



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 109-113

Monday 31st August - Psalm 109

My God, whom I praise,
do not remain silent,
2 for people who are wicked and deceitful
have opened their mouths against me;
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.
3 With words of hatred they surround me;
they attack me without cause.
4 In return for my friendship they accuse me,
but I am a man of prayer.
5 They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my friendship.
6 Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;
let an accuser stand at his right hand.
7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.
8 May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.
9 May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.
10 May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven from their ruined homes.
11 May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.
12 May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.
13 May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.
14 May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before
the Lord;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
15 May their sins always remain before the Lord,
that he may blot out their name from the earth.
16 For he never thought of doing a kindness,
but hounded to death the poor
and the needy and the brokenhearted.

17 He loved to pronounce a curse—
may it come back on him.
He found no pleasure in blessing—
may it be far from him.
18 He wore cursing as his garment;
it entered into his body like water,
into his bones like oil.
19 May it be like a cloak wrapped about him,
like a belt tied forever around him.
20 May this be the Lord's payment to my accusers,
to those who speak evil of me.
21 But you, Sovereign Lord,
help me for your name's sake;
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.
22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is wounded within me.
23 I fade away like an evening shadow;
I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees give way from fasting;
my body is thin and gaunt.
25 I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.
26 Help me, Lord my God;
save me according to your unfailing love.
27 Let them know that it is your hand,
that you, Lord, have done it.
28 While they curse, may you bless;
may those who attack me be put to shame,
but may your servant rejoice.
29 May my accusers be clothed with disgrace
and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.
30 With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord;
in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him.
31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save their lives from those who would condemn them.

Psalms like this make us uncomfortable, don't they? We ask: can we pray things like this? Is it wrong? Who is speaking this Psalm? Should this even be in the Bible?! One commentator argues that verse 6-19 are the words of the Psalmist's accusers. He says that their words are a very clear picture of taking the Lord's name in vain as they call on Yahweh to do awful things. I think it makes great sense of the tone of the Psalm. The first 5 verses and the last 12 verses are marked by lament and begging for help, whilst those middle verses are acidic and marked by scorn.

And so here are two things to consider in reflection. Firstly, we can call out to God about injustice, even injustice that makes us rage! We can be honest, because He knows. We can call on His help and beg for vindication. We can even praise Him because we know that no matter what lies people say about us, God will one day bring justice.

But the second thing to consider is this: are we like the scornful person of v. 6-19? Do we in our hearts heap shame and abuse on others? Do we speak of God's judgment of others whilst ignoring the sin in our own lives? Do we not realise that the judgment we use will be used of us? It's sobering to consider this. Romans 2 warns of us hypocrisy and the judgment of God that comes to those who condemn others and ignore their own sin.

Ask God to reveal your heart and expose your hypocrisy. Be humbled and repent. And praise Him for the glorious truth that despite our circumstances and sinfulness, His love is unfailing.

James

Tuesday 1st September - Psalm 110

The Lord says to my lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet."

2 The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from
Zion, saying,

"Rule in the midst of your enemies!"

3 Your troops will be willing
on your day of battle.

Arrayed in holy splendour,
your young men will come to you
like dew from the morning's womb.

4 The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:

"You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

6 He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

7 He will drink from a brook along the way,
and so he will lift his head high.

This passage has received a special emphasis through the history of God's people and is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passage. The whole New Testament could actually be summarised as Psalm 110 coming true!!! It is applied to Jesus in the New Testament by both the Apostles and Christ himself and is pointing to the day when the ruler on David's throne enjoys total rest from his enemies.

However, as David Mathis writes, before this Psalm fed the faith of God's people, it nourished the faith of Jesus himself on the way to the cross. Notice how each sentence would have been a strengthening promise for Jesus as he prepared to endure the suffering and shame of the cross on our behalf:

Verse 1: I will defeat your enemies and put them under your feet, for your everlasting joy.

Verse 3: I will work in your people's hearts to follow you gladly.

Verse 3: I will refresh you continually.

Verse 4: I am God and will not change my mind.

Verse 5: I will defeat leaders who oppose you.

Verse 6: I will repay unbelievers who threaten you.

Verse 6: I will destroy those who mean harm against you.

Verse 7: I will give you all you need to endure.

Verse 7: I will preserve you in what is coming upon you.

The cross is the most amazing expression of God's love in all of history. This Psalm helps us see that Jesus was not only destined to be at his Father's right hand, but in his suffering on the cross, Jesus himself acts as his Father's right hand, the one through whom he will ultimately remake the world.

Lord Jesus we praise you that you rule over everything and yet are concerned with us and aware of our every need, hope, and fear. We thank you that you have shared our human condition and that you are able to understand and empathise with our struggles and enable us to stand in greater godliness and truth. We ask that you guide and comfort us today, we pray in your name. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 2nd September - Psalm 111

Praise the Lord.

- I will extol the Lord with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
- 2 Great are the works of the Lord;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.
- 3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.
- 4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and compassionate.
- 5 He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.
- 6 He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.
- 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.
- 8 They are established for ever and ever,
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.
- 9 He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—
holy and awesome is his name.
- 10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Do you remember the old Guinness beer ad? Its catch phrase was 'I love to watch'. Today, the psalmist is calling on God's people to do the same. It often seems impossible, when our days are pressed full of urgent things, to take time to reflect.

But see where the psalmist begins and where he ends us. Together, he wants us to understand how good and great God is to His people. So think about how you might share today your reflections on this psalm and where you have seen the wonders of God.

So let's stop and see and share the wonders of what God has done and is doing in our lives.

(Phillip Doddridge, 1702 – 51)

Fountain of good, to own Thy Love
Our thankful hearts incline
What can we render, Lord, to Thee
When all the worlds are Thine

Phil

Thursday 3rd September - Psalm 112

Praise the Lord.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord,
who find great delight in his commands.

2 Their children will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.

4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
for those who are gracious and compassionate
and righteous.

5 Good will come to those who are generous and
lend freely,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
they will be remembered forever.

7 They will have no fear of bad news;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

8 Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear;
in the end they will look in triumph on their
foes.

9 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn will be lifted high in honour.

10 The wicked will see and be vexed,
they will gnash their teeth and waste away;
the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

There is connection between this psalm and Psalm 111. They are both mnemonics, equal in length and similar in form. Whereas the former psalm contemplates the greatness of God, this psalm goes to the next level and invites people to respond to God's greatness.

Read verse 1 again and this time listen to the strong invitation the psalmist is giving at the start of the psalm. When he says "Praise the Lord", he is inviting people to join him in worshipping God. When he says, "Blessed are those who fear the Lord", he is inviting people to experience the joy of knowing God. When he says, "Blessed are those...who find great delight in his commands," he is telling people what they are to delight in.

It's true that God loves to bless his children and grant gifts to them. Some people focus on the "wealth and riches" in v.3, but the force of this psalm is on a comprehensive level of wellbeing greater than anything we can humanly contemplate.

Check out the rich blessings outlined in this psalm:

To delight in God, and in his Word v.1.

To have a rich posterity v.2.

To abide in righteousness v.3.

To be a shining light for those who do right v.4.

To be generous v.5.

To be firmly established v.6, 8.

To be confident and secure v.7.

To be strong v.9.

This psalm exposes the inherent weakness of those who propound the prosperity gospel: not that they hope for too much, but that they hope for too little!

Listen to these words:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:3.

Almighty God, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you that, through him, you bless us and gift us in wonderful ways; in ways that we cannot even begin to comprehend. Forgive us for all those times when we have limited the scope of your blessing, and subsequently failed to fathom the enormity of your surpassing greatness.

John

Friday 4th September - Psalm 113

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, you his servants;
praise the name of the Lord.

2 Let the name of the Lord be praised,
both now and forevermore.

3 From the rising of the sun to the place where it
sets,

the name of the Lord is to be praised.

4 The Lord is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like the Lord our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,

6 who stoops down to look

on the heavens and the earth?

7 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

8 he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.

9 He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.

Praise the Lord.

The idea of servitude has, for many, a poor connotation of involuntary or forced service. So, when Psalm 113 opens with the line of 'Praise the LORD, you his servants' it requires us to consider two questions:

1. What sort of servants are the intended readers (and now us) to be; and
2. What sort of LORD should these servants submit to?

I think the answer to the second question informs the first.

From this Psalm we can see that this LORD is:

- Named (v. 1) and therefore knowable.
- Infinite through time (v. 2)
- Everywhere (v. 3)
- Powerful beyond the nations (v. 4)
- Enthroned and ruling (v. 5).

Seemingly a LORD like this might be unapproachable?

But v. 6 tells us that this LORD 'stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth'. He is all those big things and yet he stoops down to meet us. He makes himself personal.

V. 7-9 reminds us that this personal LORD breaths life into his people, elevates them to the king's table to eat with the princes, makes for them a home and creates for them a family.

In the first page of the New Testament, this God come near is introduced to us in the LORD Jesus. He is Immanuel – God with us. This LORD Jesus stooped low, Philippians 2 tells us, to become a servant and to serve us through his death on the cross, taking our sin and wearing it himself for our sake and God's glory. God does not owe any of us anything and yet he sent his son to deal with our sin once and for all, to breath life into our dead hearts, to elevate us to the Kings table and to make us part of his very own family.

The immeasurable LORD becomes a servant to make sons and daughters of his enemies.

So back to the first question. Perhaps servitude to a LORD like Jesus looks a lot like a life of thankfulness and joy and conforming our will to his knowing that in our submission – we are simply serving the servant LORD who stooped low.

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