

Words of Life from the Psalms

Psalm 1 to Psalm 118 (July 31, 2020)

Rev. Lonnie Dufty

Meditation 1, Psalms 1 & 2: “The Lord Cherishes Those Who Walk In His Way.”

“For the LORD cherishes the way of the righteous.” Psalm 1:6a

“Happy are all those who take refuge in the Him.” Psalm 2:11b

The writer of Psalms 1 and 2 lived in a world much like our own. In many ways things were worse in his day than in our day. People were probably harsher, less gracious and more dangerous to be around than it is for most 21st century Americans. YET the writer of these Psalms did not despair or grow cynical about life. He saw a great power for good working in the world. That power is the LORD who sits in the heavens and His Christ who would be sent to proclaim a better way.

The Psalmist declared that no plot made against the LORD or His Christ would stand. He saw that God is on the side of the righteous and was in the business of blessing those who take refuge in Him. When we choose to live by faith and obedience to God’s will, we find our spiritual glass is neither half full nor half empty – it is full to overflowing. (Psalm 23:5)

Prayer: “Dear Lord, you know the world is not right. Sometimes my response to what goes on is not right either. I want to be better than the world – I want to live according to your ways. Please forgive me my failures and help me put them behind them and never repeat them again. Amen.”

Meditation 2, Psalms 3 & 4: “The Lord Has Set Apart the Godly for Himself.”

“O LORD, my foes are so many! Many are those who attack me; many say of me, ‘There is no deliverance for him through God.’” Psalm 3:1

“Know that the LORD singles out the faithful for Himself, the LORD hears when I call to Him...Safe and sound, I lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, keep me secure.” Psalm 4:4, 4:9

Opposition is as much a fact of life as is sickness and aging. Sometime the person who opposes us is actually doing what is best for us – might even be God! Other times a bad spirit has taken root in the other person and we can’t understand why the person is against us. There are also times when people we depend upon seem unhelpful; their lack of support feels like opposition. How should we respond to those situations? We could redouble our efforts to convince the other person to support our cause. We could become angry or discouraged. Or we could do as the Psalmist did, present our complaint to God and then trust him for whatever happens. Allow God to deliver us to the condition HE thinks we need in order to obtain future success. Then, having giving the matter over to God, we can go to our bed and enjoy peaceful sleep. That is the peace that surpasses all understanding!

Prayer: “Lord, grant me the faith to trust the future to you and in the night, grace to sleep in peace. Amen.”

Meditation 3, Psalms 5 & 6: “The LORD Shelters Those Who Abide in His Ways.”

“For you are not a god who abides wickedness; evil cannot abide with you.” Psalm 5:5a

“Oh Lord, turn! Rescue me! Deliver me as befits your faithfulness.” Psalm 6:5

Many Psalms tell of suffering at the hands of enemies. Sometimes the enemy is a malevolent gossip who twists facts around to make the Psalmist look bad. Other times the enemy is a mortal danger to life and security.

Whatever the danger, when the writers of the Psalms experienced worry, loss of sleep and terror, they took it to God. Speaking to God of their oppressors they wrote such things as “there is no sincerity on their lips; their heart is filled with malice; their throats are open graves; their tongues are slippery.” They also wrote of the unpleasant physical symptoms they experienced when oppressed: languishing spirits, bones shaking with terror, eyes wasted by vexation, feeling worn out, groaning and weeping.

When attacks come to us it is right and good to go to God with our feelings. Even anger is OK. Jesus’ disciples were angry at an entire town and asked Him to call down fire on those people! (Luke 9:55-56) However, that is not the way for those who have decided to follow Jesus. We should take the SUPER natural high road; pray for grace and spiritual strength to endure hardship and in God’s good time, receive His victory.

Prayer: “Loving heavenly Father, though oppressed and opposed by enemies, I seek protection in your arms and deliverance through your abundant grace. Amen.”

Meditation 4, Psalms 7 & 8: “The Lord is Worthy of Praise.”

“I will praise the Lord for His righteousness, and sing a hymn to the name of the LORD Most High.” “What is man that you have been mindful of him, mortal man that You have taken note of him..?” Psalms 7:18, 8:5

In Psalm 7 we find a deeply wounded and perplexed man. Feeling persecuted and plotted against without just cause, he contemplates that perhaps - by some accident - he may have done something to provoke his own sufferings. Finding no good reason for what is happening he cries out to God over the injustice of it all. Suffering for wrong doing he could accept - but punishment without having done any wrong? That was difficult to accept. He calls upon God for justice.

Having cried out to God, the Psalmist sets aside his lament and contemplates the nature of repentance and God’s righteousness judgment of all the peoples of the world. He confesses there is justice in the universe and notes that evil doers provoke their own destruction. He also observes that beyond every evil action of man there remains the promised remedy of a just and righteous God. Resting in renewed confidence, he writes into Psalm 8 great praise and exaltation over the magnificent things God has created.

Prayer: “Lord, sometimes it seems even my good deeds are punished. When things like that happen, cause me to trust in your justice and show me the way forward. When there is sin in me, help me give up that sin. When I am innocent of wrong doing, cause me to trust you anyway and rejoice in your glorious creation. Amen.”

Meditation 5, Psalms 9 & 10: “God Is Judge Of The Nations.”

“Rise, O LORD! Let not men have power; let the nations be judged in Your presence. Strike fear into them, O LORD; let the nations know they are only men.” “The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations will perish from His land... You will incline Your ear to champion the orphan and the downtrodden, that men who are of the earth tyrannize no more.” (Psalm 9:21, 10:16-18)

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) wrote in Democracy in America “in a democracy, people get the type of government they deserve.” He was probably thinking of ancient Athens, a beautiful and powerful state that failed miserably to exercise wisdom and justice towards other states, engaged in wars of aggression against neighbors and through incredible acts of hubris, lost an empire. We moderns view the fall of Athens as tragic but at the time her neighbors believed it was the justice of the gods.

The Psalmist agreed with his Greek contemporaries that collapse of a nation is the work of God. He was convinced that God will judge ALL nations. The LORD even judges his covenant people Israel. How many nations has he reduced to nothing? We do not know. What we do know from the Bible is the

LORD looks down from heaven, sees arrogance, injustice and idolatry practiced by nations and eventually reaches out his hand to chastise those nations. Rough justice perhaps, but justice executed as a work of grace. Grace to avenge the weak and defeated upon whom the nations of this world are built, grace to deliver the weak and downtrodden from the strong and mighty.

Prayer: "Lord, let not my confidence be fixed upon human government but rather let it be fixed upon the righteous kingdom you are seeking to establish in human hearts and in your soon return. Amen."

Meditation 6, Psalms 11 & 12: "The LORD is in His Holy Temple."

"The LORD is in his holy palace; the LORD – His throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His gaze searches mankind. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked... For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold His face." Psalm 11:4, 7

"The words of the LORD are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined seven-fold." Psalm 12:6

The Psalmist felt his was an age of unprecedented wickedness; that righteousness was in retreat and the wicked strutted about on every side (12:8). Are things any different in our day? I don't think so. While exercising in a fitness center, I used the TV remote to scan the cable channels. Finding nothing but violence and corruption, I switched off the TV. That evening I made the best choice but there are times when I do not chose so well.

Temptations, choices and actions-God sees them all. Sometimes we resist temptation. Other times we do not resist. What we know is no matter how many times we choose the good over the bad, our bad choices prove to us that we fall short of the glory of God. The perfect is far from us and we all need deliverance from the evil that surrounds us and dwells within us.

Prayer: "Father in heaven, you see all and know all that I am. I confess you are good. I confess my own lack of goodness. Please place your Spirit within me so I will be able to do what is right. Amen."

Meditation 7, Psalms 13 & 14: "Deliverance Comes from Zion."

"How long, O LORD; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?" The LORD looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding, a man mindful of God... Oh that the deliverance of Israel might come from Zion... Psalm 13:2-3, Psalm 14:2, 7

The Psalmists often wrote of suffering. Sometimes their sufferings came through no fault of their own. Other times their pain was a result of their own actions. Whatever the cause, suffering is painful and hard to endure. Believers can wonder where God is; we can feel He is far away and removed from our pain.

God is not untouched by our pain. The LORD came into this world as a sacrificial lamb and having no sin or inherited guilt, in innocence suffered more than any human ought to suffer - and laid down His life. Through His life, death and resurrection he brought salvation and new hope to many. In Him we can end the cycle of sin and suffering. This is the message of Christmas - deliverance is through the Messiah, the savior of all who turn to Him in repentance, faith and obedience.

Prayer: "Dear Lord, I pray you will make known to me the way of deliverance from sin and sorrow. Help me turn to what is right, grant me the gift of faith and power to follow Jesus in obedience. Save me from the oppressor. Amen."

Meditation 8, Psalms 15 & 16: “ Living in the Presence of the LORD.”

"Lord, who may sojourn in Your tent, who may dwell on Your holy mountain? ... You will teach me the path of life." In Your presence is perfect joy; delights are ever in Your right hand." Psalm 15:1 and 16:11

How can a person walk with the eternal God and dwell in his presence? Do what is right, acknowledge what is true, speak no evil against others, harm no one, keep a promise even when doing so is not advantageous to yourself, honor other people, loan to those in need without interest, do not accept a bribe or harm the innocent.

Not all desire this way of living. They say "It is foolish to live like that in our world." Others say "trying to live like that is works righteousness; salvation is a free gift not dependent upon works."

However the here and now aspect of salvation is living out the word of God TODAY. Our Psalmist understood the spiritual goal was not just to enter some future paradise that arrives after this world is over. His desire was to experience God daily through an obedient life. He was not disappointed! The LORD became his benefactor. The LORD provided his daily needs. The LORD controlled his fate. The LORD caused him to live in a delightful country and the LORD blessed him with unshaken security. These are the good things that come to us when we walk obediently with God. Rev. Ben Cachiaras spoke of this way of living when he said "Your life is God's gift to you. How you live it is your gift to God."

PRAYER: *"Lord, I want to walk with you every day of my life. Please teach me what it is I must do to experience you more fully. Amen."*

Meditation 9, Psalms 17 & 18: “The Lord Vindicates Those Who Honor Him.”

"My vindication will come from You; Your eyes will behold what is right... I determined that my mouth should not transgress... my feet have held to Your paths; my legs have not given way. I call on You... Then I, justified, will behold your face; awake, I am filled with the vision of You." Psalms 17:2, 3b, 5, 6a, 15



"With the loyal, You deal loyally; with the blameless, blamelessly, With the pure, You act purely, and with the perverse you are wily. It is you who deliver lowly folk, but haughty eyes You humble. It is You who light my lamp; the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness... The LORD lives! Blessed is my rock! Exalted be God, my deliverer, the God who has vindicated me... For this I sing your praise among the nations, Lord and hymn Your name." Psalms 18:26-29, 47, 50

The writers of the Psalms experienced and wrote much of sufferings and tribulations. David also, though a man of heroic faith was no stranger to suffering; quite often in his life he was forced to endure great stress, danger and loss. Sometimes his difficulties were the result of personal sin or misjudgment; other times his difficulties were undeserved and not of his own making. What made David extraordinary was his resolve to trust God at all times, wait upon his salvation and when he sinned, confess his sin and submit himself patiently to God's chastisement. Even during times when he was persecuted unjustly and enemies opposed him to his face, David shunned responding in kind. Perhaps it was these qualities that earned for him the accolade "a man after the Lord's heart."

Prayer: *"Lord, cause me to know what is true, to value right over expedience and when stressed, strengthen me to do what is right. Then when trials are over, let me not forget to praise you. Amen."*

Meditation 10, Psalms 19 & 20: “The Lord Is Our Help.”

"Who can be aware of errors? Clear me of unperceived guilt, and from willful sins keep Your servant; let them not dominate me; then shall I be blameless and clear of grave offense." Psalm 19:13-14

"May the Lord answer you in time of trouble, the name of Jacob's God keep you safe. May He send you help from the sanctuary, and sustain you from Zion...They call on chariots, they call on horses, but we call on the

name of the LORD our God.” Psalm 20:1,2, 8

In Psalm 19, David expressed awe at the multitude of stars and the expanse within which the sun rests. He gave glory to God. Perhaps he remembered God had promised Abraham "as many as the stars of heaven, so shall be your descendants." From that memory of what God had done in the past it would be a natural progression to think of the commandments God gave Israel. To David, those commandments of God were not oppressive but "sweet as honey in the honeycomb." He desired to obey all that the LORD had commanded.

Psalm 20 is a prayer to God to deliver some other people from trouble. Because God had delivered David through many troubles, the king was confident the Lord would deliver others as well. David understood safety and deliverance was dependent not upon the strength and numbers of the military but upon God's response in our time of need.

Prayer: "God of Jacob in whom we trust, cause us to love and obey your commandments. In times of need, deliver from trouble all those who look to you for salvation. Amen."

Meditation 11, Psalms 21 & 22: "God Did Not Abandon the Crucified One."



"O LORD, the king rejoices in Your strength; how greatly he exults in Your victory...For the king trusts in the LORD; Through the faithfulness of the Most High, he will not be shaken... For they schemed against You; they laid plans, but could not succeed..." 21:2, 8, 12 "My God, my God, why have You abandoned me; why are you so far from delivering me and from my anguished roaring? All who see me mock me; they curl their lips, they shake their heads. 'Let him commit himself to the LORD; let Him rescue him, let Him save him, for He is

pleased with him.' They divide my clothes among themselves, casting lots for my garments... You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you offspring of Jacob, honor Him! Be in dread of Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He did not scorn, He did not spurn the plea of the lowly; He did not hide His face from him; when he cried out to Him, He listened...Offspring shall serve Him; the LORD's fame shall be proclaimed to the generation to come; they shall tell of His beneficence to people yet to be born, for He has acted. 22:2, 8, 9, 19,24, 25,31, 32

The enemies of King David sought to remove him from his throne. They failed. Centuries later, the crucified One quoted the opening lines of Psalm 22 from the cross. He did not curse those who put him on the cross; he blessed them with a prayer of forgiveness. Resurrected after his sufferings, Jesus appeared and preached to crowds of his disciples. Empowered by the gift of the Spirit of God, those crowds have become multitudes, uncountable as the stars of heaven. God's promise has been fulfilled.

Prayer: "LORD, cause me to hope in the glories you have in store for those who love you. Amen."

Meditation 12, Psalms 23 & 24: "The LORD is My Shepherd and My King."

"The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters... Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." 23:1, 2; 23

"The earth is the LORD's and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants. O gates, lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? -- the LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!" 24:1; 9, 10

David, the writer of Psalm 23, loved and served the LORD all his life. A shepherd in his youth, warrior in early adulthood and king in later years, he offered unceasing praise to the LORD. Centuries later his descendant Jesus who said "before Abraham was, I AM entered Jerusalem on a donkey as king. At that time Jesus spoke of himself, saying "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays

down his life for his sheep. My sheep know my voice and they follow me.” The night he was taken this same Jesus said “If I wished I could call on the army of heaven to rescue me from this suffering but that is not the Father’s plan.” With these words He identified Himself as commander of the LORD’s armies. Someday, at the time of the Father’s choosing Jesus will return at the head of those armies to bring all peoples into his kingdom of peace.

Prayer: “O LORD, I confess you as the shepherd of my soul, my commander and my king. Amen.”

MEDITATION 13, Psalms 25 & 26: “God Makes Hard Times Into Something Good.”

“Oh LORD, I set my hope on You; my God, in You I trust; may I not be disappointed, may my enemies not exult over me... My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for He will loose my feet from the net. Turn to me, have mercy on me, for I am alone and afflicted. My deep distress increases; deliver me from my straits. Look at my affliction and suffering, forgive all my sins.” Psalm 25:1, 2, 15-18

“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked without blame; I have trusted in the LORD; I have not faltered. Probe me, O LORD, and try me, test my heart and mind; for my eyes are on Your steadfast love; I have set my course by it... My feet are on level ground. In assemblies I will bless the LORD.” Psalm 26: 1, 2, 12

When bad times came the Psalmists freely expressed pain, anger, desire for vengeance and prayed for deliverance and justice. That’s OK. We can take our feelings to God in total honesty and freedom. He knows we are mortal; he knows we feel pain and need space to vent our frustrations. The God of Israel is big enough to bear our pain. At the end of the day, keep listening to God and waiting for his salvation. Those who trust in him and live according to his will shall see a better day.

Prayer: “Father in heaven, forgive me my mistakes and sins as I forgive those who damage me. Deliver me from enemies who seek to do me harm. Cause me to praise your name in the midst of the congregation of the faithful. Amen.”

Meditation 14, Psalms 27 & 28: “This I Have Asked From The LORD.”

“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple... Teach me Your ways O LORD, and lead me in a level path... Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary... Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd also, and carry them forever. 27:4; 27:11; 28:2; 28:9

The Psalmists let everything hang out. No self-censorship, no cover up of even the ugliest emotions. Messy human feelings spilled out all over the place. The good feelings we know what to do with, but what are we to make of the negative emotional stuff? Are these emotions sin, something to be rebuked? Not at all! Anger and negative emotions are not in themselves sin. They are indicators that something is not right. Some type of pain has been experienced. Real or perceived injustice, disappointed expectations and hope denied.

The danger of negative emotions is they can be followed by negative actions that increase pain in the world. The Psalmist recognized this and stopped at the level of speech – he gave up pain, anger and vengeance to God. Seeking spiritual life, he pulled back from evil actions. After crying out to the LORD in his pain, he gave it all to God, asking only that the LORD save His people and be their shepherd.

Prayer: “Dear LORD, sometimes I feel hurt and angry about things. I want to do SOMETHING violent to make the pain go away. But that’s your job, not mine. Lord, help me to live in your presence and follow the path of goodness and mercy. Save your people. Amen.”

Meditation 15, Psalms 29 & 30: “The LORD Restores the Broken Hearted.”

“Ascribe to the LORD, O divine beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; bow down to the LORD, majestic in holiness.” 29:1-2

“O you faithful of the LORD, sing to Him, and praise His holy name. For He is angry but a moment, and when He is pleased there is life. One may lie down weeping at nightfall; but at dawn there are shouts of joy. O LORD, you brought me up from Sheol, preserved me from going down into the pit... You turned my lament into dancing, you undid my sackcloth and girded me with joy, that my whole being might sing hymns to you endlessly; O LORD my God, I will praise you forever.” 30:1-4, 12-13

Sorrow and loss come upon us all. Probably the greatest sorrow of all is the death of a loved one. As surely as there is joy at the birth of a new child so is there grief at the passing of a loved one. It is not a matter of if death will knock on our door, it is when. Our loved ones, and we ourselves must go the way of those who came before us.

Is death a sign that God is personally angry with us, seeking to inflict pain upon us? Does God lack compassion? No, Love is intrinsic to God's nature and death is not final. For the people of God, death is a transition from this mortal existence into the eternal life promised to all who call upon the name of the LORD and walk in His ways. Of course the death of a loved one brings pain and for many, dark depression – for a time. But for those who look to the LORD as their strength and protection, and call upon Him to renew their joy, the time of depression and grief will pass away. By His grace new joy will be poured out into our hearts.

Prayer: *“O LORD, I praise your name and seek your ways. In my loss I pray for renewed joy. I also pray for others who have suffered loss. In your grace carry them safely through grief into renewed joy. Amen.”*

Meditation 16, Psalms 31 & 32: “The Lord Vindicates and Delivers.”

“I seek refuge in You, O LORD; may I never be disappointed; as You are righteous, rescue me. Incline Your ear to me; be quick to save me; be a rock, a stronghold for me, a citadel, for my deliverance. For You are my rock and my fortress; You lead me and guide me as befits Your name. You free me from the net laid for me, for You are my stronghold.” Psalm 31:1-5 “Then I acknowledged my sin to You; I did not cover up my guilt; I resolved, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin... You are my shelter; You preserve me from distress; You surround me with the joyous shouts of deliverance.” Psalm 32:5, 7

Duels, honor killings, wars have occurred as a result of a person or nation turning to violence to avenge shame and restore honor. The duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton resulted in Hamilton's death and Burr's self-exile from the newly established United States. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was the outcome of nearly 80 years of America shaming the Japanese people. To the Japanese, honor needed to be restored, the scales reset. The Japanese people paid dearly but Americans learned a valuable lesson that shaming a people because of their race or color of skin may not be a good idea. Unlike the above people, when the Psalmist was plotted against and spoken evil of by his enemies, he appealed to the LORD to vindicate him and restore his honor and reputation. The Psalmist did not seek blood or vengeance with his own hands; he believed God would rescue him from those who had shamed him. Perhaps it was because he knew himself to be a sinner. In Psalm 32 he confessed his own sin and humiliation. God forgave him and restored to him a sense of dignity and a joy. The Psalmist described himself as being “surrounded with shouts of joy.”

Prayer: *“Lord, You are my protector and refuge. Where I have done wrong please forgive me. Deliver me from shame and from those who speak evil of me. Surround me with a new joy! Amen.”*

MEDIATION 17, Psalm 33 & 34: “The LORD Is Able to Get it Done.”

“The LORD frustrates the plans of nations, brings to naught the designs of peoples. What the LORD plans endures for ever; what He designs, for ages on end... Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, who wait for His faithful care to save them from death, to sustain them in famine.” 33:10, 11, 18, 19

“The angel of the LORD camps around those who fear Him and rescues them... The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; those crushed in spirit He delivers. Though the misfortunes of the righteous be many, the LORD will save him from them all... The LORD redeems the life of His servants; all who take refuge in Him shall not be ruined.” 34:8, 19, 20, 23

In the world we see nations against nations, groups against groups. Technologies we don't understand and events we fear. The small things of life – where we will work, where we will live, what we will eat – seem beyond our ability to control. Life is not easy. We wonder where God is or even if there is a God. Or if there is a god, is He against me? No! God is not against you; it may just be that He is not supporting how you are trying to manage your life. Or maybe it's just that life is tough and things don't always work out because of the way the world is. Nobody promised life would be easy, not even for God's people who try to be good.

The Psalmist recognized we humans are not able to manage everything. However he did not panic or lose confidence in the future. He knew the LORD who created heaven and earth is able to manage things. No problem is too great for the LORD to solve, nothing is too small to escape His notice. The LORD frustrates the plans of kings and nations yet his eye is upon the sparrow. To those who keep themselves from doing wrong and turn to him in trust, the LORD is a faithful friend and helper. Set your hope upon the Lord, wait upon his deliverance. Seek after His way of doing things and wait upon His salvation.

Prayer: *“Lord, I know my faith is weak. Show me your grace and greatness. Forgive me my lack of faith that leads me into wrong paths. Help me wait upon you. Amen.”*

Meditation 18, Psalms 35 & 36: "The Lord Hears Our Complaint"

“Let not my treacherous enemies rejoice over me, or those who hate me without reason wink their eyes. For they do not offer amity, but devise fraudulent schemes against harmless folk...Let them not think ‘Aha, just what we wished!’ Let them not say, ‘We have destroyed him!’” Psalm 35:19, 20, 25 “With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light. Bestow your faithful care on those devoted to You, and Your beneficence on upright men.” Psalm 36:10, 11

In Psalm 35 we meet a man who is suffering because people he cared for and sought to bless had turned against him. He had done much good for them when they needed help but when troubles came his way – they were nowhere to be found. Not only did they refuse to help him, they even spoke against him and laughed about his problems. This wounded the writer's heart and caused him to become angry and discouraged. He prayed to God, asking the LORD to stand up for him and show those people how wrong they were to repay good with evil and to rejoice over his misfortune. Then having prayed his heart out to God, he left it all in the hands of the LORD.

Psalm 36 reveals a less emotional and calmer perspective regarding those who would do wrong to the Psalmist. This time he does not seem so hurt by those kind of people. Instead of focusing upon disappointing human beings, the writer's focus is upon God's loving kindness and power to help those who turn to him in time of trouble. This is a song of praise; all the Psalmist asks of God is that those bad actors in his life not be allowed to drag him down and cause him to be a spiritual failure.

Prayer: *“Lord, when people wrong me without reason and treat me unfairly, do not let them bring me down. Cause me to look to you for justice and wait upon you to act on my behalf. Amen.”*

Meditation 19, Psalms 37-38: "Give It Up To the Lord & He Will Deliver You."

“Leave all to the LORD; trust in Him; He will do it...Give up anger, abandon fury, do not be vexed; it can only do harm...the steps of a man are made firm by the LORD when He delights in his way.” 37:5, 8, 23.

“For my iniquities have overwhelmed me; they are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear...I am all bent and bowed; I walk about in gloom all day long... I am all benumbed and crushed...Do not abandon me, O LORD; my God, be not far from me; hasten to my aid, O Lord, my deliverance.” 38:5,7, 9, 19, 22

In Psalm 37 the writer reveals great frustration at the way some people are acting. His frustration wells up into anger and fury. He wants to do something to those abusers, strike out to punish them. But he lets go of his anger when he hears the Spirit of God say to his spirit “your anger can only make things worse. Let go of your anger and let Me take care of it. I will deliver.”

In Psalm 38 & 39 we read of King David’s lament over his own sins. David had lusted after the beautiful wife of one of his officers, a foreigner fighting at the front line. David sent for the woman and slept with her. She became pregnant. Fearful of what might happen when the husband found out, David ordered the man abandoned on the field of battle. The officer and his men were killed by the enemy. However, the death of the woman’s husband did not provide David with a way of escape from his sin; he agonized over what he had done. Then God’s prophet Nathan publicly confronted the king and led him to confession. In the end, God punished David’s sin. For his part, David bore the punishment in patience and humility. Though he did seek deliverance from human enemies and ongoing chastisement he did not question God or lose his desire to walk with God.

Prayer: “Lord, when I am angry and frustrated with others – calm me down so I can walk rightly with you. Remind me that I also am a sinner and help me trust your promise in 1st John 1:9 that when I turn from my sin you forgive and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Amen.”

Meditation 20, Psalms 39 & 40: “The LORD Lifted Me From the Miry Pit.”

“Man walks about as a mere shadow; mere futility is his hustle and bustle, amassing and not knowing who will gather in... You chastise a man in punishment for his sin, consuming like a moth what he treasures. No man is more than a breath.” Psalm 39:7, 12 “I put my hope in the LORD; He inclined toward me, and heeded my cry. He lifted me out of the miry pit, the slimy clay, and set my feet on a rock, steadied my legs. He put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. May many see it and stand in awe, and trust in the LORD. Happy is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who turns not to the arrogant or to followers of falsehood.” Psalm 40:1-5

Psalm 39 is a picture of frustration and negativity. In his mind the Psalmist was in flames over something done him by others. He felt insecure about everything in life – wondered how long he would live and frustrated that all his possessions and accomplishments would be taken over by somebody else. He was in spiritual turmoil, felt his sins had caused God to punish him. He despaired over everything going on in his life. But then he turned his eyes upward, started looking up at the LORD.

Psalm 40 describes his turn from despair to hope. He took his eyes from the negative things in his life and the world and sought after God. He confessed his own errors and glorified God in prayer. The LORD heard his prayer and lifted him from the pit of despair, gave the Psalmist a new joy and song of praise to sing in the gathering of the faithful. The Psalmist experienced again the joy of his salvation and rejoiced that it had come from God!

Prayer: “Lord God, help me to turn from negativity and hopelessness to trust in you. Cause me to cease from my sins and experience again the joy of your salvation. Give me new joy and hope. Amen.”

Meditation 21, Psalms 41-43: “Hope in God”

*“All my enemies whisper together against me, imagining the worst for me.” 41:8
“Crushing my bones, my foes revile me, taunting me always with, ‘Where is your God?’” 42:11
“Vindicate me, O God, champion my cause against faithless people; rescue me from the treacherous, dishonest man...Have hope in God; I will yet praise Him, my ever-present help, my God.” 43:1, 5b*

As a new missionary in Japan my Japanese co-worker told me a Japanese proverb that said “Every man has 12 friends and 12 enemies. They are the same 12 people.” Then my friend said “But we must be positive and hope for better!”

Thousands of years earlier a Hebrew poet wrote something similarly gloomy. The writer had come under attack by enemies and was betrayed by friends. People were discussing how long his family name and reputation would survive! Like my Japanese friend, the Psalmist struggled for a more positive viewpoint. He confessed personal sinfulness to God and placed his life into His hands. In the end the LORD did something good for the Psalmist, his gloom changed to rejoicing and he gave praise to the LORD.

Because the writers of these Psalms did not allow despair to overcome them, neither their words nor their names have perished from the face of the earth. The family name – Korath – is remembered and in our own time the words they wrote became one of our most beautiful praise songs: “As the Deer Panteth for the Water.”

Prayer: “Lord, my trust and hope is in you. Save me from my sin and from my enemies. Amen.”

MEDITATION 22, Psalms 44-46: “The LORD Expects Obedience Over Religious Observance.”

“You make us a byword among the nations, a laughing stock among the peoples... yet we have not forgotten you, or been false to Your covenant. Our hearts have not gone astray, nor have our feet swayed from Your path...it is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” Psalm 44:15, 18, 19, 23 Take heed, and note, incline your ear: forget your people and your father’s house, and let the king be aroused by your beauty; since He is your Lord, bow to him.” 45:11-12 “Desist! Realize I am God! I dominate the nations; I dominate the earth!” 46:11

The prophets of the LORD were sent to deliver charges against His people. They had not cared for the poor, the orphans, the widows and the strangers. The powerful seized the lands of the weak. People were wrongly held in bondage as slaves. Foreigners were mistreated. The rich and powerful loved drunken parties, violence and were sexually immoral. People did not listen; they were convinced their temple and their status as God’s chosen nation would protect them. They did not understand that God demands more than correct religious observance and confession. Later, they were punished as much for what they did not do as for what they did. Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 10:18, 15:7-11, 27:19; Proverbs 22:16, 31:9; Isaiah 1:17, 5:25, Zechariah 7:9-10, Jeremiah 7:5-7, 22:13-17, Amos 5:11-18, Ezekiel 16:49-50; Mark 10:21-25; Luke 11:39-42; James 4:1-3, 5:1-5; 1st John 3:17

Prayer: “Lord, I have read your word and confess I and my people are not as righteous as we think. Our sins are as many as those we call sinners. Forgive our self-righteous pride, save us from ourselves. Amen.”

Meditation 23, Psalms 47 & 48: “Praise the LORD for His Kindness and Mercy.”

“For the LORD Most High is awesome, great king over all the earth...sing, O sing to God; sing, O sing to our king; for God is king over all the earth; sing a hymn. Psalm 47:2, 7, 8

“In Your temple, God, we meditate upon Your faithful care. The praise of You, God, like Your name, reaches to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is filled with beneficence....For God – He is our God forever; He will lead us evermore.” Psalm 48:9, 10, 14

Within these two Psalms there is no lament, no complaint and nothing asked of the LORD. The Psalmist seeks only to glorify God. When he refers to himself it is only to speak of what he remembers of the great works the LORD has done for his people. He writes “WE have thought on your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of your temple.” Recalling times in which the LORD delivered his people from powerful enemies, he calls the faithful of the LORD to give thanks and sing praises to their merciful deliverer.

Prayer: *“Lord God, I praise you and give thanks for your loving kindness and mercy. I remember times you saved me from enemies and misfortune, and times you gave me forgiveness. Great are you O LORD! Amen.”*

Meditation 24, Psalm 49: “Man in His Pomp Like Beasts That Perish.”

“Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when his household goods increase; for when he dies he can take none of it along; his goods can not follow him down...Man does not understand honor; he is like the beasts that perish.” Psalm 49:16, 17, 20

Psalm 49 is very much like the Proverbs. Neither praise nor lament, this Psalm is a call to all the world to listen to words of wisdom. The Psalmist counsels rich and poor alike to not focus upon material wealth but to remember that death awaits all; our material possessions have no significance beyond this life.

One would think this message would not be necessary to remind people they are going to die – that it is an obvious fact that everybody does die. The Psalmist does not think so. He has observed that people do deny the inevitability of death, that in their minds they believe they will somehow be protected by wealth and possessions and in some way they will live on through the successes of this life. The Psalmist is ruthless in his confrontation of this delusion; he insists that man in his wealth and success (pomp) is no better off than the beasts.

To the righteous he offers a word of encouragement, the promise that although all will die, the LORD will receive the righteous and in the life to come, give them dominion over those whom the LORD accounts as having been wicked in this life. Reduced to its essentials, the message of the Psalmist is “everybody dies, and you can’t take it with you. What counts in the end is how you live your life before God.”

Prayer: *“Dear Lord in heaven. Help me to live this life in the hope of the life to come. Help me to cease from grasping after material riches and worldly success and trust in Jesus who said “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Amen.”*

Meditation 25, Psalm 50: “The LORD Is Judge of the Whole World.”

“He summoned the heavens above, and the earth, for the trial of His people: ‘Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice...And to the wicked God said: ‘Who are you to recite my laws, and mouth the terms of My covenant, seeing that you spurn My discipline, and brush My words aside?... Mark this, you who are unmindful of God, lest I tear you apart and no one save you. He who sacrifices a thank offering honors Me, and to him who improves his way I will show the salvation of God.’” Psalm 50:4, 5, 16, 17, 22, 23

In my ministry I have observed many obviously unrepentant people who continually disobey God’s law but are comfortable with “god talk.” They boldly profess faith in God then go out and commit some crime or sin. Psalm 50 states God is neither amused nor deceived by such people. His response is terrible to read; his rebuke frightening in extreme. He says “You have no right to speak of my laws and my covenant! Change your ways or

I will tear you into pieces! My salvation is for those honor me with the praise of thanksgiving and living their lives rightly according to my statutes..."

Prayer: *"Dear Lord, examine my heart and actions. Cause me to acknowledge and put away all sin and hypocrisy, to give you the praise of thanksgiving and live rightly according to your holy law. Save me from past sins and help me live obediently as a faithful citizen of your kingdom. Amen."*

Meditation 26, Psalm 51: "The LORD Restores Joy to Repentant Sinners"

"Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity and purify me from my sin. For I recognize my transgressions, and am ever conscious of my sin...Indeed You desire truth about that which is hidden, teach me wisdom about secret things. Fashion a pure heart for me, O God; create in me a steadfast spirit. Do not cast me out of Your presence, or take Your holy spirit away from me. Let me again rejoice in Your help; let a vigorous spirit sustain me. I will teach transgressors Your ways, that sinners may return to You...True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart." Psalm 51:2, 3, 8, 10-13, 17

After David's great sin with Bathsheba and murder of her husband upon the battlefield Nathan came to David as an accuser. David confessed all and submitted himself to God's judgment. In this David had no choice, there is no escape from God's all seeing gaze and judgment. David could have rejected the message, could have killed the messenger. Instead, he broke down in tears of anguish, confessed himself a sinner before God and placed himself before the mercy seat of God. His greatest fear was not death. He feared most the loss of God's Spirit living with and communing with his own human spirit. David was tormented by feeling that God's Spirit had departed from him and feared he might never again experience the joy of the Lord.

Prayer: *"O Lord, I know in various ways, some great and some minor, I have sinned against you. These sins have come between You and me. I confess all and turn back to you. I ask that in your loving grace you restore to me the sense of your presence and the joy of my salvation. Amen."*

Meditation 27, Psalms 52-54: "Take Hope in the LORD's Loving Kindness."

"Why do you boast in evil, brave fellow? God's faithfulness never ceases. Your tongue devises mischief, like a sharpened razor that works treacherously. You prefer evil to good, the lie to speaking truthfully. You love all pernicious words, treacherous speech. Psalm 52:1-4 The benighted man thinks, 'God does not care.' Man's wrongdoing is corrupt and loathsome; no one does good.' Psalm 53:2-3 "O God, deliver me by Your name; by Your power vindicate me. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth... See, God is my helper; the Lord is my support." Psalm 54:3, 4, 6

The Psalmist complained to the LORD about how he was being mistreated. Examining the words and behavior of the people around him, he concluded ALL were more interested in doing evil than in doing good. People had no respect for anybody; their thoughts were of personal power, wealth and social status. They never gave a thought to the idea that God could call them to account for their evil deeds. Not so our Psalmist. He knew the LORD was real and was present, a helper to those who call upon Him. He knew the LORD would punish those who lived for evil. Knowing these things, he confessed the LORD as worthy of honor and sacrifice.

Prayer: *"Dear Lord, we live in evil times. Many are those who take pride in wrongdoing. Many are those who deny God. Let me not fall into despair over the evil and unbelief of others. Grant me courage and cause me to hope in your loving kindness. Deliver me from evil. Amen."*

Meditation 28, Psalm 55 “Cast Your Burdens Upon The LORD.”

“Give ear, O God, to my prayer; do not ignore my plea; pay heed to me and answer me. I am tossed about complaining and moaning at the clamor of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring evil upon me and furiously harass me...It is not an enemy who reviles me – I could bear that! It is not my foe who vaunts himself against me – I could hide from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my friend; sweet was our fellowship; we walked together in God’s house...As for me, I call to God; the LORD will deliver me. Evening, morning and noon, I complain and moan, and He hears my voice. He redeems me unharmed from the battle against me; it is as though many are on my side...Cast your burden on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous collapse.” Psalm 55:1-4, 13-15, 17-19, 23

In Psalm 55 we read words by a person seeking God’s judgment upon people who were gossiping about him. These were people he had gone into the house of God with! Lifelong friends disrespecting him behind his back...that really hurt. But then he got to thinking about what was going on all around him in the city and concluded it was not just his friends but EVERYBODY doing wrong! This realization caused him to turn his thoughts to God and confess the LORD, not people was the source of his happiness.

Prayer: *“Father in heaven, please stand with me even in times when everybody seems against me. Help me to trust you. Amen.”*

Meditation 29: Psalm 56 “The LORD Causes Me to Walk in the Light of Life.”

“My watchful foes persecute me all day long; many are my adversaries, O Exalted One. When I am afraid, I trust in You, in God whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can mortals do to me?...You keep count of my wanderings; you put my tears into your bottle, into Your record. Then my enemies will retreat when I call on You; this I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can man do to me? I must pay my vows to You, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. For you have saved me from death, my foot from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.” Psalm 56:2-4, 9-14

Since 1956 U.S. money must have the words “In God We Trust” printed on it. This custom began as a result of a letter sent to the government during the Civil War. From that time some but not all of the US currency contained these words but it was not till the Cold War that Congress extended the law to include all US currency. Since then many people have joked that MONEY is our god and some atheists have brought lawsuits to take the words off our money. The lawsuits fail because judges think the words are not so serious and there are non-Christian religious symbols on US money the atheists did not contest!

David wrote the original words “In God I trust” in Psalm 56. As a young shepherd boy he trusted God in combat against a much bigger enemy and won. As a young leader hiding from a jealous king he trusted God to take care of the problem. As king of Israel he trusted God to help him survive criticism and rebellions. God proved himself true and faithful in every situation so David trusted in God.

Prayer: *“God in heaven, I want to trust in you as as my God. When troubles come my way, please help me respond as David and Jesus did. Amen.”*

Meditation 30, Psalm 57: “The LORD Sends His Salvation from Heaven.”

“As for me, I lie down among man-eating lions whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongue is a sharp sword...They prepared a net for my feet to ensnare me; they dug a pit for me, but they fell into it.

My heart is firm, O God, my heart is fir; I will sing, I will chant a hymn... I will praise you among the peoples, O Lord; I will sing a hymn to You among the nations; for your faithfulness is as high as heaven; Your steadfastness reaches to the sky.” Psalm 57:5, 7, 8,10

This song is attributed to David after the time he hid in a cave from his jealous father-in-law King Saul. Not knowing David and his men were hiding in the cave, Saul came into the cave to use it as a toilet. David could have ended Saul’s life that day but all he did was sneak up in the dark and cut off part of Saul’s clothing. Later he called out to Saul and the 3,000 men with him, showing the piece of Saul’s robe as proof that he was no danger to Saul. The king was greatly touched by David’s restraint, confessed himself to be in the wrong and said that David would be king after him. He asked David to never harm any of his family members and for a while, gave up chasing after David. For David this was a great victory because he never wanted to harm the king and at least for a while did not have to fear his jealous father-in-law. David rejoiced before the Lord and determined to praise God’s name among the nations.

Prayer: *“God in heaven, I give thanks for the good things you have done for me. I thank you for saving me from those who reject me. I thank you for helping me do what is right. I thank you for your love and truth. Amen.”*

Meditation 31, Psalm 58: “The LORD Does Not Desire the Death of the Wicked.”

O mighty ones, do you really decree what is just? Do you judge mankind with equity? The righteous man will rejoice when he sees revenge; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. Men will say “There is, then, a reward for the righteous; there is, indeed, divine justice on earth.” 58:2, 11, 12

The words of this song express thoughts of a person deeply offended by wickedness and angry at how bad people could be. Not a passive anger – the writer wished to see the wicked crushed for what they had done. Later in life David’s heart-felt zeal for justice was used by the prophet Nathan who told him the story of the rich man who stole a poor man’s sheep to use it to feed his guests. KING David was so enraged he wanted that rich man arrested and punished, only to be told by Nathan “YOU ARE THAT MAN!” Fortunately, God does not delight in the deaths of people who do wicked things. He desires all people to repent and be saved. Ezekiel 18:33, 33:11

Prayer: *“Lord God, sometimes I feel anger when people do bad things and demand instant judgment. But then I look into my own heart and know I also am capable of feeling and doing evil. Lord, cause me to change my heart so I might be an example to others, an encouragement to them to turn from their sin and enter into your salvation.” Amen.”*

Meditation 32, Psalm 59: “The LORD Will Protect His Anointed.”

“Save me from my enemies, O my God; secure me against my assailants. Save me from evildoers; deliver me from murderers. For see, they lie in wait for me; fierce men plot against me for no offense of mine, for no transgression, O LORD...O my strength, I wait for You; for God is my haven...But I will sing of Your strength, extol each morning Your faithfulness; for you have been my haven, a refuge in time of trouble.” 59:2-4, 10, 17

Because of his success in battle and popularity with the people, David was pursued and persecuted by King Saul. Saul’s intent was to kill David. His reasoning was clear: David’s popularity with the people might cause the people to reject the line of Saul as their rightful rulers. Indeed, this was God’s intent,

ever since the LORD sent Samuel to anoint David as the next king. In spite of such bitter opposition, David trusted God for this and looked to God to preserve his life even in the darkest of times.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, when enemies attack me for no wrong doing of my own, gift me with the faith of David to wait upon you and trust in your protection and good purposes. Amen.”

Meditation 33, Psalm 60: “The LORD Allows Hard Times to Come Upon His People.”

“O God, You have rejected us. You have made a breach in us; You have been angry; restore us! You have made your people suffer hardship; you have given us wine that makes us reel...But You have rejected us, O God; God, You do not march with our armies. Grant us Your aid against the foe, for the help of man is worthless. With God we shall triumph; He will trample our foes.” Psalm 60:3, 5,12-14

While living in Funabashi Japan my wife’s boss invited us to a party on the other side of Tokyo. I received an instruction in my spirit “Go but arrive late.” We arrived to find only four or five people remaining. Two young women joined me in conversation after asking my profession. One said “I am Jewish. I don’t believe in God. I am angry with Him. I don’t understand why it happened.” As she was speaking those words I felt the presence of Jesus standing with us. If I had seen him with my eyes I would not have been more certain of his presence than I was at that moment. I felt an incredible love and boundless compassion flowing out from Him, a deep love for that young woman. There was no condemnation, no rebuke, no harshness in Him.

I responded to that young woman as I felt Jesus responding. I don’t remember all I said but know I started with the promises God made to Abraham and concluded with words from Revelation 13 regarding Satan’s great hatred for God and for all whom God loves. I said if Satan could destroy Israel he would prove God false – but will never happen! As to why HE did not prevent the holocaust, we know God does not always intervene to prevent bad things from happening to His people. What we do know is His promises never fail. In time he will right what is wrong and brush away all our tears.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, the world is full of cruelty and pain. Sometimes unimaginable suffering comes upon people who are called by you and confess your name. When such times come upon us, please stand beside us. In your love and compassion, carry us through to the other side of sorrow. Amen.”

Meditation 34, Psalm 61 & 62: “Trust Not in Man but Wait Quietly Upon the LORD.”

“From the end of the earth I call to You; when my heart is faint, You lead me to a rock that is high above me. For You have been my refuge, a tower of strength against the enemy.” Psalm 61:3-4

“Truly my soul waits quietly for God; my deliverance comes from Him. Truly He is my rock and deliverance, my haven; I shall never be shaken...Truly, wait quietly for God, O my soul, for my hope comes from Him. He is my rock and deliverance, my haven; I shall not be shaken. I rely on God, my deliverance and glory, my rock of strength; in God is my refuge. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him; God is our refuge... Men are mere breath; mortals, illusion; placed on a scale all together, they weigh even less than a breath. Do not trust in violence, or put false hopes in robbery; if force bears fruit pay it no mind...” Psalm 62:2-3, 6-11

Good intentions are no protection against criticism and opposition. We all come under attack and criticism by others. Sometimes criticisms and opposition is just and fair – we need to correct our actions and attitudes. Other times what people say and do against us is totally unfair. Justified or not, how we respond to criticism and opposition displays our inner character. Do we examine ourselves in humility? Do we have emotional self-

control, are we obedient to the word of the LORD and do we trust in the living God? How we respond to opposition displays whether our character is akin to silver or base metal. Immature and faithless people respond to opposition by defending themselves, lashing out and going on the attack. They trust in force rather than the living God.

King David was called “a man after God’s own heart” because he was obedient to the commands of the LORD and humble in the face of opposition. When faced with people who opposed him, he went to the LORD in prayer and praise. When unjustly pursued by Saul and wronged by men of lower status than himself, he kept his peace and did not respond in harsh words or violence. What about us? When people oppose us can we rest upon the LORD, trust God to speak to our errors through our critics and defend us against those who are wrong about us? Do we have characters of silver or of base metal?

Prayer: *“Dear LORD, when people challenge me justly, cause me to change what needs to be changed. With those who oppose me unjustly, cause me to wait patiently upon you as my Defender. Amen.”*

Meditation 35, Psalms 63 & 64: “The LORD Supports Me, In Him I Take Refuge.”

“God, You are my God; I search for You, my soul thirsts for You, my body yearns for You, as a parched and thirsty land that has no water...My soul is attached to You; Your right hand supports me.”
Psalm 63:2, 9

“Hide me from a band of evil men, from a crowd of evildoers, who whet their tongues like swords; they aim their arrows – cruel words – to shoot from hiding at the blameless man; they shoot him suddenly and without fear...The righteous shall rejoice in the LORD, and take refuge in Him; all the upright shall exalt.” *Psalm 64:3-5, 11*

Few have loved the LORD as David loved Him. David’s love of God was revealed not only in his songs but in the way he lived life as a leader of men. His love of God was most evident when he was mistreated and abused by others. Rather than respond with violence as was his right according to the ethics of his time, he laid out his hurt and anger before the LORD. He was confident he could express his darkest feelings to God and after that leave it all to Him. He knew the LORD heard him because he felt his soul was connected to the LORD and it was God who healed his heart protected him from the dangers that surrounded him.

Prayer: *“My Father in heaven, thank you for your Son my LORD who came, lived and died as a man among men. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who is the point of connection between You and all come to You in humility. In my time of need I seek You, I take refuge in you. Amen.”*

Meditation 36, Psalms 65 & 66: “It is the LORD Who Rules Over All Things.”

“All mankind comes to You, You who hear prayer. When all manner of sins overwhelm me, it is You who forgive our iniquities...Those who live at the ends of the earth are awed by Your signs; You make the lands of sunrise and sunset shout for joy.” *Psalm 65:3, 4, 9*

“All the earth bows to You, and sings hymns to You; all sing hymns to Your name...Come and hear, all God-fearing men, as I tell what He did for me. I called aloud to Him, glorification on my tongue...He

paid heed to my prayer. Blessed is God who has not turned away my prayer or His faithful care from me.” Psalm 66:4, 16, 17, 20

In his book “The Persian Wars” Herodotus the ancient Greek historian digressed into a discussion of the gods. His contention was the various peoples he wrote about worshiped not many gods but a few gods given different names. Of the many names he knew about there was a name or several names Herodotus would not record. Names too holy to be put into writing. About that same period David was writing of the One God who reigned over all others that were called gods. David was not afraid to name Him – he is the LORD, the great God of Israel. YAHWEH, maker of heaven and earth. David was convinced it was He who ruled over all the peoples and to whom all the righteous prayed to for help and salvation, that it was the LORD who heard the prayers of faithful people. It was to Him that David sang his praises, it was to Him he confessed his sins and upon whom he called for the forgiveness of sins and in times of trouble, help.

Prayer: “Dear LORD in heaven, multitudes before me have called upon your name. I come before you now in praise and confession. It is to you I confess myself a sinner and from whom I ask forgiveness and deliverance from all that troubles me. LORD, hear my prayer. Amen.”

Meditation 37, Psalms 67 & 68: “Our God is the God of the Already Not Yet.”

“Peoples will praise You, O God; all peoples will praise You. Nations will exult and shout for joy, for You rule the peoples with equity, You guide the nations of the earth.” Psalm 67:4-5

“Sing to God, chant hymns to His name; extol Him who rides the clouds; the LORD is His name. Exult in His presence—the father of orphans, the champion of widows, God, in His holy habitation. God restores the lonely to their homes, sets free the imprisoned, safe and sound, while the rebellious must live in parched land...Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; chant hymns to the Lord.” Psalm 68:5-7, 33

The writers of Scripture, especially the prophets, often blended together into a single literary passage past, present and future time. It is as if they were living outside of our normal human time and viewing all time as a bird high in the sky views the world below. This blending together of past, present, and future is unique to the Bible. Past events – human history and God’s glorious works – are remembered. Present experiences of sin and suffering are acknowledged. Future events and conditions as revealed through the prophets are celebrated as if they have already occurred. So it often is that within the Psalms the author can juxtaposition the past works of God with present suffering and an instant later become transported in mind and spirit to future deliverance from all that is wrong in the world. In Psalm 67 & 68 we see this tendency. In his “real time” the Psalmist knows the peoples of the world do not yet honor God as their Lord and savior. But he also knows through revelation that one day all nations will bow before the LORD. He knows that in this time there are many widows, orphans and imprisoned people living in cruel conditions. But he also knows through revelation that the day is coming when the Lord will change the human condition and deliver all such people from their sorrowful fates. Knowing what the LORD will do, he speaks and acts as if that day has already come.

Prayer: “Dear God, I know the world does not yet honor you as lord and savior. YET I believe the time is coming when all nations and peoples will honor your name and walk in your ways. Please help me to live today as if that glorious time as already come. Amen.”

Meditation 38, Psalms 69 & 70: “The LORD Hears the Cries of His Suffering Servants.”

“Deliver me, O God...More numerous than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without reason; many are those who would destroy me, my treacherous enemies...My zeal for Your house has been my undoing; the reproaches of those who revile You have fallen upon me... They give me gall for food, vinegar to quench my thirst.” Psalm 69:2, 5, 10, 22

“But I am poor and needy; O God, hasten to me! You are my help and my rescuer; O LORD, do not delay.” Psalm 70:6

Psalm 69 and 70 were written by a believer enduring persecution because of his stand for God. It has always been so that persecution follows after we take a stand for God. So it was with David – even as a king he was subject to ridicule because of his faith in the LORD. Centuries after these verses were written, Psalm 69:10 and 69:22 were applied to Jesus by the Gospel writers. Psalm 69:10 was quoted to explain the zeal for God’s house that motivated him to drive the money changers from that place. That violent action on His part incensed the men who manged and profited from that trade; they exacted revenge upon Jesus by having him crucified by Roman soldiers. It was one of the soldiers who nailed him to the cross who gave him vinegar mixed with gall to drink after he cried out “I thirst.” Three days after Jesus cried out “I thirst” and died upon the cross the world was upended: God vindicated His Suffering Servant by resurrecting Him from the dead.

Prayer: “Lord, when I am persecuted for righteousness sake please stand with me. As you proved Yourself faithful through the resurrection of Jesus, likewise deliver me from those who oppress me because of zeal for Your kingdom. Amen.”

Meditation 39, Psalms 71 & 72: “David Finishes the Prayers to the LORD His God.”

“For You are my hope, O Lord God, my trust from my youth. While yet unborn, I depended upon you; in the womb of my mother; You were my support; I sing praises always... Do not cast me off in old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me...and even in hoary old age do not forsake me, God, until I proclaim Your strength to the next generation.” Psalm 71:5, 6, 9, 18

“O God, endow the king with Your judgments, the king’s son with your righteousness; that he may judge Your people rightly, Your lowly ones, justly.” Psalm 72:1,2

“Old Man Little” lived alone in a tiny house near my grandparents’ farm. All I knew of him was his name (Ernest Little) and that as a child his school was the old one room school house that came with the farm my grandfather had bought. Perhaps Mr. Little came with the farm, perhaps the nearby Little River was named after his family. In his last years Mr. Little moved – or was moved by someone to a tiny, dark room in a shut down hardware store in the dying town of Lineville, Iowa. It was a tiny dark, lonely room in which he spent his final days. How unlike Mr. Little’s public life was King David’s but how similar was the beginning and end of their lives! From the day David left the family farm his life was action, fame, conflict, great successes and massive disappointments. But with age comes infirmity; like Mr. Little, David’s last days were spent asleep in a bed; all David could do was record his trust in God and fashion a final prayer for his son Solomon who would soon replace him as Israel’s king.

Prayer: “O LORD, you were with me while I was yet in my mother’s womb. You have been with me all my life. In my old age do not abandon me to infirmity and forgetfulness of all you have done. When I pass on from this life welcome me into your presence. Amen.”

Mediation 40, Psalm 73: “The Well Being of the Wicked is Transitory.”

“As for me, my feet had almost strayed, my steps were nearly led off course, for I envied the wanton; I saw the wicked at ease. Death has no pangs for them; their body is healthy. They have no part in the travail of men; they are not afflicted like the rest of mankind...My mind was stripped of its reason, my feelings were numbed. I was a dolt, without knowledge; I was brutish toward you...Yet I was always with You, You held my right hand; You guided me by Your counsel and led me toward honor. Those who keep far from you perish; You annihilate all who are untrue to You. As for me, nearness to God is good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may recount all Your works.” Psalm 73:2-5, 21-24, 27, 28

Do you remember a time in your life when you assumed doing good would lead to rewards and doing bad would be punished? And then as your eyes became open to the world you became aware that very often it seemed the wicked were not punished and good were not rewarded? This happened to our Psalmist. He observed the wicked were often very successful and happy. Then he came to feel God did not always reward those who did right. Seeing those things he was tempted to conclude God was unjust and to give up following Him. So far down this path towards unbelief did the Psalm writer go that he later confessed himself a dolt, stripped of reason and emotional stability. Then everything changed as he entered into the house of the LORD and received knowledge. He was made to understand that in the long run the wicked do not succeed; that if they persist in disobedience to the commandments of the LORD they will be destroyed. The Psalmist also came to understand God had always been with him, always there holding his hand and guiding him to the blessings he needed in life.

Prayer: “Lord God in heaven, you are my refuge. When I loose heart over the apparent success of the wicked, continue to hold my hand and lead me in the paths of righteousness and faith. Cause me to remain close to you and confess your goodness. Amen.”

Meditation 41, Psalm 74: “The LORD Values Obedience Over Religious Gatherings.”

“Why, O God, do You forever reject us, do You fume in anger at the flock You tend?... Your foes roar inside Your meeting-place; they take their signs for true signs. They made Your sanctuary go up in flames; they brought low in dishonor the dwelling place of Your presence. They resolved, ‘Let us destroy them forever!’ They burned all God’s tabernacles in the land. No signs appear for us; there is no longer any prophet; no one among us knows for how long...Rise, O God, champion your cause; be mindful that You are blasphemed by base men all day long.” Psalm 74:1, 4, 7-9, 22

One of the saddest things that can ever happen to a people is to have their cities overrun and sacked by a merciless enemy. Especially difficult for religious leaders is watching their holy places emptied and destroyed. When such things happen, people rarely look to themselves to explain why everything went so wrong; much easier is to give up faith in their god, to say it was all a lie. So why did the LORD allow his covenant people Israel to suffer national destruction and loss of their holy sanctuaries? Why didn’t God protect the temples they built in His name? There is no mystery. God sent prophets to tell his people what they must do. They told the people the LORD demanded obedience to his commandments over assembling themselves together in holy buildings. The prophets told the political elite that as leaders they were required BY GOD to submit to their national enemies – to surrender national independence and survive as vassal states ruled over by powerful empires. God’s covenant people did not listen so for a time the LORD withdrew his hand of protection from them. He did not even protect the temple they had built to His name.

Prayer: “Lord, help me remember obedience is better than empty confession and attending weekly religious gatherings; that what you desire is for me to live as a living, obedient sacrifice. Amen.”

Meditation 42, Psalms 75-77: “The LORD Judges Disobedient Peoples As He Chooses.”

“At the time I choose, I will give judgment equitably....There is a cup in the LORD’s hand with foaming wine fully mixed; from this He pours; all the wicked of the earth drink, draining it to the very dregs.” Psalm 75:3, 9

“The fiercest of men shall acknowledge You when you gird on the last bit of fury.” Psalm 76:11

“Has God forgotten how to pity? Has He in anger stifled His compassion? And I said, ‘It is my fault that the right hand of the Most High has changed...You are the God who works wonders; You have manifested Your strength among the peoples.’” Psalm 77:10, 11, 15

The writer of these three Psalms lived through a period of judgment upon his people and religious system. National leaders were killed or taken into captivity with only the poorest of the poor left on the land. Life was a struggle, faith was hard to maintain. In my own time as as I meditate upon these Psalms the world is undergoing the Corona 19 pandemic. Tens of thousands of people around the world have sickened and died. Entire nations are in lock down. Much of the world economy is at a stand still. Like the final Babylonian assault upon Jerusalem and the temple, this pandemic keeps moving on; all types of people sicken and die with virtually no help from the medical establishment. Even some who insisted their youth, ethnicity or faith would protect them have spent their last hours on earth isolated and gasping for breath. Is this disease a fluke of nature or like the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem a signal from God that not all is well upon planet Earth? What prophet do we have who speaks for God and if there is such a person would we acknowledge the errors of our ways and change? Or would we, like ancient Jerusalem force God to continue to work out his wrath upon a proud and stubborn people?

Prayer: “Lord, you have said there will be times of judgment of disobedient peoples. If now is such a time please help me to see the error of my ways and turn back to your righteous path. Amen.”

Meditation 43, Psalms 78, 79, 80: “The LORD Judged His Own People.”

“He gave His people over to the sword; He was enraged at His very own. Fire consumed their young men, and their maidens remained unwed. Their priests fell by the sword and their widows could not weep.” Psalm 78:62-64

“O God, heathens have entered Your domain, defiled Your holy temple, and turned Jerusalem into ruins. They have left Your servants’ corpses as food for the fowl of heaven, and the flesh of Your faithful for the wild beasts...We have become the butt of our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us...Help us, O God, our deliverer, for the sake of the glory of Your name. Save us and forgive our sin, for the sake of Your name.” Psalm 79:1,2,4,9

“Restore us, O God; show Your favor that we may be delivered...O LORD, God of hosts, restore us; show Your favor that we may be delivered.” Psalm 80:9, 20

Generation after generation the Lord appealed to His covenant people to turn from their sin back to him. He sent prophets to warn them of what would happen if they remained stubborn. He appointed powerful nations to rule over them. They refused to submit to His will so the LORD acted against His covenant people. Around 722 BC the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. In 568 BC, the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the first temple. What a terrible tragedy it was!

Prayer: “Dear Lord, cause us to turn away from our sin and live as your obedient people. Amen.”

Meditation 44, Psalm 81: “Honor the LORD in Word and Deed.”

“Hear, My people, and I will admonish you; Israel, if you would but listen to me! You shall have no foreign god, you shall not bow to an alien god. I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But My people would not listen to Me, Israel would not obey Me. So I let them go after their willful heart that they might follow their own devices. If only My people would listen to Me, if Israel would follow My paths, then would I subdue their enemies at once, strike their foes again and again.” Psalm 81:9-16

Psalm 81 starts out with a call to worship and a remembrance of the LORD’s deliverance of Israel from slavery then abruptly turns to a disturbing topic rarely discussed within polite society - the clause in God’s covenant that states “If you do not honor the conditions of this contract I will abandon you to disaster and national destruction.” What conditions? The conditions that Israel honor the LORD and Him ONLY as their god, and obey whatever He commanded them to do. Israel agreed to this contract at Mt. Sinai. In so doing they took upon themselves a great burden but also received a promise of great blessings through obedience. Sadly, through much of Israel’s history the blessings were taken for granted and the burdens ignored. As a result God allowed them to first go their own way, then suffer the consequences of rebellion – loss of protection from natural disasters and finally national destruction by enemies. Centuries later Jesus saw it all happening again when, as he entered Jerusalem, he wept over the city (Matthew 23:36-38) and prophesied another destruction. In Romans chapter one the Apostle Paul wrote that God’s wrath is revealed as He abandons to their fate ALL people who reject Him and live contrary to his will. It is not necessarily a fact that God actively punishes those who reject or disobey Him; all He needs do is withdraw His hand of protection from misfortune and enemies.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, I desire to worship you and you alone. When I go astray please correct me early with a gentle hand; do not abandon me to my sin and deliver me from those who hate me. Amen.”

Meditation 45, Psalm 82: “God Does Not Judge By the Curve.”

“God stands in the divine assembly; among the divine beings He pronounces judgment. How long will you judge perversely, showing favor to the wicked? [Think!] Judge the wretched and the orphan, vindicate the lowly and the poor; rescue the wretched and the needy; save them from the hand of the wicked. I had taken you for divine beings, sons of the Most High, all of you; but you shall die as men do, fall like any prince. Arise, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are Your possession.”

G.K. Chesterson called America “a nation with a soul of a church.” He spoke correctly! Many Americans seek to advance their moral and religious convictions through political action at a national level. Unfortunately as a people we lack consensus upon which values are most important. The outcome is our two major parties pick and choose which evils are worse than other evils and ignore doing some of the good things God commanded. What we do as individuals and political parties is cry out “Don’t commit THAT evil!” “Don’t omit to do THAT good thing!” Sometimes it seems the only thing our political parties have in common is both feel more righteous than the other. Wrong! Sin is the failure to do EXACTLY what God desires in EVERYTHING. God does not judge by a curve or sliding scale. True righteousness is correct judgment and correct action ALL THE TIME. Hating one sin while engaging in another sin is still sin. In the end we will all be called to account for both our sins of commission and sins of omission – our political heroes included. The Son of Man, not our politics, “fulfills all righteousness” and graciously calls upon each of us to walk with him and learn of him.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, cause me to value doing good as much as I value not doing evil. Amen.”

Meditation 46, Psalm 83: “The Enemies of the LORD Rage Against His Covenant People.”

“O God, do not be silent; do not hold aloof; do not be quiet, O God! For Your enemies rage, Your foes assert themselves. They plot craftily against Your people, take counsel against Your treasured ones. They say, ‘Let us wipe them out as a nation; Israel’s name will be mentioned no more.’ Unanimous in their counsel they have made an alliance against You.” Psalm 83:2-6

Throughout their history the people called Israel have contended with God and for God. Twice they have been destroyed as a nation. For nearly 2000 years they were a discriminated against stateless people dwelling in the midst of those who hated them. The Nazis under Adolf Hitler nearly exterminated the people of Israel from Europe and in our time many others seek to destroy them as a people and as a nation. Surrounded on all sides by religious and irreligious enemies, it is a wonder the people and nation continues to survive. Israel continues on because the great I AM who revealed Himself to them and made an everlasting covenant with them wills that it be so. It is HIS will that delivered the people from bondage in Egypt, it was HIS will that they first became a nation. It is His desire that their suffering as a people ceases and they never again suffer national humiliation. The great I AM has made a covenant with Israel; those who seek to destroy Israel are no friends of God.

Prayer: “LORD, You who called Yourself I AM. I pray for the salvation and peace of Jerusalem. Bring each of your covenant people Israel into the light of your salvation, cause them to cease from contention with you so they may contend for you with all their hearts. Amen.”

Meditation 47, Psalm 84: “We Yearn to Gather Together in the House of the LORD.”

“How lovely is Your dwelling-place, O LORD of hosts. I long, I yearn for the courts of the LORD; my body and soul shout for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself in which to set her young, near Your altar, O LORD of hosts, my king and my God. Happy are they who dwell in Your house; they forever praise you.” Psalm 84:2-5

The writer of Psalm 84 loved the temple of the LORD. When he was in the temple he felt the presence of God. When he was not there he felt a sense of personal loss; he yearned to return to that place in Jerusalem where he felt close to the living God. Nothing disturbed him about that sacred house, not even the sparrows and swallows that flew about freely over the heads of worshipers and built their nests over the altar. As the temple was their physical home so was the temple his spiritual home. Move ahead in time to April of the 2020. The entire world is practicing social distancing to slow the spread of the dreaded Covid 19 virus. Old Jerusalem with its narrow and normally crowded streets is silent. That most treasured of cities where Jews, Christians and Muslims normally crowd together in their respective places of worship seems abandoned. Even there social distancing is the rule. This year there are no Passover, Easter, Ramadan crowds, no holy pilgrims jostling against one another. As in Jerusalem so it is in the other cities – places of worship are nearly empty, accessible to most via Internet alone. For the faithful, worship from home via the Internet is not the same as gathering together in real time with like minded believers. Many believers fell a sense of loss, something missing in their lives. Like the writer of Psalm 94 they yearn with intense desire to join together in the house of their God.

Prayer: “Dear LORD, we know full well that you do not dwell in a house made with human hands. Yet we also know that where two or more of your faithful are gathered together, there you are in some special way. How we yearn for that! Amen.”

Meditation 48, Psalm 85: “Judgment Begins at the House of God.”

“Turn again, O God, our helper, revoke Your displeasure with us. Will You be angry with us forever, prolong Your wrath for all generations? Surely You will revive us again, so that Your people may rejoice in you. Show us, O LORD, Your faithfulness; grant us Your deliverance. Let me hear what God, the LORD, will speak; He will promise well-being to His people, His faithful ones; may they not turn to folly...Justice goes before Him as He sets out on His way” Psalm 85:5-9, 14

Human beings have a strong desire for certainty and security, and expect whatever religion we follow will assure us all is well with us and provide us with certainty that the way we wish to view the world around us is correct. Religious leaders know this; the result is that many are inclined more to say what their congregations want to believe than to risk upsetting things by saying what they know people do not want to hear. For the sake of worldly values such leaders give up the necessary corrective role of a prophet and assume the harmless, uncritical role of a nanny. Karl Marx, perhaps in recognition that such religion bred spiritual passivity, coined his famous maxim “religion is the opiate of the masses.” He was not far off! A religion of assurance minus the prophetic (corrective!) word delivered to the congregation is as addictive and damaging as an opiate. Such religion provides only a momentary spiritual pleasure that enables the believer to avoid living fully in this world as an obedient servant of the living God. Such religion is folly; it sustains sin, spiritual sickness and death. The end of such religion is judgment which, as 1st Peter 4:17 tells us, “begins in the house of God.”

Prayer: “Dear God in heaven, let us not surround ourselves with teachers who speak only what we want to hear, preachers who hide from us your corrective wisdom. Cause your truth and your justice to reign in our congregations and over our lives! Amen.”

Meditation 49, Psalm 86: “The Lord is our Source of Aid and Comfort.”

“O God, arrogant men have risen against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life; they are not mindful of You. But You, O Lord, are a God compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me: grant Your strength to Your servant and deliver the son of Your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor; that my enemies may see and be frustrated because You, O LORD, have given me aid and comfort.” Psalm 86:14-17

Quite often in our lives as followers of the Lord some good thing we do for another is soon after followed by some form of attack or reversal that appears to be punishment for the previous good thing that was done. Sometimes when this happened, my wife would respond with the saying “no good deed goes unpunished.” This is not mere cynicism – in the spiritual world in which live there is warfare; sometimes even our friends appear as enemies. Sometimes even the righteous oppose the work of God. Such was the case with our Psalmist. He was doing right, serving the Lord and confessing His Name when enemies appeared who had no concern for the things of God. These were not the normal type of enemies who just gossip and backbite, they were ruthless people with murder on their hearts. The Psalmist did not give up living for the Lord nor did he seek to return evil with evil. Rather, he went to the Lord in prayer. He stated his case – evil men were seeking to destroy him. He confessed that Lord in His patience was slow to anger – including towards His enemies. Lastly he laid out a request he felt the Lord would be pleased to respond to – he asked the Lord to protect him from his enemies, to give him aid and comfort so they would see that God was on his side.

Prayer: “Great Father in heaven, when the forces of evil come against me, I ask only that you defend me from them. Provide aid and comfort so that all will see that You are with me. Amen.”

Meditation 50, Psalm 87: “The LORD Has Registered All Peoples as Natives of Zion.”

“The LORD loves the gates of Zion, His foundation on the holy mountains, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. I mention Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge Me; Philistia, and Tyre, and Cush – each was born there. Indeed, it shall be said of Zion, ‘Every man was born there.’ He, the Most High, will preserve it. The LORD will inscribe in the register of peoples that each was born there. Singers and dancers alike will say ‘All my roots are in You.’” Psalm 87:1-7 * Egypt*

In the “already not yet” world of faith, our Psalm writer set aside his human limitations to enter into the world of prophetic reality. Through revelation or a burst of divine awareness the Psalmist perceived the common spiritual destiny of all the peoples of this world is recognized through the work the LORD as accomplished in the city of God, Zion which is Jerusalem. The Psalmist stated that ALL PEOPLES will recognize that holy city as their common birthplace, that all people will be registered as being native to that city – including people who in that day and in our own time are not always welcome by the faithful. Perhaps this is the spiritual truth Jesus referred to when he said to His disciples “And I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself....the gates of Hell will not prevail against my church.” Knowing Jesus’ words and having confidence in God’s promise that He will preserve Zion, why should we despair over the apparent unbelief of others and fear for the future of Jerusalem? Let us live in faith and confidence that all the LORD has said will come to pass!

Prayer: “Lord, I have read in your word of a future time when all the world will acknowledge your throne in Jerusalem, and you will count all peoples as Your people. Cause me to believe and in the light of that promise, love all peoples as Your people. Amen.”

Meditation 51, Psalm 88: “The LORD Has Not Forgotten the Dead.”

“My eyes pine away from affliction; I call to You, O LORD, each day; I stretch out my hands to You. Do You work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise to praise You? Is Your faithful care recounted in the grave, Your constancy in the place of perdition? Are Your wonders made known in the netherworld, Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion? As for me, I cry out to You, O LORD; each morning my prayer greets You. Why, O LORD, do You reject me, do You hide Your face from me? From my youth I have been afflicted and near death; I suffer Your terrors wherever I turn.” Psalm 88:10-16

There are people around us, perhaps you yourself, who from childhood struggle with physical pain, fear, anxiety and depression. The writer of this Psalm was such a person. Though a man of great faith who began each day with the LORD in prayer, from childhood he suffered intense distress. Even in the midst of prayer and writing praise songs his distress left him asking why God seemed so far away and unresponsive; he wondered if God was against him and his thoughts turned to death. Perhaps the Psalmist considered ending his own life or perhaps he just wished he were dead and free of his distress. If he was tempted to take his own life he held back because he had no revelation, no certain witness that the place of the dead would be any closer to God than this life. Was God with the dead or wasn’t He? If he were to die, would the next world be a better place? The Psalmist had no answer to those questions but centuries later Jesus’ disciple Peter was able to answer the question “Has God forgotten the dead?” In 1st Peter 3:18-20 he tells the world that at His death Jesus “was made alive in the spirit and went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” Through Jesus’ death and resurrection we know God has not forgotten the dead nor has He abandoned them to hopelessness!

Prayer: “Dear Lord, in my times of fear, anxiety and depression I turn to you and wait for your salvation. Please be with me, do not be far off from me. Restore my soul. Amen.”

Meditation 52, Psalm 89: “The Covenants of God Include Penalty Clauses.”

“I have made a covenant with My chosen one; I have sworn to My servant David: I will establish your offspring forever, I will confirm your throne for all generations...If his sons forsake My teaching and do not live by My rules; if they violate My laws, and do not observe My commands, I will punish their transgression with the rod, their iniquity with plagues...I will not violate My covenant, or change what I have uttered. I have sworn by My holiness, once and for all; I will not be false to David. His line shall continue forever, his throne, as the sun before Me, as the moon, established forever, an enduring witness in the sky.” Psalm 89:4, 5, 30-33, 35-37

The LORD made a covenant with ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai in which He promised to guide and protect them. Later he made a covenant with David that his “seed” (descendants or descendant) would rule for ever. Sadly, neither Israel nor most of David’s descendants lived up to their side of the contracts. At the national level, the ultimate penalty for national violation of the covenant was invasion and destruction by enemies. The other covenant, the one between the LORD and David seemed more secure in that it promised an eternal throne to David’s “seed” that would one day rule over all the kingdoms of the world. However because most of David’s descendants failed to live up to their end of the contract they became a ruling house without a territory over which to rule, eventually rulers in name only. A royal household without territory to rule over? This disturbed the writer of the Psalm. He wondered if God had broken his promise to David. Was God false or was the faith of Israel wrong? God was not false, the error was in the Psalmist’s understanding of what God had promised to David. The promise of an eternal throne was not to all of David’s descendants, it was to ONE of his descendants, one who would in the unknown future be given authority over all the nations. Who is that king? Those who follow Jesus recognize Him as Messiah, king, the LORD who instituted those two covenants, initiated the Kingdom of God within human hearts and will one day return to Earth to sit upon the throne of David as ruler over all the nations.

Prayer: “LORD in heaven, may Your word always be true and Your promises fulfilled for all the world to see. Cause me to know your will and live as obedient servants of King Jesus. Amen.”

Meditation 53, Psalm 90: “The LORD is Our Refuge and Joy.”

“Turn, O LORD! How long? Show mercy to Your servants. Satisfy us at daybreak with Your steadfast love that we may sing for joy all our days. Give us joy for as long as You have afflicted us, for the years we have suffered misfortune. Let Your deeds be seen by Your servants, Your glory by their children. May the favor of the Lord, our God, be upon us; let the work of our hands prosper, O prosper the work of our hands!” Psalm 90:13-17

In the Psalms we often find references to human sorrow and sin in juxtaposition with appeals to God to show mercy and bestow joy upon the suffering. With some writers we sense they attributed everything that happened to them, good or bad, to God’s direct intervention; God was viewed as both cause and cure for human suffering. The writer of this Psalm views life itself as “trouble and sorrow.” He is disturbed by memories of personal sin and the feeling that he deserves God’s wrath. YET in spite of his somewhat pessimistic theology he was not bitter towards God. He recognized God as tempering his wrath with mercy AND he recognized God as the ultimate source of human joy. In spite of the bad things he had seen in the world around him he was able to see the goodness and mercy of God - and appeal to the LORD to extend His love and bless the works of His people.

Prayer: “Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. Bless us with the joy you have had from eternity. Shower upon us your great love and mercy. Amen.”

Meditation 53, Psalm 91: “The LORD Does Not Abandon His Faithful.”

“O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the protection of Shaddai – I say of the LORD, my refuge and stronghold, my God in whom I trust, that He will save you from the fowler’s trap, from the destructive plague. He will cover you with His pinions; you will find refuge under His wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield. You need not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in the darkness, or the scourge that ravages at noon.” Psalm 91:1-5

I had a dear older friend talk to me of Psalm 91. As a young man he served as an Army medic in the Korean War. He talked about his trust in the words of the Psalm and how an explosion sent shrapnel into his body that caused pain his entire life. A man of deep Christian faith, he was grateful for his life. May 2020, the Covid-19 virus. An early American victim was a pastor who doubted the seriousness of the disease, rejected social distancing and died. Faith aside, the obvious fact is people of God get sick, injured and die like other people. Does this invalidate faith? Is Psalm 91 the product of wishful thinking? I don’t think so; I believe there are unrecognized miracles and interventions that protect us from harm. We believers feel His presence in the midst of danger and speak of impending death as “going home to Jesus.” Close to my heart is a niece who died at age six of stomach cancer. Preparing to do her funeral, I interviewed hospital staff. Her nurses told me the little girl expressed her wish for after she died. “When I die I want to come back to help sick children, just like the tumor angel who comes and rubs my tummy and makes the pain go away.” The nurses never saw the “tumor angel.” They believed as do I that God sent a messenger to do for that little girl what they could not do. The LORD does love the little children and will not abandon to a lonely fate those who seek to be close to Him!

Prayer: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not fear. Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for He is with me. Amen.”

Meditation 54, Psalm 92 & 93: “The LORD Is a Loving and Faithful King.”

“It is good to praise the LORD, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High, To proclaim Your steadfast love at daybreak, Your faithfulness each night...How great are Your deeds, O LORD, how very subtle Your designs! Psalm 92:2, 3, 6

“The LORD is king...He is girded with strength. The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken. Your throne stands firm from of old; from eternity You have existed. Your decrees are indeed enduring; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, for all times.” Psalm 93:1, 2, 5

Who is the LORD of whom the Psalmist sang? He is the One who walked with Adam and Eve in the garden, the One who rebuked Cain for insolence and murder, the One who called Noah to build a great ship, the One who divided the first empire of man, the One who commanded Abraham to leave his country, the One who saved Israel from slavery in Egypt, the One who met Joshua as Commander of the Hosts of the LORD, the One who poured out his glory over Israel’s tabernacle and first temple, the One who said “if you have seen me, you have seen the Father...before Abraham was, I am,” the One who conquered death and poured out His glory upon the early Church. The LORD is the alpha and omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, you are the God of creation and Lord of history. You came before all that we know and will remain after the earth has ceased to exist. I thank you that in your matchless wisdom you have determined the greatest of all things is love, followed by truth and faithfulness to that which is good. Amen.”

Meditation 55, Psalm 94: “The LORD Is Not Quick to Judge the Wicked.”

How long shall the wicked, O LORD, how long shall the wicked exult, shall they utter insolent speech, shall all evildoers vaunt themselves? The crush Your people, O LORD, they afflict Your very own; they kill the widow and the stranger; they murder the fatherless...Judgment shall again accord with justice and all the upright shall rally to it...the LORD is my haven; my God is my sheltering rock. He will make their evil recoil upon them, annihilate them through their own wickedness; the LORD our God will annihilate them.” Psalm 94:3-5, 21-23

The Psalmist begins this song with a heartbroken cry for God to judge certain people who commit harmful acts against those who are weaker. He describes those people as “arrogant, wicked, insolent, evildoers, brutish wrongdoers and evil people.” In contrast, the people they are harming are “God’s people, the widow, stranger and fatherless, righteous and innocent.” Is it really that easy to divide good and bad people? Do we want God to judge US for all we have done or left undone? A joke I heard in a Christian college chapel suggests why it is God does not quickly answer prayers for judgment: During a meeting of ministers one of them was asked to open the meeting with prayer. As he was praying the words “Oh Lord, God of justice, I pray you bring into this room the reward we deserve” he was interrupted by the sound of chairs being pushed back from the table and the feet of ministers running from the room. The praying minister was offended and shouted “Why are you running out on my prayer?!” The ministers running from the room shouted back “If you are asking God to bring judgment upon this room as we deserve, we don’t want to be anywhere nearby!” The joke is not about ministers but upon the idea that we can easily separate good people from bad. The harsh reality of human nature is we all are sinners. If not “evil doers” ourselves, we have certainly benefited from the actions of others we view as evil doers. Judgment, when it comes, will be accompanied by grace. It must be for were God to judge each of us according to our sin, we would all be lost.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, I know judgment is at hand. Till that time teach me to live rightly before you. When I stand before you, let the love and grace of your Son bring me safely home. Amen.”

Meditation 56, Psalms 95-100: “Come Before the LORD with Praise and Worship.”

“Come, let us sing joyously to the LORD, raise a shout for our rock and deliverer...Come, let us bow down and kneel, bend the knee before the LORD our maker, for He is our God, and we are the people He tends, the flock in his care...for He is coming to rule the earth; He will rule the world justly, and its peoples in faithfulness...The LORD is king! Let the earth exult, the many islands rejoice...Sing praise to the LORD, all the earth, break into joyous songs of praise! Sing praise to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song. With trumpets and the blast of the horn raise a shout before the LORD, the King...Exalt the LORD our God and bow down to His footstool; He is holy!..For the LORD is good; His steadfast love is eternal; His faithfulness to all generations.” Psalms 95:1,6, 96:13, 97:1, 98:5-6, 99:5, 100:5

Psalms 95-100 call us to worship the LORD and witness to his glory. We are called to sing, shout, use musical instruments subtle and quiet, and instruments loud and blaring. In our prayers and praise we confess the LORD as our strength and deliverer, as the One who watches over us as Caregiver. We bow before Him in humility, joy and thanksgiving. We confess Him as holy, loving and faithful. As His thankful witnesses we encourage all the world to acknowledge the LORD as God and King!

Prayer: We praise you O Lord, we bow before you in thanksgiving and worship. We thank you for your love and faithful plan for us. We bless You who our creator, Lord and coming King! Amen.”

Meditation 57, Psalm 101: “Our Good Intentions Are No Guarantee of Good Actions.”

“I will sing of faithfulness and justice; I will chant a hymn to You, O LORD. I will study the way of the blameless; when shall I obtain it? I will live without blame in my house. I will not set before my eyes anything base; I hate crooked dealing; I will have none of it. Perverse thoughts will be far from me; I will know nothing of evil. He who slanders his friend in secret I will destroy; I cannot endure the haughty and proud man. My eyes are on the trusty men of the land, to have them at my side. He who follows the way of the blameless shall be in my service. He who deals deceitfully shall not live in my house; he who speaks untruth shall not stand before my eyes. Each morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, to rid the city of the LORD of all evildoers.” Psalm 101

Did King David write this Psalm as an idealistic, newly installed king in Jerusalem? Or was it as a chastened and humbled sinner paying the price for his personal sin? We do not know. What we do know is it was David’s desire and intention to live rightly and justly before the LORD. Sadly, he was never as perfect as he wished to be. Sometimes David sinned greatly and as king of a nation, those sins harmed many of his people. His failures as a father brought down havoc upon the kingdom. His failure to control his eyes brought another man’s wife to his own bed. His sin with that man’s wife led to his abandoning her blameless and trustworthy husband to intentional death on the battlefield. Through sins of omission and commission, David proved himself a sinner capable of the most wicked acts. Had the LORD done to David as David proposed to do to the wicked of Jerusalem, David himself would have been among the number of those destroyed. But that is not how the LORD usually works. Our God is gracious and forgiving, slow to anger and execute judgment. He knows even the best of his children are incapable of perfection because “we are made of dust” and “only God is good.”

Prayer: “Dear LORD, I confess myself a sinner in need of correction and grace. Forgive me my sins as I forgive the sins of those who sin against me. Create in me a clean and humble heart that I might live rightly before You today and all the days of my life. Amen.”

Meditation 58, Psalm 102: “The LORD Hears the Prayer of Those Who Cry for Justice.”

“O LORD, hear my prayer; let my cry come before You. Do not hide Your face from me in my time of trouble; turn Your ear to me; when I cry, answer me speedily...He has turned to the prayer of the destitute and has not spurned their prayer...For He looks down from His holy height; the LORD beholds the earth from heaven to hear the groans of the prisoner, to release those condemned to death.” Psalm 102:2,3,18,20,21

As I write Minnesotans are in shock. Another person doing good has been killed by police. July 6, 2016, Philando Castile, a much-appreciated school employee, shot in his car by a policeman. April 30, 2019, Justine Ruszczyk from Australia shot after calling police regarding a possible crime in progress. May 25, 2020 Salvation Army trainee George Floyd taken down and apparently deliberately suffocated by a policeman while three others stood by. Two black men, one white woman killed by police without justification. How are we who follow Jesus to respond when those sworn to uphold law and maintain order are themselves lawless and out of order? Should we also become lawless and disorderly? Should we riot and destroy property as some have done in Minneapolis and other cities? No, destruction merely increases the suffering of the poorest of our community. The godly response is to mourn, cry out to God for justice and continue to do good. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, we your people are in pain and shock that evil walks among us even within the ranks of those sworn to serve and protect. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Meditation 59, Psalm 103: “The LORD Does Not Reward Us According to Our Sins.”

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. He will not contend forever, or nurse His anger for all time. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor has He requited us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him. As east is far from west, so far has He removed our sins from us. As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear Him.” Psalm 103:8-14

There was a gathering of preachers meeting together in a conference. One of the preachers was asked to open in prayer. As he was praying “Oh Lord in heaven. I give thanks to you for being a just God. Please reward your servants gathered together in this room according to our righteousness and your justice.” Suddenly there was a burst of noise from chairs being pushed back from tables and the sound of people running. The praying minister opened his eyes and saw many of his fellow ministers running from the room. Startled, he shouted “Why are you running out on my prayer?” One of those fleeing the room shouted back “If you are going to ask God to reward people in this room according to what they deserve, I don’t want to be here!” The truth of human nature is we are all prone to sin. If we were all rewarded according to our sin we would be in continual misery. Fortunately God does not reward us according to our sin because He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving and forgiving. Like a good father, He overlooks many faults and chooses patient instruction over punishment of each and every mistake His children make. For those who come to Him in repentance and faith, His forgiveness is as vast as the east is from the west.

Prayer: “Heavenly Father, I thank you that in your love and grace you do not repay all my sins as I deserve. I thank you for being a compassionate Father and bless You Lord with all my soul. Amen.”

Meditation 60, Psalm 104: “Sing Praise to the LORD of Creation!”

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty, wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth...You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man’s labor that he may get food out of the earth—wine that cheers the hearts of men, oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains man’s life...How many are the things You have made, O LORD; You have made them all with wisdom: the earth is full of Your creations...I will sing to the LORD as long as I live, all my life I will chant hymns to my God. May my prayer be pleasing to Him; I will rejoice in the LORD.” Psalm 104:1,2, 14, 15, 24, 33, 34

In Psalm 104 the singer praises the work of the God of creation. As writer and poet, he observes the natural world around him and refers back to the sacred stories of creation and the flood. In writing his hymn he does not seek to explain the hows or whys of what God has done. Nor does he enter into debating the meanings of the days of creation or evolution vs. intelligent design. Our writer does not take upon himself the task of philosopher or psychologist seeking to discover new insights regarding the meaning of existence or the character of God. Nor is our writer a scientist seeking to understand the underlying mechanics of nature so as to invent some new consumer product. Our writer is none of those things; he is a poet writing a hymn in praise of the LORD of creation. The hows, whys and whens of creation mean little to him because he is in love with the WHO of creation. From beginning to end the true object of this Psalm is the LORD who is great enough to create all that exists yet close enough to make Himself known to the heart of man.

Prayer: “Lord, I believe you are the One who brought all things into existence and has called me to Yourself. May your glory endure forever and may You rejoice in what you have done! Amen.”

Meditation 61, Psalms 105 & 106 “Do Not Neglect The Calling of the LORD.”

“Praise the LORD; call on His name; proclaim His deeds among the peoples...Remember the wonders He has done, His portents and the judgments He has pronounced, O offspring of Abraham, His servant, O descendants of Jacob, His chosen ones...Mindful of His sacred promise to His servant Abraham, He led His people out in gladness, His chosen ones with joyous song...He gave them the lands of nations; they inherited the wealth of peoples, that they might keep His laws and observe His teachings. Hallelujah.” Psalm 105:1, 5, 6, 42, 43, 44

“We have sinned like our forefathers; we have gone astray, done evil...He would have destroyed them had not Moses His chosen one confronted Him in the breach to avert His destructive wrath...Their own sons and daughters they sacrificed to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to idols of Canaan...The LORD was angry with His people and He abhorred His inheritance...Their enemies oppressed them and they were subject to their power...When He saw that they were in distress, when He heard their cry, He was mindful of His covenant and in His great faithfulness relented...Blessed is the LORD, God of Israel, from eternity to eternity. Let all the people say Amen. Hallelujah.” Psalm 106:6, 23, 37, 38, 42, 44, 45, 48

Psalms 105 and 106 contain within them the history of a people chosen by God to represent Him to all other peoples. In their history we see a reflection of our own peoples' relationship with God. Psalm 105 celebrates God's calling of Abraham and Jacob as the forefathers of a chosen people to whom He would give great blessings and from whom He would expect great obedience. Psalm 106 reveals how far short that people fell of meeting God's expectations, even to the point of killing their own children in the worship of demonic idols. The LORD did not stand by silently. He threatened to make Moses the father of a new nation but Moses stepped between the LORD and Israel, begging Him to extend mercy. The LORD relented but as the centuries passed He allowed the nations to oppress and finally remove His covenant people from the land He had given them. Then they were sorry for their rebellion and cried out for mercy. The LORD heard their prayers and caused their oppressors to look upon them with favor till finally some of them were able to return to the promised land.

Prayer: “Lord God of Abraham, my people have sinned against you. We follow after the idols of man and stand by as the blood of innocents is shed. Cause us to repent and humbly serve You. Amen.”

Meditation 62, Psalm 107: “The LORD Delivers Those Who Cry Out To Him.”

“Praise the LORD, for He is good; His steadfast love is eternal! Thus let the redeemed of the LORD say, those He redeemed from adversity...Let them praise the LORD for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind. Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell His deeds in joyful song.” Psalm 107:1, 2, 21, 22

Sometimes people speak of a judgmental and unforgiving God of the Old Testament and a loving, merciful God of the New Testament. This view of God is incorrect; throughout the Bible God is portrayed as consistently loving, slow to anger and merciful to those who call upon Him for help in time of need. Of course the Bible sometimes shows God as punishing human sin – the Old Testament covers thousands of years and has a number of such stories. Most of the New Testament covers a few decades with fewer stories of God punishing sin. That said, not all that happens is because “God did it.” Jesus and the Old Testament prophets rejoiced in God as helper, savior of all those who turned from sin and called upon Him for deliverance. In times of adversity and judgment God desires to save!

Prayer: “Dear God, in my time of trouble, hear my cry. Deliver me from all sin and evil. Amen.”

Meditation 63, Psalm 108: “The LORD is Not Ours to Command.”

“My heart is firm, O God: I will sing and chant a hymn with all my soul...I will praise You among the peoples, O LORD, sing a hymn to You among the nations...But You have rejected us, O God; God, You do not march with our armies. Grant us Your aid against the foe, for the help of man is worthless. With God we shall triumph; He will trample our foes.” Psalm 108:2, 4, 12-14

Every nation that goes to war appeals to God (or the gods) to go out with them. Only one nation has a clear record of the LORD actually leading their armies. That is Israel. Joshua 5:13-15 tells how after the people crossed the Jordan River a “man” with drawn sword appeared before Joshua. Joshua challenged Him, saying “are you friend or foe?” The man replied “I am neither. I command the armies of the LORD. Remove your sandals for this is holy ground.” Because the LORD was with them and they followed His orders, Israel went on to capture Jericho and enter into the land God had promised them. That was then but the time came when the LORD was no longer with Israel because Israel was not with Him. They went out to war against His will and instead of helping them in battle the LORD allowed their enemies to prevail. At the time of the American Civil War both sides prayed fervently that God would go with them into battle. Both sides believed they were faithful Christians and their cause was just. The side that fired the first shot and was led by people who believed God’s will was that they keep other men as slaves lost that war. Truth is, God is not our servant, He is not ours to command.

Prayer: “Dear LORD, we confess that You are not ours to command. You are not our servant but we are Yours. Command us, lead us in YOUR paths of righteousness for Your Name’s sake. Amen.”

Meditation 64, Psalm 109: “The Lord Understands How We Feel.”

“O God of my praise, do not keep aloof, for the wicked and the deceitful open their mouth against me; they speak to me with lying tongue. They encircle me with words of hate; they attack me without cause. They answer my love with accusation and I must stand judgment. They repay me with evil for good, with hatred for my love.” Psalm 109:1-5

In English there is an expression “say what you mean and mean what you say.” For most people that’s easier said than done and probably best that we not follow such advice. Fortunately when it comes to talking to God we might as well say what we feel. The Psalmists did not hold back! They knew God understood everything; they had no reason to hide what they thought. The writer of this Psalm was a hurting and angry man who felt abused, misunderstood and punished without reason. His fervent prayer to God was DO SOMETHING! He wanted God to punish the people who had done him wrong; he wanted God to judge those people, even kill them. The Psalmist went so far in his desire for revenge that he asked God to make their children homeless and hungry! It’s not a pretty Psalm but it’s how the writer was feeling. Fortunately for all of us, God understands and accepts such feelings. He knows we are mere mortals. But does He want us to act out in our pain to avenge ourselves? Does God necessarily reach out His hand to punish those who hurt us? No, he does not. Jesus said the way in which we forgive those who sin against us is the way God forgives our sins. Even on the cross Jesus provided the supreme example of forgiveness when in the midst of that horrible shame and pain he prayed “Father forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.”

Prayer: “Dear God, you know when people come against me for no reason I feel hurt, angry and vengeful. Thank you for Your grace to understand my feelings. And thank you that because of Jesus I know you want me to forgive those people. LORD, help me to do that. Lead me not into temptation and deliver me from those who seek to harm me. Amen.”

Meditation 65, Psalm 110: “The LORD Is Our High Priest and King.”

“The LORD said to my lord, ‘Sit at My right hand while I make your enemies your footstool.’ The LORD will stretch forth from Zion your mighty scepter; hold sway over your enemies...The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek by My decree.”
Psalm 110:1, 2, 4

This Psalm was recorded by David as a declaration made by the LORD to another person. The LORD speaks, David hears the words but it is not to him the LORD is speaking. Rather, the LORD is speaking to David’s descendant, one whom David refers to as his Lord! This person will be a righteous ruler (Melchizedek) given authority to rule over and judge all the nations. The original Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20) was a priest of God who was also king over Salem. Abraham acknowledged his authority when he gave an offering of 10% of the goods he recovered from raiders who had attacked Sodom and Gomorrah and had taken his nephew Lot and family as slaves. Abraham bowed before Melchizedek, viewed him as his superior. Centuries after these events Jesus, in conversation with the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41-46), asked ‘What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?’ They said ‘He is the descendant of David.’ Jesus replied “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord?” The Pharisees were silent because they knew Jesus was a descendant of David and was doing many wonderful miracles and teaching the people about the kingdom of God. They understood Jesus was revealing Himself to them as Israel’s righteous king.

Prayer: “Heavenly Father, we look around us in the world and see sin and disorder in government and on the street. We ask ourselves “how long O Lord?” and yearn for the return of your Son as our priest and king who will rule over all the world. Amen.”

Meditation 66, Psalms 111 & 112: “The Knowledge of God Compels Us to Generous Deeds.”

“The works of the LORD are great, within reach of all who desire them...The LORD is gracious and compassionate; He gives food to those who fear Him; He is ever mindful of His covenant...He has won renown for His wonders. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD; all who practice it gain sound understanding. Praise of Him is everlasting. Psalm 111:2, 4, 5, 10

“All goes well with the man who lends generously, who conducts his affairs with equity. He shall never be shaken; the beneficent man will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is firm, he trusts in the LORD.” Psalm 113:5-7

Psalm 111 and 112 are songs of praise through which the writer proclaims some of the powerful works God had done in Israel’s history: revealing Himself to Israel, making an eternal covenant with them, giving the land as their heritage. He also writes of God’s character: beneficence, gracious, compassionate, provider, faithful to His covenant, truthful, just, holy, awesome and protecting of the poor. The Psalmist says all these things are knowable about the LORD; they are within reach of all who desire to know him and be blessed in Him. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not the objective the Psalmist has in mind. He recognizes God has a purpose in His self-revelation and his powerful works. The LORD’s desire for his faithful is that we lend generously to those in need, conduct our affairs rightly, live our lives in faith not in fear, give freely to the poor, be gracious, compassionate and beneficent at all times. The Psalmist assures us that in doing these things we shall ourselves enjoy success and will prosper in our ways.

Prayer: O LORD, we praise you for your wonderful acts of power and grace. We thank you that your character is known to us. Help us to live according to your goodness and generosity. Amen.”

Meditation 67, Psalms 113 & 114: “The LORD Is Able To Reverse The Fortunes of His People.”

“Who is like the LORD our God, who, enthroned on height, sees what is below, in heaven and on earth? He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap to set them with the great, with the great men of His people. He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children. Hallelujah.” Psalm 113:5-9

“Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain.” Psalm 114:7

Psalm 113 and 114 remember times in which God down from heaven to earth, saw the struggles of His people and in compassion reversed their situation. He raised the poor and needy from the dust, established them in secure positions and even set them into positions of leadership. The Lord saw childless women crying out for children of their own and answered their prayers for children. The Lord saw His people in the desert crying out for water in a place where no water was visible and He gave them water. In each and every one of these situations the LORD reversed what seemed to be bad fortune, turning it into something good and wonderful. In doing these things He proved Himself a good and loving God. Hallelujah!

Prayer: “Dear Lord in heaven, you see the way things are going down here on earth. We are in great need of your intervention. I pray in your mercy you will reverse what is bad in our land, make something good. Deliver your people O Lord! Amen.”

Meditation 68, Psalms 115-117: “Serve the LORD With Thanksgiving and Glorify Him Alone.”

“Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to Your name bring glory for the sake of Your love and Your faithfulness...O you who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their trust and shield...He will bless those who fear the LORD, small and great alike.” Psalm 115:1, 11, 13

“The LORD is gracious and beneficent; our God is compassionate...How can I repay the LORD for all His bounties to me? I raise the cup of deliverance and invoke the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people...” Psalm 116:5, 12-14

“Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples, for great is His steadfast love toward us; the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Hallelujah!” Psalm 117

One of the greatest dangers a believer faces in worship and service is idolatry. The believer who ridicules man-made idols of wood and stone as being useless can sometimes fail to recognize in himself the tendency to glorify ourselves or our ministry at the expense of God. We can become so immersed in our service or worship that we upstage the LORD! The Psalmist recognized this danger and responded to it with gratitude for all the things the LORD had done for him and for others. He confessed the LORD as being gracious, kind and full of compassion. He sang and shouted of the constant love, the eternal faithfulness of the LORD. Communing personally with God, the Psalmist raised up and drank from the cup of salvation. Having done this he determined to fulfill his vows to the LORD in the presence of all the people. In a spirit of humility, thankfulness and praise, forgetting himself, he went out to live life rightly before the LORD and fulfill the sacred vows of service he had made to the LORD.”

Prayer: “Heavenly father, cause me to remember I am the object of your grace and love; without You I am nothing. In my service and worship of You help me forget myself and in all that I do, bring glory to Your name. Amen.”

Meditation 69, Psalm 118: “The LORD Turns What Is Rejected Into His Building Material.”

“In distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and brought me relief. The LORD is on my side, I have no fear; what can man do to me? With the LORD on my side as my helper, I will see the downfall of my foes...I shall not die but live and proclaim the works of the LORD...I praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my deliverance. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our sight...Praise the LORD for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal.” Psalm 118:5-7, 17, 21-24, 29

David, the music minded youngest son in his family was thought suitable only for watching the sheep until the day the LORD’s prophet came to anoint him to succeed king Saul, whom the LORD had rejected. Years later, after many personal trials including persecution by the king, Saul died in battle against Israel’s enemies and David was proclaimed king. The LORD had taken that shepherd musician boy and elevated him to be King of Israel. Move ahead to 1974. 22 year old US Army private Billy Moore made a fateful decision that altered the course of his life, a mistake that required God’s direct intervention to remedy. Desperate for money, he went by night into a house to rob a man, was shot at by that man and returned fire, killing him. Mr. Moore was quickly arrested, confessed his crime and sentenced to death. One night Billy was contemplating suicide in his cell. He heard a voice say “If you are so sad and upset about killing someone, why are you going to do it again?” Soon after that experience Billy was told about the love of God, accepted Jesus into his life, was baptized and began to minister to fellow inmates. Billy’s turn to the Lord impressed even the family of his victim; they joined a chorus of voices including Rev. Jessie Jackson and Mother Theresa who advocated that Billy not be executed. As the moment of execution approached, he heard an audible voice say “You shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” Seven hours before his date with the electric chair Billy was pardoned. In November of 1991 he was released from prison and has been serving as a minister of the LORD since his release.

Prayer: “My Lord, you made a king of a shepherd boy, ministers of murderers and sent to us our true and righteous king Jesus born of a virgin. I thank you and praise you for these things! Amen.”