



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 65-69

Monday 29th June - Psalm 65

Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;
to you our vows will be fulfilled.
2 You who answer prayer,
to you all people will come.
3 When we were overwhelmed by sins,
you forgave our transgressions.
4 Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts!
We are filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.
5 You answer us with awesome and righteous
deeds,
God our Saviour,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,
6 who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,
7 who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.

8 The whole earth is filled with awe at your
wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
9 You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.
10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
11 You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.
12 The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
13 The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

One of the common problems in my heart and life is my selfishness and self-focus. I can find it hard to forget myself. I'm like a five year old playing soccer, fixated on the ball and unable to lift my eyes and see the big picture.

But praise, by nature, is when I take my eyes off myself. I forget myself as I fix my eyes on God and declare his glory and greatness. And in remembering his greatness, I gain true perspective. I'm humbled because I'm reminded that I'm nothing compared to Him. I'm humbled because He is so great actually cares for me.

This Psalm gives us, the people of God, so many reasons to praise God. I've listed a few below. Let me encourage you to pray this Psalm. Let it help you fix your eyes on God and forget yourself. Meditate on each reason for praising God and let your praise expand as you reflect on what each means and how you've experienced each in your own life.

Reasons to praise God:

He answers prayer	He forgives	He brings people near
He creates	He sustains	He fills the earth with awe
He gives hope	He does awesome and righteous deeds	He provides in abundance

The Psalm begins and ends with the inevitability of God being praised. It awaits Him in Zion (v. 1) and the Psalms ends with creation itself praising Him. May we join the chorus of creation in shouting for joy and singing our praise to God. And may we discover that as we take our eyes off of ourselves and praise God that we find deep joy in forgetting ourselves. Our God doesn't demand our praise because He needs it. He commands it because He loves us and knows that only He can give us deep and satisfying joy.

James

Tuesday 30th June - Psalm 66

Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
2 Sing the glory of his name;
 make his praise glorious.
3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
 So great is your power
 that your enemies cringe before you.
4 All the earth bows down to you;
 they sing praise to you,
 they sing the praises of your name."
5 Come and see what God has done,
 his awesome deeds for mankind!
6 He turned the sea into dry land,
 they passed through the waters on foot—
 come, let us rejoice in him.
7 He rules forever by his power,
 his eyes watch the nations—
 let not the rebellious rise up against him.
8 Praise our God, all peoples,
 let the sound of his praise be heard;
9 he has preserved our lives
 and kept our feet from slipping.
10 For you, God, tested us;
 you refined us like silver.

11 You brought us into prison
 and laid burdens on our backs.
12 You let people ride over our heads;
 we went through fire and water,
 but you brought us to a place of abundance.
13 I will come to your temple with burnt offerings
 and fulfil my vows to you—
14 vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke
 when I was in trouble.
15 I will sacrifice fat animals to you
 and an offering of rams;
 I will offer bulls and goats.
16 Come and hear, all you who fear God;
 let me tell you what he has done for me.
17 I cried out to him with my mouth;
 his praise was on my tongue.
18 If I had cherished sin in my heart,
 the Lord would not have listened;
19 but God has surely listened
 and has heard my prayer.
20 Praise be to God,
 who has not rejected my prayer
 or withheld his love from me!

What is praise? We often use the word to talk about singing and mayonnaise. But praise is more important than that. It's a way of speaking about realities and truths that are central to God's purpose for us.

The Psalm begins with a call for the whole earth to praise God. To say "praise God" is not actually to praise God but to call people to praise God. Verse 3 gives us a really simple definition of praise – say to God how awesome are your deeds. Praise is the declaration of how great one is by telling what they have done. To magnify, brag, and advertise their qualities. The essence of praise is proclamation and acknowledgement. It means something is communicated.

The person being praised affects how we praise them. If I was wanting to praise the other pastors for something like their fashion sense, etc, I'm only mildly enthusiastic. But if I were to praise my son and daughter there is much more emotional weight behind my praise, and we see in the Psalms way more emotional weight behind what is said about God. It's the kind of thing you "shout", with joy, and "sing" about, because the one you are singing or shouting about is so worthy of praise.

This Psalm moves from the corporate to the personal. It begins with what the whole earth is called to do, to see in particular what God has done for his people Israel, but that God also rules over me and my rebellion. Israel's salvation becomes the world's salvation ultimately through the coming of Jesus. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Father God, we thank you that you are great! We are in awe of your love, goodness and power. We praise you for your work of love and power in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. God, we want to bring you glory as we tell you, each other, and the world of how great Jesus is. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 1st July - Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
2 so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
3 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
5 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
6 The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.
7 May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

As a young child, my family would dress us up in our Sunday best (read lots of brown polyester) and we would head off to the local Presbyterian church. Mr Fulton would be dressed in flowing robes and at the end of the service, we would stand and receive a benediction from him. This would be a blessing seen to come from God that would be a benefit to us the receivers. It's something that has gone a bit out of fashion but there is something in it that is helpful. Benedictions can remind us that all we have is from God and that we are desperate for Him. Like Jacob after wrestling, with God, we seek a blessing for our life.

This psalm deals with a benediction in a different way. See the difference; we are invited to join in as God's people to give a benediction to God. See all the may's in the psalm. May's are the calls for benediction, that God would be blessed. So that nothing would stand in the way of His glory and power being known in the world. The psalmist does this so that we as His people would be blessed. We would be His agents of blessing into a world that doesn't know Him. The world that hasn't met Him like the people of Israel have met Him. See in verse 4, 5 and 7.

Our mission statement shares something of this psalm in its DNA. We exist to glorify God (benediction) by treasuring and following Jesus, loving all and sharing his Gospel everywhere.

Why? So that God's blessing might be on us as His people and that the ends of the earth might fear the Lord.

Consider today how you might want to bless and thank God for all that He is and is doing and what you would want Him to do in your life so that this psalm and our mission statement might ring true in your life.

Phil

Thursday 2nd July - Psalm 68

May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;
may his foes flee before him.

2 May you blow them away like smoke—
as wax melts before the fire,
may the wicked perish before God.

3 But may the righteous be glad
and rejoice before God;
may they be happy and joyful.

4 Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds;
rejoice before him—his name is the Lord.

5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

7 When you, God, went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,

8 the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.

9 You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary inheritance.

10 Your people settled in it,
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the
poor.

11 The Lord announces the word,
and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng:

12 "Kings and armies flee in haste;
the women at home divide the plunder.

13 Even while you sleep among the sheep pens,
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,
its feathers with shining gold."

14 When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land,
it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon.

15 Mount Bashan, majestic mountain,
Mount Bashan, rugged mountain,

16 why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain,
at the mountain where God chooses to reign,
where the Lord himself will dwell forever?

17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands
and thousands of thousands;
the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.

18 When you ascended on high,
you took many captives;
you received gifts from people,

even from the rebellious—

that you, Lord God, might dwell there.

19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour,
who daily bears our burdens.

20 Our God is a God who saves;
from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.

21 Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.

22 The Lord says, "I will bring them from Bashan;
I will bring them from the depths of the sea,

23 that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes,
while the tongues of your dogs have their share."

24 Your procession, God, has come into view,
the procession of my God and King into the
sanctuary.

25 In front are the singers, after them the musicians;
with them are the young women playing the timbrels.

26 Praise God in the great congregation;
praise the Lord in the assembly of Israel.

27 There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them,
there the great throng of Judah's princes,
and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.

28 Summon your power, God;
show us your strength, our God, as you have
done before.

29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem
kings will bring you gifts.

30 Rebuke the beast among the reeds,
the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations.

Humbled, may the beast bring bars of silver.
Scatter the nations who delight in war.

31 Envoys will come from Egypt;
Cush will submit herself to God.

32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth,
sing praise to the Lord,

33 to him who rides across the highest heavens, the
ancient heavens,
who thunders with mighty voice.

34 Proclaim the power of God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
whose power is in the heavens.

35 You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his
people.

Praise be to God!

Psalm 68 is not easy to understand. In fact, many describe this as the most difficult psalm in the Psalter. Yet the words of this psalm had a profound impact on Thanee when we were living in Thailand. In evening devotions one night I read these words: *"Our God, from your sacred home you take care of orphans and protect widows. You find families for those who are lonely"* (v. 5-6 CEV). The response was immediate: *"Daddy, does it say that? Can you show me where it says that?"*

The psalm strikes a chord in our hearts when we realise what it reveals about the character of God. The setting is uncertain, but it was probably written when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, and placed in the city of David, in the tabernacle which he had established for worship.

There are four parts to the psalm:

1. God's goodness, greatness and glory v.1-6.
2. God's deliverance: The story of the exodus v.7-18.
3. God's presence: The Ark of the Covenant v.19-31.
4. God's majesty and power v. 32-35.

This psalm celebrates the greatness of God. God is to be praised in his awesome deeds of power, and in his supreme acts of tender, loving care.

Father God, we marvel at your greatness in administrating the universe, and for your proficiency in caring for people on the bottom rung of life. Thank you for making a way, through your Son, for repentant sinners to experience mercy and forgiveness.

John

Friday 3rd July - Psalm 69

Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
2 I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.
I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.
3 I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes fail,
looking for my God.
4 Those who hate me without reason
outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause,
those who seek to destroy me.
I am forced to restore
what I did not steal.
5 You, God, know my folly;
my guilt is not hidden from you.
6 Lord, the Lord Almighty,
may those who hope in you
not be disgraced because of me;
God of Israel,
may those who seek you
not be put to shame because of me.
7 For I endure scorn for your sake,
and shame covers my face.
8 I am a foreigner to my own family,
a stranger to my own mother's children;
9 for zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
10 When I weep and fast,
I must endure scorn;
11 when I put on sackcloth,
people make sport of me.
12 Those who sit at the gate mock me,
and I am the song of the drunkards.
13 But I pray to you, Lord,
in the time of your favour;
in your great love, O God,
answer me with your sure salvation.
14 Rescue me from the mire,
do not let me sink;
deliver me from those who hate me,
from the deep waters.
15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me
or the depths swallow me up
or the pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, Lord, out of the goodness of your love;
in your great mercy turn to me.
17 Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.
18 Come near and rescue me;
deliver me because of my foes.
19 You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.
20 Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.
21 They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.
22 May the table set before them become a snare;
may it become retribution and a trap.
23 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever.
24 Pour out your wrath on them;
let your fierce anger overtake them.
25 May their place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in their tents.
26 For they persecute those you wound
and talk about the pain of those you hurt.
27 Charge them with crime upon crime;
do not let them share in your salvation.
28 May they be blotted out of the book of life
and not be listed with the righteous.
29 But as for me, afflicted and in pain—
may your salvation, God, protect me.
30 I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.
31 This will please the Lord more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.
32 The poor will see and be glad—
you who seek God, may your hearts live!
33 The Lord hears the needy
and does not despise his captive people.
34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,
35 for God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah.
Then people will settle there and possess it;
36 the children of his servants will inherit it,
and those who love his name will dwell there.

David is a man who thinks deeply and wrestles well with both the realities of life. He wasn't perfect, he acknowledges as much in this Psalm (v. 5) but the fact that these thoughts made it to scripture tell us that there is something that God wants us to see in David's thoughts. So what stands out to me?

Firstly the bad:

David is sinking in life (v. 1); he is outnumbered by those who hate him (v. 4), he is unjustly treated (v. 4b) and he is a stranger in his own family (v. 8).

Seeking the help of God from his enemies is common in the Psalms that David wrote, but there is something intensely personal in the rejection he is feeling from his family. David says, that for God's sake he endures scorn and shame and rejection from those who should love him most (v. 7-9). Many of us know just how personal that rejection is, when the people we love most shun us because of the saviour we follow, the saviour that could be theirs too.

Secondly David is concerned for God's glory:

David is concerned that his own sin would not be a blight on God's character (v. 6), that his life would be one consumed by his zeal to see God's kingdom come (v. 9). David seeks to praise God in song and thanksgiving and he knows that a broken and contrite heart is greater than a transactional sacrifice because even the poor (who perhaps cannot afford the bull) will be glad when they seek God and find him in their sincerity (v. 31-32).

David's God is a praiseworthy God (v. 34).

Finally he is sure of a greater hope:

Throughout this psalm David does not lose sight of a greater hope that is found in God alone. Despite his troubles, David's eyes and throat are worn out calling and looking for the God who can save him (v. 3). In times of trouble, no one looks for a saviour who cannot rescue. David knows that God's salvation is sure (v. 13), is near (v. 18) and that his love is good (v. 16). David leaves justice and punishment up to a just God (v. 22-28). David looks forward to a time when God's people will live in the victory that he has won for them (v. 35-36).

Father God, thank you for taking the words and fears of a man and recording them in scripture for our benefit. Thank you for showing us that we are not alone and that our faith is not futile because you are a wonderful and powerful saviour. Forgive us for when we have caused those who trust in you to stumble and Lord God cause our loved ones who don't know you yet to follow you. Help us to risk those relationships now so that they might celebrate together with us in heaven forever. Amen.

Matt