



SUMMER *in the* PSALMS

*The Songs and Prayers
of God's People*

A SUMMER JOURNEY THROUGH ALL 150 PSALMS

Dear friends in Christ,

The written Word of God is a precious gift to us. Dallas Willard, a philosopher also known for his writings on Christian spiritual formation, shares a statement that sums up the great benefits of reading and studying the Holy Scriptures:

“Our life takes a Godly and good direction when our mind is consciously occupied with God’s written words. Those words then increasingly eliminate the conscious mental contents that would surely lead us away from God.”

It is a big commitment to read all 150 psalms (often referred to as the psalter), but any time we read the written Word of God, we can be confident that the Lord will use it in our lives. Paul shares these words with his co-worker, Timothy: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” ² *Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)* God will equip you! God will train you! God will transform your life through your time in the “God-breathed” Word.

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of your experience of reading the psalms.

- 1) Begin with prayer.
- 2) Set a time each day for your reading and stick with it.
- 3) Find a translation that works for you. Scripture quotations in this guide will be from the New International Version (NIV), but there are many fine translations available. The New Living Translation (NLT) is a translation that is one of the easiest to read.
- 4) Consider listening to the psalms and following along in your Bible.
- 5) Take some notes in this booklet, in your Bible, or in a journal.

Martin Luther and members of his monastic order would have gone through the entire psalter at least monthly. Luther had high praise for the psalms:

“Where does one find finer words of joy than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens, yes, as into heaven itself. There you see what fine and pleasant flowers of the heart spring up from all sorts of fair and happy thoughts toward God, because of his blessings. On the other hand, where do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation?”

And that they speak these words to God and with God, this, I repeat, is the best thing of all. This gives the words double earnestness and life. For when men speak with men about these matters, what they say does not come so powerfully from the heart; it does not burn and live, is not so urgent. Hence it is that the Psalter is the book of all saints; and everyone, in whatever situation he may be, finds in that situation psalms and words that fit his ease, that suit him as if they were put there just for his sake, so that he could not put it better himself, or find or wish for anything better.”

- Luther's Works Volume 35 Preface to the Psalter

The writing of the psalms took place over several centuries. Some scholars believe they span from the time of Moses (14th century B.C.) through the days of King David (10th century B.C.) and into the years following the return of the exiles from Babylon (5th century B.C.). The psalms were collected and carefully organized into five books as early as the 3rd century B.C.

Some psalms are written as songs of praise to be sung in the temple in Jerusalem. There are prayers of lament and songs of joy, but whether in joy or in agony, the writer often addresses the Lord directly. There are accusations and sometimes curses against enemies (called imprecatory psalms), and at times, serious questions are raised about what God is up to in times of trouble.

A key theme to the psalms is that God is the great, divine, almighty king who rules over all people, nations, nature, and the entire universe. God is the one who exercises lovingkindness (“chesed” occurs over 126 times in the psalms), brings justice (“mishpat”), righteousness (“tsaddik”), peace (“shalom”), vindication, and salvation. As you read, please focus on the many connections between the psalms and God’s covenant with Abraham, Moses and King David, There are remarkable ties with Genesis, the ten commandments, the words of the prophets (see Micah 6:8), the life of Jesus and the writings of the entire New Testament, including the book of Revelation.

I have added a brief commentary for each psalm. You may wish to add your own notes as you read. I encourage you to consult a good study Bible like the NIV Study Bible published by Zondervan Press.

May the Lord bless you as you experience God’s presence through His Word.

Peace and joy in the Lord Jesus,
Pastor Jason Christensen

Our Journey Begins!

Book 1 Psalms 1-41

June 8 Psalm 1 and 2

Psalm 1 and 2 prepare us for our journey of prayer in the psalms by expounding on the personal benefits of meditating on God's Word and by boldly exposing the forces that oppose the Lord God and all who serve him.

Psalm 1

We are invited to delight in the psalms and all of God's Word. To meditate does not mean to clear our minds, but rather to fill our minds with the life-giving Word of God day and night (*at all times*).

Psalm 2

A central theme of the psalms is the sovereign reign of God over all nations. It is wise for all to "take refuge in him." (v.12)

June 9 Psalm 3 and 4

Psalm 3

Psalm 3 introduces two common threads that run through many of the psalms. First, there are many foes aligned against God's people, but God is "a shield around me." And secondly, a call on the Lord to bring judgment against the wicked who oppress the poor and God's people: "break the teeth of the wicked."

Psalm 4

The very first verse of this psalm of David begins with four requests of the Lord: "answer me," "give me relief," "have mercy," and "hear my prayer." The boldness of these requests points to God's gracious willingness to hear our prayers!

June 10 Psalm 5 and 6

Psalm 5

Psalm 5 is one of many “imprecatory” psalms (see Psalm 109) that not only give voice to injustice and evil but seek God’s vengeance on the perpetrators. Want to dig deeper? C.S. Lewis explores the apparent contradiction of the biblical understanding of “love thy neighbor,” the judgement of God and the imprecatory “cursing” psalms in his book, “Reflections on the Psalms” (see chapters 2 and 3). Finally, notice that even king David boldly cries out to the Lord as “my King and my God.” The Lord as King is a strong, recurring theme throughout the psalms.

Psalm 6

The psalmist cries out to the Lord for mercy, deliverance, and healing.

June 11 Psalm 7 and 8

Psalm 7

The psalmist appeals to the Lord for justice and shelter from enemies.

Psalm 8

A great psalm of praise “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” God is sovereign not only all people and nations but over the earth as well!

June 12 Psalm 9 and 10

Psalm 9

The themes of “justice” and “righteousness” and “judgment” may seem harsh to us, but in an unjust world, these attributes of God are welcome news: finally – someone who brings justice!

Psalm 10

In the midst of the chaos brought by wicked people and injustice, the cry goes up: “Why, Lord, do you stand far off?” The psalmist cries out for vindication for the helpless, defense of the fatherless and the oppressed. The power of the Lord God is proclaimed: “The Lord is King forever and ever.”

June 13 Psalm 11 and 12

Psalm 11

Though the wicked pursue the righteous, God is our refuge. It is great news for the poor and oppressed that “the Lord is righteous, he loves justice.”(v.7) The Hebrew word for “righteous” is “tsaddik” and is used 58 times in 50 verses in the psalms. Another word, “righteousness,” is used 35 times in 34 verses in the psalms. Both words are key to understanding the nature and work of the Lord.

Psalm 12

The psalmist cries out for help when it seems that all people are faithless. Great emphasis is placed on the plight of the poor. We see this emphasis on justice and care for the poor reflected throughout the psalms and the prophets in passages like Micah 6:8 “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (NIV)

June 14 Psalm 13

This lament psalm is a powerful cry to the Lord. It begins with a heartbreaking cry of sorrow but ends with a simple statement of trust in God’s unfailing love. You may wish to pray this prayer at a time when you are in a difficult place in life.

June 15 Psalm 14, 15 and 16

Psalm 14

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” In one short sentence, the psalmist summarizes a major theme of much of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament

Psalm 15

This psalm can be read in direct contrast to the fool’s life. David reflects on the ideal God-honoring life. Jesus is the only one who fully lived out these ideals.

Psalm 16

A prayer for safekeeping: “for in you I take refuge.” The Lord provides counsel, instruction, and protection to the one whose eyes are fixed on the Lord God.

June 16 Psalm 17

The psalmist appeals to the Lord as the righteous judge. In his great love the Lord will not only hide us “in the shadow of your wings,” but will confront the wicked and save the faithful. The psalm reflects the ancient practice of lodging a judicial appeal before the king. The idea of “in the shadow of your wings” appears in Psalm 36, 57, 61, 63, and 91 as well as Ruth 2:12, Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34.

June 17 Psalm 18

This song of David also occurs (*with minor variations*) in 2nd Samuel 22. The basic theme of this psalm is an exposition on the first two verses: “I love you Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.” In verse 46 there is a shout of praise: “The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!”

June 18 Psalm 19 and 20

Psalm 19

The sovereign God of the universe is praised not only by people but by all of creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God.” (v.1) From the heavens declaring the glory of the Lord, the psalmist turns to the beauty, power, and strength of the “law of the Lord.” A verse commonly quoted from the pulpit before a message (*at least in some circles*) concludes this psalm: “May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (v.14)

Psalm 20

The entire Psalm is a prayer of blessing. Verse seven hearkens back to David’s declaration of confidence in “the name of the Lord our God” when he was about to face Goliath (*1 Samuel 17:45*).

June 19 Psalm 21 and 22

Psalm 21

The connection between God’s work in the battles and the victories won by the kings who trust in the Lord is a common theme throughout the psalms.

Psalm 22

The Gospel writers saw in the passion of Jesus, the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. Jesus himself cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?” (22:1) See *Matthew 27:45-46 and Mark 15:33-34*.

June 20 Psalm 23 and 24

Psalm 23

Have you memorized this psalm? You may wish to meditate on these six verses by reading through them slowly, several times today. Pray through this psalm by changing the phrasing to reflect your prayer directly to God: “Lord, you our my shepherd, I shall not be in want...” There are few Bible passages as widely known as these verses that profess beautiful, confident, and joyful trust in the Lord as the good Shepherd-King.

Psalm 24

God is maker and owner of all things! “The Lord Almighty – he is the King of glory.” (v.10)

June 21 Psalm 25 and 26

Psalm 25

The psalmist appeals to God's mercy, love, goodness, uprightness, faithfulness, and grace. He prays for deliverance from his enemies, guidance in God's will, relief from affliction, and for the forgiveness of his sins.

Psalm 26

David uses the word “blameless,” not “sinless,” to describe himself. He is seeking God's mercy and deliverance.

June 22 Psalm 27 and 28

Psalm 27

Consider (meditate on) what it means to ask this of the Lord: “One thing I ask from the Lord this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (v.4)

Psalm 28

The psalm begins with a call to the Lord and a statement of trust “you are my Rock.” The cries for mercy, the statements of confidence like “The Lord is My strength and my shield” speak across the ages to each of us and the whole Christian Church today.

June 23 Psalm 29 and 30

Psalm 29

If you want to understand the difference between thanks and praise, begin by praying this psalm. “The voice of the Lord” reminds us of how God created all things with a word. “And God said” (Genesis 1:3). It is the Lord who reigns as king forever and is the one who gives peace and strength to his people (v.10-11).

Psalm 30

A song of praise celebrating God’s deliverance from trouble. “Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.” (v.5)

June 24 Psalm 31

God is our refuge, rescuer, fortress, and the one to whom the faithful cry for mercy. In Luke 23:46 we hear Jesus quote these words from the cross: “into your hands I commit my spirit.” (v.5)

June 25 Psalm 32

A psalm acknowledging the weight of unconfessed sin on a human soul: “when I kept silent my bones wasted away.” (v.5)

June 26 Psalm 33 and 34

Psalm 33

To praise the Lord involves lifting up his qualities: “The word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.” (v.4) “The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”(v.5) “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.” (v.6) Please read Genesis 1:3 and John 1:3,10. “The plans of the Lord stand forever.” (v.11) There is great wisdom in meditating on verses 16 and 17. There is a great temptation is to rely on our own strength in our own lives and

as the church (see *Revelation 3:17*). Every church leader and board could benefit from committing this psalm to memory.

Psalm 34

Much of this psalm reads like the book of Proverbs with short, helpful sayings, but David takes it a step further with great words of confidence in the Lord's faithfulness and deliverance.

June 27 Psalm 35 and 36

Psalm 35,36 and 37 all comment on the character of the wicked and their abuse of the poor and the faithful.

Psalm 35

An appeal to the Lord to "brandish spear and javelin" in order to rescue the servant of the Lord.

Psalm 36

A prayer for God's unfailing protection as the psalmist reflects on the godlessness of the wicked and the goodness of God.

June 28 Psalm 37

There is great encouragement throughout this psalm to do the right and faithful thing even when evil and injustice seem to gain the upper hand. We can be confident that God will set it all right in the end, even if it doesn't happen in our lifetime.

June 29 Psalm 38 and 39

Psalm 38

A psalm of lament that describes physical and spiritual anguish. Laments like this are a powerful reminder that we are invited to come to the Lord with our burdens and pain: "Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior." (v.21-22)

Psalm 39

The psalmist cries out to the Lord in a prayer of lament. Though life is "fleeting" (v.4) "my hope is in you." (v.7)

June 30 Psalm 40 and 41

Psalm 40

The psalm begins in the third person with a description of what God has done, but then David shifts to addressing the Lord in the second person. The cry for help completes this psalm: “you are my help and deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.” (v.17)

Psalm 41

The psalmist incorporates confession and a cry for mercy, healing, and restoration. Verse 13 serves as a doxology for book one.

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)

July 1 Psalm 42

A powerful lament that expresses a hunger for the Lord: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (v.2) The answer to that hunger and a downcast soul is a fitting conclusion to the psalm: “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” (v.11)

July 2 Psalm 43 and 44

Psalm 43

Another lament seeking rescue and vindication from the Lord. The ending of this psalm is nearly identical to the ending of Psalm 42: “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” (v.5)

Psalm 44

The psalmist proclaims that the nation’s deliverance is not based on their own goodness but comes through God’s power and unfailing love (v.26).

July 3 Psalm 45 and 46

Psalm 45

The title (that you’ll notice is right under “Psalm 45”) was likely assigned to this psalm when it was put in its place and includes the phrase: “a wedding song.” There are echoes of the Davidic covenant ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ – a descendant of David. “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:16)

Psalm 46

“God is our refuge and our strength.” (v.1) The entire psalm is a celebration of the power of the Lord Almighty and was the inspiration for Martin Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God".

July 4 Psalm 47 and 48

Psalm 47

A celebration of the truth that “God reigns over the nations.” (v.8)

Psalm 48

The psalmist praises the greatness of God and the strength and beauty of Jerusalem.

July 5 Psalm 49 and 50

Psalm 49

A sobering reminder that there is no wealth or power on earth that can save any human from death. “No man can redeem the life of another...the ransom for a life is costly.” (see *Revelation 5:9*) “Do not be overawed when a man grows rich... for he will take nothing with him when he dies.” (v.16-17) “But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead.” (v.15)

Psalm 50

A recurring theme in the Old Testament is how the true sacrifice acceptable to the Lord is the humbling of our hearts before Him. The Lord reminds the people that the sacrifices are not the main thing (v.9-10), rather a devoted heart to the Lord is key. See also Psalm 51:16-17 “a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”

July 6 Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is one of the greatest prayers of confession in all of Scripture. The subtitle of the psalm is: “When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.” King David not only committed adultery but also murdered her husband (2 Samuel 11:1-27 and 12:1-11). Although there would be dire consequences for this sin, God was still true to his covenant with David. This psalm forms the basis of many traditional service liturgies for confession and praise.

July 7 Psalm 52 and 53

Psalm 52

The psalm compares the person who “did not make God his stronghold” (v.7) to the person who trusts “in God’s unfailing love (chesed) forever.” (v.8)

Psalm 53

“The fool says in his heart, ‘there is no God.’” (v.1). The foolishness of those who refuse to acknowledge and/or follow God is a common theme throughout Scripture, and Israel itself is often taken to task for lack of faith in the Lord God.

July 8 Psalm 54 and 55

Psalm 54

The Lord is the one who vindicates me, sustains me, and has “delivered me from all my troubles.” (v.7)

Psalm 55

Betrayal by a good friend and the sorrow it brings is a central theme to this lament. But the Lord is faithful and hears the prayers of his servants: “Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.” (v.22)

July 9 Psalm 56 and 57

Psalm 56

The faithful are often the subject of attacks by the wicked and ungodly. While there is a cry for God’s help, judgment, and vindication, it is accompanied by statements of steadfast faith: “In God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me? (v.4 & 11).

Psalm 57

The psalmist cries out for mercy in the midst of disaster and being pursued by enemies. There is also great trust in the care the Lord provides: “I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.” (v.1)

July 10 Psalm 58 and 59

Psalm 58

An imprecatory psalm that calls on the Lord to exercise judgment on the wicked and avenge the righteous. Compare this psalm to the righteous judgment of God in the book of Revelation.

Psalm 59

Enemies surround the righteous, but God is “my strength,” “my fortress,” “my loving God.” (v.9-10)

July 11 Psalm 60 and 61

Psalm 60

A prayer for the nation at war: “Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered.” (v.5) The truth of Verse 11 “human help is worthless” is reflected in Paul’s teaching to the Ephesians Christians when he reminds them to put on the whole armor of God (*Ephesians 6:10 ff*).

Psalm 61

A cry to the Lord God from one who knows the Lord, but whose “heart grows faint.” (v.2)

July 12 Psalm 62 and 63

Psalm 62

A great expression of confident hope in the midst of trouble: “Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.” (v.1) All believers in Jesus can take comfort in this psalm: “Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.” (v.6)

Psalm 63

An expression of longing for the Lord: “my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a dry and weary land.” (v.1 - 1984 NIV) The remainder of the psalm speaks of the fullness that only the Lord can bring: “Your love (*chesed*) is better than life.” (v.3) We see echoes of this thirst in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4).

July 13 Psalm 64 and 65

Psalm 64

The wicked are plotting against the innocent. The psalmist calls on God to act.

Psalm 65

A hymn praising God for his forgiveness. The psalm transitions into a praise to the Lord who established and has power over all of creation, including calming the seas (v.7) (see *Mark 4:41*). God (the Father/Son/Holy Spirit) is our savior and “the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.” (v. 5)

July 14 Psalm 66 and 67

Psalm 66

“Shout for joy to God” sets the tone for this psalm of praise. “All the earth bows down to you” is not a wish or desire but a basic truth. The psalmist then turns to worship and expresses a stark truth: “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” (v.18) Are there any sins you “cherish?”

Psalm 67

“May all peoples praise you” (v.3) is God’s desire for all of humanity. This psalm is a great example of a psalm used in corporate worship.

July 15 Psalm 68

The psalmist celebrates the Lord God as the King who led the people out of Egypt and established the temple in Jerusalem (Mt. Zion). The Lord is recognized as the one who is “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (v.5) and the one “who daily bears our burdens” and “saves.” (v.19,20)

July 16 Psalm 69 and 70

Psalm 69

“Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.”(v.1) The vivid language of lament turns to a plea: “Answer me, Lord, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me.” (v.16)

Psalm 70

A brief, urgent plea for help: “come quickly, Lord, to help me.” (v.1,5)
There is confidence expressed in the midst of trouble: “You are my help and my deliverer.” (v.5)

July 17 Psalm 71 and 72

Psalm 71

The first four verses are packed with calls for God to act: “rescue me,” “deliver me,” “turn your ear to me,” “be my rock,” “give the command,” “deliver me!”

Psalm 72

Note the prayer of blessing for the king. The king is also called to “deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.” (see *Micah 6:8*). The psalm may have been used at the time of the king's coronation.

Book 3 Psalms 73-89

July 18 Psalm 73

The psalm addresses one of the most disturbing problems in life: How is it that the wicked often prosper while the godly suffer so much? While questions are raised about the prosperity of the wicked, there is also confidence expressed in the presence of the Lord: “you hold me by my right hand.” (v.23)

July 19 Psalm 74 and 75

Psalm 74

A prayer reminding the Lord of the covenant He made with Israel: “Have regard for your covenant” and seeking an answer from God as to why Israel's enemies are prevailing. The psalm likely dates from the time of the Babylonian Exile (587 B.C.) when the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and many of the people had been taken into exile in Babylon (1000 miles away). Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have been taken to Babylon during this time (see Daniel 1-3).

Psalm 75

The people of God lift up a confident prayer that the Lord's righteous judgment will prevail in the face of evil, arrogant worldly powers. Two key words ring out in this psalm: "justice" and "vindication."

July 20 Psalm 76 and 77

Psalm 76

The Lord exercises his power to defend his people, and a celebration is in order.

Psalm 77

The psalmist laments, but also remembers God's miraculous power.

July 21 Psalm 78

Psalms were sometimes used to teach Israel their history. Psalm 78 reflects on Israel's history from the Exodus to King David, warning listeners not to repeat Israel's past sins. The people are called to remember God's saving acts of grace and to remain faithful to God and his covenant.

July 22 Psalm 79 and 80

Psalm 79

A psalm of lament: "How long, Lord? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire?" (v. 5) This prayer seeks God's judgment on the nations that have so cruelly destroyed Jerusalem, showing utter contempt for both the Lord and His people. The theme of God's jealousy may be difficult to grasp, but consider the alternative to God not being jealous. What would humanity be like without any boundaries of behavior or thought? In Isaiah 42:8 God says: "I will not yield my glory."

Psalm 80

A psalm of lament on behalf of the nation, seeking restoration: "Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved." (v.19) The psalm begins with a scene of God's position in heaven, similar to what is found in Revelation 7:11-12.

July 23 Psalm 81 and 82

Psalm 81

A psalm that addresses the gathered community and then transitions to the voice of God to His people (v.6-16).

Psalm 82

One of the great cries of the powerless in this world is: “Rise up, O God, judge the earth.” The psalm is set in a courtroom with God as the judge. The prophet Micah (6:8) reminds the world: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

July 24 Psalm 83 and 84

Psalm 83

A cry goes up for God to “not remain silent” and “not stand aloof” (v.1) as the nations plot against Israel.

Psalm 84

A prayer of yearning extolling the beauty of the temple. “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.” (v.10)

July 25 Psalm 85 and 86

Psalm 85

A beautiful vision of the healed earthly kingdom that integrates four powerful Hebrew words into one short verse: “Love (*chesed*) and faithfulness (*emuth*) meet together; righteousness (*tsaddik*) and peace (*shalom*) kiss each other.” (v.10)

Psalm 86

Hear the psalmist reflect on God’s greatness and plead for mercy, instruction and personal transformation: “Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name (v.11) The psalm ends with a statement of confident, personal trust in the Lord: “for you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.” (v.17)

July 26 Psalm 87 and 88

Psalm 87

The psalmist celebrates Zion (Jerusalem) as the beloved “city of God.”

Psalm 88

Perhaps one of the darkest of the lament psalms, the troubled cry to the Lord includes no expressions of hopeful expectation (*as in most prayers in the psalter*), and yet the prayer begins, "O LORD, the God who saves me."

July 27 Psalm 89

The psalm begins with a declaration of God’s great love and power: “I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.” (v.1) Note verse 9 and consider the connection with how Jesus calms the storm (*Matthew 8:23; Mark 4:35; Luke 8:22*). The psalmist also restates the covenant that God made with King David. Verses 30 through 37 guide us through the tension of the punishment that comes with disobedience and with God’s utter commitment to that Covenant “I will not violate my covenant.” (v.34)

Book 4 Psalms 90-106

July 28 Psalm 90

The eternal nature of the Lord God “A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by...”(v.4) is compared to the brevity of human life.

July 29 Psalm 91 and 92

Psalm 91

Psalm 91 is a glowing testimony to the security of those who trust in God. It is also, in part, the inspiration of the Christian song “On Eagle’s Wings” (*see also Isaiah 40:30-31*). Verses 11 and 12 are quoted by the devil during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (*see Luke 4:1-13*).

Psalm 92

Praise God’s love and faithfulness both day and night. There is confidence that the righteous will indeed flourish (v.12).

July 30 Psalm 93 and 94

Psalm 93

This beautiful, short psalm is a hymn to the eternal reign of the Lord as King over all the earth.

Psalm 94

The psalmist calls upon God who hears and sees all, to rise up and judge those who murder the widow and the fatherless. As with many psalms, there is a personal side to the appeal: "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul." (v.19) Compare this psalm of judgment, justice, and vindication to the book of Revelation and many of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament.

July 31 Psalm 95 and 96

Psalm 95

A call to worship the Lord: "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation." A great example of praise psalm that lifts up the attributes and accomplishments of God: "The sea is his, for he made it"

Psalm 96

All people of every nation are to call upon and praise the Lord. Even the heavens, the earth, and the seas praise the Lord! We are to praise the Lord, in part, because "he will judge the peoples with equity." (v.10) God's righteous judgment is good news!

August 1 Psalm 97 and 98

Psalm 97

It is wonderful news that the Lord reigns! "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad."(v.1) Two important Hebrew concepts are combined to describe God's throne and his reign: "Righteousness (*tsaddik*) and justice (*mishpat*) are the foundation of his throne." (v.2) The psalm continues (*verses 1-6*) to remind the community that the Lord is Lord of all creation. Please read Philippians 2:9-11 and notice the connection between this psalm and the exalted name and position of Jesus as Lord.

Psalm 98

The Old and the New Testament are intimately connected, and God's plan of salvation is fulfilled in Jesus Christ*: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand (*see 1 Peter 3:22*) and his holy arm have worked salvation* for him. The Lord has made his salvation* known and revealed his righteousness (*tsaddik*) to the nations" (*Ps 98:1,2*). Now the nations are being told of salvation through Jesus Christ, who is the righteous (*tsaddik*) one: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (*Mt. 28:19*)(*also Acts 1:8*). All creation is invited to sing for joy that the Lord "will judge the world in righteousness" (*v.8-9*) *"*Jesus*" and "*Joshua*" means "*God is salvation.*"

August 2 Psalm 99 and 100

Psalm 99

All people of faith and all nations are to praise the Lord God.

Psalm 100

A joyful song of praise that celebrates God's goodness, love, and faithfulness. Those who read this psalm are reminded of their value as a human being: "It is he who made us, and we are his."

August 3 Psalm 101 and 102

Psalm 101

The psalmist pledges to center his life on the Lord: "I will sing of your love (*chesed*) and justice (*mishpat*); to you Lord, I will sing praise" (*v.1*)

Psalm 102

Though "my heart is blighted and withered like grass" (*v. 4*), the psalmist expresses the great truth that the Lord is still faithful and active in the world.

August 4 Psalm 103 and 104

Psalm 103

Today's psalm is a hymn to God's redeeming love (*chesed*), forgiveness, and compassion that begins with the individual and is made known to his people. All people, the angels, all the heavenly hosts, and all creation are called upon to praise the Lord.

Psalm 104

A hymn to the creator of everything! The entire psalm is a statement about God's sovereignty over all of creation.

August 5 Psalm 105 and 106

Both Psalm 105 and 106 constitute a brief (early) history of Israel. For another excellent summary, see Stephen's summary in Acts 7.

Psalm 105

Israel is called to worship and trust in the Lord. They are reminded of how God

delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. God is faithful in fulfilling his covenant promises with Abraham (v.42).

Psalm 106

Once again, the psalmist focuses on the Exodus event, Israel's forty years in the wilderness, and their journey into the promised land. It is clear that there is a painful price that comes with not remembering God's provision and rebelling against the Lord. "They did not remember your many kindnesses (*chesed* – *loving mercy*), and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. "Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known" (v.8).

Book 5 Psalms 107-150

August 6 Psalm 107 and 108

Psalm 107

Please consider meditating on the phrase: "Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love" (v.8,15,21,31). God hears the prayers of those in need and saves them.

Psalm 108

A song of praise to the Lord: "For great is your love (*chesed*), higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies" (v.4).

August 7 Psalm 109 and 110

Psalm 109

The psalmist calls on God to act with righteous judgment in an unjust world. Most of the psalm uses imprecatory language calling down judgment and curses on those who are accusing God's faithful one(s). Where's love and mercy? See notes on Psalm 5.

Psalm 110

A prophetic word about the one who is the righteous judge of all the world. This psalm is referred to in the New Testament testimony to Christ (*Hebrews 7:15*). The themes of God as righteous judge run throughout the book of Revelation and the apocalyptic teachings of Jesus in the Gospels (see *Matthew 25*).

August 8 Psalm 111

God is to be praised for his righteousness and faithfulness to his promises. Our call is to approach the Lord with great reverence. How does a human achieve true wisdom? The psalmist gives this profound answer: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (*v.10*).

August 9 Psalm 111 and 113

Psalm 112

There are great blessings for those who fear the Lord and delight in the law of the Lord.

Psalm 113

The servants of the Lord are called upon to praise the Lord. The people are called to recognize God’s character and the fact that God is above, but also near his creation.

August 10 Psalm 114 and 115

Psalm 114

Even the earth obeys the Lord!

Psalm 115

God is worthy of our praise! Idols are empty and worthless. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory” (*v.1*). What part can we play in glorifying God? Jesus says: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (*Matthew 5:16*).

August 11 Psalm 116, 117, and 118

Psalm 116

“The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion” (*v.5*). He hears our voice and saves us.

Psalm 117

Although this is the shortest psalm in the psalter and the shortest chapter in the Bible it expresses two central truths: “great is his love toward us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever” (v.2)

Psalm 118

A hymn of praise giving thanks to God who’s “love (chesed) endures forever.” Verse 22 is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 21:42: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

August 12 Psalm 119 verses 1-32

Almost every verse of Psalm 119 (the longest chapter in the Bible) mentions the value of the Lord’s instruction. The psalm is an alphabetic acrostic with each section beginning with a Hebrew letter of the alphabet.

God’s Word not only instructs but give strength to the soul: “My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word” (v.28).

There is great joy and strength that comes through God’s word: “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.” (NIV – 1984 version)

August 13 Psalm 119:33-72

“Teach me;” “give me understanding;” “direct me;” “turn my heart;” “turn my eyes” are wonderful prayers seeking the Lord’s direction in life. To turn one’s heart is very closely related to the concept of repentance that is a key concept in the New Testament. Consider meditating on the implications of verse 71. How have your mistakes led you back to the Word of God?

August 14 Psalm 119:73-112

Psalm 119 often speaks in the first person directly to God. There is a focus on the beauty, value, and eternal nature of God’s Word. “Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (v.89) The psalmist continues praising the Word of God and describes it not only as valuable but as “sweet.” “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (v.103) How does the Word function

in our lives? “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”
(v.105)

August 15 Psalm 119:113-144

In Luke 2:25-35 Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to go to the Temple to see the infant Jesus. Psalm 119:123 reveals the longing of the people of God for that future day: “My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.” (ESV) The only one who fulfilled the law (Mt. 5:17) truly reflects the joy expressed in verse 129-130.

August 16 Psalm 119:145-176

The hunger for and confidence in God’s word and God’s compassionate love is evident throughout Psalm 119. The psalmist expresses a longing for the Lord and his law in the midst of the troubles of life.

August 17 Psalm 120, 121, 122, and 123

Psalm 120

A prayer for deliverance from false accusers with “deceitful tongues.”

Psalm 121

A great and often quoted psalm declaring the watchfulness of the Lord God. “My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth”
(v.2)

Psalm 122

This hymn may have been sung by pilgrims making the journey to Jerusalem. The central place of Jerusalem is an important theme in the psalms.

Psalm 123

The psalmist prays for mercy from the Lord in the face of the ridicule and contempt of the wicked.

August 18 Psalm 124, 125, 126 and 127

Psalm 124

The psalmist reminds Israel to look to the Lord in times of trouble. “Our help is in the name of the Lord” (v.8) is a great statement of faith for all generations.

Psalm 125

Like the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so also the Lord surrounds his people.

Psalm 126

The people returning from exile (probably from Babylon) sing for joy!

Psalm 127

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain” (v.1). The word “vain” can be translated “worthless” or “emptiness.” The psalmist points out a basic, timeless truth: although human beings are capable of building and keeping watch, they are called to seek the Lord’s council and heart in all endeavors. This psalm serves as a reminder and correction to all followers of the Lord God who seek to build their own lives (or the church) on the foundation of their own skills and strength. Take a few moments to pray about how you have “built your house” – how you have built your life. You may have some things to confess today as you seek the Lord’s heart and direction for your life.

August 19 Psalm 128, 129, and 130

Psalm 128

“Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him” (v.1) is a recurring theme throughout the psalms. What does it mean “to fear the Lord” and “walk in obedience?” Please consider studying this theme further!

Psalm 129

Israel prays for deliverance from enemies.

Psalm 130

“If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you, there is forgiveness” (v.3-4). Please consider praying through this psalm. Confess your sins and experience the promise of your redemption through Jesus Christ.

August 20 Psalm 131, 132, and 133

Psalm 131

Consider meditating on what it means to put your hope in the Lord and to “calm” and “quiet” yourself. (v.2)

Psalm 132

David’s place in God’s plan of redemption is reaffirmed!

Psalm 133

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” is a timeless scriptural truth and part of the calling of the Church (see *Ephesians 1:10; 4:1-5*).

August 21 Psalm 134, 135, and 136

Psalm 134

A very brief liturgy of praise. “Servants of the Lord who minister by night” probably refers to the priests and Levites. Note the phrase “lift your hands in the sanctuary.” It seems that raising hands during worship was a very ancient practice!

Psalm 135

All Israel is called to praise the Lord, who delivered them from slavery in Egypt. God is the one true God who is Lord over all of creation and the nations and whose name (and love – *Ps. 136*) “endures forever” (v.13). The Lord will “vindicate his people” and “have compassion on his servants.” (v.14)

Psalm 136

There are few places in Scripture where we see a responsive reading so clearly outlined. A statement is made about the Lord God, and the people respond: “His love (*chesed*) endures forever.” Try reading this psalm with a friend.

August 22 Psalm 137 and 138

Psalm 137

A heart-rending song of one who was exiled in Babylon in the 5th century B.C. The call for retribution against the Babylonians is brutal.

Psalm 138

“The Lord will vindicate me; your love, Lord, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands” (v.8). God’s enduring love and the fact that God will make all things right (*vindication*) are recurring themes in the Old and New Testament. Jesus dies on the cross – but Jesus’ purpose, life, ministry, and his crucifixion and death are vindicated through the resurrection!

August 23 Psalm 139 and 140

Psalm 139

A wonderful psalm pointing to the sanctity of human life beginning in the womb: “you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” This psalm is worth sharing with all who wonder how well God knows them: “you are familiar with all my ways” (v.3).

Psalm 140

Psalm 139 speaks of the sanctity of human life from conception, while this psalm speaks of the sanctity of human life for all people and reminds the reader of God’s heart for justice and the poor (v.12).

August 24 Psalm 141 and 142

Psalm 141

The psalmist reaches out to the Lord for assistance: “come quickly to me” (v.1). There I also a call for help to resist sin: “Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil so that I take part in wicked deeds along with those who are evildoers; do not let me eat their delicacies” (v.4). And finally, an excellent reminder for all people: “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips” (v.3). (see *James 3:5-12*)

Psalm 142

A lament and prayer for deliverance: “Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.” (v.7)

August 25 Psalm 143 and 144

Psalm 143

“Do not hide your face from me” is an important theme in the Old Testament and hearkens back to the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:22-27: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons,’ ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.’ ‘So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.’”

Psalm 144

The psalmist shares several phrases describing the believer’s relationship to the Lord God: the Lord my rock, my loving (*chesed*) God, my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer and my shield. God is described not as an uninterested, distant God, but one who is actively

involved in human life and this world. Humans are called to follow him: “blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” (v.15)

August 26 Psalm 145 and 146

Psalm 145

A hymn or prayer is brought before the Lord God, the great king.

Please note and

meditate on verses eight and nine: “⁸The Lord is gracious and compassionate (*rachum*), slow to anger and rich in love (*chesed*). ⁹The Lord is good to all; he has compassion (*racham*) on all he has made.” In verse nine, the word “racham” is used to describe God’s compassion. “Racham” literally means “from the womb” and is similar to the Greek word for compassion used in the New Testament to describe times when Jesus’ was “moved with compassion” (*ie.*, *Mt. 9:36*), but also in three of Jesus’ parables when the characters have compassion on others (*Mt. 18:27; Lk 10:33; Lk 15:20*). God has this kind of life-giving compassion “on all he has made.” (v.9)

Psalm 146

The final five psalms all begin with “Praise the Lord.” The Hebrew phrase is “Hallelu Ya” or, Halleluiah (*Alleluia*)! Look carefully at what the righteous and just Lord God who made the heavens and earth does on this earth: God “upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free.” Please read and consider carefully whether you, as a follower of Jesus, value the same things God values (*according to this psalm and Matthew 25:31ff*).

August 27 Psalm 147

“Hallelu Ya!” Notice the vastness of God’s power over the universe and what God seeks in each human being: “the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love” (v.11).

August 28 Psalm 148

“Hallelu Ya!” All creation, including the stars of heaven, the weather, the mountains, and all kings of the earth, are to praise the Lord!

August 29 Psalm 149

“Hallelu Ya!” This call to praise is directed specifically to the people of God. There is great encouragement here in these words: “For the Lord takes delight in his people” (v.4).

August 30 Psalm 150

“Hallelu Ya!” “Praise the Lord!” The final great Hallelujah calls the people to praise God in the Temple and in all places for his acts of power and his greatness. The act of praise happens not only with voices but with instruments and dancing. The final words of the entire psalter, which are meant to summarize all of the psalms are: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” (*Hallelu Ya!*)

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Beloved in Christ, you have completed a reading of the psalter. In the history of the Christian church, the psalter has played an important role in the worship life of the disciples of Jesus Christ. In times past the psalter was often read through every month or even every week and memorized by those who took monastic or other theological vows.

May you be blessed as you go back and dwell on those psalms through which God has helped or challenged you this past summer. Please consider reading through the psalter again so that the Scriptures have even more opportunity to take root in your life.

And finally, some words of encouragement from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Philippi:

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. *Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV).**