



## Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 20-24

## Monday 27th April - Psalm 20

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress;  
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

2 May he send you help from the sanctuary  
and grant you support from Zion.

3 May he remember all your sacrifices  
and accept your burnt offerings.

4 May he give you the desire of your heart  
and make all your plans succeed.

5 May we shout for joy over your victory  
and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

May the Lord grant all your requests.

6 Now this I know:

The Lord gives victory to his anointed.

He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary  
with the victorious power of his right hand.

7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

8 They are brought to their knees and fall,  
but we rise up and stand firm.

9 Lord, give victory to the king!  
Answer us when we call!

So many verses in this Psalm would look great on a mug or card, wouldn't they? Who doesn't want the desires of their heart fulfilled and their plans finding success?! But there's a danger that we miss the context and therefore miss the point. The first five verses appear to be sung by Israel to King David before he goes off to battle. We don't know the exact circumstances, but we do know that David's success meant Israel's success. David's defeat would be awful for Israel.

In verse 6, it appears that David takes over the singing, with perhaps verse 9 being a final line sung by all. David is certain of victory because of his confidence in Yahweh, rather than chariots or horses. So how do we use Psalm 20 this side of the empty tomb? Well, we don't need to pray for our King to have victory, because he already has. But here are three things that have helped me as I read this Psalm.

Firstly, I'm reminded to trust in God instead of human strength, technology or power. That doesn't mean I won't use or enjoy those things, but I won't make them my ultimate hope. Only Christ is worth trusting in for my salvation. All other hopes are brought to their knees and fall.

Secondly, I'm reminded to pray when I'm afraid. Though sin and Satan and death have been beaten, we still await their end at Christ's return. Our heavenly Father hears our prayers and answers. That should encourage to persist in prayer, even when things aren't going as we desire or hope.

Lastly, I'm encouraged to pray parts of this Psalm for you. I'm not praying for you to get the desires of your heart - unless that desire is God! But those first two verses are what we need in this life aren't they? An answer in distress? We need His comfort, protection and help. We need the God of Jacob to continue to keep his promises.

*Father, help me to trust you more and more. Please answer me when I call. Please protect and sustain me. Thank you that Christ has already won the victory for me.*

James

## Tuesday 28th April - Psalm 21

The king rejoices in your strength, Lord.

How great is his joy in the victories you give!

2 You have granted him his heart's desire  
and have not withheld the request of his lips.[b]

3 You came to greet him with rich blessings  
and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.

4 He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—  
length of days, for ever and ever.

5 Through the victories you gave, his glory is  
great;

you have bestowed on him splendour and  
majesty.

6 Surely you have granted him unending blessings  
and made him glad with the joy of your  
presence.

7 For the king trusts in the Lord;  
through the unfailing love of the Most High  
he will not be shaken.

8 Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies;  
your right hand will seize your foes.

9 When you appear for battle,  
you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace.

The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath,  
and his fire will consume them.

10 You will destroy their descendants from the  
earth,

their posterity from mankind.

11 Though they plot evil against you  
and devise wicked schemes, they cannot  
succeed.

12 You will make them turn their backs  
when you aim at them with drawn bow.

13 Be exalted in your strength, Lord;  
we will sing and praise your might.

Thematically Psalm 21 builds on Psalm 20 as it celebrates the king rejoicing in the Lord's strength and in the victories that he gives (21:1), and that God has given this king "his hearts-desire" (21:2). The people triumph because their king has.

By nature, our strongest longings are for our own safety and success or comfort. The biggest struggle is for us to learn to base our deepest desires and joys in the victories of our King. "God desires to reshape our affections so we long most deeply for the victory of Jesus, seen in the vindication of his people and ultimately in his return in glory, so in our suffering we experience a foretaste of the joy of our king's final victory." (C. Ash)

In what areas of your own life do you need to put Jesus' success and victory above your own?

God not only crowns Jesus with honour, he takes up his cause by destroying his enemies. To anyone who has experienced oppression and injustice these words (v8-13) are a comfort. If we pray for the kingdom of God to grow in this world, by default we are praying for the kingdom of Satan to be destroyed. This is a sober warning as nothing remains hidden before God.

God so passionately hates the destructive power of evil, how sin and death has corrupted the human spirit and placed people in bondage to fear and shame, that he chose to die to set you free. When Jesus rose from the dead, he declared that the love of God will set us free, and death will be conquered by life, hate conquered by love, and our brokenness and sinfulness conquered by his compassion and forgiveness!

*Thank you, Lord Jesus for giving your life so we might have access to the Father forever. Your heart's desire was for us to be your people, let these truths affect our lives today. You are our great King. We praise you God for being holy and just, where you let nothing go unaddressed. Help us to let go of our grudges, praying that those who have wronged us will find your mercy through turning to you. Lord Jesus in your great name we pray. Amen*

Martin

## Wednesday 29th April - Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?  
2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.  
3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.  
4 In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.  
5 To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.  
6 But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.  
7 All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.  
8 "He trusts in the Lord," they say,  
"let the Lord rescue him.  
Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him."  
9 Yet you brought me out of the womb;  
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's  
breast.  
10 From birth I was cast on you;  
from my mother's womb you have been my God.  
11 Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.  
12 Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.  
13 Roaring lions that tear their prey  
open their mouths wide against me.  
14 I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart has turned to wax;  
it has melted within me.  
15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you lay me in the dust of death.  
16 Dogs surround me,  
a pack of villains encircles me;  
they pierce my hands and my feet.

17 All my bones are on display;  
people stare and gloat over me.  
18 They divide my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.  
19 But you, Lord, do not be far from me.  
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.  
20 Deliver me from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dogs.  
21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;  
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.  
22 I will declare your name to my people;  
in the assembly I will praise you.  
23 You who fear the Lord, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!  
24 For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.  
25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great  
assembly;  
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.  
26 The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the Lord will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!  
27 All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the Lord,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,  
28 for dominion belongs to the Lord  
and he rules over the nations.  
29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;  
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—  
those who cannot keep themselves alive.  
30 Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord.  
31 They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!

As a kid my parents took me to Jenolan Caves. It was a magical experience climbing deep underground following the lit stairs. But in one cave the lights went out, the guide flicked the switch and we were plunged into darkness. There was a darkness that you could almost feel. The tour guide kept talking but without any light to guide the way, where I was, in the black the hairs on my arms stiffened, my eyes strained and the space around me seemed to spin. I knew that people were around me, nervous laughter reminded me of that, my feet were on the steps, my hand on the railing. But the darkness overwhelmed me.

In Psalm 22 it is a different kind of darkness that has overwhelmed the psalmist. It is the darkness of being utterly alone in the place of suffering a darkness that steals away hope for him. We see the pain of body and soul that leaves him staggering under the weight of what he suffers.

When we read the opening section (1 – 21) of the psalm we can hear the words of Jesus and his cries in the midst of his darkness. His experience fills the depths of this psalm's darkness, far greater than David ever knew.

But look in the verses of praise (22 – 26) as the hope of deliverance comes at the darkest moment. Hope causes the lights to go on as God remains faithful to the one who suffers. Our suffering can make the darkness fill our hearts and minds, but see how Jesus' experience gives us hope. God is faithful in love and kindness, despite our circumstances.

But even greater than this is the blessing that comes in the last section (27 – 31) for the nations that mean that David's song becomes our song as Jesus blessing extends beyond the confines of Israel. We get to see light triumph over the darkness as this psalm ends 'He has done it'. The suffering abandoned one has caused us to be blessed. He blesses us as his friends who kneel before King Jesus instead of enemies swept away in judgement

*Thank you Lord, that in the dark moments of life we can call out to you. Help us to call out rather than run or stay silent. Thank you that Jesus was forsaken so that we would know that we will never be forsaken. Amen.*

Phil

## Thursday 30th April - Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.

This Psalm has been a tremendous source of comfort and reassurance to God's people down through the ages. It is the testimony of a man who lived his life in close communion with God. So great was his faith, so child-like his confidence, that he knew that God was there, even in the deepest and darkest of life situations.

There have been times in my life when I have felt fragile and vulnerable and God has graciously intervened and given me an amazing sense of peace and wellbeing (when there was no earthly reason for me to feel that way).

David tells us where true and lasting peace and happiness come from. We never need to be afraid for the Shepherd guides us all our earthly days, and at the appointed time, takes us safely to our home in heaven.

I sometimes wonder whether Jesus had this Psalm in mind when he said to his disciples, "I am the Good Shepherd." Jesus is our Shepherd in the truest possible way.

Through his living, dying, rising, he has made a way for our sins to be forgiven, and for us to walk in newness of life. In Luke 13:34 his heart aches over the city of Jerusalem:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus longs to shepherd his flock. He says: "Come to me all who are weary and heavily burdened and I will give you rest." Don't be slow to come to Him. He invites us to delight in him and to rest in him, and to drink deeply from the well of salvation.

John

# Friday 1st May - Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;  
2 for he founded it on the seas  
and established it on the waters.  
3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?  
Who may stand in his holy place?  
4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not trust in an idol  
or swear by a false god.  
5 They will receive blessing from the Lord  
and vindication from God their Saviour.  
6 Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek your face, God of Jacob.  
7 Lift up your heads, you gates;  
be lifted up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.  
8 Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty,  
the Lord mighty in battle.  
9 Lift up your heads, you gates;  
lift them up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.  
10 Who is he, this King of glory?  
The Lord Almighty—  
he is the King of glory.

For many this is a time of loneliness, so where are we looking for our comfort? Do we realise our need of God? Do we realise that our creator knows best what we need? What has gone wrong with this world? It's the broken relationship with its' creator.

In this Psalm, David starts by declaring the LORD to be owner and ruler of this creation and everything in it. The rest of the Psalm shows that God desires to be in a right relationship with the people He created. But we see that it is not our natural tendency to seek God. Psalm 24 shows that we need to be told. So how can we be in a right relationship with our creator?

This Psalm is written by King David, who as a young man, slew the giant Goliath, winning the battle on behalf of the Israelites. In many ways, David was a shadow of the One to come. As strong as King David was, our Lord is infinitely stronger. How can we stand before our LORD?

Jesus, the only one who can win the battle and ascend does this on our behalf, and in doing so, allows the Spirit of God to rule in our lives. As lonely as this world can be at times, take heart, our creator desires for and has made way for us to be reconciled to Him.

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle." Praise God!

*Lord God, you are the King of glory. You are almighty. You have defeated sin and Satan and death for me. Help me to praise you, trust you and seek you always.*

Daniel