2. His hosts
   "*you who serve Him, doing his will*"

3. All you works of His

BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we making the most of our limited time here on earth to bless the Lord for His everlasting lovingkindness? How can we praise the Lord with our whole being? What does that involve?

2) How has the Lord demonstrated His father-like care to us recently? God knows how we are made, sees us as dust, and on that knowledge His expectations of us are based. How do you see yourself? Do you have unrealistic expectations beyond even what God has for you?

3) How can we take this list of God's gracious dealings with us and improve in how we respond and relate to others?

4) How can we be motivated to greater fear of the Lord and greater obedience by observing the example of God's holy angels? How does the fear of the Lord and respect for Him cause us to live differently?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: "'Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all his benefits.'

That's the way the Psalm begins--David prodding himself and prompting and urging himself and stirring himself up to bless the Lord. To bless means to say good things about the Lord in a spirit of admiration and gratitude and wonder. So David prods himself: Bless the Lord, soul; remember his benefits, speak of his wonders, tell of his greatness.

Then, after two verses of self-prodding, follow seventeen reasons for blessing the Lord from verses 3-19--seventeen "benefits" that David has not forgotten, things about God that he cherishes and that make his soul bless the Lord.

And when he comes to the end of the list in verse 19 he can no longer settle for just calling his own soul to bless the Lord. He has remembered so much of God that he can't be satisfied until all the angels and all the works of creation join him in blessing the Lord."

Leupold: "Among the separate blessings that especially call forth the praises of the Lord, forgiveness of our iniquities very properly stands first. There is no blessing that is greater in scope for poor sinners, nor any that is so entirely undeserved. This approach is an indication of deeper spiritual insight on the part of the writer. When diseases are mentioned next in order, it is only too true that recovery from grievous or ordinary diseases is always one of God's major blessings as we recognize especially at the time of recovery. To this must be added another evil from which deliverance has been experimental, namely, that He has rescued the man's life from '*destruction*,' which refers to anything that might have destroyed his life and the things that are important to him, that is to say, any threatening calamity and not only the pit or the grave."

Beisner: "King David, in Psalm 103, extols God's kindness, hinging his praises on God's declaration to Moses (Ps. 103:8; see also Ex. 34:5-7). For God's compassion and grace he calls himself and, ultimately, all things to praise the Lord. In the psalm, David's focus progresses, as if in ever-larger circles, from himself (verses 1-5), to Israel and all nations, especially seen as oppressed and delivered by God (verses 6-19), to the angels of heaven (verses 20-21), and then to the whole creation (verse 22). His vision of the praise that should be rendered to God starts with himself, but rapidly swells until it encompasses all things. And suddenly, at just that moment, his thoughts collapse back in on himself (verse 22), as if either exhausted by the strain of such great imagination or afraid that in his longing for others to praise God he might forget to do it himself. The psalm works like a great symphony – starting quietly, swelling to a dramatic climax, and resolving into quiet again."

Ogilvie: "How can we discover a secret of ever-renewing spiritual life? How can we get off the cycle of ups and downs of excitement about the Lord and dull toleration of Him? What would it take to keep our faith fresh and vigorous all the time?

Psalm 103 contains the key to daily renewal. This psalm of triumphant praise has a residual power in it that can bring rejuvenated exuberance to our spiritual life… He had been through a perilous experience of weakness and physical disability, which had

brought him to the brink of death. The Lord intervened and gave him a new beginning. In response, he marshaled all his capacities to bless the Lord for his forgiveness, the healing of diseases, the gift of a new beginning, and all the bonuses of His lovingkindness. The psalmist claimed the result of those blessings from the Lord. His youth was renewed like the eagle's."

Lucado: "Remembering the important things (right priorities, etc.)"

Holwick: THE BENEFITS OF BELIEVING

I. A hymn of praise to God.
A. Why praise him?
B. What are reasons to believe in him?

II. God is loving and compassionate. 103:8
A. Same words given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Exod 34:6
(Giving of 10 Commandments)

B. He disciplines, but only in love. 103:8
1) He does not hold grudges, like us. 103:9
2) He does not give us what we deserve.
a) We think we deserve the best, all our heart's desire.
b) We actually deserve wrath due to our sins.

III. Love as high as heaven. 103:11
A. Distance correlated with love.
1) For humans, distance gets in way of love.
2) Teenagers convinced they'll be married, but decide to wait until after going to college.
Distance makes the heart grow fonder - for one whole week.
Then they look up the chicks in the freshman dorm and write a "Dear Sally/John..." letter.

B. For God, distance is no problem.
1) It becomes an image of how much he loves us.

IV. Forgiveness as far as east and west.
A. Our failures and weaknesses have a way of haunting us.

B. Since God forgives us, we should be able to forgive.
1) Forgive ourselves.
a) Too many Christians are defeated by guilt.
2) Forgive others.

V. Compassion that goes beyond human experience.

A. He has compassion like a father. 103:13

1) Tender and caring.

2) (Mothering is also an image.) According to Isaiah:

> But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."
> "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
> Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"
> Isaiah 49:14-15

B. God knows our limitations.

1) We are dust. 103:14

a) Physical reality. At death we decay.

2) We are flowers fading in the wind. 103:15

a) Metaphorical for how little impact we have.

C. God is eternal. 103:17

1) He remembers us forever.

2) He remembers us, and blesses our grandchildren.

VI. Praise the Lord!

TEXT: PSALM 104

TITLE: CHARIOTS OF FIRE

BIG IDEA:
ALL OF CREATION SHOWCASES THE GLORY AND PROVIDENCE OF ITS MAJESTIC RULER

INTRODUCTION:

(:1A) *"Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great"*

cf. Liberty Showcase Theater = summer theater to showcase the talents of various amateur actors and actresses; our two youngest have been involved in a couple of productions

I. (:1-4) CREATION SHOWCASES THE TRAPPINGS OF ROYALTY

A. Light = Cloak

B. Heaven = Tent Curtain

C. Waters = Beams of His upper chambers

D. Clouds = Chariot

E. Wind = Wings to allow Him to navigate

F. Winds and Flaming Fire = His messengers / His ministers
(like thunder and lightning)

II. (:5-9) CREATION SHOWCASES THE LORD'S DOMINION
(He is the Master of the Universe; He exercises absolute control)

A. Dominion Over the Birth of the Earth

B. Dominion Over the Separation of Land and Sea

D. Dominion Over the Mountains and the Valleys

E. Dominion Over the Boundaries of the Seashores

III. (:10-17) CREATION SHOWCASES THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE
(Caring for His Creation)

A. (:10-13) Quenching of Thirst

B. (:14-17) Satisfying of Appetite

IV. (:18-23) CREATION SHOWCASES THE DIVINE ORDERING OF

EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO APPOINTED ROLES

(Further demonstration of God's Providence)

A. Role of the Mountains and Cliffs

High Mountains = for the wild goats

Cliffs = a refuge for the rock badgers

Comforting thought: if God in His Providence cares for these critters, how much more for us?

His eye is on the sparrow ... I know He cares for me

B. Role of the Moon and the Sun

the moon = for the seasons

the sun = knows the place of its setting

C. Role of the Cycles of darkness/night and light/daytime

darkness/night = the beasts of the forest and the young lions seek their prey = their food from God

light/daytime = appointed for man to labor to obtain his food from God

V. (:24-26) CREATION SHOWCASES THE LORD'S PLEASURE IN HIS WORKS

A. Overview of God's Works (:24)

How many

How impressive

Reflect God's Wisdom

Reflect God's Power

B. Specific Example = the Sea and all it Contains (:25-26)

"*great and broad*" -- includes:

1. swarms of animals without number

both small and great

2. Ships that move thru the waters

3. Leviathan -- "*which Thou hast formed to sport in it*"

VI. (:27-30) CREATION SHOWCASES THE DEPENDENCE OF EVERYTHING ON THE DISPOSITION OF THE LORD

"*They all wait for Thee, to give them their food in due season*"

A. God May Choose to Provide

1. God's Provision -- gracious

"*Thou dost give to them*"

"*Thou dost open Thy hand*"

2. Man's Physical Responsibility
"*they gather it up*" -- cf. manna in the wilderness

3. Man's Heart Response: "*they are satisfied with good*"

B. God May Choose to Withhold

1. God's Withholding
"*Thou dost hide Thy face*"
"*Thou dost take away their spirit*"

2. Man's Heart Response
"*they are dismayed*"

3. Man's Physical Response
"*they expire, and return to their dust*"

C. God May Choose to Renew and Repeat the Cycle

1. God's Initiative
"*Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit*"

2. God's Creation
"*They are created*"

3. God's Provision
"*And Thou dost renew the face of the ground*"

VII. (:31-35) CREATION SHOWCASES THE GLORY OF THE LORD

"*Let the glory of the Lord endure forever*"

A. The Lord Takes Pleasure in His Creation because it Manifests His Glory
"*Let the Lord be glad in His works*"

B. The Lord Exercises Dominion Over His Creation
"*He looks at the earth, and it trembles;*
He touches the mountains, and they smoke"

C. We Should Praise the Lord and Take Pleasure in Him

1. Praise the Lord
"*I will sing to the Lord as long as I live*"
"*I will sing praise to my God while I have my being*"

2. Take Pleasure in Him

"Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
"As for me, I shall be glad in the Lord"

D. The Unrighteous are Destined for Extinction

"*Let sinners be consumed from the earth,*
And let the wicked be no more"

CONCLUSION:

(:35B) *"Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Cf. The references to creation in terms of God holding the world together (vs.5) to Col. 1:17. What insights do we gain from the psalm regarding God's work at creation?

2) How can we gain assurance of God's Providence and loving care to provide for us by looking at His care over the "unspiritual" aspects of His kingdom (plants and animals)?

3) What role does singing play in the life of a believer and his relationship to His God? What is the connection between being happy and singing – does one precede the other?

4) How can the Lord take pleasure in us as the crowning subjects of His creation? How would it be possible for the Lord not to enjoy what He created out of His own wisdom? Are we fulfilling our appointed role in God's ordered kingdom?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: Re vs. 31 –
"1. God rejoices in his works because his works are an expression of his glory….
2. God rejoices in the works of creation because they praise him….
3. God rejoices in the works of creation because they reveal his incomparable wisdom….
4. God rejoices in the works of creation because they reveal his incomparable power….
5. God rejoices in the works of creation because they point us beyond themselves to God himself…."

Cambridge: "The main theme of Ps. 104 is that of dependence – the dependence of the created order upon God, not merely for its origin, but for its continued life. Man, beast, bird and sea-creature are all dependent on God for their day-to-day sustenance, which, however, God provides through regular, ordered and manifold channels."

Barnes: “The psalmist expresses the earnest desire of a truly pious heart (in looking upon a world so beautiful, so varied in its works, so full of the expressions of the wisdom and goodness of God—a world where all the inferior creation so completely carries out the purpose of the Creator), that man, the noblest of all the works of God, might unite with the world around and beneath him in carrying out the great purpose of creation—so that he might, in his own proper place, and according to the powers with which he is endowed, acknowledge God. … Oh, come the time when on earth there shall be harmony in all the works of God, and when all creatures here shall carry out the purpose which was contemplated when God called the earth into existence.”

Beisner: “If we can believe that God made the earth and everything in it, learn to observe the beauty around us and proclaim it, truly loathe evil, and retain complete faith that God’s will will be done one day on earth as it is in Heaven, then we can enjoy creation as God intends us to and find in it reason to say, ‘Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord’ (Ps. 104:35).

Barclay: “The storm clouds are the chariots of God, the winds are the winged horses of God, the storm blast is his messenger and the flash of lightning his servant. What the Psalmist is saying is that it is his conviction that the whole universe exists to serve the purposes of God; God is the Creator and the Master of all things…

The Psalmist’s lyric of creation presents us with a picture of a God who brings order out of chaos and who can turn destructive forces into instruments of his mercy.”

Morris: Re vs. 13 – “The antediluvian hydrologic cycle was evidently subterranean in nature, but the eruption of the fountains of the great deep had destroyed this mechanism. A new system would have to be instituted to water the earth, and would have to be an atmospheric mechanism. ‘*He watereth the hills from His [upper] chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works*’ (verse 13). There had been no rain in the primeval economy (Genesis 2:5) because of the worldwide equable warm temperatures maintained by the ‘*waters above the firmament*,’ but these were all precipitated at the Flood. With worldwide temperature differentials now established, soon the present global atmospheric circulation was functioning and the remarkable atmospheric heat engine and water cycle were operating.”

TEXT: PSALM 105

TITLE: PROMISE KEEPER

BIG IDEA:
GOD GUIDES HIS COVENANT PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THEIR PILGRIMAGE TO POSSESS HIS PROMISES

I. (:1-7) THE HEART SONG OF GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

Who is addressed here as God's covenant people?
"*seed of Abraham*" = "His servant"
"*O sons of Jacob*" = "His chosen ones"

What should be their Heart Song?

A. Praise Him with a Spirit of Thanksgiving
"*give thanks to the Lord*"
"*Sing to Him, sing praises to Him*"

B. Seek the Lord with a Spirit of Gladness
"*call upon His name*"
"*Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad*"
"*Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually*"

C. Testify to His Deeds and Character
"*Make known His deeds among the peoples*"
"*Speak of all His wonders*"
"*Glory in His holy name*"
"*Remember His wonders which He has done,*
His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth"

Why is God deserving of this type of recognition"
"*He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth*"

II. (:8-15) THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES = THE BIRTH OF GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

A. The Covenant Made with Abraham

"*To you I will give the land of Canaan As the portion of your inheritance*"

1. "*To you*" -- privilege of being the chosen children of God

2. "*give*" -- privilege of receiving a gracious gift

3. "*the land of Canaan*" -- the goodness of the gift

4. "*inheritance*" -- privilege of inheritance

B. The Nature of the Covenant = Promise
"*the word*" of God
"*commanded*" by God
"*His oath*"
"*a statute*" of God

C. The Covenant Confirmed to Isaac and Jacob/Israel

D. The Covenant Not Time Restricted
"*He has remembered His covenant forever*"
"*The word which He commanded to a thousand generations*"
"*To Israel as an everlasting covenant*"

E. The Covenant Ambitious in its Scope
How could a great nation come from one man (Abraham), or from "a few men in number"? "*Very few*"!
How could they end up possessing a land to which they did not even have squatter's rights? "*strangers in it*"
How could they end up as possessing and inheriting this land when they had no home to call their own? "*they wandered about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people*"

F. The Covenant People Protected by the King of Kings
"*He permitted no man to oppress them*"
"*He reproved kings for their sakes*"
"*Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm*"

III. (:16-24) THE INCUBATOR STAGE IN THE STRENGTHENING OF GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE
God uses seemingly hopeless circumstances to test and refine His people for greater fruitfulness and strength

A. The Problem of the Famine
"*And He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread*"

B. The Problems Faced by Joseph
1. "*sold as a slave*" by his own brothers

2. falsely imprisoned and seemingly forgotten -- Situation looked Hopeless

the Lord's timetable = the key

Key phrase: "*the word of the Lord tested him*"

C. The Opportunities Granted to Joseph

"*made him lord of his house*"
"*and ruler over all his possessions*"

became the wise man over the king's wise men

became the refuge for the children of Israel in the time of famine

D. The Results = Fruitfulness and Strength

1. Fruitfulness: "*He caused His people to be very fruitful*"

2. Strength: "*And made them stronger than their adversaries*"

IV. (:25-38) THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE REQUIRED PLAGUES ON THEIR ENEMIES

A. Opposition from Enemies

1. Motivated by Hatred

2. Cloaked in Craftiness

B. Deliverance thru God's Appointed Leaders

1. The Leaders

Moses = "*His servant*"
Aaron = "*whom He had chosen*"

2. The Method

"*performed wondrous acts*"
"*miracles*"

C. Deliverance thru The Plagues (not a complete listing)

1. Darkness

2. Blood

"*turned their waters into blood, And caused their fish to die*"

3. Frogs

"*their land swarmed with frogs even in the chambers of their kings*"

4. Flies / Gnats

5. Hail / Flaming Fire
   "*struck down their vines also and their fig trees,*
   and shattered the trees of their territory"

6. Locusts
   "*ate up all vegetation in their land,*
   And ate up the fruit of their ground"

7. First-born
   "*struck down all the first-born in their land,*
   the first fruits of all their vigor"

D. Deliverance Accompanied with Material Prosperity
   "*He brought them out with silver and gold*"

V. (:39-44) THE COMPLETION OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO POSSESS THE COVENANT PROMISES

A. Guidance and Protection Thru the Wilderness Journey

1. "*spread a cloud for a covering*"

2. "*fire to illumine by night*"

B. Provision of Food and Water
   1. Food
      quail
      manna = "*the bread of heaven*"
   2. Water
      "*He opened the rock, and water flowed out;*
      It ran in the dry places like a river"

C. Faithfulness to His Promises
   "*He remembered His holy word with Abraham His servant*"

D. Heart Song of Joy
   "*He brought forth His people with joy,*
   His chosen ones with a joyful shout"

E. Gift of the Promised Land
   "*He gave them also the lands of the nations,*
   That they might take possession of the fruit of the peoples' labor"

(:45) CONCLUSION:
   "*So that they might keep His statutes, And observe His laws.*
   Praise the Lord!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) We are told to sing to the Lord and tell about all His miracles. Is there a benefit to others or to yourself, when you sing about what the Lord has done?

2) The sovereignty of God is evident in His control of people and their actions as well as His control over nature. When God allows you to suffer, do you take comfort in the fact of His sovereignty, or do you resent God for not being merciful towards you? Is it sinful to have feelings of doubt, despair and resentment when you are oppressed?

3) It seems God is no respector of persons in that he can choose the young to instruct the old and the prisoner to rule alongside a king. Are you hesitant to counsel an older and more experienced person? What would allow your counsel to be recognized as wise and accepted?

4) Note the ultimate goal of obedience expressed at the end of the psalm. What is our response to deliverance and to prosperity and to the enjoyment of covenant blessings? Do we become complacent and sloppy in our walk with God or are we motivated to higher levels of obedience?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "God's plan to create a people loyal only to himself, through which the nations of the world could be blessed (cp. verse 1) was only fully realized when the Israelites possessed their own land. There, in peace and security, they were to keep his statutes and obey his laws. This was the ideal, to which God's providence was directed. This psalm should not be read in isolation from Ps. 106, for in that psalm we have another presentation of Israelite history, this time interpreted from the angle of Israel's unfaithfulness. Taken together, Pss. 105 and 106 reveal that gulf between God's call and Israel's response which makes the Old Testament incomplete in itself, and needing to be completed by a new Covenant."

Barnes: "…the object of this psalm is to excite the people to gratitude by the remembrance of the goodness of God to the people in former times. Accordingly this psalm is occupied with recounting the mercies of God—his various acts of intervention in their history—all appealing to the nation to cherish a grateful remembrance of those acts, and to love and praise him."

Beisner: "Rejoice! God Rules Over History! The Ark of the Covenant was a key symbol of the presence of God with the people of Israel. Its loss to the Philistines was seen as a great tragedy in which God's glory departed from the nation (1 Sam. 4:21-22). Israel's failure, upon regaining possession of the Ark, to restore it to a central place of worship may

have stemmed from the nation's spiritual lethargy during a period of some twenty years (1 Sam. 7:1-2). During a revival under King David, the nation recognized the importance of restoring the Ark to the Tabernacle and, after one abortive attempt in which God's anger lashed out at the people because they had ignored His instructions for carrying the Ark (1 Chronicles 13; 15:13), they finally brought it to Jerusalem, where they held a joyous celebration (1 Chronicles 15; 16:1-6).

For the celebration David wrote a song urging the people to thank and praise God for upholding the Covenant by giving them Canaan as an inheritance (1 Chron. 16:8-36). Generations later, apparently, while the people of God were held captive in Babylon and in danger of abandoning their faith, another psalmist incorporated the first half of David's song into a new psalm designed to remind Israel of God's faithfulness to His Covenant and to reinvigorate their faith (Ps. 105:1-15). In the face of what seemed the beginning of the end of Israel, the psalmist boldly proclaims God's sovereign rule over all history as an absolute assurance that the Covenant will be upheld and the people will one day be restored to their land."

Beisner: Re vs. 45 – "Now the psalmist drives home his point. He has already called God's people to thank Him, to praise Him, to '*glory in his holy name'* (Ps. 105:3), and now he returns to it, having given them ample reason for obeying. He explains the purpose of God in redeeming a people for Himself: '… *that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws. Praise the Lord*' (verse 45)."

Yates: Re vv7-15 – "The Covenant with the Patriarchs. '*He hath remembered his covenant*.' The special feature of the covenant singled out is the promise that Canaan was to be Israel's inheritance. The rest of the psalm demonstrates the working out of this aspect of the covenant. Note the unusual use of *mine anointed ones* and *my prophets* to refer to the patriarchs."

TEXT: PSALM 106

TITLE: SATAN'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

BIG IDEA:
FOOLPROOF GAMEPLAN FOR STIRRING UP GOD'S ANGER

INTRODUCTION:

A. (:1-3) GOD PERSEVERES IN HIS LOVE FOR US DESPITE OUR PATTERN OF REPEATED FAILURES

1. Praise the Lord / Give Thanks
   for His Goodness
   for His Lovingkindness
   for His mighty deeds

2. Practice Righteousness / keep justice

B. (:4-5) WE LONG TO ENJOY GOD'S BLESSING AND PROSPERITY ALONG WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

Exactly what is it that we would most like to experience?
"*Thy favor*"
"*Thy salvation*"
"*the prosperity of Thy chosen ones*"
"*the gladness of Thy nation*"
"*glory with Thine inheritance*"

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There are many different ways to fail in our walk with the Lord;
Satan has his will for our life which involves multiple ways of us turning away from God;
Modern sins with ancient roots;

There are some guaranteed ways to stir up God's anger against us:

I. (:6-12) MEMORY LOSS
FORSAKING GOD'S GOODNESS

A. Fundamental Problem = Sin
"*We have sinned like our fathers*"
"*We have committed iniquity*"
"*We have behaved wickedly*"

B. Memory Loss at the Red Sea
1. Trouble ahead of them: trapped by the Red Sea

2. Trouble behind them: pursued by the angry Egyptians

3. Main Trouble = in their own minds
   "*did not understand Thy wonders*"
   "*did not remember Thine abundant kindnesses*"

Root problem cropped up again: they "*rebelled*" by the sea -- motivated by Fear;
Caused them to doubt the love and faithfulness of God

C. Miraculous Deliverance
   "*for the sake of His name*"
   "*That He might make His power known*"

D. Temporary Faith and Praise
   "*Then they believed His words*" -- Faith is the key ingredient to combat all these pitfalls
   "*they sang His praise*"

Transition: "*they quickly forgot His works*" (:13a)

II. (:13-15) IMPATIENT INDULGENCE FORSAKING GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE

unhappy with the menu and with the scheduled meal times
Problem of Contentment and of Faith

A. Impatience
   "*They did not wait for His counsel*"

B. Indulgence
   "*But craved intensely in the wilderness*" -- all types of fleshly lusts
   "*and tempted God in the desert*" -- failure to fear the Lord; presumptuous demands

C. Discipline
   "*sent a wasting disease among them*"

III. (:16-18) ENVIOUS OF GOD'S APPOINTED LEADERS FORSAKING GOD'S AUTHORITY

A. Foolhardy Rebellion: Envious of God's Appointed Leaders
   1. "*Moses in the camp*" -- Rebels had delusions of Grandeur
   2. "*Aaron, the holy one of the Lord*" -- Rebels had no fear of God

B. Severe Discipline
   1. Against the instigators of the rebellion

"*earth opened up and swallowed up Dathan ... and Abiram*"

2. Against the followers of the rebellion

"*a fire blazed up ... and consumed the wicked*"

IV. (:19-23) MATERIALISTIC IDOLATRY FORSAKING GOD'S GLORY

A. How Low Can You Go?

From worshiping the majestic God of the universe to worshiping a golden calf

"*the image of an ox that eats grass*"

Idolatry = giving the preeminence to something other than God

B. How Forgetful Can You Get?

"*forgot God their Savior*"

"*Who had done great things in Egypt*"

"*Wonders in the land of Ham*"

"*And awesome things by the Red Sea*"

C. How Close to Extinction Can You Be?

"*Therefore He said that He would destroy them*"

D. How Important is Godly Intercession?

"*Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them*"

V. (:24-27) INCESSENT GRUMBLING FORSAKING GOD'S PROMISES

A. Four Sins of a Faint-hearted People

1. Discontent

"*Then they despised the pleasant land*"

2. Lack of Faith

"*They did not believe in His word*"

3. Spreading Discontent to Others

"*grumbled in their tents*"

4. Ignoring the Word of God

"*they did not listen to the voice of the Lord*"

B. Discipline = Dispersion and Insignificance

"*cast them down in the wilderness*"

"*cast their seed among the nations*"

"*scatter them in the lands*"

VI. (:28-31) UNHOLY ALLIANCES (RELIGIOUS COMPROMISE)

FORSAKING GOD'S HOLINESS

A. Religious Corruption

1. In Affiliation -- "*They joined themselves also to Baal-peor*"

2. In Practice -- "*And ate sacrifices offered to the dead*"

B. Anger of God

"*they provoked Him to anger with their deeds*"

C. Discipline

"*And the plague broke out among them*"

D. Righteousness of Intercessor = Phinehas

"*Phinehas stood up and interposed*"

VII. (:32-33) ANGRY SELF-WILL

FORSAKING GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Provocation is No Excuse for Sinful Anger

B. Anger and Loss of Self-Control Are a Dangerous Combination

"*He spoke rashly with his lips*"

C. Discipline

"*So that it went hard with Moses on their account*"

VIII. (:34-39) FELLOWSHIP WITH THE WORLD

FORSAKING GOD'S UNIQUENESS

A. Incomplete Obedience = Disobedience and further Temptation

"*They did not destroy the peoples, As the Lord commanded them*"

B. Mingling Leads to Mimicking

"*they mingled with the nations*"

"*And learned their practices*"

C. Idolatry Leads to Corrupt Paganism

(:40-43) CONCLUSION: REPETITION OF THE CYCLE:

A. Failure of God's People

B. Anger of God

C. Discipline

D. Deliverance

(:44-46) CONSTANT OF GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS AND COMPASSION

cf. Question: How many times must I forgive my brother? No limit! (Matt. 18:21f)

God can be provoked either:
To Wrath OR
To Compassion

(:47-48) DOXOLOGY

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) God says those who disbelieve His promises are disobedient and will not be happy or content. Can you identify an area of grumbling in your life that is associated with a lack of trust in God's promises for you? If so, purpose to change.

2) How is it possible to experience God's miraculous deliverance and then live as if it had never happened?

3) A weakness or sinful tendency can often be seen popping up from generation to generation. How can you create a new family history that passes on virtuous qualities?

4) Can you, like Moses, stand between God and his execution of judgment on a sinner?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "The psalm consists essentially of three parts: --

I. A brief introduction, setting forth the duty of praising God, and referring to his mercy, and expressing the desire of the author of the psalm that he himself might participate in his mercy, and share the happy lot of the "*chosen*" of God, vers. 1-5

II. A reference to the history of the nation, and a confession of their sins in all the periods of their history, and their proneness as a people to disobey God, referring particularly to their history in Egypt, vers. 6-12; in the desert, vers. 13-33; and in the land of Canaan, vers. 34-43.

III. A prayer – founded on the fact that God had often interposed in their behalf—that he would now again interpose, and gather them from among the heathen, that they might again sing his praises, vers. 44-48."

Clarke: "A RECORD OF REPEATED REBELLION
I. RENDERING OF PRAISE (1-3). '*Hallelujah*.'

1. Commencing Exhortation (1). Summons and Stimulus.
2. Challenging Exclamation (2).
3. Confident Expression (3). '*Happy*.' Beatitude.

II. REQUEST FOR DELIVERANCE (4-5). Personal.

III. REVIEW OF HISTORY, PERSONAL (6). '*We have sinned*.'

IV. REVIEW OF HISTORY, PATERNAL (7-46). '*Our fathers (sinned)*.'
1. Rebellion and Recovery (7-12). Provocation. Exodus from Egypt.
   (i) The Sin (7).
   (ii) The Salvation (8-12). '*Nevertheless*.'
2. Rebellion and Recovery (13-23).
   (i) The Sin (13-16).
   (ii) The Searching (17-18).
   (iii) The Sin (19-22).
   (iv) The Searching (23a).
   (v) The Salvation (23bc). Intercession of Moses.
3. Rebellion and Recovery (24-31).
   (i) The Sin (24-25).
   (ii) The Searching (26-27).
   (iii) The Sin (28-29a).
   (iv) The Searching (29b).
   (v) The Salvation (30-31). Interposition of Phinehas.
4. Rebellion and Recovery (32-43a).
   (i) The Sin (32a).
   (ii) The Searching (32b-33).
   (iii) The Sin (34-39).
   (iv) The Searching (40-42).
   (v) The Salvation (43a). Intervention of Jehovah.
5. Rebellion and Recovery (43b-46). Provocation. Experience in Canaan.
   (i) The Sin (43bc).
   (ii) The Salvation (44-46). '*Nevertheless*.'

V. REQUEST FOR DELIVERANCE (47). National.

VI. RENDERING OF PRAISE (48). '*Hallelujah*.'
1. Crowning Expression (48ab). '*Blessed*.' Benediction.
2. Closing Exhortation (48c)."

VanGemeren: "This psalm complements Psalm 78 in its thematic approach to Israel's history, revealing Israel's unresponsiveness to all the mighty and good acts of the Lord. In its stress on Israel's failure, it contrasts with Psalm 105, where the psalmist records the fidelity of God in his presence, protection, and providence."

VanGemeren: Re vv.13-15 – “Israel’s faith faltered quickly (v13). Having seen the great acts of the Lord, they readily gave in to impatience when he did not anticipate their needs. In his ‘*counsel*’ the Great King knew what to do and when, but Israel’s refusal to submit to his counsel signified an independence that would develop into the spiritual anemic condition of being stiff-necked and stubborn. They murmured about food and water (Exod 15:22-25; 16:1-17:7). In their lust they devoured the quail without proper preparation (Num 11; Ps 78:28-29). Thus they ‘*put God to the test*’ (v.14; cf. 78:18) with their selfish spirit, as expressed in Numbers 11:5-6. He gave them what they wanted; but their craving ended in sickness, and their impatience rushed them to a premature death (v.15; cf. Num 11:34).”

Kidner: “For all its exposure of man’s ingratitude, this is a psalm of praise, for it is God’s extraordinary longsuffering that emerges as the real theme. This is the basis of the final prayer (47), and this gives reality to the doxology that closes not only the psalm but the fourth Book of the Psalter (Pss. 90-106).”

TEXT: PSALM 107

TITLE: OUR ACE IN THE HOLE: THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE DISTRESSED
WHEN THEY CEASE THEIR REBELLION AND HUMBLY CRY OUT FOR HELP

(:1-3) INTRODUCTION:
THE REDEEMED SHOULD THANK THE LORD FOR HIS LOVINGKINDNESS

A. Call to Thanksgiving Focused on the Lord
"*Oh give thanks to the Lord*"

1. For His Goodness
"*for He is good*"

2. For His Lovingkindness
"*for His lovingkindness is everlasting*"

B. Testimony of the Redeemed

1. Responsibility to speak out
"*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so*"

2. Freedom from oppression
"*Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary*"

C. Restoration to Place of Blessing
"*gathered from the lands*"
"*from the east and from the west*"
"*from the north and from the south*"

I. (:4-9) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE LOST AND THE STARVED

A. Provides Guidance to the Lost

1. Lost
"*They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region*"
"*They did not find a way to an inhabited city*"

Stedman: "They are what we might call the restless ones. They are the ones who wander about from place to place or from job to job from marriage to marriage, filled with questions and seeking to find where the answer lies. There are a lot of them today. They cannot find the answers. They are looking for something but they cannot find it. They keep wandering from place to place and from experience to experience, trying to find something to satisfy."

2. Found
"*He led them also by a straight way,*
To go to an inhabited city"

B. Provides Food and Drink to the Starved = the Hungry and Thirsty

1. Starved
"*They were hungry and thirsty;*
Their soul fainted within them"

2. Satisfied
"*He has satisfied the thirsty soul,*
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good"

C. Deliverance Depends Upon:
1. Ceasing from Rebellion
2. Humbly crying out for help
"*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble*"

D. Deliverance Results in:
"*He delivered them out of their distresses*"

E. Refrain: "*Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,*
And for His wonders to the sons of men!"

II. (:10-16) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE PRISONERS IN BONDAGE

A. The Misery of Bondage
1. Darkness / Death
"*dwelt in darkness*" / "*in the shadow of death*"

2. Confinement
"*Prisoners in misery and chains*"

Stedman: "These we might call the hostile, the rebellious ones. Notice their condition. They sit in darkness and gloom. That is always the figure in the Bible for hopeless ignorance. They cannot figure out what is wrong with them. Their lives are filled with gloom, they have no hope, but they do not know what is wrong. They cannot understand their condition."

B. The Cause of Bondage = Rebellion
"*Because they had rebelled against the words of God,*
and spurned the counsel of the Most High"

C. The Deliverance from Bondage -- Depends Upon:
1. Being Humbled
"*Therefore He humbled their heart with labor:*

they stumbled and there was none to help"

2. Crying Out for Help
   "*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble*"

D. The Deliverance from Bondage -- Results in:
   1. New Life
      "*He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death*"

   2. New Freedom
      "*And broke their bands apart*"
         "*He has shattered gates of bronze*"
         "*And cut bars of iron asunder*"

E. Refrain: "*Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,*
   And for His wonders to the sons of men"

III. (:17-22) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE AFFLICTED

- those afflicted with physical infirmities
- those afflicted with emotional infirmities

Stedman: "Here are the neurotics. They are sick people, either physically or emotionally sick. How many millions there are like this today! Some, perhaps, are here this morning! The characteristics of them are, first, they loathe food. Now food is what the body requires and, figuratively, it is what the soul requires. It is that which ministers health and strength. But these neurotic people are characterized by the fact that they do not want healthy things. They do not want good food. They do not want the plain fare of meat, potatoes and gravy; they want whipped cream and caramel sauce. They do not want to read good books; they want highly spiced literature that sets them a-tingling, and panders to their lust. That is all they will eat. That is all they will read. That is all they want to live on. Therefore they get worse and worse. "They draw near to the gates of death." Here are sick people, neurotic people, who are unable to handle life. They are fearful, nervous, anxious, afraid to go out and face life as it is."

A. The Cause of Affliction = Acted as "Fools"
   1. "*because of their rebellious way*"

   2. "*And because of their iniquities*"

B. The Intensity of Affliction
   1. "*Their soul abhorred all kind of food*"

   2. "*And they drew near to the gates of death*"

C. The Deliverance from Affliction -- Depends Upon Humbly Crying out for Help
   "*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble*"

D. The Deliverance from Affliction -- Results In:
   1. Deliverance from Spiritual Distress
      "*He saved them out of their distresses*"

   2. Deliverance from Physical Distress
      "*He sent His word and healed them*"

   3. Deliverance from Emotional Distresss
      "*And delivered them from their destructions*"

E. Refrain: "*Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,*
   And for His wonders to the sons of men"

   Added Testimony:
   "*Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,*
   And tell of His works with joyful singing"

IV. (:23-32) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE AGITATED = THE STORM-TOSSED SOULS

A. The Cause of Agitation: The Powerful Forces of Nature
   A. Can Scare Even the Big Shots of the Business World
      "*Those who go down to the sea in ships,*
      "Who do business on great waters"

   B. Under the Control of the God of Creation
      "*the works of the Lord*"
      "*His wonders in the deep*"

      "*He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,*
      which lifted up the waves of the sea"

B. The Intensity of Agitation
   1. Height and Depth
      "*They rose up to the heavens,*
      they went down to the depths"

   2. Utter Despair
      "*Their soul melted away in their misery*"
      "*They reeled and staggered like a drunken man*"
      "*And were at their wits' end*"

C. The Deliverance from Agitation -- Depends Upon Humbly Crying out for Help
   "*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble*"

D. The Deliverance from Agitation -- Results in:
   1. Relief -- "*He brought them out of their distresses*"

2. Peace and Quiet -- *"He cause the storm to be still, So the waves of the sea were hushed*"

3. Gladness -- "*Then they were glad because they were quiet*"

4. Secure Guidance -- "*So he guided them to their desired haven*"

E. Refrain: "*Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,*
And for His wonders to the sons of men!"

Added Testimony:
"*Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people,*
And praise Him at the seat of the elders"

(:33-43) CONCLUSION:

A. (:33-37) THE LORD CAN EITHER BRING CURSING OR BLESSING

1. Cursing: The Lord Can Turn Good Into Bad
"*He changes rivers into a wilderness*"
"*And springs of water into a thirsty ground*"
"*A fruitful land into a salt waste*"

Why? "Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it"

2. Blessing: The Lord Can Turn Bad Into Good
"*He changes a wilderness into a pool of water*"
"*And a dry land into springs of water*"
"*And there he makes the hungry to dwell,*

Why?
So that they may establish an inhabited city,
And sow fields
And plant vineyards
And gather a fruitful harvest
"*Also he blesses them and they multiply greatly;*
And He does not let their cattle decrease"

B. (:39-43) THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BRINGS DELIVERANCE FOR THE OPPRESSED BUT HUMILIATION FOR THE OPPRESSORS

1. Deliverance for the Oppressed
a. Description of the Oppressed
"*when they are diminished and bowed down*
Through oppression, misery, and sorrow"

"*the needy*"

b. Description of their Deliverance
"*But he sets the needy securely on high away from affliction,*
And makes his families like a flock"

2. Humiliation for the Oppressors
   a. Description of the Oppressors
   "*princes*"

   b. Description of their Humiliation
   "*He pours contempt upon princes,*
   and makes them wander in a pathless waste"

3. Testimony to All of the Lord's Lovingkindness
   a. "*the upright see it, and are glad*"

   b. "*But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth*"

   c. "*Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things*;"

   d. "*And consider the lovingkindnesses of the Lord*"

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we secure in the knowledge that our Heavenly Father fully accepts us and loves us unconditionally because He has clothed us in the righteousness of His Son?

2) Have we found our security in the city of our God or are we still wandering about, lost and restless? Are we always struggling with contentment or do we find that God satisfies the hunger of our soul?

3) Is there anything that still holds you prisoner? Maybe some fear or some life-dominating habit or addiction? The Lord wants to deliver you in His lovingkindness.
Is there value in having experienced the depths of sin and despair, in deepening your dependence and faith in Him? In delivering the sinner from judgment, God's miracles are often evident because of the extreme nature of their circumstances. Does this mean the more dramatic God's intervention is in your life, the more thankful you will be?

4) Are we willing to let go of our grudges and memory of personal offenses and truly love others unconditionally with the same type of steadfast love?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: "The Psalmist speaks of the steadfast love of God. In Hebrew, the word means '*an eager and ardent desire*' and refers to the fact that God's love never gives up. We sing about it in the hymn,

> 'O Love that wilt not let me go,
> I rest my weary soul in Thee.'

The thing that finally gets to us, breaks the back of our rebellion, and sets us free from our emotional hang-ups is the unqualified love of God which never lets us go. We might use a term that is more easily understood in our day. Instead of 'steadfast love' read 'unqualified acceptance.' That is what God's love does. It accepts us without reserve. I ran across an article this week which describes that very well. It is in the October issue of Eternity Magazine.

> 'Acceptance means you are valuable just as you are. It allows you to be the real you. You aren't forced into someone else's idea of who you really are. It means your ideas are taken seriously since they reflect you. You can talk about how you feel inside and why you feel that way, and someone really cares.
>
> Acceptance means you can try out your ideas without being shot down. You can even express heretical thoughts and discuss them with intelligent questioning. You feel safe. No one will pronounce judgment on you even though they don't agree with you.
>
> It doesn't mean you will never be corrected or shown to be wrong; it simply means it's safe to be you and no one will destroy you out of prejudice.'

That is what this psalm is all about, because that is what God does. He accepts us as we are and then sets about to make us what we ourselves are longing to be. That ability is what the Psalmist calls '*steadfast love of God.*'"

Stedman: "That means, think about all this! How does this relate to you? Ask yourself that. There are people here this morning who have been going through one or more of these difficult situations. Many are wandering, restless, hostile or bitter. They are held prisoner by some attitude, outlook, or habit. Or they are sick, neurotic, emotionally upset. Perhaps some are fearful, troubled by a crisis into which you have come. All right. Stop and think about how God accepts you, how he loves you, how he is deeply concerned about you and will meet you right where you are and take you just as you are. His love does not change a bit whether you are a failure or a success. It does not make any
difference to him how you appear in the eyes of men. God loves you, he is concerned about you and has already received you, already given you all that he can give, in Jesus Christ. All right, then. Begin to rejoice in that fact. You will find that love will set you free, so that you can act upon the power and liberty God gives."

Ryrie: "Within the framework of a hymn with its opening call to praise (vv.1-3) and concluding description of God's providence (vv.33-43), the psalmist presents four pictures of the nation's

deliverance from captivity (vv.4-32). They are: travellers in distress being guided to a city (vv.4-9), prisoners in a dungeon being released (vv.10-16), sick men being restored to health (vv.17-22), and sailors safely brought to their destination (vv.23-32). Each of these four vignettes contains a problem (vv.4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27), a prayer (vv.6a, 13a, 19a, 28a), God's provision (vv.6b-7, 13b-14, 19b-20, 28b-30), and praise (vv.8-9, 15-16, 21-22, 31-32)."

Beisner: "There are interesting contrasts in the needy people the psalmist describes. The first are homeless and wandering, while the second are confined in prison; the former want limits, while the latter want liberty. The third are sick and weak, while the fourth are healthy and strong. The sick and weak might think that, if they were healthy and strong, all would be well, but others have learned that health and strength are no guarantee of safety. No matter what our condition, then, we must depend on God's merciful provision for even themost basic things in life –home, liberty, food, drink, health, strength, and life itself….

Are the people of God troubled, cast down, or weary? Are they lifted up in prosperity, full of energy and joy? Are they free or confined, ill or healthy? No matter their condition, '*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.*'"

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Thanksgiving Psalm**
Introduction: As the Westminster Shorter Catechism begins, what is the chief end of man? Answer, the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. What does it mean to glorify God? Well, it simply means that we make God look good. It means that we represent God the way he is. We rightly represent him to the world. We show the world that God is good, and we show him that by how we respond to his goodness. We declare the goodness of God. We give thanks. for the goodness of our Lord.

This psalm is a exhortation to praise God for his unfailing goodness. And this psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving because it shows and recognizes how God has delivered us, how he has saved us. And think about the structure of this psalm. It's a long psalm, it's 44 verses. And really, what the structure of the psalm is, he's gonna give four scenarios where the people were in trouble, and they pray to God, and God, in his mercy, he answered. And then the psalmist says that we should praise God for this. And so there are four scenarios with a cycle of problem, and then prayer, and then provision, and it should result in praise. So in each situation, they had a problem, and the problem was overwhelming, and they couldn't deal with it on their own. And so they pray, ask God for His help, and God, in His mercy, sends His provision. And then, in response to that, the psalmist exhorts us that we should praise the Lord.

Big Idea: **Four truths here from this psalm that we can learn about the goodness of God.**

I. Declare God's Goodness – vs. 1
Ps. 100:5; 34:8 -- A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, put it like this. He said, the goodness of God is that which disposes him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of goodwill towards men. Wayne Grudem in his theology wrote this, quote, the goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval. In other words, God doesn't do something because it's good. Something is good because God does it. God is the standard of what is good. All that he does is good and right.

Ps. 119:67-68, 71 -- Even in our afflictions, We must submit to God and affirm His goodness by faith. . . We should be constantly giving thanks to the Lord. It should be normal. It should be characteristic of us. God is building his church, and he's bringing people from all over. Why? Because he wants to assemble an army of people all together, diverse people from diverse backgrounds. He wants to save them and bring them all together. Why? So that we can all form one united voice of giving praise and thanks to God for who he is.

II. Meditate on God's Hand of Providence – vs. 4-32

There are four portraits of the thankful redeemed here, four scenarios where God delivered his people from danger. And what the psalmist is doing is he's looking back on the providence of God. And he's remembering what God did, and he's giving thanks. What is the providence of God? Sovereignty and providence go hand in hand. Sovereignty means that God created it all, he owns it all, and he controls it all. The psalmist said in Psalm 115, verse three, God is in the heaven, he does all that he pleases. He does whatever he wants. That's called being God. He has sovereign control over everything. We have a big God, beloved. bigger than the universe, and he's in complete control. He not only controls the movement of the galaxies and the stars, he's also in control of your life. So that means that when we look around and we get the strong sense that the world and our lives are out of control, we're wrong. Things aren't out of control. God is in control. God is moving absolutely according to his purpose and plan. He's accomplishing his will. That's providence. Sovereignty plans your life.

Providence fulfills that plan. That's the providence of God. He has a plan, and he has the power to execute that plan, and he arranges it all, even down to the very details. Job 24:14
A lot of times we can't look forward and see what God's going to do, but we can certainly look back and see what God has done. That's called recognizing his hand of providence.

In the book, *The Mystery of Providence*, John Flavel wrote this. He says that, a bad heart and a slippery memory deprives men of the comfort of many mercies and defrauds God the glory due to them. Basically, what he was saying is that, look, it's our duty to look back and remember the mercies of God, But it's really a bad heart and a slippery memory that deprives us of these comforts. In other words, when we look back and we see what God has done, it actually blesses us, it comforts our soul, and it gives God glory.

A. Lost in a desert – vs. 4

Someone is wandering aimlessly in confusion. They have no place to call home. They're hungry. They're homeless. They're hurting. Finally, with no place to turn, at the end of all their resources, verse 6, they turn to God. They cry out to Him. And what does God do? Verse 7, He leads them in the right way. And now they look back and they see that and they can praise God, they can thank God.

B. Locked in a dungeon – vs. 10-16

Here's a person in a situation where he's rebelled against God's word, and now he's in captivity, he's in darkness, he's in misery. Look at verse 10. such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of the Lord. Here's someone that because of their own iniquities, they rebelled against God's word and their

stubborn rebellion, they resisted, and because of that, they're paying the price now. And God had to chastise them. Look in verse 12. Therefore, he brought down their heart with labor. They fell down. There was none to help. God is chastising them. It was because of their disobedience. They didn't follow the word of God.

They were in prison to this sin and God, he breaks those shackles and he brings them out of that prison. And then, what should the response be? Look at verse 15. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men. God stepped in. God saved them out of their distresses. Charles Wesley put it this way in his hymn. He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. And our response should be, thank you, Lord, for your goodness.

C. Languishing with a disease – vs. 17

Here's a person who is suffering sickness for their own sin. Sickness is not always because of sin. But sometimes it could be, the man described here is clearly physically sick due to his own sin. And that's why he's called a fool in verse 17, fools. And it's not referring to someone who is mentally deficient, but morally deficient. They rebelled against God's word. They went off into sin. Because of that, it's affected their body. They're now sick, languishing with this disease. Verse 18 reads like a description of a drug addict or an alcoholic who has wasted his mind and body. Their soul abhors all manner of meat. They draw near unto the gates of death. They're suffering a fatal, deadly disease. They're wasting away. You know, sin brings its own punishment.

God has the power to send his word and bring healing. and he does do that, and delivered them from their destruction. Which should our response be? Look at verse 21. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men.

D. Laboring in the deep – vs. 23

This final group represents people who are overwhelmed by their circumstances. Derek Kidner in his commentary writes this. He says that this group does not speak so much of, quote, our guilt, but of our **littleness**. The hurricane shakes us into seeing that in a world of gigantic forces, we live by permission, not by good management. These sailors are overwhelmed. There are circumstances beyond their control. God sometimes will send storms into our life.

You're just in a bad storm and there's nothing that you can do except look up, turn to God. All of man's answers have failed. Vain is the help of man. All you can do is cast yourself upon the Lord and ask him to sustain you. And look at the goodness of God. Look at verse 28.

III. Don't take God's blessings for granted – vs. 33-42

Again, there are <u>four illustrations</u>. In order to drive his point home, what God does is he takes those that are self-sufficient and they have all kind of planning and God brings it to poverty. And what God is doing here is he's turning plenty into poverty, and then he turns poverty back into plenty. You have plenty, he turns it into poverty. Why? Because of your wickedness, because of your self-sufficiency, because of your pride. and you don't acknowledge God. And so God says, okay, you don't acknowledge me, I'll take away all that I've given you. And

you know what, all of a sudden your resources are dried up. And then when you humble yourself and realize it was God after all who gave you all this, he'll turn your poverty back into plenty. He'll reverse it.

What's the whole point here? Well, the point is, is that people who are self-sufficient and are proud do not experience the goodness of God. You have to be humble, you have to recognize that God has to humble us in order to help us. He has to bring us to the end of ourselves in order that we might experience his love and favor. That's the whole point. He has to humble us so that we can experience blessings in full.

IV. Each day take a moment to observe the goodness of God – vs. 43

TEXT: PSALM 108

TITLE: VICTORY IN JESUS

BIG IDEA:
THANKS BE TO GOD WHO ALWAYS LEADS US IN HIS TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:
2 Cor. 2:14
(Really, what we have are pieces of 2 psalms tied together to meet a different purpose and different historical circumstances)

I. (:1-5) THE PATH OF TRIUMPH BEGINS WITH A HEART FOCUSED ON WORSHIPING GOD (cf. 57:7-11)

A. (:1) Unwavering in Worship
"*My heart is steadfast*"
"*I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul*"

B. (:2) Enthusiastic in Worship
What a way to start the day!
"*Awake, harp and lyre;*
I will awaken the dawn"

C. (:3) Expressive in Public Worship
"*I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the peoples*"
"*And I will sing praises to Thee among the nations*"

D. (:4) Focused on God's Kindness and Truth
1. Kindness "*For Thy lovingkindness is great above the heavens*"

2. Truth "*And Thy truth reaches to the skies*"

E. (:5) Geared towards Glorifying God
"*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens*"
"*And Thy glory above all the earth*"

II. (:6-13) THE PATH OF TRIUMPH CULMINATES IN GOD'S VICTORY OVER OUR ENEMIES (cf. 60:5-12)

A. (:6) Plea For Victory
1. Based on Covenant Relationship -- "*That Thy beloved may be delivered*"

2. Based on the Power of God -- "*Save with Thy right hand*"
Messianic implications

3. Based on God's Mercy and Compassion to Answer Prayer -- "*Answer me*"

B. (:7) Victory over Internal Enemies -- God Controls the Promised Land
Fulfillment of God's promises -- internal consolidation; home conquests
Confirmed by God's holiness
"*God has spoken in His holiness*"

1. Shechem -- "*I will exult, I will portion out Shechem*"

2. Succoth -- "*And measure out the valley of Succoth*"

C. (:8) Victory is Secure -- God Reigns Over His Chosen Tribes

1. Gilead

2. Manasseh

3. Ephraim -- military center "*Ephraim also is the helmet of My head*"
known for their mighty men of valour that helped David

4. Judah -- political center for ruling and governing "*Judah is My scepter*"

D. (:9) Victory Over External Enemies -- they will be completely subdued

1. "*Moab is My washbowl*"

2. "*Over Edom I shall throw My shoe*"

3. "*Over Philistia I will shout aloud*"

E. (:10-11) Temporary Rejection is no Discouragement to the Hope of Ultimate Victory

F. (:12-13) Key to Victory = Placing all of our confidence in God rather than in Man

1. "*Deliverance by man is in vain*"

2. "*Through God we shall do valiantly*"
"*it is He who will tread down our adversaries*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In order to sing and praise wholeheatedly, one's heart must be steadfast, fixed and immovable. How is this achieved in the life of a believer?

2) David mentions God's love, truth, supremacy, power and deliverance as being praiseworthy. What else about God causes you to praise Him?

3) God rescues and provides for those He loves and who acknowledge Him. Sometimes we're unable to recognize our weaknesses, but we're usually quick to identify what we lack and need. What is a provision that you need God to supply for you? What has been blocking that from happening in your life up until now? Is that an area in your life that you are powerless over and need God to rescue you from?

4) You must depend on God to fight your battles for you and not rely on yourself or another person. With God's help, He will give you the victory. Is every battle a spiritual one and is that why God's help is always essential?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "This psalm is composite: verse 1-5 are taken from 57:7-11 and verse 6-13 from 60:5-12…. In the present distress it may seem that God has abandoned his people (verse 11), but they remain dear to him (literally 'thy beloved'; cp. Isa. 5:1) and it is with the knowledge of his abiding love that this prayer is offered (cp. verse 4)….

(10-13) The final plea for help is also a confession that a humbling lesson has been learned. The people have been brought to see that no-one but God can help against the enemy. Without him they lost their battles and without him they know they can obtain no deliverance. But now they have learned to trust God again, there is every reason for confidence, for he remains the warrior-king who has promised to lead them to victory over their enemies."

Barnes: Re "*That thy beloved may be delivered*" – "The word rendered *beloved*, and the verb rendered *may be delivered*, are both in the plural number, showing that it is not an individual that is referred to, but that the people of God are intended."

Maddux:

I. Fixed Purposes.
   A. Purpose in praise.
      1. Fixed heart.
      2. Promised song.
      3. Plenary praise.
   B. Purpose in plaudits.
      1. Proclaimed before people.
      2. Notations among nations.
      3. Exaltation exclaimed.
      4. Gamut of glory.
      5. Deluge of deliverance.
      6. Asking answered.

C. Purpose in proclamation.
    1. Holiness contrasted.
    2. Absolute ownership.
    3. Divided and given.
    4. Designated use.
    5. Triumph certain.

D. Purpose in planning.
    1. Planned advance.
    2. Guide needed.
    3. Man is powerless.
    4. God is sufficient.

II. Spiritual Fixation.

A. Heart hopeful.
    1. Praise to God.
    2. Praise in prosperity.
    3. Praise by all means.
    4. Praise early.
    5. Praise in every place.
        a. Among the people.
        b. Among the nations.
    6. Praise for reasons:
        a. Great mercy.
        b. Great TRUTH.
        c. Great glory.
        d. Great deliverance.

B. Divine Diction.
    1. God speaks in holiness.
    2. God experiences joy.
    3. God exercises sovereignty.
    4. God purposes for everyone.

C. Human helplessness.
    1. Need expressed.
    2. No help aside from God.
    3. Man's help as nothing.
    4. Valiant victory through God.
    5. The work is all of God.

Spurgeon: "We have before us THE WARRIOR'S MORNING SONG, with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day."

TEXT: PSALM 109

TITLE: GIVE THEM THEIR DUE

BIG IDEA:
THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRE VENGEANCE AND VINDICATION FROM UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKERS

(:1-5) INTRODUCTION:
UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKERS BRING US TO OUR KNEES IN PRAYER

Key phrase: "*But I am in prayer*" (:4)

A. Supreme Court of Appeal = God Himself
   1. The One Deserving of Praise
      "*O God of my praise*"

   2. The One Capable of Action
      "*Do not be silent*!"

B. Methodology of Unjustified Attackers
   1. Lying and Deceit

   2. Hatred and Warfare

C. Personal Nature of the Attacks = "*against me*"
   track the use of this phrase in these verses

D. Unjustified Nature of the Attacks = "*without cause*" (direct opposite of Grace)
   1. "*in return for my love they act as my accusers*"

   2. "*repaid me evil for good*"

   3. "*and hatred for my love*"

E. Only Recourse = Prayer -- "*But I am in prayer*"

I. (:6-20) DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE

A. (:6-15) Payback Options: Bad Things for Bad People
   (Note: Reflect on the blessings the righteous enjoy in contrast)

   1. Justice (this is a good thing for the righteous and the afflicted)
      a. Under wicked authority = "*appoint a wicked man over him*"
      b. Accused and unable to escape = "*and let an accuser stand at his right hand*"
      c. Convicted and Unable to appeal
         "*when he is judged, let him come forth guilty*"

"*and let his prayer become sin*"

2. Shortened Life = "*Let his days be few*"

3. Dethroned from Power and Influence = "*Let another take his office*"

4. Death Penalty
   a. Children = fatherless
   b. Wife = widow

5. Bankruptcy and Dislocation
   a. Children
      "*Let his children wander about and beg;*
      And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes"

   b. Personal
      "*Let the creditor seize all that he has;*
      And let strangers plunder the product of his labor"

6. Denied Mercy and Compassion
   a. Personal
      "*Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him*"

   b. Children
      "*Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children*"

7. Family Cut Off and Forgotten
   "*Let his posterity be cut off;*
   In a following generation let their name be blotted out"

8. Sins Remembered
   "*Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord,*
   And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.
   Let them be before the Lord continually,
   That He may cut off their memory from the earth"

B. (:16-20) Payback Justification: Bad People Deserve Bad Things

1. (:16) Persecuted the helpless vs. Lovingkindness

2. (:17-18) Cursed others vs. Blessing
   "*he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment*"

3. (:19-20) Payback Applied
   a. If the shoe fits, Wear it
      "*Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself,*

And for a belt with which he constantly girds himself"

b. Pay him his due

"Let this be the reward of my accusers from the Lord,
And of those who speak evil against my soul"

II. (:21-29) DESIRE FOR VINDICATION

A. (:21-25) The Bad Guys Win Unless God Helps the Afflicted

1. Personal Vindication tied to God's Name and Character

"*deal kindly with me for Thy name's sake;*
Because Thy lovingkindness is good, deliver me"

2. The Afflicted are Incapable of Helping Themselves

B. (:26-29) When God Delivers the Righteous, the Gloating of the Wicked Will Be Turned to Shame

(:30-31) CONCLUSION: THANKSGIVING AND TESTIMONY

A. Thanksgiving

B. Testimony

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Was David justified to pray for God's vengeance against his enemies here or is this an example of an honest, emotional outburst that is really out of bounds?

2) How would you make application to these imprecatory psalms to our situation today in the context of the NT Church Age? What was different about David's situation? What was the same? Are there any appropriate contexts for Christians to utter similar thoughts? Are there any NT examples of such proclamation of woes and cursing?

3) Where do we turn when we are treated unjustly? What is our initial reaction?

4) Do we picture our Lord standing "*at the right hand of the needy to save him*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: Re imprecatory character – "The Old Testament law of evidence required that those found guilty of giving false evidence should suffer the same penalty that the accused would have suffered had he been found guilty (Deut. 19:16-21)….

…we must not forget that the denunciation of God's wrath upon sinners is a recurring feature of the Old Testament (cp. Deut. 27:14-26) and that within the terms of the covenant established by God's grace (Deut. 7:7f) was the warning 'those who defy him and show their hatred for him he repays with destruction: he will not be slow to requite any who so hate him' (Deut. 7:10)."

Barnes: "In the New Testament (Acts i.20) a part of the psalm is applied to Judas the traitor, but without its being necessary to conclude that it had any original reference to him. The conduct of Judas was like the conduct of the enemy of David; the language used in the one case might be properly used in the other."

Barnes: Re "*And let Satan stand at his right hand*" – "As his counselor and adviser. The language would be properly applicable to one who had been a counselor or adviser to a king in the administration of the government; and the prayer is, that he might know what it was to *have* such a one as *his* counsellor and adviser. The language used would seem to make it not improbable that David here refers particularly to some one who had occupied this position in reference to himself, and who had betrayed his trust; who had given him crafty and malignant counsel; who had led him into bad measures; who had used his position to promote his own interests at the expense of his master's."

Beisner: "It is the honor and glory of God's name that concerns David more than anything. That – not personal vengeance – is the motive for David's cursing prayer against his enemies. That men should deal treacherously with anyone is a gross injustice that dishonors God; but that they should deal so with God's anointed king, whom God personally set over His chosen people, is a greater affront. So both in praying for his enemies' punishment and praying for his own deliverance … David prays for God to be honored."

Kidner: Re vs.17-20 "The terrible logic of judgment, whereby what a man chooses he ultimately and totally receives, and indeed absorbs and is enfolded in, is expressed nowhere else with quite this vivid intensity."

Kidner: Re vs. 30,31 "The psalms often emphasize the rightness, indeed the duty, of giving public thanks for personal blessings: cf. especially 40:10. The final verse puts the matter in a nutshell, picking up a phrase from verse 6 (which RSV has relegated to the margin) and replacing the figure of the accuser, who stands at the right hand of his victim, by the figure of God who stands at the right hand of the needy in a very different sense. It is the complete answer."

TEXT: PSALM 110

TITLE: CONQUERING MESSIAH

BIG IDEA:
THE MESSIAH WILL CONQUER ALL ENEMIES AND FUNCTION:
AS KING
AS PRIEST
AS JUDGE

NOTE: This is clearly a Messianic Psalm

cf. Christ's argument in Matt. 22:41-46 -- depends on 2 things being true:
1) that David wrote Psalm 110
2) that David was a prophet writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit
"How does David call him Lord" -- if the Messiah is merely the "son of David"?

cf. Acts 2:32-36 speaking of the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Messiah at the right hand of God -- speaks not of David but of Messiah, the son of David = "this Jesus whom you crucified" -- "God has made him both Lord and Christ"

1 Cor. 15:24-28 "He has put all things in subjection under his feet"

Hebrews 1:13 shows that Christ is superior to angelic beings

Hebrews 10:11-12 shows the sufficiency of His sacrifice

(:1) INTRODUCTION: PEACEFUL SECURITY OF ANTICIPATING VICTORY OVER ALL ENEMIES

3 people clearly involved here:
1) David -- who wrote the Psalm
2) "*The Lord*"
3) "*my (David's) Lord*"

Ultimate Victory is Assured

Enemies are Real, but not to be feared
our soul should be at peace in Zion

The Battle is ultimately the Lord's -- not ours

I. (:2-3) MESSIAH AS KING

A. Strength of His Rule = "*strong scepter*"

1. Originates from Jerusalem (Zion)

2. Extends over all His enemies

B. Loyalty of His People

1. Secure by virtue of His Power

2. Separated from the world in accordance with His Holiness

II. (:4) MESSIAH AS PRIEST

Def. of a priest: one who represents man to God

A. Qualifications as Priest (from Wayne Wever -- Hebrews 5:1-4)
1. has to be a man
2. has to have access to God and be able to offer sacrifices
3. has to be compassionate
4. has to be chosen by God
(Remember: Saul neglected this and was subject to God's wrath)

B. Distinctiveness of Priesthood of Melchizedek
only 2 priesthoods established by God: Aaronic and Melchizedek
1. Aaronic: reserved for the descendants of Levi; they inherit the office
2. Melchizedek: no record of any progenitors or successors; it is a forever priesthood
He was king over Salem in the ancient world (later called Jerusalem).
Heb. 7:1
No record of his beginnings or end
Reign of Righteousness and Peace (Rom. 5:1)
Received tithes from Abraham -- shows his greatness
Melchizedek blessed Abraham
Gave Abraham bread and wine -- possible type of Lord's Supper?

Part of the message of Hebrews is the Superiority of this Priesthood

"*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind*" -- this priesthood is irrevocable
Permanence of this priesthood

III. (:5-6) MESSIAH AS JUDGE

A. No Respecter of Persons -- How the Mighty have Fallen

B. Goal is Punishment Rather than Reformation

(:7) CONCLUSION: REFRESHING TASTE OF ENJOYING VICTORY OVER ALL ENEMIES

A. Drinking from the Brook

B. Lifting up His Head

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If you are to join the Lord in battle against the enemy, how should you prepare yourself?

2) It says in verse 4, that the Lord has made a promise and will not change His mind. Is it ever appropriate to pray for His will to change? Is prayer of this kind by the believer effective and welcomed by God?

3) What justification does God have for judging nations as guilty before Him?

4) Why does God become angry at wickedness, when He knows that apart from Him, man has no choice but to be wicked?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "The idea in the psalm is that of the exaltation, the conquest , the priesthood, and the dominion of the Messiah. Two things—the kingship and the priesthood of the Messiah—are combined. The leading idea is that of the *priest-king* or the *king-priest*, as in the case of Melchizedek, in whom the two offices of priest and king were in a very unusual manner and form united in one person. Usually they were separate, even in the earliest ages of the world. In the case of Melchizedek they were *combined*, and hence he was selected as a proper representative of the Messiah—of one who should combine these offices, apparently incongruous, in one.

The psalm embraces the following points: --

I. The appointment of the Messiah – acknowledged by the author of the psalm as *his* '*Lord*' – to that high office, to be held until he should subdue all his enemies, ver. 1.

II. His being endowed with *power* needful for the accomplishment of the design for which he was appointed, ver. 2.

III. The assurance that his people would be made '*willing*' in the day when he should put forth his power, vers. 3.

IV. The peculiar characteristic of his reign, as that of a *priest-king*, after the order of Melchizedek; combining the two functions of king and priest in his own person and office, ver. 4.

V. His conquest and triumph, vers. 5-7."

Maddux: "By Divine Appointment

I. Right hand place by throne.

A. God first in command.
B. Enemies subdued.
C. Delegated power.
D. Willing fealty of His people.
1. In beauty of holiness.
2. Supported by youth.
a. Refreshing as the dew.
b. As promising as the morning.

II. Eternal priesthood.
A. Underwritten by Divine oath.
B. Not of Levitical order.

III. On the throne.
A. God on the right hand now.
B. The Lord God still rules.
C. Righteous judge of nation.
D. Direct plan of action.
E. Vigilant and victorious.
1. Gideon's Band analogy.
2. Proud herd-leader analogy.
3. Majestic leader."

Kidner: Re "*Sit at my right hand*" – "The authority and power conferred by such an address will be illustrated in the remaining verses of the psalm; but it will take the New Testament to do it justice.

a. He is not only greater than David (Acts 2:34, 'for David did not ascend into the heavens') but greater than the angels (Heb. 1:13, 'to what angel has he ever said, Sit at my right hand …?');

b. God exalted Him as emphatically as man rejected Him (Acts 5:30f., 'Jesus whom you killed … God exalted … at his right hand');

c. It is as Saviour and Intercessor that He reigns (Acts 5:31; Rom. 8:34, 'Christ … who is at the right hand of God … intercedes for us');

d. ('*Sit* …'): In token of a finished task, He is seated (Heb. 10:11f., 'every priest stands daily …, offering repeatedly … But … Christ … sat down at the right hand of God');

e. ('*till* …'): He awaits the last surrender (Heb. 10:13, 'to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet'; cf. also 1 Cor. 15:25f.).

So this single verse displays the divine Person of Christ, His power and the prospect before Him. Together with verse 4 it underlies most of the New Testament teaching on His glory as Priest-King."

Gaebelein: "'*The womb of the morning'* means the dawning of that blessed day. The nation Israel will then be born again, become God's firstborn among the other nations and appear '*in holy splendor*.' And so '*they are the dew of His youth.*' This is a beautiful expression. As the dew glitters on a beautiful morning when the sun rises in his splendor so His redeemed people will reflect His glory. In each dewdrop there is a little sunbeam, and so His willing people will reflect Himself. They are called '*the dew of His youth*'

because they too are the travail of His soul, when so to speak, '*in His youth*' He poured out His soul and died for that nation."

Harris: CONQUEST OF THE PRIEST-KING
Theme: Clearly Messianic and foretelling the coming and conquest of earth's true King.
Cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 2:34; etc.
Occasion: Not known.

I. THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. Ver. 1-3. "*The Lord shall send*" (ver. 2).
1. Appointment. Ver. 1, 2. "*Sit thou at my right hand*" (ver. 1). Here is a vision of the coming king, exalted to sit at God's right hand and participate in his authority and power. We see this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus.
2. Assurance. Ver. 3. "*Thy people shall be willing*." The subjects of this king are willing followers and not conscripted slaves. They are to be a cleansed people, and they shall remain young in the service.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAH. Ver. 4. "*Thou art a priest*."
1. Pledge. Ver. 4a. "*The Lord hath sworn*." There is no greater than the oath of God, and of that he will not repent since he is unchanging.
2. Priesthood. Ver. 4b. "*A priest forever after … Melchizedek*." The royalty of this priesthood and its eternal duration make it referable only to Jesus. It is doubtful if this language could have a primary application.

III. THE CONQUEST OF THE MESSIAH. Ver. 5-7. "*The Lord at thy right hand*" (ver. 5).
1. Conflict. Ver. 5, 6. "*Shall strike through kings*" (ver. 5). Here we are on the battlefield, and this is the revelation of victories to come. The might of the king and his army having been described, and his priestly character portrayed, the conflict and the victory are now contemplated. Everlasting dominion and eternal power and triumph characterize this conquest.
2. Conquest. Ver. 7. "*Drink of the brook in the way*." The picture seems to be that of a victorious leader stooping only to refresh himself as he pushes on to victory. Or is it a picture of Christ drinking of the "*waters of affliction*" on his way to exaltation? In any case it is the harbinger of victory. Nor will that victory be long delayed. Swiftly shall it come, and the longsuffering people of God will take courage, for their "*redemption draweth nigh*."

PS 111 – Praise for His Great Works

Worship Reflects on the Character of God Displayed in His Awesome Works

Heb Letter / Phrase# / Verse

Praise the LORD!

Aleph a

#1 :1a I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart,

Beth B

#2 :1b In the company of the upright and in the assembly.

Gimel G

#3 :2a Theme: Great are the works of the LORD;

Daleth D

#4 :2b They are studied by all who delight in them.

1. Awesome in ROYAL RIGHTEOUSNESS (:3)

He h

#5 :3a Splendid and majestic is His work;

Waw W

#6 :3b And His righteousness endures forever.

2. Awesome in MEMORABLE GRACE (:4)

Zayin Z

#7 :4a He has made His wonders to be remembered;

Heth X

#8 :4b The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

3. Awesome in PROMISED PROVISION (:5)

Teth j

#9 :5a He has given food to those who fear Him;

Yodh y

#10 :5b He will remember His covenant forever.

4. Awesome in PROVIDENTIAL POWER (:6)

Kaf K

#11 :6a He has made known to His people the power of His works,

PS 112 – for His Great Blessings

Only the Righteous Will Prosper – In this Life and the Next – How Blessed is the Man Who Fears the Lord

Praise the LORD!

Theme: How blessed is the man who fears the LORD

Who greatly delights in His commandments.

1. PROSPEROUS POSTERITY (:2-3)

His descendants will be mighty on earth;

The generation of the upright will be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in his house,

And his righteousness endures forever.

2. CHRISTLIKE LIGHT AND CHARACTER

Light arises in the darkness for the upright;

He is gracious and compassionate and righteous.

3. SAFETY NET FOR GENEROSITY (:5)

It is well with the man who is gracious and lends;

He will maintain his cause in judgment.

4. MEMORABLE STABILITY (:6)

For he will never be shaken;

Lamed ל

#12 :6b In giving them the heritage of the nations. The righteous will be remembered forever.

Note: Chiastic Arrangement of vv.7-8 A / B / B1 / A1

5. Awesome in TRUTHFUL INTEGRITY (:7a, 8b) 5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR (:7a, 8b)
6. Awesome in RELIABLE REVELATION (:7b, 8a) 6. ANCHOR OF FAITH (:7b, 8a)

Mem מ

#13 :7a A - The works of His hands are truth and justice; He will not fear evil tidings;

Nun נ

#14 :7b B - All His precepts are sure. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

Samekh ס

#15 :8a B1 - They are upheld forever and ever; His heart is upheld,

Ayin ע

#16 :8b A1 - They are performed in truth and uprightness. He will not fear until he looks with satisfaction on his adversaries.

7. Awesome in SOVEREIGN REDEMPTION (:9a) 7. TRANSFORMED BEHAVIOR (:9a)

Pei פ

#17 :9a He has sent redemption to His people; He has given freely to the poor;

Tzadei צ

#18 :9b He has ordained His covenant forever; His righteousness endures forever;

SUMMARY: SUMMARY:
Awesome in HOLINESS OF CHARACTER (:9b) FUTURE RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

Qof ק

#19 :9c Holy and awesome is His name. His horn will be exalted in honor.

CONCLUSION: CONCLUSION:
Foundation of WISDOM and WORSHIP (:10) CONTRAST -- CURSING THE WICKED (:10)

Reish ר

#20 :10a The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; The wicked will see it and be vexed;

Shin ש

#21 :10b A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; He will gnash his teeth and melt away;

Tav ת

#22 :10c His praise endures forever. The desire of the wicked will perish.

TEXT: PSALM 111

TITLE: PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GREAT WORKS

BIG IDEA:
WORSHIP REFLECTS ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD DISPLAYED IN HIS AWESOME WORKS!

Alphabetic Psalm = each verse starts with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet

(cf. Story told by daughter just starting at Univ. of Richmond: fellow student commented: "Isn't Rousseau French? But he wrote in such excellent English!" No concept of the work of translation. Sometimes we miss some of the subtleties that created extra beauty in the original language.)

Companion Psalm to 112 which we will study next week
- 111 – focus is on praising God for Himself -- His great works and what we can then learn about His character
- 112 – focus is on praising God for all of the blessings that flow to those who fear Him

Both are alphabetic psalms
The themes and even the phrasing run parallel through the 10 verses of each

(:1) INTRODUCTION: HEARTFELT PRAISE EXPRESSES OUR PUBLIC WORSHIP

A. Praise for the Lord is Always Appropriate
"*Praise the Lord*"
Hallelujah! – to shine, to flash forth the light; praise; honor
Not some meaningless repetition of a mantra under your breath

B. Praise Involves Giving Thanks
"*I will give thanks to the Lord*"
Thanksgiving solves a lot of ills

Wiersbe: Praise takes the selfishness out of our lives. It takes us away from idolatry, from living on substitutes.

C. Praise and Thanks must Originate from the Heart
"*with all my heart*" -- my inner man
the Lord is not fooled by **external worship**; by the **hypocrisy** of religious rites
Is. 29:13-14 "*Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their heart far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with*

this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed."

contrast the type of rejected worship offered up by **Israel** in the OT

Amos 5:21-24 "*I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let* ***justice*** *roll down like waters And* ***righteousness*** *like an ever-flowing stream*."

contrast the type of self righteous worship offered up by the **Pharisees**

look at **David** – the writer of many of the psalms = *a man after God's own heart* – specialized in heartfelt worship

Are we passionate and sincere about our worship? Or do we come half-hearted?

Application: heartfelt worship not set in contrast to intelligent worship – God knows nothing of mindless, emotional worship

D. Praise must be Voiced Publicly Among God's People
(not just a private matter)
1. "*in the company of the upright*" – circle of more intimate friends
2. "*in the assembly*" – congregation, gathering

We come to together to worship God; not to primarily have our needs met; God has already met our deepest needs; we need to trust Him and praise Him for what He has already done; we need the application of His great works to our life – not in desperate need for new miracles

Application: We need to give people an **opportunity to praise the Lord**; brings up problem issues

- don't want women teaching –

Context of 1 Cor. 14 is primarily oriented around **edification** rather than **praise** – that is where women are commanded to keep silent in the church

- don't want certain personality types to dominate

- don't want long-winded rabbit trails

- don't want periods of uncomfortable silence or don't want to pressure people

But we want the Lord to receive the praise publicly due to Him – saw example in church we visited on our retreat

Why don't churches allow for this?? Become so big it is not practical; people don't even know one another

This is one reason it is a sin to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (not talking about those with health limitations where they are unable to assemble)

It is a sin to rob God of the praise that is due Him

It is a sin of idolatry to substitute anything else for God in our affections and thereby give our emotional praise to that idol

I. (:2) THESIS: PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GREAT WORKS

A. The Works of the Lord – Recognized as Great

"*Great are the works of the Lord*"

Part of the greatness of God at work in **Creation** –

Psalm 19 *"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge*"

Psalm 8 *"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed your splendor above the heavens*"

The wicked refuses the clear testimony of God's greatness in creation:

Rom. 1:18-20 *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse*"

Greatness of God also at work in His providential outworking of His plan for History as well as His plan to care for His people

Greatness of God especially evidenced in His salvation and sanctification of His children

"*Works of the Lord*"

- Ex. 32:16 – tablets of the Law
- Ex. 34:10 – miracles in delivering people from Pharaoh
- Deut. 11:1-7
- Josh 24:31
- Judges 2:7

Great in what sense?

- great in number
- great in magnitude and extent and intensity
- scope
- variety
- design – in terms of what they are intended to do; in importance
- effect – in terms of what they accomplish

B. The Works of the Lord – Relished as Great

"*They are studied by all who delight in them*." –

because more in them than meets the eye just on the surface treatment
Deut. 4:20; 13:15; 19:18

1. Diligent Study – investigate, study, seek with care, inquire of the Lord
   Requires:
   - effort, energy
   - expense
   - equipment
   - endurance

   Cf. study of those professionals in other disciplines
   Doctor – should certainly see the greatness of the works of the Lord in his examination of the human body
   Scientists
   Archaeologists

2. Delightful Study (not burdensome)
   Look at how much time people devote to their hobbies … Why?? Nobody is making them invest time in improving their golf game or learning how to cook more exotic dishes …. They have a love and a passion for that hobby
Piper – his emphasis on delighting in the Lord

Blaise Pascal "Human things must be known to be loved, but divine things must be loved to be known."

II. (:3-9) WORSHIP REFLECTS ON THE AWESOME CHARACTER OF GOD AS REVEALED THROUGH HIS GREAT WORKS

"awe" = emotion in which dread, veneration and wonder are variously intermingled – wondering reverence tingled with fear inspired by the sublime

Lots of allusions to the **Abrahamic Covenant** in this section

7 REASONS TO PRAISE THE LORD:

Look at 3 Areas:
- Historical Context of Israel – especially related to the Exodus
- Cross of Jesus Christ
- Illustrations from our own experience

1. (:3) Awesome in **Royal Righteousness**
   "Splendid and majestic is His work"
   "And His righteousness endures forever"

Usually power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely; not so with the reign of the Righteous Branch of David

VanGemeren: The word "*righteousness*" refers to God's orderly rule over creation, his victorious rule over the nations, and his redemption of his own

Reflect on how the Righteous Judge did what was right in delivering Abraham and Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah (**Gen. 18:19-25**)

Reflect on how God manifested His majestic righteousness in delivering His people from the harsh bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt

- sent them all types of signs of judgment
- then delivered His covenant people and destroyed the Egyptian pursuers

[this pair of psalms possibly recited at the eating of the Passover Lamb each year]

- recall song of Moses celebrating God's righteous reign –

Exod. 15:6,11, 18 "*Your right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power . . . Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? . . .the Lord shall reign forever and ever*"

Reflect on how God demonstrated his royal righteousness at the cross of Jesus Christ – making it possible for God to remain just and still the justifier of those who would put their faith in Him .. the message of the gospel of God's righteousness is spelled out in great detail in the Book of Romans – (1:17) "*in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*"

Reflect on how God has performed His splendid and majestic work in your own life in rescuing you from the kingdom of Satan and transforming you into His royal family of majestic righteousness

2. (:4) Awesome in **Memorable Grace**

"*He has made His wonders to be remembered*"

Hebrew: "He has made His remembrance to be marvelled at"

Extraordinary, surpassing, beyond our power; difficult to understand

Important to pass down this legacy from generation to generation

Lord has built up a remarkable reputation

Wiersbe: As Abraham went from place to place, he left behind altars and wells as memorials that God had brought him that way, and the Jewish nation left "*memorial stones*" after they entered Canaan (Josh. 4:1-7). Jewish parents were commanded to teach their children the meaning of the special days and the memorial stones (Exo. 13:3-10; Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 4:4-7). There are no "sacred places" where God dwells in some unique way, but there are special places where God can bring edifying memories to mind that will help us remember His greatness and grace.

Awesome in Tender-Heartedness

"*The Lord is gracious and compassionate*"

All of God's people should be reproducing this important trait – will be the focus next week as we study Psalm 112; we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; must study His life to see How gracious and compassionate He is

His grace goes so far beyond anything we could expect or imagine – surprising

Psalm 136 – Lord's goodness to Israel -- refrain: *"His lovingkindness is everlasting"*

What type of memorials of God's Grace have you established for your family?

3. (:5) Awesome in **Promised Provision** -- Generous and Sufficient Provision for Promised Material Needs

"*He has given food to those who fear Him*"

Physical = spoils in going out from Egypt and manna in wilderness
Spiritual = Bread of Life

One of the many names of God = El Shaddai –

Even gives food to the birds who have no consciousness of His provision; How much more we can trust His provision; no excuse for Anxiety or for hoarding worldly riches for our own security
Psalm 37:25; Matt. 6:33

MacArthur: God's faithfulness in providing food for Jacob through Joseph (Ge 37-50)

"*He will remember His covenant forever*"

Amill camp better take a strong look at this characteristic of God; There are so many detailed promises made to the nation of Israel – God does not want us to give up on these or try to help Him out by spiritualizing them and applying them to the church instead

How has God provided for you and your family?

4. (:6) Awesome in **Providential Power** – make conspicuous, declare, proclaim, publish

"*He has made known to His people the power of His works*"

This is not power manifested for the sake of showing off; this is power channeled into purposeful acts to benefit His people; that is why God does not always perform miracles; He has specific purposes to accomplish

God's people get the revelatory benefit of His power; the unsaved don't get the message; look at hard-hearted **Pharaoh** – who saw more of God's power than this great earthly sovereign – yet it did him no good – his army was wiped out in the Red Sea – the same power that preserved God's elect, destroyed God's enemies

Accomplishing the Impossible

"*In giving them the heritage of the nations*"

What seems impossible in your life; where does God want to show Himself strong? God had promised Abraham to make the nation like the stars of the sky (Ge 15:5)

Conquest of the land seemed impossible – great walled cities; we seemed like grasshoppers

* * * * chiastic arrangement of vs. 7-8 A / B / B / A

How has God shown you His providential power?

5. (:7a, 8b) Awesome in **Truthful Integrity**
"*The works of His hands are truth and justice*"
"*They are performed in truth and uprightness*"

No hidden agenda; no manipulation; no deception; no corruption;
God cannot be bribed; God cannot be accused of any unfairness
Total Integrity and Truthfulness and Justice

6. (:7b, 8a) Awesome in **Reliable Revelation** (closely tied to Faithfulness)
"*All His precepts are sure*"
"*They are upheld forever and ever*" – supported, sustained – something you can lean on

"*Sure*" -- Confirmed, faithful, established, verified, reliable
You can count on whatever God has spoken and revealed; His Word is certain

* * * *

7. (:9) Awesome in **Sovereign Redemption**
"*He has sent redemption to His people*"

- Redeemed out of Egypt
- Redeemed at the Cross of Christ
- Redeemed in your personal experience

Awesome in Sovereign Execution of His Eternal Plans
"*He has ordained His covenant forever*"

Summary (:9c) Awesome in **Holiness of Character**
"*Holy and awesome is His name*"
All other verses had 2 phrases; this third phrase is a summary; a crescendo

All other references were tied to some aspect of the greatness of God's works – by which we see how awesome He is and worthy of praise; here we look at His name itself; His character

Wiersbe: The word "reverend" is usually applied to the clergy, but there is no biblical basis for this … To the Jewish people, God's name was so awesome that they would not speak the name "*Jehovah*" but substituted "*Adonai*" lest they would inadvertently blaspheme His holy name.

(:10) CONCLUSION: COMPLETING THE CYCLE – WE END AT THE BEGINNING

A. Foundation of Wisdom and Worship = the Fear of the Lord

"*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*"

it is certainly the beginning of Wisdom which is what we need to properly reflect on the character of God, to appreciate His awesome works, and to respond with heartfelt Worship

B. Obedience = Key to Discernment and Worship

"*A good understanding have all those who do His commandments*"

Obedience is the key to maintaining that proper attitude of the fear of the Lord and thus being continually blessed with more and more wisdom and understanding

C. Eternal Value of Praise

"*His praise endures forever*"

Forever = a long time; what else can we participate in that has eternal value?

Steve Zeisler: Now, the NIV says, "*To him belongs eternal praise*," but that is slightly misleading. It is true that he will always deserve praise, but that isn't the point the psalmist is making here. The point is that when his praise is uttered from the heart, it lasts forever. A shout in a cave does not vanish into the air as quickly as a shout made in an open field. It echoes and lasts longer as a result. This verse suggests that, in some sense, genuine praise never "vanishes from the air," becoming instead part of an everlasting song offered by the creation to the Creator.

So Praise starts with the Fear of the Lord and it never Ends!

WORSHIP REFLECTS ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD DISPLAYED IN HIS AWESOME WORKS!

Royal Righteousness
Memorable Grace
Promised Provision
Providential Power

Truthful Integrity
Reliable Revelation
Sovereign Redemption
Summary: Holiness of Character

PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GREAT WORKS

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What does it mean to give all your heart to God in the presence of other Christians? Does it involve interacting with them or just a testimony of encouragement before them?

2) It is always a pleasure to see God work. How can you actively seek out more of these opportunities? Will your pleasure increase if you are a participant in this work with God?

3) Does the fact of God's eternity and changelessness affect the degree of trust you place in Him, more so than knowing that His holiness underlies every decision made?

4) Obeying God takes you places you wouldn't go otherwise and allows your understanding to grow. What are the areas in your life that lack growth and are snares to you? Determine how you can respond to God obediently in these weak areas and purpose to do so.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leslie McCaw: almost every phrase consists of just three Hebrew words, and in both poems the last two verses contain three phrases and not two as is the case in the other verses. The two Psalms deal with twin themes.

Barnes: "The psalm is a call to the praise of God on account of his *works*, and is designed to suggest grounds of confidence in him as drawn *from* those works…. The works of the Lord are great. They are great in number; great in magnitude; great in wisdom; great in goodness…. A man who loves God will have real pleasure in studying his works as well as his word…One great error among the friends of God is the neglect to study his works."

Barnes: Re vs. 7 "*are truth*" – "That is, They tend to establish and confirm the truth; they are done in the cause or the defense of truth. Truth in any case may be ascertained by what God does,--for all that he defends and protects is *truth*, and his acts, therefore, may be regarded as an expression of what is true and right."

Allen: "The psalmist expresses his gratitude that Yahweh has instituted the festivals at which the tradition of saving history may be reaffirmed: specifically he has the Exodus in

mind (cf. Exod 3:20; 12:14). He moves on to the creedal statement of Exod 34:6, which is associated with the renewal of the covenant and enshrines Yahweh's loving patronage, and then to his provision of quails and manna in the wilderness. From both he deduces the strong saving and keeping reality assured by the covenant of the law made at Sinai. Yahweh committed himself to his people in a permanent relationship. Associated with the renewal of the covenant was the divine promise of Canaan (Exod 34:10-11). This then is the sacred history which was Israel's foundation stone: the Exodus, protection during the wilderness trek and the gifts of the law and the promised land. This is the cluster of events to be celebrated as the touchstone of Yahweh's power and purposes for his chosen people. They mark him out as faithful to his own and their just defender from all who would oppress them."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 10 – "Practical godliness is the test of wisdom. Men may know and be very orthodox, they may talk and be very eloquent, they may speculate and be very profound; but the best proof of their intelligence must be found in their actually doing the will of the Lord. The former part of the Psalm taught us the doctrine of God's nature and character, by describing his works: the second part supplies the practical lesson by drawing the inference that to worship and obey him is the dictate of true wisdom."

David Silversides: **Praising the Lord, where, how and why**
The ABCs of praising God – 22 phrases – starting with diff Hebrew letter
True praise is never just meaningless words with no thought

1. Where to Praise the Lord

Every place is appropriate for praise (including privately and in our homes); but there is a particular obligation to praise the Lord in the assembly of the people of God; "*upright*" is word applied to works of God – those who have been called to be holy as God is holy; 2 Hebrew words rendered congregation or assembly in OT; like *ecclesia* = those called out = church, common bond; or *synagogue* = word used here; refers to the place of meeting; any gathering together of the people
Not simply talking of private praise, but public praise in the assembly – together with the other believers; "I don't need to go to church; I can praise the Lord at home" = excuse;

2. How to Praise the Lord

Not what outward form; but with what inward disposition – with my whole heart; this psalm is an example of the material to use in this whole-hearted praise; not mindless or just emotional; but content and substance oriented – nothing incompatible between thoughtful praise and heartfelt praise – unbiblical to think that spontaneous mindless worship is somehow more spiritual; love God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength; use our minds in worship; rolling on the floor and making foolish noises is not the high point of spiritual worship; in true worship the emotions follow the mind; 1 cor. 14:15; Spirit of God is not the author of confusion or of mindless emotion that passes falsely for worship

3. Why to Praise the Lord

A. Because of the Works of the Lord – in Creation and Providence

"the heavens declare His glory" … (Ps. 19) *"When I consider the . ."* Ps. 8
The mandate for the Christian explorer and scientist – seeks out the works of God; explores what God has done so as to see the glory of God reflected in the works of His hands; God's handiwork will bear close scrutiny – not like our handiwork which will show flaws and disappoint when examined up close;
The works of God should be examined in their vastness, minute detail, in all of its interconnectedness
Rom. 1 – unsaved reject this important revelation – reject the creation because they are sinners, not because the evidence for God is unclear; we don't need to prove the existence of God – it is self-evident; problem is a moral one; only the perversity of man causes him to say that he can't see it; atheism and agnosticism are not a result of objective assessment of the evidence; they want to do their own thing;

B. Works of God to His People (:3-7)
Attributes of God:
1. God's **Righteousness** (:3) -- delivering His people out of Egypt is in view; judged the Egyptians – overthrowing them in the Red Sea; He punishes sin; He is a God of retribution; foretaste of great redemption from sin in Jesus Christ; His death on the cross displays the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25-26); God doesn't save sinners by bypassing sin or ignoring or overlooking sin; every sin will be punished; who is going to pay the penalty and take the punishment for your sins? Is. 45:21; Ps. 98:2; 1 John 2 – we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; cf. error of theologians saying Hell is non-existent = then God doesn't punish sin; then Christ didn't need to die
2. God's **Grace** and **Compassion** (:4) – saw the affliction of His people in Egypt; mercy combined with righteousness; Ps. 136:10 celebrates His mercy that endures forever; the cross of Christ is where these attributes of God meet together; Lord's Supper is a remembrance of this
3. God's **Covenant Faithfulness** (:5) – His binding promise by which He commits himself to do certain things; Egyptians gave departing Israelites spoils to take with them; or a reference to manna in wilderness; promise to Abraham of a continuing seed; all of these promises hinged on the preservation of Israel in the wilderness – How could they perish when God could not lie?
4. God's **Power** (:6) – Back at the Exodus from Egypt; sent His judgments upon Pharaoh; when He divided the Red Sea and then caused it to overflow over the armies of Egypt; *"that I might show my power"* – Rom. 9:22; when He raised Christ from the dead; when He transforms sinners; when He keeps His people in this world for ultimate sanctification – God shows His power in all of these ways; at the resurrection of the last day
5. God's **Truth** and **Right** (:7) – of all that the Lord promised, not one word failed, all came to pass

4. The God of Redemption is the God of all Praise
(:7b) *commands* = what God has decreed will come to pass; Ps. 33 – *the counsel of the Lord shall stand*; His purposes; all that He has foreordained will come to pass; everything in the heart and mind and plan of God

Spurgeon: The sweet singer dwells upon the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration. Many are ignorant of what their Creator has done, and hence they are foolish in heart, and silent as to the praises of God: this evil can only be removed by a remembrance of God's works, and a diligent study of them; to this, therefore, the psalm is meant to arouse us. It may be called The Psalm of God's Works intended to excite us to the work of praise.

TEXT: PSALM 112

TITLE: ARE YOUR BLESSINGS WORTH COUNTING?

BIG IDEA:
ONLY THE RIGHTEOUS WILL PROSPER – IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT -- HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD!

Song: Count your Blessings, name them one by one … see what God has done
Scripture Reading: **Deut. 28:1-14; Job 5:17-27**
Going to count some of our blessings this morning

I want you to look carefully this morning at your **investment strategy.**

I have some great failures in this area when it comes to financial investments …

But Spiritually I hope I have a good track record …

Especially called to be generous to the poor

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

Hy Wlh

Sets the tone for this study

This is another **acrostic poem**, the phrases of which begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Companion to Psalm 111 – takes up where that psalm ends
Now we see the character of God (studied last week from His great works) manifested in the character of His children; we are godly and righteous because of the work of His grace in our lives to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit

Answers a lot of key questions:
- Why do the wicked prosper?
- Is it really worth it to fear the Lord – to obey Him and serve Him?
- Will God really bless me if I obey Him and follow Him and Fear Him and Depend on Him and Love Him and Delight in Him?

Common Concerns:
Eccles 8:12 *"I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly"*
Matt 19:27-30 Apostles concerned with what would be the reward for following Christ whole-heartedly
"we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"
1 Tim. 4:8 *"godliness is profitable for all things"*

Gives us the Big Idea in v.1 and then goes on to illustrate and prove his point
ONLY THE RIGHTEOUS WILL PROSPER – IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT -- HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD!

I. (:1b) THESIS: ONLY THE RIGHEOUS WILL PROSPER – IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT – HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD!

A. Theme is that of **Abundant Blessing**

"*How blessed is the man*"

vya-yrva

When God is the one doing the blessing …. You can be sure that the blessing is worth something; more than just happiness; inward peace and joy that goes beyond our circumstances

B. Identification of the Godly – **Inward Attitude** -- just one summary description used

" *who fears the Lord*"

ary

will be contrasted with the wicked in vs. 10

Psalm 111 identified this man as:

The *"upright"*

those who *"delight in"* the works of the Lord

those who *"fear Him"* vs. 5

"*His people*" (vs. 6, 9)

"*all those who do His commandments*"

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of **Worship** (**111:10** – companion psalm)

it is certainly the beginning of **Wisdom** which is what we need to properly reflect on the character of God, to appreciate His awesome works, and to respond with heartfelt Worship; Obedience is the key to maintaining that proper attitude of the fear of the Lord and thus being continually blessed with more and more wisdom and understanding -- "*A good understanding have all those who do His commandments*"

C. Identification of the Godly -- **Outward Evidence** of Fearing God = **Enthusiastic Obedience**:

"*Who greatly delight in His commandments*"

`dam #px wytwcmB hwhy-ta

Similar to **Psalm 1** *"his delight is in the law of the Lord"*

How often can we say this of our children?

If we really have their maturity and blessing in mind, why isn't this their reaction more often?

Doesn't find God's commandments burdensome; not a chore to obey God

Doesn't obey grudgingly or out of necessity; God loves a cheerful obeyer

Christ: *"Lo, I delight to do Thy will . . ."*

Unbelievers cannot imagine that we take delight in something they view as restrictive and robbing them of the enjoyment of life

II. (:2-9) 7 BLESSINGS ON THE GODLY:

[Each grows out of **corresponding characteristic of God** we studied in Psalm 111 as we praised God for His mighty works]

1. (:2-3) **Prosperous Posterity** Associated with the God's Royal Righteousness

a. Legacy of Influence and Power

"*His descendants will be mighty on the earth*
The generation of the upright will be blessed."

`%rby ~yrvy rAD A[rz hyhy #raB rABG

Should be expectation that the children of godly parents will have the best opportunity to make a leadership impact on the church of the next generation. Not true in every case … but godly nurturing will have its reward

Two principles in tension: every man accountable for his own sin; yet there is also a carry-over – both positively and negatively – from preceding generation

Church leadership should benefit from our godly children growing up and assuming significant roles

b. Material Wealth and Riches

"*Wealth and riches are in his house*"

AtybB rv[w-!Ah

abundance and contentment; fulfillment; satisfaction

Connection in OT economy normally between godliness and material prosperity – associated with the blessings of life in the Promised Land; different in the church age: Peter said: "*silver and gold have I none*" – so Prosperity Gospel is a great hoax today – they try to run with verses like this one – if the church is just the continuation of Israel, makes it harder to be precise and accurate in these types of controversies

c. Enduring Righteousness

"*And his righteousness endures forever*"

`d[l tdm[Atqdcw

If conversion is genuine, then the fruit abides forever; Bible knows nothing of believers who look to all the world like they live in unrighteousness and ungodliness

2. (:4) **Christlike Light and Character** Associated with God's Memorable Grace

a. Intellectual and Moral Guidance /
Hopeful Future on the dark pathway of Tough Times (Adversity)

"*Light arises in the darkness for the upright*"

~yrvyl rAa %vxB xrz

Christ came as the Light of the world to bring light to all who would receive Him
Believers are described as salt and light

What is true about a man who walks in darkness?

- Can't see where he is going
- Stumbles and falls

Even in tough times, the righteous have the light of the Lord's presence and guidance; What darkness are you facing today? The blessing of the godly is that you are not destined to remain in that darkness – Great HOPE for the future

David Silversides:
Could refer to deliverance from the darkness of trouble; but more likely refers to **guidance in a life of complexity**; light from the Word of God as the believer honestly seeks the face of God; not having some verse jump out of context so that he makes it mean something that it does not – that's not guidance; not a jumble of individual statements that we should put in a bag and shake up and then draw out some phrase; read each book in context and in totality; chief requirement to receive this blessing is honesty before God; uprightness of heart; integrity; we actually do want to know what God's Word says and how it applies to our situation; not asking for reassurance that the path we have already decided to take is right; we want to use God as a rubber stamp for what we want; **Jer. 42:2,5** that the Lord may show us the way we should go and the thing we should do; should we flee into Egypt or stay where we are? Message was to stay where they were and the Lord would look out for them (**43:2** – opposition to Lord's Word).

Wiersbe: If there is darkness around them, they wait for the Lord to send the light (v. 4). This is what encouraged Joseph during thirteen years of waiting and suffering in Egypt. "*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord*." (27:14, NKJV)

Spurgeon: It is as ordinary for the righteous to be comforted as for the day to dawn. Wait for the light and it will surely come; for even if our heavenly Father should in our last hours put us to bed in the dark, we shall find it morning when we awake.

b. Tender-Hearted Demeanor
"*He is gracious and compassionate and righteous*." Like the Lord
`qyDcw ~Wxrw !WNx
Parable of the Good Samaritan – when confronted with the need of someone who is in distress, we exercise the stewardship of God's possessions entrusted to us to try to meet that need

3. (:5) **<u>Safety Net for Generosity</u>** Associated with <u>God's Promised Provision</u>
a. Encouragement to be Aggressive in Generosity (not Foolish)
"It is well with the man who is gracious and lends"
hwlmW !nAx vya-bAj

Fear: is that if I am generous and give to others, I will end up destitute and abandoned; not true that we can promise some formula that if we give X, God will return in a material sense X squared … but it is true that we can never outgive God and He has pledge to take care of all of our needs

We can be aggressive in being generous to others because God will guard our cause and provide for all of our needs
Look at the example of the Macedonians who gave out of their great poverty and affliction; even beyond their ability to give (**2 Cor. 8:1-6**)

Look at **excuses**:
- I can't help him out because I don't have very much myself
- I can't help him out because he is not deserving
- I can't help him out because I need to provide for my own future security – can never have enough – you don't know what the future will hold

Look at lending from a **wrong motive**:
- trying to enrich myself – usury; huge rates of interest
- trying to ingratiate myself and get something in return; bribe

Luke 6: 32-36

Wiersbe: He was generous in his use of the wealth the Lord gave him, sharing it with the poor and lending it freely without interest (Deut. 23:19-20). He was certainly not miserly or covetous, and he was obedient to the Lord's admonition to care for the poor and needy (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 25:35-38; Deut. 15:7, 11). When he quoted verse 9 in 2 Corinthians 9:9, the apostle Paul used him as an example for believers today to follow. (See also Prov. 11:24).

b. Guarantee that God has our Back – He Covers Our Bets
"*He will maintain his cause in judgment*." Difficult to translate
`jPvmB wyrbD lKlky

He will sustain his case in litigation

he will be found successful in the critical battles that arise

Alternative translations: (I am not choosing these)
He will guide his affairs with discretion
He will maintain his affairs justly

4. (:6) **<u>Memorable Stability</u>** = **<u>Unshakeable Stability and Righteous Reputation</u>**
Associated with <u>God's Providential Power</u>
Times of difficulty and challenge will arise for the godly – but he faces adversity with a quiet confidence
a. Unshakeable Stability
"For he will never be shaken"
jAMy-al ~lA[l-yK

<u>9 OT usages</u> – be shaken, totter, removed, overthrown

Psalm 15:5 *He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.*
Psalm 125:1 *Those who trust in the LORD Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.*
Proverbs 10:30 *The righteous will never be shaken, But the wicked will not dwell in the land.*

Henry Law: He stands immovable as a rock. His confidence is firmly settled on his God. He trembles not lest messengers should announce calamities. He knows that all events are ordered by his heavenly Father, and therefore that all things must work together for his good. He fears not lest his foes should gain advantage, and extinguish his remembrance upon earth.

b. Righteous Reputation

"The righteous will be remembered forever."

`qyDc hyhy ~lA[rkzl

Think of how the unsaved love to make monuments to themselves; try to create a lasting legacy; want to be remembered for their achievements
Think of famous saints of the past; think of ones who have had a lasting impact on your life;
You can even have an impressive testimony to nonbelievers

* * * * chiastic arrangement of vss. 7-8 A / B / B / A * * * *
Heart Anchored in Faith Rather Than Adrift in Fear

5. (:7a, 8b) **Freedom from Fear** Associated with God's Truthful Integrity

"He will not fear evil tidings"

aryy al h[r h[WmVm

"he will not fear until he looks with satisfaction on his adversaries"

`wyrcb hary-rva d[aryy al

no such thing for him as "*evil tidings*"

Rom. 8:28
James 1:17

"*let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid*"

6. (:7b, 8a) **Anchor of Faith** Associated with God's Reliable Revelation

"His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord" – Man's Responsibility

`hwhyB xjB ABl !Akn

"His heart is upheld" – God's Sovereign Grace

Abl %Wms

God responds to his faith and upholds his heart
Calm and untroubled even in the face of adversity

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7. (:9) **Transformed Behavior** Associated with God's Sovereign Redemption

a. Past Performance of Unselfish Generosity

"*He has given freely to the poor*"

~ynAybal !tn rZP

VanGemeren: He has singled out generosity and compassion (v.4) as the hallmark of wise living. Wise living is characterized by lasting success, unlike many human endeavors that fail or are short-lived.

b. Abiding State of Righteousness

"*His righteousness endures forever*"

d[l tdm[Atqdc

Summary (:9c) **Future Recognition and Rewards** Associated with God's Holiness of Character

"*His horn will be exalted in honor*."

`dAbkB ~WrT Anrq

Horn = symbol of strength and power and dignity – study animals

VanGemeren: The *"horn"* denotes peace, prosperity, and God-granted success, instead of the competitive, greedy aspirations of the wicked.

Ps. 75:5 "*Do not lift up your horn on high, Do not speak with insolent pride*."

Look at example of **Mordecai** and his exaltation – **Esther 6**

Lord exalts us in due time; look at how exalted Christ is now after His life and death of humiliation and suffering

Look at the "crowns" promised to the godly in the NT as rewards for faithfulness

"*the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory*"

Spurgeon: His horn shall be exalted with honour. A horn is an emblem of power; for it is the beast's strength, offensive and defensive: and of plenty, for it hath within it a capacity apt to contain what is put into it; and of sanctity, for in it was put the holy oil, with which kings were consecrated; and of dignity, both in consequence upon the reasons mentioned (as denoting might, and influence, and sacredness accompanying sovereign dignity) and because also it is an especial beauty and ornament to the creature which hath it; so that this expression, "his horn shall be exalted with honour," may be supposed to import that an abundance of high, and holy, of firm and solid honour shall attend upon the bountiful person ... God will thus exalt the bountiful man's horn even here in this world, and to an infinitely higher pitch he will advance it in a future state. --Isaac Barrow, 1630-1677.

III. (:10) CONCLUSION: CONTRAST THE CURSING OF THE WICKED

A. Distress and Frustration -- because of the Ultimate Prosperity and Blessing Showered on the Righteous

"*the wicked will see it and be vexed*" – consider, perceive

s[kw hary [vr

Envy eats away at his heart – provoked to anger and wrath

No more questions about why do the wicked prosper … they don't!

Eccles 5:13-17 – If you pursue riches and hoard them up rather than sharing with those in need you will end up frustrated and vexed

MacArthur: Earthly treasures are precarious and bring disadvantages: they produce anxiety (v. 12) and pain (v. 13). They disappear through bad business (v. 14) and are left at death (v. 15). They can even produce fear (v. 17).

Anger, bitterness, jealousy, frustration – all self destructive emotions

B. Diminishing and Suffering that leads to Eternal Torment

"*He will gnash his teeth and melt away*"

smnw qrxy wyNv

gnash, grind the teeth – only NT usage of this Hebrew word

"*melt away*"

Ex. 16:21 – of the manna which melted away under the mid day heat of the sun

Ezekiel 21:7 *"And it will come about when they say to you, 'Why do you groan?' that you will say, 'Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,' declares the Lord GOD."*

C. Despair and Futility -- No Satisfaction or Fulfillment

"*The desire of the wicked will perish*"

`dbaT ~y[vr twaT

"*desire*" – their coveting and scheming

Psalm 10:3 *For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns the LORD.*

10:17 *O LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble; Thou wilt strengthen their heart, Thou wilt incline Thine ear*

Psalm 21:2 *Thou hast given him his heart's desire, And Thou hast not withheld the request of his lips.*

Proverbs 11:23 *The desire of the righteous is only good, But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.*

Ask the unsaved: "What do you want out of life and/or eternity?"

God says "You can't have it!" -- you will never be satisfied or fulfilled

Even the pleasures of the flesh will not last forever
But the Word of the Lord endures forever (and those who delighted in doing His will)

Do you really have compassion on the lost?
Is that reflected in aggressive outreach and witnessing regarding how God has richly and undeservedly blessed you?

What is your investment strategy?
A. The Wicked – Why continue down this path of frustration and ruin? The sooner you repent and turn around, the sooner the blessings will flow

B. The Righteous --
- How can you fear God more?
- How can you delight in His commandments more?
- How can you be more generous in lending to the poor?
- How can you be more compassionate and more righteous and fair in how you treat others?

You can see that the **payout is worth it** – both in this life and the next … what is holding you back?

Christ commanded the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give his money to the poor and Follow Him – are we truly sold out to following our Lord?

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what ways can you be a blessing to your children and their children?

2) The focus of people is often on themselves and their family. As God's steward and blessed by Him, what are your responsibilities to yourself, family and others?

3) Are you more blessed, the more sacrificially you give?

4) Honesty and generosity are linked with being obedient to God and subsequently blessed by Him. Living this way allows you to embrace life without fear because of your trust in God. Think of how your life impacts those around you: your family, friends and neighbors. Is this motivation enough to live that kind of a Christ-like life?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: The attributes of God given in 111 become the character qualities of the godly believer in 112, for becoming more and more like Jesus Christ is the greatest reward of a faithful life of obedience.

Cambridge: Re vs. 5 *"to order his affairs with judgment"* – "this word is ambiguous, as is the Hebrew. The verse means either that the man orders his affairs with discretion (so the Authorized Version) or that he avoids corruption and illegality in all that he does."

Barnes: Re vs. 2 – "The best security for the virtue and the success of children is the virtue and the piety of parents; the surest inheritance as pertaining to happiness, respectability, and usefulness in life, is that which is derived from the example, the prayers, the counsel of a pious father and mother."

Yates: "While 111 declares God's wonderful works, 112 describes the righteous man who has learned what it means to fear God. In its acrostic construction as well as in its subject-matter, this didactic psalm is a **companion to the preceding one**.
1-3. His Blessedness. '*Blessed is the man*.' In language reminiscent of Ps 1:1, the happiness of the God-fearer is set forth. A man who fears the Lord naturally finds delight in keeping the divine commandments. His children become heirs of his spiritual and material blessings…
4-6. His Character. '*Gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous*.' These terms are also used in Psalm 111 in the author's description of God. This is an application of the eternal truth that a devout man becomes more and more like the object of his worship. His prosperity will be lasting and his name long remembered because of his godly character.
7-10. His Permanence. '*His heart is fixed*.' His utter trust in God has given a sense of stability that the wicked cannot know. The truth that '*his righteousness endureth for ever*' here stands in sharp contrast to the fate of the wicked."

Kidner: Re v5ff – "Now the particular form of this prosperous man's goodness comes into view. It is **generosity**, the theme of this verse and of verse 9, but already anticipated in 4b. In enlarging on it, the psalm deals realistically with the temptations that go with the possession of money. One of them is the impulse to abuse the power that money brings: hence the commending of both graciousness (5a; cf. RV, NEB) and fairness (5b, *justice*) in the lender, who has all too strong an advantage over the borrower. Another snare is fear (7, 8), for there is much that can go wrong for a rich man (cf. the *evil tidings* of verse 7), and much malice and rivalry to contend with (8, 10). The answer to it is the Godward stance of 7b: trust, not in a hoped-for turn of events but in the Lord (this is developed more fully in, e.g., Ps. 37). What is promised is not better news (not, at least, for the time being, though it will come: 8b, 10), but a steady heart. More exactly, it is a heart *made* firm: established (7b, lit.) and supported (8a, lit.) by better facts than its own courage.

A third temptation is the miser's. The whole psalm speaks against it, but especially verses 5, 6 and 9, the last of which is quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:9. There, as here, it is the bold course that is shown as the surest. In the psalm, where the accent is on the things that last, **the man who dares to be generous** is seen as the one who will be remembered (6), whose good deeds will never lose their value (9; cf. 3)."

Gaebelein: "The Psalm contains the praise and worship of those who fear Jehovah, those who walk in submission to His will, and are obedient in all things. But we must remind ourselves that the blessings are earthly blessings; they are the blessings promised to the believing Jews. Christian blessings are not earthly alone, they are heavenly, for we are 'blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ' (Eph. 1:3). The Psalm takes us, at least in part, to the earthly blessings and prosperity which the godly saved remnant will enjoy in the coming earthly kingdom…

Wealth and riches are for his earthly people the signs of divine blessing, favor and approval. They are frequently mentioned in Proverbs…"

Morgan: "A TRULY HAPPY MAN --
REFLECTION OF GOD THRU THE LIFE OF ONE WHO LOVES THE LORD

I. WHAT SORT OF MAN IS HAPPY?
   A. Fears the Lord -- Deut. 6:1,13; Joshua 24:14; 1 Pet. 2:17
      1. Positively: obedience -- Gen. 22:12
      2. Negatively: hatred of evil -- Prov. 8:13
   B. Delights greatly in His commandments -- they are not a burden

II. WHAT WILL WE FIND IN THE LIFE OF THIS HAPPY MAN? 9 THINGS:
   A. Has effect on his family -- his seed will have spiritual impact
   B. Prosperity
   C. His Character (:3) = righteousness
   D. Light arises in the darkness
   E. Gracious, full of compassion
   F. Generous (but not at the expense of discretion)
   G. Stable -- not scared of evil tidings; heart fixed on God
   H. Will see God vindicate His justice (:8)
   I. Contrasted with the wicked (:10)"

David Silversides: **The Difference that Godliness Makes**

Connection of Form with psalm 111; but also an exposition of the last verse of the previous psalm; this psalm is about the man of God

1. (:1-3) The Godly Man and His House

A. (:1) <u>His Personal Goal</u> – a definition of the fear of the Lord; not that terror or dread of God; but a loving reverence for God; parallel with delighting greatly in His commandments; commands of God are not only to be learned in the mind, nor outwardly conformed to in practice, but inwardly delighted in them in the heart; ungodly cannot understand how anyone would want to be a godly person; concept is intolerable; don't see any attractiveness in the Christian life; we do not feel that we are "missing out"; they feel that we do not enjoy life; grudging, miserable service to Christ is a bad testimony to the glory and beauty and majesty of the one we serve

B. (:2) <u>His Family</u> – Privileges and promises concerning the seed of the faithful in the Word of God; many of these will be mighty in the land as they are nurtured in the truth of God; primary source of preservation and maintenance of future church on earth;

C. (:3) <u>His Goods</u> – many of the godly in the OT were materially wealthy; not always the case – associated with promises of blessing in the promised land

D. (:3b) The Godly Man's Stickability – righteousness of the believer is not a flash in the pan; it will endure forever; the believer is a repentant sinner and it shows in the fruits of repentance as he continues to lead a godly life; Hos. 6:4 – real converts last;

2. (:4-5) The Godly Man and Features of His Life
A. (:4) Guidance – light in the darkness for the upright
[see quoted above]
B. The Righteous Man's Grace and Compassion (:4)
Man with wealth and power can abuse that power; godly man lends as a good steward of his possessions under God; knows that everything he has comes from God; uses his possessions to God's glory; in vs. 9 he gives; **Luke 6:32-36** – wicked men are capable of natural affection; we manifest a family likeness to our Father in heaven;

3. The Godly Man in the Time of Alarm (:6-9)
Has a calm confidence; his heart is fixed; a habitual truster in the Lord in ordinary times so that he is prepared for times of alarm; his godly confidence remains; not someone who doesn't give God a thought until trouble comes; he can anticipate a good outcome in the end (vss. 8-9); if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him; the memory of the just is blessed; produces admiration – even among the ungodly often

4. The Appalling Alternative (:10)
Everyone is either godly or wicked; only two categories of people; our generation tries to separate the fruit of conversion from the category of the saved; conversion must result in godliness of living; Is. 65:13 – the rage of the wicked against the blessedness of the redeemed; in hell there is no satisfaction of any desire; when death comes, all that he was holding on to or striving after is stripped away; a perpetual, unfulfilled longing

Where do you stand?

Paul Etterling: **The Blessings of Those Who Fear God**
1. (:1-3) The Prosperity of the Righteous (those who fear the Lord)
2. (:4-6) The Provision of the Righteous
3. (:7-10) The Prevailing of the Righteous

Spurgeon: The subject of the poem before us is -- the blessedness of the righteous man, and so it bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts. The hundred and eleventh speaks of the great Father, and this describes his children renewed after his image. The psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with "Praise ye the Lord;" and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God.

TEXT: PSALM 113

TITLE: MY GLORY AND THE LIFTER OF MY HEAD

BIG IDEA:
FROM HIS EXALTED POSITION OF SUPREME GLORY, THE LORD CAN RAISE UP THE POOREST SOUL TO THE PLACE OF BLESSING AND HONOR

Remember Psalm 3:3 "My glory, and the One who lifts my head"
(Psalm 27:6)

1 Peter 5:6 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time"

(:1-3) INTRODUCTION: PRAISE THE LORD

Beginning of the Hallel group of psalms = 113-118; sung in conjunction with the Passover; focused around Redemption of God's people from Egypt;
Praise oriented

We naturally resist being in a humbled state, totally dependent on God's deliverance:
Who enjoys being humbled and brought down low?
Being poor and destitute?
Being buried in the dust of insignificance?
Being rejected and cast off on the ash heap of life?
Being barren and unfruitful?

This Psalm gives HOPE to all those who are experiencing such afflictions; for it is the testimony of praise of the redeemed people of God = those who have experienced deliverance from the severest bondage and humiliation

A. Call to Praise the Lord

Addressed to the Servants of the Lord (remember their affliction as servants of Pharoah in Egypt)
What a privilege to be Servants of the Lord

We Praise the Lord by Blessing the name of the Lord

B. Focus of Praise = the Name of the Lord = all of His glorious attributes

C. Duration of Praise

All throughout Time: "*From this time forth and forever*"
good to develop this ability; we will be exercising it throughout eternity

All the Time: "*From the rising of the sun to its setting*"

I. (:4-5) THE LORD'S POSITION OF SUPREME GLORY

A. His Exaltation and Glory = "*high above all nations*" = "*above the heavens*"
nothing to fear if we are being afflicted by the most powerful leaders of the most powerful nations on earth

B. His Uniqueness = "*Who is like the Lord our God*"

C. His Power and Majesty = "*Who is enthroned on high*"

II. (:6-9a) THE LORD'S ABILITY TO RAISE UP THE POOREST SOUL TO THE PLACE OF BLESSING AND HONOR

A. The Compasson of the Lord = He really cares about little old me
"*Who humbles Himself to behold*:
1) *the things that are in heaven* (no surprise here)
2) *and in the earth*" (big surprise here) cf. Psalm 8

B. The Power of the Lord

1. "*raises the poor from the dust*"

2. "*lifts the needy from the ash heap*"

3. "*makes them sit with princes, with the princes of His people*"

4. "*makes the barren woman abide in the house as a joyful mother of children*"

(:9b) CONCLUSION: PRAISE THE LORD

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does one go about "*praising the name of the Lord*"? How is this different than just "praising the Lord"?

2) Are all men considered the "*servants of the Lord*" because of their being created by Him? Or are only those called to be His chosen people viewed by God to be His servants?

3) How are you able to serve a God who lacks nothing and has no needs to be met?

4) Why is God considered to be merciful when He addresses the needs of the poor, helpless and childless, when in His sovereignty He could have spared them from ever experiencing those needs?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "He sets His throne so high but deigns to look down so low. In this psalm the exalted majesty of God and his intimate concern for the weak and humble are beautifully combined. (For other examples see 1 Sam. 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55). "

Maddux: "The Imperative of Praise
I. His NAME demands praise,
    A. Eternity required to praise.
    B. Full day not too long for praise.
II. His position worthy of praise.
    A. Above all nations.
    B. Glory above heavens.
    C. Abides on high.
III. His works call for praise.
    A. Humbly regards creation.
    B. Lifts fallen humanity.
    C. Makes man equal to rule.
    D. Makes homes complete."

Clarke: "CONDESCENSION OF THE CREATOR.
I. JEHOVAH'S PRAISE, THE COMMAND (1).

II. JEHOVAH'S PRAISE, THE COMPLIANCE (2-3).

III. JEHOVAH'S PRAISE, THE CAUSES (4-9).
    1. His Glorious Exaltation over the Creation (4-5).
    2. His Great Condescension toward the Earth (6).
    3. His Gracious Exaltation of the Needy (7-9).

The revelation of God's character must precede the rendition of man's praise. Jehovah's praise will be unceasing (2) and universal (3); that of Christians is a kind of first-fruits. God is not only cognisant of earthly affairs, He cares for earth's peoples (6). When God stoops it is in order to lift up (7)."

VanGemeren: "The praise of the Lord was to be a lasting *hallel* ('*praise*'). The God who acted and revealed himself in creation and in redemption desired each generation to declare to the next generation the story of redemption so that he might have a loyal people on the earth. The emphasis on the continuity of praise is a corollary of the emphasis on the continuity of God's loyalty to his people. Thus the psalm begins with praise and

focuses on God's merciful acommodation to the needs of his people (vv. 6-9). Furthermore, he is to be praised '*both now and forevermore*' (v.2; cf. 121:8; 125:2; 131:3)."

TEXT: PSALM 114

TITLE: DIVINE EARTHQUAKES

BIG IDEA:
THE EARTH QUAKES BEFORE THE POWER OF THE REDEEMER

INRODUCTION:

Tremendous poetry; great parallelism throughout the psalm;
Reflecting on the power of the Redeemer; inspires Praise on the part of the people of God and trembling on the part of all creation; there can be no doubt that God is powerful enough to meet the needs of His people -- regardless of their circumstances

I. (:1-2) DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT AND SANCTUARY IN THE PROMISED LAND TESTIFY TO THE POWER OF THE REDEEMER

A. Deliverance from Egypt

"*When Israel went forth from Egypt*"
"*The house of Jacob from a people of strange language*"

B. Sanctuary in the Promised Land

"*Judah became His sanctuary*"
"*Israel, His dominion*"

II. (:3-6) THE FORCES OF NATURE RESPOND TO THE POWER OF THE REDEEMER

A. The Parting of the Red Sea and Jordan River

way of escape for God's people
pathway to destruction for God's enemies

B. The Mountains and the Hills

no obstacle to the progress and conquests of the invading people of God
like rams and lambs under the direction and control of the Good Shepherd

III. (:7-8) THE REDEEMER DESERVES TO BE FEARED FOR HIS AWESOME POWER

A. Trembling is the Proper Response for all of Creation

Key: "*Tremble, O earth, before the Lord*"

B. The Redemer is also the Provider for the needs of His people

Even as God brought water out of the rocks in the wilderness, so He will continue to provide for the needs of His people

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is God's holy place today? How can we tremble before the Lord in a way that is productive rather than debilitating?

2) God wants you to experience freedom in Him and from bondage. Why then does He sometimes insist on your staying in bondage for a season? What are some possible lessons He wants you to learn when you are enslaved by oppressing circumstances?

3) The Israelites saw God perform many miracles and yet remained hard-hearted. If God actually made the mountains dance and the seas run away today, would those miracles cause peoople to have a change of heart and compel them to trust Him?

4) Our culture is not receptive to the idea of a Supreme Being who can defy the laws of nature (that He established) whenever He pleases and for His own pleasure and purpose. Do you view yourself as subject to the same interventions by God as created beings, able to be controlled by Him at His whim?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "This psalm, a part of the Hallel … is occupied in celebrating the praises of God for what he had done in the delivering of his people from Egyptian bondage, and in conducting them to the promised land. It is the language of exultation, joy, and triumph, in view of the gracious interpositions of God in their deliverance. The psalmist sees the mountains and hills seized as it were with consternation, leaping and skipping like sheep; … everything is personified. Everything is full of life; everything recognizes the presence and the power of the Most High."

Clarke: "THE POWER OF THE PRESENCE
I. COMMENCEMENT OF THE NATION (1-2). ISRAEL'S BIRTHDAY.

II. CONVULSIONS OF NATURE (3-4). Psalmist speaks as Narrator.
1. The Waters (3).
2. The Land (4).

III. CHALLENGES TO NATURE (5-6). Psalmist speaks as Spectator.
1. The Waters (5).
2. The Land (6).

IV. CARE FOR THE NATION (7-8). ISRAEL'S BLESSING.

Spurgeon: Quoting Isaac Watts, in "The Spectator," 1712
"When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,

The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.

Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.

The moutains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power at hand.

What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?

Let ev'ry mountain, ev'ry flood,
Retire, and know th' approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:
Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.

He thunders—and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord."

Allen: "With its staccato momentum and evocative imagery the psalm is as exciting as the music of drum or cymbals. It is alive with radiant assurance: Israel shares in the victory of her God and moves in his protective wake. His saving and keeping acts of the past are real and relevant for today. Yahweh's covenant promise, in the good of which Judah now lives (v 2), is ever undergirded by his power (cf. Col 1:11-14).

TEXT: PSALM 115

TITLE: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR GOD IS?

BIG IDEA:
WE CAN BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS BLESSINGS BECAUSE:
OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS
AND HE DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES

INTRODUCTION:

Often we live as if we are lost, stumbling around, powerless, overwhelmed by the world around us. Part of our problem is we have forgotten where our God is. In this psalm, we are reminded that "Our God is in the heavens and He does whatever He pleases!" (vs.3) What a reason for celebration and Thanksgiving!

The world worships idols of their own creation: these may be idols of materialism, idols of sports heros, idols of religious formality -- all sorts of idols. But they all have one thing in common: these idols are powerless to impart any type of blessing. This psalm provides one of the most graphic comparisons between the power of the true God and the helplessness of manmade idols.

The world will taunt us with mocking questions like: "Where now is your God?"
They will point to the gods created by their own hands and boast about how impressive they are. But their gods ultimately fall on their faces and break into pieces like Dagon before the ark of the covenant in 1 Samuel 5.

WE CAN BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS BLESSINGS BECAUSE:
OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS
AND HE DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES

THREE COMPARISONS:

I. (:1-7) GOD VS. IDOLS
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE GLORY AND POWER OF THE TRUE GOD AND THE FUTILITY OF IDOLS

A. (:1) God Deserves Glory Because of His Character

1. God deserves glory, not us

2. His character:
Lovingkindness
Truth

B. (:2-3) God Alone Dwells in the Realm of Absolute Sovereignty

1. Essence of Foolishness = Mocking God's ability to bless His people

"*Why should the nations say, 'Where now is their God*?'"

2. Essence of Wisdom = Understanding and Submitting to God's Absolute Sovereignty
   "*But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases*"

Would you rather have: an ace in the hole, or a God in the heavens?

C. (:4-7) Idols Have Only the Appearance of Life and Power

1. Introduction:
   a. Made from inferior materials = silver and gold
      not often are these valuable commodities used to portray lack of value!

   b. Made by inferior craftsmen = "*the work of man's hands*"

   No surprise that idols cannot rival God

2. Mouths: "*but cannot speak*"

3. Eyes: "*but they cannot see*"

4. Ears: "*but they cannot hear*"

5. Noses: "*but they cannot smell*"

6. Hands: "*but they cannot feel*"

7. Feet: "*but they cannot walk*"

8. Conclusion: "*they cannot make a sound with their throat*"
   lifeless and powerless

Why put your trust in such idols??

II. (:8-15) BELIEVERS IN GOD VS. BELIEVERS IN IDOLS
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BLESSING OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE TRUE GOD AND THE FUTILITY OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN IDOLS

A. (:8) Futility of Those Who Trust in Idols
"*will become like them*" = lifeless and powerless

you become like whom you worship: values, etc.

B. (:9-15) Blessing of Those Who Trust in the True God

1. Identification of the Believers:

    a. Israel

    b. House of Aaron

    c. All who fear the Lord

2. Description of the Blessings

    a. Protection: "*He is their help and their shield*"

    b. Providential Care: "*The Lord has been mindful of us*"

    c. Provision
        "*He will bless us*"
        "*the small together with the great*" – no Partiality

3. (:14-15) Desire for the Blessings
        "*May the Lord give you increase*"
        "*May you be blessed of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth*"

III. (:16-18) THE LIVING VS. THE DEAD
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PRAISE AFFORDED THE LIVING AND THE LACK OF OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED THE DEAD

A. Abode: Heavens vs. Earth

B. Opportunity for Praise

Application: Therefore, "*Praise the Lord*!"

CONCLUSION:

cf. The type of analysis done on TV on the pregame show before an NFL football game:

	TEAM A	VS.	TEAM B
OFFENSE	advantage		
DEFENSE			advantage
SPECIAL TEAMS	even		even
COACHING	advantage		
INTANGIBLES	advantage		

Try that type of analysis for God vs. Idols!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) In what ways are those who worship idols instead of the true God, like the idols they make?

2) What do people find about idols that is more appealing than the love, mercy and faithfulness of God?

3) Trusting God for His help and protection is seen in a national, family and personal context in this psalm, and is an evidence of our respect for Him. Is there a direct correlation between an increased trust in God and an increased respect for who He is? Or can one respect God without trusting in Him?

4) Are you to expect success and God's blessing if you respect Him? If your business, family, marriage or health fails, is this a reflection of God no longer blessing you?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: Re vs. 3 – "'*He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*.' And, therefore, what has been done is right, and we should be submissive to it. He is a sovereign God; and mysterious as are his doings, and much as there seems to be occasion to ask the question '*Where is now your God*?' yet we are to feel that what has occurred has been in accordance with his eternal plans, and is to be submitted to as a part of his arrangements. It is, in fact, always a sufficient answer to the objections which are made to the government of God … that he is '*in the heavens*;' that he rules there and everywhere; and that all things are ordered in accordance with his will. There *must*, therefore, be some good reason why events occur as they actually do."

Wiersbe: "In spite of conditions existing within the borders of the nation of Israel, God was alive and at work. The temple was in ruin, the city of Jerusalem was a heap of rubble, and the people themselves were demoralized. But the psalmist was giving glory to God! Why? Because of God's mercy and truth. Even the chastening of the nation was evidence that God was true to His Word, and in His wrath He had remembered mercy (Hab. 3:2)…

God does not need our blessing, but we need to bless God! We should bless Him for what He is, the living God who meets us in grace and cares for our every need, spiritual and material. As we bless the Lord from submissive and grateful hearts, we grow spiritually; and as we grow, we discover more of His blessings—and we praise Him more! Worship and praise are the thermometer of the spiritual life. If our hearts are cold and complaining, we will be silent, like the dead; but if our hearts are warm and appreciative, we will praise and bless God wherever we are."

Clarke: "IMPEACHMENT OF IDOLATERS
I. ASCRIPTION TO JEHOVAH (1).
Negative Aspect—Positive Aspect.

II. ARGUMENT FROM EXPERIENCE (2).

III. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SOVEREIGNTY (3).

IV. ABSURDITY OF IDOLATRY (4-8). TRUST OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS.
The Psalmist's Expostulation.
1. The Fetishes (4a).
2. Their Fabrication (4b).
3. Their Futility (5-7).
4. Their Fabricators (8).
5. The Followers (8b).

V. ASSURANCE OF ISRAEL (9-11). TRUST OF THE HOLY NATION.
The Psalmist's Exhortation.
1. The Appeal (9a).
2. The Answer (9b).
3. The Appeal (10a).
4. The Answer (10b).
5. The Appeal (11a).
6. The Answer (11b).

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF BLESSING (12-13).

VII. ARGUMENT FROM EXPERIENCE (14-16).

VIII. ASCRIPTION TO JEHOVAH (17-18).
Negative Aspect—Postive Aspect."

Maddux: "Worship in Humility
I. Self-effacement.
II. God exalted.
- A. Worthy in mercy.
- B. Worthy in truth.

III. God is Spirit.
- A. Heathen spiritually blind.
  1. Demand to see God.
  2. Fail to look up.
- B. Heaven is God's abode.

IV. God in contrast.
- A. Anthropomorphic in action but not in form.
- B. Heathen gods inactive.
- C. Heathen gods senseless.
- D. Heathen gods insensible.

V. God of the nations.
- A. Worthy of trust.
- B. Imperative to trust.

VI. God of the priesthood.
- A. Ever present help.

B. A shield of trust.

VII. God of the individual.
- A. All who trust and fear.
- B. A shield and help always.

VIII. God of providence.
- A. Blessed in cognizance.
  1. As a nation.
  2. As religious leaders.
  3. As worshipers.
- B. Blessed in futurity.
  1. Based on trust.
  2. Based in impartiality.
  3. Blessed in posterity.

IX. God of creation.
- A. In power and ownership.
- B. In landlord rights.
- C. Praise due now.
- D. Danger in eternal silence.
- E. Join the prelude.
- F. Begin in the vestibule.
- G. End with the doxology."

Yates: Re vv. 9-11 – "This threefold appeal for trust was probably voiced by a priest; and very likely a choral response followed each appeal. The nation, the priests, and the devoted God-fearers are all addressed in turn."

Spurgeon: "It grieved the heart of the godly that Jehovah should be thus dishonoured, and treating their own condition of reproach as unworthy of notice, they beseech the Lord at least to vindicate his own name. The Psalmist is evidently indignant that the worshippers of foolish idols should be able to put such a taunting question to the people who worshipped the only living and true God; and having spent his indignation in sarcasm upon the images and their makers, he proceeds to exhort the house of Israel to trust in God and bless his name. As those who were dead and gone could no longer sing Psalms unto the Lord among the sons of men, he exhorts the faithful who were then living to take care that God is not robbed of his praise, and then he closes with an exulting Hallelujah. Should not living men extol the living God?"

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Monstrous Sin of Idolatry**
Introduction: The passion of our heart as believers should be that we desire to see the one true and living God worshiped by all people in all nations. Ps. 22:27; 86:9 That's the reason why we send out missionaries. But when I visit places like Nepal and India and see people worshiping graven images, and it just grieves me to my core that God is so dishonored. Idolatry is a monstrous sin.

Idolatry is very alive today in the Western world. And they might look different, but the idols are there just the same. So let me start off by saying, what is idolatry? What is an idol? The definition given by Webster's Dictionary is this, the worship of idols is excessive devotion to or

reverence for some person or thing. An idol is when something or someone becomes more important to us than God. Even good things can become idols when we make them the ultimate thing in our life. And so anything or anyone can become an idol when that thing or person takes the place of Almighty God. when we give more devotion to that, when we depend upon that. John Piper defines it like this, it is the thing loved or the person loved more than God, wanted more than God, desired more than God, treasured more than God, enjoyed more than God.

In Colossians 3.15, Paul said covetousness is idolatry, which means covetous starts in the heart, craving, wanting, enjoying, being satisfied by anything that you treasure more than you treasure God. Anything that you trust in or depend on more.

- Sports
- Self
- Approval
- Relationships
- Success
- Wealth / Materialism
- Health
- Food
- Intellect
- Comfort

God hates idolatry. Ex. 20:3; 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21

Big Idea: **Six reasons why idolatry is such a monstrous sin.**

I. It robs God of His rightful glory – vs. 1

If you like idolatry so much, I'm gonna imprison you in the place where idolatry is featured, in the land where idols began there in Babylon. At that time in the world, idolatry was all over. In fact, Babylon was known for its idolatry and all of its false gods. By the time the people of Israel were done in captivity there, they returned back to the land. You know what? They never worshipped a false god ever again because they got a taste of idolatry in the land of Babylon. You know what they saw? They realized it's all **futile**.

God's jealousy is holy. God's jealousy is righteous. It's righteous because only He rightly deserves the glory. And it's loving because he knows, God knows, that the best thing for us is to treasure him above all. Why? Because we were created to enjoy God. And when we replace God with other things, that's destructive to us.

II. It ignores the truth of God's sovereignty – vs. 2

You can't contain this God in some temple. He is the God. He is the true and the living God. He's greater beyond our finite comprehension. That's the answer. He does whatever He wants. He is sovereign. And that's what idolatry does. It ignores the truth that God is sovereign. powerful over all, that you would choose to put your affection and trust and dependence on something that is finite and small and forget that you have a God who is sovereign and powerful over all? What a bad trade.

III. It reveals the utter depravity of man – vs. 4-7

In these verses, the psalmist kind of launches into a satirical attack against idolatry. He's actually laughing against the stupidity of worshiping a god that someone can make with their own hands and then supposedly breathe life into them. So he mentions the top-of-the-line models made out of silver and gold, not the cheaper wooden variety, but even the best of idols are just man-made objects. The precious metal doesn't give them life. How ridiculous it is to bow down and worship them. Hos. 8:6

Here's a principle, you become like the thing that you worship. Think about that. You become like the thing that you worship. The people who do not know the living and the true God are spiritually dead. They're blind, they're deaf, they're dumb. They are insensible to spiritual truth. They are spiritually crippled. In short, it's sheer lunacy to worship an idol. And what this does is it shows the incredible depravity of the heart of man.

IV. It places trust in vain things rather than in God – vs. 9

V. It robs us of the rich blessings of God – vs. 12

Don't you covet His blessings in your life? I mean, that's the thing that we should desire above all things. We want His grace and His blessing poured out on our life. We want it poured out on our family, on our children and grandchildren, on our church. That's the thing that we should desire above all things, to have His blessing.

VI. It robs us of the joy of true worship and gratitude to the Creator – vs. 16

Conclusion:

How do we know if something has become an **idol**? Well, there are four questions you need to ask yourself to identify the idols in your life.

- Where do I spend my time?
- Where do I spend my money?
- Where do I get my joy from?
- What's always on my mind?

TEXT: PSALM 116

TITLE: HOW CAN I REPAY THE LORD?

BIG IDEA:
THE LIVING NEED TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR OPPORTUNTIES:
TO LOVE THE LORD
TO WALK WITH THE LORD
TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

I. (:1-4) DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH AFFORDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP LOVING THE LORD AND CALLING ON HIM FOR HELP

A. Answers to Prayer Reinforce our Love for the Lord
"*I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my supplications*"

B. Answers to Prayer Encourage us to Keep Calling on Him for Help
"*Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon HIm as long as I live*"

C. Specific Example of Near-Death Experience

1. Desperate Situation
- bondage and terror
- distress and sorrow

2. Desperate Prayer for Help
"*Then I called upon the name of the Lord, ' O Lord, I beseech Thee, save my life!*'"

II. (:5-11) DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH AFFORDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP WALKING WITH THE LORD IN PEACE AND CONTENTMENT

7 BENEFITS OF DELIVERANCE:

A. Deliverance Highlights the Lord's Character

1. Gracious

2. Righteous

3. Compassionate

B. Deliverance Highlights the Lord's Sufficiency
"*The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.*"

We are not called on to do anything clever or spectacular; just simple childlike dependence

C. Deliverance Restores Us to a State of Rest = Peace and Contentment
"*Return to your rest, O my soul*"

D. Deliverance Can be a Great Blessing Beyond All Expectations
"*For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you*"

"*rescued my soul from death*:"
"*my eyes from tears*"
"*my feet from stumbling*"

E. Deliverance Renews our Commitment to Walk with the Lord
"*I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living*"

F. Deliverance Reminds Us of Our Own Insufficiency
"*I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted*.'"
not minimizing or exaggerating the situation; simply stating the reality of it

G. Deliverance Exposes the Insufficiency of Trusting in Man
"*I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars*.'"

III. (:12-19) DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH AFFORDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP GIVING THANKS TO THE LORD FOR ALL HIS BENEFITS

Question: "*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me*?"

A. Glorify God for My Salvation
"*I shall lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*"
Thankful Worship -- cf. the Lord's Supper and taking the cup of salvation in that context

B. Keep My Commitments to the Lord (vs. 14 and 18)
"*I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people*"
Welcomes accountability before others

C. Remember that the Lord is Sovereign over Life and Death
"*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones*"

Death is not a trivial matter that escapes God's notice and Providential direction

D. Re-Dedicate Myself to the Lord's Service
"*O Lord, surely I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid, Thou hast loosed my bonds*."

freedom from the bondage of sin and death is the freedom to serve the Lord

E. Offer Sacrifices of Thanksgiving

"To Thee I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the Lord"

F. Praise the Lord!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why is thanksgiving considered by God to be a sacrifice?

2) When someone is shown attention, he returns to the source again and again, because of the love, help and encouragement that is perceived. The psalmist views God in that way as the one to meet all needs. So why do difficulties in life sometimes turn Christians away from God, rather than drawing them closer to Him? How can you safeguard your relationship with the Lord, so that you will never be alienated from Him?

3) It seems that we have nothing to give to the Lord for all His goodness to us, except to give Him ourselves. The psalmist says, he will give the Lord what he promised or vowed. What are the vows God expects from you? Why are we to fulfill them in front of other believers?

4) What hope keeps us from being defeated? Do you see a process here from being immobilized by depression to being functional and active in God's service?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: Re vs. 15 – "the sense may be that God does not allow those faithful to him to die an untimely death. However, it is clear that such people have to die sometime, and the N.E.B. implies that such deaths are especially noticed by God."

Barnes: Re "*the simple*" in vs. 6 – "being open, frank, ingenuous, trustful, sincere… It refers to one of the characteristics of true piety,--that of unsuspecting trust in God. It would describe one who yields readily to truth and duty; one who has singleness of aim in the desire to honour God; one who is without guile, trick, or cunning."

Ogilvie: "What is the specific gift the Lord wants to give? Gratitude for what He's done previously gives us the courage to ask for it. Most of us ask far too little because our vision is far too small. When we allow the Lord to bless us, we are quickened in our willingness to ask for more. The Lord wants to have us drink deeply from the cup of salvation because that alone will satisfy our personal needs. When we are healed by His Spirit, we will want to turn our prayers to the needs of people around us and the situations

that need His grace. To drink consistently from the cup of salvation creates the desire to offer it to a world parched for the only One who quenches thirsty souls."

Clarke: "THE RETURN TO REST

I. EXPRESSION OF PRAISE (1-2).
   1. The Regard (1a).
   2. The Reasons (1b-2a).
   3. The Resolve (2b). "*I will call upon*."

II. EXPERIENCE OF PERIL (3-6).
   1. The Affliction (3).
   2. The Appeal (4). "*I beseech Thee*."
   3. The Answer (5-6). God's Attributes—God's Actions.

III. EXPRESION OF PRAISE (7-9)
   1. The Rest (7a).
   2. The Reason (7b-8).
   3. The Resolve (9). "*I will walk*."

IV. EXPERIENCE OF PERIL (10-11)
   1. The Assurance (10a).
   2. The Affliction (10b).
   3. The Agitation (11).

V. EXPRESSION OF PRAISE (12-14)
   1. The Reflection (12a).
   2. The Reason (12b).
   3. The Resolve (13-14). "*I will take* …" (Triple).

VI. EXPERIENCE OF PERIL (15-16)
   1. The Affliction (implied) (15).
   2. The Appeal (16ab). Lit. "*I beseech Thee*."
   3. The Answer (16c).

VII. EXPRESSION OF PRAISE (17-19)
   1. The Resolve (17-19b). "*I will offer* …" (Triple).
   2. The Response (19c). "*Hallelujah*."

Maddux: "THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

I. Love is reciprocal.
   A. Love answers love.
   B. God hears in love.

II. Love is lasting.
   A. As long as life lasts.
   B. Trouble cannot dim.

C. Deliverance through love.
D. Mercy proves love.
E. Love has saving power.
F. Love lifts the depressed.

III. Love strengthens security.
A. Love guides aright.
B. Love recognizes acts of love.
C. Love evaluates wisely.

IV. Love looks within.
A. Love makes right selections.
B. Love willingly vows.
C. Love knows no death.
D. Bondage erased in love.
E. Love is positive.

V. Love is reciprocal.

Kidner: Re vv.10-11 – "So the author makes a point which his fellow psalmists often illustrate: that to feel crushed (10) or disillusioned (11), and to say so, even in the wild tones of panic (NEB's word for *consternation*, 11; …), is no proof that faith is dead; it may even vouch for its survival, as pain betokens life. Indeed, as pain cries out for healing, trouble frankly faced cries out for God."

TEXT: PSALM 117

TITLE: LOVINGKINDNESS AND TRUTH

BIG IDEA:
TWO CORE COMPETENCIES OF GOD'S MAJESTY MERIT GLOBAL PRAISE

INTRODUCTION:
this is a "big picture" psalm
Not a lot of words ... but a lot is communicated

I. REPEATED EXHORTATION
"Praise (laud) the Lord!

II. GLOBAL SCOPE

- all nations

- all peoples

III. TWO CORE COMPETENCIES
A. His Lovingkindness
"great toward us"

B. His Truth
"everlasting

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Can there be unrealistic expectations of God, when His character and actions are of an unlimited and everlasting nature?

2) The psalmist has a good understanding of who God is and that perspective compels him to praise God repeatedly. In looking at yourself, do you have the same need to express your praise and gratitude to God? If not, how can you develop a desire to praise Him?

3) In verse 2, we read that God's truth lasts forever. What truth is that?

4) How does the Lord want you to praise Him? What is the purest form of praise?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "The shortest psalm in the psalter has a universal perspective. All nations and peoples are summoned to worship the God of Israel. It is in dealings with Israel that he has uniquely displayed his covenant loyalty and constancy (verse 2), but in these acts his purpose for all nations has been disclosed."

Clarke: "THE PRAISE OF THE PEOPLES

I. THE RENDERING OF PRAISE (1). ACCLAMATION OF JEHOVAH.
Cordial Invitation to the Peoples.

II. THE REASON FOR PRAISE (2ab). ATTRIBUTES OF JEHOVAH.
Concise Explanation. Lovingkindness and Truth.

III. THE RENDERING OF PRAISE (2c). ACCLAMATION OF JEHOVAH.
Closing Injunction to the Peoples. 'Hallelujah.'

A recognized Messianic psalm it is quoted by Paul the Apostle (Rom. xv.11) to show that God always had in store blessing for the Gentiles. Israel was endowed with blessing that the nation might diffuse blessing, cf. Ps. lxvii. In millennial days Israel will joyfully summon the nations to the worship of Jehovah, who has displayed in His dealings with the nation His two great twin attributes of lovingkindness and truth (faithfulness)."

Kidner: "This tiny psalm is great in faith, and its reach is enormous. Its message was still too big for some of Paul's readers to have grasped: see Romans 15:7ff., a passage which is clinched by the quoting of this psalm among others.

In singing this, we too are challenged not to measure God's Kingship by His '*little flock*', nor to accept the idea that different peoples have a right to different faiths."

VanGemeren: "The reason for the universal praise of the Lord lies in his dealings with the covenant people. In his relationship to Israel, he reveals a constancy of '*love*' (*hesed*) and '*faithfulness*' … These two perfections are often paired, as God's love is always faithful (cf. Exod 34:6-7; Ps 36:5). The love of God is great (*g-b-r*, '*be mighty*,' '*be strong*'; cf. 103:11). Not only is his love so great in depth and height (cf. Rom 5:20; 1 Tim 1:14), it is also lasting ('*endures forever*')."

Martin: "Paul quotes from this psalm in Romans 15:11 to show that the Gentiles are to share in the blessings of the gospel. Someone has spoken of it as 'large riches in a narrow room.' It is, of course, the shortest of the Psalms. Spurgeon quotes one of the old commentators, G. Rogers, as saying: 'There are times for short hymns and long hymns, for short prayers and long prayers, for short sermons and long sermons, for short speeches and long speeches. It is better to be too short than too long, as it can more easily be mended.'"

TEXT: PSALM 118

TITLE: PROGRESSIVE IMAGES OF VICTORY

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD SHOWS HIS GOODNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS BY LEADING US TO VICTORY WHEN DEFEAT SEEMS IMMINENT

"Thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ!" 2 Cor. 2:14
Note the Messianic applications throughout the psalm

INTRODUCTION (:1-4) THANKSGIVING FOR HIS:
- GOODNESS
- LOVINGKINDNESS= EVERLASTING

- let Israel say ...
- let the house of Aaron say ...
- let those who fear the Lord say ...

I. (:5-9) IMAGE OF PROTECTION: THE LORD IS MY REFUGE

A. Imminent Defeat: "*my distress*" -- lit. "a tight place"
pressure from all sides

B. Calling Upon the Lord

C. Key to Victory: "*The Lord is for me*!" (:6-7)

D. Experience of Victory: "*set me in a large place*" (in contrast to a tight place)

E. Lesson Learned: "*It is better to take refuge in the Lord* !"
- than to trust in man
- than to trust in princes

II. (:10-14) IMAGE OF DELIVERANCE: THE LORD IS MY SALVATION (MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG)

A. Imminent Defeat:
- surrounded by enemies = all nations
- surrounded by enemies like by bees

B. Invoking the Name of the Lord

C. Key to Victory: "*the Lord helped me*"
Confidence: "*I will surely cut them off*"

D. Experience of Victory:
actually was successful in cutting them off

extinguished them like a fire of thorns (very quick combustion with nothing left)

E. Lesson Learned: *"The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."*

III. (:15-18) IMAGE OF POWER: THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD DOES VALIANTLY

A. Imminent Defeat: "*disciplined severely*"
disciplined almost to the point of death
"*He has not given me over to death*" (but it was close!)

B. Joyful Celebration:
"*the sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous*"

C. Key to Victory: "*the right hand of the Lord does valiantly*"

D. Experience of Victory:
- the right hand of the Lord is exalted
- I shall not die but live

E. Lesson Learned: the works of the Lord (accomplished by His valiant right hand) are Powerful
- I should give testimony and "*tell of the works of the Lord*"

IV. (:19-21) IMAGE OF TRIUMPH: THE LORD IS MY CONQUERING HERO VICTORY PROCESSION THRU THE GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. Key to Victory: only "the righteous" can enter thru the gates of righteousness = the gate of the Lord

B. Lesson Learned:
- Triumph should always lead to Worship and Thanksgiving
- God answers and becomes our salvation

V. (:22-28) IMAGE OF BLESSING: THE LORD IS THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

A. Imminent Defeat: "*the stone which the builders rejected*"
this was true of the nation of Israel: rejected by the other nations, yet central focus of God's plan for history
this was true of the Messiah: supreme rejection and humiliation
this will be true of all God's children: yet we are choice and precious in the sight of God -- 1 Peter 2:4

B. Calling Upon the Lord for Salvation and Prosperity
- "*O Lord, do save we beseech Thee*"
- "*O Lord, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity*"

C. Key to Victory: "*This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes*"

"*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord*"

D. Experience of Victory: "*has become the chief corner stone*"
"*The Lord is God, and He has given us light*"

E. Lesson Learned: rejoice each day because of confidence in the Lord's triumph and blessing
"*This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it*"
"*Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar*."
"*Thou art my God, and I give thanks to Thee; Thou art my God, I extol Thee*"

CONCLUSION (:29) THANKSGIVING FOR HIS:
- GOODNESS
- LOVINGKINDNESS = EVERLASTING

"*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) The psalmist speaks of God throughout most of the psalm, in an impersonal way. What change has happened for God to now become personal, in verse 28? How can this be so in your life?

2) The Christian escapes spiritual death through God's gift of life. What does living now mean for the believer?

3) In what ways, is the Lord's mercy shown to us? How does that cause us to place our trust in Him instead of man?

4) How is God shown to be not only the source of our deliverance but also the means of our salvation?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Quoting Luther's testimony that this is his favorite psalm – "This is my own psalm which I specially love. Though the entire Psalter and the Holy Scriptures are indeed very dear to me as my sole comfort and my very life, yet I have come to grips with this psalm in a special sense, so that I feel free to call it my very own. For it has done me great service on many an occasion and has stood by me in many a difficulty when the emperor, kings, wise men and clever, and even the saints were of no avail…"

Kidner: Re vs. 14 – "This verse is an exact quotation from the victory song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:2a), and verses 15 and 28 will have further echoes of it. So the Exodus events stamp their likeness on God's acts of redemption throughout history (1 Cor. 10:6, 11, lit. '*as patterns*'), consummated in the work of Christ (cf. Lk. 9:31: lit., '*his exodus which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem*')."

Yates: "As a procesional and a jubilant expression of thanksgiving, this song of praise serves as a fitting conclusion to the Hallel collection. Clearly designed for antiphonal use, it employs solo voices, choruses, and congregational refrains."

Clarke: Re prophetic anticipation – "The voice of a representative of restored Israel in millennial days, reviewing the recent mighty deliverance of the nation by the advent of Messiah. Points on to the great millennial Feast of Tabernacles, Zech. xiv. 16-19 with Israel fully returned in heart to their God and fulfilling the prophecy uttered by our Lord in the days of His rejection, Matt. xxiii. 39; Isa. xxv.9. For many centuries God's ancient people have remained without that which was their distincitive glory—the Temple of God, but they are seen here again in possession, and in full realization that Messiah is the sole foundation upon which the dwelling of God among them securely rests (cf. the Tabernacle types). To Christ they owe their spiritual and temporal deliverance, and the worshippers stand at last on a righteousness not their own. It is that of their once despised and rejected, but now risen and glorified Messiah."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Get the Most Out of Every Day**
Introduction: **118:24** -- The whole goal of my sermon is that we just apply some principles that will help us to live each day to the fullest. We have to understand that every day that we have is a God given day. And we want every God-given day to be a God-governed day, because every God-given day and God-governed day will then be a God-gladdened day. **Ps. 90:10**

I. Each day is a provided day.
God is the creator of time. Lam. 3:22-23 Nobody has any more time than anyone else.

II. Each day is a present day.
So many times people can't enjoy today because they are haunted by the past or they're still living in the past or they're fearful of the future. Don't hold on to past glory, but then also past grudges. Bitterness is an acid that destroys its own container.

III. Each day is a precious day.

So the psalmist says, **teach us to number our days**. You say, well, how do we do that?
Let me just give you a <u>few principles</u> here.

- First of all, number one, <u>prayer.</u> Start your days in prayer. Listen to God, get your orders from the Lord. How does God want me to spend my time?
- Secondly, <u>priorities</u>. Start each day setting your priorities according to God's leading. You see, for the Christian, many times the choice is not between good and bad. The choice is between good and best.
- Thirdly, <u>power.</u> Just work in the spirit. **Ephes. 5:15-18**

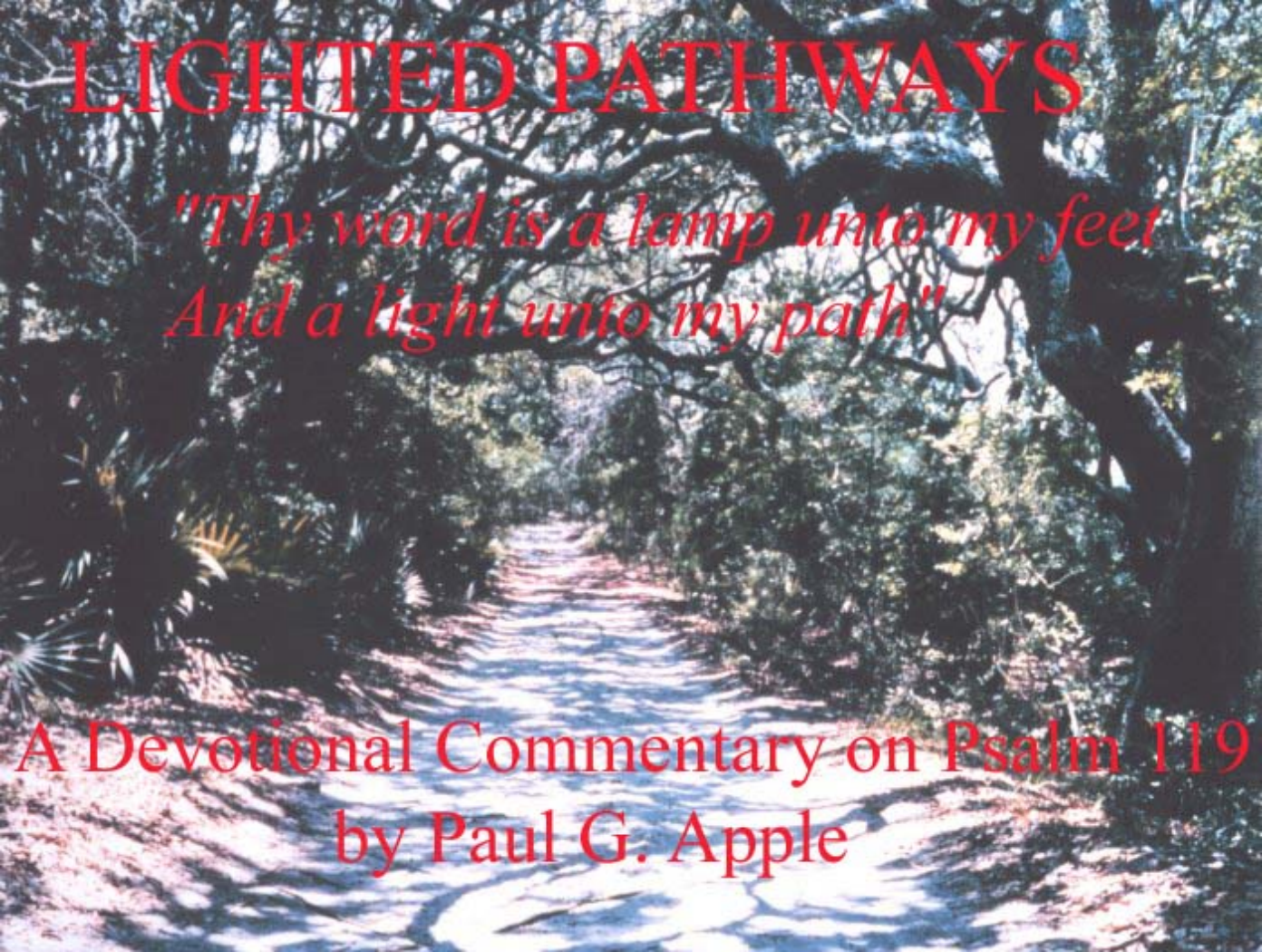
- Fourthly, principle of progress. Don't procrastinate because procrastination is a sin. Whatever duties and responsibilities God has given you, get it done. Don't put it off. Put God first. Put his kingdom first. Do the things he wants you to do. And that's how you redeem the time and you make the most out of each day.

IV. Each day is a passing day.

Jesus said you better work while you can, for the night comes when no man can work.

V. Each day is a providential day.

Every day, look at the providence of almighty God and choose to be happy in that day. During this year, we studied the book of Philippians. And one thing I hope that you learn from that, as I did, is that joy and rejoicing is a choice that we make. Paul said, I will rejoice. That was a choice. I'm going to be happy.



LIGHTED PATHWAYS

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path"

A Devotional Commentary on Psalm 119

by Paul G. Apple

TEXT: PSALM 119:1-8 ALEPH

TITLE: THE PROPER RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

BIG IDEA:
OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

Each of these 8-verse stanzas is focused around a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet = an acrostic format. This is the ALEPH stanza with each verse beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

This stanza is a nice general introduction to the themes of the entire psalm.

I. THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION

look at the different terms used for the Word of God:

A. (:1) His law (torah) ("direction, instruction" – Brown, Driver, Briggs)

Zemek: "it depicts God's special revelation as a gracious gift which points out or shows the way through life's twisted highways and byways."

B. (:2) His testimonies (edat)

Zemek: (from Girdlestone) "the law of God is His testimony, because it is His own affirmation concerning His nature, attributes, and consequent demands."

Zemek: "The Word of God as 'testimonies' emphasizes both the authority of their source in the Lord and the accountability of their reception by men."

C. (:3) His ways

D. (:4) His precepts (piqqudim)

Zemek: (from Eddleman) "oral or written declarations as to what he expects of man. The original meaning carries the idea of fix, appoint, designate; here is an intimation of the sovereignty of Yahweh… man must submit to it or suffer the consequences."

E. (:5,8) His statutes (hoq / huqqa)

Zemek: (from Scroggie) "'This word comes from a root which means to hew, cut in, engrave, inscribe; and so comes to mean what is ordained, decreed, prescribed, enacted.' The common denominator is revelational and applicational indelibility …" Preserved and binding for all time

F. (:6) His commandments (miswa)

Zemek: "from a root meaning to *set up* or *appoint* … emphasizes … the right to give orders"

G. (:7) His righteous judgments (mispat)

Zemek: Relates to "rules of righteous administation"

II. THE PRIORITY AND PRACTICALITY OF OBEDIENCE

look at the different responses to the Word of God:
(look at the different verbs used)

A. (:1) Walking in obedience = blameless

B. (:2) Observing His Word = "*seeking Him with all their heart*"

C. (:3) "Do no unrighteousness" = "*walk in His ways*"

D. (:4) Keep His Word Diligently
this is the purpose for which God has ordained His precepts

E. (:5,8) Keep His Statutes
requires Grace of God -- "*Oh that my ways may be established*!"

F. (:6) Look Upon All His Commandments
(not just those commandments we find appealing)

G. (:7) Learn His Word

III. THE PROSPECT OF BLESSING

A. Prosperity: "*How blessed are those ...*" (:1,2)

B. Confidence: "*Then I shall not be ashamed*" (:6)

C. Thanksgiving: "*I shall give thanks to Thee*" (:7)

D. Contrast -- Opposite Prospect: "*Do not forsake me utterly*!" (:8)
Obedience and its associated blessing dependent on God's continued Presence and grace. Leupold: "no smug self-righteousness here." He has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What specific blessings have you experienced as a result of specific steps of obedience? How excited do you get in anticipating God's blessing in the future? How faithful are we in expressing thanksgiving for God's blessings?

2) Why does the psalmist use so many different words to make reference to God's revelation?

3) Explain the difference between "sinless perfection" and the type of walk described in these verses.

4) What have you found in your life to be the relationship between disobedience and shame? How has that shame manifested itself?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "it is now impossible to ascertain the occasion on which the psalm was composed, or to determine who was its author. Nor is it necessary. The psalm is so applicable to the people of God at all times, so fitted to strengthen the mind in trial, so adapted to guide, comfort, and support the soul, and so true in regard to the influence and value of the law of God, that it is not needful to know when it was composed, or who its author was. It is sufficient to know that it was composed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is a repository of truths which will be of inestimable value in all ages of the world."

Barnes: "'Blessed are they who are upright, sincere, perfect, in their course.' The whole psalm is designed to illustrate this thought, by showing what the influence of a sincere and conscientious attachment to the principles of the law or word of God in the various circumstances of life must be."

Cambridge: "The total picture that emerges is not of something static, but of something many-sided and dynamic. God's revelation is partly written, and is partly commandment and partly story containing promise. It is to be obeyed, loved, and understood ever more deeply. In itself it gives light and guidance; but it establishes fellowship with a living God who even now acts in accordance with his promises to deliver the psalmist, and to illuminate his understanding."

Leupold: "The particular emphases that come to the fore again and again as the psalm progresses are thoughts such as these: thanksgiving for the law or the Word of God; prayer that it may be faithfully kept, or that one may experience the comfort of that Word in trying times; prayer for steadfastness, or that God may not forsake His servant; the overthrow of the ungodly; praise of the law in its various aspects; prayer for understanding of God's Word and for ability to keep it."

Spurgeon: "There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of verse 5 is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Blessed Are the Blameless**
Introduction: This passage tells us how to get into a position where God can bless us.
Two times in the first two verses, we see this word *blessed*. And it's the Hebrew word *asherah*

where we get the name *asher*, and it just means happy or happiness. It refers to a state of prosperity. It's normally used to speak of favor that a superior bestows on someone. And when this is used in the Bible, this is talking about most of the time God bestowing favor on someone or blessing someone with prosperity.

Big Idea: **A blameless life brings blessings. Six Characteristics of a Blameless Life.**

I. A blameless person seeks to live according to God's Word. Vs. 1
The psalmist is using Hebrew parallelism, that's characteristic of Hebrew poetry. And so, what is it to be undefiled in the way? It is to walk in the law of the Lord. God's law guides us in what pleases God.

II. A blameless person seeks God with a wholehearted devotion. Vs. 2
If you want to live a sanctified, holy life, it's going to have to be on purpose. You're going to have to put out effort. In fact, you know what it's going to require? It's going to require your whole heart.

I think the most plausible explanation for **authorship** is that this chapter was written by one of the young Jewish men that was taken away as an exile. during the Babylonian captivity. He was taken out of Jerusalem and he made that long march to Babylon and was kept as an exile. This could have been Daniel, it could have been Ezekiel, it could have been Ezra. All of these have been suggested as possible authors for this. Whoever it was, I believe that they were taken as a captive during Nebuchadnezzar's third siege of Babylon. Jerusalem, and then the deportation of captives to Babylon that followed immediately after that.

Psalm 119, the whole aim of it is, again, it's all about God's Word. And again, it's the expression of His heart, the psalmist's heart, to seek God through His Word, to not forget God's testimonies, to not forget God's Word. Psalm 119 forms an acrostic, just like the book of Lamentations. This captive begins to work his way through the Hebrew alphabet from A to Z. And of course, the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. Ours has 26. That's why you have 22 sections in Psalm 119. Also, there's eight verses for each section.

God is referred to in every verse in Psalm 119. The number 8 is stamped all over this psalm. There are 8 special names for God's Word. There are 8 symbols for God's Word given. The believer has 8 responsibilities to God's Word in Psalm 119. There are 8 basic titles of the Bible. In the first nine verses, it's called the Law of the Lord, the Testimonies, Ways, Precepts, Statutes, Commandments, Judgments, and Word, eight different titles for God's Word. And these are all repeated throughout this Psalm, these eight titles. The word eight in Hebrew means enough. It may be that the writer is kind of in a subtle way implying to everyone that God's Word is enough. God's Word is sufficient. You have all that you need for life and godliness.

Another interesting thing about Psalm 119 is that each Hebrew letter of the alphabet represents a picture. Remember, before the alphabet evolved to letters, they were actually pictures that represented sounds. And so these letters represented pictures. For example, Aleph was an ox. And Abate was a picture of a house. And Gimel was a camel. And Dalet was a door. And I think

sometimes in these sections, the psalmist will make subtle references to what the letter stands for.

III. A blameless person doesn't practice sin. Vs. 3

Again, this doesn't mean to be sinless. The word *do* here, *peol,* which is simply means to practice -- they don't continue in a pattern of sin, an unbroken pattern of sin in their life. A believer will lapse in the sin, and he will loathe it. An unbeliever will leap in the sin, and he will love it. A true believer is running from sin. An unbeliever is running into sin and captures it. A true believer is trying to obey God constantly. An unbeliever has no concern about obeying the Lord whatsoever.

IV. A blameless person takes God's commandments seriously. Vs. 4

God commands us to guard the Word diligently with great fervor, to keep it, to watch it, to live it, to obey it. The people of Israel had the word of God, but they didn't really appreciate it. And they didn't take God's commandments to heart.

V. A blameless person groans over their own sinfulness. Vs. 5

(Cf. Paul in Romans 7)

He delights in the law of God. He loves God's Word on one hand, but on the other hand, he also realizes his own sinfulness.

VI. A blameless person is determined to worship God with integrity. Vs. 7

The word praise here, it describes an act of worship, of giving thanks to God, of bringing your thanksgiving offering to the Lord in worship. Uprightness just simply means a pure heart, an obedient heart. Acceptable worship and obedience go hand in hand. You can't do one without the other.

It does us no good to fill our mind with theology and doctrine if it doesn't change us, if it doesn't change who we are, if we don't live it out. A.W. Tozer wrote, theological truth is useless until it's obeyed. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action.

TEXT: PSALM 119:9-16 BETH

TITLE: DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

BIG IDEA:
DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO PURITY

I. DIET FOR PURITY = GOD'S WORD

A. (:**9,11,16**) God's Word

B. (:**10**) God's commandments

C. (:**12,16**) God's statutes

D. (:**13**) God's ordinances

E. (:**14**) God's testimonies

F. (:**15**) God's precepts / ways

II. DISCIPLINE FOR PURITY = DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

A. (:**9**) Driving Ambition (Keeping)
To Get the Right Answer You Need to Ask the Right Question:
"*How can a young man keep his way pure*?"
Answer: Obedience to God's Word

B. (:**10**) Passionate Heart (Seeking)
"*With all my heart I have sought Thee*"
"*Do not let me wander from Thy commandments*"

C. (:**11**) Godly Value System (Treasuring)
"*Thy word I have treasured in my heart*"

D. (:**12**) Teachable Heart (Learning)
"*Teach me Thy statutes*"

E. (:**13**) Faithful Witness (Testifying)
"*With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Thy mouth*"

F. (:**14**) Joyful Reckoning (Rejoicing)
"*I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches*"

G. (:**15**) Reflective Heart (Meditating)
"*I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways*"

H. (:**16**) Positive Memories (Delighting; Remembering)
"*I shall delight in Thy statutes*"
"*I shall not forget Thy word*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Discuss some of the attacks on purity that young men face in today's culture.

2) How is memorizing God's Word linked to meditating on it?
What are some techniques you use for memorization or meditation?

3) Make a list of the things/activities/ etc. that we treasure the most – based on how much time we devote to them. Where does the Word of God rank?

4) How faithful are we at sharing with others the nuggets that God has shown us from the treasures of His Word?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zemek: (from Anderson) (Re pledge never to forget) "this involves not only one's memory but also a deliberate act of the will (cf. **13:1** (M.T.2), **44:24** (M.T. 25), **74:19, 77:9**). In the OT to forget God means much more than an inability to remember; it can be described as a guilty forgetfulness (cf. **106:13, 21**), or as being false to his Covenant (**44:17** (M.T. 18)), and as turning to other gods (**44:20** (M.T. 21))"

Cambridge: "The dominant thought of this section is that of continual preoccupation with God's revelation so that it reaches the deepest levels of thought and life. The section speaks of meditation (**verse 15**), treasuring in the heart (**verse 11**), continual delight (**verse 16**) and repetition (**verse 13**)."

Barnes: (regarding "*hid in mine heart*") "The meaning here is, that he had treasured up the word of God, as the most valuable thing, in his heart; it was there, though unseen; it constituted the secret power by which he was governed; it was permanently deposited there, as the most valuable of his treasures."

Piper: Re importance of Bible Memorization program – "So the teaching in this verse is that one way to keep from sinning -- one way to attain the ultimate reason for being, to live for the glory of God by enjoying him forever – is to store up the word of God in our hearts as something very precious. When we have the word of God stored or hidden in our hearts, and treasure it like gold and silver, that word will function to keep us from sin."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Clean Up Your Life**
Introduction: **John 15:3** -- The psalmist starts out by asking a very good question in verse number nine, wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? And we need to ask ourselves that very question. How can we keep our lives clean? spiritually clean. We live in such a dirty world. How can we stay clean in this world in which we live? And we need to be like the psalmist and desire to be spiritually cleansed.

Big Idea: **Three simple principles regarding how to clean up your life**

I. Principle of Spiritual Motivation
You have to desire that. And just three observations.

A. Recognize the need
1) Because he was young
The Hebrew word is *na'er*, adolescent. Sometimes it's used of a boy, preteen. A lot of times it's used to speak about an adolescent. I think it's an adolescent here. This is such a pivotal and vulnerable time for young people. They're growing in the process of becoming independent. They begin to discover who they are. They also face a crisis with developing communication skills, learning to talk to the people around them, learning to communicate without a sense of self-consciousness. They, a lot of times, feel inferior. They wrestle with feelings of awkwardness, and they have emotional highs and lows and a lot of insecurities. And then there's that peer pressure that comes upon them, and they have to learn to make their own decisions and stand for what is right. And also, they're investigating things. They're at the point in their life where they're questioning everything that they were taught, perhaps, by their teachers and parents, and they're making their own decisions. So it's such a vulnerable time for young people.

2) Because of his inward nature
his way, the Hebrew *ora*, which metaphorically refers to behavior or your conduct. You know, we're all born with that sin nature, right? We all know that. **Prov. 22:15**

Proverbs actually mentions four different categories of youth.
- There's the simple -- this is someone who's naive and they just haven't learned a lot and they're beginning to learn things.
- And then it also mentions the scorner. This is the young person who's a cynic. You know, we would call him a wise guy. You know, they always have something smart to say.
- And then there's the foolish, which is a rebel. They rejected God's word and God's principles.
- And then there's the wise.

B. Utilize the instrument for spiritual cleansing
It is the word of God that gives us that cleansing.
1) It cleanses our thoughts – **2 Cor. 10:5**
2) It cleanses our actions – **James 1**
3) It reveals our motives – **Heb. 4:12**
4) Teaches us how to confess sins to God

C. Maximize the effort for spiritual cleansing – **vs. 10**
Notice he's wholehearted. He's not passive in his spiritual devotion. The world is actively engaged in corrupting people's minds. We have to be actively engaged in fighting against that and getting God's Word into our heart and our mind. What this takes is spiritual discipline.

One time a young man said to Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse, the great Bible teacher, I would give everything to know the Bible the way you do. And he said to him, well, good, because that's exactly what it's going to cost you. You got to give it everything.

II. Principle of Skillful Memorization. Vs. 11
Reasons to memorize the Word of God:
A. To prevent sin
God's Word is compared to the sword of the Spirit. There's two Greek words for sword. One is the big sword, the *romphia*, which is a long sword that you can kind of just wield indiscriminately. But then there's another word for sword, which is much shorter, *machia*. which is a sword that takes skill. This is the one you would use for close combat, and you had to be skillful with this sword. This is the word for sword used in Ephesians, the sword of the spirit.

B. To promote praise – **vs. 12**
Ps. 119:164

C. To promote discernment – **vs. 12**
teach me thy statutes. And the word teach here means to be skillful or to be instructed, to have discernment, really, we could say, to be able to discern, to make right choices.

III. Principle of Scriptural Meditation – vs. 15
A lost art today. For the Puritans, meditation was a daily duty that enhanced every other duty of the Christian life. Thomas Watson, the Puritan, defined meditation as this, a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God's word to remembrance and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves. The Puritans wrote of two types of meditation. There was occasional, and then there was deliberate. Edward Colomy, the Puritan, wrote, deliberate meditation is when a man sets apart some time and goes into a private closet or a private walk, And he says this, and there doth solemnly and deliberately meditate of the things of heaven. And he went on to say that meditation has to enter into three doors, the door of understanding, the door of heart and affection, and the door of practical living. And so he said, thou must so meditate of God as to walk as God walks. and so to meditate of Christ as to prize him and to live in obedience to him.

A. Repeating God's Word. **Vs. 13**
There's a nuance to the word meditate. One of them is to speak to oneself, to think or to reflect. William Wilson writes of this word, it means to murmur and to mutter, to make sound with the mouth. It implies what we express by talking to himself.

B. Rejoicing in God's word. **Vs. 14 –** A Joyful Reflection
You can set the words to music.

C. Respecting God's word. **Vs. 15**

Respect here is the idea of giving attention to serious consideration of God's word.

The Puritans devoted scores of pages on this one topic of meditation of Scripture, they called it the benefits or the excellencies of meditation. Let me just give you some of those excellencies that they write about in closing.

> They said, meditation helps us focus on the triune God to love and enjoy him in all his person. Meditation helps increase knowledge of sacred truth. One Puritan wrote, it takes the veil from the face of truth. Meditation stirs one's affections, Watson said. It is the billows of the affections, talking about love from your heart. It fosters repentance. Meditation helps us view worship as a discipline to be cultivated. Meditation transfuses scripture through the texture of the soul, one Puritan wrote. Meditation is a great aid to prayer. It tunes the instrument of prayer before we pray. It also stresses the heinousness of sin. That's a word I don't really use a lot, heinousness. But it shows us how sinful sin is. One Puritan said this, it musters up all weapons and gathers all forces of argument for to press our sins and lay them heavy upon the heart. Thomas Hooker, another Puritan said, meditation sharpens the sting and strength of corruption that it pierces more prevailingly. It is a strong antidote against sin. And you get the idea. And they just list on and on the spiritual benefits of what'll take place in your life if you just meditate on God's word. And for our purpose here tonight, it will clean us up spiritually. It gives us a spiritual cleansing when we are in God's word and we allow it to go through our mind.

TEXT: PSALM 119:17-24 GIMEL

TITLE: THE BEST COUNSELOR = GOD'S WORD

BIG IDEA:
UNDERSTANDING GOD'S REVELATION
IS THE PATHWAY TO ENCOURAGEMENT

(:17) INTRODUCTION

"*Deal bountifully with Thy servant, That I may live and keep Thy word*"

If God were to bless us abundantly and give us our greatest desire, what would that be? The opportunity to continue to live a life of obedience that is pleasing to God!

I. (:19; 22-23) AS PILGRIMS IN AN ALIEN WORLD, ALL GOD'S SERVANTS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT

we are all in the same boat when it comes to needing encouragement;
if you make it your mission to encourage others you can be sure that you are performing a valuable ministry that is greatly needed

A. Pressure of Pilgrim Struggles -- "*Stranger in the earth*" (:19)

B. Pressure of Reproach and Contempt (:22)

C. Pressure of Malicious Plots (at the highest levels) (:23)

II. (:18-21) GOD GRANTS UNDERSTANDING OF HIS REVELATION:
- ACCORDING TO HIS SOVEREIGN WILL AND
- ACCORDING TO OUR COMMITMENT TO OBEY

A. According to His Sovereign Will

1. Revealing Truth and Granting Understanding (:18)

2. Hiding Truth and Blinding the Understanding (:19)

B. According to Our Commitment to Obey

1. Burden for Conformity to God's Requirements (:20)

2. Arrogant Disregard for God's Commands Rebuked (:21)

III. (:22-24a) ENCOURAGEMENT COMES AS WE REMAIN FOCUSED ON GOD'S REVELATION

A. Obeying (:22)

B. Meditating (:23)

C. Delighting (:24a)

(:24b) CONCLUSION: THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF TRUE NOUTHETIC COUNSELING
"*Thy testimonies are my counselors*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When was the last time someone encouraged you? How did they do it? When was the last time you made an effort to encourage someone else? How?

2) Think of all the types of counseling where the Word of God is often not utilized at all: psychological counseling, social services, guidance and career counseling, twelve step programs, etc. How important is it to have counseling that is Biblically based?

3) Why would God choose to hide His truth from certain people and in certain circumstances? Is this fair? Shouldn't everyone have equal access to God's truth?

4) Do we tend to give credit to our own reasoning abilities or to the gracious illumination of God's Spirit when it comes to understanding spiritual truths. Think thru your approach to Bible study and witnessing. Do you rely more on your own thinking and reasoning ability or on the sovereignty of God to graciously open up the eyes of the heart?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: Re "open thou mine eyes" -- "Uncover, that is, take away from the eyes what is before them to prevent clear vision. Comp. Num. 22:31; 24:4,16"

Barnes: Re "My soul breaketh" – "This word means to break; to crush; to break in pieces by scraping, rubbing, or grating. The idea would seem to be, not that he was crushed as by a single blow, but that his soul – his strength—was worn away by little and little. the desire to know more of the commands of God acted continually on him, exhausting his strength, and overcoming him. He so longed for God that, in our language, 'it wore upon him'—as any ungratified desire does. It was not the possession of the knowledge of God that exhausted him; it was the intenseness of his desire that he might know more of God."

Zemek: Re "that I may live" – "not merely a hanging on to physical existence; neither was it viewed as something exclusively spiritual in an eschatological sense. Based upon key OT

passages, it was an abundant life that was in view, 'a fulness of life in his (i.e. God's) favour'" (from Brown, Driver, Briggs)

Zemek (from Delitzsch) Re "extraordinary" – "the expression for everything supernatural and mysterious which is incomprehensible to the ordinary understanding and is left to the perception of faith. The Tora beneath the surface of its letter contains an abundance of such 'wondrous things,' into which only eyes from which God has removed the covering of natural short-sightedness can penetrate; hence the prayer in ver.18."

Spurgeon: Re the proud – "Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient. God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they wre candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good comfort under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. 'The Lord rebuke thee' is answer enough for all the accusations of the devils."

Piper: Re vs. 18 – "The three points we saw in this verse last week were: 1) there are wonderful things in theWord of God; 2) no one can see these wonderful things for what they really are without God's supernatural help; and 3) therefore we must pray to God for supernatural illumination when we read the Bible.

So the stress last week was on prayer and our desperate need for God's supernatural illumination to see spiritual things - to see God's glory and beauty and excellence. You can see many things when you come to the Word without God's opening the eyes of your heart. You can see words and grammatical constructions. You can see logical connections. You can see historical facts. You can see an author's rational intention. You can see some human emotions. None of that requires that God open your eyes in a special spiritual way.

But what you cannot see is the spiritual beauty of God and his Son and their work in the world. You cannot see that God is infinitely desirable above all things. A blind person cannot see the sun, though he can know many facts about the sun and pass a test in astronomy with a score higher than a person who can see the sun. Knowing about and knowing by sight are not the same. Knowing that honey is sweet and tasting honey are not the same."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Believer's Survival Guide**
Introduction: As you read this psalm here, the opening verse, you kind of get the impression that the psalmist is in survival mode. He wants to live, and he wants to live a life of obedience, and in a hostile world, he wants to seek the Lord. So, the question is, how are we to survive this

journey through this world? My soul is crushed with longing. Or we could say my heart is crushed with longing. Longing for what? Longing for God's word.

Big Idea: **Four reasons I see that we should long for God's Word as Christians.**

I. Because we are servants of the Lord – vs. 17

A. Loyal to their master

No man can serve two masters. Thirteen times in **Psalm 119**, he calls himself God's servant.

B. Live for their master.

His whole life was focused on doing the will of God, serving his master.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is called the servant. He's the model servant. If you want to know how to serve, just look at the life of Jesus. And what did Jesus say? I have come to do my Father's will. His whole life was directed to that one thing. He said, I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of him that sent me. And so we need to follow the example of our Savior.

II. Because we are students of the Word – vs. 18

The Bible calls upon us to be students of God's word. We're supposed to diligently study. Did you know that? **Col. 3:16; John 5:39** So we have to open the Bible before God. Then secondly, God must open the Bible before you. **Vs. 18; 1 Cor. 2:9; Is 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:10**

III. Because we are strangers in this world. Vs. 19

We're pilgrims because we're headed to our home. This world isn't it. We're headed to that celestial city. and we're just passing through here. **1 Pet. 2:11**

Now, if you're a pilgrim or a traveler in this world, what do you need? You need a guide. You need a map. God's Word is our guide.

The letter gimel represents, it pictures a camel. And so he's saying that the psalmist is making an allusion to the letter gimel by this motif of a traveler. Because one thing you needed in the ancient world in that day if you traveled is you needed a camel. And he writes this in his commentary, no other pack animal can survive the rigors of the desert like the camel. Because in ancient times, the caravan was the only way to get supplies across the desert. So the gimel represents divine supply. What a camel is to a traveler, God's word is to the believer as we travel through this world.

Importance of hiding God's Word in our hearts.

IV. Because we are scorned by the ungodly – vs. 21

We find our comfort, our refuge in God's Word, just like the psalmist. How should we respond when we're in adversity in a hostile world?

A. Remember the destiny of the disobedient. **Vs. 21**

He remembers that the enemies of God, those who disregard the word of God and cast it aside,

have a serious consequence to pay one day.

B. Entrust your soul to God for his protection. **Vs. 22**
God is able to turn the tables. He's able to turn things around.
Illustration of Haman
Example of Jesus – 1 Peter 2

What do you do when people speak against you? Our first reaction is to be defensive or to fight fire with fire, to go on our own campaign. We want to defend ourselves. We want to defend our name. Sometimes we need to mount an aggressive defense like the Apostle Paul (for the sake of the gospel) when criticized by the Corinthians. But there are other occasions when we're the only ones being hurt by slander and lies. And on those occasions, the best response is to stay focused in God's word, meditate in God's word. Don't worry about the words of men, focus on the word of God.

C. Get your contentment and counsel from God's word. **Vs. 24**
"*God, your testimonies are my delight and the men of my counsel*."
Every believer should have a council, a cabinet. And you know what it should be? It's God's word.

I believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, which means that God has given us, in His Word, all things for life and godliness, if we just obey it, if we just live it. Guess what? No counselor is going to give you some new idea out there that's all of a sudden going to presto change you and make everything all right for you. A lot of it is you just need to apply the truth of God's Word to your life. So get your contentment and your counsel from the Word of God.

Conclusion: What we need to survive is a compass and a guide. And friend, God's Word is that for us. That's what God's Word is for us. It is our survival guide. We simply have to trust it. We have to trust it more than our feelings. We have to trust it over our own wisdom. We have to trust it over the advice of others. Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It's without error. And therefore, we can trust it. Friend, you can trust God's word to guide you in this world.

TEXT: PSALM 119:25-32 DALETH

TITLE: CLEAVING TO THE WORD

BIG IDEA:
COMMITMENT TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO PERSONAL REVIVAL (= REVIVED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH)

I. CONDITIONS THAT CALL FOR PERSONAL REVIVAL

A. (:25) Emotional Death

"*My soul cleaves to the dust*"

We came from dust and our body will return to the dust (imagery of death)

B. (:28) Overwhelming Grief

"*My soul weeps because of grief*"

C. (:29) Moral Failure

"*the false way*" -- contrasted with "*the faithful way*"

could be talking about injustice others commit against you; but more likely is talking about personal moral failure

D. (:32) Constricted Heart

need to have one's heart "*enlarged*"

II. CATALYST FOR PERSONAL REVIVAL = CONFESSION + GOD'S WORD

(Talking here about God's initiative and grace and power)

A. (:26) Confession

"*I have told of my ways, and Thou hast answered me*"

B. (:25,28) God's Word

(:25) "*Revive me according to Thy word*"

(:28) "*Strengthen me according to Thy word*"

Again, note all of the different words used to refer to God's Word:

"*statutes*" (:26)
"*precepts*" (:27)
"*law*" (:29)
"*ordinances*" (:30)
"*testimonies*" (:31)
"*commandments*" (:32)

III. COMMITMENT TO GOD'S WORD

(Talking here about man's responsibility)

A. Commitment to Learn

"*Teach me Thy statutes*" (:26)

There is a necessary learning process; Growth doesn't just happen automatically and instantly:
Requires God's Grace to:
- Reveal truth
- Cause one to understand truth

B. Commitment to Meditate
"*So I will meditate on Thy wonders*" (:27) - as those wonders are revealed in God's Word

C. Commitment to Obey - conscious choice involved; determination
"*I have chosen the faithful way*"
"*I have placed Thine ordinances before me*"
"*I cleave to Thy testimonies*"
"*I shall run the way of Thy commandments*"
But still dependent on God's Grace

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How honest are we before ourselves and God about the depths of our own sin? Do we ever weep before God in grief over our sin? Do we practice open confession where we declare all of our ways to God?

2) When we are down and depressed where do we turn for the lifting up of our spirits? Do we practice denial and feed our fleshly appetites with food, with entertainment, with activity? Do we give in to despair and become paralyzed as we pity our sorry lot? Or do we turn to God's Word and allow God to revive our hearts?

3) How determined and dedicated are we in terms of choosing "the faithful way"?

4) Under what circumstances does our heart feel constricted? Where does our old nature tend to rear its ugly head? How have we seen God enlarge our heart over the years of walking with Him?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "In these verses we shall see the influence of the divine word upon a heart which laments its downward tendencies, and is filled with mourning because of its deadening surroundings. The word of the Lord evidently arouses prayer (25-29), confirms choice (30), and inspires renewed resolve (32): it is in all tribulation whether of body or mind the surest source of

help. This portion has 'D' for its alphabetical letter: it sings of Depression, in the spirit of Devotion, Determination, and Dependence."

Zemek: "…the psalmist's proccupation with his own character and conduct, especially in the light of the hostile occasion in which he found himself, binds all of these elements together. …Verses 26-27 unfold chiastically: vv.26a-b, professions; v. 26c, request; v. 27a, request; v. 27b, profession; and verses 29-31 exhibit a similar development with a thematic or theological orientation: vv. 29a-b, appeals for Divine enablement; vv. 30-31a, assertions of human responsibility; v. 31b, appeal for Divine enablement."

Zemek: Sees the structure developed around 2 complaints:
"*I am utterly humiliated*" (:25-27)
"*I am in great anguish*" (:28-32)

Cambridge: "In this section the Hebrew word *derek* = way, is prominent… Basically, the psalmist's request is that God will keep him from the false way (verse 29), and will show hm the true way (verse 27), whereupon the psalmist, whose ways are known to God (verse 26) will follow God's way (verse 32)."

Barnes: "The phrase '*to enlarge the heart*' means to make it free; to deliver it from all hindrances to what is right; to fill it with noble and holy purposes; to stimulate and animate it. The heart is contracted or made narrow by selfishness, pride, vanity, ambition, covetousness; it is made large by charity, love, hope, benevolence. Sin narrows the soul; religion enlarges it."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Pray When You Are Down**
Introduction: What did the psalmist mean by this expression, *my soul cleaves to the dust*?

- Could be talking about Depravity
- Depression -- It may be that he's just downcast. He's going through a very difficult time.
- Derision -- He's tired of being the object of the world's ridicule.
- Disappointment –
- Death itself --

Regardless of what it may be, we do know this, he's down. He's down. Emotionally, he is down. He's going through a difficult time. And what we see here in this stanza are some ways that we can pray when we're down.

Big Idea: Four requests to pray when you're down

I. Empower me – vs. 25
Quicken thou me according to thy word.

It will revive us. It will make us alive spiritually when we are really down. There are several metaphors that we see in the Bible, and you know these, but let me remind you, these are metaphors that teach us that the Bible gives us life.

- The Seed – born again of incorruptible seed by the Word of God
- Water – power to renew
- Wind – power to resurrect – dry bones of Ezekiel

II. Educate me – vs. 26, 27

The one thing that affliction does for us is it makes us more teachable. I notice that people, when they're going through suffering, are more ready to receive God's Word than at any other time. Our trials inspire us to learn Scripture in a greater way. Martin Luther said that there are three ways to learn God's Word or become a theologian. He said, first of all, there's prayer. Secondly, he said, there's meditation and reflection. And thirdly, he said, there's suffering and affliction.

When God teaches you new things, you're going to want to go out and you're going to want to tell others.

III. Enable me

Three specific areas where the psalmist alludes to where God's word will help him, will strengthen him.

A. To overcome our weakness – **vs. 28**

His heart was just heavy with sorrow. Another way to say it would be my sadness is about to kill me. or I have drowned in a tears of pain.

To give me strength – Ways that God strengthens us in times of deep sorrow

- God's Word reminds us of God's love and faithfulness.
- God's Word offers hope for the future.
- God's Word shares with us stories of resilience.
- God's Word reminds us of the assurance of God's presence. **Is. 41:10**
- God's Word provides a framework to understand suffering.
- God's Word teaches us to pray, how to pray, and how to depend upon God in times of suffering.

B. To overcome our wickedness – **vs. 29**

The psalmist knew his own propensity to resort to lies and deceitful practices. He knew his heart. God's word helps us in several ways.

- It teaches us that God hates lying.
- It teaches us that the truth will eventually come out. Jer. 28 – Hananiah
- It enables us to replace lies with the truth.

C. To overcome waywardness – **vs. 30**

It's important to be in God's word constantly. You know why? Because it'll keep us from wandering off the path. Easy to get lost in the woods when you lose your point of reference. Our point of reference is the word of God.

IV. Enlarge Me. Vs. 32

We need to ask for an enlarged heart. That's what he's saying here. Give me a greater desire. Give me a greater willingness to run after your commandments.
Illustration: Secretariat -- He had a larger heart. Therefore, he could run faster.

TEXT: PSALM 119:33-40 HE

TITLE: THE MASTER EQUIPPER

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S INITIATIVE IS THE PATHWAY TO PERSONAL REVIVAL

I. (:33-34) GOD'S INITIATIVE IN CHANNELING OUR MINDS

A. God's Teaching Ministry is Essential for Obedience

"*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, And I shall observe it to the end*."
Perseverance in obedience is the goal

B. God's Enlightening Ministry is Essential for Obedience

"*Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law; And keep it with all my heart*."
Complete obedience is the goal

II. (:35-37) GOD'S INITIATIVE IN CHANNELING OUR HEARTS

A. God Directs Our Will and Emotions

"*Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For I delight in it*."
Where do we find our greatest joy?

B. God Directs Our Heart

"*Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, And not to (material) gain*."
What do we value the most?

III. (:38-39) GOD'S INITIATIVE IN CHANNELING OUR FOCUS

A. God Focuses Us on His Word and on the Fear of Him

"*Establish Thy word to Thy servant, As that which produces reverence for Thee*."

B. God Focuses Us Away from Fearing Men

"*Turn away my reproach which I dread, For Thine ordinances are good*."

(:40) CONCLUSION

"*Behold, I long for Thy precepts; Revive me through Thy righteousness*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Our minds have a tendency to follow many rabbit trails of unnecessary debates over the minutiae of words and doctrines that are far from the heart of God. If we can submit our minds to the teaching and enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit, we can hopefully stay closer to the pathway of the practical application of God's truth.

2) Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven … for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mat. 6:19-24).
Do we truly Delight in God's Word more than in material possessions? What type of investment have we made in God's Word?

3) How does increased fear of God help to alleviate the paralyzing influence of the fear of man?

4) What type of "*vanity*" have we allowed our eyes to gaze upon this past week? If we know theoretically that it is so "empty" and "unprofitable", what is the attraction? How can we eliminate unnecessary exposure to alluring images of vanity?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zemek: "The disciple knew that his natural inclination would be toward … 'profit' or 'material gain,' so he implores his LORD to take the initiative in directing his 'heart' (i.e. the comprehensive anthropological term emphasizing rationality and volitionality) toward His testimonies rather than an innate pull to profit. This is truly a confession of man's utter dependence upon God."

Zemek: (with Leupold) "There is an implicit urgency to the psalmist's request that his LORD turn his eyes away from looking at … anything that is morally 'valueless,' in that the prepositional infinitive…lit. 'from seeing,' ultimately includes the hazard of 'being attracted by, and so finding pleasure in.' 'So this prayer specifies that the eyes may be turned away from trivialities by the grace of Him who alone can shape the deeper destinies of life.'"

Barnes: Re "Establish Thy word" – "Confirm it; make it seem firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there."

Cambridge: "The fact that the letter *he*, which begins the next eight lines marks a causative sense in Hebrew…makes this section consist mainly of requests in which the divine initiative and power in the psalmist's life are stressed…The inability of the psalmist to be true to God without God's help is thus strongly emphasized"

Spurgeon: "If we are devoted to God's fear we shall be delivered from all other fear. He has no fear as to the truth of the word who is filled with fear of the Author of the word. Scepticism is both the parent and the child of impiety; but strong faith both begets piety and is begotten of it."

Spurgeon: Re: "Thy judgments are good" – "When men rail at God's government of the world it is our duty and privilege to stand up for him, and openly to declare before him, 'thy judgments are good;' and we should do the same when they assail the Bible, the gospel, the law, or the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **How to Finish Strong**

Introduction: Not everyone who enters the race finishes well. Paul was able to say at the end of his life, *I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I've kept the faith*. That should be the desire of all believers, that we finish well for the Lord. Now, that was certainly the desire of the psalmist in **Psalm 119**.

Big Idea: **Three petitions that he makes to God that I think will help him to be faithful to the word of God unto the end.**

I. Teach Me / Develop my mind – vs. 33

No one ever outgrows scripture, the book widens and deepens with our years. We need understanding. When believers get half-hearted, there's a problem, right?

II. Train Me / Discipline my heart – vs. 35

On one hand, we delight in the law of God as God's people, but then on the other hand, we are weak to fulfill it. We need God's help to fulfill it. We need a grace, an enablement to help us do it. We carry around this body of death, this sin nature. Make my spiritual desires greater than my selfish desires.

Why does he mention covetousness? Because, again, we all struggle with this. This is at the root of all of our sins. Covetousness is a strong desire for things. It's the opposite of contentment. The Greeks defined it as the insatiable desire for that which can never be satisfied, to want what you don't have. When directed toward money, it ends up with stealing. When directed toward fame, it ends up with boasting. When directed toward worldly success, it ends up in selfish ambition. When directed towards power, it ends up with exploitation or intimidation or tyranny. And then on we could go. This is covetousness being expressed in so many different ways. Paul calls it in Colossians 3, verse 5, idolatry. Covetousness, which is idolatry? Because really, you know what it is? It's self-worship. It's self-worship.

III. Turn Me / Direct my steps – vs. 37

A. A Godly Focus

Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. The Christian life is all about having the right focus. Jesus said this, he said, the light of the body is the eye, if therefore that eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But then Jesus said this, but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of what? Be full of darkness. And so if you have the wrong focus as a believer, you're in trouble. **Prov. 4:25; 23:33; Ps. 123:1**

The things of the world ultimately, I mean, they look good on the surface, they look good on the outside, but ultimately they're empty, they're worthless. Worthless because they have no good in them. Worthless because they don't last. Worthless because they distract us from the truth in Christ. And they have nothing to do with Jesus.

B. A Godly Fear

Help me to put away doubts and some of the natural skepticism that might rise up in my sinful heart, and help me to be completely established in your word, because I'm devoted to thy fear.

You see, the reason people today don't have a fear of God is because they don't believe God's Word. They don't hold to the Word of God. And the psalmist, he wants this godly fear. He wants to hold fast to the scripture. But then also, a fear of sin, not only a fear of God, but a fear of sin. He doesn't want the consequences of sin to bring shame to the Lord and shame to him in his own life.

C. A Godly Fervor

Three times in this chapter, the psalmist speaks of longing for God's word. **Vs. 40, 20, 174**
A believer that has no appetite for the Word of God reveals that there's some problem there. There's some spiritual issue. We should never lose our longing, our hunger for the Word of God.

TEXT: PSALM 119:41-48 WAW

TITLE: FREEDOM WALKING -- "I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY"

BIG IDEA:
THE DESIRE TO OBEY AND PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO LIBERTY

INTRODUCTION:

Why is Liberty so crucial to spiritual maturity?

I. (:41-42) THE DESIRE TO PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD COMES FROM:

A. Experiencing God's Deliverance = His Lovingkindness in action in harmony with God's Word

B. Trusting in God's Word

C. Result: Freedom from Fear of Man
(= what holds us back from proclaiming God's Word)
"*So I shall have an answer for him who reproaches me*"

II. (:43-45) THE DESIRE TO OBEY GOD'S WORD COMES FROM:

A. God's Faithful Keeping of His Promises
"*And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth*"
We wait in hope for God to vindicate us by proving faithful to His word of truth
"*For I wait for Thine ordinances*"

B. Our Passionate Desire to Walk in Freedom

C. Result:
Freedom from the Bondage of Sin
Ability to keep God's law continually

III. (:46) THE FREEDOM TO PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD BRINGS BOLDNESS
"*I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings; And shall not be ashamed*."

IV. (:47-48) THE FREEDOM TO OBEY GOD'S WORD BRINGS GREATER LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD
"*And I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Thy statutes*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we use our personal testimony in a non-argumentative fashion as an

appropriate answer for those who "reproach" us?

2) What are some of the factors that motivate us to obey and proclaim God's Word?

3) Are we experiencing freedom from the fear of man? From the bondage of sin?

4) Do we wait for God to vindicate us or do we try to take matters into our own hands?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kidner: "The prayer of Acts 4:29, 'to speak thy word with all boldness', is not only anticipated here (42f., 46) but put in context; for the word spoken is first of all the word appropriated (41), trusted (42b, 43b), obeyed (44), sought (45) and loved (47f.)."

Cambridge: "The psalmist looks forward to deliverance from his adversaries (verse 45), and confidence to speak of God's ways to those who taunt him (verse 42) or even to kings (verse 46), provided that he retains his ability to speak the truth (verse 43)."

Barnes: Re "*walk at liberty*" – "The Hebrew word means *wide, broad, large, spacious*. The reference is to that which is free and open; that in which there are no limits, checks, restraints; -- where a man does what he pleases. The meaning here is, that he would feel he was free. He would not be restrained by evil passions and corrupt desires. He would be delivered from those things which seemed to fetter his goings. This does not here refer so much to external troubles or hindrances, to being oppressed and straitened by external foes, as to internal enemies – to the servitude of sin – to the slavery of appetite and passion."

Leupold: "The emphasis is now directed toward the prayer for grace and courage to be enabled to make a good confession. The matter to be confessed is, however, the superlative truth of God's Word."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Five Proper Responses to the Mercy of God**
Introduction: **Rom. 12:1** -- God wants all of you. He wants your mind. He wants your heart. He wants your hands. He wants your feet. He wants your tongue. He wants every fiber of you, all of you, your soul, body, soul, and spirit. So we are to present ourselves. Real worship is when you give yourself completely to God.

Big Idea: Because of your mercies of God, I will. I will walk in liberty. I will speak of thy testimonies. I will delight myself in thy commandments. I will lift up my hands. I will meditate in thy statutes. It's as if the psalmist is presenting himself as a living sacrifice to God because of God's mercies in his life. This stanza of Psalm 119 is an Old Testament illustration of what Paul meant in Romans 12:1-2. So what I want you to see from this stanza then are what I call **Five proper responses to the mercy of God in our life.**

I. Because of God's mercies, we defend God's Word – vs. 42

Psalm 137 records the exiles weeping as they were taunted by the Babylonians. You ever notice how the world loves to ridicule God's people whenever they get a chance? The psalmist desires to provide a bold and intelligent answer to those who would attack his belief and his faith.

The word apologist comes from the Greek word *apologia*, and it means a defense. Peter uses this word in **1 Peter 3:15**, *but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer.* There's the word, a defense *to every man that asks if you are the reason or the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*. We're always to be ready to give an answer, a defense, an apologia, an apology, if you will, about our faith in Jesus Christ. And again, this word *apologia*, this was a technical term. This was used in the law courts when you would mount a defense, an intelligent, well-thought-out, skillful answer for what you believe. And as Christians, God calls all of us to be an apologist. Everyone's an apologist. You're either a good one or you're a bad one.

The best way to give an answer to the world is to know God's word and simply give them the truth of God's word. There's different ways that Christians approach defending the faith. There's different methods in which they do that. The classical method is just using reason and philosophy. There's **evidentialism**, where you try to point to evidences, and there's certainly a place for that. There is what is called **fideism**, where you basically say you have to believe before you really ever understand. But there's one method that I think is the most biblical method of defending the faith, and that is what some people call **presuppositionalism**. And you say, what is that? That is just **simply starting with the Bible**. A presuppositionist will say, look, I don't have to convince you that there is a God. You already believe that, you know that, even though you might lie about it, because God has put that knowledge in every man's heart. And I don't have to convince you that the Bible is true and that the Bible is the word of God. What I have to do is just simply unleash it and let it do its work. It's like Spurgeon said, you don't have to defend the lion. All you have to do is open the cage. And when you open the cage, the lion will defend himself. That's kind of like a presuppositional approach. Look, all I have to do is just give the word of God. That is the instrument that the Holy Spirit uses, right? It's not my philosophy, not my brilliance. It's the power is in the word itself. So we need to trust in the word of God, just like the psalmist here said, for I trust in thy word. Paul said it like this, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're not man-made, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

II. Because of God's mercies, we depend on God's word. Vs. 43

Let me not resort to placing my trust in other things. Let me not resort to worldly arguments or means. Let me not trust in the wisdom of the world and the false ideas of men. Sadly, there are churches and ministries today that have replaced the preaching of God's word. God's word has been utterly taken out of their mouth. They place their hope in entertainment or programs or philosophy or pragmatism. They're no longer depending on God's word.

III. Because of God's mercies, we demonstrate God's word. Vs. 44

This is how you know that you're a true believer because you're constantly keeping the commandments of God. It is a life of obedience. [message of **1 John**] I just want to obey you, Lord, for the rest of my life. I want to obey you forever and ever. All the rest of my days.

The best defense of the faith is demonstrating a transformed life. There's no argument against a transformed life. True believers will demonstrate the truth to the world by how they live their life, by how we walk in God's way.

The word *liberty*, literally, a wide place. It's an idiom for freedom. It's a picture of one who's free from restrictions and limitations. And the freedom was a result of obedience to the word of God. The service of sin is slavery. The service of God is perfect liberty. **John 8:31, 34**

IV. Because of the mercies of God, we declare God's word. Vs. 46
Each day, the Lord presents us with opportunities to share his word, to declare his word. But the sad reality is that many of those who profess to be Christians don't take advantage of those opportunities, because they may be ashamed to speak up for Christ.

Illustration: Hugh Latimer – preaching before King Henry VIII

V. Because of God's mercies, we delight in God's word. Vs. 47
There's three ways in which he delighted in it.

A. Just love it
There are at least 10 words for love in Hebrew here. He uses the word here that speaks of great tenderness. I will delight myself. This is a word which means to hold on to, to embrace.

B. A Reverence for it

C. Meditate in it
Dawson Troutman, founder of the Navigators, believed that the last prevailing thought in one's conscious mind before going to sleep should be the word of God. He called this the HWLW principle, his word, the last word. His word, the last word. And his friends and associates that travel with him would say, you know, he would basically, you know, when it was time to go to sleep, lights out, he would just, before that, he would just begin to quote scripture and speak it out loud because he wanted that to be the last thought in his mind. And the theory was that the last dominating idea would kind of simmer in your mind. Psychologists tell us that the subconscious mind works while we sleep. And he wanted it to be in his mind, the last thing that he thought about. So it's delighting in God's word.

TEXT: PSALM 119:49-56 ZAYIN

TITLE: COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

BIG IDEA:
THE PROMISE OF GOD IS THE PATHWAY TO COMFORT IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION

What gives HOPE in times of affliction?

I) (:49) God's Faithfulness to His Word of Promise

"*Remember the word to Thy servant, In which Thou hast made me hope*."

God's promises apply to God's servants
God has a perfect memory -- will not forget His promises
God does not raise false hopes and expectations that He will not fulfill
Those who trust in God's Word are never despairing (= beyond hope)
The word "Remember" has a rich depth of meaning in the Scriptures.

II) (:50) Power of God's Word to Revive

"*This is my COMFORT in my affliction, That Thy word has revived me*."

Believers experience all sorts of affliction.
We should seek to minister comfort to others -- use the Word of God.
We need to go to the Word ourselves to seek comfort.
God's Word is life-giving and sustaining.
The Lord has not left us comfortless. He has also sent His Holy Spirit.

III) (:51) Perseverance in Obedience to God's Word Despite Ridicule

"*The arrogant utterly deride me, Yet I do not turn aside from Thy law*."

Our faith is attacked in many ways.
cf. how Noah was mocked while obeying God to proclaim His Word and build the ark.
cf. how the media mocks Christians today.
Remember Psalm 2 -- it is the Lord who derisively laughs at the futility of the scoffers.
Jesus has the truth; where would we turn if we turn aside?
God's law is not burdensome to us; but brings blessing.
We need to maintain our focus and not be distracted.

IV) (:52) Reflection on God's Dealings Throughout History

"*I have remembered Thine ordinances from of old, O Lord, And COMFORT myself*."

God's words and ways are unchanging. He remains the same in His dealings with men.
We need to slow down to take time to reflect on God's ordinances.
There is no comfort in the escapism of the world: thru drinking, drugs, pleasure, work, etc.

V) (:53) Righteous Indignation against the Arrogant Rebellion of the Wicked

"*Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, Who forsake Thy law*"

The wicked are not a threat to us, despite their big talk and swagger.
They are on the wrong side of God's law.
We are concerned that God's law be upheld by others (as well as by ourselves)

VI) (:54) Eternal Perspective Brings Joy

"*Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage*"

We delight in God's Word as we anticipate our heavenly mansion.
Pilgrims can endure hardship since they know it is only for a fleeting moment.

VII) (:55) Nighttime Meditation on God's Character and Requirements

"*O Lord, I remember Thy name in the night, And keep Thy law.*"

When we wake up troubled in the middle of the night, we need to meditate on God.

VIII) (:56) Track Record of Obedience

"*This has become mine, That I observe Thy precepts*"

When obedience becomes second nature, that is the assurance of our new nature!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we preparing ourselves for affliction by storing up God's precious promises from His Word and feeding intimately on His Word daily?

2) Where do we turn for comfort? What resources do we use to try to comfort others?

3) What is the connection between Obedience and Comfort?

4) How do we respond when we are ridiculed for our faith?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zemek: The psalmist "was progressively realizing in his heart of hearts the strategic balance between dependence and duty. Without such a biblical perspective real life becomes not only inexplicable but also intolerable."

Outline:

1A. Cycle 1 (vv.49-50): amidst his affliction he anticipates God's remembrance and obtains comfort.
2A. Cycle 2 (vv. 51-53): amidst his adversity he remembers the Word of God and feels righteous indignation (i.e. towards the apostates).
3A. Cycle 3 (vv.54-56): amidst his alienation he remembers the God of the Word and matures in obedience.

Leupold: "The Word of God sustains the psalmist in the midst of affliction and opposition…"

Barnes: "The word of God is the only foundation of hope for men; and when our hopes are fairly built on that, we have a right to appeal to God that he will make it good."

Barnes: Re "judgments of old" – "The word *judgments* here seems to refer to the Divine dealings, whether expressed in the law of God, or in the actual administration of his government over the world."

Barnes: Re vs. 56 – "This joyful remembrance of thy law in the night of affliction (ver. 50); this stability and firmness on my part in keeping thy law when proud men have derided me (ver. 51); this comfort which I have derived from meditating on thy statutes (ver. 52); this solicitude for the welfare of others (ver. 53); this peace which I have enjoyed in thy law in the house of my pilgrimage (ver. 54); and this consolation which I have had in thee in the night-season (ver. 55); -- all this has been granted to me because I have kept thy statutes; because I have sought to be obedient – to serve thee – to find my happiness in thee. These are the proper fruits and effects of keeping the law of God. Such peace does it impart; so much does it do to sustain and comfort the soul."

Spurgeon: "This octrain deals with the comfort of the word. It begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfilment of his promise, and then it shows how the word sustains us under affliction, and makes us so impervious to ridicule that we are moved by the harsh conduct of the wicked rather to horror of their sin than to any submission to their temptations. We are then shown how the Scripture furnishes songs for pilgrims, and memories for night-watchers; and the Psalm concludes by the general statement that the whole of this happiness and comfort arises out of keeping the statutes of the Lord."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Things to Remember in Trying Times**
Introduction: As Christians, we are prone to forget some things that we need to remember, especially in trying times. And so it seems that it's the nature of human nature that we forget things that we need to remember, and we remember things that we should forget. That's kind of part of our nature. But I think the secret of living a Christian life, part of the secret is just being consistent and faithful is that you remember the right things.

Look at usage of word "*remember*" (**vs. 49, 52, 55**) and the context of **afflictions**. This is a word that means to be wretched, to be miserable, to be humiliated. In **verse 51**, he says he's been in derision. That is, he was the object of his enemy's scorn.

Big Idea: **Three important things that we should remember in trying times.**

I. Remember God's Promises

A. God's Promises are the Believer's Security – **vs. 49**

We need to remember God's promises to unlock whatever prison that we're in. God's promises are the believer's security. He remembers God's faithfulness in fulfilling his word in the past. He's asking God to fulfill his promises again. He's remembering the promises of God and it brings him *comfort* (**vs. 50, 52**).

B. God's Promises are the Believer's Strength – **vs. 50**

2 Cor. 1:8-9 – burdens drain us of strength. God drains us completely of all our strength, why? So that we can trust in God who has the ability to give strength to raise the dead. **1 Thess. 2:13 –** *energeo* – where we get the word energy. The word of God is able to work in you and give you strength and power and energy.

C. God's Promises are the Believer's Shield – **vs. 51**

Illustration: Missionaries Dick and Margaret Hillis – caught in China during the Japanese invasion with 2 of their children in small town called Shinku – relying on the promises of God

D. God's Promises are the Believer's Song – **vs. 54**

He was singing the scripture, singing God's word. Now did you know that singing scripture helps us to memorize it?

II. Remember God's Judgments – vs. 52, 53

He's referring to the providential works of God recorded in scripture. In Hebrew there are 16 words that describe God's mercy and 16 words that describe his judgment, justice, and wrath. There's a perfect balance here, mercy, Judgment. It's the prerogative of God, a sovereign God, at times to reveal himself through mercy and at times to reveal himself through judgment or justice.

III. Remember God's Name – vs. 55

LORD -- the divine name, the four-letter name of Yahweh, that sacred name, the name that is so sacred that Jews never really mentioned that name because it was too sacred to say out loud. Out of reverence, they would not say that name. They would replace it with Adonai or Hashem, the name. But they wouldn't speak that name because it was too sacred. And I think this tradition goes all the way back to **Exodus 3:14**, where Moses said, *Lord, who are you? What's your name? And who shall I say? When the children of Israel asked me who sent me, what shall I tell them? What's your name?* And what did God say? *I am that I am*. And that phrase there is from the Hebrew word to be. The name Yahweh stems from the Hebrew expression to be, and it kind of comes from that declaration that God gave there. God points to himself as the **self-existent eternal one.** It became known as the Tetragrammaton.

A. Remembering God's name is just trusting in His character.
God's name reveals who he is. And this means you reject all idolatry.

B. Remembering God's name is an act of worship.

C. Remembering God's name is a confession of complete trust and reliance on God.
Prov. 18:10

Jesus in the New Testament is the Yahweh of the Old Testament. So to call upon the name of the Lord for you is to call upon Jesus.

D. Remembering God's name is a call to live in a manner that honors and His character that reflects His holiness.

E. Remembering God's name is to ask him to remember us and work on our behalf.

TEXT: PSALM 119:57-64 HETH

TITLE: THE LORD IS MY PORTION

BIG IDEA:
A VALUE SYSTEM ORIENTED AROUND GOD'S WORD
IS THE PATHWAY TO CONTENTMENT

6 KEYS TO CONTENTMENT:

I. (:57) BEING SATISFIED WITH THE LORD

"*The Lord is my portion*" -- this is the major key

What else do we need? We've got the whole pie! We've got the only pie that counts!
"I'd rather have Jesus than riches or gold"
"Content to let the world pass by, to know no gain nor loss"

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:

We are Committed to Obedience

"*I have promised to keep Thy words*"

II. (:58-60) SEEKING GOD'S FAVOR

"*I entreated Thy favor with all my heart*"

"*Be gracious to me*"

Self-effort cannot realize contentment

Confidence that God is a good God and delights to give good gifts to His children

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:

1) We Walk Circumspectly

"*I considered my ways*" -- sensitive to missteps

"*And turned my feet to Thy testimonies*" -- correction

2) We Obey Instantly

"*I hastened and did not delay to keep Thy commandments*"

III. (:61) NOT PANICKING UNDER PRESSURE

"*The cords of the wicked have encircled me*"

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:

We Remain Focused on God's Word

"*But I have not forgotten Thy law*"

IV. (:62) GIVING THANKS ALWAYS

"*At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to Thee*" -- no bitterness here; nothing taken for granted

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:
We Agree with God's Verdict of Right and Wrong
"*Because of Thy righteous ordinances*"

V. (:63) FELLOWSHIPING WITH OTHER GOD-FEARERS
"*I am a companion of all those who fear Thee*"
Good companions foster good morals

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:
We are attracted to those who are like us = Committed to obeying God's Word
"*And of those who keep Thy precepts*"

VI. (:64) SEEING GOD'S LOVE EVERYWHERE
"*The earth is full of Thy lovingkindness, O Lord*"
Some people see a glass as half empty vs. seeing it as half full
Positive attitudes (Phil. 4:6-8)

Proof that our Value System is oriented around God's Word:
We desire additional teaching
"*Teach me Thy statutes*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some of the things that disturb your sense of contentment? Where do you especially struggle in this area? How do you tend to express your discontent? How does your discontent affect others (in your family, your job, your church, etc.)?

2) Are we always asking the Lord for more "goodies" or are we praising Him for His sufficiency and the fact that He is "our portion"?

3) Can we recall the Word of God causing us to make any changes in our Value System?

4) Are we attracted to fellowship with like-minded believers? Do we derive comfort from this?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey."

Spurgeon: "Neither his sense of injustice, nor his sorrow at his losses, nor his attempts at defence diverted him from the ways of God. He would not do wrong to prevent the suffering of wrong, nor do ill to avenge ill. he carried the law in his heart, and therefore no disturbance of mind could take him off from following it."

Spurgeon: "A thankful heart is such a blessing that it drives our fear and makes room for praise."

Zemek: "In verses 63-64 his contemplations regarding companionship and communion become an impetus for another mood, a mood of continuation (i.e. perseverance). Like the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12:1, this fellowship of the faithful provided for him a measure of encouragement to keep on keeping on."

Barnes: Re "*full of thy mercy*" – "Full of the proofs of thy goodness and compassion… This is the expression of a heart full of love to God and to his word. In such a state of mind as the psalmist was in, the goodness of God is seen everywhere. The best preparation for seeing evidence that God is good is a heart full of love. Then the proofs of that love spring up on every side—as when we truly love a friend we find constant proofs of his excellency of character."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When God Is Your Portion**
Introduction: The psalmist starts the stanza with the declaration that *God is his portion*. Now portion, that's not a word that we use a lot. Most of the time that's used in the context of eating, portion control and that sort of thing. But what is it used with here? What is the context here? Well the concept of a portion comes from the judicial system of allotting inheritance or land. So this portion or this inheritance would have been very important to the ancient Israelite. It was their future. I mean, you would guard it. Your standing in society would be determined by how much of a portion you would have. And it really kind of became attached with your identity. So this concept of portion really took on the meaning of something that was treasured, a treasured possession.

In the book of Joshua, when the land of Canaan was being divided up among the 12 tribes, you might remember this, each tribe got their own portion, the Bible says. However, the priests and the Levites were not given a portion of land. This might seem unfair at first, but God gave them something better than land. The Bible says, God said to the Levites, *I am thy part and thine inheritance.* In **Numbers 18:20**, it says it like this, *I am your portion*. God said, you don't get any land, but I'm gonna be your portion. They were blessed above others to have God as their portion.

Big Idea: **Now, the rest of the stanza reveals how we are to live our lives knowing that the Lord is our portion.**

I. Because the Lord is our portion, we obey his word. Vs. 57
Salvation is not a fire escape from hell and then you going out and living how you want to. Salvation is coming, repenting of your sins, submitting to the Lordship of Christ and saying, I'm gonna obey him all the rest of my life. **1 John 5:3**

II. Because the Lord is our portion, we seek his favor. Vs. 58

To ask for someone's favor was asking that person to turn their face towards you in a kindly way. Turning away God's face is punishment. So on the other hand, when God's face is turned towards you, that is blessing, that is favor.

III. Because the Lord is our portion, we live in continual repentance. Vs. 59

A. True repentance begins in our mind.

Metanoia -- It's a change of thinking towards God, towards sin, towards righteousness, towards the Bible, and so on.

B. True repentance results in a change of behavior.

It starts in the mind but it doesn't end there.
Involves mind, emotions and will.
A lot of people show remorse or show regret, but they don't truly repent because it ends just with the emotions. It has to culminate with the will.

C. True repentance is continual.

True salvation is a repentance that you don't repent of. You don't turn back.

D. True repentance includes an urgency to obey God.

2 Cor. 7:11 – all the elements of true repentance in a person's life.

IV. Because the Lord is our portion, we value God's truth above earthly possessions. Vs. 61

He values God's word above any earthly possession that he has.

V. Because the Lord is our portion, we make friends of God's people. Vs. 63

A holy man spends his night with God and his days with godly people, again wrote Spurgeon. Association leads to assimilation. The Bible says, *he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* One of the most important choices in your life is who you're gonna make your friends. Choose godly friends.

VI. Because the Lord is our portion, we treasure God's expressions of love. Vs. 64

The earth and everything around it is constantly revealing God's great love to us each day. Each breath breathes out expressions of thanksgiving and worship and praise. Makes us want to draw near to God. to know him more, to delight in him more, to enjoy him more.

TEXT: PSALM 119:65-72 TETH

TITLE: IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I WAS AFFLICTED

BIG IDEA:
APPRECIATING AFFLICTION IS THE PATHWAY TO SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT

I. THE GOOD SHEPHERD USES AFFLICTION TO DISCIPLINE AND RESCUE WAYWARD SHEEP
"*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word.*"

II. APPRECIATING AFFLICTION SOUNDS LIKE A CONTRADICTION BUT ACTUALLY IS A MATURE PERSPECTIVE

"*Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord*"

"*Thou art good and doest good*"

"*It is good for me that I was afflicted*"

III. THE ARROGANT ARE INSENSITIVE TO GOD'S TRUTH
(it doesn't even register with them)

A. They Deal in Malicious Lies
"*The arrogant have forged a lie against me*"

B. Their Heart is Closed to God's Truth
"*Their Heart is Covered with fat*"
more interested in the satisfying the appetites of the flesh

IV. THE SUBMISSIVE DELIGHT IN GAINING SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT

A. They Long to be Taught more of God's Word (:66,68,71)

B. They Put their Faith in God's Word (:66)

C. They are Committed to Obey God's Word (:67,69)

D. They Delight in God's Word (:70)

E. They Value God's Word (more than the greatest riches) (:72)
Song: "I'd rather have Jesus than riches or gold"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) "Appreciating affliction" is definitely a strange concept. Find some other NT passages that speak to the same theme and meditate on these.

2) Think of how you inflict "affliction" on your children in certain instances in order to develop their character and shape them in a desired direction. What about some of the methods used by shepherds with their sheep?

3) Are we able to maintain our conviction in the Goodness of God whatever our circumstances?

4) How do you evidence a hunger and commitment to God's Word? What are some trends in Christian churches today that tend to lower the emphasis and importance of God's Word? What are the pressures influencing some of those trends?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "Truth and law do nothing but good, and the welfare of individuals, and of a community, is promoted just in proportion as truth and law prevail."

Barnes: Re "*teach me good judgment*" – "The word here rendered *judgment* means, properly, taste, -- that power by which we determine the quality of things as sweet, bitter, sour, etc. Then it is applied to the mind or understanding, as that by which we determine the moral quality of things, or decide what is right or wrong; wise or foolish; good or evil. Here it means that he desired to have in full exercise the faculty of appreciating what is right, and of distinguishing it from what is wrong."

Spurgeon: Re summary – "They are the witness of experience, testifying to the goodness of God, the graciousness of his dealings, and the preciousness of his word. Especially the Psalmist proclaims the excellent uses of adversity, and the goodness of God in afflicting him. The sixty-fifth verse is the text of the entire octave. '*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word.*' This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum of ours. The Psalmist tells the Lord the verdict of his heart; he cannot be silent, he must speak his gratitude in the presence of Jehovah, his God. From the universal goodness of God in nature, in verse 64, it is an easy and pleasant step to a confession of the Lord's uniform goodness to ourselves personally. It is something that God has dealt at all with such insignificant and undeserving beings as we are, and it is far more that he has dealt well with us, and so well, so wondrously well. He hath done all things well: the rule has no exception. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything Jehoavah hath dealt well with us."

Zemek: Outline:

"… we find the child of God painting three pictures of Divine goodness
on a dark canvas of human distress:

1A. (vv. 65-67) The first picture is one of a past restoration to fellowship by means of distress.
2A (vv. 68-70) The second picture is one of a present preservation in the midst of distress.
3A (vv. 71-72) The third picture is one of continued edification as the product of distress.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Finding Good in Our Afflictions**
Introduction: Background of hymn "It is Well with My Soul" – Horatio Spafford
This psalmist makes this declaration of the goodness of God, but what's interesting is he does it in the midst of affliction. God does what is good because he is good, and he does it according to his word.

Big Idea: **Now, so I want us to learn from this passage just five basic ways in which God uses affliction for our good.**

I. Affliction creates in us a desire for biblical discernment. Vs. 66
The only way we can have discernment is to know God's standard.

A. Discernment is needed to avoid deception
False teachings and deceptive people are everywhere and even in the church. That's why John said, you know, try the spirits to see whether they are of God.

B. Discernment helps us to make sound decisions in various areas of our life, personal relationships or professional decisions.
We need discernment to see the will of God, to see God's providence, what is He leading, what is He doing, and how we can follow in that.

C. Discernment is needed to grow spiritually.
Discernment helps Christians understand what God teaches about holiness so that we can live in accordance to God's principles, but also for spiritual growth.

D. Discernment is needed to protect us from evil; to discern between good and evil.
We use discernment to identify the enemy's deceptive tactics.

The enemies of God are characterized by a lack of discernment.

II. Afflictions discipline us to practice a greater level of obedience. Vs. 67
Afflictions make us aware of our sin. Afflictions can expose us to our pride, our hidden struggles, makes us more dependent on the Lord.

III. Afflictions give us a greater appreciation of the character of God. Vs. 68
Sometimes we don't recognize God's goodness the way we should. Afflictions have a way of opening our eyes to that, as ironic as that might seem. God is good in His nature; in His activities. God's goodness should lead to thankfulness on our part. God doesn't do a thing because it is right. A thing is right because God does it. Because God is good. Everything

that comes from God is good.

IV. Afflictions give us a greater capacity to understand spiritual truth. Vs. 71
Afflictions teach us to rely more on the promises of God. We run to God's word with a greater passion during times of affliction.

V. Afflictions will cause us to treasure God's word above earthly riches as well. Vs. 72
Affliction helps us to rightly assess true riches, the true value of scripture.

TEXT: PSALM 119:73-80 YODH

TITLE: I WAIT FOR THY WORD

BIG IDEA:
PERSEVERANCE IN WAITING FOR GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO A BLAMELESS HEART AND A BLAMELESS TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION

Perseverance is a lost virtue in our Instant-oriented culture.
Spiritual maturity does not occur overnight.

No superscription – so we can't be dogmatic about the author or the historical situation –
Some think David, Daniel, disciple of Ezra, etc.
The Psalmist is experiencing some persisting type of affliction (which he attributes to the hand of God). While he has been promised some great blessing, he as yet has not realized full inner blessing or outward prosperity. Yet he hangs in there and "waits for God's word" and for the fulfillment of God's promises.

He must fight two important battles:

1) the battle with himself -- questioning whether God will really deliver on His promises
2) the battle of others looking at his afflicted condition and questioning his spirituality

The constant threat is that of **Disappointment** = being let down by God

1) Private shame and embarrassment -- in his own heart
2) Public shame and embarrassment -- in the eyes of others:
   - other believers (God-fearers)
   - other non-believers (his enemies = the arrogant)

1 Pet. 4:19 "*Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right*"

Structure of Octave is inverted with the core message in vv. 76-77 and every 2 verses related in concentric circles moving out from the core:

v. 73 Starting Point: Realize God's Purpose Based on Design
  v. 74 God Fearers Rejoice – Internal Application
    v. 75 Divine Agent of Affliction
      vv.76-77 Lovingkindness / Compassion = the Grace of God = Core
    v. 78 Human Agent of Affliction
  v. 79 God Fearers Renew Fellowship – External Application
v. 80 Goal = Accomplish God's Purpose of Holiness and Integrity

SEVEN PRAYERS / PRACTICES TO ENCOURAGE PERSEVERANCE IN WAITING FOR GOD'S WORD

1. (:73) REST IN GOD'S WISDOM BECAUSE HE DESIGNED ME FOR A PURPOSE

A. My Creator has a plan for my life

"*Your hands made me and fashioned me;*"

יָדֶיךָ עָשׂוּנִי וַיְכוֹנְנוּנִי

Matthew Henry: Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was. . . We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Do you take pleasure in the things which you create? The projects you accomplish? The designs you are able to bring to reality? God takes pleasure in His creation – does not make mistakes

Bill Gothard teaching on accepting God's Design

we are special because God has personally created us for His purposes:

"Acceptance of Self – Scripture teaches that we are intricately designed and that each of our physical characteristics was prescribed by God and developed according to His plan. (Psalm 139:14-16). However, today's teen-agers are extremely self-conscious about physical 'deficiencies' in themselves and an overwhelming majority would change inborn features if they had the power to do so. By this, they are saying that God's workmanship is inferior to their desired self-image and therefore, He cannot be trusted in other areas of life. . . A negative self image will be the result of accepting the values of people around us. However, an accurate self image will develop if we comprehend and accept the values which God places on our appearance, abilities, parentage and environment."

Potter knows what is right for the clay

God will not leave His work half-done; Therefore, I can't quit on God.

Total dependence upon God is the only approach to life that makes sense

Zemek: God's hands gave me my constitution; made me what I am; He has sovereignly overseen the framing of our personalities and potentialities

B. Discernment in the Word is Available

"*Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.*"

הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶלְמְדָה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃

The One who created me physically will surely equip me mentally and spiritually; get the owner's manual from the manufacturer; I am helpless without His wisdom; God knows my frame, that I am but dust; He knows all of my limitations and shortcomings; he knows what sins give me special trouble

James 1 – ask God for wisdom

Proverbs – put a premium on searching God's Word for wisdom

Talked about **spiritual discernment** last week from Luke 11 --

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (the type of understanding that leads to Obedience) DEPENDS NOT ON GREATER REVELATION BUT ON THE RIGHT HEART CONDITION

Zemek: grant me **practical perception** for real life (esp., amidst its many pressures).

Illustration of Pharmacist: in a drug store there are remedies for all types of ills; but the unlearned will walk around the shelves filled with prescription drugs and have no clue what to take for what illness

Could look at example from life of David, Daniel, Christ …. We will look at the life of the Apostle Paul:
Example of the Apostle Paul – how to deal with the <u>thorn in the Flesh</u> – some physical problem that Paul did not like … but he recognized it had been sent by God to accomplish His purposes – **2 Cor. 12:7-10**; Viewed himself as a **trophy of God's grace and glory**

2. (:74) RAISE THE JOY LEVEL OF OTHER BELIEVERS WHO WITNESS MY FAITHFUL PERSEVERANCE

A. Faithful Christians Encourage others

"*May those who fear You see me and be glad*,"
יִרְאֶיךָ יִרְאוּנִי וְיִשְׂמָחוּ

Zemek: This disciple was not so utterly preoccupied with his personal problems that he thought of no one else but himself.

Consider how we <u>impact other believers</u> – both in negative and hopefully in positive ways

Importance of combining devotion (fearing the Lord) with knowledge of the truth

Job's friends and counselor were not glad to witness his faithfulness in time of affliction; they wanted to jump to all sorts of false conclusions; advice of his wife: "*Curse God and die*"

B. Patience in the Word is Key

"*Because I wait for Your word*."
כִּי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃

What does it mean to *wait on the Lord*?

Spurgeon: Re vs. 74 – "When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others, especially if that grace has made him a man of sound understanding and holy knowledge. God-fearing men are encouraged when they meet with experienced believers. A hopeful man is a God-send when things are declining or in danger… Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God's word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows."

Wiersbe: When we hope in God's Word, we have joy in life, and this helps us to encourage others. "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle" (Ian MacLaren). Are people happy to see us arrive or are they happier when we leave? When our friends and acquaintances have burdens, do they turn to us for help, or do we add to their burdens? We are commanded to bear our own burdens courageously and to help others bear their burdens (Gal. 6:2, 5).

Example of the Apostle Paul – **Phil. 1:24-26** – Difficult circumstances; imprisoned for the gospel; other ambitious preachers from a motive of jealousy were stirred up to take advantage of Paul's situation and preach Christ from envy and strife; Paul's perseverance was a testimony that brought joy and maturity to the other believers – Look at how Paul is handling this difficult situation! Viewed himself as a blessing to others – someone to comfort and strengthen others; encourage them on to maturity

3. (:75) RECEIVE HARDSHIP FROM THE HAND OF A RIGHTEOUS GOD

A. God is Righteous in Upholding His Standards

"*I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous*,"

יָדַעְתִּי יְהוָה כִּי־צֶדֶק מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ

Abraham had to learn this in God's judgments against Sodom and Gomorrah;
God always does what is right – in general … and in His personal dealings with me

Difficult to transfer this theological knowledge to our own situation of affliction – to really mean this and really live by this conviction
We think that we are wiser and would do things differently

B. God is Faithful in Using Hardship to Benefit Me

"*And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me*."

וֶאֱמוּנָה עִנִּיתָנִי׃

Very personal application here – we know this in theory – do we live this out?
Might be a sin component and might not be

Job is the supreme example here – suffering for the sake of righteousness; directly targeted by Satan
Recognizes God as the ultimate source of his affliction

Details of the affliction of the psalmist are set forth in the next octave (**vv. 81-83**)

Zemek: This means not only that there was justice in Yahweh's action, but an ultimate good purpose behind it. . . He focuses his faculties upon the pedagogical potential of these divinely issued sufferings … He knows that God has humbled him . . .

Example of the Apostle Paul – Always saw the sovereign hand of God in all of his sufferings for Christ and for the gospel: **Rom 8:28-39** – viewed himself as a victorious conqueror; not as a victim to be pitied

4. (:76-77) REPLENISH STRENGTH FROM GOD'S GRACE = HIS LOVINGKINDNESS AND COMPASSION

A. (:76) Encouragement from God's Lovingkindness

"*O may Your lovingkindness comfort me, According to Your word to Your servant*."

יְהִי־נָא חַסְדְּךָ לְנַחֲמֵנִי כְּאִמְרָתְךָ לְעַבְדֶּךָ׃

B. (:77) Encouragement from God's Compassion

"*May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight*."

יְבֹאוּנִי רַחֲמֶיךָ וְאֶחְיֶה כִּי־תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי׃

This is the **core** of this octave in Psalm 119:73-80; everything flows outward from this rock solid foundation

Our ultimate strength cannot be found in men or in any human relationship; we must turn to the Lord to renew our strength and get the grace to persevere in our situation; the Lord is always tender-hearted in dealing with us

The flame of hope is fueled by **delighting in God's Word**

Zemek: hope arises out of hurt; **Lam. 3:31-32 . . .**
Both a fatherly type of consolation (:76) and a motherly type of compassion (:77)

The God who is Righteous and Faithful in Afflicting me is also Loving and Compassionate to Comfort and Deliver me
Scroggie: the afflicter . . . is the comforter

Paradox: The one who afflicts is the same one who comforts and delivers; and He remains righteous and faithful throughout

Zemek: Introverted pattern; in 76 and 77 not only do the leading jussives correspond, but also the near synonyms for the grace of God mirror one another. Structure moves outwardly from this core.

Example of the Apostle Paul – Viewed himself as a <u>forgiven sinner sustained by the grace of God</u> – Not some self righteous, self sufficient, self made man; **1 Tim. 1:12-17 –** viewed himself as the foremost of all sinners
2 Cor. 1: 3-7 – sharing God's comfort with others

5. (:78) RESORT TO MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD WHEN ATTACKED BY THE PROUD (instead of taking vengeance)

A. Subverting the Subverters – Word of Contrast

"*May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie*;"

יֵבֹשׁוּ זֵדִים כִּי־שֶׁקֶר עִוְּתוּנִי

Note of imprecation – OT flavor

The arrogant have their day; but the day of the Lord is coming

"*subvert*" = to overturn or overthrow from the foundation; involves an undermining of allegiance; Be bent, crooked; deprive of justice
Lam. 3:35-36 "*To deprive a man of justice In the presence of the Most High, To defraud a man in his lawsuit -- Of these things the Lord does not approve*."

With slander, false testimony – Lord will bring out the truth eventually

Zemek: because they made me crooked (i.e. twisted me) with a lie; cf. **Lam. 3:36** with same verb: "*To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not*."
Finally, this mature disciple emphatically contrasts their profane perversion with his pure preoccupation.

B. Meditating on God's Word

"*But I shall meditate on Your precepts*."

אֲנִי אָשִׂיחַ בְּפִקּוּדֶיךָ׃

Does not do any good to be consumed with the negative slander of others towards us; nothing we can do to set the record straight or bring about justice; only causes bitterness; we need to be characterized by the love of Christ
Phil. 4:8 "*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things*."

Example of the Apostle Paul – Viewed himself as a protected species – Not some endangered species that needs to take personal vengeance – **1 Tim. 4:11-16** – understood the challenges of ministry; exhorting Timothy here; people will put you down in many ways -- maybe just because you are young; maybe because they do not want to show respect for God's servant; you need to persevere in aggressively using your spiritual gift – don't allow yourself to be silenced – meditate on God's Word; persevere in your ministry; **2 Cor**. – Paul stood his ground against those who attacked his ministry; called on them to repent lest he come and use the rod of authority against them

6. (:79) RENEW FELLOWSHIP WITH THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD

A. Fear of God Draws Believers Together in Fellowship

"*May those who fear You turn to me*,"

יָשׁוּבוּ לִי יְרֵאֶיךָ

Renewing intimate fellowship with the godly; implies that there may be some who have proved to be "fair weather" friends and have avoided him for some reason in his affliction; he has become isolated – and that has intensified his suffering – just when he most needed their support and encouragement

There is an estrangement from the world that we should expect – Christ warned us that the world would hate us even as it hated Him; this type of rejection and opposition and even persecution can be very harsh; but it is even harder to bear the shunning of brothers and sisters who wrongly treat you as if you are in some type of sin and under God's judgment; as if you were some type of leper – again, think of the experience of Job and the condemning counsel even from his closest friends; think of the experience of David – spoke months ago about caveman theology – how lonely he felt as he hid out in caves despite God's promise of a royal kingdom

B. Knowledge of God's Word Should Increase Fellowship

"*Even those who know Your testimonies*."

(וְיֵדְעוּ) [וְיֹדְעֵי] עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃

Sometimes people only have superficial knowledge of God's Word – not the type of discernment that drives them to take a stand for justice and righteousness

Example of the Apostle Paul – Viewed himself as a brother in the family of God with corresponding support and encouragement – Not some isolated, lonely, separated weirdo; but reconciliation of relationships requires godly repentance – **2 Cor. 7:2-7**

7. (:80) REMAIN BLAMELESS IN HEART AND SHAMELESS IN LIFE

A. Blameless in Heart –Holiness of Life

"*May my heart be blameless in Your statutes*,"

יְהִי־לִבִּי תָמִים בְּחֻקֶּיךָ

Zemek: his focus is not merely on external compliance but especially on internal conformity. He well knew that integrity of life-style only comes from integrity of heart.

Cf. **Sermon on the Mount** – longs for that type of internal righteousness; not smug or self righteous; knows that the heart is deceitfully wicked; sees himself as God sees him; increasingly aware of the gap between a holy God and his own sin; yet hungry for holiness

B. Shameless in Life – Integrity of Testimony

"*So that I will not be ashamed*."

לְמַעַן לֹא אֵבוֹשׁ׃

Not ashamed before God – **1 John 2:28** "*Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*."

Not ashamed before man – as if God has let him down and not come through for him

A major theme in the Psalms – **Psalm 25:1-3** *"Do not let my enemies exult over me"*

Matthew Henry: David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with, and subject to, the power of it; that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy … shame is the portion of hypocrites.

Example of the Apostle Paul – Viewed himself as a saint pursuing holiness and integrity – Not some embarrassed failure who can't escape the bondage of sin and the corruption of this world **Titus 2:11-14**

CONCLUSION:

As we wait for God's Word …

Don't want to be **disappointed** either – cf. string of commercials about the fine print that some banks try to confuse you with – Ally Bank

- little girl riding a bike – but restricted to a small rectangle
- little girl being give a real pony vs a toy pony

- little boy being allowed to play with a big truck vs a paper truck

God is not out to trick us – offer us something that looks good and then pull a bait and switch

1) (:73) REST IN GOD'S WISDOM BECAUSE HE DESIGNED ME FOR A PURPOSE
View yourself as a trophy of God's grace and glory – Not some cosmic mistake

2) (:74) RAISE THE JOY LEVEL OF OTHER BELIEVERS WHO WITNESS MY FAITHFUL PERSEVERANCE
View yourself as a blessing to others – Not some disconnected Lone Ranger

3) (:75) RECEIVE HARDSHIP FROM THE HAND OF A RIGHTEOUS GOD
View yourself as a victorious conqueror – Not some pitiful victim

4) (:76-77) REPLENISH STRENGTH FROM GOD'S GRACE
View yourself as a forgiven sinner sustained by the grace of God – Not some self righteous, self sufficient, self made man

5) (:78) RESORT TO MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD WHEN ATTACKED BY THE PROUD
View yourself as a protected species – Not some endangered species that needs to take personal vengeance

6) (:79) RENEW FELLOWSHIP WITH THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD
View yourself as a brother in the family of God with corresponding support and encouragement – Not some isolated, lonely, separated weirdo

7) (:80) REMAIN BLAMELESS IN HEART AND SHAMELESS IN LIFE
View yourself as a saint pursuing holiness and integrity – Not some embarrassed failure who can't escape the bondage of sin and the corruption of this world

That is how you **persevere** in waiting for God's Word to come to fulfillment in your life.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we trust the Potter to complete his work of shaping and molding us through trials and adversity? Does our Creator really know what is best for us?

2) Are other believers encouraged when they see us? Do we have a positive, vibrant testimony? Do we have the type of smile and countenance that reflects our patient confidence in our Lord?

3) Do we make time for meditating on God's Word? How are we teaching our children these skills and disciplines? What type of appetite do we have for God's Word?

4) Study the compassion of Christ in the Gospels.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: "One might summarize the unique emphasis of this section as follows: When God delivers His servant who has kept His Word, such deliverance will mightily comfort others of God's saints. There is, of course, a slight reference also to the advantage that comes from having been afflicted (v. 75), with the additional emphasis on the fact that the writer is willing to accept whatever the Lord may send him in this respect."

Barnes: "As I have derived my being from thee, so I am wholly dependent on thee to carry out the purpose for which I have been made. My Maker alone can give me understanding. I have no resources in myself."

Barnes: "he was a friend of God; that he had pleasure in his service and in his commandments; and that he might, therefore, with propriety, appeal to God to interpose in his behalf. This is a proper ground of appeal to God in our prayers, not on the ground of merit or claim, but because we may reasonably suppose that God will be disposed to protect his friends, and to deliver them in the day of trouble."

David Silversides: **Affliction – the Christian's Acknowledgement of God's Grace in Sending it and His Need of God's Grace Under It**
Each section headed by a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet; that particular letter begins each verse of that section; Hebrew letter *Yod* = smallest letter of Hebrew alphabet; "jot" – Matt. 5:18 – Christ's confidence in the trustworthiness of OT Scriptures down to every last letter

1. (:73) The Psalmist's Consistent Dependence Upon God
Acknowledges God as His Maker; made him what he is; our very existence and our constitution we owe to God; only God is self-existent; everything else created by God; we owe everything that we have to God; Delusion that we can rise above our Maker; we cannot save ourselves; dependent on God for understanding of Scriptures as well; left to ourselves we are in darkness; cannot discern truth independently of God; that is why we pray for God to give understanding; the world by wisdom does not know God or understand the Scriptures

2. (:74) Concern to Encourage the Brethren
Christianity is personal but Christians effect one another – sometimes for the worst (provoking to sin) and sometimes to good works; worship together because of family relationship in the Lord; bond of love and common concern to glorify God and follow His Word and increase in faith in the Lord and holiness of life to the glory of God; don't neglect the assembling together; we are meant to benefit from one another; **Ps. 34:2** "*My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad*."
Acts 11:23 – Barnabas affected by sight of new converts; **28:15** "*when Paul saw he thanked God and took courage*" ; **2 Cor. 7:6** "*comforted us by the coming of Titus*"; God comforts His people by means of His people; don't claim to be so spiritual that you don't need other Christians; **Ps. 73:15** Asaph bewildered that the wicked were prospering – but concerned not to speak in a manner that would discourage the people of God

3. (:75) Confessing that God is Right in Affliction
"*judgments*" = God's dealings, actions (rather than His pronouncements or words); we must be always ready to say this even in times of trial and crisis and tragedy; God's Providence is right; ungodly say that either God is not in control or He doesn't care or He doesn't know what He is

doing or He is doing something wrong; we must not keep silent when God is attacked; Man has such a high opinion of himself – thinks that God owes him undisturbed happiness;
Not just dealing in generalities – God was faithful in afflicting him; **Ps. 39:9** David wouldn't complain against God; expressing His faithfulness and love to His child in the affliction; not just compatible with what God has promised His people … but an expression of His faithfulness; whom the Lord loves He chastens; **Ps. 77:7-10**;

4. (:76-77) Comfort Longed For
Not a prayer for the removal of the affliction (although nothing wrong with that); but desiring inner comfort and strength in his soul so that he will not sink or sin under affliction; God's covenanted mercies; promised mercies; praying for God to do what He has promised to do for His people = strength in the midst of trials; grace to help in the time of need; people watch us in affliction – does that Christianity really work? What is a Christian like when the going gets rough? Our sympathetic high priest (**Heb 4:16**); they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength

5. (:78-80) Contrast that Becomes Clear
Only two kinds of people in this world; incompatible **Prov 29:27**; the proud were against him, dealing perversely with him without a cause; proud men are offended by God's Word; their desires will be put to shame; still need to pray for the conversion of the proud;
(:79) – Fellowship as a means of strengthening; some of them had been a disappointment; he wants renewed fellowship; seek a holy life more than a quiet life;

Conclusion: not a trouble-free picture of the Christian life; involves the taking up of the cross and following Christ; the gospel is offensive to the pride of men; **Heb. 11:24** – *choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God*

Zemek: The man of God echoes four concentric circles of prayer requests based upon his chronic experience with affliction:
1A. (vv. 73, 80) The largest circle encompasses the man of God's **desire for deep maturity**.
1B. (v. 73) His desire leads him to pray for more discernment of the Word of God.
2B. (v. 80) His desire leads him to pray for total conformity to the Word of God
2A. (vv. 74, 79) The second largest circle encompasses the man of God's **concern for other believers.**
1B. (v. 74) He prays to be a visual testimony to other believers.
2B. (v. 79) He prays to be a vocal testimony to other believers.
3A. (vv. 75, 78) The third largest circle encompasses the man of God's **exposure to trials.**
1B. (v. 75) The man of God's acknowledgement of the Divine Source of trials.
2B. (v. 78) The man of God's petition concerning the human instruments of trials.
4A. (vv. 76, 77) The innermost circle encompasses the man of God's **deepest needs.**
1B. (:76) His need for Divine consolation.
2B. (:77) His need for Divine compassion.
Deliverance has not yet been experienced; however, the avalanche of prayer requests, preponderantly jussives, would indicate that this afflicted child of God soon anticipated abundant manifestations of God's grace. His dependency without denial serves as a model of biblical response in reference to the many scriptural exhortations given to those who suffer persecution.

Isaac Barrow: We should (be sure) all of us embrace a rich and plentiful estate; when, as God knows, that would make us slothful and luxurious, swell us with pride and haughty thoughts, encumber us with anxious cares and expose us to dangerous temptations; would render us forgetful

of ourselves and neglectful of him. Therefore he wisely disposeth poverty unto us; poverty, the mother of sobriety, the nurse of industry, the mistress of wisdom; which will make us understand ourselves and our dependence on him, and force us to have recourse unto his help. And is there not reason we should be thankful for the means by which we are delivered from those desperate mischiefs, and obtain these excellent advantages?

We should all (certainly) choose the favour and applause of man; but this God also knows, would corrupt our minds with vain conceit, would intoxicate our fancies with spurious pleasure, would tempt us to ascribe immoderately to ourselves, and sacrilegiously to deprive God of his due honour. Therefore he advisedly suffers us to incur the disgrace and displeasure, the hatred and contempt of men; that so we may place our glory only in the hopes of his favour, and may pursue more earnestly the purer delights of a good conscience. And doth not this part of divine providence highly merit our thanks?

We would all climb into high places, not considering the precipices on which they stand, nor the vertiginousness of our own brains; but God keeps us safe in the humble valleys, allotting to us employments which we are more capable to manage.

We should perhaps insolently abuse power, were it committed to us; we should employ great parts on unwieldy projects, as many do, to the disturbance of others, and their own ruin; vast knowledge would cause us to overvalue ourselves and contemn others; enjoying continual health, we should not perceive the benefit thereof, nor be mindful of him that gave it. A suitable mediocrity therefore of these things the divine goodness allotteth unto us, that we may neither starve for want, nor surfeit with plenty.

In fine, the advantages arising from afflictions are so many, and so great, that it were easy to demonstrate that we have great reason, not only to be contented with, but to rejoice in, and to be very thankful for, all the crosses and vexations we meet with; to receive them cheerfully at God's hand, as the medicines of our soul, and the condiments of our fortune; as the arguments of his goodwill, and the instruments of virtue; as solid grounds of hope, and comfortable presages of future joy unto us.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Work of the Divine Potter**

Introduction: Yad in Hebrew means hand. And I think there's no accident that the writer here refers immediately after this letter in the very first verse of this stanza, **verse 73**, he refers to the hands of God. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. And so I think he's referring here to the work of God's hands. This seems to be the main idea in this stanza here. Image of potter and the clay – **Is. 64:8; Ps 100:3; Jer. 18:6** -- You know, we are in this wheel of life, and the wheel's constantly turning. We constantly have this routine of life, and God is using the wheel of life to help shape us, and the pressure of His hands, or the circumstances that we're in, the things that we face. We are the clay that is on the wheel, and you know what? The clay has one job to do, and that is to yield to the potter. **Ephes. 2:10; 2 Cor. 4:7**

I. The Process of the Divine Potter

What are some of the things that the divine potter uses to shape us?

A. Divine Punishment – **vs. 75**

Hab. 1:5-6; Jer. 25:9 -- His ultimate purpose in disciplining his people was to bring them back into a place of fellowship.

B. Deep Pain – **vs. 75**

Affliction simply is a word for suffering, to be bowed down with suffering.

Suffering can reveal areas of our life where we're not living in accordance to God, and God

will use that to get our attention, prompting us to repent and to seek his face. God will use it to strengthen our faith when we learn to trust God in a greater way in the midst of all of our sufferings.

C. Difficult People – **vs. 78**
They're speaking lies. They're saying things that are not true. They're slandering me.

What was the response of the psalmist here? It motivated him to focus more on God's word.
Prov. 12:16; 20:3; 10:12

D. Divine or Delightful Providences – **vs. 76-77**
Kesed – difficult Hebrew word to translate; wide range of meanings; God's steadfast love; merciful kindness; it could mean loyalty, steadfast love, mercy, goodness. It encompasses all of these things.

Every day God demonstrates his faithful, loyal love to his people with his delightful, loving, providential acts. **Ps. 36:7; 107:43**

II. The Product of the Divine Potter
What are some of the things that we see here that is developing in the life of this man as a result of God's work in his life?

A. Enlightenment – **vs. 73**
He can give us a greater understanding of the word of God.

B. Encouragement – **vs. 74**
When you persevere through suffering, when you continue to trust in God's word, people will take encouragement from your life.

C. Endurance – **vs. 75, 78, 80**
All these verses demonstrate the psalmist's perseverance and determination to maintain his faith in God, even though he's going through a very, very difficult time.

D. Edification – **vs. 79**
1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 15:2

E. Earnestness – **vs. 80**

Conclusion: When Michelangelo was asked how he created his statue of David, he replied, I just removed everything that wasn't David. And God is doing the same thing with us. He's chiseling away at us, but you know what? He's removing everything about us that is not Christ-like, that is not Christ, because he's molding us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what we have to do? We just have to yield. As Clay, our job is to yield to what God is doing.

TEXT: PSALM 119:81-88 KAPH

TITLE: I WAIT FOR THY WORD -- PART 2

BIG IDEA:
PERSEVERANCE IN WAITING FOR GOD'S WORD
IS THE PATHWAY TO ESCAPING LIFE IN THE PITS

I. (:81-84) THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TIMING OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE MAKES PERSEVERANCE PAINFUL

A. 2 Haunting Questions:

1) How Long?
"*How many are the days of Thy servant*?"

2) When?
"*When wilt Thou comfort me*?"

B. 2 Expressions of Pain and Struggle:

1) Inner Pain
"*My soul languishes for Thy salvation*"

2) Outer Pain
"*My eyes fail with longing for Thy word*"

C. 1 Image of Futility:
"*Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke*"

The leather wineskins needed to be supply and pliable in order to accommodate the expanding effects of the fermentation. If hung empty (without being used for its primary purpose) for too long in the smoke-filled tent, the wineskin would start to shrivel up and become wrinkled and worn. The psalmist feared that his life was becoming shriveled and useless as the trial continued to wear him down.

D. 1 Resource to Cling To = The Word of God

E. 1 Desire for Justice
"*When wilt Thou execute judgment on those who persecute me*?"

II. (:85-87) THE DECEITFUL PERSECUTION BY THE UNGODLY MAKES PERSEVERANCE NECESSARY

A. The Ungodly Character of the Persecutors

1. Arrogant

2. Rebellious = "*men who are not in accord with Thy law*"

3. Deceitful = "*They have persecuted me with a lie*"

B. The Malicious Nature of the Persecution

1. "*The arrogant have dug pits for me*"

2. "*They almost destroyed me on earth*"

C. The Faithfulness of God's Word encourages the Psalmist to Faithfully Keep Clinging to Hope

1. Faithfulness of God's Word
"*All Thy commandments are faithful*"

2.. Faithfulness of the psalmist
"*But as for me, I did not forsake Thy precepts*"

III. (:88) THE DELIVERANCE BY A LOVING GOD TO A LIFE OF SPIRITUAL VICTORY MAKES PERSEVERANCE WORTH IT
"*Revive me according to Thy lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Thy mouth*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Think of some tough times where you have asked the Lord the same questions:
"When?"
"How long?"
How has the Lord used Delay in your life to teach you valuable lessons?

2) Have you ever wanted something so bad that you could taste it? Has that ever been your experience in waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promises to you and deliver you?
The eyes can grow very "heavy" and still not expire.

3) Think how the proud and the arrogant build themselves up by digging pits and trying to cast the righteous down. What types of pits have they been digging in our times? Do we ever try to build ourselves up by dragging down others?

4) Because the Lord's lovingkindness is eternal, it never runs out despite being called upon to revive so many saints in so many precarious situations. Meditate on the depths of the Lord's lovingkindness.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "The Psalmist's face through sorrow had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried and tanned. His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution; he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental suffering, and that men would look upon him as an old worn-out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer no purpose."

Spurgeon: "He grew weary with waiting, faint with watching, sick with urgent need. Thus the sincerity and the eagerness of his desires were proved. Nothing else could satisfy him but deliverance wrought out by the hand of God, his inmost nature yearned and pined for salvation from the God of all grace, and he must have it or utterly fail."

Spurgeon: Re verse 88 – "If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life. Lovingkindness itself cannot do us greater service than by making us to have life more abundantly. When we are quickened we are able to bear affliction, to baffle cunning, and to conquer sin. We look to the lovingkindness of God as the source of spiritual revival, and we entreat the Lord to quicken us, not according to our deserts, but after the boundless energy of his grace."

Barnes: "How often in the Psalms do the expressions occur, '*When*,' and '*How long*!' How often in the life of the believer now are similar expressions appropriate! God often seems greatly to try the faith and patience of his people by mere delay; and the strength of faith and the power of religion are shown in such circumstances by persevering faith in the Divine promises, even when there seems to be no evidence that he will interpose."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Left Hanging, But Still Hoping**
Introduction: The dark night of the soul is a spiritual metaphor. It's not talking about a literal dark night. And it describes a period of intense spiritual turmoil or despair and doubt. It's a time when one feels as if they're disconnected from God, which leads to emptiness and meaninglessness. And this was a phrase that was originated in the 16th century by the middle-aged theologian John of the Cross. He wrote about this in a poem that he called The Dark Night. Now in **Psalm 119,** this is the dark night of the psalmist's soul. He has endured long seasons of suffering, waiting for God to intervene on his behalf. He's prayed, he's asked God for his intervention, and yet it seems as if heaven is silent. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, he is at his breaking point. He's waiting on God to respond to his desperate condition. And he feels forsaken, he feels forgotten.

I'm like a bottle in the smoke. What does he mean by that? Well, bottles back in that day were made of animal skins. They were what we call wine skins. And when the wine was no longer inside, they would be left hanging in the rafters of a tent or a house. And they were sometimes forgotten and left there. And they would become dried out. They would become shriveled by the smoke that was normally ascending from the fireplace. If it was in a tent, hanging in the rafters of a tent, and the smoke from the fireplace would go to the top, and this empty wineskin would

be just dried out. Sometimes it would turn blackened and cracked because of the smoke and the heat from the fire. And so this is how he pictures himself. He's saying, you know, I'm like one of those empty wineskins. That's how I feel. And that's in saying, God, I feel like I'm left hanging. I'm empty, I'm unused, I'm burnt out, I'm bottled up. And to the Jews, by the way, wine represented joy. It represented fullness. And so this shriveled wineskin is a picture of uselessness and emptiness. It has no wine, therefore he's saying, I have no joy. Like the wineskin, the psalmist, he needs to be repaired, and he wants to be refilled. And he knows that only God can repair the destruction in his soul. He knows that only God can fill him with joy. And so he keeps hoping in God.

I. The Circumstances he describes

A. His strength is failing – **vs. 81**

The word soul is *naphish*, which is used in the Old Testament really to refer to a person's whole being. This is body, soul, spirit, his emotions, his mental state, his spiritual state. I think it's used that way here, his whole being. I'm coming to the end and I have no strength to go forward.

B. His hopes are fading – vs. 82

My eyes grow weary looking for what you have promised.

The psalmist is waiting, he's looking. He's asking God to fulfill his word, and he asks the question, when will you comfort me?

C. His days are fleeting – **vs. 84**

3 rhetorical questions that the psalmist is wrestling with:

- When are you going to comfort me?
- How many of the days are thy servant?
- When will you execute judgment on them that persecute me?

D. His enemies are frightening

He describes how they targeted him for persecution.

II. The Character he displays

A. Keep waiting on God

B. Keep hanging on to the promises of God

I hope in your word – **vs. 81**.

C. I forsook not your precepts – **vs. 87**

III. The Changes he desires

A. Relief – **vs. 82**

He's asking God again to remove the suffering, to remove the burdens, to fulfill his promise.
1 Pet. 5:7

B. Retribution – **vs. 84**

The psalmist is asking God to judge his persecutors. He desires for God's justice. He desires for God's vindication in a situation. A Christian can pray that God will make things right; but he also must love his enemies and pray for their salvation.

C. Revival – **vs. 88**

Quicken me – a favorite prayer of the psalmist – used 11 times just in Psalm 119

In this dark and smoke-filled stanza, the psalmist has poured out his soul. He has spoken honestly of his affliction, of his failing strength, of his fading hope, of his fleeting days, of his frightening enemies. Yet, though he feels like a bottle hanging in the smoke, he still is hoping.

TEXT: PSALM 119:89-96 LAMEDH

TITLE: FOREVER, O LORD, THY WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN

BIG IDEA:
THE ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO HIS WORD
IS THE PATHWAY TO PRESERVATION

I. (:89-91) THIS IS TRUE IN NATURE

A. Thesis Stated:
"*Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven*"
"*Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations*"

B. Example of the Earth
God established it by His Word -- "*Thou didst establish the earth*"
God upholds it by His Word -- "*It stands*"

C. What is True of the Whole is also True of All the Parts
"*They (= the parts making up "it") stand this day according to Thine ordinances, For all things are Thy servants*"

nothing outside the scope of God's sovereignty and control

II. (:92-95) THIS IS TRUE IN THE LIFE OF THE AFFLICTED BELIEVER

A. Preserved by Delighting in God's Word
"*If Thy law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction*"

B. Preserved by Remembering God's Word
"*I will never forget Thy precepts, For by them Thou hast revived me*"

C. Preserved by Seeking God's Word
"*I am Thine, save me For I have sought Thy precepts*"

D. Preserved by Diligent Study -- despite the plots of the wicked
"*The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Thy testimonies*"

III. (:96) CONTRAST: NO SUCH FAITHFULNESS POSSIBLE FOR FINITE, SINFUL MAN

A. Because No Sinless Perfection
"*I have seen a limit to all perfection*"

B. Because God's Law is All-Encompassing
"*Thy commandment is exceedingly broad*"

Attitudes as well as Actions
Character as well as Obedience

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How good are we at keeping our promises to our children? How "*settled*" is our word or is it very changeable?

2) Think of how evolutionists base their theories on the old age of the earth on the principle of Uniformitarianism = all things have continued at the same rate of decay throughout all time. Now God turns around this argument of the unchanging laws of Nature and uses it to prove His faithfulness to His word!

3) How can we ensure that God's Word remains "*our delight*" when we are in the midst of trials? How has the persecuted church been able to do this in times past?

4) How do people try to "*narrow*" the scope of God's commandments so that they do not apply in their special circumstances? Yet God's law is exceedingly "*broad*" and does not allow for any claims of perfection.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "The generations of men change and pass away, but thy promises do not change. They are as applicable to one generation as to another; they meet every generation alike. The people of no one age can lay any exclusive claim to them, or feel that they were made only for them. They are as universal — as much adapted to the new generations that come upon the earth — as the light of the sun, ever-enduring, is; or as the fountains and streams, which flow from age to age."

Barnes: "It is very easy to flatter ourselves that we are perfect, if we make our own standard of character; it is not possible for man to set up a claim to perfection, if he measures himself by the standard of God's word; and all the claims of men to perfection are made simply because they do not properly understand what the law of God requires."

Zemek: "From his lofty vantage point in *Lamed* he feasts the eyes of his heart upon *'the great certainties*.' First, by meditating upon the attributes of the Word of God and the God of the Word, additionally illustrated by the handiwork of God, he feeds upon Divine stabilities in verses 89-91. Then in verses 92-96 he drinks deeply from the vessel of special revelation which brims with its super-natural sufficiency."

Spurgeon: "Nature is governed by fixed laws; the globe keeps its course by the divine command, and displays no erratic movements: the seasons observe their predestined order, the sea obeys the

rule of ebb and flow, and all things else are marshalled in their appointed order. There is an analogy between the word of God and the works of God, and specially in this, that they are both of them constant, fixed, and unchangeable. God's word which established the world is the same as that which he has embodied in the Scriptures…When we see the world keeping its place and all its laws abiding the same, we have herein assurance that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant, and will not allow the faith of his people to be put to shame."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Forever Settled**
Introduction: All the other stars, because of the Earth's rotation, seemed to swirl and move. But the Polaris remained fixed in the same position, almost directly above the North Pole. So for those at the sea or in the wilderness, it served as kind of a reliable reference point. It was a reliable guide in the sky.What a beautiful picture of God's Word. We just read **verse 89**. *Forever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in heaven.* The word settled here means firm, fixed, and movable. It's reliable. God's Word is not orbiting with the culture. It's not wobbling with time, but God's Word is fixed. God's Word does not change. It is a **reliable standard**. God's Word is the fixed point in a shifting world.

I. God's Word Sustains Creation (:89-91)
A. God's Word is forever in heaven (:**89**)
Cf. efforts to try to stamp out the Word of God
- Voltaire
- Docletian

B. God's Word is faithful on earth (:**90-91**)
God, however, does not change. Why? Because he's absolutely perfect. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Gives us great comfort for two reasons:
- His promises will not change
- His love for us will not change

Despite the fallenness of the world, the structure of the cosmos remains because of God's Word. It is sustained by the Word of God.

II. God's Word Sustains Christians (:92-96)
It helps me through my afflictions

A. It delights my soul in dark days (:**92**)

B. It revives our spirit in difficult days (:**93)**

C. It renews our hope in discouraging days **(:94**)

D. It strengthens our heart in dangerous days **(:95**)

E. It supplies our need in deficient days **(:96**)

Conclusion: we need to build our life on the unchanging word of God forever.

TEXT: PSALM 119:97-104 MEM

TITLE: O HOW I LOVE THY LAW!

BIG IDEA:
LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS THE PATHWAY TO SUPERIOR WISDOM

I. (:97) THE KEY TO SUPERIOR WISDOM = LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD
"*O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day*."

Those that love the world, spend their time consumed with the things of the world. Those that love the Word, spend their time meditating on the Word.

cf. the hypocrisy of the Pharisees = superficial approach to obeying the externals but no heart understanding or meditation on the spiritual truths of the law

II. (:98-100) THE MEASURE OF SUPERIOR WISDOM
measured by comparison to other potential sources of wisdom

A. (:98) Superior to the Wisdom of My Enemies
"*Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine*."

enemies present themselves as "know-it-alls";
we have a tremendous advantage over them; don't give them any respect;
the world has a certain shrewdness and street smarts, but not beneficial like godly wisdom;
note sense of personal ownership of God's commands -- they have been internalized

B. (:99) Superior to the Wisdom of My Teachers
"*I have more insight than all my teachers, For Thy testimonies are my meditation*."

teachers deserve respect; but we must recognize the limitations of man's wisdom;
spiritual things must be spiritually discerned
(not saying that we don't need spiritual teachers; making contrast with human wisdom)
Holy Spirit able to impact our hearts with God's truth in a special and very direct way
Requires time and concentration on our part

C. (:100) Superior to the Wisdom of the Elderly
"*I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Thy precepts*."

"Practice doesn't make Perfect; Perfect Practice makes perfect"

Old age doesn't automatically bring wisdom; it is the amount of time that has been spent in obeying God's Word
We are to have great respect for our elders; but the Word of God has even a higher claim on our allegience

III. (:101-102) THE GOAL OF SUPERIOR WISDOM = OBEDIENCE

"*I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Thy word*."
"*I have not turned aside from Thine ordinances, For Thou Thyself hast taught me*."

A. Requires Self-Restraint
resisting of temptation
not being distracted from the straight and narrow

B. Requires Submission to Divine Instruction
there can be no disputing what God teaches us personally
(importance of developing convictions)

(cf. the Goal of Commandments = Love (1 Timothy 5:10)

IV. (:103-104) ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S WISDOM

A. Love for the Truth
"*How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth*!"

B. Hatred of Evil
"*From Thy precepts I get understanding Therefore I hate every false way*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are the dangers of giving so much attention to seeking to understand God's Word? How do we involve ourselves in the exercise of meditation throughout the course of the day?

2) How can we combine increased and superior wisdom with deepened humility and respect for others?

3) Note how the goal of practical obedience is stressed throughout these brief verses. Why is it so difficult for our academic models of education to maintain this emphasis?

4) How would you answer someone who claims by virtue of this strophe that they have no need of pastors and elders teaching them the Word because the Lord teaches them directly and gives them greater insight "*than all my teachers*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zemek: Re vv.98-102 – "The special advantages of this Divine wisdom.
1C. (v.98) It gives prudence in the presence of antagonists.
2C. (v.99) It multiplies insight in the presence of intellectuals.
3C. (v.100) It increases discernment in the presence of the more experienced.
4C. (vv.101-102) It grants direction in the presence of alternatives."

Zemek: Re concept of "*love*" – "Biblically—through the Divine paradigm, covenantal connections, semantical parallelisms, and the word's prevalent situation in contexts of obedience—the spotlight is upon *commitment* to someone or something. In its present context that something is … (*tora*), the 'revelation of the will of God for the life of man.' (Scroggie, Psalms)… The first step towards outward obedience must be internal compliance, and so the documentation of the psalmist's love for the law begins with his thorough internalization of it (v. 97b)."

Kidner: Re Heavenly wisdom – "The New Testament illuminates verses 98-100 by its successive demonstrations that heavenly wisdom begins as a gift '*to babes*', hidden from the worldly-wise. This emerges clearly in the ministry of Christ (Lk. 10:21), decisively at the crucifixion (1 Cor. 2:8), and consistently after that in the reactions of the knowledgeable to the gospel (1 Cor. 1:18ff). On the themes of these verses see also Acts 6:10; 1 John 2:27; but Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:20."

VanGemeren: Re Meditation – "… a form of devotion to the Lord himself, and hence its practice is regularly cultivated ('*all day long*,' vs.97; cf. vv.15, 23, 27, 48, 148). He delights in his understanding of God's law as he reflects on his devotion in relation to the '*enemies*,' '*teachers*,' and '*elders*' (vv.98-100). The comparison is not a prideful assertion of superiority but a form of exultation in the Lord himself, whose wisdom is more direct and superior (cf. v.102; Jer 9:23-24). The word of God together with divine illumination is superior to any human interpretation. However, in setting forth the excellence of divine illumination, the psalmist would not have been so arrogant as to shun instruction from the teachers and elders!"

Morgan: "3 COMPENSATIONS OF GOD'S WORD FOR YOUTHFULNESS
INTROD:
2 Prerequisites for these compensations:
1) Desire for God's Word (:97) -- an active love for it
2) Diligence in God's Word -- my meditation all the day
I. GIVES PRUDENCE IN THE PRESENCE OF ENEMIES
assumes human responsibility of possession of the Word of God
II. GIVES INSIGHT IN THE PRESENCE OF SCHOLARS (DANIEL 1:14,17)
cf. the scribes of Jesus' day
assumes diligence in studying the Word of God
III. GIVES DISCERNMENT IN THE PRESENCE OF EXPERIENCE
'*understand*' = to separate mentally, discern subtle shades of meaning;
assumes obedience to the Word of God as it is understood"

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Wealth of Wisdom from the Word**
Introduction: We have this world that is so filled with knowledge. And yet, it just seems like our age is starved for something more rare than knowledge -- and that is wisdom. God's Wisdom doesn't just inform us, it transforms us. It gives us discernment, it gives us understanding, it gives us direction for every area of our life. And we have access to this wonderful wisdom, and that is through God's word.

I. The Scriptural Way to Wisdom – Vs. 98

Greek philosophy emphasized abstract reasoning, but Hebrew wisdom was practical. It didn't really have to do with what you were thinking in your mind. It was really the choices that you made = skill in living. You are what you are right now because of your choices. Now, wisdom is making the right choices.

Wisdom is not making just the right choice, but wisdom is making the righteous choice. And again, it begins with a fear of the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is a reverential attitude that leads to right actions.

Illustration of life of Karl Marx -- Millions of people follow his philosophy, call him brilliant. But look at the sum total of his life. Look at the choices that he made.
Also: Socrates, Friedrich Nietzsche (God is Dead philosophy), John Paul Sartre, Ernest Hemingway
Human wisdom without God is insufficient to save the soul.

A. Wisdom is created with a genuine love for God's word -- V**s. 97**)

B. Wisdom is cultivated as we meditate in God's Word – **Vs. 97**

C. Wisdom is celebrated as we're nourished by God's word -- **Vs. 103**

II. The Spiritual Wealth of Wisdom

What are the benefits? What kind of wisdom does it give us?

A. It gives us wisdom over our enemies – **Vs. 98**
The word of God reveals their lies, the word of God unmasks their deception, the word of God roots us into God's truth.

B. It gives us wisdom over our educators – **Vs. 99**

C. It gives us wisdom over our elders – **Vs. 100**

D. It gives us wisdom over evil – **Vs. 101**

E. It gives us wisdom over enticement – **Vs. 102**

F. It gives us wisdom over error – **Vs. 104**

TEXT: PSALM 119:105-112 NUN

TITLE: LIGHTED PATHWAYS

BIG IDEA:
THE WORD OF GOD LIGHTS OUR PATHWAYS
ON THE ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION:
THEME OF PSALM 119: "LIGHTED PATHWAYS"
MEDITATIONS ON THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE WORD OF GOD

I. (:105) THESIS: "THY WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH."
Contrast of Light vs. Darkness very important throughout Scriptures
"God is Light"
We lose our bearings when we stray from the Word of God
God's Word provides practical direction in the path of obedience

II. (:106) RIGHTEOUSNESS MOTIVATES OUR COMMITMENT TO OBEDIENCE
"*I have sworn, and I will confirm it, That I will keep Thy righteous ordinances*."

A. Level of our Commitment -- How committed are you to obedience?
1. "*I have sworn*"
2. "*I will confirm it*"
3. "*I will keep*"

B. Value of God's Commands -- How righteous are they?

III. (:107-110) AFFLICTION THREATENS OUR PESEVERANCE IN OBEDIENCE
A. Intensity of the Affliction

1. Its Depth -- "*I am exceedingly afflicted*"

2. Its Duration -- "*My life is continually in my hand*"

3. Its Danger -- "*The wicked have laid a snare for me*"

B. Passion for God's Word

1. Its Power to Revive -- "*Revive me, O Lord, according to Thy word*"

2. Its Helpfulness to Instruct -- "*teach me Thine ordinances*"

C. Attitude of Thankfulness -- "*O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord*"

D. Perseverance in Obedience

1. Remaining focused -- "*Yet I do not forget Thy law*"

2. Remaining on track -- "*Yet I have not gone astray from Thy precepts*"

IV. (:111-112) THE ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE ROAD TO ETERNITY

A. Righteousness is Our Eternal Joy

"*I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart*"

B. Righteousness is Our Eternal Pursuit

"*I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes Forever, even to the end*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Compare how difficult it is to stumble around in the dark in our house which is so familiar to us. How utterly foolish it would be to venture out into the unknown without the benefit of the light the Lord freely offers!

2) Are we committed to keeping God's Word even when it pains us? Are we willing to be afflicted for the sake of obedience to our biblical convictions?

3) What are some of the ways the Wicked One or his cronies (the wicked) have tried to trip you up along your path? What alerted you to the presence of traps and pitfalls? How were you able to protect yourself?

4) Have we thought of God's testimonies as our permanent, precious inheritance?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ryrie: "The psalmist vows to follow God's Word always."

Leupold: "The psalmist vows fidelity to the enlightening Word of God, under all circumstances, let the cost be what it will (vv.105-112)…

(Re vs. 107) The thought expressed in this verse may mean that men have made him suffer for being so faithful in the doing of God's will. But he has recourse to prayer that God might revive him, that is, increase his physical strength to bear what must be borne. Nor will he allow himself to be unduly depressed by that which weighs heavily upon him. He can tender praises for the many good things that he still enjoys. In great humility he feels that his poor praises are not acceptable to God unless God condescends to receive them. He would praise Him especially for the help that His Word afforded. Almost in the same breath, as he praises God for what that Word has done for him, he prays that he may learn still more of that priceless treasure."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 105 – "We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving word, lest we slip with our feet. Each man should use the word of God personally, practically, and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. Having no fixed lamps in eastern towns, in old time each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of ordure which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark world: we should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if the Scripture, like a blazing flambeau—did not reveal it. One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life; it is not sent to astound us with its brilliance, but to guide us by its instruction. It is true the head needs illumination, but even more the feet need direction, else head and feet may both fall into a ditch. Happy is the man who personally appropriates God's word, and practically uses it as his comfort and counsellor, -- a lamp to his own feet. '*And a light unto my path*.' It is a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times. David guided his own steps by it, and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams. He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 112 – "He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending. He made it his end to keep the law unto the end, and that without end. He had by prayer, and meditation, and resolution made his whole being lean towards God's commands; or as we should say in other words—the grace of God had inclined him to incline his heart in a sanctified direction. Many are inclined to preach, but the Psalmist was inclined to practise; many are inclined to perform ceremonies, but he was inclined to perform statutes; many are inclined to obey occasionally, but David would obey always; and, alas, many are inclined for temporary religion, but this godly man was bound for eternity, he would perform the statutes of his Lord and King even unto the end."

Zemek: Re vv.111-112 – "A positive setting of contentment is the basis for this resolution to obedience.

1B. (v.111) The man of God's contentment is a motivation reality.
  1C. (v.111a) He is content because the Word of God is his eternal inheritance.
  2C. (v.111b) He is content because theWord of God is his present satisfaction.
2B. (v.112) The man of God's contentment leads him to a faithful practice of God's Word…

Strong attestations of contentment (v.111) followed by a comprehensive affirmation of continuance (v.112) draw the psalmist's meditations in Nun to a close. One cannot properly assess the impact of the disciple's attestations in verse 111 without being aware of how important the land promises have always been to Israelites. The word chosen for this particular attestation is …(*nhl*), a term which bears covenantal freight. It is especially associated with the Lord's inalienable promise to give the '*Holy Land*' to Israel (cf., e.g., Exod 32:13). Consequently, when the man of god says, 'I have taken possession of Your testimonies forever' (vs. 111a), he was magnifying his timeless inheritance in the law beyond any territorial possession of the land. He was not depreciating the land promise but was elevating his law

possession, especially since it appears that the persecuted child of God was very likely in exile. Therefore, just as he had previously confessed that the Lord Himself was his …(hlq; v. 57), 'portion,' so he now testifies that God's word was his everlasting inheritance, i.e. …(nhl; v. 111a).

G. Campbell Morgan: "… the psalmist is thinking of hemself as a pilgrim passing through a world of darkness in which it would be easy for him to miss his way. On such a pilgrimage the revealed will of his God is a lamp and a light. Thus he recognizes at once the sacredness of the actual commandment, and the value of the spiritual illumination which shines through it."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Lighting Our Path**
Introduction: Life is full of twists and turns and unexpected detours, and there are times when we're confused, and we need light. And this is what this stanza of Psalm 119 is all about. It's how God's word gives us light. Whenever you reach a crossroads, whenever you're not sure about which way to go, the good news is God gives you his word as a source of light that will help you in making those decisions.

Big Idea: **Seven powerful ways in which God's Word gives us light for whatever path that we travel.**

I. God's Word gives light for a dark path – Vs. 105
A lot of times God's word doesn't give us the whole panorama of our path or the life that we have or what God's gonna do in front of us, but what God wants us to do is he wants us to trust him for the next step that we're gonna take. And God's word gives us enough light to show us the next step for the journey. It doesn't show us the entire journey, but just enough light for the next step.

II. God's Word gives light for a determined path – Vs. 106
It's one thing to desire to live for God, but it's another thing to have the direction to live for God. Desire without direction can get you lost.

III. God's word gives light for a difficult path – Vs. 107
We go through trials. Even on an illuminated path, affliction will come to us. It does help us to persevere through affliction.

IV. God's Word gives light for a devoted path – Vs. 108
Worship has to be done in spirit and according to the truth. It has to be spirit-led and word-fed. God's word is essential for guiding us in what is acceptable and true worship before God.

V. God's word gives light for a dangerous path – Vs. 109
My life is in constant danger, we could say, or I'm always at risk. It's as if I'm holding my own life in my hand through the things that I do. I wonder if he's making an allusion to holding that lamp in his hand. I am fragile and endangered, but I do not drop the word that sustains it. Just as I hold my soul, I hold your word as a lamp to guide me and preserve me. God's word will get us through the dangerous times that we might face in our life.

VI. God's word gives light for a descendant's path – Vs 111

The word heritage here refers to something that is passed down to the next generation, something you leave to your descendants, to those that follow you. In the Old Testament, a heritage sometimes would be a portion of land that God gave to Israel. They would pass that land down to their descendants. But here, the psalmist is referring to God's word as his inheritance, the most treasured possession that anyone could have. It was a heritage that was passed down, a heritage that was passed down to him, handed down to him by his forefathers. It became for him a source of great rejoicing.

VII. God's Word is light for a disciplined path – Vs. 112

The word inclined here has the idea of a deliberate act, turning or bending or stretching. And it involves effort. The psalmist is bending his heart to obedience to God. He resolves to follow God's statutes all the way to the finish line. This word invokes images of a runner leaning forward in the final stretch, finishing the race well. And so the believer, we must lean in our heart towards obedience, refusing to veer off the path I want to finish well.

How do we discipline our heart to finish well?

1) train your heart daily.
2) resist spiritual laziness.
3) live with the end in view.
4) build habits that shape desire.

TEXT: PSALM 119:113-120 SAMEKH

TITLE: HAVING REGARD FOR GOD'S WORD

BIG IDEA:
RESPECT FOR GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY
TO RESPECTING GOD'S JUDGMENTS

I. (:113-117) 5 WAYS TO SHOW RESPECT (LOYALTY) FOR GOD'S WORD

A. (:113) Whole-Hearted Commitment to God's Word
this must be the starting point

1. Rejection of the Path of Wavering Commitment
"*I hate those who are double-minded*"

NIV: "I hate those who are undecided whether or not to obey you"

James 1:6 "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways"

2. Passion for God's Word
"*But I love Thy law*"
gives direction, stability, hope, perseverance, etc.

B. (:114) Patiently Relying on God's Word for Ultimate Victory

1. Resting in God's Protection from the Attacks of the Enemy

a. Making God your Hiding Place -- so attacks can't reach you
look at how much time King David spent in hiding

b. Making God your shield to fend off attacks when the enemy finds you

2. Never Losing Confidence in Ultimate Victory thru the Word
"*I wait for Thy word*" -- especially God's promises

C. (:115) Rejecting the Influence of Bad Companions -- Motivated by a desire to Obey God's Word
"*Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God*"

Your Company Impacts Your Conduct

D. (:116) Counting On God's Word to Never Let You Down
"*Sustain me according to Thy word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope*."

1. Sustain You Thru Trials

2. Bring all of Your Biblically-Based Hopes to Fruition

E. (:117) Clinging to God for Safety and Protection -- with the Goal of Respecting God's Word Forever
"*Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Thy statutes continually*."

II. (:118-120) 2 WAYS TO SHOW RESPECT FOR GOD'S JUDGMENTS

A. (:118-119) Appreciate God's Judgment of the Wicked

1. Character of the Wicked

a. Wicked

b. Disobedient -- "*who wander from Thy statutes*"

c. Deceitful and Futile -- "*their deceitfulness is useless*"

2. Severity of the Judgment

a. Rejected them

b. Removed them like dross (fairly easy for God to perform this judgment)

3. Impact on my Love for God's Standards
"*Therefore I love Thy testimonies*"

B. (:120) Fear God's Judgment Against Yourself
"*My flesh trembles for fear of Thee, And I am afraid of Thy judgments*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How solid and unwavering is our commitment to obey God's Word? Where do we find ourselves being *double-minded*?

2) When it seems like God is taking a long time to fulfill His promises, do we wait patiently, drawing *sustenance* from His Word?

3) Do we have the type of *love* and *loyalty* for God's commands that is pictured here?

4) Do we have a healthy respect for God's judgments – both upon the wicked in the sense of condemnation and upon ourselves in the form of discipline and correction?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: "This section appears to be a prayer for strength to remain loyal to the Word in the face of much opposition. In the Hebrew certain little-used words appear because the initial letter of each verse is one that is among those letters of the Hebrew alphabet that are least used."

VanGemeren: "The ways of the righteous and the wicked are clearly divergent. The wicked are '*double-minded*' (a Hebrew *hapax legomenon*, v.113), '*evildoers*' (v.115; cf.6:8); Isa 1:4), disobedient to God's word ('*stray from your decrees*,' v.118; cf. vv.10,21), and deceptive ('*deceitfulness*,' vs.118). The psalmist dissociates himself completely from them. The language of dissociation itself is a form of commitment to God. He '*hates*' the '*double-minded*' but '*loves*' the law of the Lord (v.113). He calls on the evildoers to stay away from him (cf. 6:8; 139:19) so that he may draw closer to the observance of God's commands (v.115)."

Yates: "The Inspiration of Loyalty. '*Thou art my hiding place and my shield.*' The sharp contrast drawn between faithless men and the psalmist emphasizes the loyalty of the latter. This loyalty gives him a sense of safety and the inspiration to face the future."

Murphy: "The word of God is a law from which it is hateful to swerve. *Those who swerve* from the path of rectitude, are the double-minded, who try to serve both God and mammon. The love of the law implies the hatred of its transgression….
The punishment of the wicked and the deliverance of the oppressed present the righteousness of God in the most terrible majesty."

G. Campbell Morgan: "All through this division of the psalm it is evident that the singer is contemplating the course and curse of wickedness. He first declares his hatred for such as are of a double mind, that is, those who are not loyal, the undecided, such as lack singleness of purpose. Later, he calls upon all evildoers to depart from him. Finally, he declares that God sets at naught and causes to cease all such evil men. In the presence of the double-minded he affirms his own loyalty to the law, and his consequent confidence in God. He delcares that his reason for calling upon evil-doers to leave him is that he may keep the commandments of God. In view of God's judgments of the wicked, he is filled with trembling. This is the utterance of a quick and sensitive conscience."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Cure for the Double-Minded**
Introduction: When the heart is divided, pulled in one direction and then in the other, perhaps by faith and then the other direction by doubt, or maybe it's drawn to God and then to the world, what happens is a person becomes spiritually paralyzed, unable to really make any progress in their Christian life. Look at verse 113. I hate vain thoughts. The word for thoughts there is a word, siep, that literally means double-minded. The word seems to describe those who their religious commitment is not total. They don't have pure hearts. They really have a mind for God and then a mind also for the world. This stanza begins and ends with the psalmist declaring his love for God's word.

Big Idea: **Three things that should prevent us from being double-minded. 3 Images**

I. God is our Protection – v. 113-115
Notice three actions we see from the psalmist here.

A. Hiding – **vs. 114**
talking about a secret place. It's talking about a shelter, a place of protection and refuge. It kind of conveys intimacy. It conveys safety. The same word is used in **Psalm 32:7**. Cf. **1 Sam. 22:1-2; Ps. 57:1; Is. 32:2; Col. 3:3**
No better place to hide than in Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of that messianic image we hide in him. He is the rock that we hide in. (cf. *Rock of ages cleft for me . . .*)

B. Hoping – **vs. 114**
I hope in thy word. And the word here has the idea of a confident expectation. This is not wishful thinking. He's absolutely confident in the promises of God's word.

C. Heeding – **vs 115**
He demonstrates the opposite of being double-minded. It's a picture of decisive loyalty to God, of spiritual commitment. The psalmist here acts decisively. He's not halting between two opinions. He's choosing absolute total commitment to God.

II. God is Our Pillar – v. 116-117
A. God Supports Us – **vs. 116**
This Hebrew letter was a picture of a **pillar**. Throughout scripture, God is portrayed as a pillar. Remember, he's a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night for the Israelites as they journey through the wilderness. In **1 Timothy 3:15**, the church is called the pillar and ground of the truth. You might want to write in your margin, **Isaiah 41:10**, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. To say that God is our pillar means God is the source of our strength. He is our stability. He's the structure that holds us, that keeps us from collapsing.

B. God Strengthens us – **vs. 117**
It's a picture of us being so weak that we need something to lean upon. And that person that we lean upon again is the Lord. Security of the believer -- the preservation of the believer, but there's also the perseverance of the believer.

III. God is Our Purifier – vs. 118-120
This talks about God's wrath. You really don't understand God's love until you first understand the seriousness of God's wrath, again, that is based upon his holiness.

A. Trodden Down – **vs. 118**
God trods down those who deviate form his statutes. It evokes scenes of destruction. where God's enemies are not merely ignored, but they're actively judged, they're crushed by God's righteous feet.

B. Throwing away – **vs. 119**

God is the refiner and the wicked are not just rejected, they are removed as part of this purification process. God actively removes evil. His wrath is not passive, but it's deliberate.

What should our response be to God's righteous judgment?
This should cause us to love God's word all the more. Love for God's word is deepened as we see his power in action.

C. Trembling – **vs. 120**
Reverential fear -- a kind of holy trembling, a deep awareness of God's greatness and our unworthiness. By seeing the holiness and majesty of God through the scripture, by meditating on God's word, he trembled.

Conclusion: The cure for the double-minded is not found in great willpower. It's not found in external discipline. It is found in a renewed heart, one that burns for love for God's word, bows with reverence before God's holiness. And we love him because he's our hiding place, because he's our pillar. We fear him because he's our purifier. He is our judge. This is the kind of love and fear that doesn't pull us in opposite directions. It anchors us. It causes us to be completely devoted to who God is.

TEXT: PSALM 119:121-128 AYIN

TITLE: IT IS TIME FOR THE LORD TO ACT (THE ACTS OF THE LORD)

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S INTERVENTION IS THE PATHWAY TO DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION

I. (:121) WHY WOULD GOD WANT TO INTERVENE?

A. Integrity of My Life

"*I have done justice and righteousness*" – "I've been perfectly fair" (NIV)

B. Injustice of My Oppression

"*Do not leave me to my oppressors*" – God hates injustice and oppression

C. Inability to Deliver Myself

II. (:122) HOW COULD GOD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

A. Promote What's Good for Me

"*Be surety for Thy servant for good*"

B. Protect Me from What's Harmful

"*Do not let the arrogant oppress me*"

III. (:123-126) WHEN WILL GOD TAKE ACTION?

A. (:123) Delay from our Finite Perspective

1. Delay is Painful

"*My eyes fail with longing for Thy salvation*"

2. Delay Should not Cause Us to Question God's Righteousness

"*And for Thy righteous word*"

B. (:124-125) Discernment Needed to Understand God's Perspective

"*Teach me*"
"*Give me understanding*"

C. (:126) Decisiveness In Accordance with God's Timetable and God's Justice

"*It is time for the Lord to act. For they have broken Thy law*."

IV. (:127-128) WHAT IS THE RESPONSE TO ANTICIPATION OF GOD'S INTERVENTION?

A. Love for God's Commandments

"*Therefore I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold*."

"*Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything*"

B. Hatred for "*every false way*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we conduct ourselves as devoted and loyal "*servants*" of our Lord God? Do we have the expectation that the Master will take up for the cause of His servant?

2) Do we have a conscience that evaluates our own ethical performance as *having "done justice and righteousness*"? Consider how more remarkable this testimony is from the mouth of one who had the power to exploit others if he had been so inclined.

3) When is it "*time for the Lord to act*" in our situation?

4) Does our value system truly place God's commandments at the top of the heap?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "The Time of Intervention. '*It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*' After declaring that he has diligently followed the right, the psalmist appeals for action on God's part. So completely have his oppressors disregarded God's law that only divine judgment is left for them.

Leupold: "God's faithful servant commits his cause into God's hands and clings steadfastly to the Word of his God. The term '*servant*' appears three times, and though it is obviously another way of saying '*I*', it breathes a fine humility—the writer knows his place over against God."

Spurgeon: "'*I have done judgment and justice.*' This was a great thing for an Eastern ruler to say at any time, for these despots mostly cared more for gain than justice. Some of them altogether neglected their duty, and would not even do judgment at all, preferring their pleasures to their duties; and many more of them sold their judgments to the highest bidders by taking bribes, or regarding the persons of men. Some rulers gave neither judgment nor justice, others gave judgment without justice, but David gave judgment and justice, and saw that his sentences were carried out."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 126 – "Men make void the law of God by denying it to be his law, by promulgating commands and doctrines in opposition to it, by setting up tradition in its place, or by utterly disregarding and scorning the authority of the lawgiver. Then sin becomes fashionable, and a holy walk is regarded as a contemptible puritanism; vice is styled pleasure, and vanity bears the bell. Then the saints sigh for the presence and power of their God: Oh for an hour of the King upon the throne and the rod of iron! Oh for another Pentecost with all its wonders, to reveal the energy of God to gainsayers and make them see that there is a God in

Israel! … The Lord can work either by judgments which hurl down the ramparts of the foe; or by revivals which build up the walls of his own Jerusalem."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Time for God to Work**
Introduction: In God's sovereign timing, delays are not hindrances. He has a holy purpose for all of his delays, and that's something that we need to learn in the Christian life. Key verse: It is time for thee, Lord, to work. It's a spiritual discipline of learning to wait upon the Lord in faith. Waiting time is not wasted time.

Big Idea: **Godly attitudes we need to adopt to help us in waiting on God**

I. Supplication – I have done right – vs. 121
While the psalmist is waiting on the Lord, what is he doing? He's pouring out his heart to God. He's pleading for God to move on his behalf. We suffer at times for doing the right thing.

His supplication revolves around three requests.
- Rescue me – **vs. 121**
- Represent me – **vs. 122**
- Respond to me – **vs. 123**

II. Submission – I am your servant – vs. 124-125
It's a posture of surrender. He asks God for 2 things:
- Mercy
- Wisdom

III. Satisfaction – I love your word – vs. 126-128
Three reasons why he's asking God to work, and they're related to his love for God's word:
- The treatment of God's Word – **vs. 126**
- The treasure of God's Word – **vs. 127**
- The truth of God's Word – **vs. 128**

TEXT: PSALM 119:129-136 PE

TITLE: ESTABLISH MY FOOTSTEPS IN THY WORD

BIG IDEA:
WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO EXPERIENCING THE GIFT OF GOD'S FREEDOM

I. (:129-131) THERE IS NOTHING MORE SATISFYING THAN WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S WORD

A. (:129) God's Word is Wonderful
"*Thy testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul observes them.*"

B. (:130) God's Word is Enlightening
"*The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.*"

C. (:131) God's Word is Thirst Quenching (Satisfying)
"*I opened my mouth wide and panted, For I longed for Thy commandments.*"

II. (:132-135) THERE IS NOTHING MORE LIBERATING THAN EXPERIENCING THE GIFT OF GOD'S FAVOR

A. Requires:

1. (:132) God's Grace
"*Turn to me and be gracious to me, After Thy manner with those who love Thy name.*"

2. (:133a) God's Direction
"*Establish my footsteps in Thy word*"

B. Results in:

1. (:133b) Freedom from the Oppression of Sin
"*And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me*"

2. (:134) Freedom from the Oppression of Man
"*Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Thy precepts.*"

C. (:135) Restatement:
"*Make Thy face shine upon Thy servant, And teach me Thy statutes.*"

III. (:136) THERE IS NOTHING MORE TRAGIC THAN WATCHING PEOPLE REBEL AGAINST GOD'S WORD

"*My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Thy law.*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What things do we consider to be "*wonderful*"? How does the Word of God rank in our assessment?

2) Are we blessed with so much "*light*" in terms of the Lord revealing His Word to us and enlightening us to understand His ways that we have forgotten the despair of those who dwell in darkness? Is our heart moved with compassion to reach out to those who still dwell in darkness and proclaim the Light of the world who is Jesus?

3) Is there any sin that still has "*dominion*" over me? Am I actively seeking God's favor that He would "*Turn to me and be gracious to me*" that He would make His face shine upon me?

4) When was the last time we cried over the lost rebellious condition of others?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "The Wonder of Illumination. '*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*' The greatest wonder is the inner light that gives understanding even to the unlearned man. The psalmist is brokenhearted over those who do not keep God's law."

VanGemeren: Re vv.129-31 – "The psalmist considers the many benefits of God's word. His '*statutes*' … are '*wonderful*' (v.129). Through them he gains insight into the '*wonderful*' acts and perfections of the Lord (cf. v.18; Exod 15:11; Ps 77:11, 14). God's revelation … illumines (cf. vs.105) so that even those not experienced in the realities of life ('*the simple*'; cf. 116:6; Prov 1:4; 14:15) may gain wisdom ('*understanding*'; cf. 19:7). Because of these and other benefits, the psalmist uses the metaphor of '*mouth*,' suggesting that he has a great appetite for the '*commands*' … of the Lord (v.131). He '*pants*' for them as he waits with great anticipation (cf. Job 29:23). Thus he expresses his satisfaction with God's word, which fulfills and refreshes the godly.

Zemek: Re vs. 136 – "The reason for this stirring reaction on the part of the psalmist immediately follows (i.e. vs. 136b). It is not because '*they*' had relentlessly victimized him (although they indeed had). Nor is his deep sorrow grounded upon any other self-oriented standard, but it is an expression of grief over their blatant disregard of his Lord's law. He views these people as having absolutely no concern for God's will and way, and it is for that reason that he is heart-broken. In application, Barnes has argued that 'there is nothing for which we should be excited to deeper emotion in respect to our fellow-men than for the fact that they are violators of the law of God, and exposed to its fearful penalty.'"

Spurgeon: Re vs 134 "'*Deliver me from the oppression of men.*' David had tasted all the bitterness of this great evil. It had made him an exile from his country, and banished him from

the sanctuary of the Lord: therefore he pleads to be saved from it. It is said that oppression makes a wise man mad, and no doubt it has made many a righteous man sinful. Oppression is in itself wicked, and it drives men to wickedness."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Wonderful Word of God**
Introduction: Something that was all inspiring, whether it be seeing snow-capped mountains in person for the first time, or perhaps holding a little newborn baby, and we just have a moment of wonder. And that's what the psalmist, I think, is having here as we approach this new stanza. He's having one of those moments when he has this sense of wonder. And this wonder that he has is not found in some breathtaking scene of beauty, of natural beauty. The wonder that he expresses is over the depth of God's Word, just as the Grand Canyon had that beautiful beauty about it that commanded those men's attention. Even so, Scripture has this beauty about it that demands our respect, our reverence, and our obedience. You never come to the end of the beauty of God's Word.

This wonder of God's word, again, should stir us and also even bring us to tears as we'll see by the time we get to the end of the stanza. It kind of moves us from wonder to weeping.

Big Idea: **Reasons Why God's Word is so Wonderful**

I. Because of the light that it provides

A. The Opening of Scripture – **vs. 129**

1) Literal Opening

For God's Word to have an impact on us, there has to be a literal opening. You have to open up the Bible. Now, when we read the Bible, we obviously need to use our own intellect and we need to use our own empirical way of learning.

2) Spiritual Opening

There has to be the illumination of the Holy Spirit. So there has to be the Spirit that opens our eyes.

3) Personal Opening

And then a personal opening, not only just a literal opening of the Bible and a spiritual opening of our eyes, but then a personal opening. We have to welcome God's Word into our heart. **James 1:21**

B. The Operation of Scripture – **vs. 130**

1) Exposes our sin

The light of Scripture exposes our sin, exposes who we are. The Bible is the only book that when you read it, it reads you back, and it reads you better than you read it. It tells you who you are.

2) Restores the person – John 8:12

When the word works in us, it changes our thinking, it changes our desires, it changes our steps.

C. The Outcome of Scripture – vs. 130

1) Gives grace to the humble

2) Gives guidance for the hungry – **Prov. 2:6**

3) Gives growth for the holy -- **2 Pet. 31:8**

II. Because of the longing it provokes – vs. 131

Pe in the Hebrew means mouth or open mouth. Okay? Now, the reason I bring that up is because the psalmist, I think, is literally using this imagery in this verse. He kind of plays on that in verse number 131, where he says, *I opened my mouth and panted. for I long for thy commandments*. And I think, again, that's a beautiful poetic way of alluding to the Hebrew letter and saying, speaking of pain, this is how I feel about God's word. I open my mouth because I have such a longing and a hunger and a thirst for God's word.

A. <u>He wants divine instruction</u>

B. <u>He wants divine intervention</u>

I've read your word, how you dealt with Abraham, and how you dealt with Moses, and how you dealt with David, and how you dealt with Israel that called upon you. Now do for me what you have done for them.

C. <u>He wants divine illumination – **vs. 135**</u>

III. Because of the lawlessness it prevents – vs. 133-134

A. <u>It will help us to kill inward sin</u>

Order our steps according to the Word. Help me have a disciplined life.

<u>How can God's Word help me to live a disciplined life?</u>

1) By revealing sin
2) By cleansing and purifying
3) By providing a weapon against temptation

B. <u>It will strengthen us to face external enemies</u>

IV. Because of the lament that it produces – vs. 136

He is in wonder over God's word, but then at the same time, he weeps because of God's word, because he sees how God's word is disregarded and ignored and pushed aside. And so he says, rivers of water run down mine eyes. And this is not self-pity, this is a holy sorrow for the dishonor that is shown to God and his word.

A. <u>God is dishonored</u>

B. <u>Sinners are damned because disobedience leads to destruction</u>

TEXT: PSALM 119:137-144 TSADHE

TITLE: AN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

BIG IDEA:
THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE PATHWAY TO THE PERMANENCE OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

(:13) THESIS: GOD IS RIGHTEOUS IN ESSENCE AND IN EXECUTION (WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE DOES)

A. Righteous in Essence = Who He Is
"*Righteous art Thou, O Lord*"

B. Righteous in Execution = What He Does
"*And upright are Thy judgments*."

I. (:138, 140) THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATED IN THE REVELATION OF HIS WORD

A. Created in Righteousness
"*Thou hast commanded Thy testimonies in righteousness*"

B. Carried out in Faithfulness
"*And exceeding faithfulness*"

C. Characterized by Absolute Purity
"*Thy word is very pure*"

D. Causes the Response of Love
"*Therefore Thy servant loves it*"

II. (:139, 141, 143) THE STRUGGLES OF FINITENESS / VICTORY THRU THE WORD

(references to our finiteness interspersed every other verse in contrast to God's everlasting righteousness and perfections)

A. (:139) Struggle with Culture (Zeal for Righteousness vs. Prevailing Dullness) / Victory Thru the Word
"*My zeal has consumed me, Because my adversaries have forgotten Thy words*"

the world will always have a different value system

B. (:141) Struggle with Insignificance / Victory Thru the Word
"*I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Thy precepts*"

C. (:143) Struggle with Trouble / Victory Thru the Word

"*Trouble and anguish have come upon me; Yet Thy commandments are my delight.*"

III. (:142, 144) THE PERMANENCE OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS REFLECTED IN THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS WORD

A. Permanence of God's Righteousness
"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness*"

B. Absolute Truth of God's Word
"*And Thy law is truth*"

C. Permanence of God's Righteous Word
"*Thy testimonies are righteous forever*"

D. Prayer for Understanding
"*Give me understanding that I may live*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why does the issue of "Is God being fair to me in my circumstances?" even come up if we have settled in our heart that God is essentially righteous and only can do righteousness?

2) Are we careful to keep God's Word "*pure*" by not adding to it our own traditions, our own preferences, our own speculations, our own self-imposed legalistic ideas, etc.? Is our passion for God's Word stirred up by appreciating its purity?

3) How can we deal with the potential for frustration – given the great contrast between our zeal and love for God's word and our culture's indifference and even hostility to God's word?

4) Do we struggle with issues of significance? Do we seem "*small and despised*"? How can we see ourselves from God's perspective?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Zemek: "He rehearses his plight by testifying how he feels (cf. v. 139a), how others regard him (cf. v. 141a), and how providence has pressured him (cf. v. 143a). Amidst all of this adversity not only had he not defected (cf. v. 141b), but he also had continued to delight in the written expressions of God's will (cf. v. 143b). If these assertions of human anxiety are interfaced with the ones pertaining to Divine rectitude, verses 137-144 deal with three adverse situations from which the child of God extols the fidelity of God and His Word.

1A. (vv. 137-139) The first adverse situation is that he is surrounded by infidels.

1B. (vv. 137-138) The resources of Divine fidelity.
2B. (v. 139) The reality of human infidelity.

2A. (vv. 140-141) The second adverse situaiton is that he is rejected by others.
1B. (v. 140) His rejection is compensated for by God's refined revelation.
2B. (v. 141) His rejection does not affect his obedience.

3A. (vv. 142-144) The third adverse situation is that he is besieged by pressure and stress.
1B. (v. 142) The weapons enabling him to withstand pressure and stress.
2B. (vv. 143-144) The warfare against pressure and stress."

Spurgeon: "God is always right, and he is always actively right, that is, righteous. This quality is bound up in our very idea of God. We cannot imagine an unrighteous God. '*And upright are thy judgments*.' Here he extols God's word, or recorded judgments, as being right even as their Author is righteous. That which comes from the righteous God is itself righteous."

VanGemeren: "In his anguish the psalmist holds on to faith in the Lord. He is able to help and has confirmed it in his promises (v.140). Though he does not yet see the outcome of his present troubles, the psalmist knows his God to be '*righteous*,' his word to be '*righteous*' and '*faithful*,' and his promises to have been tested over and over again in redemptive history. He knows in whom he has put his trust. Therefore, he does not challenge the Lord's integrity but prays humbly that he may '*understand*' (v. 144; cf. v. 125) so that he may be revived in his inner being ('*live*'; cf. 116)."

Leupold: Re vs. 143 – "In this verse he comes back to the subject so regularly touched on in the psalm, that the writer's position has involved him in '*trouble and anguish*.' But that does not drive him away from the divine commandments but has moved him all the more to find his delight in them. They are a real solace at such times."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Rejoicing in His Righteousness**
Introduction: The psalmist is rejoicing in the fact that God is righteous and his righteousness is put on display. So it's a meditation on this whole thing. Now, again, the Hebrew letter here, *Zadai*, is the letter that begins each verse. And this letter is closely associated with the Hebrew word, *Zadik*, which is righteousness. There's only one letter difference from *Zadai* and *Zadik*, which is the Hebrew word for righteousness. So this letter is has always been associated with righteousness.

In the ancient form, *Zadai* was drawn like a figure, kneeling down, lifting his hands in surrender. That was the pictograph of what this letter was, and then it formed into this, the letter that it is. It evolved into that. But it's a powerful picture because kneeling has always been a symbol of what? Been a symbol of humility and submission. So think about that. The very letter that begins the word *Zadak*, **the righteous one**, was pictured as a person kneeling. And God is teaching us something through the alphabet itself. And the message is this, true righteousness doesn't come from standing tall in pride, it comes from kneeling low in humility before God. That's the whole message.

Big Idea: **Three reasons why he rejoices in the righteousness of God**

I. God's righteousness is described in his character – vs. 137

A. God is righteous – Ps. 11:7; 145:17; Dan. 9:7

Wayne Grudem in his systematic theology defines it like this. God's righteous just means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right. Louis Berkhof said, the righteousness of God is that perfection whereby he maintains himself over against every violation of his holiness and shows in every respect that he is the holy one. And so God is righteous.

B. God's righteousness is everlasting – **vs. 142**

1) Eternal in its source – **Mal. 3:6**

There will never be a time when God will be less than what he is. God is righteous and he will never be less than that. God's righteousness, we could say, is eternal in its source, because it flows from the nature of God. He has never been unrighteous, and he will never be unrighteous.

2) Eternal in its standard – **Is. 51:6**

3) Eternal in its salvation – **Jer. 23:6**

Christ is the eternal provision of righteousness for people that believe in him.

Our standing before God is secure because it's based on an everlasting righteousness.

But also, it assures us that judgment will take place for the sinner. If God's righteousness is everlasting, what does that mean? That sin will never be overlooked. It will never be excused.

II. God's righteousness is displayed in his commandments. Vs. 142, 144

A. Faithful in their promises

Since God is righteous and therefore his word is righteous, that means his word is faithful. God's word is amen. God's word is truth. It's a word of certainty.

B. Faithful in protection

God's commandments keep us from harm. The prohibitions of scripture, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not covet. These are not prison bars, these are guardrails to keep us from sin's destructive consequences in our life.

C. Faithful in preservation

1) God's word is pure – **vs. 140**

God's word is untainted by falsehood. It is perfect, perfectly trustworthy.

2) God's word is true – **vs. 142**

This is an exclusive claim. If God is perfectly righteous, then his word must be the only pure, flawless standard of truth. It's exclusively true.

III. God's Righteousness is demonstrated by His children

Is. 61:3; 10 -- God's desire is to clothe his people in righteousness so that his glory is put on display before all the world.
Mic. 6:8 -- God calls his people to embody his righteousness on a daily basis.

Jesus said it like this, let your light, so what? Shine before men, that men may see your good works, and what? Glorify your Father, which is in heaven above. When the righteousness of God is put on display to the world through God's people, God is always glorified because of that.

Phil. 1:11 -- God's purpose is that His children bear visible fruit of righteousness because when that happens, it magnifies God.

How do God's people put God's righteousness on display?

1) In their zeal for God's glory – **vs. 139; Ps. 69:9**
2) In their love for God's word – **vs. 140**
3) In their remembrance of God's instructions – **vs. 144**

He shows that his true devotion to God is not dependent on status, it's not dependent on comfort, it's not dependent on popular approval. Even if the world forgets him, he will not forget God's word. That is the mark of a child of God that is displaying the righteousness of God.

4) In their delight of God's comfort – **vs. 143**
5) In their hunger for God's truth – **vs. 144**

TEXT: PSALM 119:145-152 QOPH

TITLE: GOD IS ONLY A PRAYER AWAY

BIG IDEA:
FERVENT PRAYER IS THE PATHWAY TO RESTING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF HIS PROMISES

I. (:145-149) FERVENT PRAYER CRIES OUT TO GOD FOR AN ANSWER

A. Fervent Prayer is Whole-Hearted Prayer
"*I cried with all my heart*"

B. Fervent Prayer is Directed to God
"*O Lord*"
"*I cried to Thee*"

C. Fervent Prayer is Answer-Oriented (with the Assumption of God's Ability to Help)
"*answer me*"
"*save me*"
"*cry for help*"
"*I wait for Thy words*"
"*Revive me*"

D. Fervent Prayer has the Goal of Obedience
"*I will observe Thy statutes*"
"*I shall keep Thy testimonies*"

E. Fervent Prayer is Unceasing Prayer (takes every Opportunity to come before God)
"*I rise before dawn*"
"*My eyes anticipate the night watches*"

F. Fervent Prayer is Reinforced by the Promises of God's Word
"*That I may meditate on Thy word*"

G. Fervent Prayer is Rooted in God's Lovingkindness and God's Will
"*according to Thy lovingkindness*"
"*according to Thine ordinances*"

II. (:150-151) RESTING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

A. Enemies are Near
"*Those who follow after wickedness draw near. They are far from Thy law.*"

B. God is Nearer
"*Thou art near, O Lord, And all Thy commandments are truth.*"

III. (:152) RESTING IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD'S PROMISES

"*Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, That Thou hast founded them forever*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How intense and fervent are my prayers? Do I pray with all my heart?

2) Do I take advantage of opportunities to spend time alone with God in prayer and in meditation in the early morning and the evening?

3) Do we view the Lord as closer to us than our enemies and our problems or do we have difficulty looking past our troubles to find the Lord?

4) Do we have the confidence that God's Word and promises will stand the test of time? Is our faith established firmly on the sure foundation of the Rock of Ages?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "This section is given up to memories of prayer. The Psalmist describes the time and the manner of his devotions, and pleads with God for deliverance from his troubles. He who has been with God in the closet will find God with him in the furnace. If we have cried we shall be answered. Delayed answers may drive us to importunity; but we need not fear the ultimate result, since God's promises are not uncertain, but are '*founded forever*.' The whole passage shows us: How he prayed (verse 145). What he prayed for (146). When he prayed (147). How long he prayed (148). What he pleaded (149). What happened (150). How he was rescued (151). What was his witness as to the whole matter (152)."

Zemek: "the disciple's two choruses of lamentation gradually ebb in the light of Divine sufficiencies.

1A. (vv. 145-148) The disciple's cries for protection result in his being drawn to the Word of God.
- 1B. (vv. 145-146) His cries for protection express his need for dependency.
  - 1C. (v. 145) God needs to respond in order for him to live obediently.
  - 2C. (v. 146) God needs to rescue in order for him to live obediently.
- 2B. (vv. 147-148) His acknowledged dependency leads to an anticipation of God's sufficiencies.
  - 1C. (v. 147) Early in the morning he anticipates God's good response through HisWord.
  - 2C. (v. 148) Late at night he appropriates God's good response through His Word.

2A. (vv. 149-152) The disciple's cries for attention rest in his being drawn to the God of theWord.

1B. (v. 149) His cries for attention express his need for a sustaining relationship.

2B. (vv. 150-152) His need for a sustaining relationship is satisfied through a renewed appreciation of God's sufficiencies.

1C. (v. 150) This appreciation is intensified by contrast.

2C. (v. 151) This appreciation is implemented by contact.

3C. (v. 152) This appreciation is integrated by confidence."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Lessons in Fervent Prayer**

Introduction: Spurgeon said, prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog. In the New Testament, James said this, *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. And the Greek word there, effectual, is a word, *energeia*, where we get the word energy from. It takes energy to pray. It takes work to pray effectively. Thomas Brooks said, cold prayers freeze before they reach heaven. And so, we need to learn how to pray effectively.

I. Fervent prayer is wholehearted. Vs. 145

Ps. 110:2; 119:10, 58, 69

Some things that characterize wholehearted prayer:

A. Frequency

Praying without ceasing -- This doesn't mean that we stay in our prayer closets all day long. We can't obviously do that. But it means, to use an analogy, to keep the receiver off the hook. so that nothing is between us and God. The line is always open so that we can speak to God at any moment

B. Fervency

Expression: "*I cried*" – implies intensity. Again, three times he uses the word *cried*. But now the interesting thing is he uses two different Hebrew words here. In verses 146 and 147, it's *kara* is the Hebrew word there, and it means to call or summons. It has the idea of a deliberate, reasoned, crying out to God, calling out, speaking out loud, even the idea of giving a request, giving an argument. Lord, this is why I want you to hear me. And then there's another word that's used in 147, which is *shawah*, which is the word that means, more emotional word, it means to scream, literally cry of distress. It's more visceral. It's kind of an emotion. It can come from anguish or pain. It's more emotional. It's really groaning. It's more of an emotional crying out to the Lord. And so while the first word is more focused, the first Hebrew word focuses more on intellectual arguments. God, here is why I want you to answer me. The second word is more on the emotion from the heart. Again, it is just a groan, presenting our groan, our pains, our sorrows, the anguish. Sometimes, have you ever prayed just out of sorrow and anguish? And that's the idea here. And so really, using these two words, it kind of gives us a picture of wholehearted prayer. Not only do we use arguments, but we also sometimes use anguish while we pray. Not only do we pray with talk, but we pray with tears. Our tears sometimes are prayers.

The brazen altar, again, points to the sacrifice, the blood that was shed. And of course, that points forward to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, the fire that ignites our prayers is by focusing on the cross in Christ. That's how prayer is ignited. is directly related to our focus on Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross at Calvary.

Illustrations of fervent prayer –

- In the bible
- From biographies of missionaries

C. Faith

Each time he says, *I cried*, it's followed by a petition. He's not bargaining with God, rather he's dedicating himself to obey God regardless of whether or not he has an answer to his prayers. Faith is not just believing in spite of circumstances, it's obeying in spite of consequences. No matter what the consequences are, we will obey the Lord.

II. Fervent prayer is Watchful – vs. 147, 148

Soaking prayer is not biblical prayer. Important to stay alert and be active, not passive in prayer. It involves hoping in the word, not in some mystic experience.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter, James, and John to watch and pray.

The Bible consistently presents prayer as words offered to God from our heart. But also prayer in scripture is filling the mind with God's word, not emptying it. Not emptying it and waiting for something to fill it. Notice he says that in verse 148, that I might meditate. Prayer is a form of meditation. The best prayers that we can pray come from meditating in the word of God and taking what we have learned from God's word and forming a prayer based on that and bringing it back to God.

1 Peter 5:8 says, be sober, be vigilant. Why? Because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, seeks whom he may devour. We have enemies all around.

III. Fervent prayer is word-oriented

Each verse in this section mentions the scripture and the writer's devotion to God's word.
As I study God's Word, it inspires me to praise and thanksgiving. The more I learn about God and His character, the more I want to praise Him and worship Him with adoration.

IV. Fervent prayer is worshipful – vs. 149

He's appealing to God's love and faithfulness. He's submitting to God's will. He's exalting the attributes of God. He's acknowledging God's eternal word. He's bowing down to God's authority.

TEXT: PSALM 119:153-160 RESH

TITLE: GREAT ARE THY MERCIES, O LORD

BIG IDEA:
CALLING UPON THE MERCY OF GOD IS THE PATHWAY TO DELIVERANCE FROM SUFFERING FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

I. (:153-156) THREE PLEAS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM SUFFERING

A. (:153) Rescue Me

1. Appeals to the Lord's Compassion
"*Look upon my affliction and rescue me*"
Look with the idea of seeing my need and doing something to alleviate it

2. Argues based on Personal Faithfulness to God's Word
"*For I do not forget Thy law*"

B. (:154) Redeem Me

1. Appeals to the Lord's Advocacy
"*Plead my cause and redeem me*"

2. Argues based on God's Faithfulness to His Word
"*Revive me according to Thy word*."

C. (:155) Aside: The Wicked have no Grounds for Deliverance
"*Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Thy statutes*."

D. (:156) Revive Me

1. Appeals to the Lord's Mercy
"*Great are Thy mercies, O Lord*"

2. Argues based on God's Faithfulness to His Word
"*Revive me according to Thine ordinances*."

II. (:157-159) THREE PERSPECTIVES OF THE RIGHTEOUS WHEN SEEKING DELIVERANCE

A. (:157) Persevering in Faithfulness In the Face of Opposition
"*Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, Yet I do not turn aside from Thy testimonies*."

B. (:158) Despising the Path of Disobedience
"*I behold the treacherous and loathe them, Because they do not keep Thy word*."

C. (:159) Appealing to God's Lovingkindness

"*Consider how I love Thy precepts; Revive me, O Lord, according to Thy lovingkindness*."

III. (:160) CONCLUSION: THE BOTTOM LINE IS ALWAYS GOD'S TRUTH AND EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. God's Truth

"*The sum of Thy word is truth."*

B. God's Righteousness

"*And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we remember that the Lord Jesus is our Advocate, "*pleading our cause*" – just as the psalmist desires?

2) Note the threefold repetition of the plea for God to "Revive me":

- according to His "*Word*"
- according to His "*ordinances*"
- according to His "*lovingkindness*"

What things need to be removed from our life, what changes need to be made in our hearts in order for us to experience the joy of our salvation fully?

3) What encourages perseverance here on the part of the psalmist in the face of so many persecutors and adversaries?

4) Note how both the sum and the individual parts of God's "*Word*" and God's "*righteous ordinances*" are "*truth*" and "*everlasting*" (vs. 160).

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "The Consciousness of Need. '*Consider mine affliction and deliver me*.' The severity of the speaker's affliction and his understanding of his personal need are clearly shown in the repetition of '*quicken me*' in verses 154, 156, and 159. The enduring nature of God's righteous judgments is his hope and assurance."

Leupold: "The basic thought of the section is this: In the midst of wicked enemies the psalmist looks to God to '*revive*' him. This petition concerning reviving occurs three times. We should again draw attention to the fact that this verb, frequently used in this psalm, does not involve the idea of 'spiritual quickening' but rather that the many burdensome things that weigh a man down may be taken away, and thus life becomes free and joyous again."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 160 – "The sweet singer finishes up this section in the same way as the last by dwelling upon the sureness of the truth of God. It will be well for the reader to note the likeness between verses 144, 152, and the present one. '*Thy word is true*.' Whatever the transgressors may say, God is true, and his word is true. The ungodly are false, but God's word is true. They charge us with being false, but our solace is that God's true word will clear us. '*From the beginning*.' God's word has been true from the first moment in which it was spoken, true throughout the whole of history, true to us from the instant in which we believed it, ay, true to us before we were true to it."

Zemek: Re urgency of this strophe – "To a significant degree the intensity of verses 153-160 is borne along by eight imperatives which the fragile child of faith directs to his Lord.

As in the case of the previous stanza, the distubed disciple does not become utterly distraught. By the sovereign mercy of his Lord, he is enabled to gaze beyond his acute circumstances and to focus upon the perfections, promises, and protection of his good and great God. His faith, being ultimately grounded upon the right foundations of God and His Word, therefore does not flounder."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Revive Me, O Lord**

Introduction: The phrase that is key in this section of Psalm 119 is the phrase, *quicken me*, or we could translate it, *revive me*. Because he uses it three times here in this section. Verse 154, *plead my cause and deliver me, quicken me according to thy word*. And then we see it again in verse 156. And then we see it again in verse 159. It seems like that the closer he gets to the end of the Hebrew alphabet as he writes these stanzas, the more urgent he becomes in drawing near to the Lord and asking for God's help, asking for God's spiritual guidance. And so while the alphabet is about to end, however, his trials are not ending. And so that's why he's praying all the more for God to strengthen him, to awaken him, to give him life.

Big Idea: **Three reasons why he prayed for God to revive him**

I. Revive me because my afflictions are great.

God's people are not exempt from affliction. We all go through trials. In a way, we ought to be thankful for the trials that force us to run to God and to depend upon Him all the more.

A. His trials are heavy – **vs. 153**

The word for *affliction* here means suffering. It's a word for misery or wretchedness.
He's asking God to look upon him as a father, a compassionate father would look upon a hurting child, to give attention, to give compassion.

B. His trials are personal

These trials were unique to him. The trial or the suffering or the affliction that you go through is something that God has given you specifically.

C. His trials are providential

They're not an accident.

D. His trials are purposeful

We must remain faithful to God through the trial. Cf. Job

Here the psalmist is saying, you know, consider, Lord, that I do not forget thy law. I'm being faithful despite the trial that I'm going through. God's Word continually calls for our faith to be tested to show whether or not it's valid. **Ps. 17:3; 26:1-2**

Christ is our advocate, the one pleading on our behalf. **1 John 2:1; Ps. 119:155; John 7:7; Prov. 29:27**

II. Revive me because your mercy is great – vs. 156

A. God's mercies are Abundant

His whole prayer that he prays is based upon the mercy of God, not merit. The psalmist is overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of the mercy of God. God's mercies are not like a trickle, it's like a flood. They're so abundant. **Ps. 103:11**

B. God's mercies are Tender

When we fall, God is there like a compassionate father, ready to give us his mercy. That's the time when we should run to God, because not only are his mercies great, but they are so very tender. When we fall, God doesn't deal with us harshly. He stoops. He lifts us up. He rejoices over us that we are willing to come to him.

III. Revive me because your word is great.

A. A Hatred for Sin – vs. 158

The psalmist's heart is broken because he sees the rebellion of sinners, he sees God's word being cast aside, and he's not entertained by their sin. He's not indifferent to what's going on. He was grieved.

B. A Love for Scripture – **vs. 159**

Why do we love it? Well, we love it because it reveals God's love to us.

Chesed = loving-kindness -- But even that word doesn't really fully capture the meaning of this word *chesed.* It really is speaking about God's unspeakable love, his immeasurable love to all of his people.

C. God's word is the source of truth. **Vs. 160**

Man's wisdom is constantly changing. Yesterday's scientific facts are discarded by today's discoveries. Philosophies rise and fall with the ages, but God's word never changes. God's word is true from the very beginning.

D. God's word is eternal.

TEXT: PSALM 119:161-168 SHIN

TITLE: LOVING GOD'S WORD

BIG IDEA:
LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE THAT BRINGS PEACE AND HOPE

I. (:161-164) FOUR WAYS TO EXPRESS LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

A. (:161) Fear God's Word in Awe and Wonderment /
But Don't Fear the Unjust Persecution of Men
"*Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Thy words.*"

B. (:162) Get Excited About God's Word (Like Winning the Lottery)
"*I rejoice at Thy word; As one who finds great spoil*."

C. (:163) Hate Every Lie / But Love the Truth
"*I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law*."

D. (:164) Praise God Continually Because His Word is Righteous
"*Seven times a day I praise Thee, Because of Thy righteous ordinances.*"

II. (:165-168) A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE BRINGS PEACE AND HOPE

A. (:167-168) What Motivates a Life of Obedience?

1. (:167) Love for God's Word Motivates Obedience
"*My soul keeps Thy testimonies, And I love them exceedingly*."

2. (:168) Living in God's Presence Motivates Obedience
"*I keep Thy precepts and Thy testimonies, For all my ways are before Thee*."

B. (:165-166) What Results From a Life of Obedience?

1. (:165) Great Peace in the Present
"*Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble*."

2. (:166) Firm Hope in the Future
"*I hope for Thy salvation, O Lord, And do Thy commandments*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we have a proper fear of the Lord and of His Word that takes precedence over any fear of powerful men and motivates our obedience since all of our ways are openly observed by His scrutiny?

2) Do we rejoice over God's Word as we would over the discovery of hidden treasure?

3) Do we make it a habit throughout the day to praise the Lord?

4) Do we experience the peace that only the Lord can give that comes only to those "*who love God's law*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Re vs. 164 – "If the law of the Lord is so great a treasure that calls forth such strong affection, it is surely most fitting that God should be praised abundantly for it. This '*abundantly*' is expressed as being '*seven times a day*.' Precise arithmetic is out of the question in such an ideal statement. Seven merely signifies a comparatively large number as Ps. 12:7 would also seem to indicate. The perfect tense of the verbs used here and repeatedly throughout the rest of the section expresses the habitual. This frequent praising of the Word is what the writer regularly does…"

Zemek: "…the reader observes the child of God verbally laying out before the Lord six indications of basic integrity for the purpose of documenting his previous and forthcoming requests.

1A. (v. 161) His godly fear prevails over human pressure.
2A. (v. 162) His godly contentment rivals human materialism.
3A. (v. 163) His godly commitment provides perspective on human injustice.
4A. (v. 164) His godly praise is the product of Divine justice.
5A. (v. 165) His godly peace (i.e. as a member of the community of the faithful) promises a reassuring stability.
6A. (vv. 166-168) His godly obedience is prompted by:
  1B. (v. 166) A confident expectation.
  2B. (v. 167) A consuming adoration.
  3B. (v. 168) A complete penetration."

Spurgeon: Re "*but my heart standeth in awe of thy word*" – "He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds."

VanGemeren: "The joy, devotion, and benefits of a godly life radiate through this strophe. The context of adversity is unchanged, as the '*rulers*' (v. 161; cf. v.23) of the people continually '*persecute*' (cf. vv.150, 157) '*without cause*' (cf. 35:7, 19; 69:5; 109:3; Prov 1:11). But instead of anger the psalmist rejoices in the '*promise*' of the Lord. He is like a warrior returning from battle with '*great spoil'* (v. 162; cf. vv.14, 72, 111; Isa 9:3). His joy does not lie primarily in the immediate rewards but in the heartfelt love for God's instructions ('*law*,' *torah*, v.163; cf. 1:2) and hatred of evil."

Maddux:
A. Respect for Right Authority.
B. Rejocing for the right treasure.
C. Evasion of evil.
D. Love for the Law.
E. Perseverance of praise.
F. Peace without offense.
G. Hopefulness in salvation.
H. Testimony of love.
I. Practice His presence.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Standing in awe of God's word**
Introduction: If archaeologists and scholars have kind of an awe of Scripture [Illustration of discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls and how the complete scroll of Isaiah debunked the widely held theory of three authors], how much more should we as God's people have an awe of God's Word? Cf. **Is. 66:2** -- To stand in awe of God's word is to realize that the Bible is indeed God's revelation, it is God's word, and also to respond with humility and a desire to obey it. As God's people, we should have a reverence and an awe for scripture.

Big Idea: **Seven reasons to reverence (stand in awe of) God's Word**

I. It relieves us of the fear of man – vs. 161
This young Jewish exile [who wrote this Psalm] is remembering the word of God. So we see a young man whose heart was wholly set on the word of God. And **Psalm 119** is his meditations, the diary of his meditations. Now remember, as he's being carried away, he's surrounded by princes, he's surrounded by persecutors. And the Babylonians demanded loyalty to their gods. They wanted all these exiles to forsake their gods and to worship the gods of Babylon. But this young man has determined in his heart that he's going to be loyal to his God. He's going to be focused on his God. They could kill him at any moment, yet he did not live in dread of them. Why? Because he feared God's word more than he feared man's wrath.

II. It enriches us with spiritual treasure – vs. 162
Great spoil here refers to a plunder taken after a battle. And ancient warfare victors often carried away gold and silver. They carried away all kind of weapons and clothing and cattle. All of these were the spoils of war. And he's not talking about just spoil, but great spoil. So this is a huge treasure that he's thinking about here. Maybe he's thinking about the Babylonians when they destroyed Jerusalem, and they carried away all of the treasures that were in the temple, and they were rejoicing over the spoil that they took out of the city of Jerusalem.

III. It teaches us the danger of lying – vs. 163
Lying goes against the very character and nature of God. And the more that you love truth, the more you're gonna hate lies. **Titus 1:2; Prov. 12:2**
Lying leads to judgment.
Lying opens the door to temptation

IV. It stirs us to continual worship – vs. 164
I think what he's really doing here is just using a poetic expression of saying constantly. I'm just continually praising God because of his word. And he's actually worshiping God. He's praising God for who he is because it's through the word of God that we learn about the greatness of our God, the greatness of his character. It reveals his holiness. It reveals his mercy, his sovereignty, his omniscience. And our response to that when we see it in scripture is to just praise and thank God and worship God. All theology. should lead to doxology.

V. It gives us an inner peace in spite of the words and actions of others – vs. 165
The principle then is that when you love God's word, it will anchor your heart with peace. No matter what the outward circumstances are, no matter the outward insults, no matter the outward trials and difficulties, God's word will anchor your soul and give you peace in the midst of all of that.

When we're easily offended, quick to stumble, when we lose our spiritual footing very easily, It reveals that our heart is not ruled by peace. When you let God's word dwell in you richly, then the peace of God will rule in your heart. Love for God's word produces forgiveness and forbearance. You see, God's word repeatedly commands us to forgive. It commands us to overlook offenses, to love our enemies.

The mature Christian is just hard to offend. Those who love God's word develop a spiritually thick skin, you could say. Without becoming hard-hearted, they develop a thick skin. They know that their identity is in Christ, and so personal slights do not shake them. They know God's providence. They know they can trust in what God's doing, and they turn it over to the Lord. They know God's command, so they're patient instead of retaliating.

VI. It fuels us to trust in God for deliverance – vs. 166
What is it that helps us to continue to hope and wait on the Lord? That's the strength that we get from God's word.

VII. It trains us to live obediently in the presence of God – vs. 167
He understood God was watching. Theologians call this *quorum deo.* That's an expression that they used that came out really out of the Reformation times. *Quorum deo* is the Latin, *quorum* is in the presence of, *deo* is God. So to live *quorum deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God. It's recognizing that God sees everything about us. Everything about our life, God sees it. And that's precisely the spirit here of this verse. The psalmist recognizes that there's no thought that God does not know. There's no word that God does not hear. There's no step that God does not see. Our entire life unfolds before the presence of the Lord. **Heb. 4:13**

Illustration: It was said of the great artist Michelangelo that when he was painting the Sistine Chapel, that he was working in one obscure corner and he spent days and days on that one obscure place. And when some clergy came along and they saw him spending all that time there, they said, how come you're spending so much time there? No one will see it. And Michelangelo responded, God will see it. God will see it.

TEXT: PSALM 119:169-176 TAW

TITLE: GOD'S HELPING HAND

BIG IDEA:
INTIMATE COMMUNICATION WITH THE LORD CENTERING AROUND HIS WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO ANTICIPATING HIS HELPING HAND

INTRODUCTION:

This strophe serves as a doxology to sum up many of the themes of Psalm 119. The tone is one of humble petition rather than arrogant demanding: "Let my ...".

As throughout this psalm, note the different references to the Word of God:

"*Thy word*" (twice)
"*Thy statutes*"
"*Thy commandments*" (twice)
"*Thy precepts*"
"*Thy law*"
"*Thine ordinances*"

There is one reference in each verse -- the Word of God is the preeminent theme.

"Lighted Pathways" is a study in how the Word of God functions in the life of a believer as "*a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path*."

I. (:169-172) INTIMATE COMMUNICATION WITH THE LORD CENTERS AROUND HIS WORD

A. (:169-170) We Pray to God and Listen to His Word

1. Prayer
   "*Let my cry come before Thee, O Lord*"
   "*Let my supplication come before Thee*"

2. Listening to His Word
   "*Give me understanding according to Thy word*"
   "*Deliver me according to Thy word*"

B. (:171-172) We Praise God and Listen to His Word

1. Praise
   "*Let my lips utter praise*"
   "*Let my tongue sing of Thy word*"

2. Listening to His Word
   "*For Thou dost teach me thy statutes*"
   "*For all Thy commandments are righteousness*"

II. (:173-176) OUR FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD ENCOURAGES US TO ANTICIPATE HIS HELPING HAND

A. Our Focus on God's Word

1. Our Priority = "*For I have chosen Thy precepts*"

2. Our Delight = "*Thy law is my delight*"

3. Our Sufficiency = "*let Thine ordinances help me*"

4. Our Perseverance = "*I do not forget Thy commandments*"

B. Our Anticipation of God's Helping Hand

1. God's Willingness = "*Let Thy hand be ready to help me*"

2. God's Timing = "*I long for Thy salvation*"

3. God's Majesty = "*Let my soul live that it may praise Thee*"

4. God's Compassion = "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If we gain God's hearing, we have gained everything (cf. vs. 169). What would be some things in our life that would be obstacles to God hearing our prayer?

2) Do we think that we can arrive at a position of "understanding" through our own reasoning and study or do we truly seek the person of God directly to grant us the necessary understanding?

3) Reflect on the significance of the different words used here to refer to God's word. Do we get a sense of the richness and depth of God's revelation? Do we truly have a heart that longs to obey God's commands?

4) How does this stanza function as a doxology for the entire Psalm 119?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Yates: "The Determination of Steadfastness. '*My lips shall utter praise*.' The psalmist sums up his message by pleading for further spiritual help, while declaring his intention to stand fast upon the foundation of God's teachings."

Craigie: "In the *taw* strophe the gamut of the psalm's concerns are reflected, a double prayer, an avowal of piety and a reference to the situation of complaint. V 175 notably acknowledges that praise is the purpose of life (cf. 115:18), while v 176 poignantly appeals to the Shepherd to rescue the suffering lost sheep. The double prayer of vv 169-70 and the appeal to Yahweh's '*rulings*' or judicial intervention illustrate the two poles of the psalm. At one end stands the revealed Torah, and it is for insight into this that the psalmist prays so that he may fulfill Yahweh's moral will in his life. At the other stands the hope of divine providential intervention, and for this too he prays out of his distress. The dual manifestation of God is itself bridged by the Torah's examples and promises of aid to the faithful. The psalmist is in the center, communing with God through the fellowship of prayer and looking this way with the eyes of faith and that way with the eyes of hope. From this double stance the same living God both manifests himself through the written revelation and can be expected to manifest himself through the providential overruling of adversity in the believer's life."

VanGemeren: Re vs. 176 – "The last note of the psalm is a cry from a broken spirit rather than a confession of apostasy. The psalmist feels helpless, like a '*lost sheep*' (cf. Jer 50:6; Ezek 34:4-6, 16) and cries to his Good Shepherd to '*seek*' … him (cf. Luke 15:4-70. The psalmist's lostness is a result of the adversities he has so frequently mentioned and not because of his neglect of God or his word."

Leupold: "The psalm closes with what may be called a cluster of pleas for insight and help and for '*the grace of thankfulness*' for the divine Word. Almost every verse is a petition. … It is surprising how many times the prayer for insight has appeared in this psalm. Then as now the magnitude of the thoughts of God drove men to prayer for a better grasp of the depths of divine revelation. Then as now men were dependent upon God's help in their manifold afflictions, and when they phrase their petition, '*Let my plea come before Thee*,' the sovereignty of the Lord in even such matters is clearly set forth. God is under no obligation to hear us; His answer to our petitions must be thought of as being entirely within His good pleasure."

Zemek: "two tides of petition in the final stanza of Psalm 119 recapitulate the disciple's dependence upon God and His Word.

1A. (vv. 169-172) The swelling tide rises heavenward in anticipation of communication with God.
- 1B. (vv. 169-170) The acute communication of his burdens.
  - 1C. (v. 169) His burden for scriptural insight.
  - 2C. (v. 170) His burden for supernatural intervention.
- 2B. (vv. 171-172) The accompanying communication of his blessings:
  - 1C. (v. 171) Personal instruction.
  - 2C. (v. 172) Propositional integrity.

2A. (vv. 173-176) The ebbing tide returns earthward in anticipation of compassion from God.
- 1B. (vv. 173-174) The anticipated compassion of Divine protection.
  - 1C. (v. 173a) The disciple's desire.
  - 2C. (vv. 173b-174) The disciple's documentation (positive).
- 2B. (vv. 175-176) The anticpated compassion of Divine preservation.

1C. (v. 175) The disciple's desire.
2C. (v. 176) The disciple's documentation (negative and positive)."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Help for Straying Sheep**
Introduction: The writer of **Psalm 119** signs his name in **vs. 196** = "*lost sheep*".
Ps. 23; 100:3 – "*the sheep of His pasture*"
What do we know about sheep?

- Not smart
- No sense of direction – **Is. 53:6**
- Defenseless and vulnerable
- Delicate, nervous, fearful

They desperately need a good shepherd.

List of petitions here from the psalmist.

Big Idea: **2 Groups of Petitions**

I. Lord, Teach Me – sheep need the shepherd's voice

A. We need to understand God's Word – **vs. 169**

- Spirit of God illumines us
- Faithful pastors and teachers explain God's Word
- Communion of saints reinforces God's Word
- Bible interprets itself

B. We need to use it and apply it

C. We need to unleash it (**vs. 171-172**)
Don't be ashamed to speak God's Word publicly or in hostile environment – cf. situation of the author's exile in Babylon.

II. Lord, Reach Me – sheep need the shepherd's hand
"Help me" – need God's personal involvement and strengthening
Shepherd – guides / rescues – uses his staff / protects from enemies / feeds / binds us

A. Staying on the Right Path – **vs. 173**
The more we live close to God the more we need His help

B. Striving with the Right Passion – **vs. 174-175**
Yearning of hope and delight in God

C. Straying from the Right Priority – **vs. 176**
Takes discipline to continue in devotion to the Lord

TEXT: PSALM 120

TITLE: A DOVE AMONG HAWKS

BIG IDEA:
ADVOCATES FOR PEACE LAMENT LIVING AMONG LYING WARMONGERS

INTRODUCTION:
First in a series of Psalms (120 - 134) labelled "A Song of Ascents";
possibly a hymnbook for pilgrims coming up to the Temple for the great feasts
- Spurgeon

but many other suggested possibilities as well

I. (:1-4) LAMENT AGAINST DECEITFUL LIARS (SLANDERERS)

A. Cry for Deliverance
"*In my trouble I cried to the Lord, And He answered me*."
"*Deliver my soul, O Lord*"

B. Cause of Conflict (the Nature of Slander)
"*lying lips*"
"*deceitful tongue*"

C. Curse of Retribution

1. Retribution is necessary -- Because of the "deceitful tongue"
"*What shall be given to you*"
"*What more shall be done to you*"

2. Retribution is appropriate (cf. how slander is referred to in these terms)
"*sharp arrows of the warrior*"
"*burning coals of the broom tree*"
Spurgeon: "coals of juniper:
quick in flaming
fierce in blazing
long in burning" (cf. hell fire)

II. (:5-7) LAMENT AGAINST WARMONGERS

A. Grief from Close Association = Living among the Warmongers
"*Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar*!"
"*Too long has my soul had its dwelling With those who hate peace*."

B. Grief from Antagonistic Objectives = Advocate for Peace vs. Advocate for War
"*I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we wait until we are in trouble before we cry out to the Lord? Do we appreciate His faithfulness in being there for us to hear and answer our cries for help?

2) What types of personal attacks, slander, lies have we had to face? In what ways did we struggle with pain and hurt on these occasions?

3) What types of judgments are pictured in the images of verse 4? Why are these judgments especially appropriate in light of the offenses?

4) Is our soul troubled by the unrest around us and desirous of the type of peace that only the kingdom of God can establish?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Peterson: "A person has to be thoroughly disgusted with the way things are to find the motivation to set out on the Christian way….

Psalm 120 is the song of such a person, sick with the lies and crippled with the hate, a person doubled up in pain over what is going on in the world. But it is not a mere outcry, it is pain that penetrates through despair and stimulates a new beginning—a journey to God which becomes a life of peace….

Christian consciousness begins in the painful realization that what we had assumed was the truth is in fact a lie. Prayer is immediate: '*Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue*.' Rescue me from the lies of advertisers who claim to know what I need and what I desire, from the lies of entertainers who promise a cheap way to joy, from the lies of politicians who pretend to instruct me in power and morality, from the lies of psychologists who offer to shape my behaviour and my morals so that I will live long, happily and successfully … Rescue me from the person who tells me of life and omits Christ, who is wise in the ways of the world and ignores the movement of the Spirit….

The first step toward God is a step away from the lies of the world. It is a renunciation of the lies we have been told about ourselves and our neighbors and our universe. '*Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!*'…

Repentance is not an emotion. It is not feeling sorry for your sins. It is a decision. It is deciding that you have been wrong in supposing that you could manage your own life and be your own god; it is deciding that you were wrong in thinking that you had, or could get, the strength, education and training to make it on your own; it is deciding that you have been told a pack of lies about yourself and your neighbors and your world. And it is deciding that God in Jesus Christ is telling you the truth. Repentance is a realization that what God wants from you and what you want from God are not going to be achieved by doing the same old things, thinking the same old thoughts. Repentance is a decision to follow Jesus Christ and become his pilgrim in the path of peace."

Harris: THE PLAINT AND PRAYER OF THE SLANDERED

Theme: The cry of suffering due to a slanderous foe.
Occasion: Not stated. Cf. 1 Sam. 22:22 and Psalm 52.

I. PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE. Ver. 1, 2. "Deliver my soul, O Lord" (ver. 2).
   1. Peril. Ver. 1.
   2. Plea. Ver. 2.

II. PREDICTION OF DOOM. Ver. 3, 4. "What shall be done unto thee?" (ver. 3).
   1. Recompense. Ver. 3.
   2. Retribution. Ver. 4.

III. PROTEST AT DISCORDANCE. Ver. 5-7. "I am for peace" (ver. 7).
   1. Plaint. Ver. 5.
   2. Position. Ver. 6, 7.

VanGemeren:
   A. Assurance of Answered Prayer (v. 1).
      B. Prayer for Help (vv. 2-4)
      B'. Expression of Desperation (v. 5)
   A'. Longing for Peace (vv. 6-7)

Spurgeon: "Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defence. We could ward off the strokes of cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Pilgrim Psalms**
Introduction: Beginning a series on Psalms 120-134. "*song of degrees*" – 15 psalms – means a step or a stair or ascending upward or movement upward. Normally, it was a word that was used to talk about a person who was walking up a hill. Why such a designation?
Various views:

1) Collected to be sung regarding the Babylonian captivity as the children of Israel were released from Babylon and they went back to Jerusalem and back to Israel. These songs were sung in honor of that occasion. because Babylon was in the lowlands, Israel was in the highlands, and so as people went back to Israel, they were literally walking up.
2) Some say that the word for degrees or ascent really is a literary designation. It's the idea that Verses build on each other. There's a thought in one verse and in several verses later It builds on that idea and then later it builds on that idea the idea of a stair-step building of ideas of progression of thoughts. However, not all the psalms show that kind of progression, so I don't think that's what it's talking about.
3) Speculation: Some say that these psalms were sung by priests in the temple. Did you know that there, according to Ezekiel 40, there were eight steps leading into the outer

courts, and then there were seven more steps that led into the inner court? Thus, you had 15 steps in all leading into the holy place. And so, some say that these psalms were sung then by priests, Levites, as they were going into the holy place. They would sing these psalms at each step.

4) Best view: these Psalms were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they traveled to Jerusalem on the various feast days. God commanded all men in Israel to go to Jerusalem for a feast three times a year they had to do that? As commanded in Exodus 24, verses 14 to 17, they had to go for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles. Jerusalem, geographically, is located in an elevated area. It is 2,300 feet above sea level. So anyone traveling into Jerusalem would literally, geographically, ascend upward into the city.

Lessons we can learn:

I. God's people are a pilgrim people.

Abraham, the model of faith, the model of who we should follow, he was a pilgrim all of his life, living in tents, but he looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. 1 Chron. 29:15

A. Pilgrims follow their guide.

The journey that we have here If we just follow God's Word, it becomes a lot easier. God's Word is a survival guide to help us make it through.

B. Pilgrims forsake the world. Vs. 5

Too many believers today, they want to settle in this world instead of being pilgrims.
1 Pet. 2:11

If you read history, you're going to find out that the Christians that God used the most in this present world were those who thought the most about the next world. They were heavenly minded. C.S. Lewis said this, aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you'll get nothing.

II. God's people are a protected people.

This pilgrim journey is filled with darkness and danger and difficulty and distress. But God is the one who's with us and he will protect us and he will watch over us. The psalmist looks upward and he sees God. He looks backwards and he sees the protection of God. He looks outward. You know, he says, he says, man, I'm surrounded. The Lord is round about his people from henceforth and forevermore Did you know no matter what direction you go in your pilgrim journey? You're surrounded by God He's already going to be there.

III. God's people are a praising people.

Ps. 134:3 --
God has done great things for us.
We have a God who can turn valleys and sorrows into mountains and joys. Ps. 126:5

IV. God's people are a progressing people.

Progressing geographically towards Jerusalem; but spiritually ascending higher and higher as well. The Christian life is a continual advancing, it's a continual going forward and going up. Never should there be a standstill. If we remain stationary in one experience or become stranded at one stage, we shall find that our spiritual life suffers.

In this world, there's no such thing as a perfect path. There's going to be pitfalls. It cannot be mended. You cannot get around it. The thing is, you must overcome them. And you must continue to press on in this pilgrim journey. You've got to keep making progress. That's what God wants of you. And God gives you all the resources and the help to do that very thing.

As we train our children to mature, we want to see them progress from dependence to independence. But did you know that in the spiritual realm, it's the exact opposite? In the Christian life, in the pilgrim journey, it is growing from independence of God to complete, total dependence upon the Lord for everything. For everything. Where you're content, at peace, there's no complaining. Why? Because you are absolutely, totally dependent on the Lord. That's the measure of how you're making progress.

I believe that on that journey that Jesus took, that final journey to Jerusalem, I believe, I can't prove it, but I think I'm right. I think he sung these songs on that pilgrimage.

Let me just say this one thing, you know think about pilgrims again, they travel in groups You know what? That means we got to help each other out now On this journey, we got to help each other out

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John Bunyan reminds us that in this pilgrim journey that we're in, often the right road is the difficult road. John Phillips has detected a pattern in these Psalms. He says that these Psalms really can be arranged in five groups of three Psalms each. He notes that the first psalm in each group records trouble, and the second psalm in each group records trust, and he says the third psalm in each group records triumph.

I. The Difficulty He Endured

A. Distress – **vs. 1** -- The Hebrew word *sarar* has the idea of something that is narrow or tight. It's the opposite of being in a large, broad place. You're in a tight place. You're in a tight squeeze. It refers to anything that is narrow or confined, something that is too small. It was used in Isaiah to speak of a blanket too narrow to wrap yourself. or binding a stone in a sling. Oftentimes it's used in a way to speak about strong emotion that comes from perhaps stress or pressure or anxiety.

B. Defamation – **vs. 2** -- He was a victim of lying lips. One of the hardest experiences to endure is to have someone go around and destroy your reputation or slander you through lies. A good name is a very precious thing. The Bible says a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. Slander is a very lethal weapon. Thomas Watson said, the scorpion carries his poison in his tail. The slanderer carries it in his tongue.

C. Deception – **vs. 3** –

The word *deceit* here is the idea of fraud. He was a victim of fraud. Someone was defrauding him. Someone perhaps had made a promise or had said they were going to do something and it never came to pass. There was purposeful deceit towards him. He was a victim of a scam.

D. Despair – **vs. 5** --

E. Displacement – **vs. 5** -- He feels out of place. Do you ever feel out of place? This is what the psalmist is describing here. What does he mean by Meshach and Keter? Meshach was located far north of Jerusalem. In fact, it was the farthest north known during that time. It was an area that was beyond the Black Sea. And the people in that area were considered to be barbarians and pagans. It was the most distant land north. that perhaps they could think of. And then what about Keter? Well, that was located in the opposite direction. That was all the way south. It was in the desert region. And the people that lived here were Arabs. They were descendants of Ishmael. They were wild. They were vicious. They would go out and they would plunder. They would go into the settled places and rob and then retreat to the safety of the desert. And there they would live. But really, these two groups have this in common. It's a long way away from Jerusalem. And these are people that act like pagans. And they are very ungodly. And they were enemies of the people of God.

It's figurative. These are expressions, poetic expressions, that the psalmist is using to say he was living among the worst group of people. He was living among the unrighteous, the ungodly, the wicked, who are his enemies, and it's making life very, very difficult for him. It's vexing his soul. We could compare it to Lot living in Sodom, whose soul was vexed by the ungodliness that was around him.

Are you where you need to be spiritually? Is your heart away from the Lord?

F. Disputation – **vs. 6** -- He lives among people that are constantly rattling the sabers of war. He's living in a hostile environment.

II. The Deliverance He Enjoyed

He gives us a prescription for dwelling in a hostile environment. or in a difficult situation. Three attitudes we have to maintain if we're going to survive this, if we're going to make it up this difficult hill. We have to drink from this spring, as it were, to get us over this hill.

A. Express the problem prayerfully – vs. 1

Verse 1 is past tense. I called to the Lord in the past. Here he's describing perhaps a previous experience where he went through difficulty and trouble. And what did he do? He called unto the Lord. And what happened? The Lord answered him. And so what does he do now, verse 2? Presently, he's praying, and here's his prayer. Deliver me, O Lord. You see, what's the point? The point is, his past prayers and past answers from God has given him confidence to pray in this present situation.

- Confident Prayer – counting on God’s faithfulness
- Careful Prayer – very specific
- Concise Prayer

B. Entrust the problem patiently – **vs. 3**
He's turning all of this over to God. He's entrusting this to the greatest warrior, the one who fights all our battles for us. Don't get on the defensive and try to defend yourself. Turn it over to the Lord. Let God take care of this, and then wait patiently for the Lord to take care of this problem.

C. Endure the problem peacefully – **vs. 5-7**
He won't always change your circumstances. He may not change the hostility that exists around you or the difficulty around you. But what he will do is he will give you inward peace that is able to overcome all of those things.

TEXT: PSALM 121

TITLE: THE LORD IS MY HELPER

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT HELPER AND PROTECTOR

I. (:1-4) THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT HELPER

A. Looking for Help in All the Right Places -- "*From whence shall my help come*?"

1. Reminder: The impressive grandeur of the mountains reminds me of the majesty of the Creator
"*I will lift up my eyes to the mountains*"

2. Answer: "*My help comes from the Lord*"

B. The Lord's Credentials as Helper are Impeccable

1. Lord over Nature = Creator of heaven and earth
"*Who made heaven and earth*"

2. Personally Cares for Us
"*He will not allow your foot to slip*;"

3. Vigilant = On Call 24 hours a day
"*He who keeps you will not slumber*"
"*Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep*"

II. (:5-8) THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT PROTECTOR

A. Looking for Protection in All the Right Places -- "*The Lord is your keeper*"

B. The Lord's Credentials as Protector are Impeccable

1. Lord over Nature = Protector from the elements
"*The Lord is your shade on your right hand*"

a. From the heat of the sun
"*The sun will not smite you by day*"

b. From the freezing temperatures of the night
"*Nor the moon by night*"

2. Personally Cares for Us = Watches over our soul
"*The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul*"

3. Vigilant = On Call 24 hours a day

"*The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) When have we been disappointed by looking for help in the wrong places?

2) How does the grandeur of nature speak to our hearts about the Lord's ability to care for us?

3) Why is the debate over Creation and Evolution so significant in its practical implications?

4) If the Lord is On Call all the time, why do I wait until my situation is desperate before calling on His help?

5) The next time I feel the pressure and start to feel the heat turned up, how can I remember that the Lord is the shade on my right hand?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ogilvie: "In Psalm 121, the psalmist faced danger. He was either on a pilgrimage or a journey. A range of hills or mountains lay ahead. In them would be robbers, wolves, and treacherous passages in which he could slip and fall. In the valley he knew there was no otgher way than through the hills to his destination. How would he make it? The perplexity led him into a dialogue with his own inner being. He took the four looks I mentioned earlier. Note the progression.

1) Looking Out

'I will lift up my eyes to the hills …' the hills were looked to for help and rejected as a source of strength in danger.

2) Looking In

…The psalmist's inward look resulted in the pertinent question, 'Just where can I go to find help?'

3) Upward Look

'My help comes from the Lord'

4) Looking Ahead
   a) God's Providential Care
   b) God's Protective Care
   c) God's Preserving Care"

Carr: HANG ON, HELP IS COMING!

Intro: The superscription to this Psalm tells us that it is a "Song of Degrees." That is, this is a Psalm that worshipers would sing as they made their way to Jerusalem to participate in the three great annual feasts; Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. With that in mind, it is plain to see that this is a pilgrim's song. It tells of the dangers of the journey, and of the help God provides along the way.

Verse 1 is not a declaration of hope, but rather, it is a cry of despair. The Psalmist is telling us that danger is lurking in the hills above and is waiting for an opportunity to pounce upon the weary traveler. When this happens, where can the pilgrim turn to for help? The psalmist answers his own question be reminding us that the Lord is our help!

I. (V. 2-4) THE SOURCE OF OUR HELP

A. V. 2 He Is Our Creator
B. V. 3 He Is Our Confirmer
C. V. 3b-4 He Is Our Constant Helper

II. (V. 5-6) THE STRENGTH OF OUR HELP

A. V. 5 He Protects Us From Our Enemies
B. V. 6 He Protects Us From The Elements

III. (V. 7-8) THE SECURITY OF OUR HELP

A. V. 7 We Are Preserved From Evil
B. V. 8 We Are Preserved For Eternity

David Holwick: MAY THE LORD KEEP YOU

I. Uncertainty of modern life. 121:1
A. Terrible feeling to be all alone, thinking no one cares.
B. People seek help, none answer.

II. Is your God big enough? 121:2,4
A. The God of Psalm 121 is the God of creation.
1) He made it, and he continues to control it.

B. He is the God of the nations.
1) The God of the Bible is not just God for Europe and America.
a) He must be acknowledged the world over.
b) He calls nations to account.
2) He establishes rights for all people.
a) When God is forgotten, human rights are forgotten.

III. Is your God small enough? 121:5
A. Does your God care about YOU?

1) Many see God as the Great Designer, little more.
2) If he created distant galaxies, what would he care about our scrawny concerns?
3) The God of the Bible is a personal God.
a) He sent Jesus to die for you PERSONALLY.

B. God is a watcher.
1) We don't like to be watched - Big Brother syndrome.
a) "Be Careful Little Hands What You Do..."
b) Usually, we are hiding something.
2) God's watching is meant to be comforting.
a) He watches to protect us, not to catch us.
b) He pays constant attention - no sleeping.
c) Note emphasis - mentioned 5 times.

C. God sweats the details.
1) He is concerned about our foot slipping.
2) The harm he keeps us from must be seen from whole perspective.
a) Note paradox of Luke 21:18 - hairs on head, yet death.
b) Ultimately, nothing can harm a Christian.

IV. Does your God control the future? 121:8
A. God protects us "now and forevermore."
B. If he does, should you be fearful right now?
C. Trust in God puts things in a different perspective.

Derek Kidner:
I. Protection is a burning issue for pilgrims.
A. Hills- a place of refuge or a menace?
B. Either way, God is better: living help, primary, personal, wise, and immeasurable.
II. Rest of psalm leads into an ever expanding circle of promise.
A. God is closer than the hills.
B. Israel's privilege is applied to individuals.
1) Kept from all evil doesn't imply a cushioned life, but a well-armed one. Cf. 23:4, expects dark valley but can face it.
2) Cf. Luke 21:18f, where God's minutest care is in same breath as prospect of hounding and martyrdom (21:16f).
III. Psalm ends with a strong pledge. Deliverance
A. Going and coming: more than 'everything,' it draws attention to one's ventures and enterprises (cf. Ps 126:6). Also, to pilgrimage and return.
B. Protection starts "from now", and continues without end (not just to the end of time), like God himself.

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **God Our Help in Ages Past**

Introduction: How many of you could say, I need God's help tonight? We all could use the help of the Lord. This psalm here is meant to encourage us. It's meant to strengthen us. And this is part of a collection of psalms called Pilgrim Psalms. These psalms were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they were traveling to Jerusalem for the various feast days. And, you know, of course, Mount Zion was located geographically higher than the surrounding area. So wherever Jews were traveling from in the ancient world, they had to, you know, go upward. They were ascending up into Mount Zion. They were going up to the holy city. And this was often a long and difficult journey, and it was fraught with danger. And this psalm reminds us, too, that we also are pilgrims, aren't we? This world is not our home. We're just passing through. We are also headed to our Mount Zion, the heavenly city. And as we journey, this journey can get dangerous.

Now the Hebrew word for help (vs. 1) is *ezer*. That name is a biblical name, and it's from actually two Hebrew words, Eben is stone, Ezer is help. You remember that in 1 Samuel, when God helped the Israelites conquer the Philistines and then brought revival, Samuel raised up a stone and he called it Ebenezer, the stone of help, because he wanted all of Israel to remember how God had helped them at that crucial time in their life. And so that's really what the word here is, Ezer, help.

Now, this psalm here answers really just a few questions for us. It'll answer, first of all, who is our help? And then it'll answer the question, how close is our help to us? And from what does our help protect us? What are the limits of His vigilance as He is protecting us?

We see the word *keep* used three times, and then we see the word *preserve* used three times. What if I told you that that was the exact same word in the Hebrew every time? In the English we translate it differently, but the Hebrew word is actually the same. And it's the word *shamar*, which means to hedge about, to watch over, to preserve. It's a word that's used of a shepherd that watches over his sheep. It's used of a man who watches over his house. And the whole idea is he's watching over to protect to keep safe. And this is what God does for us. God is constantly watching over us. Whether you realize it or not, He never takes His eyes off of you. He's watching you. He is protecting you. He's keeping you. He is preserving you. He's helping you. That's what this psalm reminds us about.

I. The Character of My Help – vs. 1-2

A. <u>Danger – vs. 1</u>

1. Hills -- *I will lift up mine eyes into the hills from whence cometh my help.*

Now, some commentators translate this as if the psalmist is looking to the hills as his source of help. In other words, he's looking to the hills because he thinks the hills will be his help. But that's not the help here in this verse. In fact, the hills are actually the **source of danger**. You know, those hills were dangerous to travel in. Those who traveled to Jerusalem knew that there were thieves and murderers and robbers that hid in the crevices and caves of those mountains. There was also wild beasts that lived in those hills. So the hills and the mountains were a place of potential danger. All kinds of dangers lurked in those hills and in those mountains.

Hills were a place where idolaters would set up their altars, their false places of worship. They're called in the Old Testament, the high places, because they would find a hill or a high place and

they would set up that idolatrous system and they would worship there. And so those hills troubled Israel.

What are the hills in your life? What are the mountains that you're looking at, that you're facing at this moment? The things that trouble you, the challenges that are before you, the things that you say, man, I need help. I'm looking at this and it causes fear.

2. Help -- *From whence cometh my help?*

B. Dependence – vs. 2

Some think that this is supposed to be an antiphonal song. You say, what's that? That's where you have a choir on each side, and one choir will ask the question, and another choir will answer the question, you know. They say, that's what's going on here. You know, one side sings the question, the other side sings the answer. And it very well could be that they do that here with this psalm. Some say that this is a dialogue between travelers. There's two travelers here, and one of them is a younger, and the other is older, and the younger is saying, you know, I'm looking at these hills. Where's my help going to come from? And then the older traveler says, oh, listen, my help is the Lord.

But then there's another interpretation of this, and I think this is probably closer to correct. This is an internal dialogue that's going on with this pilgrim traveler. He's having it with himself. He's battling negative thoughts with a positive thought. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, stop listening to yourself and start preaching to yourself.

Who's going to help me on this journey? And all of a sudden he remembers Yahweh. He remembers the divine name. He remembers the God that led Israel through the wilderness and was with them. And he is going to be with him as well. Why should I fear the mountains when the creator of those mountains is my protector? And so that's who our helper is.

II. The Closeness of My Help – vs. 3

A. He is my Security – vs. 3

Ps. 37:23 -- In this journey of life, we have to be careful in our steps, but guess what? We have a God who will watch over the steps that we take, as long as we're dependent upon Him.

B. He is my Sentry – vs. 3

This God shall neither slumber nor sleep. God, the omnipotent God, doesn't sleep. He doesn't even get drowsy. He never sleeps. He's ever vigilant. He is constantly watching over us like a sentry on duty. He never takes His eyes off of us.

C. He is my Shade – vs. 5

The Lord is our shield and our protector from anything that will harm us in the day or anything that will harm us at night.

III. The Circumference of My Help – vs. 7

But are there certain events or circumstances that he cannot protect us from? Well, that question is answered right here. He'll preserve us from all harm. And that's the whole idea here. Now,

this obviously doesn't mean that bad things will not happen to believers. But what it does mean is that even during those bad things, when they happen, God will protect us from the harm of those things. God is the one keeping me, even throughout eternity.

TEXT: PSALM 122

TITLE: PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM

BIG IDEA:
APPRECIATE AND PROMOTE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP THE LORD TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:
OT context = Jerusalem as the center of worship with the Temple as the House of God;
Dispensational approach will see Jerusalem again prominent in the context of worship in the millennial kingdom;
Non-Dispensational approach will not see any future significant role for the city of Jerusalem

I. (:1-5) OT PILGRIMS APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP IN THE HOUSE OF GOD IN JERUSALEM

A. (:1) Appreciate the Invitation to Make the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem
"*I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord*.'"

B. (:2-3) Appreciate the Significance of the City of Jerusalem
"*Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem*."
"*Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together*."

C. (:4) Appreciate the Priority of Corporate Worship

1. Commanded for the People of God

2. Objective = "to give thanks to the name of the Lord"

D. (:5) Appreciate the Historical Roots and Significance of the Kingdom of God as Mediated by David
"*For there thrones were set for judgment, The thrones of the house of David*."

II. (:6-9) PROMOTE THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF JERUSALEM

A. Pray for Peace and Prosperity

Blessing upon those who love Jerusalem
"*May they prosper who love you*."

B. Actively Seek Peace and Prosperity

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Am I excited about every opportunity for corporate worship?

2) Does my worship center around giving thanks to the character of the Lord?

3) Am I an instrument for peace within the church of God?

4) Do I understand and appreciate the roots of my faith?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Clarke: THE JOYS OF JERUSALEM

I. THE CITY'S PRE-EMINENCE (1-5). Object of Praise.
   1. Indicated Purpose (1-2).
      (a) Anticipation (1).
      (b) Realisation (2).
   2. Imposing Prospect (3).
   3. Illustrious Privileges (4-5).
      (i) The Temple – Religious Centre.
      (ii) The Throne – Civic Centre.

II. THE CITY'S PEACE (6-9). Object of Prayer.
   1. Invited Prayer (6).
   2. Invoked Prosperity (7).
   3. Indicated Purpose (8-9).
      (i) Benediction Pronounced (8).
      (ii) Benefit Pursued (9).

SUPERSCRIPT. – A Song of the Degrees; David's

VanGemeren: "The significance of this psalm extends from the focus of Zion as the goal of the pilgrimage (vv. 1-2) to the eschatological vision of Zion as the center of God's judgment and peace (vv.5-9). The worshipers are hereby continually encouraged to pray for the welfare of Jerusalem."

Kidner: Re vs. 4 – "The unity was never meant to be uniform; Israel was a family of tribes, each with its well-marked character (cf. Gn. 49; Dt. 33). But the ties were more than those of blood or convenience: these were the tribes *of the Lord*, and Jerusalem was where they were to meet Him, not simply one another. King Jeroboam, with his breakaway kingdom, feared this rallying point (1 Ki. 12:26ff.), forgetting that what was *decreed for Israel* (Dt. 12:13f.) could never be at odds with what was conditionally promised to him by the same God (cf. 1 Ki. 1:38)."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 9 – "He prays for Jerusalem because of Zion. How the church salts and savours all around it. The presence of Jehovah, our God, endears to us every place wherein he reveals his glory. Well may we seek her good within whose walls there dwells God who alone is good. We are to live for God's cause, and to be ready to die for it. First we love it (verse 6)

and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good. If we can do nothing else we can intercede for it. Our covenant relation to Jehovah as our God binds us to pray for his people, -- they are '*the house of the Lord our God*.' If we honour our God we desire the prosperity of the church which he has chosen for his indwelling.

Thus is the poet glad of an invitation to join with others in the Lord's service. He goes with them and rejoices, and then he turns his delight into devotion, and intercedes for the city of the great King. O church of the living God, we hail thine assemblies, and on bended knee we pray that thou mayest have peace and felicity. May our Jehovah so send it. Amen."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Let's Go to the House of the Lord**
Introduction: There's a certain thing that takes place here when we gather together in the Lord's house that can't be done anywhere else. You can't substitute anything for it. This psalm here expresses the joy of the worshiper to go to the house of the Lord.

3 Ways to speak about Jerusalem:

1) **Literally**
2) We can think of Jerusalem **metaphorically**. Did you know that Jerusalem speaks about the New Jerusalem in heaven? That's what the Bible says about heaven. It's a city. It's called the New Jerusalem. John said this in Revelation, *I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.*
3) Thirdly, we can look at it **spiritually**. we can think of it as the now Jerusalem. That is to say that it represents the **church.**

Did you know that when we come together in God's house, there's a sense in which God is with us in a special way?

Big Idea: **Several reasons that I see here in Psalm 122 why we're glad to come to the house of God.**

I. Because God's house is a place where we celebrate – vs. 1
Someone said the Christian life is not a famine or a funeral, it is a feast. And when we come to God's house, we come to celebrate.

A. Why do we celebrate?
We celebrate the fact that we are citizens of, even this is our now Jerusalem, we are citizens of the new Jerusalem. And we all together, we celebrate the fact that we know that one day we're all gonna be together there in heaven.
Phil. 3:20 -- The church is a colony of heaven away from heaven.

B. What do we celebrate? Jesus
We celebrate the redeeming, risen, reigning, and returning Lord. Iin the book of Leviticus, God prescribed seven feast days for the children of Israel to enter into? and they would go and anticipate these wonderful occasions. Did you know, however, that all of those feast days pointed to the saving work of Jesus Christ?

1. For example, there's the Feast of the **Passover**, and that pointed to the Messiah as our Passover lamb. whose blood would be shed.

2. Then there's the Feast of the **Unleavened Bread**. This pointed to the Messiah's sinless life. Leaven is a picture of sin, and Jesus was the sinless Savior.
3. And then there's the Feast of the **Firstfruits**, and this points to the resurrection. Jesus would come out of the grave. He was the firstfruits of the resurrection. We are the main harvest. This points to the fact that we also will have a resurrection.
4. Then there was the Feast of **Weeks,** or **Pentecost,** and this pointed to the great harvest of souls, the gift of the Holy Spirit that would come upon the church.
5. Then there's the Feast of the **Trumpets**. And a lot of scholars believe this points to the rapture when the trumpet will sound and we'll be taken out of this world.
6. And then there's the **Day of Atonement**. Many believe this points to the second coming of Christ, when the Jews will, the Bible says, look upon him whom they've pierced and they will repent of their sins.
7. And then finally, there's the Feast of the **Tabernacles**, where this is the fulfillment of the promise where God will tabernacle among his people.

It's all about Christ. So there's a sense in which we come to God's house, we celebrate Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of all of these things.

II. Because God's House is a place where we Congregate – vs. 2

A. Commitment to Worship -- *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem*.
Nothing is gonna keep me from God's house. I'm gonna be there at the appointed time. Sometimes we let the least little thing keep us from God's house. We need to make sure that we don't get into bad habits of putting things ahead of the house of the Lord. Your presence will bless other people.

B. Closeness of Worship – vs. 3
Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together. What does that mean? Well, when the pilgrim worshiper got close to Jerusalem and went into the city, you know what he noticed? That the city was very crowded. In fact, the streets are very narrow. You could go to Jerusalem today, to the literal city, and walk in the gates, and I've done it many times, and walk down the street, and you know what you'll find? That the streets are very, very narrow, and the houses are compact together, they're so very close together there in the city. The very layout of the city communicated closeness and warmth and love.

When you come to Jerusalem, the worship of God has a unifying effect, and it has a strengthening effect. It brings us all together, it makes us all one, and we draw our strength from our closeness being together in God's house.

C. The Company of Worship – vs. 4
In the previous verse, he was really focusing on the unity of worship, but here he's focusing on the diversity of the people. And basically, when you think about it, the tribes of Israel, they were very diverse. There were the coastal dwellers of Zebulon. There were the highlanders of Dan. There were the farmers of Ephraim. There were the desert dwellers of Reuben.

The church are people from every different type of background, racial background, social background, whatever background, who have been saved and forgiven by the Lord Jesus Christ,

and who come together in true love and unity. and true love, and we worship the same Savior. And there's a love that they should see here that we have among one another. Derek Thomas wrote this, he said, sameness and total uniformity is something only the cults have sought after. Within the community of God's people, there's always been a recognition of the value of diversity.

D. The Command to Worship – vs. 4
This command of God is to come together and to worship and to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

III. Because this is a place where we Communicate – vs. 5
Two means of communication:
A. Word of God
B. Prayer

TEXT: PSALM 123

TITLE: MY CUP RUNNETH OVER ... WITH CONTEMPT!
SEEKING GOD'S GRACE

BIG IDEA:
WHEN THE PROUD LOOK DOWN ON US WITH CONTEMPT,
THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD NEED TO LOOK UP FOR GOD'S GRACE

I. (:1-2A) WE LOOK UP TO THE LORD OUR GOD

A. Because He is Enthroned in the Heavens

B. Because He is our Master = the one who is responsible to meet our needs

II. (:2B-3A) WE SEEK GOD'S FAVOR = "*Be gracious to us*"
(repeated 3 times)

III. (:3B-4) WE ARE GREATLY FILLED WITH CONTEMPT

"*Our soul is greatly filled with the scoffing of those who are at ease*"
"*And with the contempt of the proud*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What responsibilities do masters have for their servants?

2) If our eyes are looking up our souls cannot be downcast. What hinders us from looking up?

3) What types of contempt do we experience from our extended family? How do we handle it?

4) Why do the scoffers and the proud seem to have such an easier life than we do?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Maddux:
I. The upward look.
II. The submissive look.
III. The expectant look.
IV. The hopeful look.
V. The imploring look.
VI. The inward look.

VII. The separating look.

Kidner: "It is illuminating that *contempt* is singled out for mention. Other things can bruise, but this is cold steel. It goes deeper into the spirit than any other form of rejection; in the Sermon on the Mount it ranks as more murderous than anger (Mt. 5:22). It is particularly wounding when it is casual or unconscious; but if it is deserved and irreversible it is one of the pains of hell (Dn. 12:2)…

Yet as part of the Christian's lot, in his capacity as Christian, its sting is drawn. It can be an honour (Acts 5:41), and it is something Christ Himself accepted and made redemptive."

Leupold:
"a) An expression of complete submission to God till He be pleased to help (vv. 1,2)
This psalm expresses, not words that were spoken so much as a gesture, a quiet hopeful look….

The writer's looking to God is likened to the looking of servants or slaves and maids to the hand of their respective master or mistress…. this first phase of the psalm ends on the note of patient and hopeful waiting. Submission is the proper attitude for faith.
b) An earnest plea for help from contimptuous treatment (vv. 3,4)
… it is the attitude of the proud which makes the words spoken twice as cutting…"

Spurgeon: "here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as '*the Psalm of the eyes.*' Old authors call it *Oculus Sperans*, or *the eye of hope*. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Cure for Spiritual Nearsightedness**
Introduction: The word *myopia*, you may have heard of that word before. It's a medical term and it is the term for nearsightedness or short-sightedness. People who have myopia can see things that are close, but they can't see things that are far away, right? That's nearsightedness. Things that are distant, are blurred, or perhaps can't even be seen at all. And what's interesting is this medical term, myopia, comes from the Greek New Testament. Did you know that? This is the Greek word that is used in **2 Peter 1.9**, where it says this person is blind and cannot see afar off. That's one word in the Greek, and it's the word myopia.

And so perhaps you have that problem tonight. You're nearsighted. But I'm talking more to those who don't have a physical problem, but to those who have a spiritual problem, because this is a spiritual disease as well. There is such a thing in the Christian life, I believe, as spiritual myopia. And this is the believer, the Christian, who is so burdened down with the cares of this world because they're seeing things that are near. And they're not seeing things that are far off. They see the problems that they're dealing with. They see the circumstances that they are in. They see the world and all of its problems. And because they're spiritually nearsighted, they are depressed.

We don't really see the problem until we come to the last two verses in verses 3 and 4. And what I want you to notice is the phrase, *we are exceedingly filled with contempt*. It just

simply means saturated. We could say it like this. We have had more than enough. You ever hear someone say, I'm fed up to here. I'm fed up to here. Or I've had it up to here. Or I'm ready to throw in the towel. Or you could probably think of some others, right? I can't take it anymore. Or I'm at the end of my rope. Well, here's my favorite. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Now, all of these things really express the emotion that the psalmist is trying to express here. It is frustration. It is hurt. It is disappointment. And all of those things are all rolled up into one where he says, we are exceedingly filled. Now the burden the psalmist was facing was the ridicule and the contempt that the world was constantly dishing out at the people of God. The people of God are being scorned, they're being held in contempt by those who are at ease. I think one of Satan's greatest weapons is to use the contempt and the scorn of the world to try to get at God's people, to depress the people of God. Thomas Carlyle called ridicule or scorn, he called it the language of the devil. Shakespeare called it paper bullets of the brain. But those bullets have slain many a warrior. There are many that can stand up to lions, and yet they wither under scorn and ridicule from the world. And so the psalmist is fed up with it.

Background to this psalm – **Is. 36:4-20** -- most scholars agree that the background of this psalm was during the time when Hezekiah was king of Judah. And the city of Jerusalem was being invaded by the Assyrians under the king, Sennacherib. He's mocking the people of God. He's trying to really demoralize the people of God. The real problem you have is not your problem. The real problem you have is that you're focused on your problem and not on the Lord.

Big Idea: **Three things that cure spiritual nearsightedness**

I. Focus on God's Throne – vs. 1

You tell me where you're looking and I'll tell you what your spiritual condition is. Notice where he looks. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes*.
Is. 45:22

Purposeful Decision
We need to be reminded that our Lord sits enthroned in heaven. He is in control. **Is. 6**

II. Focus on God's Hand – vs. 2

Someone said faith is the ability to look past adverse circumstances and see God's hand at work. Whenever a master with servants would entertain guests, those servants would be attentive to his every gesture. In this culture, it was considered rude or it was considered unclassy to speak out loud. And so what the servants would do is they would look at the gestures of their boss, their master. And just with the gestures of his hand, he would give the servants direction on what to do. And so they would be waiting at the end of the hall, focused on the hands of their master. It may be just a little wave of the hand, a little finger gesture. But they're alert. They're standing. They're waiting. They're looking. for just that one little movement that will give them the order, the direction that they need.

God's hand at work in the Scriptures refers to God's providential acts. Many Christians are blind to what the Lord is doing. When we look at our problems, we become blind to blessings. But when we look to providence, we become blind to burdens. And we see God's good hand.

III. Focus on God's Heart (Mercy) – vs. 2b

Three times he uses the word mercy. He's asking God for mercy. Now, friend, this is a good prayer to pray. You know why? Because, first of all, it expresses to God our utter helplessness.

Would you go back to Isaiah again in chapter 36:2 because I want you to see a great illustration of what? We're talking about this prayer for mercy for God's help and salvation. He stood by the conduit of the upper pole in the highway of the fuller's field. Now, you say, why is that important? I think this information has special, not only geographical significance, but theological significance. Years earlier, another king of Judah, just a few years earlier, a king by the name of Ahaz, was in this same location. This is found in Isaiah chapter 7.

God sends Isaiah the prophet to meet King Ahaz where? At this very same place. At the conduit of the upper pool and the highway of the fuller's field. This exact same place is where King Ahaz stood. And what happened? King Ahaz was asked to trust in the Lord. He was asked to look to the Lord. And you know what happened? He wouldn't do it. He refused to look to the Lord. Instead, he looked to other things. And basically, he failed that test. He failed. Now, years later, here's another king. He's in the same situation. He's being threatened by an evil force and an evil king. And now he's going to be asked to do the same thing, and that is to put his trust in the Lord.

Now, go to chapter 37, and I want you to see King Hezekiah's response. Chapter 37, verse 1, it came to pass when King Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and he went into the house of the Lord. Drop down to verse number 14. It says, and Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and he spread it before the Lord. So what does he do here? Again, same situation. Hezekiah, he's filled with sorrow. He's distraught. He takes this threatening letter that is given to him and the other people in the city, and he takes this letter into the house of the Lord, and he spreads it out before God. And what is he doing by doing that? He's looking to the Lord now.

God may call upon us to wait, because you remember in Psalm 123, it says, until we wait upon thee for mercy. Sometimes we have to wait for God to bring His answer. But that's part of faith. By the way, that's the hardest part of the Christian life. Waiting. But that's faith, is waiting on the Lord. And you know what? Hezekiah waits. He doesn't have to wait long, because in verse 21, God sends Isaiah the prophet King Hezekiah. Look in verse 33, because here's the Lord's answer. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way he came, by the same shall he return. And it shall not come into this city, says the Lord, for I will defend this city to save it.

TEXT: PSALM 124

TITLE: THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE

BIG IDEA:
BECAUSE THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE,
WE ESCAPE BEING DEVOURED BY OUR ENEMIES

I. (:1-2) THE LORD MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IN ANY BATTLE

As powerful as David was, he had a large number of close calls where it was clear that only the protection of the Lord had enabled him to escape with his life.

"*Had it not been the Lord who was on our side*"

It should not be surprising when enemies rise up against the people of God and against God's program for the age; Satan is actively on the attack
"*When men rose up against us*"

II. (:3-5) THE INTENT OF OUR ENEMIES IS TO DEVOUR US

A. Driven by Anger

"*When their anger was kindled*"

B. Images of Destruction

1. Fierce Military Attack or Catastrophic Earthquake

"*they would have swallowed us alive*"

2. Raging Flood

"*waters would have engulfed us*"
"*The stream would have swept over our soul*"
"*the raging waters would have swept over our soul*"

III. (:5-8) ESCAPE COMES FROM THE LORD

A. Motivates us to Worship

"*Blessed be the Lord*"

B. Images of Escape

1. From Wild Animal seeking prey

"*has not given us to be torn by their teeth*"

2. From the Cunning Hunter and his traps

"*Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper*"

cf. the image of the freedom of a bird that is flying away
vs. the frustration of the hunter who returns to find his trap or net empty

C. Sufficiency of our Helper = the Lord

1. His character

"*Our help is in the name of the Lord*"

2. His credentials = Creator

"*Who made heaven and earth*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Where is Satan actively attacking God's people today?
Any personal attacks that have been directed against you?
"The snare is broken and we have escaped" – What types of deliverances have we experienced (maybe from sin or addiction or other forms of bondage)

2) If God is on our side, who can be against us?? Read Romans 8
Why do we feel sometimes like the Lord has deserted us or that something has separated us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?
No one can harm us unless the Lord permits it.

3) What are some historical examples of how the Lord rescued David?
Or some other OT examples of where the forces of Israel were greatly outnumbered, but the Lord came thru for His people (cf. Gideon)

4) Does our worship reflect this sense of escape from dire straits?
We are often very slow in expressing our gratitude.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "From all confidence in men may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God. … Our soul is like a bird for many reason; but in this case the point of likeness is weakness, folly, and the ease with which it is enticed into the snare. Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls…. The snare may be false doctrine, pride, lust, or a temptation to indulge in policy, or to despair, or to presume; what a high favour it is to have it broken before our eyes, so that it has no more power over us… '*The snare is broken, and we are escaped*.'"

Cambridge: "The psalm is an affirmation of the eternal vigilance for his people on the part of God…"

Barnes: "The danger was so great, their helplessness was so manifest, and the deliverance was so clearly the work of God, that it was proper to say that if this had not occurred, ruin would have been inevitable and entire."

Piper: David wants God first of all simply to be open to hearing his more specific requests. If God's face is turned away, ignoring David, then all his supplications and arguments are in vain.

All the other requests fall into two groups, David's desire for safety and his desire for godliness. His desire for godliness is seen in verse 8: "*Cause me to know the way I should go*," and verse 10: "*Teach me to do Your will ... lead me on a level path*." There
is a great lesson here for us, namely, whenever we plead with God for some material or physical blessing, we should always include an earnest prayer for our own moral and spiritual transformation. David's life was endangered and he was crying out for protection and preservation. But sheer existence, the hunger to stay alive, did not so dominate David's mind that he forgot the point of living. Why go on living? For the believer earthly life is not an end in itself. There are reasons to live which justify the desire to stay alive and one of those reasons is to do God's will, to walk in the way God has appointed (vv. 8,10). So David does not merely plead for escape and safety. He pleads for God to teach him and lead him in a "*land of uprightness*" (which is how
verse 10b can be translated). He doesn't just want to live, he wants to live for God….

In verse 11 God's righteousness is back to back with His commitment to His own name: "*For thy name's sake, preserve my life, in thy righteousness bring me out of trouble*." It seems to me, therefore, that the faithfulness of verse 1 probably means primarily God's faithfulness to His own name and only secondarily His faithfulness to His covenant promises. If so, then God's righteousness probably means: doing right by His name, that is, seeking to preserve the honor of His name. In support of this we could look at Psalm 7:17 where God's name and His righteousness come together again: "*I will give to the Lord the thanks due to His righteousness, I will sing praise to the name of the Lord*." If I am tracking with David, then, God's righteousness is His commitment to honor His name. God would do the ultimate wrong if He allowed His name to be indefinitely dishonored or belittled. David knows this and so he knows that this is a solid, unchanging rock that he can appeal to….

David's assurance is that if he is trusting in God with all his heart, lifting up his soul with longing to Him only, seeking refuge in Him alone and claiming Him for his only God, then God's honor is at stake in David's deliverance. It would be a blotch on God's name if one who banked all his hopes on that name was finally destroyed."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Had it not been for the Lord – Meditating on God's Providence**
Introduction: Many years ago, I read a book that had a big impact on my life called The Mystery of Providence, and it was written by a Puritan minister, a man by the name of John Flavel. He ministered in England in the 17th century.

His father, Richard Flavel, died in prison of the plague because he was a non-conformist minister, which meant that he preached the word of God and would not conform to some of the religious standards that he felt were out of harmony with scripture. So he stood on the word of God and his father ended up dying in prison.

But John Flavel learned a lot from his father, and he studied at Oxford, and in 1650 he was ordained to be a minister. John Flavel married a godly woman, and in the process of giving birth to their first child, his wife died. And the baby died as well. Flavel would remarry a second time only to see his second wife die tragically. He would remarry a third time only to have his third wife also struck down with illness and he watched her die as well.

In 1656, he was called to minister at Seaport City of Dartmouth. It was a small church, got a small salary, but he worked very hard and the people there loved him. Many people were converted to Christ. He was a great expositor of the Word of God. But John Flavel was ejected from the pulpit in 1662 for nonconformity. What does that mean? Well, you have to remember that in that time, the Church of England was the state-run church. They had a book called the Book of Common Prayer, where they demanded that all the ministers do their services and liturgy according to everything that was written in the Book of Common Prayer. And there were some things in there that was scriptural, but there were a lot of things that were not biblical. And John Flavel, like his father, could not use that book because he believed in doing things according to the word of God. And because he refused to conduct services according to the book of common prayer, he was removed from the pulpit. And back then under an act of parliament, if you did not conform to that book, you could also be arrested.

And so John Flavel spent the rest of his life basically on the run. He would still meet with his congregation, but a lot of times it was secretly in the woods. He was hunted, he was hounded by the authorities, and yet at the same time he ministered to many people. They were looking for him, they wanted to arrest him. Many times he narrowly escaped arrest. In the summer of 1681, he was forced to seek safety in London. And again, he narrowly escaped arrest when soldiers interrupted a prayer service that he was conducting. At one time, his enemies burned his image and effigy because they hated him so much. And then finally, when he made a visit to Exeter in 1691, John Flavel suffered a stroke. and he died, but his final words were, I know that it would be well, it will be well with me.

What was the secret of his perseverance during all these troubles and trials? John Flavel developed the spiritual discipline of meditating on the providence of God. He learned to look back in his life and see the hand of God working in the affairs of his life. He knew that it was only because of God that he was not swallowed up in all of his troubles and all of his afflictions. He knew it was God watching over him. It was only through the Lord that he was able to escape many, many troubles and difficulties in his life. He knew it was because of the Lord that he was able to go through many of the difficult trials that he faced in his life.

This is what he said -- a bad heart and a slippery memory deprive men of the comfort of many mercies and defraud God of the glory due for them. **Is. 26:11; 5:12** -- They will not recognize the providential hand of God.

Ps. 124 – The psalmist is looking back at the hand of God, his providences and saying, you know what? If it hadn't been for the Lord, we wouldn't be able to be here. If it hadn't been for the goodness of the Lord. The only reason I made it this far is because of the goodness of God. What if God had not intervened in my life and given me these blessings?

We could divide this psalm into two sections, in verses 1 to 5, providence, and verses 6 to 8, praise. In the first section of the psalmist, of the psalm, he's thinking. In the second section, he's thanking. In the first part, he remembers the hand of God. In the second part, he rejoices over the help of God.

I. Remember the Protective Hand of God – vs. 1-5

Surprise Attack – vs. 1-3

Had it not been for the Lord, had it not been for the Lord, we would have been swallowed up. We would have been devoured by this beast. We would have been a prey to their teeth.

II. Rejoicing in the Providential Help of God – vs. 6-8

Here's the image of a bird that's captured in a snare. The bird's fate is sealed, it's been captured, but something unbelievable happens. The snare is broken and the bird has escaped.

TEXT: PSALM 125

TITLE: ROCK SOLID
(OR: THE LORD AS THE ULTIMATE DO-GOODER)

BIG IDEA: ISRAEL – THE LAND OF THE RIGHTEOUS – ABIDES ROCK SOLID FOREVER

INTRODUCTION:
We know that "Faith can move mountains", but here we learn that Faith makes you an unmoveable mountain!

I. (:1) MOUNTAIN-LIKE STABILITY FOR THE LAND OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. Key = Faith
"*Those who trust in the Lord*"
this is the defining characteristic of the people of God
the object of our trust is who makes all the difference

B. Comparison to Mount Zion – "*Are as Mount Zion*"
1. Stability
"*which cannot be moved*"

2. Permanence
'*but abides forever*"

II. (:2-3) MOUNTAIN-LIKE PROTECTION FOR THE LAND OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. Key = Family Identity
"*the Lord surrounds His people*"
It is a bad thing to be surrounded by the enemy, but a great comfort to be surrounded by the Lord.

B. Comparison to Refuge and Protection afforded by Mountains
"*As the mountains surround Jerusalem …*"

1. Protection
"*So the Lord surrounds His people*"

2. Permanence
"*From this time forth and forever*"

C. Protection Against Evil Rule and Influence
"*For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous; That the righteous may not put forth their hands to do wrong.*"

III. (:4-5) ROCK SOLID BLESSINGS FOR THE LAND OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A. Blessing

"*Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, And to those who are upright in their hearts*"

B. Cursing

"*But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity*."

(:5B) BENEDICTION:

"*Peace be upon Israel*"

Cambridge: "not merely a request for absence of conflict, but a desire that in every way, Israel should prosper."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What mountains have you had the opportunity to visit? Describe their qualities. What type of impression or impact did they make on you? What was the benefit for a city like Jerusalem of being surrounded by mountains?

2) What type of mountain-top Christian experiences have you had where your faith and God's blessing were in evidence?

3) Why was the psalmist so concerned with Peace being upon Israel? What type of concern do we have for the extent of righteousness vs. crookedness in our land?

4) Reflect on how the Lord loves to "Do Good" to his people. As a parent, reflect on how you love to bless your children with good gifts, with protection and security, etc.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "Jerusalem, except on the north, is encompassed with hills or mountains, so that although the city was built on hills – Zion, Moriah, Bezethah, Acra, -- it was itself surrounded by hills higher than any of these, and was, in a certain sense, in a valley."

Barnes: Re "crooked ways": "unfrequented paths or roads; narrow and crooked paths, remote from the highways, or the ways commonly traversed. Hence the word means also paths of sin – as deviations from the straight road which man should travel."

Spurgeon: "As the Lord sitteth King for ever, so do his people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in him is firm. This is, and is to be our portion; we are, we have been, we shall be as steadfast as the hill of God. Zion cannot be removed, and does not remove; so the people

of God can neither be moved passively nor actively, by force from without or fickleness from within. Faith in God is a settling and establishing virtue; he who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, by that same power stays the hearts of them that trust in him. This steadfastness will endure 'for ever,' and we may be assured therefore that no believer shall perish either in life or in death, in time or in eternity. We trust in an eternal God, and our safety shall be eternal."

Peterson: "Being a Christian is like sitting in the middle of Jerusalem, fortified and secure. First we are established and then entrenched; settled, and then sentinalled: made like a mount, and then protected as if by mountains. And so the last sentence is, '*Peace be in Israel*!' A colloquial, but in the context accurate, translation would be, '*Relax*.' We are secure. God is running the show. Neither our feelings of depression nor the facts of suffering nor the possibilities of defection are evidence that God has abandoned us. There is nothing more certain than that he will accomplish his salvation in our lives and perfect his will in our histories."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **We Shall Not be Moved**
Introduction: These are unstable times financially; morally; spiritually; militarily -- we are living in unstable, changing times. And that's why Psalm 125 is such a great psalm for us. I think this is a perfect psalm for anyone who has anxiety in their heart about all the instability that is around us. Some of these chapters were written in the setting of the invasion of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib.

Big Idea: **Three characteristics of those who are learning to trust in the Lord.**

I. There is a Permanence about them – vs. 1
Here the psalmist, in a very poetic way, is expressing an idea of permanence, of immovability. And how does he do that? He points to the city of Jerusalem itself. He points to Mount Zion. You can imagine a pilgrim as he's coming into the city, as he scales the hill and he looks and sees Jerusalem. And he sees that city that has been there for so many years. And he says, they that trust in the Lord is going to be just like that city, that immovable city. This city was founded upon a strong rock. But I think that what he's referring to here is not the geographical features, although Jerusalem was founded on Mount Zion, that strong citadel, that rock. I think he's talking about the city being in the purpose and plan of God. The reason Jerusalem is not going anywhere is because that city has been part of God's purpose and plan for a long, long time. And so it's not going to go anywhere. That city is going to continue to abide. Jesus will reign from the throne of David, the Bible says. And so it's fixed. It's permanent. It's not going anywhere. Now the psalmist is saying that the person who puts their trust in the Lord is going to be like that city, like Mount Zion. stable, firm, fixed, immovable. The point is, even the weakest saint who exercises simple trust in God is anchored to an immovable object. God expects strength and stability from His people. Stand Firm.

II. There is a Presence around them – vs. 2
Just like Jerusalem is surrounded with mountains, even so God will surround his people. And you have to understand a little bit about the topography of Jerusalem. They say, I've never been there, but they say that as you enter in, Jerusalem is kind of like a saucer with higher mountains all around it.

Did you know that there are actually seven mountains that surround Jerusalem? Seven mountains. Let me give them to you. And let me just kind of give you how I think this speaks of God to us.

1. First, there's **Mount Moriah**. That's one of the mountains that surrounds Jerusalem. And that speaks to me of God as my provider. We know the story of Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. That was the mount where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. And the Lord didn't allow him to do that because the Lord provided a substitute ram in the thicket. And that's where he called upon Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who provides. And so that speaks to me of God as my provider.
2. And then there's another mountain there around Jerusalem. It's called **Bethsaida**. And that speaks to me as God, my pardon. This word, *beseda*, comes from the root word, *kesed*, which means mercy and love. This is the word that is used in the Old Testament to speak of God's loving grace, God's forgiving grace. This speaks of God, my pardon.
3. And then there's a mountain there called Scopus. And that speaks to me as God my physician. He's my physician. This was the mount. It was a place where people who were sick were treated. Did you know even today there, Mount Scopus has been the site of various hospitals there in Israel.
4. And then there was **Mount Olives**. And this speaks to me of God my power. The root word here is *zetem*, which means to press like an olive press. And it speaks of olive oil. Oil was that symbol of the Holy Spirit and power. And so God is my power.
5. And then there's **Mount Opal**, which is a word that means a wall, a protection. This speaks of God, my protector. He's constantly protecting me.
6. And then, of course, there was **Mount Zion**, which is from the word which means white or pure. And this speaks of God, my purity.
7. And then, of course, there was another mountain there that is called **Garib**, or we know it better as **Mount Calvary**. And this speaks of God, my propitiation. This is where Christ took the sins of the world upon himself.

And so all of this speaks about what God is in my life. He's like those mountains that surround Jerusalem. **He's my provider. He's my pardon. He is my physician, my power, my protection, my purity, my propitiation**. He surrounds me with his strength, his love, his mercy. That's what God is to me. That's what God is to you.

III. There's a Providence ahead of them – vs. 3 – cf. Rom. 8:28

God is going to work everything together for good to those who are trusting Him. He's going to work it all out. His providence is already working those things out. And we know the word providence comes from two words, *pro-*, which means beforehand, *video*, to see, **to see beforehand** God's actions today are based on what He already sees tomorrow. And He's working on behalf of His people.

Look at the list of blessings for those who trust in God

A. Promise of Preservation – **vs. 3** –
the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.

God will not permit the scepter of wickedness to rest on the lot of the righteous to the extent that it would drive God's people into sin and wickedness. 1 Cor. 10:13

B. Promise of Prosperity – **vs 4**
He will do good to those who will be good.

C. Promise of Peace – **vs. 5**
If you ride with an outlaw, you've got to die with an outlaw. And if you turn aside and you do what the wicked does, then you'll be counted with the wicked. And you'll be judged with the wicked. But those that trust in the Lord, what will God give? **Peace**.

TEXT: PSALM 126

TITLE: WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE

BIG IDEA: RESTORATION (TO ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S PROMISED BLESSINGS) WIPES AWAY THE TEARS OF CAPTIVITY WITH THE JOYFUL SHOUTS OF PRAISE

INTRODUCTION:

Context: Return from Babylonian captivity

I. (:1-3) RESTORATION REALIZED

"*When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion*"

A. A Dream Come True

"*We were like those who dream*"

Need to poke yourself to see if you are dreaming. Everything seems too good to be true.

B. Tears of Captivity

"*the captive ones of Zion*"

C. Joyful Shouts of Praise

"*Then our mouth was filled with laugher, And our tongue with joyful shouting*."

D. Exciting Testimony

1. Second Hand Testimony

"*Then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them*."

2. First Hand Testimony

"*The Lord has done great things for us; We are glad*."

II. (:4-6) RESTORATION ANTICIPATED

"*Restore our captivity, O Lord*"

A. Visualizing the Dream

"*As the streams in the South*"

B. Tears of Captivity

"*Those who sow in tears*"

"*He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed*"

no possession of the promised land in which to plant crops

C. Joyful Shouts of Praise

"*Shall reap with joyful shouting*"

"*Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy*"

D. Testimony of Fruitfulness
"*bringing his sheaves with him*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Recall the initial joy and excitement over your conversion to Christ. Have there been subsequent instances of "restoration" where you have experieced such joy and gladness?

2) Have your family spend some time recounting the "great things" which the Lord has accomplished for you. Do any of your family or friends and neighbors realize what the Lord has done for you? Have you told them?

3) Has blessing ever rushed upon you like a flash flood? Recall the Lord's promise in Malachi to open the windows of heaven and shower us with blessing if we turn from our self-righteous ways and obey Him.

4) When you get to heaven, what sheaves of fruitfulness will you gladly be bringing with you?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Re testimony of the Gentile nations that heard of Israel's restoration. These outsiders were saying: 'Yahweh [the One known to be the God of Israel] did great things for them.' This remark was made with obvious wonder and surprise. No God of the ancients was ever known to have achieved the restoration of His people after their deportation. Cf. Is. 52:10. What the heathen were compelled to say with a sort of grudging admiration, Israel could say with deep conviction by using the selfsame words …"

Leupold: Re streams in the south – "In the South land … are many wadis, stream beds, that are dry eleven months out of twelve and apparently unable to produce even a trickle of water. When, however, the rainy season comes, they fill up quickly and often become raging orrents. So completely can the Lord change the status of His people. For such a total change the psalmist prays in Israel's name."

Barnes: Re streams in the south -- "As those streams when dried up by the summer heat are swelled by autumnal and winter rains, so let the streams of the returning people, which seem now to be diministhed, be swelled by augmenting numbers coming again to their own land. Let the companies of returning emigrants be kept full, like swollen streams, until all shall have been brought back."

Spurgeon: on the bliss of restoration – "Let us look to the prison-houses from which we have been set free. Ah, me, what captives we have been! At our first conversion what a turning again of captivity we experienced. Never shall that hour be forgotten. Joy! Joy! Joy! Since then, from multiplied troubles, from depression of spirit, from miserable backsliding, from grievous doubt, we have been emancipated, and we are not able to describe the bliss which followed each emancipation."

Wiersbe:
1. Happiness is freedom (vv.1-3)
…freedom in Christ is what enables you to become all that God wants you to become. As you yield to Christ and obey Him, He reproduces Himself in you, and enables you to be yourself! A paradox! Of course—but a blessed paradox! True individuality is the result of surrender to Christ. Cult leaders duplicate themselves in their naïve followers, who gradually lose their freedom and their individuality. But Jesus Christ reproduces Himself in His disciples, who enjoy freedom and individuality in the happy will of God!

2. Happiness is fullness (v.4)
… It is not God's will that people have empty lives, or that they live on the sickening substitutes of this world. In Jesus Christ, spiritual fullness is available. God can fill your empty life the way the rains fill the dry riverbeds in the desert, but with this difference: those rivers will one day go dry again, but you can go 'from blessing to blessing' as you draw upon the fullness of Jesus Christ.

3. Happiness is fruitfulness (vv.5-6)
… Why is a fruitful life a happy life? Because a fruitful Christian is experiencing God's power in his life and fulfilling his greatest potential. Furthermore, he is serving others, and this is a constant source of joy. The more faithful he is to the Lord, the more blessing (and trials) he experiences; but this prepares him to be even more useful to the Lord."

Peterson: "Joy is not a requirement of Christian discipleship, it is a consequence. It is not what we have to acquire in order to experience life in Christ; it is what comes to us when we are walking in the way of faith and obedience.

We come to God (and to the revelation of God's ways) because none of us have it within ourselves, except momentarily, to be joyous. Joy is a product of abundance; it is the overflow of vitality. It is life working together harmoniously. It is exuberance. Inadequate sinners as we are, none of us can manage that for very long."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Song of Joy**
Introduction: Joy is inward and it is constant. No matter what the outward circumstances may be, you can always have that inward joy. The shortest verse in Greek is **1 Thessalonians 5:16**, *rejoice evermore*. The psalmist here seems to be bursting forth with uncontainable joy. Now I want us to look at this psalm then and find out the sources of joy.

Big Idea: **Three sources of joy for believers**

I. Joy in Freedom – vs. 1

What captivity is in view here? Some say Babylonian Captivity. But this is called the Captivity of Zion (City of Jerusalem). The psalmist implies that the city's deliverance was sudden and unexpected. The city was held into captivity, and suddenly something happened where they were free. Now, the release from the Babylonian captivity was not sudden. It was not unexpected. Context: 2 Chron. 32 – invasion of Sennacherib -- the next morning when you get up, this mighty army, the mightiest army in the world at that time, has been wiped out, decimated, destroyed, and all the men are dead. Let me ask you a question. Are you going to be happy about that? Are you going to be filled with joy? What an incredible scene that must have been.

Did you know that we're much like those people in that city? Did you know that we were in captivity to a great king and he had us in bondage and we were under his control and under the fear of death? And his name was Satan. Did you know the Bible says the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one? That he's in control of those who do not know him? And at one time we were children of the devil until God, through a miracle, delivered us from Satan. And now we are free. **Heb. 2:14** -- there's joy in deliverance. **Ps. 40:3** We should get joy from knowing that we've been delivered by God from sin and Satan from the kingdom of darkness. And we know that we're going to heaven.

II. Joy in Fullness – vs. 4

He's speaking of a particular area there in Palestine in the south known as the Negev. It is a dry desert. In fact, the Hebrew word Negev means dry. And during that dry season, the riverbeds or these little tributaries, small streams off these rivers, they're called wadis over there, they would get dry, barren, they would be cracked, and they would be empty. And that was during the dry season, there was just barrenness, there was just drought.

But now when the springtime came, two things happened. It would start to rain, and it would partly fill up those wadis and those streams and those rivers. And then another thing would happen, the snow from off the top of Mount Hermon, would begin to melt and the waters would flow down into the Jordan River and the Jordan River would flow down and those waters would come into those tributaries and wadis and they would be filled to overflowing.

And so it went from one extreme to the other. It went from being completely dry and barren and empty to being completely overflowing with water. Now, the psalmist is referring to this phenomenon that happens pretty much every year there in the Holy Land. He said, Lord, make us like the streams in the South. When the springtime comes, we want to be filled to overflowing.

Satan works to distract us.
Busyness can distract us.

<u>What are some of the things God wants to fill us with?</u>

1) The knowledge of His will – **Col. 1:9**
2) The Word of God – **Col. 3:16**

Thomas Minton, the great Puritan, wrote this. He said, Barrenness and leanness of soul is a very great defect which God's children often complain of. And he says, one great reason is because the Word of God doth not dwell plenteously in them.

3) The Spirit of God – **Eph. 5:18**
If you try to live the Christian life in your own strength, you're not going to have joy.

How do I know when the Holy Spirit is with me? Three signs, **verse 19**, *speak in yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.*

III. There is Joy in Fruitfulness – vs. 5-6

A. The Tears – vs. 5

The basic reason we win so few people sometimes is because our hearts really aren't broken over the destiny of the wicked. People don't care what you know until they know that you care. And we have to show compassion.

B. The Treasure – vs. 6

We're sowing precious seed, and the seed, of course, symbolically, is the Word of God. It is the seed that works.

C. The Triumph – vs. 6

God doesn't promise that every person that we talk to is going to get saved, but we're not going to fail. And one day it will bring rejoicing.

TEXT: PSALM 127

TITLE: NO SUCCESS APART FROM GOD'S BLESSING

BIG IDEA: THE SUCCESS OF ANY ENDEAVOR DEPENDS ULTIMATELY ON THE GIFT OF GOD'S BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

There are many ingredients to success. The psalmist is not demeaning the value of hard work, of diligence, of ambition, etc. But there is one essential ingredient for success.

I. (:1) 2 ILLUSTRATIONS

A. Building a House

"*Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it*"

1. Requires skilled labor – but this alone is vanity apart from:

2. Essential Ingredient = the work of God

cf. frustration of those who attempted to build the Tower of Babel in opposition to God's will.

Cambridge: "*house* is probably used in a wide sense, which could include the temple, an ordinary house, or a dynasty or family"

B. Guarding a City

"*Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain*"

1. Requires the vigilance of a watchman – but this alone is vanity apart from:

2. Essential Ingredient = the vigilance of God

II. (:2) KEY PRINCIPLE

A. Insufficient Ingredients for Success (Fruitless apart from God's Blessing)

1. Long Hours of Work

"*It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late*"

2. Hard Labor

"*To eat the bread of painful labors*"

B. One Essential Ingredient for Success = Gift of God's Blessing = "*He Gives*"

"*For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep*"

If man receives the blessing while he is sleeping, it is evident that the fruit of

his labors depend on God's gracious gift rather than on his own labors.

The Lord delights to give good gifts to His beloved children.
No place for anxiety; we should sleep in peace – confident in the Lord's giving to meet our needs in harmony with His will.

Cambridge: perhaps should be interpreted: "he gives (children) to those He loves as they sleep" Or "in sleep (= marital intercourse)"

Transition: The best proof of this is the gift of children.

III. (:3-5) FINAL PROOF = GOD'S GIFT OF CHILDREN

A. The Determining Ultimate Source of Children

1. "*Behold, children are a gift of the Lord*"

2. "*The fruit of the womb is a reward*"

B. The Powerful Resource of Children
"*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth*"

C. The Blessing of a Large Family
"*How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;*
They shall not be ashamed, When they speak with their enemies in the gate."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) As we acquire skill in a particular area, do we tend to forget about our need to rely on God for success in that area?

2) When have we labored hard at something and been frustrated because God's hand of blessing was not in the endeavor? Doesn't this make it imperative for us to spend time seeking the will of the Lord as to what endeavors He wants us to give our time and energies to?

3) Do we treat each of our children as a precious gift from the Lord and communicate that to them?

4) Do we have the same perspective towards large families as the Lord does? What does this have to say about the modern emphasis on family planning and birth control?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: “Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from labouring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power, to render second causes effectual. Holy Scripture endorses the order of Cromwell – ‘Trust in God, and keep your powder dry’: only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear.”

Cambridge: “Among numerous benefits of having many sons will be the ease of obtaining justice in court … “In an agricultural society, a large number of children will help to defend and work the family lands. The psalmist, however, sees the greatest benefit as accruing in the field of justice, where cases were heard in the gate of the city… Whereas in corrupt times justice might be denied to the defenceless (e.g. the widow and orphan) it would hardly be denied to a man backed by a number of hefty sons! It is less likely that the passage refers to actual fighting or feuding between families.”

Barnes: Re children as a gift – “They are an inheritance derived from the Lord. They are bestowed by him as really as success is in building a house, or in guarding a city. The idea is, that everything which we value, or which we desire, is a gift from God, and is to be received as from him, and to be acknowledged as his gift. The general idea here, as in the previous verses, is that of entire dependence on God.”

Leupold: “That man is described as being particularly fortunate who is supported by stalwart sons in the city gate. It must be born in mind that the city gate was the place where persons most generally congregated. There business was transacted; there cases were tried in a kind of popular court. Whatever the situation was, when a man encounters opponents, happy is he to have some sons of his own as backers, stalwart young men who support him and prevent the opposition from taking advantage, as it sometimes well might, of a lone-standing individual.”

Piper: “Don't eat the bread of anxious toil because *‘God gives to His beloved in his sleep*.’ Some translations say, He gives His beloved sleep. Either is a possible translation from the Hebrew. One implies that God helps a person rest at night, the other implies that
while a person is resting God is busily at work in the world to bless him. Which fits the context better?

The first half of verse two says that it is vain to rise early and go late to rest, but how would the simple statement that God gives sleep discourage a person from rising early and going to bed late? He is not interested in his sleep, he's worried and wants to be
about his work. But if Solomon meant, as I think he did, ‘*God gives to His beloved in his sleep*,’ then there is a tremendously strong incentive to stop being anxious and cutting our sleep short. The incentive is this: God can perform more good for those who trust Him while they sleep than they can perform with anxious labor for themselves while awake. Can you think of a better reason not to rise early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil?

Have you ever wondered why God made us in such a way that we have to sleep away a third of our lives? God could have designed a human being that was always fresh and rested and needed no sleep. Why did he decree that sleep be part of human experience? I'll give you my opinion. He wanted to give a universal reminder to the human race that we are but children and ought to own up to it. We are so frail that we have to become helpless and unconscious and blind and weak every day in order to live at all. Sleep is a terribly humbling experience. We are never more weak, never more childlike than when we sleep in faith,. And has not God said, '*My power is made perfect in weakness*'! And: '*Unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God*.' …

So don't eat the bread of anxious toil, because no matter how hard you work to achieve anything, God has lifted off your back the final responsibility for its success, and God can accomplish more good for those who trust Him while they sleep than they can accomplish with anxious labor while awake."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Psalm for Frustrated Fathers**
Introduction: This psalm is about getting God's full blessing on your family. Solomon gives us some great lessons about how to live meaningfully as a father and not be frustrated. over the things that we experience in life, but they have full meaning and all the labor that we have.

I. Learn to fully rely on the Lord – vs. 1
Anything you do, whether it's building a house, guarding a city, working in your job, it is worthless unless the Lord is in it. We all have this sinful propensity to see ourselves as being primary in our efforts, and we relegate God to a secondary role in all that we do. The most crucial factor in building a satisfying home is that you walk in genuine humility before the Lord is that you cast yourself upon his grace so that you can trust in Him by faith and prayer for God to do it all.

Look at the <u>two things</u> we need to rely upon God for.
A. <u>Building the home</u>

B. <u>Protecting the home</u>

II. Learn to faithfully respond to the Lord – vs. 2
When we say we're relying on the Lord, it doesn't mean we sit around and do nothing. There's a balance here between, and I see this all over in scripture, between human responsibility and divine sovereignty. We have to do what we're responsible to do. But then after that, we rest in the Lord. That's it. We don't worry after we do it.

III. Learn to freely receive from the Lord.
A. <u>Desirability of children-- **Vs. 3** –</u>
Children are a heritage of the Lord. And the fruit of the womb is his reward.
Every child is a sovereign gift from almighty God.

B. <u>Direct ability of the children – **vs. 4**</u>
As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth.

They require our time to shape and reshape them.
I do my best to teach my children the things of God, and then I launch them forth

C. <u>The Dependability of the children – **vs. 5**</u>
Happy is a man that had his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Because of those children, he's not afraid. He's not ashamed. Why? Well, when the enemy comes to the gate, his children are standing there right behind him.

May we raise a generation of children that are strong, strong in the Word, strong in prayer, that know how to walk with you, that know how to face the enemies today. And Lord, only You can do that for us.

TEXT: PSALM 128

TITLE: LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

BIG IDEA: BLESSINGS FOR THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD

(:1) DECLARATION:

"*How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways*."

A. Promise – Abundant Blessing

B. Recipients

- "*everyone who fears the Lord*"
- "*Who walks in His ways*"

I. (:2) PERSONAL BLESSINGS

A. Fruitful Labor

"*When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands*"

B. Happiness and Prosperity

"*You will be happy and it will be well with you*"

II. (:3) FAMILY BLESSINGS

A. Fruitful Wife

"*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine*"

B. Numerous and Pleasant Children

"*Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table*"

(:4) REVIEW

"*Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord*"

III. (:5) NATIONAL BLESSINGS

A. Zion as the Source of all Blessing

"*The Lord bless you from Zion*"

B. Jerusalem as the Recipient of Blessing

"*And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life*"

IV. (:6A) POSTERITY BLESSINGS

"*Indeed, may you see your children's children*"

the joy of being permitted to see prosperity extended to the next generations

(:6B) BENEDICTION

"*Peace be upon Israel*"
Reflects concern for the furtherance of God's kingdom on the earth.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Think of how the Bible consistently preaches a strong work ethic. The "work of our hands" is something that God wants us to ourselves to and something which He has promised to bless abundantly. What satisfaction do we get from the fruit of our labors?

2) Note the connection between fearing the Lord and obedience. How do you see that worked out in your family relationships between parents and children? Are we too permissive or "buddy-buddy" with our children in ways that undermine the proper respect that we are trying to instill and thus undermine their obedience?

3) Develop further the imagery of a wife like a fruitful vine and children like olive plants. What are some of the characteristics and applications that come to mind?

4) Note the emphasis on the blessing of grandchildren. Are we maintaining sufficient contact with our extended families to enjoy these blessings in a day when people seem to be so spread out geographically?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "The blessing enjoyed by the family will overflow into the general prosperity of Jerusalem and Israel."

Cambridge: Re "*you shall eat*" – "it did not follow in ancient Israel that a man would always enjoy the fruit of his labours on the land. Deprivation by an enemy nation, or drought, or disease, or a plague of locusts, could be his lot from time to time. The Israelites tended to regard such disasters as God's punishment, something that would pass by a truly god-fearing man, although the destiny of the individual was obviously bound up with that of the community …

Cambridge: Re the wife as a "*fruitful vine*" – suggests the vitality and beauty of the wife, who achieves a close and harmonious relationship with her numerous children, who are symbolized by *olive-shoots*"

Spurgeon: Re children like olive plants – "Hundreds of times have I seen the young olive plants springing up around the parent stem, and it has always made me think of this verse. The Psalmist never intended to suggest the idea of olive plants round a table, but of young people springing up around their parents, even as olive plants surround the fine, well-rooted tree. The figure is very striking, and would be sure to present itself to the mind of every observer in the olive country. How beautiful to see the gnarled olive, still bearing abundant fruit, surrounded

with a little band of sturdy successors, any one of which would be able to take its place should the central olive be blown down, or removed in any other way."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Home that is Blessed**
Introduction: Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 are meant to be read together, because they both focus on blessings in the home. Psalm 127 basically talks about a satisfying home that has God's blessing, and Psalm 128 takes a step further. It's God's blessing on the home, and it tells us why and how that blessing comes, and it comes through, very simply, the **fear of the Lord**.

There's a progression in this Psalm. A man who fears the Lord will also teach his family to fear the Lord. It'll be well with his family. And if it's well with his family, then it'll be well also with the nation. By the time you get down to verse number six, it talks about the peace of God on the whole country, the whole nation of Israel. So it starts really with the man.

Key idea thru the whole psalm is the word *blessing*. Means happiness. The Hebrew word here is actually talking about *asherim* -- which is many multiplied blessings and happiness on the home. And so this is a pronunciation of blessedness and blessing on the home where there is a father who fears the Lord and who teaches his children to do the same.

I. The Condition for God's Blessing = Fearing the Lord – vs. 1
Definition of the fear of the Lord. It is a reverential attitude that leads to right actions.
A. The Attitude -- Reverential
This is an awareness of the holiness and the awesomeness of God.
Now there's a negative side to this fear of the Lord, and that is, it's this idea that God is not to be trifled with.

B. Right Actions --
To fear the Lord is to walk in his ways.

Prov. 1:7 -- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of what? Wisdom. It's the beginning of wisdom. Now again, the question we have to ask, what is biblical wisdom? Very simply, if I can just give it to you in a very simple expression, biblical wisdom is the ability to make the right choices = godly choices.

Wisdom is not about how smart you are. It's not about your IQ.

II. The Circumference of God's Blessings – vv. 2-3
These are a wide range of blessings that God gives to the man that will lead his home to fear the Lord.

A. His Contentment and Satisfaction – **vs. 2**
He's learned to enjoy his labor, and he's learned to enjoy his family, and he provides for them, and he's content with what he has, and he's happy. He's satisfied. He has a contentment that comes only from God. Contrast in book of Eccl. How Solomon lacked contentment.

B. His Companion – **vs. 3** – His wife and children

This is a beautiful picture of the husband-wife relationship. She's like that beautiful vine, and he's like that stable wall, and she clings to him, and he's that stability, and she's that beauty in the home. So there's a beautiful picture of oneness and togetherness here that the psalmist is trying to paint in this picture here in verse number three. A vine will cling, a vine will climb, it'll grow, and then also a vine will continue to cluster, that is, it'll produce fruit. And that's a picture of the children. Children are a sign of blessing. They don't make a rich man poor, they make a poor man rich.

C. <u>His Contribution – vs. 5-6</u>

Because it's well with the family, that family is going to make a contribution to the overall nation.

TEXT: PSALM 129

TITLE: THE BATTLE CRY OF THE PERSECUTED BELIEVER

BIG IDEA: ULTIMATE DEFEAT IS RESERVED FOR OUR PERSECUTORS

I. (:1-4) THEY CAN BEAT ME BUT THEY CAN NEVER DEFEAT ME
(THEY CAN WHIP ME BUT THEY CAN NEVER TOTALLY WHIP ME)

A. Numerous Persecutions But Divine Perseverance

1. Numerous Persecutions

"*Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up*"

2. Divine Perseverance

"*Yet they have not prevailed against me*"

B. Painful Persecutions But Divine Deliverance

1. Painful Persecutions

"*The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows*"
Image of Israel lying down like a field and being scourged

2. Divine Deliverance

"*The Lord is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked*"

II. (:5-8) THEY WILL ULTIMATELY SUFFER THE SHAME OF
FRUITLESSNESS AND DEFEAT

A. Defining Characteristic of the Persecutors:
They hate God / They hate God's Program / They hate God's People
"*all who hate Zion*"

B. Final Destiny of the Persecutors

1. Shame: "*Be put to shame*"
2. Frustration and Defeat: "*turned backward*"

C. Image of Fruitlessness

1. Withering Grass

"*Let them be like grass upon the housetops, Which withers before it grows up*"

2. Barren Harvest

"*With which the reaper does not fill his hand*"
"*of the binder of sheaves his bosom*"

D. Denial of Any Blessing

"*Nor do those who pass by say,*
'The blessing of the Lord be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the Lord'"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) The nation of Israel by any account has had a rough time of it. Think thru how God used various heathen nations to discipline and persecute His people; but then remember how God judged those heathen nations as well. Who ended up better in the end?

2) When we are experiencing tough times and even persecution, is our testimony still that "The Lord is righteous?" Let us resolve to never find fault with the ways of the Lord – even when we don't understand where He is taking us.

3) Our lives are intended to be fruitful. Will the reaper and the binder of sheaves at the end of our days find much to gather in at the harvest?

4) From verse 8, consider what a powerful thing the blessing of the Lord is. Let us never use the Lord's name lightly or in vain. But let us always seek the blessing of the Lord for our household and the household of God.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "The idea is, that it is no new thing to be thus afflicted. It has often occurred. It is a matter of long and almost constant experience. Our enemies have often attempted to destroy us, but in vain. What we experience now we have often experienced, and when thus tried we have been as often delivered, and have nothing now therefore to fear. We are not to regard it as a strange thing that we are now afflicted; and we are not to be discouraged or disheartened as if our enemies could overcome us, for they have often tried it in vain. He who has protected us heretofore can protect us still."

Leupold: "the lament is a kind of summary of all the naitonal disasters that have befallen the nation at the hand of her enemies. From her youth onward Israel has suffered 'much' from the hostility of others."

Leupold: "the life of those who oppose God's people and thus God Himself will be utterly futile. It will amount to as little as do the tufts of grass that in spring shot up from the mud roofs of the typical Palestinian homes of days of old. They were bound to appear there from time to time. But even before the owner had determined to pluck them out, they had already withered away, due to lack of moisture."

Spurgeon: "The scourgers tore the flesh as ploughmen furrow a field. The people were maltreated like a criminal given over to the lictors with their cruel whips; the back of the nation was scored and furrowed by oppression. It is a grand piece of imagery condensed into few words."

Spurgeon: "See how godly men are roughly ploughed by their adversaries, and yet a harvest comes of it which endures and produces blessing; while the ungodly, though they flourish for a while and enjoy a complete immunity, dwelling, as they think, quite above the reach of harm, are found in a short time to have gone their way and to have left no trace behind."

Peterson: "The central reality for Christians is the personal, unalterable, persevering commitment that God makes to us. Perseverance is not the result of our determination, it is the result of God's faithfulness. We survive in the way of faith not because we have extraordinary stamina but because God is righteous. Christian discipleship is a process of paying more and more attention to God's righteousness and less and less attention to our own.; finding the meaning of our lives not by probing our moods and motives and morals but by believing in God's will and purposes; making a map of the faithfulness of God, not charting the rise and fall of our enthusiasms. It is out of such a reality that we acquire perseverance."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **When You Are Treated Like Dirt**
Introduction: The idea here is that God is the protecting presence over His people. This psalm really gives us some helpful advice when you're being wrongly or unjustly treated. We could literally say that they were treated like dirt. Look at verse number three, where it says again, *the plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows*. Literally, Israel had been treated like dirt. He was saying that people had been plowing over us, just like a farmer plows over the soil in his field. And so we've been treated that way. We've been mistreated, we could say, and abused and walked upon and treated like dirt.

Big Idea: **Three basic responses when we are being mistreated**

I. Just Expect It – vs. 1-2
God warned that this would be the case. What did God say to Abraham? *I will bless them who bless you* and what? *Curse them that curse you*. And what does that imply? That they will be cursed. And so persecution is nothing new. And that is also true of all the people of God, of the church. 1 Pet. 4:12; Matt. 10:17; Rev. 12 -- Satan has always targeted Israel. The dragon goes after the child, the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is out to blaspheme and bring down the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He tried to prevent the coming of the Messiah. He tried to devour the child as soon as it was born.

II. Evaluate It – vs. 1
When you go through a time of mistreatment, you should think about it, you should evaluate it. Now this psalmist does that very thing, and what does he discover as he evaluates it? He makes three conclusions based on his evaluation.

1) The enemy will not prevail – **vs. 2**
2) The Lord will not forget – **vs. 4** – He will be faithful to His promises – His Word
3) The season will not last – **vs. 4** -- there's come the time when God cuts the cords and the trouble and the suffering will not be long. It'll be over. He cuts the cords – **1 Pet. 1:6**

Andrew Murray had a fourfold reminder when he went through trials. He said, first, I have to remember that God brought me here. He said, secondly, I have to remember that I am here in His love. And he's given me grace as his child. And third, he said, he will make this trial a blessing.

He will teach me through this trial. He intends good for me. And then last, he said this, in God's time, he's going to bring me out of this. This is only for a little while. This is not for long. And so he says, I'm here by God's appointment. I'm here in his keeping. I'm here under his training. And I'm here for his time. And those are good things to remind ourself of when we're going through difficulty.

III. Entrust it – vs. 5-8

Imprecatory psalms -- where the people are praying that God would seek vengeance, or God would perform vengeance, or be the revenge against their enemies.

Now, you say, well, why should a person pray like this? Aren't we taught by the Lord Jesus to bless our enemies? Of course, we're taught that by the Lord Jesus, but that does not mean that there are times when we could not and should not pray for God's justice against His enemies. You say, now why would we do that? Because what is at stake is not ourselves, but the character and the nature and the honor of God. Or I should say the name of God is at stake.

Notice what he prays.

1) First of all, he prays that they would be **shamed** – **vs. 5**
2) Let them be **short-lived** – **vs. 6**

Let those who are plotting against or working against God's people, let them be like the grass on the housetops. Let it wither before it ever even comes to full fruition. Let it be useless.

3) Let them be **shunned** – **vs. 8**

But here's the overall principle. What is he doing here in these verses? He's committing all this to the Lord. He's saying, Lord, I'm putting all of my persecutors, all those who mistreat me, I'm putting them all in Your hands, Lord. He prays for them indeed, but He just commits it all to God. And friend, that's what we can learn from this. When you're being mistreated, when things are not going your way, when you feel like you're being walked upon like dirt, you're being plowed upon. It may not even be a person that's doing it. It may be a certain situation that has plowed you down and is walking over you right now. You say, how do I respond to that? Friend, number one, don't be surprised by it. You expect it when it comes. And then, friend, you evaluate it. And remember, the Lord hasn't forgotten you. He's with you. And then you entrust it. You give it to the Lord. You put it in God's hands. You know, what's interesting to me is that this is exactly what Peter tells us to do. Write down in your Bibles 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 19.

TEXT: PSALM 130

TITLE: THE LORD MAJORS IN FORGIVENESS

BIG IDEA: BECAUSE THE LORD MAJORS IN FORGIVENESS WE CAN CONFIDENTLY WAIT FOR HIS ABUNDANT REDEMPTION

INTRODUCTION:

Many Aspects of Redemption:

positional redemption – we already have obtained this blessing
completion of our redemption – applies to even our bodies

Also

Many Applications of Redemption:

ultimately to the redemption of our souls
but also to deliverance from other types of trials and difficulties

I. (:1-4) THE LORD MAJORS IN FORGIVENESS

A. The Reason Why God Responds to Our Cries for Help

1. God wants us to Turn to Him when we are in Trouble
   "*Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord*"
2. God Listens
   "*Lord, hear my voice!*"
   "*Let Thine ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications*"

Spurgeon: contrast between:

1) The depths from which prayer may arise
2) The heights to which prayer may ascend

B. The Only Basis for Hope

"*If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand*?"

C. The Pivotal Point for Our Relationship with God

1. Forgiveness is Offered by God (Fundamental to His Character)
   "*But there is forgiveness with Thee*"
2. Forgiveness Gives Us the Opportunity to Relate to God (Fundamental to Our Relationship with Him)
   "*That Thou mayest be feared*"

II. (:5-8) WE CAN CONFIDENTLY WAIT FOR HIS ABUNDANT REDEMPTION

A. Resolved Steadfastness of Confidently Waiting

- "*I wait for the Lord*"
- "*my soul does wait*"
- "*And in His word do I hope*"

B. Heightened Expectation of Confidently Waiting

"*My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning*;"
"*Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning*"

those who guard a city, wait anxiously for the dawning of a new day and the safety it provides

C. Solid Grounds for Confidently Waiting
- "*with the Lord there is lovingkindness*"
- "*And with Him is abundant redemption*"
- "*And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities*"

with us there is sin; but with the Lord there is forgiveness and lovingkindness

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What would people say you major in? Complaining? Holding Grudges? Or do you major in Forgiveness in your relationship with others? "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

2) How confident are we that the Lord hears our prayers? Why would we think that He would not hear us?

3) If God forgives us so readily, Why are we so hard on ourselves or so hard on others? (cf. the parable of the servant who was released from his debt and then went out and was unmerciful to his debtors)

4) What does the psalmist mean by "abundant redemption"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: Re "depths" – "It would be applicable
(a) to affliction – the depths of sorrow from loss of friends, property, or bodily suffering;
(b) sin – the depths into which the soul is plunged under the consciousness of guilt;
(c) mental trouble – low spirits – melancholy – darkness of mind – loss of comfort in religion – powerful temptation – disappointment – the anguish caused by ingratitude – or sadness of heart in view of the crimes and the sorrows of men – or grief at the coldness, the hardness, the insensibility of our friends to their spiritual condition"

Spurgeon: "The Lord's people have always been a waiting people: they waited for the first Advent, and now they wait for the Second. They waited for a sense of pardon, and now they wait for perfect sanctification. They waited in the depths, and they are not now wearied with waiting in a happier condition. They have cried and they do wait; probably their past prayer sustains their present patience."

Spurgeon: "Our iniquities are our worst dangers: if saved from these, we are saved altogether; but there is no salvation from them except by redemption. What a blessing that this is here promised in terms which remove it out of the region of question: the Lord shall certainly redeem his believing people from all their sins. Well may the redemption be plenteous since it concerns all Israel and all iniquities! Truly, our Psalm has ascended to a great height in this verse: this is no cry out of the depths, but a chorale in the heights. Redemption is the top of covenant blessings. When it shall be experienced by all Israel, the latter-day glory shall have come, and the Lord's people shall say, 'Now, Lord, what wait we for?' Is not this a clear prophecy of the coming of our Lord Jesus the first time? and may we not now regard it as the promise of his second and more glorious coming for the redemption of the body? for this our soul doth wait: yea, our heart and our flesh cry out for it with joyful expectation."

Peterson: "Waiting does not mean doing nothing. It is not fatalistic resignation. It means going about our assigned tasks, confident that God will provide the meaning and the conclusions. It is not compelled to work away at keeping up appearances with a bogus spirituality. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulations, of scurrying and worrying.

And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion of fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident alert expectation that God will do what he said he will do. It is imagination put in the harness of time. It is the opposite of making plans that we demand that God put into effect, telling him both how and when to do it. That is not hoping in God but bullying God."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Out of the Depths**
Introduction: Martin Luther also loved **Psalm 130**. He called it a Pauline Psalm. And the reason he called it that is because of the message of forgiveness and grace, apart from human works, that one finds when you read through and study through this psalm.

Psalm 130 is called a penitential psalm. In fact, it's one of seven psalms that are categorized as a penitential psalm. And it's categorized like that because this, along with the other psalms named, express deep sorrow and mourning over sin. It starts out really in despair and it moves upward and it ends in hope. As Derek Kidner writes, at the end there is encouragement for the many from the experience of the one. And so really Psalm 130 in itself is like a psalm of ascent because it moves upward throughout the four stanzas -- there are two verses in each stanza, and so we have eight verses with four stanzas, two verses each, and it's constantly moving upward.

What the psalmist is talking about here is sin. And the depths that he's talking about is he is wrestling with the guilt that comes with sin. He's wrestling with the shame that comes with sin. And he wants forgiveness. And he's tired of bearing this weight of sin. I think that today we have lost the sense of sin. We've lost the awareness of sin.

What this psalm basically does is it exalts the forgiveness of God. It shows us what a precious thing it is to have the forgiveness of God in our life. Because that's the only way to deal with guilt, beloved. We have to go to God. We have to repent before God. We have to find cleansing with Almighty God. And so this exalts the fact that we have a God who is a God of forgiveness, and again, it shows us how precious it is to have that.

Big Idea: **Now, based on that then, I want you to see just how the forgiveness of God will produce four effects in a person's life**

I. Repentance – vs. 1-2

II. Reverence – vs. 3-4

III. Restoration – vs. 5-6

IV. Redemption – vs. 7-8

TEXT: PSALM 131

TITLE: THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

BIG IDEA: THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT IS TO BALANCE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF SELF WITH LOFTY HOPE IN THE LORD

I. (:1) REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF SELF

A. Humility in Attitude

1. How I think about myself

"*O Lord, my heart is not proud*"
not being puffed up with a sense of my own importance

2. How I think about others

"*nor my eyes haughty*"
not expressing arrogance or contempt towards others

B. Humility in Actions – Not biting off more than I can chew

1. Degree of Importance

"*Nor do I involve myself in great matters*"

2. Degree of Difficulty

"*Or in things too difficult for me*"

cf. the Pride surrounding the Tower of Babel incident

we must guard against striving to do what only God can do; God might desire to work thru us, but we must be careful not to attempt such things in the flesh

II. (:2) THE PEACE OF CONTENTMENT

A. Attained by Actively Focusing My Soul on the Lord's Sufficiency

"*Surely I have composed and quieted my soul*"

B. Maintained by Quietly Resting My Soul on the Lord's Lovingkindness

"*Like a weaned child rests against his mother,*
My soul is like a weaned child within me."

III. (:3) LOFTY HOPE IN THE LORD

"*O Israel, hope in the Lord From this time forth and forever*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How is this Attitude of Humility different from a passivity which pursues a course of mediocrity? How do we still strive for excellence in all things and yet remain in harmony with the tenor of this passage? When are our ambitions a problem and get in the way of submitting to the Lord's plan for our life?

2) How will our Contentment increase if we rest in our secure relationship with the Lord (the same type of relationship a weaned child enjoys resting against his mother) rather than anxiously striving to obtain more and more from the Lord? Think thru the struggle a young child goes thru during the weaning process until he arrives at the point of rest and contentment. Are we still in the struggle phase or have we arrived at the restful phase?

3) What made up some of the Content of Israel's Hope in the Lord? For what are we hoping? Think of how lofty our hopes should be.

4) Does our life reflect the tone of peace and quiet and restfulness that the psalmist portrays here? cf. some of the thoughts of the Beatitudes: "meek and lowly of heart"

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Re inner struggle required – "The writer had to take himself in hand: he 'stilled and quieted' his soul. There may have been a time when great plans and mighty projects surged through his thoughts and drove him onward along the road of ambition. In some way he came to see that it is wrong for a man to seek great things for himself and to aim at that type of fame. When the wrongness of his course became apparent, he desisted from his former pursuits. He takes a child as his model… As the weaned child rests content at its mother's side, no longer clamoring for the breast, so he, weaned of his ambitions, rests content to be at the side of his God."

Spurgeon: "What the heart desires the eyes look for. Where the desires run the glances usually follow. This holy man felt that he did not seek after elevated places where he might gratify his self-esteem, neither did he look down upon others as being his inferiors. A proud look the Lord hates…"

Spurgeon: "When we cease to hanker for the world we begin hoping in the Lord."

Ferguson: "If we were to give it a title, we could do worse than the one used by the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs for his book on this theme: *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.*

Burroughs was right to call contentment a '*jewel*,' because it is beautiful to see this grace in a person's life; it sweetens the spirit of those who are younger; it lends dignity to those who are older and helps us to understand what the psalmist meant when he said that the Lord '*beautifies the meek with salvation'* (Ps. 149:4).

Poem by Amy Carmichael:

And shall I pray thee change thy will, my Father?
Until it be according unto mine?

But, no, Lord, no, that never shall be, rather
I pray thee blend my human will with thine.

I pray thee hush the hurrying, eager longing,
I pray thee soothe the pangs of keen desire;
See in my quiet places wishes thronging.
Forbid them, Lord. Purge though it be with fire.

And work in me to will and do thy pleasure.
Let all within me, peaceful, reconciled,
Tarry content my Wellbeloved's leisure,
At last, at last, even as a weaned child."

Harris: A SONG OF CHILDLIKE TRUST
Theme: A meditation and self-examination on relationship to God.
Occasion: None given. Cf. 2 Sam. 6:22.

I. CAUTION. Ver. 1. "*Neither do I exercise myself*."
   1. Lowliness. Ver. 1a. "*My heart is not haughty*." This psalm is like the crooning of a peaceful child that has learned to rest on its mother's bosom. It is a meditation rather than a proclamation, and reveals a mood of the soul which betokens true humility.
   2. Loyalty. Ver. 1b. "*Too high for me*." It is a sign of fealty when the soul is content with that which God has permitted and ventures not into forbidden pathways. The Psalmist is loyal to Jehovah, and will follow him only where he calls or leads the way.

II. CONTENTMENT. Ver. 2. "*Quieted myself*."
   1. Submission. Ver. 2a. "*I have behaved*." Self-will has a large part in the spirit of discontentment which we feel. When we submit our will to God, there is happy peace and satisfaction. To learn the mastery of our own spirit and bring it under subjection is the secret of true contentment.
   2. Surrender. Ver. 2b. "*Even as a weaned child*." When we have learned to forego the joys and comforts we think we need and to which we feel entitled, then God will give us something better, something that will make for spiritual growth and strength in after life. Resolute self-suppression will bring the victory, and we shall rest satisfied in the Father's arms.

III. CONFIDENCE. Ver. 3. "*Hope in the Lord*."
   1. Reliance. Ver. 3a. "*Let Israel hope*." Out of experiences like these, the Psalmist would utter his word of exhortation. They who put their trust in God can know, too, and share in that quietness of heart which is his. God's provision for us is surely best, his judgments without question, his will our peace forevermore.
   2. Rest. Ver. 3b. "*From henceforth and forever*." Only thus can we come to true rest, when we cease to depend on ourselves and the things of time,

and rely on God and his eternity. Then shall we know that "*peace which passeth understanding*."

Peterson: "Christian faith needs continuous maintenance. It requires attending to….

Psalm 131 is a maintenance psalm. It is functional to the person of faith as pruning is functional to the gardener: it gets rid of that which looks good to those who don't know any better, and reduces the distance between our hearts and their roots in God.

The two things that Psalm 131 prunes away are unruly ambition and infantile dependency, what we might call getting too big for our breeches, and refusing to cut the apron strings. …

Ambition is aspiration gone crazy. Aspiration is the channeled, cretive energy that moves us to growth in Christ, shaping goals in the Spirit. Ambition takes these same energies for growth and development and uses them to make something tawdry and cheap, sweatily knocking together a Babel when we could be vacationing in Eden."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Hidden Jewel of Contentment**

Introduction: Spurgeon said that this psalm is one of the shortest to read, but one of the longest to learn. Because he's talking here about the idea of contentment. David has learned to humble and quiet his soul before the Lord. What is contentment? I like what the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs wrote. He said, it's a sweet, inward, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition. Another Old Testament scholar, Charles Kelly, he said it like this. He said, Christian contentment is the God-given ability to be satisfied with the loving provision of God in any and every situation.

Big Idea: **Contentment is something that we have to learn. Three characteristics of a truly contented person**

I. A contented soul learns to accept personal limitations – vs. 1

David is saying right now I'm winning this battle because I didn't give in to any of these things that in the past have been a stumbling block to me. I have not succumbed to pride. I have not succumbed to overreaching ambition. I have not succumbed to presumption. I've learned not to presume knowing things that only God can know, understanding things that only the Lord can understand. I haven't done any of these things.

A. Pride

All of us have a measure of pride. If anyone had a reason to be proud, it was David. If you walk in pride, basically you have the attitude, you cop an attitude that says, I deserve what I have. In fact, I deserve more. In fact, God hasn't given me enough. God hates pride. Pride is centered in the heart. **Mic. 6:8** God resists the proud, but he gives grace unto the humble.

Definition of Humility by Andrew Murray: Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and am at peace as in the deep sea of calmness when all around me and above me is trouble. The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself. He simply does not think of himself at all.

B. Overreaching Ambition
This is desire to have more than you already have. You have more, but you want more. And this is something that destroys contentment, where you're not satisfied with what you have.

I heard about a fisherman. And once a rich industrialist was disturbed to find this fisherman just sitting idly by his boat, and he said to the fisherman, why aren't you out there fishing? And the fisherman said, because I've caught enough fish for the day already. He said, well, why don't you catch more fish than you need? And the fisherman said, well, what would I do with them? He said, well, you can earn more money. You can buy a better boat so you can go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets and catch even more fish and make money. And soon you'd have a fleet of boats and you'll be rich just like me. And the fisherman said, well, then what would I do? He said, then you could sit down and enjoy life. And the fisherman said, well, what do you think I'm doing right now? I'm already enjoying life.

Certainly nothing wrong with godly ambitions. We should have them. But there's a difference between having godly ambition and selfish ambition. When it's all about you, it's cross the line. If it's more about you than about the kingdom, if it's more about you than the work of God, then that's really selfish ambition.

C. Presumption
I am not exercising myself in things too high for me. You never know what God's doing in His providence. The best thing to do is just wait and trust the Lord. Know that God in His wisdom is working in His love. He's doing what's best for you in His kindness.

It'll be a great day when we realize there are some things that we cannot do. There are some things that we don't know. There are some circumstances that we cannot control. There are some questions we cannot answer. **2 Sam. 12:7-10** David, you, instead of being grateful for the gifts that I gave you, instead of being content of the gifts that I gave you, you despised me, you despised my gifts, and by not being content and despising the gifts that I've given you, you opened yourself up and you went after another man's wife.

Contentment teaches us to accept what the grace of God gives and what the grace of God does not give.

II. **A contented soul learns to accept painful loss – Ps. 131**
Commentators debate about this picture, I'm not going to settle that matter here tonight, but some of them they think that this is a picture of a satisfied child on his mother's breast who's already been nursed, and so he's satisfied because he's already been contented by being nursed. And there are others that say this is a picture of a child who's been weaned off of his mother's breast, or we would say no longer on the bottle, No longer desperate to have what he thinks he should have.

A. There's a new level of submission there.
The will of the child has to be broken. One of the things I tell parents is, you know, try to break the will of your child without breaking their spirit, right?

B. Then also there's a new level of maturity because in this whole process, there's a change in

the diet from milk to solid foods. We learn a new level of dependence upon God.

C. There's also a new level of satisfaction.

III. A contented person learns to accept providential leading – vs. 3

I was anointed king, but I'll tell you what, I was living in a cave. It just looked like it was never gonna happen, but it did in God's time. Don't stop hoping in God. Give God time. A contented person learns to accept God's providential leading. And what I could say about that is, is that God providentially has a way and a time and the way he works, and he doesn't do it on our calendar. He does it on his and we just have to trust God that he knows what he's doing.

Phil. 4:11-12 -- He absolutely believed that God was in total control of his life. And he knew that God had a reason for every lack that he suffered, every limitation that he had. And every time God made him abound, he trusted God in all that. And that's the key to contentment. It's confident trust in the providential workings of God, knowing that God has your best interest at heart all the time.

Jeremiah Burroughs in his book, *The Jewel of Christian Contentment*, He just said that you're going to have to continually fight against several things if we're going to have this kind of contentment.

1. First, he says, we're going to have to fight against murmuring and repining against God, the hand of God. Fight against that.
2. Secondly, he says, we have to learn to fight against vexing and fretting.
3. Thirdly, he said, we have to fight against tumultuousness of spirit. That's a Puritan word there. When our thoughts are distracted, our works are confused, when our affections are unruly.
4. Fourth, he said, we have to fight against distracting, heart-consuming cares that have to be dealt with if we're going to have this kind of contentment.
5. And then fifth, he says, we have to fight against sinking discouragements.
6. And then six, we have to fight against sinful shiftings and shirkings to get relief when we try to figure out our way out of our circumstances instead of trusting God and our circumstances.
7. Seventh, he said, we have to fight against rising of the heart against God and all these things Burroughs talks about in his book.

TEXT: PSALM 132

TITLE: GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

BIG IDEA: GOD'S DWELLING PLACE IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITY OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

INTRODUCTION:
Barnes: Arguing for Authorship by Solomon instead of David: "'The whole tenor of this psalm,' says Jebb, 'is an exact epitome of the dedication prayer of Solomon (2 Chr. vi). The topics are the same, -- the building the house of the Lord—the promise to David—the inhabitation of the Almighty; and the concluding sentences of the dedication are identical with the expressions of the psalm in ver. 8-10…' it is almost certain that it was sung by the congregated multitudes when the ark was removed from the tabernacle in Mount Zion to the magnificent temple on Mount Moriah. It was a season of solemn joy, the greatest that had ever occurred in their national history."

I. (:1-9) ZEAL FOR GOD'S DWELLING PLACE EXPRESSED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

A. (:1-5) Reminder of David's Zeal for God's Dwelling Place
1. David's life characterized by affliction rather than peace
"*Remember, O Lord, on David's behalf, all his affliction*"
2. David's commitment expressed in blanket promise
"*How he swore to the Lord, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob*"
3. David's priorities oriented towards the Lord
"*Surely I will not enter my house, Nor lie on my bed:*
I will not give sleep to my eyes, Or slumber to my eyelids"
3. David's goal = to establish a Permanent Dwelling Place for the Lord
"*Until I find a place for the Lord, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob*"

B. (:6-7) Zeal Expressed in the Pursuit of the Ark of the Covenant
1. Tracking it throughout the land
"*Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; We found it in the field of Jaar*"

2. Traveling to it to worship in His presence
"*Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool*"

C. (:8-9) Zeal Expressed in the Dedication of a more Permanent Place of Worship
1. Call for the Lord to dwell in the Temple
"*Arise, O Lord, to Thy resting place; Thou and the ark of Thy strength*"

2. Call for the Right Response:
a. Priests – Holiness
"*Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness*"

b. People – Joy

"*And let Thy godly ones sing for joy*"

(This Refrain is repeated in verse 16)

II. (:10-12) APPEAL TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD FOR THE CONTINUITY OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

A. Based on God's Unchanging Promise to David

- God's servant
- God's anointed

"*For the sake of David Thy servant, Do not turn away the face of Thine anointed. The Lord has sworn to David, A truth from which He will not turn back; 'Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.*'"

B. Based on the Obedience of David's sons

"*If your sons will keep My covenant, And My testimony which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever.*"

III. (:13-18) REMINDER THAT THE PROSPERITY OF DAVID'S KINGDOM IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO GOD'S CHOICE OF DWELLING PLACE

A. God Chose Zion

"*For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation*"

"*This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.*"

B. God Promised to Abundantly Bless Zion in Many Ways

1. Food and material provisions

"*I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread*"

2. Spiritual Blessings (cf. to verse 9)

"*Her priests also I will clothe with salvation; And her godly ones will sing aloud for joy*"

3. Kingdom Blessings

"*There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed*"

C. Summary

1. Cursing for the Enemies of God's Anointed

"*His enemies I will clothe with shame*"

2. Blessing for God's Anointed

"*But upon himself his crown shall shine.*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Where is God's dwelling place today? As you read the psalm from this perspective thinking about your own body as God's temple and the body of Christ as God's temple, what insights do you gain?

2) As we meditate on the Lord's faithfulness to His promises … How faithful are we to the commitments we make to the Lord? Do we carry thru on our promises? What did it cost David to have such zeal for the Lord?

3) What are the implications here for the doctrine of Election? What security or comfort do we gain from these truths about God's sovereign choice? What are the Messianic implications of this psalm?

4) How has God abundantly blessed us recently?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "This psalm expresses more clearly than any other in the Psalter the significance of the Davidic kingship. In contrast to the frequent changes of dynasty in the northern kingdom after the death of Solomon, with the resulting upheaval and bloodshed (1 Kings 15:25-9; 16:8-22), the continuance of the Davidic line in the south ensured political stability. Theologically, the Davidic house was, for the people of the south, a symbol of God's favour; it is here acknowledged, however, that this favour was in part conditional upon the obedience of the king to the divine law (verse 12). We can thus understand the fervent wish in this psalm that God will continue to bless the house of David (verse 10) ."

Cambridge: "the region of Jaar is probably the neighbourhood of Kiriath-jearim, where the Ark rested for a long period (1 Sam. 7:2). Ephrathah may either be another name for Kiriath-jearim, or may be the birth-place of David (Ruth 4:11)."

Spurgeon: "David resolved to find a place where Jehovah would allow his worship to be celebrated, a house where God would fix the symbol of his presence, and commune with the people. At that time, in all David's land, there was no proper place for that ark whereon the Lord had placed the mercy-seat, where prayer could be offered, and where the manifested glory shone forth. All things had fallen into decay, and the outward forms of public worship were too much disregarded; hence the King resolves to be first and foremost in establishing a better order of things."

Peterson: "The Strength to Stand; the Willingness to Leap –
In such ways Psalm 132 cultivates the memory and nurtures the hope that lead to mature obedience. It protects us from a religion that is ignorant of the ways of God and so keeps us prey to every fear that thrusts itself upon us. It guards us from a religion riot with fantasies and nightmares because it has gotten disassociated from the promises of God. It develops a strong sense of continuity with the past and a surging sense of exploration into the future. It is the kind

of thing we sing to stay normal without becoming dull, to walk upright in the middle of the road without getting stuck in a long rut of mediocrity. Its words prod us to reach into the future without losing touch with daily reality. Its rhythms stimulate us to new adventures in the Spirit without making us lunatics. For Christian living demands that we keep our feet on the ground; it also asks us to make a leap of faith.

A Christian who stays put is no better than a statue. A person who leaps about constantly is under suspicion of being not a man but a jumping jack. What we require is obedience—the strength to stand and the willingness to leap; and the sense to know when to do which. Which is exactly what we get when an accurate memory of God's ways is combined with a lively hope in his promises."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **The Heart of the Worshiper**

Introduction: Why would a shepherd boy go up against a giant, a champion like Goliath? Well, it's because David, even at that young age, had a heart for the Lord. He had a passion for the honor of God. And he knew that the Philistines and this giant was dishonoring the name of God. And that was the thing that provoked David.

There are 18 verses in this chapter, and it's divided in half neatly. Nine verses at the beginning that talk about a man with God, and there are really two stanzas in those nine verses. And then the other nine verses talk about God with man. And again, there are two stanzas in that section as well. And notice that these sections begin with a reference to David.

Both sections talk about oaths or vows. David took an oath or a vow in the first nine verses. He makes a vow unto the Lord. And in the next nine verses, from verses 10 down to verse 18, God makes an oath and God takes a vow. In the first nine verses, David vows to build a house, a house for God. And in the second part of it, God makes a vow to build a house for David, or we could say a dynasty for David. And so David desires to build God a house, and God decrees to build a house for David. The more you want to honor and exalt God in your life, the more God is going to bless you.

Big Idea: **Four elements of the worship experience**

I. We contemplate God's rightful place – (:1-5)

I want to build a house that will put God on high, that will exalt the name of God to this world. He began preparation for building the house of God. Now, we know that ultimately it was not David who built that house. It was Solomon. But David began all of the preparations. And by the way, that wasn't an easy thing. That was a hard thing.

But that's the heart of a true worshiper. He's willing to pay whatever cost there is that God might get the rightful honor. But then notice David's determination, verse 3.

II. We celebrate God's reviving presence – vs. 6

This is when the Ark of the Covenant was brought back to Jerusalem.

The Ark of the Covenant is a box that's about a yard long, 18 inches high and deep. It was covered with gold. Inside the Ark was the tablets of stone, and on those stones was written the law of God. And this was carried through the wilderness. It had a lid on top of it. And on the top of that lid was the mercy seat. Angels' wings were outstretched. And it was overlaid with gold.

It was carried through the wilderness. and it symbolized God's presence. Whenever the Jews would go from place to place, always at the head of the parade were the priests bearing this ark. In fact, when the Israelites came to the Jordan River, the priests were the first ones to step into the river, and when they did, the Jordan River parted like the Red Sea, and they walked over on dry land. And then we also read of it, the ark was in Shiloh in Judges 18.1, after that was in Bethel, and then at Mizpah. And then you remember the story in the Bible how the ark was taken away by the Philistines. This was during the Judges' era of Israel's history. This was the dark ages when Israel was not obeying the Lord, and God would raise up a people to punish them.

And on one of those occasions, it was the Philistines. And in a battle of the Philistines, they won the battle and they took the ark that belonged to Israel. And you remember that Eli was the priest, and when he heard the news of that, what happened to Eli? He fell back and he broke his neck. And the glory of God had departed from Israel.

And in fact, why don't you just look at 1 Samuel 5, and just look at a few of these verses with me. They can probably, just reading them would be better than me describing them. But then what happened after that was that the ark of the Lord was out of the land of Israel, and it was in enemy hands. Look in chapter 5, look at verse 2, 1 Samuel. And when the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of David, and they set it by Dagon. And verse 3. When they of Ashtod arose early in the morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and they set him on his place again. This happened again.

Bottom line is, no idol is going to be able to stand next to the real ark of God. This is a message God was sending to them. But look at verse 6. But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them at Ashtod, and he destroyed them and smote them with emrods, even Ashtod and the coast thereof. So wherever the ark went in the land of the Philistines, God was punishing those people there. And so for a time, they were passing it around, almost like hot potato. I don't want it, you take it. I don't want it, you take it. Wherever it went, it brought trouble, it brought punishment, until finally they said, let's just send it back to Israel. They put it on a cart with some cows and they shoved it towards, or they pointed towards the land. And then it went to Beth Shemesh, look in chapter 6, look down at verse 19, and it went to Beth Shemesh, and there, because they looked at the ark, verse 19, even he smoked the people, 50,003 score and 10 men. And finally, it comes in verse 21, to the inhabitants of Kergeth-Jerom, And they came to see it, verse 21, it says, the Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord, come ye down and fetch it up to you. In chapter 7, verse 1, they come out and they take the ark. And there it stays at the house of Obed-Edom for a time, until finally it goes back into Israel, into the hands of God's people.

They heard the news of where it was. They went down, and they got it, and they brought it back. And again, this was a joyous occasion. This was a time of celebration. Whenever God's presence comes in a very real way, what happens is there's always a reviving that happens with the people of God. Now, we know that God's already everywhere. But there's a certain dynamic that takes place when we begin to praise and honor God that we sense His presence. He comes in a kind of an atmospheric-type revival with His presence. And He fills our hearts. And it's a wonderful thing.

Revival means, said Martyn Lloyd-Jones, days of heaven on earth. Stephen Ophir said revival is an invasion from heaven that brings a conscious awareness of God's presence. Jonathan Edwards said during the first great awakening, when God was moving in such a mighty way, that you could feel the presence of God in that whole town during that time. That's what we long for. We long for His presence.

III. We communicate God's reliable promises – vs. 10 (2 Sam. 7)

We have a tendency to forget what God has promised. God's promises are reliable. He never breaks His word. Men break their word all the time, but God never will break His word. Spurgeon said, I have thumbed my Bible many a year. I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me. Not one good thing has failed. And you know what? You'll find in God's Word, you'll find promises for every situation in life that you might face.

IV. We commemorate God's redemptive provision – vs. 13

A. <u>God's Special Place</u>

God's selected place in verse 13 is Zion. That is Jerusalem. That's the place where God desired to place his name. And he's talking about that literal city of Jerusalem. We have seen in Scripture that that has a very special place in God's plan. And by the way, it still does. You want to know when the Lord's coming back? Keep one eye on Jerusalem and watch what's going on there. It's kind of like a prophetic calendar because God's plan is not done. And by the way, this city of Jerusalem also speaks of the new Jerusalem where all of us will live one day.

B. <u>God's Saving Provision – v. 15-16</u>

C. <u>God's Special Person – vs 17</u>

A horn is a sign of being exalted. And this is speaking of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. It ends by pointing to the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who will come. He will be the exalted horn. He will be the one that brings salvation. He is the object of our worship. And we're talking about the worship experience. Beloved, any service or sermon that does not make much of Jesus is a waste. We need to focus on Christ.

TEXT: PSALM 133

TITLE: THE PRECIOUS OIL OF UNITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

BIG IDEA: UNITY IN THE FAMILY OF GOD IS PICTURED AS A PRECIOUS BLESSING

I. (:1) THEME: UNITY IN THE FAMILY OF GOD IS PRECIOUS

A. The Precious Goal

"*For brothers to dwell together in unity*!"

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"

B. The Precious Results

- Good
- Pleasant

"*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is*"

II. (:2) PICTURE #1: LIKE PRECIOUS OIL POURED UPON THE HEAD

"*It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes*."

Comparison drawn from the realm of Worship

III. (:3) PICTURE #2: LIKE THE DEW OF HERMON

"*It is like the dew of Hermon, Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever*."

Comparison drawn from the realm of Nature

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Think through your own church experiences and the obstacles that have arisen to attack the unity of the family of God. How painful have some of those experiences been? How could some of these situations have been avoided?

2) In your own family growing up, how cohesive of a family unit did you have? Did you get along with your brothers and sisters? How close are you today as a family? What are some of the factors that contribute to a close family?

3) How precious is the unity of God's people to you? What would you sacrifice to maintain it?

4) If God's blessing is eternal life – how important is it that we strive to get along now with those with whom we will be spending eternity?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "The psalm is an illustration, in most beautiful language, of brotherly love, particularly in regard to its calm, and gentle, and sweet influence—like the ointment which flowed down from the head of the anointed priest, or like the gentle dew on Hermon or Zion. It is a psalm applicable alike to a church; to a family; to a gathering of friends."

Barnes: Re "*how pleasant*" – "The word here used means lovely, charming, attractive; that which fills the mind with delight, spoken of one's beloved, Cant. vii.6; of a friend, 2 Sam. i.26; of a place, Gen. xlix.15; of words, Prov. xv. 26; of beauty or glory, as of Jehovah, Ps. xxvii.4. It is descriptive of the pleasure which we derive from a picture, from a landscape, from sweet sounds and gentle voices, or from love."

Spurgeon: "It has a sweet perfume about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a holy thing, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high-priest alone!"

Cambridge: Re "*dew of Hermon*" – "Hermon is the highest mountain in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, which receive the greatest rainfall in the area containing ancient Israel. Perhaps the phrase denotes life-giving and refreshing dew and mist, believed to come from the region of Hermon."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Celebration of Unity**
Introduction: The psalmist is reflecting on this unity. And really, he looks at it from three different perspectives. In verse one, he reflects on it spiritually. In verse two, he reflects on it theologically. And then in verse three, he reflects on it geographically. And what we see in verses two and three are two beautiful images, two beautiful pictures to describe the unity, the beauty of unity that should exist among the people of God.

David loved unity, but he didn't see a whole lot of it. But not only did he inherit a divided nation, but even in David's home there was disunity. If you read the story of David in the Bible, you're going to find that in his very home, his children couldn't get along.

Big Idea: **Three areas of unity that the psalmist celebrates**.

I. **Celebrate the special bond of unity – vs.** 1
A. A family bond

B. A fellowship bond

Unity doesn't mean uniformity. It doesn't mean we all have to be cookie cutter type Christians. God doesn't want us all to be uniform in the sense that we all have to speak the same and look the same and act the same. We can all be ourselves and yet there can be great unity among the diversity that we all have.

God loves diversity. He made it. He created it. And when that diversity comes together and worships together and there's unity there, it's beautiful to God. You know, the flower arrangements we love most are not those kinds that are all the same flowers, but all different flowers brought together. Those are the most beautiful.

C. A faithful bond

Look at the word **dwell** there. And you say, what does that really mean? It means it's a lifestyle. This isn't just a one time event. This is continual. We dwell together. We don't just come together for special occasions. We dwell in unity. This is the default mode of the believer. We're to live in unity. We're to live in peace.

D. A favorable bond

Look where it says it is good. And it is pleasant. This is the nature of spiritual unity. Some things are good, but not pleasant. Other things are pleasant, but not good. But spiritual unity is both good and pleasant.

What causes disunity in the church?

- Sin
- Selfishness
- Pride

II. Celebrate the spiritual basis of unity – vs 2-3

Spiritual unity is not something that we have to work up. It's something that God sends down. It's given as a gift from God.

Look at the images here:

- Like **holy oil**; anointing oil
    - The preciousness of the oil

It was a special perfume, a special cologne, if you will. And no one could wear it. Why? Because it was holy. It was set apart. And wherever this was used, it was God signifying and saying, this is set apart for me. The tabernacle was set apart for me. The priests are set apart for me.

    - The pouring of the oil

David is saying unity is like that oil poured out. You know what it signifies? That it's a sign of special favor from God. That means you're specially favored. You're a sweet fragrance to God when God's people are together.

    - The path of the oil

It's poured out on the head, it flows down to the body. From the head to the heart, to the toes. The path of the Lord just flows downward. And that's true of unity. You know where unity starts? You know what the head speaks of? Christ. Unity starts at the head and flows to the body.

You see, Christ is the head of the church. We are the body of Christ. And unity starts with Jesus. And it's extended to us.

- Like **heavenly dew**

Imagine if you were on Mount Zion, and it's hot, and it's dry, and it's arid, and suddenly, the dew from Mount Hermon descends on you. Like a blanket, it just comes down, and it's cool, and it's refreshing, and it's reviving, and it's life-giving. It's the dew of heaven. It's not anything that man could manufacture. It's heaven-sent dew.

But think about the fullness of the unity. Not only does it descend, it drenches. the idea here is that the unity of the Spirit comes, and it's so refreshing, and it drenches us, and it baptizes us, and it brings life to that which is dying, to that which is in need. And then the fruitfulness of the dew.

III. Celebrate the sovereign blessings of unity – vs. 3

Friend, if you are in need of mercy tonight, all you have to do is go to Him. Just go to Him. And so, we should desire this beautiful unity. The bond of unity. The basis of unity. The blessings of unity. All of that is what we should desire as the people of God.

TEXT: PSALM 134

TITLE: BLESS AND BE BLESSED

BIG IDEA: MAY FAITHFUL MINISTERS BLESS THE LORD AND BE BLESSED IN RETURN

I. WHO IS A FAITHFUL MINISTER?

A. "*all servants of the Lord*"

B. "*Who serve by night in the house of the Lord*"

II. COMMAND TO BLESS THE LORD IN CONJUNCTION WITH WORSHIP

A. "*Bless the Lord*!"

B. "*Lift up your hands to the sanctuary*"

III. BENEDICTION: TO RECEIVE A BLESSING IN RETURN

A. "*May the Lord bless you*"

B. "*from Zion*"
the pilgrims had made the journey to Zion to worship there

C. "*He who made heaven and earth*"
the pilgrims were departing to return to their respective corner of the earth

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Reflect on the concept of the priesthood of all believers. What type of service do you render to the Lord as a faithful minister?

2) How do we bless the Lord?

3) As we worship, are we always lifting up the hands of our heart?

4) How does God's role as Creator give Him the credentials to be able to bless us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: "The psalm certainly lent itself to use by pilgrims, and thus its presence among the pilgrim songs may be justified. The pilgrims may have used it as a parting salutation to the

priests, either during the last night service when there were such, or in the early morning hours when they left for their home before the dawn had broken.

Leupold: Re "*to stand before the Lord*" – "a technical expression which signifies some type of official service of God in the sanctuary (cf., Deut. 10:8; 18:7; I Chron. 23:30; II Chron. 29:11). It may yet be remarked that the expression 'bless the Lord' means about as much as to 'praise' Him, that is to say, to tell of His mighty acts."

Barnes: Re "*lift up your hands in the sanctuary*" – "The Hebrew word properly means 'holiness', but it may be applied to a holy place. See Ps. xx. 2. The lifting up of the hands is properly expressive of prayer, but the phrase may be used to denote praise or worship in general."

Spurgeon: "We have now reached the last of the Gradual Psalm. The Pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their Psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse. the priests as good as say, 'You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray the Lord to bless you.' The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benedictions upon their loving and prayerful people."

Spurgeon: Re "*Bless*" – "Think well of Jehovah, and speak well of him. Adore him with reverence, draw near to him with love, delight in him with exultation."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **A Call to Worship**
Introduction: It's the shortest psalm, with the exception of Psalm 117. However, as Warren Weirsbe said, it deals with a subject that could fill volumes. Although this is just three short verses, this is a theme that is one of the most important themes, if not really, I should say the most important theme in the Christian life. And it deals with the issue of worship. I think it's appropriate that the climax of these psalms is climaxed in worship. Because this is the whole reason why the pilgrims made the journey to begin with. Why did they leave their homes and travel long distances, sometimes dangerous journeys? The whole purpose of it is worship, to worship the Lord. And so it's a fitting that the last Psalm in this series deals with that very issue. They're no longer on the journey. They're now in the temple.

Big Idea: **Five elements of worship**

I. The Plan of Worship
What does it mean to bless the Lord? I think we bless the Lord when we recognize His great glory, when we recognize His great attributes, when we recognize all of His perfections, all of His glorious characteristics. when we think about all of these things, and then we respond properly. What's the proper response? Adoration. Wonder. Awe. Praise. Worship.

God doesn't need anything else to make him any more blessed. But that doesn't mean that we can't bless him. And it doesn't mean that he doesn't want us to bless him. He does. And he rejoices over that.

II. The Participants of Worship – vs. 1
All servants of the Lord. Now, you know what I learned from this? Worship is not a spectator sport. You don't come to church and watch others participate in worship and not get involved yourself because that's not worship.

What are the types of sacrifices that we offer?

III. The Pattern of Worship --
It is a lifestyle. It is a pattern of life. It's a way of life. In fact, the gospel call is a call to worship.

IV. The Posture of Worship
There were several postures that the Scripture mentions. Standing with outstretched hands, 1 Kings 8. Kneeling, Daniel 6. Standing, Luke 18. Sitting, 2 Samuel 7. Bowing the head, Genesis 24. Lifting up the eyes, John 17. Falling on the ground, Genesis 17 and Job 1. Really, the important thing is not necessarily the posture of the body, it's the **posture of the heart**.

It seems like in the Old Testament, when they worshipped the Lord and they stood up, they lifted up their hands to God and worshipped. Psalm 63, verse 4, Thus will I bless thee, I will lift up my hands unto thy name. Psalm 28, verse 2, hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. Psalm 141, verse 2, let my prayer be set forth as incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. And so they did that often.

In fact, in the New Testament, Paul said, I would that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. Paul said that in the New Testament. So when they stood before God and they prayed, they would lift up their hands, kind of like their palms turned up to heaven. And that outward posture was used to demonstrate the posture of the heart, the inward attitude of the heart.

And what did the lifting up of hands signify? A few things.
1) Surrender
2) Dependence
3) Purity

V. The Product of Worship – vs. 3
God will bless you. **2 Cor. 3:18** -- transformed

Let me close with this illustration. Raymond Edmond was a wonderful missionary and he later became a college president of Wheaton College. Billy Graham once called him the most unforgettable Christian I ever met. And he died in 1967. Let me tell you how he died. He was preaching in chapel in Wheaton College. You know what his topic was? Worshiping God. Worship.

And he was telling a story in his sermon in chapel. And it was about one time he went to Ethiopia and he visited an Ethiopian king. And he was invited into the presence of the king, but before he could go to have an audience with the king, he had to follow all the proper protocols. And he had to prepare for that audience. And if he had not fulfilled all of the criteria that he was given, that he was deemed unworthy, he was judged unworthy and he could not go into the king's presence.

And then Dr. Edmund drew on that illustration as a parallel to us when we Have an audience with God. Then he said this. Don't you realize that every time you congregate together and you're with the people of God, you have an audience with the king of kings every time? And he said any ruler would love to have that audience. They would fall on their face before Almighty God, any king. And then he began to offer some practical suggestions on how we are to get ourselves ready to meet God and to be with him, to have an audience with God. And while he was doing that, you know what happened? He died right there. He died talking about preparing to have an audience with God. Wow, what a way to go. And all of a sudden he was there with God.

You know, when I read that, I thought, you know, there's a sense in which as Christians, we really don't change what we do when we die. We just change locations. We should be worshiping God all the time. And when God calls us out, we just step step into his presence. But also the other thought was this. When it comes time for the Lord to call us home, whenever that may be, may he find us worshiping him, worshiping him.

TEXT: PSALM 135

TITLE: GREAT IS THE LORD AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED

BIG IDEA: PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS AND GREATNESS

I. (:1-4) PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS

A. Activity of Praise

"*Praise the Lord*!"
"*Praise the name of the Lord*"

B. Ministers of Praise

"*You who stand in the house of the Lord*"
"*In the courts of the house of our God*!"

C. Description of the Lord's Goodness

- "*for the Lord is good*"
- for His name "*is lovely*"

D. Proof of the Lord's Goodness

"*For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession*."

II. (:5-18) PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GREATNESS

A. Thesis: "*For I know that the Lord is great*"

B. Definition of the Lord's Greatness

1. Majestic = "*above all gods*"

2. Sovereign

"*Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps*"

C. Proof of the Lord's Greatness = He Performs His Will Throughout History for the Benefit of His People

1. Rules over Nature

"*causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth*"
"*Who makes lightnings for the rain*"
"*Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries*"

2. Crushes the Opposition of Rebellious World Powers

a. Egypt
b. "*many nations*" / "*mighty kings*"

"*Sihon, king of the Amorites*"
"*Og, king of Bashan*"
"*all the kingdoms of Canaan*"

3. Distributes Land to Benefit His People
   "*He gave their land as a heritage, A heritage to Israel His people*"

4. Has Earned an Enduring Reputation
   "*Thy name, O Lord, is everlasting*"
   "*Thy remembrance, O Lord, throughout all generations*"

5. Judges His Own People
   "*For the Lord will judge His people*"
   "*And will have compassion on His servants*"

6. Is Superior to All Idols
   they are made of inferior materials = "*silver and gold*"
   they are made by inferior creatures = "*the work of man's hands*"
   they have inferior functionality
      "*They have mouths, but they do not speak*"
      "*They have eyes, but they do not see*"
      "*They have ears, but they do not hear*"
   they are lifeless = "*Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths*"
   God will Judge those involved in idolatry
      "*Those who make them will be like them,*
      Yes, everyone who trusts in them."

(:19-21) BENEDICTION: BLESSED BE THE LORD!
- "*house of Israel*"
- "*house of Aaron*"
- "*house of Levi*"
- "*You who revere the Lord*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some of the "lovely" attributes of the Lord's character that have been precious to you this week? Describe His goodness to you recently.

2) How is the Lord's Sovereignty over all things connected with His compassion towards His people rather than some sense of cruelty?

3) How much do we value the inheritance the Lord has provided for us? Remember how Esau sold his inheritance for a bowl of porridge. How did Israel take their inheritance for granted and misuse it?

4) What are some modern day idols and how does the imagery of this psalm apply to those examples?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: “On closer investigation it becomes apparent that the psalm quotes frequently from earlier psalms and should, therefore, be called a mosaic. Lest this designation seem to involve an unwarranted criticism, we add the words of Maclaren: ‘The flowers are arranged in a new bouquet, because the poet had long delighted in their fragrance.’ In the process of inspiring men for the sacred writings the Spirit of God used manifold approaches.”

Spurgeon: “Everywhere the Lord worketh all things, and there is no power which escapes his supremacy. It is well for us that it is so; one bandit force wandering through the Lord’s domains defying his control would cast fear and trembling over all the provinces of providence. Let us praise Jehovah for the power and wisdom with which he rules clouds, and lightnings, and winds, and all other mighty and mysterious agencies.”

Spurgeon: “Those who resist the divine purpose will find it hard to kick against the pricks. The greatness of the nations and the might of the kings availed nothing against the Lord. He is prepared to mete out vengeance to those who oppose his designs: those who dream of him as too tender to come to blows have mistaken the God of Israel. He intended to bless the work through his chosen people, and he would not be turned from his purpose: cost what it might, he would preserve the candle of truth which he had lighted, even though the blood of nations should be spilt in its defence. The wars against the Canaanite races were a price paid for the setting up of a nation which was to preserve for the whole world the lively oracles of God.”

Cambridge: “The psalmist affirms that God’s character revealed in the exodus, as one who acts to deliver the oppressed, is an unchanging character on which his people will be ever able to rely. This is not so of the gods mentioned in the following verses.”

Barnes: “*Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever*. Thou art the ever-living, the unchanging God. The generations of men pass away; the kingdoms of the earth change; the idols perish, but thou art the same. The object here seems to be to bring the image or the idea of God before the mind as he was when he performed these great works, as a God interposing in behalf of his people, and as worthy of praise. The idea is that he is the same now that he was then; and as he then impressed the world with a sense of his majesty and power, and as he then interposed in behalf of his people by mighty signs and wonders, we should feel that, being an unchangeable God, he can do it now, and is now equally worthy of confidence, adoration, and praise.”

Piper: Re vs. 6 -- "*Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps*." – “… whenever God acts he acts in a way that pleases him. God is never constrained to do a thing that he despises. He is never backed into a corner where his only

recourse is to do something he hates to do. He does whatever he pleases. And therefore, in some sense, he has pleasure in all that he does….

So we are brought back to the inescapable fact that in some sense God does not delight in the death of the wicked (that is the message of Ezekiel 18), and in some sense he does (that is the message of Psalm 135:6-11 and Deuteronomy 28:63).

I have commended a solution to you before and I will commend it again: namely, that the death and misery of the unrepentant is in and of itself no delight to God. God is not a sadist. He is not malicious or bloodthirsty. Instead when a rebellious, wicked, unbelieving person is judged, what God delights in is the vindication of truth and goodness and of his own honor and glory.

When Moses warns Israel that the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon them and destroying them if they don't repent, he means that those who have rebelled against the Lord and moved beyond repentance will not be able to gloat that they have made the Almighty miserable. Quite the contrary. Moses says that when they are judged they will unwittingly give an opportunity for God to rejoice in the demonstration of his justice and his power and the infinite worth of his glory.

Let this be a warning to us this morning. God is not mocked. He is not trapped or cornered or coerced. Even on the way to Calvary he had legions at his disposal. "No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord" -- of my own good pleasure, for the joy that is set before me. At the one point in the history of the universe where God looked trapped he was totally in charge doing precisely what he pleased -- dying to justify the ungodly like you and me.”

TEXT: PSALM 136

TITLE: HIS LOVINGKINDNESS IS EVERLASTING

**BIG IDEA: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD;
FOR HIS LOVINGKINDNES IS EVERLASTING**

(:1-3) INTRODUCTION:

3-fold statement of the theme: praise to the triune God
absolute sovereignty of God as:
- "*God of gods*"
- "*Lord of lords*"

I. (:4-9) GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS DEMONSTRATED IN CREATION

A. Summary of Creation = "*great wonders*"
"*To Him who alone does great wonders*"

B. Made the Heavens
"*made the heavens with skill*"

C. Made the Earth
"*spread out the earth above the waters*"

Cambridge: "In verse 6, *laid upon* uses a word which denotes the beating of metal into a thin sheet. The passage implies that the wisdom by which God made the created order can be discerned indirectly by man, as he ponders the creation (cp. Ps. 8)

D. Made the Great Lights
1. "*the sun to rule by day*"

2. "*the moon and stars to rule by night*"

II. (:10-22) GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS DEMONSTRATED IN ESTABLISHING ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND

A. Deliverance from Egypt
1. "*smote the Egyptians in their first-born*"

2. "*brought Israel out from their midst*"

3. "*with a strong hand and an outstretched arm*"

B. Parted the Red Sea
"*divided the Red Sea asunder*"
"*made Israel pass through the midst of it*"
"*overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea*"

Cambridge: “The rare verb *swept* (verse 15, literally ‘*shook off*’) occurs at Exod. 14:27, while the verb *divided* (verse 13) is used of the parting of the Red Sea only in this psalm.”

C. Led His People in the Wilderness

D. Defeated Mighty Kings
1. Sihon, king of the Amorites

2. Og, king of Bashan

E. Gave Israel the Inheritance of the Land

(:23-26) SUMMARY
A. Remembers the Lowly

B. Rescues us from our Adversaries

C. Gives Food to all Living Things

D. Give Thanks to the God of heaven, For His Lovingkindnes is Everlasting

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How important is it to recognize the sovereignty of God over all things? Is there anything that can happen in your life outside of the control of God? Why do people have a problem with admitting the sovereignty of God with respect to salvation (doctrines of predestination, election, etc.)?

2) How is it that some acts of God can look to be so severe and harsh and yet be identified here as proofs of His lovingkindness?

3) In your own life, what have been some instances of being in a “low estate” where God has demonstrated His lovingkindness?

4) Do we remember every day to give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and lovingkindness?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: “It is a psalm of very peculiar construction, and stands alone in the form of its poetry. The peculiarity consists in repeating at the close of each verse the language ‘*for*

his mercy endureth for ever.' This is a kind of refrain, and may have been designed, in public worship, to be a response by a choir, or by the people. … The general idea is, that all these acts of the Divine interposition, -- all that God has done, even though it seemed to be a display of power or of justice, of severity or of wrath, -- was, in fact, an illustration of the '*mercy*' of God, and laid a foundation for praise. That is, All this was connected with the good of his people, with favours to mankind, with the accomplishment of great and benevolent purposes, and, therefore, was expressive of mercy, -- a proof that the '*mercy of God endures for ever*.'"

Cambridge: "If verse 25 is rightly interpreted as referring to all living things, then the overall structure of the psalm is that it begins with the universality of God, and then concentrates on his particular revelation to Israel, before returning to a general statement about his universal providence."

Spurgeon: "There are lords many, but Jehovah is the Lord of them. All lordship is vested in the Eternal. He makes and administers law, he rules and governs mind and matter, he possesses in himself all sovereignty and power. All lords in the plural are summed up in this Lord in the singular: he is more lordly than all emperors and kings condensed into one. For this we may well be thankful, for we know the superior Sovereign will rectify the abuses of the underlings who now lord it over mankind. He will call these lords to his bar, and reckon with them for every oppression and injustice."

Leupold: "Basic to all thanksgiving is the conviction concerning the Lord that 'He is good.' But the significant experience that the people of God have concerning His goodness is in the area of His 'kindness' to His people. In that respect the Lord is unwaveringly loyal because He is bound to His people by a solemn covenant which He entered into with their fathers (Gen. 15:18, etc.) as well as with the nation as a whole (Exod. 24:8). This psalm emphasizes that, in the last analysis, all the favors that God, the Lord, bestowed upon His people are traceable to this covenant. The exalted nature of Him who made the covenant is indicated by two superlatives: 'God of gods' and 'Lord of lords.'"

TEXT: PSALM 137

TITLE: A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW

BIG IDEA: CAPTIVITY SILENCES THE SONGS OF JOY AS WE WEEP OVER OUR LOST GLORY

INTRODUCTION:

cf. son Steve hates to swallow pills

I. (:1-3) CAPTIVITY IS A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW

A. Because of Memories of Lost Glory

"By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion."

B. Because of Melancholy Spirits – no heart to sing Songs of Joy

"Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps"

B. Because of Mocking Taunts by Our Captors

"*For there our captors demanded of us songs,*
And our tormentors mirth,
saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

II. (:4-6) LOYALTY REFUSES TO BE QUENCHED EVEN WHEN SONGS OF JOY ARE SILENCED

A. Songs of Joy are Not Always Appropriate

"*How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land*?"

B. Loyalty Refuses to Be Quenched

1. Oath #1 -- "*If I forget you, O Jerusalem,*
May my right hand forget her skill."

2. Oath #2 -- "*May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,*
If I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy."

III. (:7-9) JUSTICE WILL BE SWEET WHEN VENGEANCE IS RECOMPENSED BY THE LORD

A. Two Candidates for the Lord's Vengeance Decried

1. Sons of Edom

"*Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom The day*
of Jerusalem, Who said, 'Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation!'"

2. Daughter of Babylon

"*O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one*,"

B. Two Blessings for the Lord's Executioners Pronounced

1. "*How blessed will be the one who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us*."

2. "*How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones Against the rock*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) If we have truly been redeemed by the Lord from captivity to sin and to Satan, why do we often live as if we were still in bondage? Are we singing the Lord's song in the land of our pilgrimage as we should be?

2) Do we have the same type of zeal and loyalty for God's kingdom and His program on earth as these exiles in Babylon did? Do we remain loyal during difficult times?

3) Do we find great joy in the Body of Christ? Are we moved to songs of joy?

4) Do we have any comprehension what a fearful sight the vengeance of the Lord will be when He exacts His wrath on those who have mocked Him and persecuted His people?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "Nowhere else in a short compass is so much Judaism—so much Jewish piety—to be found concentrated as in this psalm. There is grief at their lonely and desolate condition in Babylon; profound and submissive silence in the midst of their troubles; indignation that they should be taunted and derided by their captors; a strong—earnest—supreme love for their native land; deep resentment at the remembrance of the many wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was destroyed; and an earnest invocation to God that he would remember those wrongs alike in relation to Edom and Babylon, and treat those wrong-doers as they deserved."

Cambridge: "The unfailing loyalty to Jerusalem is expressed in the form of two oaths…"

Leupold: "The grief described is not the ordinary longing for the homeland, a longing which displaced persons may always have felt. It was rather occasioned by the fact that they remembered Zion and all that that ancient capital stood for: the Temple, its services, the remembrance of godly men that dwelt there, the mighty deliverances that God had wrought, the dynasty of David that had had its seat there, and the Holy City as the object of sacred pilgrimages during high festivals. All these facts would flood through the minds of captives and move them to bitter tears, which we cannot help but believe were frequently the tears of repentance."

Spurgeon: “The captives in Babylon did not make music, but they poured forth their righteous maledictions, and these were far more in harmony with their surroundings than songs and laughter could have been. Those who mock the Lord’s people will receive more than they desire, to their own confusion: they shall have little enough to make mirth for them, and more than enough to fill them with misery.”

TEXT: PSALM 138

TITLE: THE LORD WILL ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES FOR ME
(MY LIFE WILL NOT BE AN UNFINISHED BOOK)

BIG IDEA: THE LORD'S WORD OF PROMISE FUELS OUR CONFIDENCE AND OUR THANKSGIVING

INTRODUCTION:

Important to understand 2 Samuel 7 = God's Word of Promise to David about the kingdom of David that would culminate in the reign of the Messiah; David went through many difficult trials and dangers at the hands of family and foe where the fulfillment of that promise looked to be in jeopardy. But God proved Himself faithful.

Digital cameras are the latest rage. Think of a camera that is not limited by the dimension of time:

3 SNAPSHOTS IN TIME THAT LOOK AT THE LORD'S WORD OF PROMISE FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

I. (:1-3) SNAPSHOT OF THE PAST:

"*Thou didst answer me; Thou didst make me bold*"

PAST DELIVERANCE INSPIRES CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD'S WORD OF PROMISE AND WHOLE-HEARTED THANKSGIVING AND WORSHIP

A. Deliverance Occurred When:

1. God came through in a Big Way
   - *magnified His Word* = "*truth*"
   - *in accordance with His name* (character) = "*lovingkindness*"

2. God answered our specific prayer
   "*On the day I called Thou didst answer me*"

3. God delivered us from our specific weakness
   "*Thou didst make me bold with strength in my soul*"

B. Past Deliverance Inspires Confidence in the Lord's Word of Promise
   "*Thou hast magnified Thy word*"

C. Past Deliverance Inspires Whole-hearted Thanksgiving and Worship

1. Thanksgiving
   "*I will give Thee thanks with all my heart;*
   I will sing praises to Thee before the gods."
2. Worship
   "*I will bow down toward Thy holy temple,*
   And give thanks to Thy name"

II. (:4-6) SNAPSHOT OF THE FUTURE: *"great is the glory of the Lord"*
FUTURE FULFILLMENT INSPIRES VALIDATION OF THE LORD'S WORD OF PROMISE AND HUMBLE THANKSGIVING

A. The Most Powerful World Leaders will See the Fulfillment of God's Word of Promise (in the Millennial Kingdom)
"*When they have heard the word of Thy mouth.*"

B. The Most Powerful World Leaders will Respond in Humble Thanksgiving
"*All the kings of the earth will give thanks to Thee, O Lord*"
"*And they will sing of the ways of the Lord*"

C. This Future Fulfillment will Validate the Greatness of the Glory of the Lord
"*For great is the glory of the Lord*"

D. The Lord Gives Grace to the Humble But Rejects the Proud
"*For though the Lord is exalted,*
Yet He regards the lowly;
But the haughty He knows from afar."

III. (:7-8) SNAPSHOT OF THE PRESENT:
"*The Lord will accomplish what concerns me*"
PRESENT RELIANCE ON THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCES AS NEEDED IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH GOD BRINGS HIS WORD OF PROMISE TO ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT

A. We Need God's Help Because We "*walk in the midst of trouble*"

4 REASONS WE CAN COUNT ON GOD'S HELP:
B. We Can Count on God's Help Because He is More Powerful than our Enemies
"*Thou wilt revive me*"
"*Thou wilt stretch forth Thy hand against the wrath of my enemies*"
"*And Thy right hand will save me*"

C. We Can Count on God's Help Because He Will Bring His Word of Promise to Ultimate Fulfillment in Our Life
"*The Lord will accomplish what concerns me*"

D. We Can Count on God's Help Because His Lovingkindness is Everlasting
"*Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, is everlasting*"

E. We Can Count on God's Help Because He will Never Leave Us or Forsake Us
"*Do not forsake the works of Thy hands*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Have there been any times of "spiritual breakthroughs" in your life when God delivered you from a persisting or sudden fear and strengthened you with boldness in your soul so that you enjoyed a mountaintop victory experience?

2) Is our Thanksgiving accompanied by reverent adoration or by presumptuous begging and pleading?

3) How has God made His Word seem BIG to you? Written His Word in large letters so that you couldn't miss what He was saying to you?

4) Are we confident that the Lord will complete in us the good work that He has begun and "*accomplish what concerns us*"? Do we understand how patient the Lord is with us? Does God really have a plan for your life?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "We need a broken heart to mourn our own sins, but a whole heart to praise the Lord's perfections. If ever our heart is whole and wholly occupied with one thing, it should be when we are praising the Lord. …
Praise would be the main part of David's worship; the name or character of God the great object of his song; and the special point of his praise the grace and truth which shone so conspicuously in that name….
The word of promise made to David was in his eyes more glorious than all else that he had seen of the Most High. Revelation excels creation in the clearness, definiteness, and fulness of its teaching….
It is the distinguishing mark of the true and living God that he hears the pleadings of his people, and answers them; the gods hear not and answer not, but Jehovah's memorial is – '*the God that heareth prayer*.'"

Barnes: Re: "*above all thy name*" – "the word *name* here would refer properly to all that God had done to make himself known,--since it is by the name that we designate or distinguish any one; and, thus understood, the meaning would be, that the word of God—the revelation which he has made of himself and of his gracious purposes to mankind—is superior in clearness, and in importance, to all the other manifestations which he has made of himself; all that can be known of him in his works. Beyond all question there are higher and clearer manifestations of himself, of his being, of his perfection, of his purposes, in the volume of revelation, than any which his works have disclosed or can disclose."

Barnes: “Literally, ‘Thou didst embolden,--or, didst make me courageous with strength.’ Thou didst enable me to meet danger, and to overcome fear. It would seem probably that this was on some occasion when he was in danger from his enemies.”

Barnes: Re: “*great is the glory of the Lord*” – “…this will be seen to be so when those of most exalted rank thus worship and adore him. The most lofty on earth shall acknowledge that there is one who is more exalted than they are, and their own dignity and splendour shall thus contribute to deepen the impression of the honour and glory of God… the fact of God’s exaltation does not prevent his noticing the affairs of men: that the lowly in life need not fear lest they should be overlooked; the proud need not hope that they will escape the notice of his eye.”

Cambridge: “The psalm closes with an affirmation that God’s purpose for the psalmist will be fulfilled, which turns into a prayer that his wider purposes for Israel, and perhaps the world, will triumph.”

TEXT: PSALM 139

TITLE: *SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART*

BIG IDEA: GOD KNOWS ME INTIMATELY SO HE CAN TAKE CARE OF ME PERFECTLY

(:1) INTRODUCTION: GOD IS A THOROUGH INVESTIGATOR

"*O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me*"

I. (:2-6) GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT ME = OMNISCIENCE (WE ARE AN OPEN BOOK BEFORE GOD)

A. God Knows Everything I Do

"*Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up*"

B. God Knows Everything I Think

"*Thou dost understand my thought from afar*"

C. God Knows Everywhere I Go

"*Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down,*
And art intimately acquainted with all my ways"

D. God Knows Everything I Say

"*Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord,*
Thou dost know it all"

E. God Uses This Knowledge to Provide Providential Protection

"*Thou hast enclosed me behind and before,*
And laid Thy hand upon me."

God's knowledge has a benevolent purpose.

F. Such Intimate Knowledge is Beyond our Comprehension

"*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,*
It is too high, I cannot attain to it"

II. (:7-12) THERE IS NO PLACE WHERE I CAN HIDE FROM GOD'S SCRUTINY = OMNIPRESENCE (WE ARE SURROUNDED BY GOD'S PRESENCE)

A. Summary Question:

"*Where can I go from Thy Spirit?*
Or where can I flee from Thy presence?"

cf. the example of Jonah

B. Heaven or Sheol

"*If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there;*
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there."

C. East or West
"*If I take the wings of the dawn,*
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea"

D. Summary Principle: God's Presence Is Intended to Guide and Protect Us
"*Even there Thy hand will lead me,*
And Thy right hand will lay hold of me"

E. Darkness or Light
"*If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,*
And the light around me will be night,
Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to Thee."

III. (:13-16) GOD KNOWS ME FROM THE INSIDE OUT BECAUSE HE CREATED ME INDIVIDUALLY (WE ARE COMPLETELY GOD'S CREATION – FROM A TO Z)

A. My Sovereign Creator Formed Me in My Mother's Womb
"*For Thou didst form my inward parts;*
Thou dids weave me in my mother's womb."

B. My Sovereign Creator Deserves Thanksgiving for an Awesome Work
"*I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*
Wonderful are Thy works, Any my soul knows it very well."

C. My Sovereign Creator Was Involved Right From the Beginning
"*My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret,*
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth."

D. My Sovereign Creator Ordained My Days Before I Ever Existed
"*Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me,*
When as yet there was not one of them."

IV. (:17-18) SUCH INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE IS A GOOD THING

A. God's Thoughts Regarding Me are Precious
"*How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God*!"

B. God's Thoughts Regarding Me are Innumerable
"*How vast is the sum of them!*
If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand."

C. God's Presence With Me is Precious

"*When I awake, I am still with Thee*."

V. (:19-22) ASIDE: GOD'S ENEMIES ARE MY ENEMIES

A. Longing for Divine Vengeance on the Wicked

"*O that Thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God*"

B. Longing for Separation from Violent Men

"*Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed*."

C. Indictment Against God's Enemies

"*For they speak against Thee wickedly,*
And Thine enemies take Thy name in vain."

D. Hatred for God's Enemies / They Have Become My Enemies

"*Do I not hate those who hate Thee, O Lord?*
And do I not loathe those who rise up against Thee?
I hate them with the utmost hatred;
They have become my enemies."

(:23-24) CONCLUSION: KEEP SEARCHING AND LEADING ME

A. Keep Searching Me

"*Search me, O God, and know my heart;*
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;"

B. Keep Leading Me

"*And see if there be any hurtful way in me,*
And lead me in the everlasting way."

Psalmist not afraid of being put under the searchlight of God's scrutiny. In this way God will vindicate him from unjustified attacks by the wicked; God will correct any of his sinful patterns and continue to lead him in the paths of righteousness.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we bitter about some aspect of God's Design in our life? About how He has made us? Is there some feature that we wish God had designed differently? We need to come to the place where we can give God thanks for how wonderfully He has designed us.

2) Do we desire God to search our inmost thoughts and motives and to purify us, or do we have a part of us that we want to try to hide from God's scrutiny? Do we live our lives in the consciousness of His observing all that we think and do and say?

3) Do we resent God's intimate knowledge of us and His presence with us or do we see His benevolent purposes in longing to care for us completely and do what is best for us?

4) Do we understand that all of our days have been ordained by our Creator even before He brought us into existence? Do these thoughts of God's sovereignty give us Comfort?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "The main problem for the interpreter is to account for verses 19-22. An older view was that the psalm raised the problem of evil by asking, in effect, how the all-seeing, all-knowing and ever-present God could tolerate wicked men. However, this view rather forces the meaning of verses 19-22. A more recent solution has proposed that the psalmist had been accused of unfaithfulness to God by the enemies mentioned in verses 19-22, and that the psalm is in some way connected with his ordeal before God, designed to test his innocence."

Cambridge: Re verse 7 – "*spirit* and *presence* are terms by which the psalmist speaks of the reality of God in the world of men; yet this reality remains essentially a mystery beyond human understanding (see verse 6). The questions do not mean that the psalmist wishes to escape from God!"

Barnes: "The leading idea in the psalm seems to be that of comfort from the fact that God is everywhere; that he knows all that pertains to us; that we can never be hidden from his view; that he has known us from the beginning; that as he fashioned and formed us—making us what we are—he knows all our necessities, and can supply them.

Spurgeon: Re vs. 24 – "See whether there be in my heart, or in my life, any evil habit unkown to myself. If there be such an evil way, take me from it, take it from me. No matter how dear the wrong may have become, nor how deeply prejudiced I may have been in its favour, be pleased to deliver me therefrom altogether, effectually, and at once, that I may tolerate nothing which is contrary to thy mind. As I hate the wicked in their way, so would I hate every wicked way in myself. '*And lead me in the way everlasting*.' If thou hast introduced me already to the good old way, be pleased to keep me in it, and conduct me further and further along it. It is a way which thou hast set up of old, it is based upon everlasting principles, and it is the way in which immortal spirits will gladly run for ever and ever. There will be no end to it world without end. It lasts for ever, and they who are in it last for ever. Conduct me into it, O Lord, and conduct me throughout the whole length of it. By thy providence, by thy word, by thy grace, and by thy Spirit, lead me evermore."

Stedman: "Everywhere today one hears of those who are passing through an identity crisis., That is a fancy way of saying what people have been asking for a long time, 'Who am I?' We all ask this question occasionally but perhaps it is asked more frequently today because of the prevailing scientific view of the universe. That view tells us that our earth is but a tiny speck in a vast universe, and we are struggling mortals on an obscure planet located in a second rate galaxy among billions of other galaxies in a great universe. Such an outlook tends to make us feel most insignificant. It contrasts sharply with the biblical view of man and especially the view which deals with man in relationship to God. This 139th Psalm describes a man who is thinking about himself and his relationship to God. If you are struggling with an identity crisis and you are not

sure just who you are then I suggest you read carefully as we look together at this marvelous psalm.

It is divided into four paragraphs of six verses each. It is easy to follow the outline for it is already structured for us in the RSV. In each paragraph the psalmist faces a question about himself in relationship to God….

1) In the first paragraph he asks, 'How well does God know me?'
2) In the second paragraph the writer is exploring the question, 'How near is God to me?'
3) In the third paragraph the psalmist is telling us how he knows all this:
    a) First, because of deduction from the design of the body.
    b) Then he is struck by the progress that is necessary in the forming of a human being. He is not only impressed by the argument from design but by the evidence of determination.
    c) The psalmist is impressed by the abundance of revelation from God
4) (fourth paragraph)
    a) First, he asks God to take care of the problem of the wicked.
    b) (Then) Reveal the wickedness that may lie undetected in my own heart, and guide me in the way that leads to fullness of life."

Ogilvie: "A time of difficulty and false accusations by people had driven him to a profound time of prayer. In communion with God, he discovered two powerful aspects of God's nature—His omniscience and His omnipresence. The Lord knew all about him, and there was no place he could go where the Lord was not there to meet him.

… The fact that the Lord knows all and is everywhere is the basis of a viable hopefulness for the future. Wherever we go, whomever we meet, the Lord is already there waiting for us. He not only comes to us in times of need and gives us supernatural power for life's difficulties and challenges, He also goes before us to prepare the way."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Keeping the Wonder in Our Worship**
Introduction: Wonder is amazement. It is astonishment. It is it is being bewildered. It is being in awe of something. It is having a fascination. Warren Wiersbe said this wonder is not a cheap amusement that brings a smile to your face; it is an encounter with reality, with God that brings all to your heart. You're overwhelmed with an emotion that is a mixture of gratitude and adoration, reverence, fear and love. You're not looking for explanations, you're lost in the wonder of God.

Wonder is a small child looking at a rainbow for the first time. It is Moses staring at the burning bush. It is Peter struggling as he pulls in the nets that are breaking because they're so filled with fish. It is Isaiah in the temple lifting up his eyes and seeing the Lord on his throne and saying, Woe is me for I'm a man of unclean lips? Torrance said this wonder is the exercise of the mind in the contemplation of God in which wonder and all play an important part in stretching and enlarging our vision. All worship involves wonder. If we're truly worshiping God, there is that element of wonder. Now, the problem is, is that as we grow older, we lose our sense of wonder.

So the question I want to ask is, where has our God given sense of wonder gone? The study of God is not boring. In fact, it is the most exciting thing that you'll ever study in your life. This psalm is an expression of what happens to a believer when he takes time to truly think about the greatness of Almighty God.

Big Idea: **Four truths that this psalmist thought about that caused him to be in awe of God and kept the wonder in his worship.**

I. God knows everything about me – vs 1

A. He knows my conduct
B. He knows my contemplations – vs. 2
C. He knows my character – vs. 3
D. He knows my conversations – vs. 4
E. He knows my circumstances – vs. 5

The **incomprehensibility of God** is the presupposition of all theology. What I mean by that is, look, we can learn some things about God, but if you think you're going to completely figure God out, you've got another thing coming. He's too great for that. We can't figure God out with our reasoning.

II. God is always with me

A. Death cannot separate me from God – vs. 8
B. Distance cannot separate me from God – vs. 9
C. Darkness cannot separate me from God – vs. 11

III. God made me

A. He made me sovereignly
B. He made me skillfully
C. He made me secretly – vs. 15

IV. God continually thinks about me – vs. 17

TEXT: PSALM 140

TITLE: ARE YOU WEARING YOUR HELMET?
(WHO IS PROTECTING YOUR HEAD?)

BIG IDEA: THE LORD HIMSELF IS OUR HELMET OF SALVATION FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF THE WICKED

INTRODUCTION:

cf. importance of wearing your seat belt; of wearing your helmet when you bicycle; of wearing a helmet when you play football; head is a vulnerable area that must have maximum protection

I. (:1-5) CRY FOR PROTECTION / PROTECTION IS NECESSARY

A. Action Requested

"*Rescue me*" … "*Preserve me*" (:1)
"*Keep me*" … "*Preserve me*" (:4)

B. Attackers Identified

"*evil men*" (:1)
"*violent men*" (:1,4)
"*wicked*" (:4)
"*proud*" (:5)

C. Attackers Described

1. Always Plotting to Attack the righteous

"*Who devise evil things in their hearts*"

2. Given to Violence

"*They continually stir up wars*"

3. Specialize in Malicious Slander

"*They sharpen their tongues as a serpent;*
Poison of a viper is under their lips"

D. Attackers' Goal

"*Who have purposed to trip up my feet*"

E. Attackers' Deceitfulness – Using various types of traps to try to capture their prey

"*have hidden a trap for me, and cords;*
They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set snares for me"

II. (:6-8) CASE FOR PROTECTION / PROTECTION MAKES SENSE

A. Because God Hears and Answers the Prayers of His People

"*I said to the Lord, 'Thou art my God;*
Give ear, O Lord, to the voice of my supplications"

B. Because God Is a Helmet of Salvation to Protect His People

"*O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation,*
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

C. Because the Wicked Cannot Be Allowed to Win

"*Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked;*
Do not promote his evil device, lest they be exalted."

III. (:9-11) CALL FOR RETRIBUTION / PROTECTION INCLUDES VENGEANCE

No Helmet of Salvation on Their Head

"*As for the head of those who surround me*"

Instead:

A. They Will Reap the Evil They Have Sown

"*May the mischief of their lips cover them*"

B. They Will Be Destroyed and Cast Into the Lowest Pits

"*May burning coals fall upon them;*
May they be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits from which they cannot rise"

C. They Will Enjoy No Peace Or Security But Be Pursued by Evil

"*May a slanderer not be established in the earth;*
May evil hunt the violent man speedily"

(:12-13) CONCLUSION: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

THE LORD PROVIDES JUSTICE FOR THE OPPRESSED RIGHTEOUS

"*I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted,*
And justice for the poor.
Surely the righteous will give thanks to Thy name;
The upright will dwell in Thy presence."

* * * * * * * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Look at the influence the Master Serpent has on all of his servant serpents: teaching them his wiles and methods of deceit and attack. Are we good disciples of our Master? Are we practicing the kind of warfare techniques and using the weapons that He has provided?

2) Are we like our Lord in sticking up for the rights of the oppressed and doing our part to maintain their cause?

3) Study the concept of the Helmet of Salvation from Ephesians 6 and other

Scriptures. Do we have the confidence and assurance of the Lord's salvation?

4) Are we walking circumspectly, aware of Satan's devices and on the lookout for the types of snares and traps he has laid? Or are we careless and giving opportunity for the devil to tempt us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Victor Ross (Salvation Army – sermon outline on SermonCentral.com):

"POINT 2 PROTECTION

[a] Over the last few years, there's been quite a campaign to get cyclists to wear protective headgear - a kind of crash helmet!
[b] This is because in a bike accident it has been proved over and over again, that the head is the most vulnerable part of the body!
On large building sites, helmets are of course compulsory.
[c] Could we imagine a soldier going into the battlefield without has helmet!!
Even in riot situations we have seen the police dawn helmets for protection!
[d] The Roman Soldier's helmet was of primary importance.
[e] The Christian's HELMET OF SALVATION (mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 6:17) is of enormous importance!
…

POINT 3 SHOWS OUR ALLEGIANCE

[a] As you will be aware, many armies of bygone days have worn different colours of plumage on their helmets, to differentiate them from the enemy - they showed their colours - showed who they belonged to!
[b] There is NO SECRET SERVICE in God's Army!! The Christian, in all circumstances and in all situations is expected to show his or her colours!!
[c] The helmet of the Roman Soldier was his pride and joy! His showpiece! When he rode or marched into battle, it was clean and sparkling, and glistening in the sunlight.
[d] Our Salvation must reflect the glorious light of God's presence! There must be nothing in our lives to tarnish this reflection of the Lord from shining out from us!
Others must see His Glory gleaming from our lives."

Spurgeon: “Saul laid many snares for David, but the Lord preserved him… Birds are taken in nets, and men are taken by deceit. Satan instructs his children in the art of fowling, and they right speedily learn how to spread nets…”

Spurgeon: “The shield of the Eternal is better protection than a helmet of brass. When arrows fly thick and the battle-axe crashes right and left, there is no covering for the head like the power of the Almighty. See how the child of providence glorifies his Preserver! He calls him not only his salvation, but the strength of it, by whose unrivalled force he had been enabled to outlive the cunning and cruelty of his adversaries. He had obtained a deliverance in which the strength of the Omnipotent was clearly to be seen.”

TEXT: PSALM 141

TITLE: SPIRITUAL REVIVAL IS A DANGEROUS PURSUIT

BIG IDEA: ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL MUST ALSO PRAY FOR PERSONAL PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION:

David certainly qualifies as an Advocate for Spiritual Revival

I. (:1-2) ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL MUST SEEK GOD'S EAR IN PRAYER AS PART OF THEIR DAILY SACRIFICE OF WORSHIP

A. Listen to My Prayer

"*O Lord, I call upon Thee; hasten to me!*
Give ear to my voice when I call to Thee!"

B. Liken My Prayer to an Offering

"*May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee;*
The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering."

He associates his pattern of petitioning God for protection to the pattern of regular offerings administered each evening by the priest

II. (:3-4) ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL NEED GOD'S PROTECTION AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF BITTERNESS AND COMPROMISE

A. God's Protection Against the Temptation of Bitterness

"*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth;*
Keep watch over the door of my lips."

When God is not responding like we would like or as quickly as we would like, it is easy to become bitter and say the wrong thing.

B. God's Protection Against the Temptation of Compromise

"*Do not incline my heart to any evil thing.*
To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity;
And do not let me eat of their delicacies."

III. (:5) ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL NEED TO REMAIN RESPONSIVE TO REPROOF FROM THE RIGHTEOUS AND COMMITTED TO THEIR GOAL OF REPROVING WICKEDNESS

A. Responsive to Reproof from the Righteous

"*Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me;*
It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it"

B. Committed to the Goal of Reproving Wickedness

"*For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds*."

IV. (:6-7) ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL HOPE IN THE POWER OF GOD TO CHANGE MEN'S HEARTS

A. Hope that People Will Become Responsive to the Word of God

"*Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock,*
And they hear my words, for they are pleasant."

B. Hope that Fruit Will Be the Result of the Work of Sowing the Seed

"*As when one plows and breaks open the earth,*
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol"

NIV "*When their leaders are condemned, and their bones are strewn across the ground, then these men will finally listen to me and know that I am trying to help them*."

V. (:8-10) ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD'S PROTECTION

A. Actively Looking to the Lord for Protection

"*For my eyes are toward Thee, O God, the Lord;*
In Thee I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless."

B. Avoiding all Traps by virtue of the Lord's Protection

"*Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,*
And from the snares of those who do iniquity"

C. Advocating the Demise of the Wicked from a Position of Safety

"*Let the wicked fall into their own nets, While I pass by safely*."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Would we be more careful and devote more energy to our prayers if we viewed them as a worshipful sacrifice offered up to God? Are our prayers sweet incense or grating protestations?

2) How are we doing in the area of self-control of our tongue? Do we find it difficult to guard what we say? Study James 4. The tongue has the potential to do much harm among our Christian brothers and sisters. What practical steps can you take in seeking the Lord to guard your mouth? On the other hand are we willing and courageous enough to take a stand against "*wicked deeds*" where God wants us to? (Especially in the area of committing ourselves to pray for spiritual revival?)

3) How do we accept reproof and correction from others? Are we immediately defensive and do we argue and strike back or can we listen objectively and see the kindness of our friends in their desire to help us. What can we learn from the imagery of precious oil poured upon the head (vs. 5)?

4) Are we able to maintain hope that the power of God can work in people's hearts? (Especially in the hearts of those people that seem to us so unlikely to respond to the gospel.) Remember the NT analogy that a seed abides alone unless it falls into the ground and dies – in which case it is able to bear fruit.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "The whole psalm asserts that true religion is a fellowship with God that withstands all adversity; it prefers the correction that will deepen such fellowship, to the superficial attractions of compromise and luxury."

Leupold: "The particular difficulty that is to be encountered in connection with the interpretation of this psalm is the fact that vv. 6,7 … are beset with unusual problems… when one 'plows in the earth and breaks it up,' that is work which is done in anticipation of things to be sown and harvested. On the plowed earth that has been prepared for the sowing lie the bones of God's saints, scattered right at the mouth of the grave where they are buried, but not buried in utter hopelessness. Though buried, they are a seed sown unto a new life. This verse then appears like a statement of a belief in the resurrection. It is not as clear as Is. 26:19 or, in another sense, Ezek. 37, but still a statement that has an outlook of hope for the children of God."

Leupold: "The fact that the use of incense typifies prayer is stated with abundant clearness in the New Testament as Rev. 5:8 indicates. On the use of incense in the sanctuary see Exod. 30:7ff.; Exod. 29:41 shows that the evening sacrifice was appointed early in Israel's history."

Leupold: "…the trouble in which the psalmist finds himself is such that he may under the circumstances be tempted to speak rashly and act foolishly."

Spurgeon: Re death of their judges – "the death of Saul made all the best of the nation look to the son of Jesse as the Lord's anointed; his words became sweet to them. Many of those good men who had spoken severely of David's quitting his country, and going over to the Philistines, were nevertheless dear to his heart for their fidelity, and to them he returned nothing but good-will, loving prayers, and sweet speeches, knowing that by-and-by they would overlook his faults, and select him to be their leader."

TEXT: PSALM 142

TITLE: A CAVE MAN'S COMPLAINT

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever felt trapped and cornered; no way out; no possible escape? Have you been lonely and isolated? Thinking that no once cares about you and no one is available to help you?

BIG IDEA: WHEN I AM TRAPPED AND ALL ALONE
THE LORD IS STILL MY ESCAPE ROUTE

I. (:1-4) WHEN I AM TRAPPED AND ALL ALONE
I CAN STILL CRY OUT TO THE LORD

A. Crying out to the Lord

1. It Helps to Cry out Loud to the Lord

"*I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord;*
I make supplication with my voice to the Lord."

2. It Helps to Pour Out our Heart to the Lord

"*I pour out my complaint before Him;*
I declare my trouble before Him."

B. Taking Solace in the Lord's Providence

1. Feeling Overwhelmed

"*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me*"

2. Feeling Encouraged

"*Thou didst know my path*"

C. Feeling Trapped

"*In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me*."
"*There is no escape for me*"

D. Feeling All Alone

"*Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me*;"
"*No one cares for my soul*"

II. (:5-7) DESPITE THE STRENGTH OF MY ENEMIES,
THE LORD IS STILL ABLE TO RESCUE ME

A. The Lord is My Refuge

"*Thou art my refuge*"

B. The Lord is My Portion

"*My portion in the land of the living*"

C. The Lord is My Deliverer

"*Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me. Bring my soul out of prison*"

D. The Lord Should Receive All the Glory

1. Praise from Me

"*So that I may give thanks to Thy name*"

2. Recognition from the Righteous

"*The righteous will surround me*"
I will once again enjoy their fellowship and they will give God the glory for what He has accomplished in delivering me.

3. Testimony of all: "*Thou wilt deal bountifully with me*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of cave experiences have we suffered? What does a trapped animal feel like? What are some of the temptations that face us when we are cornered?

2) Do we find it helpful to pray out loud at times? Do we pray from our hearts and pour out our troubles at the Lord's feet?

3) Do we take comfort in the fact that the Lord knows all about the difficulties we face? He has ordained our paths and knows our future so we can trust in His leading.

4) What type of a friend are we to those who are in low spirits? Are we sensitive to the loneliness they are feeling? Do we make that extra effort to try to provide what companionship and help we can? Are we fair-weather friends … abandoning our friends when they are cast upon the sea of perplexity and deprivation?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "This short psalm is a passionate plea for help in the face of some sort of persecution. The psalmist feels so totally alone that he expects no help from any friend (verse 4). His enemies are too strong for him (verse 6), but in his weakness he finds strength from God (verse 3) and he looks forward to rejoicing in company with those loyal to God."

Barnes: "The reference may be either to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1), or to that in Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 3). In both cases the circumstances were substantially the same, for David had fled to the cave to escape from Saul. The prayer is such as would be appropriate to a condition of danger such as was that in which David then was. It is a cry of distress when there

was no refuge—no hope—but in God; when there seemed to be no way of escape from his enemies; and when, forsaken by his friends, and pursued by an enemy who sought his life, he seemed now to be in the power of his foe."

Barnes: David looked forward to the time when the righteous "shall come to me with congratulations and with expressions of rejoicing. They will desire my society, my friendship, my influence, and will regard it as a privilege and an honour to be associated with me."

Spurgeon: "Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days."

Kidner: Re vv.3b-4 – "Just how timely was the conviction that God knew David's way (3a) is now doubly clear. First, verse 3b shows the perils of the path ahead; he can be thankful that it holds no problem for God. Then verse 4 reveals the friendless state of David, whom noone cares to know—or so he feels. Mercifully again, God knows and cares. In the event, it seems that God answered abundantly, soon sending David's '*brothers and all his father's house*' to join him in his cave, and then by degrees a company that would become the nucleus of his kingdom (1 Sa. 22:1f.). This low ebb in his fortunes proved in fact to be a turning-point."

Dr. Jerry Harmon: **Songs from a Cave**
Introduction: Psalm 142 is about David, a time in his life when he was in darkness, he was kind of forsaken, he was lonely, he was in a place where he was really not comfortable at all. And it's about how God helped him to make it out of that place. What he's kind of saying. He wrote this by himself in a very dark, damp, And by the way, this same subtitle is under Psalm 57. So it's very likely that he wrote two songs in this same circumstance. Now this was at a time in his life when he was running from Saul. Scholars think that when he wrote this, it was at the cave of Adullam when he wrote this, because at that place and at that point in his life, he was utterly alone. When he was at the cave of Nengedi, he had his brothers and his men that were there with him. And so that's why most think Adullam is the place. Caves are effective classrooms. They help you to trust God and put your faith in the Lord.

Big Idea: **Some things to remember when you have your cave experience**

I. The Lord hears our cry – vs 1
Faith in God must be personal. You have to develop a strong enough faith that'll get you through these times. Maybe the best way that we can pray is to ask God to give us the grace to handle our circumstances. His grace is sufficient. Prayer then is taking a matter to the Lord. It's an act of worship of pouring it out.

II. The Lord knows our circumstances – vs. 3
He knows your path, and he knows your problems. He knows your pain.

III. The Lord helps our cause -- vs. 5
We learn that God is all that we need when we're put into a position where God is all that we have. He learns that God is his refuge. He learns that God is his portion.

We learned to find our total contentment in God. What I see here at the end of the psalm is David is growing in confidence, and then I think he, here's what we learned, the Lord will attend to our cry – vs. 6. The Lord will deliver me.

IV. The Lord will show you the way

TEXT: PSALM 143

TITLE: STAYING UPBEAT WHEN YOU ARE BEING BEAT UP

BIG IDEA: WHEN OUR ENEMIES HAVE THE UPPER HAND, WE CAN AVOID DEPRESSION BY FOCUSING ON OUR GOD

4 WAYS TO FOCUS ON OUR GOD:

I. (:1-4) CRYING TO GOD
(EVEN THOUGH WE ARE BEING CRUSHED)

A. Asking for Answers

1. Listen

"*Hear my prayer, O Lord,*
Give ear to my supplications!"

2. "*Answer me*"

3. Based on:

"*Thy faithfulness*"
"*Thy righteousness*"

B. Appealing for Mercy

"*And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant,*
For in Thy sight no man living is righteous"

C. Accusing the Enemy

"*For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground;*
He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead."

D. Agonizing Within

"*Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;*
My heart is appalled within me."

II. (:5-6) LONGING FOR GOD'S GLORY
(EVEN THOUGH WE ARE DYING OF SPIRITUAL THIRST)

A. Trying to Revive that God-Connection

1. "*I remember the days of old*"

2. "*I meditate on all Thy doings*"

3. "*I muse on the work of Thy hands*"

4. "*I stretch out my hands to Thee*"

B. Longing of Spiritual Thirst

"*My soul longs for Thee, as a parched land*."

III. (:7-9) LOOKING FOR GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS
(EVEN THOUGH WE ARE TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF THE PIT)

A. Almost Down the Tubes

1. Urgency of the Situation

"*Answer me quickly, O Lord, my spirit fails*"

2. Precariousness of the Situation

"*Do not hide Thy face from me,*
Lest I become like those who go down to the pit"

B. Alert for God's Lovingkindness

"*Let me hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning*"

C. Anchored in Faith

"*For I trust in Thee*"

D. Available for Instruction

"*Teach me the way in which I should walk; For to Thee I lift up my soul*"

E. Asking for Deliverance

"*Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies, I take refuge in Thee*."

IV. (:10-12) SEEKING GOD'S LEADING
(EVEN THOUGH WE ARE IN A HEAP OF TROUBLE)

A. Teach Me – "*Teach me to do Thy will*"
Why? "*For Thou art my God*"

B. Lead Me – "*Let Thy … Spirit lead me on level ground*"
Why? "*Thy good Spirit*"

C. Revive Me -- "*Revive Me*"
Why? "*For the sake of Thy name, O Lord*"

D. Rescue Me – "*bring my soul out of trouble*"
Why? "*in Thy righteousness*"

E. Repay My Enemies – "*cut off my enemies*" / "*destroy all those who afflict my soul*"
Why? "*in Thy lovingkindness*" / "*For I am Thy servant*"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) This psalm is rich in theology. Note the implications for some major doctrines:
Doctrine of Depravity

Doctrine of God's Leading / God's Will for the Believer
Doctrine of Prayer
Doctrine of the Character of God

2) Would your family describe you as "upbeat" in times of pressure – do you look up to the Lord for help and deliverance or do you look down at the pit that threatens to devour you?

3) If you were to "*remember the days of old*" and "*meditate on all God's doings*", what specifically would come to mind?

4) Think of all that God needs to accomplish in our life in order to revive us, in order to give us renewed life and energy for serving Him. Are we open to God teaching us and leading us by His Good Spirit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "This is the prayer of a man who has been brought very low before his enemies (verses 3f.) and whose suffering is made unbearable by his sense of dereliction (verse 7). Recalling God's faithfulness and his past acts of salvation (verses 1, 5), he comes longing for his presence (verses 6-8) and pleading for deliverance (verses 9-12). His plea is for mercy rather than for justice, because he is all too well aware of his own unworthiness (verse 2) and his need for a closer walk with God (verses 8, 10). Hence this has become one of the Penitential Psalms in Christian tradition, the last of the seven in the Psalter. Originally it may have been used in night vigils, for it is one of several that looks for God's help to come in the morning (verse 8…)."

Spurgeon: "Why it has been set down as one of the seven Penitential Psalms we can hardly tell; for it is rather a vindication of his own integrity, and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault. … It seems to us rather martial than penitential, rather a supplication for deliverance from trouble than a weeping acknowledgment of transgression.

Spurgeon: Re vs. 11 – "Oh for more life as well as more light! Teaching and leading call for invigoration, or we shall be dull scholars and slow pilgrims. Jehovah, the Lord and giver of life, is the only one from whom life can come to renew and revive us; -- hence the prayer is to him only. Perchance a servant might teach and lead, but only the Master can enliven."

Kidner: "The main concern of David is with the straits to which his enemies have brought him. If his preoccupation at first is mainly with his troubles, towards the end it is largely with finding and following God's way ahead….
Three times in verses 8-10 David prays for guidance; and each request has its own nuance. '*The way I should go*' (8b) gives slight prominence to the fact of individual destiny, i.e., that each of us is uniquely placed and called (cf. Jn. 21:21f.). '*Teach me to*

do they will' (10a) settles the priorities, making the goal not self-fulfilment but pleasing God and finishing His work. The words '*lead me*' (10b) speak with the humility of one who knows his need of shepherding, not merely of having the right way pointed out to him. David, no less than Paul (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), teaches us to look to God's good spirit for this leading; in other words, for an inward work of inclining the will and awakening the mind."

Carr: COMING OUT OF LIFE'S DARK VALLEY

I. THE PAIN OF THE DARK VALLEY
   A. V. 3 The Pain Of Darkness - No Help
   B. V. 4 The Pain Of Depression - No Heart
   C. V. 7 The Pain Of Despair - No Hope

II. THE PRIZE IN THE DARK VALLEY
   A. V.2 The Prize Of Repentance - Our Sins
   B. V.5 The Prize Of Remembrance - Our Sovereign
   C. V. 6 The Prize Of Reliance - Our Self

III. THE PATH OUT OF THE DARK VALLEY
   A. V.1, 6, 8a, 9a, 11-12 The Path Of Prayer - Waiting
   B. V.10b The Path Of Praise - Worshiping
   C. V. 8b, 9b, 10a The Path Of Practice - Walking

TEXT: PSALM 144

TITLE: HOW BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD

BIG IDEA: THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION FIGHTS THE BATTLES THAT SECURE OUR DELIVERANCE AND PROSPERITY

(:1A) INTRODUCTION:

"*Blessed be the Lord, my rock*"

I. (:1B-4) THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION TAKES A PERSONAL INTEREST IN SECURING VICTORY FOR US

A. Equips Me to Fight

"*Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle*"

B. Protects and Delivers Me

"*My lovingkindness and my fortress, My stronghold and my deliverer;*
My shield and He in whom I take refuge;
Who subdues my people under me"

C. Takes a Personal Interest in Me (Surprising given who He is vs. who man is)

"*O Lord, what is man, that Thou does take knowledge of him?*
Or the son of man, that Thou dost think of him?
Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow."

II. (:5-11) THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION FIGHTS ON OUR BEHALF TO SECURE OUR DELIVERANCE

A. (:5-6) Unleashes His Majestic Power Against Our Enemies

"*Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down;*
Touch the moutains, that they may smoke.
Flash forth lightning and scatter them;
Send out Thine arrows and confuse them."

B. (:7-8, 11) Delivers Us From Deceitful Enemies

"*Stretch forth Thy hand from on high;*
Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, Out of the hand of aliens
Whose mouths speak deceit, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood."

"*Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of aliens,*
Whose mouth speaks deceit,
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood."

C. (:9-10) Puts a New Song in Our Mouth

1. A Song of Praise

"*I will sing a new song to Thee, O God;*
Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to Thee"

2. A Song of Salvation

"*Who dost give salvation to kings;*
Who dost rescue David His servant from the evil sword."

III. (:12-14) THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION BLESSES US WITH ABUNDANT PROSPERITY

A. The Blessing of Successful Offspring

"*Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,*
And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace"

B. The Blessing of Abundant Wealth

"*Let our garners be full, furnishing every kind of produce,*
And our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;
Let our cattle bear, Without mishap and without loss,
Let there be no outcry in our streets!"

(:15) BENEDICTION:

"*How blessed are the people who are so situated;*
How blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How have we allowed the Lord to equip us for the battles we fight? Have we taken advantage of the opportunities the Lord has provided? Where do we need to sharpen our skills?

2) Reflect on how far above man God is and yet how He personally loves and cares for us. Reflect on how brief our stay on this earth is and yet what a tremendous opportunity it affords to walk in faith.

3) Do we picture the powerful forces of nature (of Thunder and Lightning) as unleashed by God on our behalf to defeat our enemies? How can we question whether God's arm is too short to deliver us?

4) What type of material prosperity do we enjoy? Do we acknowledge this as a blessing from God? Do we place our hope in the spiritual blessings that cannot be affected by our physical circumstances?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: Re “sculptured pillars” – “the reference may include either good looks, or regal stature, or both.”

Spurgeon: “Not only does the Lord give strength to his saints, but he is their strength. The strength is made theirs because God is theirs. God is full of power, and he becomes the power of those who trust him…. A believer in God may without presumpton expect the Almighty Lord to use on his behalf all the stores of his wisdom and power: even the terrible forces of tempest shall be marshalled to the fight, for the defence of the Lord’s chosen. When we have once mastered the greater difficulty of the Lord’s taking any interest in us, it is but a small thing that we should expect him to exert his great power on our behalf.”

Spurgeon: “In this Psalm David ascribes his own power over the people, and the prosperity which attended his reign, to the Lord himself. Happy was the nation which he ruled; happy in its king, in its families, in its prosperity, and in the possession of peace; but yet more in enjoying true religion and worshipping Jehovah, the only living and true God.”

TEXT: PSALM 145

TITLE: PRAISING THE NAME OF THE LORD

BIG IDEA: WE SHOULD PRAISE THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD CONTINUALLY

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION:

"*I will extol Thee, my God, O King;*
And I will bless Thy name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless Thee,
And I will praise Thy name forever and ever."

A. Praise Activity Defined
"*extol*"
"*bless*"
"*praise*"

B. Praise Him for His Relationship to Me As:
1. My God

2. My King

C. Praise Him for His Character = His Name

D. Praise Him Continually
1. Every day

2. Forever and ever

I. (:3-6) HIS GREATNESS

A. Summary
"*Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised*"

B. Unsearchable
"*His greatness is unsearchable*"

C. Enduring (True for Every Generation)
"*One generation shall praise Thy works to another;*
And shall declare Thy mighty acts."

D. Majestic
"*On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty,*
And on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate."

E. Powerful

"*And men shall speak of the power of Thine awesome acts;*
And I will tell of Thy greatness."

II. (:7-10) HIS GOODNESS

A. Summary

"*They shall eagerly utter the memory of Thine abundant goodness*"

B. Righteous

"*And shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness*"

C. Kind

"*The Lord is gracious and merciful;*
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness."

D. Impartial / Universal

"*The Lord is good to all,*
And His mercies are over all His works.
All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O Lord,
And Thy godly ones shall bless Thee."

III. (:11-13) HIS GLORY

A. Summary

"*They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom*"

B. Powerful

"*And talk of Thy power*"

C. Manifested in His Eternal Kingdom

"*To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts,*
And the glory of the majesty of Thy kingdom.
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Thy dominion endures throughout all generations."

IV. (:14-20) HIS GENEROSITY

A. Summary (:16,19-20)

1. Generous to All in a General Sense

"*Thou dost open Thy hand,*
And dost satisfy the desire of every living thing."

2. Generous to His People in a Special Sense

"*He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;*
He will also hear their cry and will save them.
The Lord keeps all who love Him;
But all the wicked, He will destroy."

B. Helps those who are Burdened Down

"*The Lord sustains all who fall,*
And raises up all who are bowed down."

B. Provides Necessary Food
"*The eyes of all look to Thee,*
And Thou dost give them their food in due time."

C. Righteous and Kind
"*The Lord is righteous in all His ways,*
And kind in all His deeds."

D. Approachable
"*The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,*
To all who call upon Him in truth."

(:21) CONCLUSION:
"My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord;
And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever."

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What is the special contribution of our generation to the progressive testimony to the Greatness of God? How has He demonstrated His greatness in our family? What has been passed down to us from our forefathers on this subject?

2) Reflect on the Goodness of God in General Grace and how that goodness should lead men to repentance. Do we abuse God's patience (His grace and mercy and being slow to anger) and become sluggish in our obedience? Are we ever tempted to fall into the trap of picturing God as a Scrooge who is out to treat people cruelly?

3) David's concerns always rose above his personal situation and desire for family blessing to the level of concern for God's kingdom. What type of concern do we have for God's overall program in the world?

4) Do we picture the Lord as right at our side to lift us up when we fall down? Do we appreciate how accessible He is and how He longs to satisfy our desires?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "Probably no psalm in the whole Psalter is less in need of commentary than Ps. 145. The fact that this is an acrostic psalm in which each verse begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet (see p. 10) means that it consists in the main of short, self-

contained statements. These centre on the universal rule of God, and result in an incomparable hymn of praise to God as king…"

Cambridge: "God's care for his world extends to all creatures, including all mankind. This does not mean, however, that he does not execute justice against all wickedness (see verse 20). Such moral action is also part of God's wise government."

Barnes: (quoting Walford) "But when we behold omnipotence united with infinite love, and with wisdom and rectitude so absolutely perfect that it is the most impossible of things for him to do wrong, then, if we desire his favour and friendship to forgive and sustain us, hope extends its consoling energies to our hearts, and we learn to rejoice in knowing that he in whose hands ourselves and all creatures are and must ever be, is invested with power to effect all the purposes of his beneficent will, and to feel that we are safer in his keeping than in our own; and that though we are frail, feeble, and unworthy, he is pledged by the necessary excellence of his nature to educe good from evil, and so to direct all events, temporal and eternal, as shall demonstrate him to be the only wise and good, and to be worthy of all glory and honour from the whole intelligent universe."

Leupold: "It should be noted that this psalm is of a kindred spirit with the others that close the book as Kirkpatrick nicely points out. They all develop the theme, 'For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.'"

Beisner: "What an amazing God we have! Splendid, glorious, majestic in His greatness. Righteous and faithful and holy, yet full of loving mercy, grace, and compassion. A God who, from His vantage point far away, sees our every rebellious act, yet a God near and ready to comfort and help. Truly God is great and God is good! No wonder David was so intent on praising him!

All of these marvelous attributes of God, these elements of His greatness and goodness, determine the kind of Kingdom he rules. The glorious, splendid, majestic King has a glorious and splendid Kingdom (Ps. 145:5,11-12). The God who is forever faithful to His promises rules a Kingdom that endures forever (verse 13). And in that Kingdom of love Jehovah the King '*upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down*' (verse 14). He meets all His subjects' needs – and even more, all their desires (verses 15-16). Righteous in all His ways and loving toward all He has made, He draws near to those who call on Him and fear Him, and He saves them (verses 17-19). And then, that His saints might endure as long as His Kingdom endures, He '*watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy*' (verse 20)."

Stott: "It is noteworthy that in verses 19 and 20 God's people are said both to *fear* and to *love* Him. One writer comments: 'Fear and love are the inseparable elements of true religion. Fear preserves love from degenerating into presumptuous familiarity: love prevents fear from becoming a servile and cringing dread."

The last verse (verse 21) seems to summarise the three characteristics of the worship of Jehovah, which have been elaborated in the psalm. It is eternal (*for ever and ever*), universal (*every creature*), and rational (*praise his holy name*)."

Ogilvie: "The Lord is like that net [relied on by the trapeze artist in the circus]. He catches me when I fall, and when I am caught by His everlasting arms, I discover His true greatness. He is the forgiving Lord whose love never fails. If I had never fallen in the failures of my life, I would never have known the absolute reliability of His grace. He is always there when I fail. The more sure I am of that, the less I fear failure, and amazingly, the less I fail! I am learning how to fall into greatness…

'*The Lord upholds all who fall,/And raises up all those who are bowed down*' (v. 14).

In Hebrew, *upholds* is a predicate explaining the nature of the Lord. His name here is *The Lord upholds*. He supports those who fall in the walk of life. The metaphor shifts to affirm that He also raises up those who are bowed down. The image is of a reed bent down under the heat of the sun or the blasts of the wind.

We fall because of what we do with life; we are bowed down because of what life does to us. We either fall down or are pushed down. In either case the Lord is there to help us with love we never imagined was possible.

I am convinced that what the psalmist knew about the greatness of God's grace had been learned in the difficulties of falling in his own life, and in the life of Israel as the people of God. He could priase God for His compassion and mercy because he had fallen into the strong arms of greatness in times of failure."

Wiersbe: "To a praising saint, the circumstances of life are a window through which he sees God. To a complaining saint, these same circumstances are only a mirror in which he sees himself. That is why he complains…

It is interesting to see how David balanced the seeming contradictory attributes of God in this psalm. He opened extolling the greatness of God, and then turned to the goodness of God. Now we move from God's sovereign government to His sovereign grace! He is a great God on the throne, yet He is a God who is near us, concerned about our needs."

Harris: A SUPREME SONG OF PRAISE
Theme: David's own thanksgiving and praise pitched in a joyous key.
Occasion: Unknown.

I. PRIASE FOR GREATNESS. Ver. 1-6. "*I will declare thy greatness*" (ver. 6).

II. PRAISE FOR GOODNESS. Ver. 7-10. "*The memory of thy goodness*" (ver. 7).

III. PRAISE FOR GLORY. Ver. 11-13. "*The glory of thy kingdom*" (ver. 11).

IV. PRAISE FOR GUIDANCE. Ver. 14-16. "*Upholdeth all that fall*" (ver. 14).

V. PRAISE FOR GRACE. Ver. 17-21. "*He will fulfil the desire*" (ver. 19).

TEXT: PSALM 146

TITLE: THE LORD CAN DO IT ALL

BIG IDEA: TRUSTING IN GOD BEATS TRUSTING IN MAN

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: PRAISE THE LORD CONTINUALLY

"*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!*
I will praise the Lord while I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."

I. (:3-5) THESIS: TRUSTING IN GOD BEATS TRUSTING IN MAN

A. Limitations of Trusting in Man

1. Even Princes = Mere Mortals

"*Do not trust in princes, In mortal man*"

2. Unable to Provide Salvation

"*in whom there is no salvation*"

3. Death Kills His Vision and the Implementation of His Plans

"*His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;*
In that very day his thoughts perish."

B. Blessings of Trusting in God

"*How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,*
Whose hope is in the Lord his God;"

II. (:6-9) PROOF: NO LIMITATIONS IN WHAT GOD CAN DO

A. Creator of All

"*Who made heaven and earth,*
The sea and all that is in them"

B. Faithful / Unchanging

"*Who keeps faith forever*"

C. "*Executes Justice for the Oppressed*"

D. "*Gives Food to the Hungry*"

E. "*Sets the Prisoners Free*"

F. "*Opens the eyes of the Blind*"

G. "*Raises up Those Who are Bowed Down*"

H. "*Loves the Righteous*"

I. "*Protects the Strangers*"

J. "*Supports the fatherless and the widow*"

K. "*Thwarts the Way of the Wicked*"

(:10) CONCLUSION: IT PAYS TO TRUST IN GOD BECAUSE
HE WILL REIGN FOREVER
"*The Lord will reign forever, Thy God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Where do we find ourselves placing undue confidence and trust in our undershepherds in the church rather than in the Great Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep?

2) Think of this life as an opportunity to express Praise for the God whom we trust while we still walk by faith rather than by sight. Have we taken full advantage of that opportunity today?

3) Think of the Messianic implications of this psalm. Compare the types of capabilities mentioned in verses 6-9 to those applied to the Messiah in Isaiah 61:1-3 (quoted by the Lord in Luke 4:18-19).

4) What types of sins held us prisoner before the Lord set us free?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: "Ps. 146 contrasts the gracious power of God, which manifests itself in action on behalf of the oppressed and in judgement against the wicked (verses 5-10), with the powerlessness of man to establish a true order (verses 3f.)."

Cambridge: "Princes share all the limitations of mortal men, and their power must not become the object of unwavering trust….Even if a ruler has good plans and intentions, those die with him, and he may be replaced by others with different aims. This continual flux contrasts with the permanence of God's will for mankind."

Leupold: "The manifold evidences of what God can do may be grouped into two classes: there are, first of all, the great works that God is known to have done; then there are the kindly works that He loves to do for the children of men…. All that He does is at the

same time governed by a principle, and the governing principle is that He 'upholds justice for the oppressed.' … Wherever men may try to override justice, the Almighty overrides their injustice."

Spurgeon: "We are now among the Hallelujahs. The rest of our journey lies through the Delectable mountains. All is praise to the close of the book. The key is high-pitched: the music is upon the high-sounding cymbals. O for a heart full of joyful gratitude, that we may run, and leap, and glorify God, even as these Psalms do."

Spurgeon: "Men are always far too apt to depend upon the great ones of earth, and forget the Great One above; and this habit is the fruitful source of disappointment. Princes are only men, and men with greater needs than others; why, then, should we look to them for aid? They are in greater danger, are burdened with greater cares, and are more likely to be misled than other men; therefore, it is folly to select them for our confidence."

TEXT: PSALM 147

TITLE: THE AFFLICTED WILL BECOME THE AFFLUENT

BIG IDEA: THE LORD'S PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW DOWNTRODDEN, WILL BE BUILT UP TO ENJOY ALL THE BLESSINGS OF THEIR PRIVILEGED STATUS

3 EXHORTATIONS TO PRAISE THE LORD:

I. (:1-6) THE LORD BUILDS UP AND HEALS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW DOWNTRODDEN AND AFFLICTED THEY MAY BE

A. Exhortation to Praise the Lord

"*Praise the Lord*!" Why?

1. "*For it is good to sing praises to our God*"

2. "*For it is pleasant*"

3. "*and praise is becoming*"

B. The Compassion of the Lord in Building Up His Downtrodden People

1. Restoration Focused around His Kingdom Plan

"*The Lord builds up Jerusalem*"

2. Restoration Draws in all the Afflicted Outcasts

"*He gathers the outcasts of Israel*"

3. Restoration Heals all Spiritual, Emotional and Physical Wounds

"*He heals the brokenhearted,*
And binds up their wounds"

C. The Intimacy of the Lord in Building Up His Downtrodden People

"*He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them*."

He personally loves and cares for each individual. They are significant to Him.

D. The Power of the Lord in Building Up His Downtrodden People

"*Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength*;"

E. The Wisdom of the Lord in Building Up His Downtrodden People

"*His understanding is infinite.*"

F. Summary:

"*The Lord supports the afflicted;*

He brings down the wicked to the ground."

II. (:7-11) THE LORD'S SPECIAL FAVOR IS RESERVED FOR HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

A. Exhortation to Praise the Lord

"*Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;*
Sing praises to our God on the lyre"

B. Nature Illustrates the Lord's Ability to Provide

1. Provides Rain

"*Who covers the heavens with clouds;*
Who provides rain for the earth"

2. Causes Growth

"*makes grass to grow on the mountains*"

3. Provides Food

"*He gives to the beast its food,*
And to the young ravens which cry"

C. The Lord's Special Favor Not Based on Merit

"*He does not delight in the strength of the horse;*
He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man"

D. The Lord's Special Favor Reserved for His People

"*The Lord favors those who fear Him,*
Those who wait for His lovingkindness"

III. (:12-20) THE LORD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF THEIR PRIVILEGED STATUS

A. Exhortation to Praise the Lord

"*Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!*
Praise your God, O Zion!"

B. 4 Special Blessings the Lord Provides

1. Blessing of Protection

"*He has strengthened the bars of your gates*"

2. Blessing of Children

"*He has blessed your sons within you*"

3. Blessing of Peace

"*He makes peace in your borders*"

4. Blessing of Food

"*He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat*"

C. Blessings Commanded by the Sovereign Lord Who Rules Over Nature

"*He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.*
He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes.
He casts forth His ice as fragments; Who can stand before His cold?
He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow
and the waters to flow."

D. The Lord's People Enjoy a Unique Privileged Relationship

"*He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.*
He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His ordinances, they have not known them."

(:20B) CONCLUSION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we demonstrate the same heart of compassion (like the Lord) to those who are downtrodden and afflicted? Especially to those of the household of faith?

2) If the Lord provides food for helpless baby birds (ravens in this context; sparrows in Matthew 6) why do we have difficulty trusting in His daily provision for our needs? (Especially when we learn that the Lord knows each of His sheep personally and calls them by name just as He has named each of the multitude of the stars.)

3) Do we evaluate people by the "strength of their legs" (how impressive they are, what they have to contribute to the ministry of the church, outward appearance, etc.) or are we more concerned with their inward character – their fear of the Lord and confidence in His love?

4) Note the teaching in this psalm regarding the power and efficacy of the Word of God.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Spurgeon: "This is a specially remarkable song. In it the greatness and the condescending goodness of the Lord are celebrated. The God of Israel is set forth in his peculiarity of glory as caring for the sorrowing, the insignificant, and forgotten."

Spurgeon: Re vs. 20 – "Israel had clear and exclusive knowledge of God, while others were left in ignorance. Election is the loudest call for grateful adoration. … The nations were covered with darkness, and only Israel sat in the light. This was sovereign grace in its fullest noontide of power. '*Praise ye the Lord*.' When we have mentioned electing,

distinguishing love, our praise can rise no higher, and therefore we close with one more hallelujah."

Leupold: "The motivation for praise regularly includes two areas in each of the three sections of the psalm—what the Lord does in His universal government of the world as well as what He does for His people."

Leupold: "The healing of the '*brokenhearted*' is to be taken in the broadest sense by including those who grieve over their sins as well as those who are afflicted by life's manifold adversities. Similar is the thought of the binding up of wounds. In either case the gentle pity of the Lord is beautifully depicted as He stands by to comfort or to act the part of the kindly physician."

Piper: Re vs. 10-11 – "… And so we get an idea of how we feel both hope and fear at the same time. Hope turns fear into a happy trembling and peaceful wonder; and fear takes everything trivial out of hope and makes it serious. The terrors of God make the pleasures of his people intense. The fireside fellowship is all the sweeter when the storm is howling outside the cottage.

Now why does God delight in those who experience him in this way -- in people who fear him and hope in his love?

Surely it is because our fear reflects the greatness of his power and our hope reflects the bounty of his grace. God delights in those responses which mirror his magnificence.

This is just what we would have expected from a God who is all-sufficient in himself and has no need of us -- a God:

> who will never give up the glory of being the fountain of all joy,
> who will never surrender the honor of being the source of all safety,
> who will never abdicate the throne of sovereign grace.

God has pleasure in those who hope in his love because that hope highlights the freedom of his grace. When I cry out, 'God is my only hope, my rock, my refuge!', I am turning from myself and calling all attention to the boundless resources of God."

TEXT: PSALM 148

TITLE: CREATION PSALM: UNIVERSAL PRAISE

BIG IDEA: LET ALL HEAVEN AND EARTH PRAISE THE LORD

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

I. (:1B-6) LET ALL HEAVEN PRAISE THE LORD
"*Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights*!'

A. (:1b-4) Who?
1. "*Angels*" / "*hosts*"

2. "*Sun and moon*" / "*stars of light*"

3. "*Highest heavens*" / "*waters that are above the heavens*"

B. (:5-6) Why?
1. Created by the Command of the Lord
"*Let them praise the name of the Lord,*
For He commanded and they were created."

2. Established and Sustained by the Decree of the Lord
"*He has also established them forever and ever;*
He has made a decree which will not pass away."

II. (:7-14A) LET ALL EARTH PRAISE THE LORD
"*Praise the Lord from the earth*"

A. (:7-12) Who?
1. "*Sea monsters and all deeps*"

2. "*Fire and hail, snow and clouds;*
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word"

3. "*Mountains and all hills*"

4. "*Fruit trees and all cedars*"

5. "*Beasts and all cattle*"

6. "*Creeping things and winged fowl*"

7. "*Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth;*
Both young men and virgins; Old men and children."

B. (:13-14A) Why?

1. He is Exalted Above All Things

"*Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven*."

2. He Exalts a Strong Savior for His Chosen People

"*And He has lifted up a horn for His people, Praise for all His godly ones; Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him*."

(:14B) CONCLUSION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Reflect on singing God's praises in the same choir as His holy angels and all of His creation. What beautiful harmony we will make throughout all eternity.

2) Should not the Creator receive continual praises from His creatures? What happens when we lose sight of that Creator / Creature distinction? What is the world doing to try to eradicate that distinction? Cf. other religions which make the mistake of worshiping the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. (Study Romans 1)

3) Think of how worthy the Lord is of our praise. All people – from kings and princes to the most lowly – from the youngest to the oldest – all have in common the fact that they stand on a level plane before God as His creatures designed to offer up His praises.

4) Study the concept of the "*horn for his people*" (vs. 14). Note how a horn connotes strength. What are the Messianic implications here?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Cambridge: Verses 1-6 correspond to Gen. 1:1-19, the creation of the heavenly bodies, while verses 7-14 correspond to Gen. 1:20-2:4a….It would not be unfair to describe the psalm as a version of Gen. 1 suitable for use as a hymn."

Cambridge: Re vs. 11ff – "The detail of the various distinctions of rank and sex implies that the distinctions are ordained by God, and part of his created order. Human society is intended to be no less ordered than the natural world, and the perspective is not that of Israel alone, but man, as the final act of creation (Gen. 1:26)."

Barnes: “O what a hymn of praise is here! It is a universal chorus! All created nature have a share, and all perform their respective parts. All intelligent beings are especially called to praise him who made them in his love, and sustains them by his beneficence. Man particularly, in all the stages of his being – infancy, youth, manhood, and old age: all human beings have their peculiar interest in the great Father of the spirits of all flesh.”

Leupold: “The psalm reflects a unified view of the whole realm of nature. All things in this realm are to be traced to the almighty Creator and owe so much to Him that they ought to unite with one another in singing His praise…. The basic thought is this. The destiny of Israel is so important, and what God had recently done for his people in their Restoration is of such vital importance to all nations and creatures that, if they grasped what it involved, they would be glad to add their praises to Israel’s praises.”

Spurgeon: “His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people. He lifts up the down-trodden, but he in a peculiar mannner lifts up his people. When they are brought low he raises up a horn for them by sending them a deliverer; when they are in conflict he gives them courage and strength, so that they lift up their horn amid the fray; and when all is peaceful around them, he fills their horn with plenty, and they lift it up with delight.”

TEXT: PSALM 149

TITLE: NEW SONGS OF JOY

BIG IDEA: VICTORY AND VENGEANCE CAUSE GOD'S PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE WITH NEW SONGS OF JOY

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

I. (:1B-4) VICTORY CAUSES GOD'S PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE PUBLICLY WITH NEW SONGS OF JOY

A. Exhortation to God's People to Celebrate Publicly with a New Song
"*Sing to the Lord a new song,*
And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones."

B. Celebration Focused on God
1. Their Maker
"*Let Israel be glad in his Maker*"

2. Their King
"*Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King*"

C. Celebration Accompanied By Instruments of Joy
1. Dancing
"*Let them praise His name with dancing*"

2. Musical Instruments
"*Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre*"

D. Victory Appropriate for God's People Because of Election
"*For the Lord takes pleasure in His people*"

E. Celebration Connected with God's Victory
"*He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation*"

II. (:5-9A) VENGEANCE CAUSES GOD'S PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE PRIVATELY WITH NEW SONGS OF JOY
(VENGEANCE IS A FORM OF VICTORY)

A. Exhortation to God's People to Celebrate Privately with Songs of Joy
"*Let the godly ones exult in glory;*
Let them sing for joy on their beds."

B. Celebration Focused on God
"*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*"

C. Celebration Accompanied By Instruments of Vengeance
"*And a two-edged sword in their hand*"

D. Vengeance Appropriate for God's Enemies Because of Their Rebellion
"*To execute vengeance on the nations,*
And punishment on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the judgment written;"

E. Celebration Connected with God's Victory
"*This is an honor for all His godly ones*."

(:9B) CONCLUSION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do you feel that your praise and worship of the Lord is old and worn-out? Do you need some new life breathed into your worship? Maybe you need some new spiritual victories to celebrate so that you can rejoice with new songs of joy!

2) Note the connection between our relationship to God as our Creator and as our King – How does this impact His ability to give us the Victory?

3) Note how the Lord takes pleasure in blessing His children and is equally faithful in executing vengeance on the rebellious. Why do the wicked think they can afflict God's people with impunity?

4) How is God's execution of vengeance "*an honor for all His godly ones*"?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: "To act as God's instruments in this great judicial process, so far from being a disgrace or hardship, is an honour reserved for all the objects of his mercy and subjects of his grace."

Leupold: "'A new song' is called for, for new mercies make us feel the inadequacy of our past efforts at praise (cf. Ps. 33:3; 96:1). The song is to be 'praise' offered in the assembly of the pious because there it is done well, there the desire to praise the Lord flourishes best.

Spurgeon: Re vs. 8ff – “Israel as a nation had this to do, and did it, and then they rejoiced in the God who gave success to their arms. We praise our God after another fashion; we are not executioners of justice, but heralds of mercy. It would be a sad thing for any one to misuse this text; lest any warlike believer should be led to do so, we would remind him that the execution must not go beyond the sentence and warrant; and we have received no warrant of execution against our fellow men. Christians have no commission of vengeance; it is theirs to execute the command of mercy, and that alone.”

TEXT: PSALM 150

TITLE: PRAISE THE LORD!

BIG IDEA: DOXOLOGY FOR THE HYMNBOOK OF PRAISE

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

I. (:1B) WHERE?

"*Praise God in His sanctuary;*
Praise Him in His mighty expanse."

II. (:2) WHY?

"*Praise Him for His mighty deeds;*
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness."

III. (:3-5) HOW?

"*Praise Him with trumpet sound;*
Praise Him with harp and lyre.
Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.
Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals."

IV. (:6A) WHO?

"*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord*."

(:6B) CONCLUSION: "*Praise the Lord*!"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does this psalm counter some of the legalistic objections people have to certain forms of praise? i.e. based on this psalm do you think it is appropriate to praise God with drums? (Note how much emphasis is given to the wide variety of instruments that can be employed in worship.)

2) Where is God's sanctuary today? What places are appropriate places of worship? Think through the concept of "The Lord's House." How is that concept misapplied by some today? (Study John 4)

3) What place does dancing have in your worship experience? Why do you think this is?

4) As long as we have breath, let's make PRAISE a major reason for our being!

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Barnes: “What magnificence and majesty in this close! Praise gathered in from every creature; every instrument of joy, and gladness, and triumph, and jubilee summoned to sound loud praise; and every heart and voice engaged to help the choir.”

Leupold: “One can at a glance recognize the propriety of having this psalm serve as the conclusion of the Psalter. The note of praise swells out more and more strongly toward the close of the book, finally to break out in this crescendo which is full-toned and jubilant. Each of the four preceding books was concluded by a doxology (see Ps. 41:13; 72:18-20; etc.). What is more appropriate than to have a very special doxology for the final conclusion?”

Spurgeon: “We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship. It is a rapture. The poet-prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He stays not to argue, to teach, to explain: but cries with burning words, ‘Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the Lord.’”

Spurgeon: Re vs. 2 – “Here is a reason for praise. In these deeds of power we see himself. These doings of his omnipotence are always on behalf of truth and righteousness. His works of creation, providence, and redemption all call for praise; they are his acts, and his acts of might, therefore let him be praised for them. ‘Praise him according to his excellent greatness.’ His being is unlimited, and his praise should correspond therewith. He possesses a multitude or a plenitude of greatness, and therefore he should be greatly praised. There is nothing little about God, and there is nothing great apart from him. If we were always careful to make our worship fit and appropriate for our great Lord how much better should we sing! How much more reverently should we adore! Such excellent deeds should have excellent praise.”

SEMINAR ON THE PSALMS: CLASS SCHEDULE

This is a suggested 12 week outline for covering the Psalms in an overview type of course. Each class could introduce some of the unique features of the Book of Psalms and then concentrate on the particular topic for the week by looking at one or two of the psalms in that category.

1) **INTRODUCTION**
   Psalm 34:1-4; David = "a man after God's own heart" – What does that mean?
   Outline Course Objectives (see related Appendix)

2) **RIGHTEOUS VS WICKED / INTEGRITY / GODLINESS**
   Psalms 1; 7; 14; 15; 17; 26; 49; 64; 101; 120
   REVELATION / WORD OF GOD
   Psalms 19; 119 (22 strophes)

3) **MESSIANIC** (broken out separately, but could fit under other topics as well)
   Psalms 2; 8; 16; 22; 40; 45; 69; 72; 89; 102; 109; 110; 132
   (see related Appendix)
   KINGSHIP / ROYAL / SOVEREIGNTY
   Psalms 21; 24; 47; 48; 85; 87; 93; 97; 99; 113; 122

4) **CRISIS / DESPERATION**
   Psalms 55; 57; 70; 88; 142; 143
   REPROACH / SLANDER
   Psalms 4; 86; 123

5) **ANSWERING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS** (see related Appendix)
   Psalms 10; 13; 74; 77; 79

6) **PROTECTION / DELIVERANCE / VICTORY**
   Psalms 3; 5; 12; 18; 20; 28; 44; 46; 59; 61; 62; 108; 118; 121; 124; 140; 141; 144; 147

7) **JUDGMENT / VINDICATION / IMPRECATORY / WRATH OF GOD**
   (see related Appendix)
   Psalms 9; 35; 50; 54; 58; 75; 82; 83; 94; 106; 129
   (Also: 7; 55; 59; 68; 69; 79; 137; 139)

8) **PENITENTIAL / CONFESSION OF SIN / DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD**
   Psalms 6; 32; 39; 51; 53; 137
   (Also: 38; 130; 143)

9) **IMPORTANCE OF FAITH / FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**
   Psalms 11; 27; 56; 91; 105; 146
   HOPE / PERSEVERANCE / PERSPECTIVE
   Psalms 31; 37; 38; 42; 43; 71; 78; 90; 125; 130; 131; 138

10) **GOD'S PROVIDENCE / GOODNESS / THANKSGIVING / BLESSINGS /**

GOD'S FAVOR
Psalms 23; 65; 67; 73; 80; 81; 84; 95; 100; 103; 115; 126; 127; 133; 134; 135; 139

11) **GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS / MERCY**
Psalms 36; 41; 52; 60; 63; 107; 116; 117; 136

12) **FEAR OF THE LORD / MAJESTY / WORSHIP**
Psalms 25; 29; 34; 66; 68; 76; 104; 111; 112; 114; 128
PRAISE / JOY
Psalms 30; 33; 92; 96; 98; 145; 148; 149; 150

TOPICAL INDEX (FOLLOWING SUGGESTED CLASS SCHEDULE)

Note: Each psalm is included in only one primary category (despite having obvious application to other categories). The Title and the Big Idea statement for each psalm are displayed.

RIGHTEOUS VS WICKED / INTEGRITY / GODLINESS

Psalms 1:1-6 *TWO PATHS / TWO DESTINIES*
THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND BLESSINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS VS THE LACK OF CHARACTER AND JUDGMENTS OF THE UNGODLY

Psalms 7:1-17 *INTEGRITY COUNTS FOR SOMETHING*
INTEGRITY ENSURES PROTECTION FROM FIERCE ADVERSARIES SINCE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL VINDICATE THE INNOCENT AND EXECUTE THE WICKED

Psalms 14:1-7 *THE FOOLISHNESS OF PRACTICAL ATHEISM*
THE CORRUPTION OF THIS WORLD CREATES A LONGING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Psalms 15:1-5 *RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH A HOLY GOD*
A LIFE OF INTEGRITY KEEPS YOU CLOSE TO GOD

Psalms 17:1-15 *CRY FOR JUSTICE*
THE MAN OF INTEGRITY CRIES OUT FOR GOD'S JUSTICE AND PROTECTION WHEN HUNTED BY THE WICKED

Psalms 26:1-12 *PASSING THE ULTIMATE TEST*
THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THE MAN OF INTEGRITY

Psalms 49:1-20 *YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU*
THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS VS. THE FALSE SECURITY OF THE WICKED

Psalms 64:1-10 *TURNING THE TABLES*
THE WICKED ARE THE ONLY LOSERS WHEN THEY TRY TO AMBUSH THE RIGHTEOUS

Psalms 101:1-8 *INTEGRITY IN LIVING AND IN RULING*
GODLY LEADERS NEED TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

Psalms 120:1-7 *A DOVE AMONG HAWKS*
ADVOCATES FOR PEACE LAMENT LIVING AMONG LYING WARMONGERS

REVELATION / WORD OF GOD

Psalms 19:1-14 *THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD*
GOD IS SPEAKING ... AM I OBEYING?

Psalms 119 *LIGHTED PATHWAYS* (22 8 verse strophes)

MESSIANIC

Psalms 2:1-12 *NO CONTEST*
REBELLIOUS WORLD LEADERS MUST BOW DOWN BEFORE GOD'S ANOINTED RULER OR BE BROKEN BY GOD'S WRATH

Psalms 8:1-9 *REACHING FOR THE STARS: GOD'S GLORY AND MAN'S DOMINION*
GOD DESIGNED SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT MAN TO REIGN OVER THE EARTH IN MAJESTY

Psalms 16:1-11 *7 REASONS TO BLESS GOD AS WE FACE DEATH*
DEATH OPENS THE DOOR TO THE RICHES OF OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE SECURED BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Psalms 22:1-31 *PROPHETIC PICTURE OF CRUCIFIXION*

THE MESSIAH SUFFERS EXTREME REJECTION (CRUEL CRUCIFIXION) BUT ANTICIPATES THAT GOD'S DELIVERANCE WILL
SPARK EVER EXPANDING CIRCLES OF PRAISE AND FELLOWSHIP

Psalms 40:1-17 *SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE*
6 CONSTANTS IN THE EQUATION FOR DIVINE DELIVERANCE

Psalms 45:1-17 *CELEBRATION OF THE ROYAL WEDDING*
A MAJESTIC BRIDEGROOM AND A BEAUTIFUL BRIDE PRODUCE MEMORABLE PRINCES

Psalms 69:1-36 *THE PAIN OF REPROACH*
THE PAIN OF REPROACH CAN BREAK THE HEART OF THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT GOD CAN STILL DELIVER

Psalms 72:1-20 *THY KINGDOM COME / SHOWERS OF BLESSING*
SPECIAL REQUESTS FOR THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

Psalms 89:1-52 *FAITHFUL AND TRUE*
CAN GOD BE COUNTED ON TO KEEP HIS PROMISES?

Psalms 102:1-28 *A GLIMMER OF LIGHT IN THE GLOOM OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT*
THE LONELINESS AND DESPAIR OF SPIRITUAL SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CAN ONLY BE OFFSET BY A VISION OF THE ETERNALITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

Psalms 109:1-31 *GIVE THEM THEIR DUE*
THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRE VENGEANCE AND VINDICATION FROM UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKERS

Psalms 110:1-7 *CONQUERING MESSIAH*
THE MESSIAH WILL CONQUER ALL ENEMIES AND FUNCTION AS KING, AS PRIEST, AND AS JUDGE

Psalms 132:1-18 *GOD'S DWELLING PLACE*
GOD'S DWELLING PLACE IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITY OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

KINGSHIP / ROYAL / SOVEREIGNTY

Psalms 21:1-13 *THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING*
THE CORONATION OF GOD'S KING MEANS CELEBRATION, SECURITY, EXTERMINATION, AND EXALTATION

Psalms 24:1-10 *PRAISE ANTHEM: THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY*
WORSHIP USHERS THE KING OF GLORY INTO HIS RIGHTFUL DOMAIN

Psalms 47:1-9 *A GREAT KING OVER ALL THE EARTH*
IN THE ARENA OF NATIONS, GOD IS KING OF CAPTURE THE FLAG

Psalms 48:1-14 *THE CITY OF GOD*
THE CELEBRATION OF THE CITY OF GOD

Psalms 85:1-13 *THE RESTORATION OF GOD'S GLORY BRINGS PEACE AND PROSPERITY*
PAST RESTORATION TO THE PEACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE IS A FORETASTE OF FUTURE MILLENNIAL BLESSING

Psalms 87:1-7 *THE CITY OF GOD*
THE CITY OF GOD IS DESTINED FOR GLORY

Psalms 93:1-5 *THE EVERLASTING KING*
THE LORD REIGNS FOREVER IN MAJESTY AND STRENGTH

Psalms 97:1-12 *THE LORD REIGNS*
THE REIGN OF A HOLY GOD MAKES THE RIGHTEOUS GLAD AND THE WICKED TREMBLE

Psalms 99:1-9 *THE REIGN OF A HOLY KING*
3 DISTINCTIVES OF THE LORD'S REIGN AS A HOLY KING

Psalms 113:1-9 *THE GLORY AND THE LIFTER OF MY HEAD*

FROM HIS EXALTED POSITION OF SUPREME GLORY, THE LORD CAN RAISE UP THE POOREST SOUL TO THE PLACE OF BLESSING AND HONOR

Psalms 122:1-9 *PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM*
APPRECIATE AND PROMOTE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP THE LORD TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD

CRISIS / DESPERATION

Psalms 55:1-23 *PRESSURE SITUATIONS*
HOW TO HANDLE PRESSURE SITUATIONS = CASTING YOUR BURDEN ON THE LORD

Psalms 57:1-11 *WORSHIP FROM THE CAVE OF DANGER*
IN THE MIDST OF DANGER WE CAN WORSHIP GOD FOR HIS KINDNESS AND TRUTH

Psalms 70:1-5 *HELP!*
HURRY UP AND RESCUE ME!

Psalms 88:1-18 *LIFE IN THE PITS -- A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE*
THE LONELINESS OF BEING FORSAKEN BY GOD AND MAN MAKES LIFE IN THE PITS INTOLERABLE

Psalms 142:1-7 *A CAVE MAN'S COMPLAINT*
WHEN I AM TRAPPED AND ALL ALONE THE LORD IS STILL MY ESCAPE ROUTE

Psalms 143:1-12 *STAYING UPBEAT WHEN YOU ARE BEING BEAT UP*
WHEN OUR ENEMIES HAVE THE UPPER HAND, WE CAN AVOID DEPRESSION BY FOCUSING ON OUR GOD

REPROACH / SLANDER

Psalms 4:1-8 *THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY LEADER*
UNJUSTIFIED SLANDER AND ATTACK SHOULD NOT DISTURB THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF THE GODLY

Psalms 86:1-17 *ONE GOD, ONE HEART, ONE REQUEST*
WHEN UNDER ATTACK, THE HEART OF THE GODLY SEEKS ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE ONE TRUE GOD

Psalms 123:1-4 *MY CUP RUNNETH OVER ... WITH CONTEMPT! SEEKING GOD'S GRACE*
WHEN THE PROUD LOOK DOWN ON US WITH CONTEMPT, THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD NEED TO LOOK UP FOR GOD'S GRACE

ANSWERING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Psalms 10:1-18 *GOD SEES ALL*
THE WAY OF THE WICKED IS NOT HIDDEN FROM THE EYES OF THE LORD

Psalms 13:1-6 *THE HOW LONG PSALM*
REJOICING BY FAITH WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH REQUIRES FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

Psalms 74:1-23 *CONSIDER THE COVENANT*
THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH FOR GOD TO ABANDON HIS PEOPLE TO DEFEAT AND REJECTION

Psalms 77:1-20 *WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOD?*
THE REALITY OF MY TROUBLES CAN NEVER CONTRADICT THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Psalms 79:1-13 *HOW LONG? AND WHY?*
WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCIPLINED, THEY CRY OUT FOR THE ANSWERS TO 2 SEARCHING QUESTIONS: HOW

LONG? AND WHY?

PROTECTION / DELIVERANCE / VICTORY

Psalms 3:1-8	*THE LORD MY SHIELD* GOD PROTECTS AND DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR ENEMIES
Psalms 5:1-12	*MORNING DEVOTIONS* THOSE WHO SEEK GOD'S FAVOR IN THE MORNING REJOICE IN GOD'S PROTECTION AGAINST ALL ENEMIES
Psalms 12:1-8	*WAR OF WORDS -- WORD OF THE WICKED VS THE WORD OF THE LORD* THE LORD'S PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE EXPOSES THE IMPOTENCE OF THE BOASTING OF THE ARROGANT
Psalms 18:1-50	*SUPERGOD AND SUPERMAN* A SUPERGOD MAKES HIS ANOINTED VICTORIOUS LIKE A SUPERMAN
Psalms 20:1-9	*BATTLE HYMN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD* WE WILL BOAST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, OUR GOD
Psalms 28:1-9	*MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD* THE LORD IS NOT DEAF TO THE CRIES OF HIS PEOPLE
Psalms 44:1-26	*TEMPORARY DEFEAT* GOD SOMETIMES GIVES TEMPORARY DEFEAT TO SET THE STAGE FOR MANIFYING HIS GLORY THRU DELIVERANCE
Psalms 46:1-11	*GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH* THE BEST FORTRESS IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD
Psalms 59:1-17	*GOD IS MY STRONGHOLD* THE STRONGHOLD OF GOD IS OUR REFUGE FROM FIERCE ATTACKERS
Psalms 61:1-8	*THE ROCK OF REFUGE* THE FAINT-HEARTED APPRECIATE GOD AS THEIR SOLID ROCK OF REFUGE
Psalms 62:1-12	*HE ONLY IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION* SECURITY MUST BE FOUND IN GOD ALONE
Psalms 108:1-13	*VICTORY IN JESUS* THANKS BE TO GOD WHO ALWAYS LEADS US IN HIS TRIUMPH IN CHRIST
Psalms 118:1-29	*PROGRESSIVE IMAGES OF VICTORY* THE LORD SHOWS HIS GOODNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS BY LEADING US TO VICTORY WHEN DEFEAT SEEMS IMMINENT
Psalms 121:1-8	*MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD* THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT HELPER AND PROTECTOR
Psalms 124:1-8	*THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE* BECAUSE THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE, WE ESCAPE BEING DEVOURED BY OUR ENEMIES
Psalms 140:1-13	*ARE YOU WEARING YOUR HELMET?* THE LORD HIMSELF IS OUR HELMET OF SALVATION FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF THE WICKED
Psalms 141:1-10	*SPIRITUAL REVIVAL IS A DANGEROUS PURSUIT* ADVOCATES FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL MUST ALSO PRAY FOR PERSONAL PROTECTION
Psalms 144:1-15	*HOW BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD* THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION FIGHTS THE BATTLES THAT SECURE OUR DELIVERANCE AND PROPSPERITY
Psalms 147:1-20	*THE AFFLICTED WILL BECOME THE AFFLUENT*

THE LORD'S PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW DOWNTRODDEN, WILL BE BUILT UP TO ENJOY ALL THE BLESSINGS OF THEIR PRIVILEGED STATUS

JUDGMENT / VINDICATION / IMPRECATORY / WRATH OF GOD

Psalms 9:1-20 *PUTTING THE WICKED IN THEIR PLACE*
THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL PUT THE WICKED IN THEIR PLACE

Psalms 35:1-28 *CALLING IN THE HEAVY ARTILLERY*
UNDESERVED MALICIOUS PERSONAL ATTACKS CALL FOR DIVINE VINDICATION

Psalms 50:1-23 *GOD WILL NOT FORGET THOSE WHO FORGET HIM*
GOD'S INDICTMENT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE FOR INSINCERE WORSHIP & UNRIGHTEOUS CONDUCT

Psalms 54:1-7 *VINDICATE ME BY THY POWER*
GOD IS THE ONE WE LOOK TO FOR DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION

Psalms 58:1-11 *SURELY THERE IS A GOD WHO JUDGES ON EARTH*
WICKED RULERS WILL GET WHAT'S COMING TO THEM = THE WRATH OF GOD

Psalms 75:1-10 *HERE COMES THE JUDGE!*
GOD IS COMING AS JUDGE TO PUT DOWN THE WICKED AND EXALT THE RIGHTEOUS

Psalms 82:1-8 *HERE COMES THE JUDGE!*
UNJUST RULERS WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE SUPREME JUDGE WHO IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY

Psalms 83:1-18 *GOD IS NO SLEEPING GIANT*
GOD'S ENEMIES FACE SHAME AND DESTRUCTION WHEN GOD SPRINGS INTO ACTION

Psalms 94:1-23 *THE GOD OF PAYBACKS*
THE GOD OF PAYBACKS WILL EXECUTE VENGEANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS TIMETABLE

Psalms 106:1-48 *SATAN'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE*
FOOLPROOF GAMEPLAN FOR STIRRING UP GOD'S ANGER

Psalms 129:1-8 *THE BATTLE CRY OF THE PERSECUTED BELIEVER*
ULTIMATE DEFEAT IS RESERVED FOR OUR PERSECUTORS

PENITENTIAL / CONFESSION OF SIN / DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD

Psalms 6:1-10 *STAYING AFLOAT IN TEARS OF GRIEF*
GOD HEARS US AT OUR BREAKING POINT

Psalms 32:1-11 *CONFESSION IS THE BEST MEDICINE*
CONFESSION OF SIN CONVERTS THE QUICKSAND FOR SUFFERING INTO THE CONCRETE FOR BLESSING

Psalms 39:1-13 *OUR RESPONSE TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD*
OUR RESPONSE TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD: HOW TO TRANSFORM SULLEN DESPAIR INTO SUBMISSIVE DESPERATION

Psalms 51:1-19 *A BROKEN SPIRIT*
A BROKEN SPIRIT PLEADS FOR FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

Psalms 53:1-6 *DEPRAVITY LAMENTED*
CORRUPTION AND DEPRAVITY CREATE A LONGING FOR THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM OF GOD

Psalms 137:1-9 *A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW*
CAPTIVITY SILENCES THE SONGS OF JOY AS WE WEEP OVER OUR LOST GLORY

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH / FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Psalms 11:1-7 *FAITH VS EXPEDIENCY*
OUR RESPONSE TO PERSONAL DANGER AND NATIONAL COMPROMISE MUST BE FAITH NOT EXPEDIENCY

Psalms 27:1-14 *TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS -- FAITH IS THE VICTORY!*
THOSE WHO SEEK GOD'S FACE CONFIDENTLY EXPECT DELIVERANCE

Psalms 56:1-13 *WHEN I AM AFRAID I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN THEE*
ONLY FAITH IN GOD CAN CONQUER FEAR OF MAN

Psalms 91:1-16 *THE UNTOUCHABLES*
NO FEAR WHEN YOU DWELL IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

Psalms 105:1-45 *PROMISE KEEPER*
GOD GUIDES HIS COVENANT PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THEIR PILGRIMAGE TO POSSESS HIS PROMISES

Psalms 146:1-10 *THE LORD CAN DO IT ALL*
TRUSTING IN GOD BEATS TRUSTING IN MAN

HOPE / PERSEVERANCE / PERSPECTIVE

Psalms 31:1-24 *HANGING ON*
CLINGING TO HOPE IN PROLONGED TIMES OF TROUBLE

Psalms 37:1-40 *FOCUS ON THE FINISH LINE*
RESPONSES TO THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED: PEACEFULLY PERSEVERE VS. FRANTICALLY FRET

Psalms 38:1-22 *HANGING ON BY A THREAD*
CLINGING TO HOPE WHEN BURDENED BY SIN AND ATTACKED BY ENEMIES

Psalms 42:1-11 *HOPE IN GOD*
CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD IS THE ONLY ANSWER FOR THE SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS OF THE ISOLATED BELIEVER (PART 1)

Psalms 43:1-5 *CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD*
CONTINUED HOPE IN GOD IS THE ONLY ANSWER FOR THE SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS OF THE ISOLATED BELIEVER (PART 2)

Psalms 71:1-24 *ASSISTED LIVING BUT NO RETIREMENT*
SPIRITUAL WARFARE DOES NOT ALLOW FOR RETIREMENT IN OUR OLD AGE

Psalms 78:1-72 *LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL*
THE LESSONS OF HISTORY CAN HELP US ESCAPE THE FUTILITY OF CYCLES OF DISOBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLINE

Psalms 90:1-17 *DUSTBUSTERS*
SINCE OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED, WE SEEK PERSPECTIVE FROM THE GOD OF ETERNITY

Psalms 125:1-5 *ROCK SOLID (THE LORD AS THE ULTIMATE DO-GOODER)*
ISRAEL -- THE LAND OF THE RIGHTEOUS -- ABIDES ROCK SOLID FOREVER

Psalms 130:1-8 *THE LORD MAJORS IN FORGIVENESS*
BECAUSE THE LORD MAJORS IN FORGIVENESS WE CAN CONFIDENTLY WAIT FOR HIS ABUNDANT REDEMPTION

Psalms 131:1-3 *THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT*
THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT IS TO BALANCE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF SELF WITH LOFTY HOPE IN THE LORD

Psalms 138:1-8 *THE LORD WILL ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES FOR ME*
THE LORD'S WORD OF PROMISE FUELS OUR CONFIDENCE AND OUR THANKSGIVING

GOD'S PROVIDENCE / GOODNESS / THANKSGIVING / BLESSINGS / GOD'S FAVOR

Psalms 23:1-6	*THE GOOD SHEPHERD* CONTENTMENT IS NO PROBLEM WHEN WE ARE FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD
Psalms 65:1-13	*THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S HORN OF PLENTY* THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S POWER AND BLESSING BOTH IN NATURE AND IN OUR LIVES QUIETS OUR HEART IN AWE AND EXCITES OUR HEART IN PRAISE
Psalms 67:1-7	*WHEN GOD BLESSES US* WHEN BLESSINGS COME DOWN, PRAISE AND RESPECT SHOULD GO UP
Psalms 73:1-28	*THE ANTIDOTE FOR THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS* STICK CLOSE TO GOD AND BITTERNESS WON'T STICK TO YOU
Psalms 80:1-19	*IS GOD SMILING DOWN ON YOU?* SEEKING GOD'S FAVOR IS THE FIRST STEP IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL
Psalms 81:1-16	*OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE AND GOD WILL FILL IT!* OUR REDEEMER INVITES US TO CELEBRATE THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION
Psalms 84:1-12	*3 GUARANTEED BLESSINGS* LOOK TO THE LORD AS THE SOURCE OF EVERY BLESSING
Psalms 95:1-11	*THANKSGIVING DAY* KEEP YOUR HEART TENDER FOR PRAISING THE LORD JOYFULLY AND WORSHIPPING THE LORD HUMBLY
Psalms 100:1-5	*THE GRATEFUL LIVING* WE ARE GLAD AND WE ARE GRATEFUL BECAUSE HE IS GOD AND HE IS GOOD
Psalms 103:1-22	*BLESS THE LORD!* FOUR PERSPECTIVES THAT ENCOURAGE US TO KEEP ON BLESSING THE LORD
Psalms 115:1-18	*DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR GOD IS?* WE CAN BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS BLESSINGS BECAUSE OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS AND HE DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES
Psalms 126:1-6	*WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE* RESTORATION (TO ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S PROMISED BLESSINGS) WIPES AWAY THE TEARS OF CAPTIVITY WITH THE JOYFUL SHOUTS OF PRAISE
Psalms 127:1-5	*NO SUCCESS APART FROM GOD'S BLESSING* THE SUCCESS OF ANY ENDEAVOR DEPENDS ULTIMATELY ON THE GIFT OF GOD'S BLESSING
Psalms 133:1-3	*THE PRECIOUS OIL OF UNITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE* UNITY IN THE FAMILY OF GOD IS PICTURED AS A PRECIOUS BLESSING
Psalms 134:1-3	*BLESS AND BE BLESSED* MAY FAITHFUL MINISTERS BLESS THE LORD AND BE BLESSED IN RETURN
Psalms 135:1-21	*GREAT IS THE LORD AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED* PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS AND GREATNESS
Psalms 139:1-24	*SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART* GOD KNOWS ME INTIMATELY SO HE CAN TAKE CARE OF ME PERFECTLY

GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS / MERCY

Psalms 36:1-12	*WICKED SCHEMERS ARE IGNORANT OF THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE* THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS WILL PROTECT US AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE WICKED
Psalms 41:1-13	*BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL* BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY
Psalms 52:1-9	*UPROOTED TRASH TALKERS VS GREEN OLIVE TREES* THE VICIOUS ATTACKS OF THE WICKED CAN NEVER CANCEL OUT THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD
Psalms 60:1-12	*THROUGH GOD WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY* WE NEED TO RALLY AROUND THE BANNER OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN ORDER TO GAIN THE VICTORY THAT GOD DESIRES FOR US
Psalms 63:1-11	*SATISFYING A THIRSTY SOUL* GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE
Psalms 107:1-43	*OUR ACE IN THE HOLE: THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS* THE LORD'S LOVINGKINDNESS BAILS OUT THE DISTRESSED WHEN THEY CEASE THEIR REBELLION AND HUMBLY CRY OUT FOR HELP
Psalms 116:1-19	*HOW CAN I REPAY THE LORD?* THE LIVING NEED TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES TO KEEP LOVING THE LORD, WALKING WITH THE LORD AND GIVING THANKS TO THE LORD
Psalms 117:1-2	*LOVINGKINDNESS AND TRUTH* TWO CORE COMPETENCIES OF GOD'S MAJESTY MERIT GLOBAL PRAISE
Psalms 136:1-26	*HIS LOVINGKINDNESS IS EVERLASTING* GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD; FOR HIS LOVINGKINDNESS IS EVERLASTING

FEAR OF THE LORD / MAJESTY / WORSHIP

Psalms 25:1-22	*WAITING ON THE LORD* THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD CAN WAIT ON THE LORD FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE
Psalms 29:1-11	*THE MAJESTY OF GOD* WORSHIP THE LORD FOR HIS MAJESTY
Psalms 34:1-22	*FEAR THE LORD AND BE DELIVERED FROM ALL YOUR FEARS* THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD PRAISE HIM CONTINUALLY FOR HIS DELIVERANCE FROM DESPARATE SITUATIONS
Psalms 66:1-20	*OUR AWESOME GOD* OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD: WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP AND PRAISE
Psalms 68:1-35	*THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF GOD* GOD'S VICTORY PROCESSION ESTABLISHES HIS PEOPLE AND SCATTERS HIS ENEMIES
Psalms 76:1-12	*BROKEN ARROWS* GOD CONFIRMS HIS MAJESTY BY DELIVERING THE HUMBLE FROM THE ATTACKS OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO FEAR HIM
Psalms 104:1-35	*CHARIOTS OF FIRE* ALL OF CREATION SHOWCASES THE GLORY AND PROVIDENCE OF ITS MAJESTIC RULER
Psalms 111:1-10	*GREAT ARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD* WORSHIP REFLECTS ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD DISPLAYED IN HIS AWESOME WORKS
Psalms 112:1-10	*THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD*

	HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD
Psalms 114:1-8	*DIVINE EARTHQUAKES*
	THE EARTH QUAKES BEFORE THE POWER OF THE REDEEMER
Psalms 128:1-6	*LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL*
	BLESSINGS FOR THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD

PRAISE / JOY

Psalms 30:1-12	*TRANSFORMATION FROM MOURNING TO DANCING IN THE MORNING*
	PRAISING GOD JUSTIFIES OUR EXISTENCE
Psalms 33:1-22	*A GOD WE CAN COUNT ON*
	BECAUSE WE CAN COUNT ON GOD, OUR HEART SHOULD OVERFLOW WITH SONGS OF JOY
Psalms 92:1-15	*A GLAD HEART SINGS A JOYFUL SONG*
	WHEN IT COMES TO JOY, THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE IT ALL OVER THE WICKED
Psalms 96:1-13	*THE GREATNESS OF GOD*
	GREAT IS THE LORD AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED
Psalms 98:1-9	*THE NEW SONG OF CELEBRATION*
	BREAK OUT OF YOUR RUT AND SING A NEW SONG OF SHOUTS OF JOY
Psalms 145:1-21	*PRAISING THE NAME OF THE LORD*
	WE SHOULD PRAISE THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD CONTINUALLY
Psalms 148:1-14	*CREATION PSALM: UNIVERSAL PRAISE*
	LET ALL HEAVEN AND EARTH PRAISE THE LORD
Psalms 149:1-9	*NEW SONGS OF JOY*
	VICTORY AND VENGEANCE CAUSE GOD'S PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE WITH NEW SONGS OF JOY
Psalms 150:1-6	*PRAISE THE LORD!*
	DOXOLOGY FOR THE HYMNBOOK OF PRAISE

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- "Connecting Our Heart to the Heart of God"
    - David = "a man after God's own heart" – What does that mean?
        - Where are we today:
            - In our emotions and our circumstance?
            - In our trials and tribulations?
            - In our despair and disappointment"
            - In our doubts and confusion?
            - In our joy and confidence?
    - Whatever can be experienced … we see in the psalms in intensified, extreme form
    - Understanding the psalms provides us with a better understanding of our own spiritual needs

- Enhancing our Prayer Life (or Life of Prayer)
    - cf. disciples: "Lord, Teach me to pray"

- Enhancing our Praise and Worship
    - "Lord, Teach me to Worship"

- Encouraging us to be Authentic and Transparent before God and Others

- Learning More About the Character and Person of God
    - (Balanced Perspective)
        - His Goodness
        - His Sovereignty
        - His Holiness
        - His Wrath
        - His Lovingkindness
        - His Mercy
        - His Power
        - His Majesty
        - His Transcendence and yet Imminence

- Learning more about our Lord Jesus Christ as we see the Messiah alluded to in the Psalms
        - How far to go here? very subjective
        - certain psalms clearly Messianic – how do you determine?
        - other references that certainly apply; David is a type of the Messiah

MESSIANIC PSALMS

Introduction:

Luke 24:26-27 "in all the Scriptures"
"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

Luke 24:44 "all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled"

1 Peter 1:10-12 "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow"

Messiah = "anointed one"; Prophet (Ps. 105:15; 1 Kings 19:16); Priest; King (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13) – anointed with oil (symbol of the Holy Spirit)

What makes a psalm a Messianic Psalm?

- Prophesying of His sufferings and glory
- Predicts aspects of the Person and Work of Christ

(remember: written 1000 years before Christ – very impressive)
to what extent do we see Christ in the OT?
some people would see Christ everywhere
our approach: a targeted approach: bull's-eye = those psalms where the **NT references** and quotes make it clear that it is being interpreted as a Messianic Psalm
Often some type of dual fulfillment = partially true of David in his experience (or hyperbole – exaggerated – in reference to psalmist's experience)
but only totally true of Christ
Other times: can only have direct reference to Christ; no correlation in the experience of David
many other allusions, references, aspects of David or his kingdom = **types** of Christ
fulfilled directly in the historical experience of the psalmist but also looks forward to the ultimate reality and fulfillment in Christ (cf. Book of Hebrews)

(Note: How I read devotionally may be different than how I seek to arrive at the interpretation of the psalms)

Purpose of the Messianic Psalms?

- makes the identification of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah
  (nature of progressive revelation – looking back it is clear;
  this is what gives so much difficulty in interpreting end times refs)
- confirms the inspiration and authority of Scriptures – very exciting
- helps us to see Jesus more clearly

13 MESSIANIC PSALMS – as quoted in the NT

1. (102:25-27) ETERNITY PAST (Heb 1:10-12)

THE LONELINESS AND DESPAIR OF SPIRITUAL SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CAN ONLY BE OFFSET BY A VISION OF THE ETERNALITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

(:23-28) MY WEAKNESS AND BREVITY CONTRASTED WITH HIS IMMUTABILITY AND ETERNALITY

2. (40:6-8) INCARNATION (Heb. 10:1-10)

6 CONSTANTS IN THE EQUATION FOR DIVINE DELIVERANCE

III. (:6-8) PLEASING GOD IS STILL THE MOTIVATION
RELIGIOUS FORMALISM CANNOT BE SUBSTITUTED FOR JOYFUL OBEDIENCE

A. (:6) Rejection of Religious Formalism
B. (:7-8) Joyful Obedience from the Heart in Response to the Revealed Will of God

3. (89:3-4, 28-29, 34-36) OF DAVID (Acts 2:30)

CAN GOD BE COUNTED ON TO KEEP HIS PROMISES?

(:1-4) GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS AND FAITHFULNESS REFLECTED IN HIS PROMISE OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

(:19-29) THE PROMISE OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL

1. (:19-20) Selection of David
2. (:21-23) Strengthening and Protection against Enemies
3. (:24-27) Exaltation to the Heights of Majesty and Power
   all done in accordance with God's faithfulness and lovingkindness
4. (:28-29) Permanent Fulfillment Guaranteed -- Messianic

(:33-35) PERMANENT REJECTION -- NEVER

(:36-37) PROMISE REPEATED (so there can be no doubt)

1. Application of the Promise -- Relates to:
   his descendants
   his throne
2. Duration of the Promise -- "endure forever" / like the sun

3. Guarantee of the Promise: by the witness of the unchanging sun and moon

4. (132:11-12) OF DAVID (Acts 2:30)

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITY OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

(:10-12) APPEAL TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD FOR THE CONTINUITY OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

A. Based on God's Unchanging Promise to David
- God's servant
- God's anointed

B. Based on the Obedience of David's sons

5. (22:1-31) CRUCIFIXION Mat. 27:35-46; John 19:23-25; Heb. 2:12)

THE MESSIAH SUFFERS EXTREME REJECTION (CRUEL CRUCIFIXION) BUT ANTICIPATES THAT GOD'S DELIVERANCE WILL SPARK EVER EXPANDING CIRCLES OF PRAISE AND TESTIMONY

(:1-5) THE PARADOX OF BEING FORSAKEN BY GOD THE FATHER
(:6-8) THE PUBLIC HUMILIATION AT THE HANDS OF ARROGANT MOCKERS
(:9-10) THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS DEEP ROOTS
(:11-18) THE PICTURE OF CRUCIFIXION IS PRECISE AND VERY DETAILED
(:19-21) THE PLEA FOR HELP IS URGENT
(:22-31) THE PRAISE AND TESTIMONY FLOW OUT IN EVER EXPANDING CIRCLES

6. (16:10) INCORRUPTION (Acts 2:24-31; 13:35-37)

DEATH OPENS THE DOOR TO THE RICHES OF OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE SECURED BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

6) (:10) GOD IS MY RESURRECTION
RESPONSE: Bless God; Don't Despair

7. (69:25) JUDAS CURSED (Acts 1:16-20)

THE PAIN OF REPROACH CAN BREAK THE HEART OF THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT GOD CAN STILL DELIVER

(:22-28) PLEA FOR GOD'S WRATH

8. (109:6-19) JUDAS CURSED (Acts 1:16-20)

THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRE VENGEANCE AND VINDICATION FROM UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKERS

(:6-20) DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE
(:6-15) Payback Options: Bad Things for Bad People

1. Justice (this is a good thing for the righteous and the afflicted)
2. Shortened Life = "Let his days be few"
3. Dethroned from Power and Influence = "Let another take his office"
4. Death Penalty
    a. Children = fatherless
    b. Wife = widow
5. Bankruptcy and Dislocation
    a. Children
    b. Personal
6. Denied Mercy and Compassion
    a. Personal
    b. Children
7. Family Cut Off and Forgotten
8. Sins Remembered

9. (8:4b-8) HUMILIATION AND GLORY (Heb. 2:5-10)

GOD DESIGNED SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT MAN TO REIGN OVER THE EARTH IN MAJESTY

(:5-8) MAN REIGNS OVER THE EARTH IN MAJESTY

A. His Derived Majesty -- “Man was created in the image of God.
What is the image of God in man?

we are spiritual beings as God is Spirit; man is a moral being; God is a personality and so are we; 3 aspects of personality:
1) intellect -- a mind to reason

2) emotions -- sensibility -- response
3) volition -- will to make our own decisions

B. His Assigned Dominion over all Creation

10. (110:1-7) ASCENSION AND PRIESTHOOD (Mat. 22:43-45; Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 1:13; 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:24)

THE MESSIAH WILL CONQUER ALL ENEMIES AND FUNCTION: AS KING / AS PRIEST / AS JUDGE

I. (:2-3) MESSIAH AS KING
A. Strength of His Rule = "strong scepter"
B. Loyalty of His People

II. (:4) MESSIAH AS PRIEST

Def. of a priest: one who represents man to God

A. Qualifications as Priest (from Wayne Wever -- Hebrews 5:1-4)
1. has to be a man
2. has to have access to God and be able to offer sacrifices
3. has to be compassionate
4. has to be chosen by God
(Remember: Saul neglected this and was subject to God's wrath)

B. Distinctiveness of Priesthood of Melchizedek
only 2 priesthoods established by God: Aaronic and Melchizedek
1. Aaronic: reserved for the descendants of Levi; they inherit the office
2. Melchizedek: no record of any progenitors or successors; it is a forever priesthood
He was king over Salem in the ancient world (later called Jerusalem).
Heb. 7:1
No record of his beginnings or end
Reign of Righteousness and Peace (Rom. 5:1)
Received tithes from Abraham -- shows his greatness
Melchizedek blessed Abraham
Gave Abraham bread and wine -- possible type of Lord's Supper?

Part of the message of Hebrews is the Superiority of this Priesthood

"The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind" -- this priesthood is irrevocable; Permanence of this priesthood

III. (:5-6) MESSIAH AS JUDGE
A. No Respecter of Persons -- How the Mighty have Fallen
B. Goal is Punishment Rather than Reformation

11. (2:1-12) KISS THE SON (Acts 4:25-28; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5;5)

REBELLIOUS WORLD LEADERS MUST BOW DOWN BEFORE GOD'S ANOINTED RULER OR BE BROKEN BY GOD'S WRATH

I. (:1-3) THE FUTILITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE RULE OF GOD -- FORGET IT!
A. (:1) It Doesn't Make any Sense
B. (:2) There is No Safety in Numbers
C. (:3) Resolutions of Rebellion are Doomed to Failure

II. (:4-6) THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE -- NO PROBLEM!
A. His Position -- sits reigning in the heavens -- Majesty
B. His Mocking of their feeble resistance
C. His Wrath in promising judgment
D. His Triumph in establishing His King over all the earth

III. (:7-9) THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANOINTED KING -- THE SON OF GOD -- IT'S A DONE DEAL!
A. Messiah's Dominion Consistent with God's Sovereign Plan for History
B. Messiah's Dominion Part of His Inheritance as the Son of God
C. Messiah's Dominion Will Demolish All Opposition

IV. (:10-12) THE ESCAPE CLAUSE FOR THE REBELLIOUS -- TURN OR BURN!
A. Final Warning – Requires the Mighty Swallowing Their Pride
B. One Way Out – The Fear of the Lord is the Key
C. Only 2 Options:
1. Perish under His wrath
2. Submit and enjoy His blessing

12. (72:6-17) RULE (1 Cor. 15:27)

THY KINGDOM COME (IN THE PERSON OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS RULE) / SHOWERS OF BLESSING

I. (:1-4) MAY HE JUDGE THE PEOPLE OF GOD WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BRING JUSTICE TO THE AFFLICTED

II. (:5-7) MAY HE COME DOWN LIKE SHOWERS OF BLESSING

III. (:8-11) MAY HE RULE THE ENTIRE WORLD AND RECEIVE GIFTS FROM ALL KINGS

IV. (:12-15) MAY HIS REIGN BE CHARACTERIZED BY COMPASSION TOWARDS THE POOR AND NEEDY

V. (:16) MAY THERE BE MATERIAL PROSPERITY

VI. (:17-19) MAY HIS NAME BE BLESSED AND HIS GLORY FILL THE EARTH

13. (45:6-7) THRONE FOREVER -- ETERNITY FUTURE (Heb 1:8-9)

A MAJESTIC BRIDEGROOM AND A BEAUTIFUL BRIDE PRODUCE MEMORABLE PRINCES

(:6-7) A Throne of Eternal Righteousness

WRESTLING WITH THE TOUGH QUESTIONS IN PSALMS

Who:

UNIQUENESS OF GOD

- GENERAL / GLORY

  89:6 For **who** in the skies is comparable to the LORD? **Who** among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD

- STRENGTH / SECURITY

  18:31 For **who** is God, but the LORD? And **who** is a rock, except our God

- POWER OVER NATURE

  147:17 He casts forth His ice as fragments; **Who** can stand before His cold?

- FAITHFULNESS

  89:8 O LORD God of hosts, **who** is like Thee, O mighty LORD? Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee.

- DELIVERANCE

  35:10 All my bones will say, "LORD, **who** is like Thee, **Who** delivers the afflicted from him **who** is too strong for him, And the afflicted and the needy from him **who** robs him?"

  94:16 **Who** will stand up for me against evildoers? **Who** will take his stand for me against those **who** do wickedness?

- DOMINION

  113:5 **Who** is like the LORD our God, **Who** is enthroned on high

  24:8 **Who** is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD / HOLINESS

15:1 O LORD, **who** may abide in Thy tent? **Who** may dwell on Thy holy hill?

24:3 **Who** may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And **who** may stand in His holy place?

FORGIVENESS

19:12 **Who** can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.

130:3 If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, **who** could stand?

FAVOR OF GOD

4:6 Many are saying, "**Who** will show us *any* good?" Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, O LORD!

34:12 **Who** is the man **who** desires life, And loves *length of* days that he may see good?

FEAR OF THE LORD

25:12 **Who** is the man **who** fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

WISDOM

107:43 **Who** is wise? Let him give heed to these things; And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.

TESTIMONY / PRAISE

6:5 For there is no mention of Thee in death; In Sheol **who** will give Thee thanks?

106:2 **Who** can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD, Or can show forth all His praise?

REBELLION / DENYING ACCOUNTABILITY

12:4 **Who** have said, "With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; **who** is lord over us?"

59:7 Behold, they belch forth with their mouth; Swords are in their lips, For, *they say*, "**Who** hears?"

64:5 They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose; They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, "**Who** can see them?"

VICTORY

60:9 **Who** will bring me into the besieged city? **Who** will lead me to Edom?

108:10 **Who** will bring me into the besieged city? **Who** will lead me to Edom?

WHAT?

UNIQUENESS / HOLINESS / GREATNESS

77:13 Thy way, O God, is holy; **What** god is great like our God?

PROVIDENCE / LOVE OF GOD

8:4 **What** is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?

144:3 O LORD, **what** is man, that Thou dost take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that Thou dost think of him?

MIRACLE-WORKING POWER OVER NATURE

114:5 **What** ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?

LIMITATION OF MAN

11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, **What** can the righteous do?

HOPE

39:7 "And now, Lord, for **what** do I wait? My hope is in Thee.

FAITH VS FEAR

56:4 In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. **What** can *mere* man do to me?

56:11 In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. **What** can man do to me?

118:6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear; **What** can man do to me?

DELIVERANCE / TESTIMONY

30:9 "**What** profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise Thee? Will it declare Thy faithfulness?

116:12 **What** shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?

DEATH

89:48 **What** man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?

WICKED / DECEITFUL / JUDGMENT OF GOD

50:16 But to the wicked God says, "**What** right have you to tell of My statutes, And to take My covenant in your mouth?

120:3 **What** shall be given to you, and **what** more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue?

WHERE?

PRESENCE OF GOD / REJECTION / VINDICATION

42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, While *they* say to me all day long, "**Where** is your God?"

42:10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, "**Where** is your God?"

79:10 Why should the nations say, "**Where** is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight, Vengeance for the blood of Thy servants, which has been shed.

89:49 **Where** are Thy former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, Which Thou didst swear to David in Thy faithfulness?

115:2 Why should the nations say, "**Where**, now, is their God?"

139:7 **Where** can I go from Thy Spirit? Or **where** can I flee from Thy presence?

WHY?

SILENCE / INACTIVITY OF GOD

10:1 **Why** dost Thou stand afar off, O LORD? **Why** dost Thou hide *Thyself* in times of trouble?

44:23 Arouse Thyself, **why** dost Thou sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever.

44:24 **Why** dost Thou hide Thy face, And forget our affliction and our

oppression?
74:11 **Why** dost Thou withdraw Thy hand, even Thy right hand? From within Thy bosom, destroy *them*!

REJECTION / PRESENCE OF GOD

22:1 My God, my God, **why** hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.
42:9 I will say to God my rock, "**Why** hast Thou forgotten me? **Why** do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
43:2 For Thou art the God of my strength; **why** hast Thou rejected me? **Why** do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
74:1 O God, **why** hast Thou rejected *us* forever? **Why** does Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture?
79:10 **Why** should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight, Vengeance for the blood of Thy servants, which has been shed.
88:14 O LORD, **why** dost Thou reject my soul? ***Why*** dost Thou hide Thy face from me?
115:2 **Why** should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?"

DESPAIR VS HOPE

42:5 **Why** are you in despair, O my soul? And ***why*** have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.
42:11 **Why** are you in despair, O my soul? And **why** have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God.
43:5 **Why** are you in despair, O my soul? And **why** are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God.

FEAR VS FAITH

49:5 **Why** should I fear in days of adversity, When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me?

DISCIPLINE OF GOD

80:12 **Why** hast Thou broken down its hedges, So that all who pass *that* way pick its *fruit*?

DOMINION OF GOD

68:16 **Why** do you look with envy, O mountains with *many* peaks, At the mountain which God has desired for His abode? Surely, the LORD will dwell *there* forever.

REBELLION / WICKED

2:1 **Why** are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain

thing?
10:13 **Why** has the wicked spurned God? He has said to himself, "Thou wilt not require *it*."
52:1 **Why** boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

WHEN?

PERSECUTION / VINDICATION / JUDGMENT

41:5 My enemies speak evil against me, "**When** will he die, and his name perish?"
119:84 How many are the days of Thy servant? **When** wilt Thou execute judgment on those who persecute me?

COMFORT / DELIVERANCE

119:82 My eyes fail *with longing* for Thy word, While I say, "**When** wilt Thou comfort me?"

FAVOR OF GOD / PRESENCE OF GOD

42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; **When** shall I come and appear before God?
101:2 I will give heed to the blameless way. **When** wilt Thou come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

WISDOM / REPROOF

94:8 Pay heed, you senseless among the people; And **when** will you understand, stupid ones?

HOW LONG?

REJECTION / DELIVERANCE

6:3 And my soul is greatly dismayed; But Thou, O LORD-- **how** long?
13:1 **How** long, O LORD? Wilt Thou forget me forever? **How** long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?
13:2 **How** long shall I take counsel in my soul, *Having* sorrow in my heart all the day? **How** long will my enemy be exalted over me?
35:17 Lord, **how** long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, My only *life* from the lions.
74:10 **How** long, O God, will the adversary revile, *And* the enemy spurn Thy name forever?
79:5 **How** long, O LORD? Wilt Thou be angry forever? Will Thy jealousy burn like fire?

80:4 O LORD God *of* hosts, **How** long wilt Thou be angry with the prayer of Thy people?
89:46 **How** long, O LORD? Wilt Thou hide Thyself forever? Will Thy wrath

burn like fire?
90:13 Do return, O LORD; **how** long *will it be*? And be sorry for Thy servants.

WICKED

4:2 O sons of men, **how** long will my honor become a reproach? ***How*** *long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?
62:3 **How** long will you assail a man, That you may murder *him*, all of you, Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?
82:2 **How** long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked?
94:3 **How** long shall the wicked, O LORD, **How** long shall the wicked exult?

HOW?

PURITY / HOLINESS / OBEDIENCE

119:9 **How** can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Thy word.

VINDICATION / DELIVERANCE / TESTIMONY

119:84 **How** many are the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou execute judgment on those who persecute me?
137:4 **How** can we sing the LORD'S song In a foreign land?

Check out also:

How blessed …
How majestic …
How mighty …

IMPRECATORY PSALMS

Def: invoke evil or a curse on someone; invoke judgment or curses on one's enemies

Tension created by NT example and commands of Christ:
Love your enemies
Pray for and bless those who persecute you

Examples from the Psalms:

7:8 "*The Lord judges the peoples;*
Vindicate me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me"

9:4 Vindicates the righteous "*Thou hast maintained my just cause*"
Affirms the Sovereign Rule of God "*Thou doest sit on the throne*"
Affirms the Righteous Rule of God "*judging righteously*"

9:7-8 Demonstrates the Eternal Rule of God "*the Lord* (in contrast to the wicked) *abides forever*"
Judgment is appropriate for a Ruler "*He has established His throne for judgment*"
Judging in righteousness = Judging with equity
Motivates praise and faith and hope on the part of the righteous

9:20 Establishes the fear of the Lord "*Put them in fear, O Lord;*
Let the nations know that they are but men"

35:1-8 Calling upon the Lord to Fight against those who unjustly fight against me
Fill them with shame and dishonor and humiliation
Result: "*My soul shall rejoice in the Lord It shall exult in His salvation*"

50:22-23 Urges the wicked to repent
God does take notice of wickedness (even though He is keeping silent for a time); there will be a reckoning

54:5 "*Destroy them in Thy faithfulness*"

55:9 "*Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues*"
55:15 "*Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol*"
55:23 "*bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days*"

58:6-9 Graphic pictures of the type of judgment desired

"*shatter their teeth in their mouth*
break out the fangs of the young lions

When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts

Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun"

58:10-11 "*Righteous will rejoice*
Righteous will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked
And men will say, Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"

59:5 "*Awake to punish all the nations; Do not be gracious to any who are treacherous in iniquity*"

68:1 "*Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; And let those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away*"

68:21 "*Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds*"

69:22ff "*May their table before them become a snare; And when they are in peace, may it become a trap. May their eyes grow dim so that they canot see, And make their loins shake continually. Pour out Thine indignation on them, And may Thy burning anger overtake them. May their camp be desolate… May they be blotted out of the the book of life, And may they not be recorded with the righteous*"

75:7 All Judgment belongs to God; "*He judges all on the earth with equity*"

79:12 "*And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom The reproach with which they have reproached Thee, O Lord*."

82:8 "*Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is Thou who dost possess all the nations*"
God will even judge the unrighteous judges – showing His righteousness by contrast

83:9ff "*Deal with them as with Midian, As with Sisera and Jabin… who became as dung for the ground…*"
List of Historical examples of judgment
Images of destruction: "*make them like the whirling dust; like the chaff before the wind. Like fire*"

"*That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the Lord, Art the Most High over all the earth*"

94:1 Lord invoked as the "*God of vengeance*" – Shine forth!
"*Judge of the earth*"
"*The Lord our God will destroy them*"

109:6-20 "*Appoint a wicked man over him …*" Really let him have it!
Great list of evils the Lord can heap on the heads of the evil
(Some – Stedman – hold that these are the curses spoken by David's enemies against him… shows the level of tension)

129:5ff "*May all who hate Zion, be put to shame and turned backward,*
Let them be like the grass uon the housetops, which withers before it grows up"

137:8-9 "*How blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock*"

139:21-22 "*Do I not hate those who hate Thee, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against thee? I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies*."

Examples of wrong types of Curses

1) Sons of Thunder response – driving down the road; some lunatic puts your life in jeopardy; wish you had a rocket launcher so you could torch his car; or at least that the police would pull him over and lock him up – quite a difference in these two ideas

2) Personal rights issues – he offended me; you don't know who you're messing with; my Lord could zap you right now

Why did David respond at times like he did against **Shimei** (a Benjamite, the son of Gera of Saul's family, who met David at Bahurim in his flight from Absalom and cursed him -- 2 Sam. 16:5)? David's flight took him past a place from which Shimei could hurl stones as well as ugly words at the fleeing king
When fortunes were reversed, Shimei tried to make amends… As David returned to Jerusalem Shimei, with a thousand Benjamites, met him at the Jordan River and, in great humility and penance, pleaded for mercy (2 Sam 19:16-23);
king promised: "You shall not die"
Ended up deciding his own fate at the hands of Solomon = showed his true colors of wickedness and was taken care of
Solomon brought Shimei to Jerusalem and warned him that he would be put to death if he ever left the city; 3 years went well; when his slaves ran away he left the city to retrieve them … death sentence 1 Kings 2:42-46

Notes from *Psalms of Promise* – by E. Calvin Beisner
Curses on Covenant-Breakers – Psalm 109

Example of Jeremiah – "the weeping prophet" denouncing Judah's apostasy in late seventh century B.C.; known for his love for his people; after they rejected his message:
Jer. 18:19-23 Pretty strong language
Look at how God responded: Jer. 19:3-9 fulfilled in siege of Jerusalem just 20 years later in 587 B.C.

cf. covenant curses set forth in the law: Dt. 28:53; Lev. 26:29

Psalm 109 – examine David's prayer of cursing – Try to understand imprecatory prayer and its role in the life of the people of the Covenant

Possible Explanations for David's Cursing of his Enemies:
(in particular, his application of the curses to the person's parents, wife, and offspring)
1) simply recognizing and agreeing with God's already proclaimed curses against such activities and wickedness
    but the language shows David longing for such outcomes
2) David is wrong here and venting his anger in an honest expression
    but David was not being vengeful
    expresses as his chief motive that God's name be honored (vs.21)
        concerned for God's glory
    look at the history of David's mercy to his personal enemies
    look at his lowly spirit (vs. 22-23)
3) What David did was valid = a man of the Covenant
    Ex. 20:5

Defense of David: (Seminary notes – John Davis)
1) He was clearly a patient man with his enemies (cf. dealings with Saul, Absalom and Shimei); so here we must have legitimate outcries for divine justice
2) He clearly feared the Lord; these are enemies of righteousness (not just personal enemies)
3) He takes his concerns to the Lord for justice and vindication
4) Clearly concerned for the ultimate conversion of these people in many of the psalms (cf. Ps.2)
5) Taking God's view of the wicked – they are properly deserving of divine judgment

6) Many of these psalms called for immediate divine judgment = not uncommon in Israel's history (cf. sarcasm of Gal. 5:12)
7) In many respects it was right to pray for the destruction of the wicked
    a) in conformity with God's nature and promises
    b) looked for temporal covenantal blessings and judgments
        not as much in tune with final Great White Throne judgment
        and God ultimately setting things right

But what is the **Application for Christians**? Should they ever pray such prayers? Are Christians even permitted—let alone required—to pray this way? Who has the right to pray curses on someone else? Who is a proper object of cursing? And what are proper occasions for imprecatory prayer?

Liberals would write off the whole concept as "barbaric and outdated OT lower level living" But same command to love your enemy is in Lev. 19:18; Ex. 23:4-5; Prov. 25:21-22

Jesus used Cursing quite extensively
Luke 6:24-26 "Woe to you…"
Luke 11:39-52 -- 6 woes (curses) proclaimed on the Pharisees

The Lord's Prayer
"your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" Mt. 6:9-10

Christ's Commission to the Missionaries
Luke 10:10-16 enumeration of some curses against those who reject the message

Incident at the Fig Tree
Mat. 21:19

Apostle Paul and Cursing on those who preach another Gospel
Gal. 1:8-9
whenever we pray for the Second Coming, judgment and wrath is tied up with the whole concept – cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-8

Imprecatory Prayer of Martyrs in Rev. 6:10

Difficult issue …
Important to understand **Distinctions between God's dispensation** in dealing with Israel in the OT as his Covenant People and God's dispensation at present in this Church Age

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