



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 94-98

Monday 10th August - Psalm 94

The Lord is a God who avenges.

 O God who avenges, shine forth.

2 Rise up, Judge of the earth;

 pay back to the proud what they deserve.

3 How long, Lord, will the wicked,

 how long will the wicked be jubilant?

4 They pour out arrogant words;

 all the evildoers are full of boasting.

5 They crush your people, Lord;

 they oppress your inheritance.

6 They slay the widow and the foreigner;

 they murder the fatherless.

7 They say, "The Lord does not see;

 the God of Jacob takes no notice."

8 Take notice, you senseless ones among the people;

 you fools, when will you become wise?

9 Does he who fashioned the ear not hear?

 Does he who formed the eye not see?

10 Does he who disciplines nations not punish?

 Does he who teaches mankind lack knowledge?

11 The Lord knows all human plans;

 he knows that they are futile.

12 Blessed is the one you discipline, Lord,

 the one you teach from your law;

13 you grant them relief from days of trouble,
 till a pit is dug for the wicked.

14 For the Lord will not reject his people;

 he will never forsake his inheritance.

15 Judgment will again be founded on
righteousness,

 and all the upright in heart will follow it.

16 Who will rise up for me against the wicked?

 Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?

17 Unless the Lord had given me help,

 I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.

18 When I said, "My foot is slipping,"

 your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.

19 When anxiety was great within me,

 your consolation brought me joy.

20 Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—

 a throne that brings on misery by its decrees?

21 The wicked band together against the righteous

 and condemn the innocent to death.

22 But the Lord has become my fortress,

 and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.

23 He will repay them for their sins

 and destroy them for their wickedness;

 the Lord our God will destroy them.

When I'm wronged, my heart often jumps to feelings of revenge. It could be something small or large, but there is something in my heart (and perhaps yours?) that is tempted to repay others for their evil.

Some in our world hate the idea that God would be an avenger (v. 1). They consider it crude and violent; they imagine it would make God's people violent too.

But this truth that God avenges, that he will call all to account and repay all is such a glorious and wonderful truth. It means that evil won't prevail. It is proof that God is holy and righteous. No one will get away with it. It also means that while we can seek justice in our day, we don't need to seek revenge; God will make everything right.

The Psalmist also notes the injustices and trials of our day are used by the Lord to discipline us (v. 12). Don't despise his discipline; see it as evidence of his 'unfailing love' (v. 18). So don't waste those moments. Press in closer and see that being disciplined actually leads to relief (v. 13) and steadfastness (v. 14).

This Psalm promises justice but also acknowledges the reality that life is hard as we wait. The Psalmist felt like he was about to fall (v. 18). He felt great anxiety (v. 19). But God's love and consolation supported him and brought him joy. What comfort as we feel weak, without hope or anxious and overwhelmed.

So friends, rest in God. Let Him be your fortress, your rock, your refuge. Don't seek revenge, for God will one day make everything right. Remember that you deserve His wrath, but that Christ bore it in full for you. Let that humble you and hold you as we wait for Christ's return.

James

Tuesday 11th August - Psalm 95

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

3 For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.

5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

7 for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,

the flock under his care.

Today, if only you would hear his voice,

8 "Do not harden your hearts as you did at
Meribah,

as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,
9 where your ancestors tested me;

they tried me, though they had seen what I did.

10 For forty years I was angry with that generation;

I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go
astray,

and they have not known my ways.'

11 So I declared on oath in my anger,

'They shall never enter my rest.'"

Psalm 95 is one of my favourite psalms. Hear the call to worship in this psalm.

Even though it is not possible for us to meet together at church at the moment, we can still meet in small groups, we can still kneel down beside our bed.

Six psalms, 95 to 100 are grouped together to form a praise liturgy for use in temple worship. Psalm 95 answers the question, 'Who is the LORD?'

He is the mighty Saviour who is worthy of all praise v.1-2.

He is great and awesome God v.3.

He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe v.4-5.

(We need to get down on our knees v.6).

He is the Shepherd who cares passionately about his people v.7.

However it is imperative that obedience be joined to worship. People may claim to belong to God, but their hearts reveal where their real allegiance lies. If people are not willing to give God his rightful place in their lives then it is impossible for them to experience the kind of blessing this psalm is talking about.

Israel's experiences in the wilderness clearly show that we can be so complaining, disobedient and stubborn that we can effectively miss out on the wonderful things God has called us to enjoy.

"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? " Hebrews 12:25.

Father God, unblock our ears to the clear rebuke in this psalm. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for those blessings and benefits that flow to us and through us, and strengthen and bless our relationship with God.

John

Wednesday 12th August - Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.

4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

6 Splendour and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.

9 Worship the Lord in the splendour of
his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be
moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.

11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.

12 Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in
them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

13 Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he
comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Poetry and songs often come after being inspired by an event. The typical love song or break-up song are often heard during love song dedications on the radio. Midnight Oil songs are often about injustice. Paul Kelly's come in response to loss in life. In these songs, we are invited to go on a journey with them. As we go, songs have a way of changing us.

In the book of Psalms, these ancient words have a way of bringing us to the very presence of God.

So it is with Psalm 96. In this psalm, we have a single focus. Can you see what this focus is?

Where does the Psalmist want us to go with them?

Songs also call us to be changed by the journey. Where are we being taken?

What change should we expect in this psalm?

Phil

Thursday 13th August - Psalm 97

The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad;
let the distant shores rejoice.

2 Clouds and thick darkness surround him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of
his throne.

3 Fire goes before him
and consumes his foes on every side.

4 His lightning lights up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

5 The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
before the Lord of all the earth.

6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
and all peoples see his glory.

7 All who worship images are put to shame,
those who boast in idols—
worship him, all you gods!

8 Zion hears and rejoices
and the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments, Lord.

9 For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the
earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

10 Let those who love the Lord hate evil,
for he guards the lives of his faithful ones
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

11 Light shines on the righteous
and joy on the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous,
and praise his holy name.

Psalm 97 continues the theme of the previous two psalms that God is the Lord of all the earth. The six psalms, 95 to 100 are grouped together to form a united liturgy for use in temple worship.

People everywhere are invited to acknowledge and praise the LORD: let the earth be glad, let the distant shores rejoice v.1.

Holiness, righteousness, and justice are the foundation of God's reign v.2,6.

His power and majesty surpasses that of any other spiritual power or authority v.3-7,9.

His own people already recognise him as the Lord. The villages of Judah rejoice when they hear his judgements. They rejoice and are glad because God is both the comfort and protector of his people v.8.

Can you hear the call to righteousness in v.10-12. People worldwide are commanded to love the LORD, to hate evil, and to pursue holy lives.

"But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness." 1 Timothy 6:11.

Father God, thank you for washing us clean from our sins by the perfect, once and for all, work of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, upon the cross. Minister your healing to the deepest, most wounded parts of our hearts, and give us the grace to walk with you in newness of life.

John

Friday 14th August - Psalm 98

Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvellous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.

2 The Lord has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

3 He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

4 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;

5 make music to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,
6 with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

7 Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.

8 Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;

9 let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

When we read the early chapters of Genesis and then look out the window, we see exactly what we'd expect to see. A creation of wonderful design and full of beauty. But mixed in with this we also see evidence of the fall (Gen 3). Paul refers to this as a creation that is groaning and subject to frustration (Rom 8:20). We especially see it in our own lives and in our broken relationship with our creator... And yet we have reason to "sing to the LORD"! Why? Despite who we are and what the world has become He is a God who is in the business of salvation and restoration.

Col 1:19-20 "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross."

How wonderful to know that through Christ our relationship with God is restored and that we have a new creation to look forward to. No wonder the "rivers clap their hands and the mountains sing together for joy."

But how do we cope in the meantime in this fallen world? I heard the story of a woman who got news that her husband was returning from war. All of a sudden, the regular frustrations of daily life didn't seem to matter so much. The joy of her husband returning seemed to override everything else. Life can be hard but praise God, our Saviour is returning as a groom to collect His bride.

Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth.

Danny