



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 114-118

Monday 7th September - Psalm 114

When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange
language,
2 Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
3 The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.
5 What ails you, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
6 O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
8 who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Psalm 113-118 are known as the 'hallel' (meaning 'praise') Psalms and they were sang at Jewish holidays that involved celebration, such as the Passover. Psalm 114 celebrates the salvation that God gave to Israel in the Exodus. It reminds them that it was God who saved them. It was God's presence with them caused the sea to flee and the Jordan river to turn back as they entered into the promised land.

The final verses not only show the power of God's presence with His people, but also the life that He gives. He makes water come from the rock!

In the New Testament, specifically in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul writes that the rock that brought forth water was Christ. He's embracing this picture of life giving water as being fulfilled in Christ. The Exodus is meant to be a picture of the better Exodus to come. Just as Yahweh was present with his people, so too Christ is Immanuel, God with us. As Yahweh rescued his people from Egypt, so has Christ rescued us from slavery to sin! Christ brings life out death.

It's so easy to think that we are alone, that God is not with us. Yet this Psalm was meant to remind Israel that the God who saved them continued to dwell with them. The same is true of us.

I can't help but think that we need to know more fully and deeply the promise of Jesus from Matthew 28 that 'surely I am with you always, until the very end of the age'. I can't help but think if I really believed and trusted that God was with me, I'd be slower to sin and quicker to choose righteousness. I'd be less timid in sharing my faith and more excited about what God, who is with me, is able to do through my weakness.

May you know and delight in the saving power and presence of God. Despite all that comes, we can be certain, because of Christ, that God is with us.

Heavenly Father, help me to know and experience your presence in my life. Help me to look back at your saving work to have assurance that you continue to be with me. May your presence empower me to be a faithful witness for Christ. Amen

James

Tuesday 8th September - Psalm 115

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name
give glory,

for the sake of your steadfast love and your
faithfulness!

2 Why should the nations say,

“Where is their God?”

3 Our God is in the heavens;

he does all that he pleases.

4 Their idols are silver and gold,

the work of human hands.

5 They have mouths, but do not speak;

eyes, but do not see.

6 They have ears, but do not hear;

noses, but do not smell.

7 They have hands, but do not feel;

feet, but do not walk;

and they do not make a sound in their throat.

8 Those who make them become like them;

so do all who trust in them.

9 O Israel, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and their shield.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and their shield.

11 You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and their shield.

12 The Lord has remembered us; he will bless us;

he will bless the house of Israel;

he will bless the house of Aaron;

13 he will bless those who fear the Lord,

both the small and the great.

14 May the Lord give you increase,

you and your children!

15 May you be blessed by the Lord,

who made heaven and earth!

16 The heavens are the Lord's heavens,

but the earth he has given to the children of
man.

17 The dead do not praise the Lord,

nor do any who go down into silence.

18 But we will bless the Lord

from this time forth and forevermore.

Praise the Lord!

The request for help in this psalm comes from a desire to see God glorified. The cause of their suffering is not important, but it is concerned with the glory and honour of God among the nations rather than themselves (v1). However, so often we make our lives about something other than God's glory, and anything more important to me than God is an idol.

This psalm contrasts our God and 'their idols' (v3-4). God has complete freedom and creative power, but idols are impotent and made by humans. Idols are unable to give us the guidance and love that we need (v5-7). Even though idols are powerless, they have a negative effect on us since we become like what we behold (v8). For example, the person who seeks power is controlled by power.

As Tim Keller has said, "The only way to free ourselves from the destructive influence of idols is to turn back to the true one, the living God...he's the only one who if you find him, can truly fulfil you, and if you fail him, can truly forgive you."

In praying for God's name to be hallowed, we are praying that we would be making God's priorities our priorities. As we reflect on the bible and the Spirit of God works in our hearts our affections for our Holy God grow and prayer begins to change us in the best of ways.

Father, we thank you that Jesus gives us the meaning and assurance we need and often look for in other things. Help us to rejoice in you more than we often do and help us learn to pray in response to what you are saying to us in the bible. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 9th September - Psalm 116

- 1 I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- 2 Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- 3 The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- 4 Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"
- 5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
- 6 The Lord preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- 7 Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.
- 8 For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;
- 9 I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.
- 10 I believed, even when I spoke:
"I am greatly afflicted";
- 11 I said in my alarm,
"All mankind are liars."
- 12 What shall I render to the Lord
for all his benefits to me?
- 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
- 14 I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
- 15 Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.
- 16 O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
You have loosed my bonds.
- 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.
- 18 I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
19 in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord!

Ron Savage was part of our Westside/CCBC family, a dear old saint. He had a quiet assurance about his faith in Jesus all the time that I knew him. This was often demonstrated in acts of service towards his brothers and sisters in Christ. Notes of encouragement, giving money to be passed on to others in need. As he became frail and his ability to come to church was hampered. Doubts and fears entered into his heart and mind about his standing with God. These doubts and fears would often leave Ron feeling overwhelmed.

Ron, in response, went to the only place he knew. He went to prayer at the end of his bed to His king and Saviour Jesus. He did this most days.

In hospital when his life was fleeting away. He asked me if he would go to heaven. Ron do you know and love Jesus? Oh I do.

Do you believe He died for your sins and rose again so you could have a new life?

"Oh I do, I can't believe God has been so good to me all of my life"

I wonder when our time comes if we will be in the same place.

Phil

Thursday 10th September - Psalm 117

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

2 For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 117 is the shortest psalm in the Psalter.

Even though it is short, it is every bit a complete hymn of praise with an introduction, strong theme, and conclusion.

You may be tempted to think of this psalm as somewhat lacking in substance. But the apostle Paul thought so highly of these words that he used them to argue that God has a wonderful plan for the nations Romans 15:11.

This psalm sparks a flashback to Genesis:

'He took him (Abraham) outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be".

Genesis 15:5

God's plan of salvation is wonderful. It starts with one man. One man becomes one tribe. One family becomes one tribe. One tribe emerges into one nation. From this nation emerges the promised Messiah, and through Him the Good News of the Gospel goes out to the nations.

Revelation 7:9-10 sees the culmination of the psalmist's prayer:

'After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

God is worthy of worship and honour, and deserves the praise of the whole earth!

Father God, thank you for the achievement of the cross; for all Jesus accomplished by his living, dying, and rising. Thank you for making a way for us to be included into the family of God. So move our hearts that our one desire is to honour you by our lives. Amen.

John

Friday 11th September - Psalm 118

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!
2 Let Israel say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
3 Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
4 Let those who fear the Lord say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
5 Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me free.
6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
7 The Lord is on my side as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in man.
9 It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.
10 All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
11 They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
12 They surrounded me like bees;
they went out like a fire among thorns;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
13 I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the Lord helped me.
14 The Lord is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.
15 Glad songs of salvation
are in the tents of the righteous:
"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly,
16 the right hand of the Lord exalts,
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!"
17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
18 The Lord has disciplined me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.
19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
20 This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.
21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
23 This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save us, we pray, O Lord!
O Lord, we pray, give us success!
26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
27 The Lord is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!
28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.
29 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

You're not supposed to have favourite children, but I think it's ok to have a few favourite Psalms! For me, this has to be one that I treasure most. And it's not because it has so many famous lines that have been turned into song or quoted in the New Testament, though those things are amazing. For me, I love this Psalm because it reminds me that what is true for every believer in this song is only true because of Christ.

Psalm 113-118 are known as the 'hallel' (meaning 'praise') Psalms. And they were sung at Passover (and other holidays) every year. The gospels record that Jesus sang with his disciples before heading out to the garden of Gethsemane. Following Jewish custom, he likely sang this one.

And so I just want to encourage you to imagine this song on the lips of our Lord before he went to his death. In dying Christ demonstrated God's steadfast love. He was not helped so that we would be. He was surrounded but he didn't cut them off; he was cut off. He was not saved by God in order to save us. He died, he was given over to death so that we would live. He's the gate of righteousness and the stone the builders rejected. He was the festal sacrifice, the Passover lamb, bound and slaughtered. O, what love!

Let this Psalm stir and stoke and set aflame your affections for Christ. How he loves us! How he loves you! He sung of it before his death and his death sings of his love forever. Brothers and sisters, read and re-read over this Psalm and "give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever."

James