



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 11-15

Monday 13th April - Psalm 11

- 1 In the Lord I take refuge.
How then can you say to me:
"Flee like a bird to your mountain.
- 2 For look, the wicked bend their bows;
they set their arrows against the strings
to shoot from the shadows
at the upright in heart.
- 3 When the foundations are being destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"
- 4 The Lord is in his holy temple;
the Lord is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.
- 5 The Lord examines the righteous,
but the wicked, those who love violence,
he hates with a passion.
- 6 On the wicked he will rain
fiery coals and burning sulphur;
a scorching wind will be their lot.
- 7 For the Lord is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.

It is easy to look at the world right now and think that everything is falling apart. And it's hard to know what to do when that happens. That is what seems to be happening for David. Things are going badly and his friends give him poor advice from v. 1c to the end of v. 3. This advice suggests a feeling of fear and helplessness, concluding with "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It shows us that even people who love us and want good for us may not give us wisdom.

But David takes refuge in Yahweh (God's covenantal name which implies faithfulness to his promises). From verse 4, David remembers some truths that change his outlook on everything. He remembers that Yahweh is present and that he rules and reigns over everything. In verse 5 he remembers that Yahweh sees and examines all and hates the wicked. He remembers that Yahweh will end injustice because He loves justice.

We too need to remember these things when we're afraid or when it feels like the foundations of our lives are being destroyed. Yahweh's rule and reign and righteousness never change. He will make everything right. We are reminded to seek righteousness and trust him as our sure foundation.

But we also know more than David. We know the one on whom Yahweh poured all his judgment. We know the one who was treated as though he were wicked in our place, for our wickedness.

So friends, remember that as everything changes and as you feel helpless, our foundation is sure. Our God is on the throne and He is with us. He will make everything right. He does see. Stand firm and take refuge in Him.

Lord God, please remind us that you are always with and you rule and reign. Help us to take refuge in you and to build our lives on you, our sure and true foundation.

James

Tuesday 14th April - Psalm 12

- 1 Help, Lord, for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.
- 2 Everyone lies to their neighbour;
they flatter with their lips
but harbour deception in their hearts.
- 3 May the Lord silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue—
- 4 those who say,
“By our tongues we will prevail;
our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?”
- 5 “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise,” says the Lord.
“I will protect them from those who malign them.”
- 6 And the words of the Lord are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.
- 7 You, Lord, will keep the needy safe
and will protect us forever from the wicked,
- 8 who freely strut about
when what is vile is honoured by the human race.

This psalm declares that God sustains and sets His saving love on those humble enough to admit their need of His protection and grace. Christians need God’s protection from lies, slander and deception because words have enormous power not only to mislead and damage but also to influence a whole culture (v3-5, 7-8).

David feels all alone in the world as he laments a society full of arrogance, falsehood, deception and flattery. He describes a society where God’s faithful people are not around (v1-4). The social trend that’s pervasive (“everyone” v2) revolves around empty talk and deception. We are also familiar with deceptive advertising, politics, media, religious, governmental and judicial systems.

How should we respond when we feel alone in a culture informed by different values?

The great challenge is not to respond in kind (v2) but take this psalm to heart and learn to love the truth. David gives an urgent prayer in verse 3 to cut off these deceivers who “take all” (v4). As a church, nothing will destroy our relationships more than lies (Ephesians 4:25).

God graciously responds to the sufferings of his people in verse 5 and gives a much-needed word of assurance. This is reminding us of the certainty and truthfulness of God’s word.

David’s sense of isolation points forward to Christ, the son of David. Jesus was the only man who always spoke the truth, and he walked to the cross alone. Our job is to trust in God’s protection and imitate the actions of our Master and Saviour, Jesus, who when he was reviled did not revile.

Lord, we thank for your mercy and how through Jesus you meet us at our point of need. Make my words honest and true, wise, kind and well-chosen. Help me see my own resentment and envy that are often in my own heart. My deepest comfort is knowing that you see all things and will, in the end, set all things right. Father cause your sovereign authority and wisdom to hold sway at all times, in every place on earth and in the deepest parts of our own souls. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 15th April - Psalm 13

- 1 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- 3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
- 4 and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- 5 But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

It was a quiet day, when the phone rang. Poe is an elder in the Maori community of Claymore. He called to let me know of a death of a young girl and asked about my availability to conduct her funeral. The girl was 4 years old and for a time was part of Luther's class at Preschool. It was complicated, like most childhood deaths, tragic and a very difficult time for everyone involved. As I stood in the hallway of the kitchen I reflected on the other 5 funerals I had done of children and one thought ran over through my mind. Where is the goodness of God?

The writer of Ecclesiastes says that it is better to be in the house of mourning than of feasting and that the living should take this to heart. But given the circumstances a birthday party is far better than what was before me on that day.

The circumstances we find ourselves can drive us to withdraw from God and so the pain that we see can lead to all sorts of grief and difficulty. This is where the psalmist finds himself in the first 4 verses of this psalm. To forget the goodness of God leaves us with nothing else to rest in or trust. Where else can we go? What else can we trust in? As Peter says to Jesus

'Where else have we to go when you alone have words of eternal life?' John 6:68

The psalmist goes back to the character of God, His goodness, His love, His salvation.

Is there any circumstance, pain or concerns in your life that is causing you to doubt the goodness of God?

Take some time to write out what these are and take it to prayer like the psalmist does to God who loves you in Jesus.

Lord God, please show me your goodness. Remind me of your faithfulness, especially in seasons of doubt. Help me to pray when I can't. Help me to trust in your unfailing love and to rejoice in my salvation in Jesus.

Phil

Thursday 16th April - Psalm 14

1 The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.

2 The Lord looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.

3 All have turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.

4 Do all these evildoers know nothing?
They devour my people as though eating bread;
they never call on the Lord.

5 But there they are, overwhelmed with dread,
for God is present in the company of the righteous.

6 You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor,
but the Lord is their refuge.

7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the Lord restores his people,
let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

Have you ever heard someone says, "If there is God, how can he let this happen to me?" We live in a world marred by misery, fear and sorrow since sin entered the world. Societies have been finding their own ways to alleviate problems and to satisfy themselves in various ways unimaginable.

People flock to superhero movies as they are emboldened by how these superheroes can turn situations and defeat the villains. But after watching the movie, we dismiss them all as we know this is just a fiction. The characters and story are just created by someone's imagination. Is God just a fiction to you too or is He real to you? Psalm 14 illustrates how the fools think and live. They ignore God and shut down the reality of His existence as they would like to live in their deeds of darkness.

In the classic encounter between Pilate and Jesus, the episode ends with a question. "What is truth?". As it is with so many people, the truth was standing in front of his eyes and he didn't even recognise it. How do you respond to the reality of God in your life? Would you dismiss Him as if He did not exist? In this Psalm, we are reminded that the Lord looks down to see if there are any who understand and seek Him (v.2).

Jesus tells us in Matt 6:33 to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. May the Lord find us desiring to know Him more as we seek to be drawn closer to Him each day. May we be restored and be joyful in the hope of God's promises to us in His word (v7). Even if sometimes we might have a bad day, the truth and the reality of God will remain the same.

God is not sovereign sometimes. God is sovereign all the time.

Lord please help us to see with the eyes of faith as we look at the object of our faith. May we see Jesus as he is, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. May we be wise in responding to the truth of who you are. Please help us to proclaim the truth about Jesus in the way like live and speak as we share this truth to others.

Edwin

Friday 17th April - Psalm 15

1 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?
Who may live on your holy mountain?
2 The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;
3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbour,
and casts no slur on others;
4 who despises a vile person
but honours those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;
5 who lends money to the poor without interest;
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.

I wonder how you felt as you read this Psalm. Assured? Confronted?

It begins the most profound question - who can dwell with God? Who can be in his presence? Surely this question is far more important than most that we ask. And yet the answer might surprise us. The person who can dwell with God is blameless (or wholehearted in devotion), they are honest and true, they have integrity. They despise evil and those who hate God's people, they keep their word even when it is costly and they care about the poor and oppressed.

Does that unsettle you? This doesn't mean that God only saves 'good' people. But it does mean that saved people (as Israel were, and as Christians are) should be holy people. Hebrews 12 reminds us to "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

God expected that His people would be holy because He is holy. We rejoice that Christ bore all our sins upon himself. But that should not make us more flippant about sin, but resolved to be holy. It should change our affections and desires and actions. God's grace is meant to change us deeply so that we, bit by bit, become the people God has called us to be. This Psalm doesn't deny grace, it tells us what grace is supposed to bring about in our lives. It challenges us to consider whether we have truly received and been transformed by grace.

The promise at the end of Psalm is wonderful. Those who walk in holiness will be held secure by God. Not only is he with us, but he is also holding us. May this Psalm shake us out of our apathy towards sin. As we remember his grace may we walk in holiness. If you're left feeling confronted and unsure, let me encourage you to go back to the source of salvation - to Christ crucified and risen for your sin. Let that give you confidence and encourage you to change.

Lord, thank you for treating Christ as I deserve. Help me to strive for holiness. Forgive my apathy towards sin. Thank you that in your grace you confront my sin and point me to Christ.

James