

# The Quarterly



PSALMS

SUMMER AT CITIES CHURCH



Cities Church

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The Quarterly is a publication of Cities Church that complements our current sermon series. It includes Bible study resources and articles from our congregation.

All Scripture quotations are in ESV unless otherwise noted.

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Week One

P S A L M 1

What  
to Embrace

E M I L Y H O L L E Y

PSALM 1

Blessed is the man  
    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
    and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree  
    planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
    and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.  
The wicked are not so,  
    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in  
the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the  
righteous;  
for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

# What to Embrace

## Emily Holley

The First Psalm serves as a gateway to the rest of the psalms and offers you two ways to live: you can guide your life with God's instruction, or you can take the advice of those who reject his ways. Each choice leads to very different endings.

The subject of this poem is a "blessed man," and your desire should be to embody the characteristics of this man so that you experience blessing as well. The term blessed is more than just a temporary or circumstantial feeling of happiness. Instead, it refers to something much more valuable. It is a state of well-being in relationship with God that belongs to those who follow his law and obey his commandments.

The first thing that is read in this psalm is a warning for the man to not be pulled in with the wicked, sinners and scoffers. A godly person who is following God's law refuses to follow the moral orientation of such a person's lifestyle. As the first verse progresses, the man falls more and more deeply into the fray of the ungodly. Initially, he is walking, then standing, and

then sitting among the wicked. This progression illuminates how easily we can be pulled into the enticing temporary thrills of those around us who offer what looks like satisfaction but is instead empty. Our hearts are so easily deceived by these things. Highlighting this, Alexander Pope wrote,

VICE IS A MONSTER OF SO  
FRIGHTFUL MIEN  
AS TO BE HATED NEEDS BUT TO BE SEEN;  
YET SEEN TOO OFT, FAMILIAR  
WITH HER FACE,  
WE FIRST ENDURE, THEN PITY,  
THEN EMBRACE.

This poetic verse speaks to the temptation we have to fall in love with the things we are surrounded by most often. When we are meditating on vices and monsters our disposition becomes one that eventually wants to embrace these things. Knowing this inclination of our hearts to love the things that we think about and surround ourselves with, the psalmist encourages this blessed man to instead meditate on the

law of the Lord. It is not enough to simply avoid the wicked, sinners and scoffers. We must replace this void by filling it with something more valuable: the law of the Lord.

Those who have ever attempted a successful dieting plan know the importance of not only eliminating bad foods. For the diet to be sustainable, the dieter must replace bad foods with healthy foods. In the same way, as our hearts yearn to wallow in sinful ambitions we must strive to face every situation—no matter how mundane—with the aim of pleasing the Lord by knowing and following his Word.

The psalmist leaves you with a choice that has eternal consequences. What will you choose to surround yourself with and meditate on?

The psalmist then shares two contrasting similes based on agriculture.

The first image is a tree which is in a dry climate but nevertheless thrives because of a constant supply of fresh water. A tree bears fruit not for itself but for others. When the blessed man is faithful, the benefit is for those around him. The second image is that of chaff. As farmers brought in their crop, they removed the lighter straw and husks from the edible kernels. To do this the farmer tossed the threshed wheat into the air. The chaff flew away for, unlike the tree which benefited those around him, the chaff had no benefit to the farmer.

The psalmist leaves you with a choice that has eternal consequences. What will you choose to surround yourself with and meditate on? Choose carefully because the outcome is fixed. The wicked cannot stand in the face of judgment. They cannot find communion with the righteous. The warning in this psalm is clear: choose wisely or perish.

# Day 1 – Psalm 1:1–2

- ① The first psalm introduces the reader to the Book of Psalms. Right away, where are we instructed to go to receive a blessing? How is blessing received? What is a blessed life?
- ② Define and describe *delight*. Where are we to find delight? Describe something you delight in more than God? How is the law (or instruction) of God delightful? See Proverbs 3:5–7.
- ③ In what ways would delighting yourself in God’s Word impact your life? Why is meditating on Scripture morning and evening important? Describe how meditation can be more than Bible-reading time in the morning and evening. What does this look like in your life?

## Day 2 – Psalm 1:3–4

- ① Describe the metaphor of the tree. What does it mean to be planted? Define yield. In what situations would a leaf wither?
- ② What does it mean that in everything this person prospers? Contrast the two types of people being described in these verses.
- ③ Read Jeremiah 17:5–13. Describe the metaphors being used. What are the implications of these metaphors for you today? What causes anxiety in your life, and in what ways can you address it?



## Day 3 – Psalm 1:5–6

- ① “Therefore” points us to a conclusion. What conclusion is the psalmist making? What is a wicked person? Who are the wicked? What happens to these people? See Matthew 13:41–43.
- ② Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. What do you learn about “the judgment”? What are we commanded to do as Christians? What is the conclusion in 5:11?
- ③ God knows! Think about your day. Did you realize that God knew everything you did and thought and said? What are some good things that you did but did not get credit for that God saw and was glad about? How about some things you weren’t proud of?


# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study Matthew 12:33–37

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good,

and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Two

P S A L M 2

God's Laughter:  
*A Voice of Reason*

Z A C H K R Y C H

PSALM 2

Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and against his  
Anointed, saying,  
“Let us burst their bonds apart  
and cast away their cords from us.”

He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.  
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
“As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.”

I will tell of the decree:  
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations  
your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the LORD with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.



# God's Laughter: A Voice of Reason

## Zach Krych

On one of the first pleasant days of spring this year, I was sitting with my 72-year-old neighbor, Phil, on his back patio. He smoked a cigarette as I tried to enjoy the fresh air and read him Psalm 2. Phil is not a Christian, yet after hearing this psalm, he responded in his usual booming yet gruff voice saying, "It sounds like Punch-us Pilate and the Jews didn't read this before they crucified Jesus." I had to laugh. Talk about the clarity of Scripture! Phil got the point without any commentary needed from me.

The point of Psalm 2 is the ultimate foolishness of resisting Christ as King. The Anointed One—the Messiah—is the only begotten Son of God (verse 7), and the nations are his heritage (verse 8). The Messiah was set on his kingly throne by God Almighty (verse 6), not by popular vote. His rule is a sovereign monarchy, not a democracy. And Acts 4 reveals that the Messiah's sovereign rule was on full display during the crucifixion:

[T]HEY LIFTED THEIR VOICES TOGETHER TO GOD AND SAID, SOVEREIGN LORD, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND EVERYTHING IN THEM,<sup>25</sup> WHO THROUGH THE MOUTH OF OUR FATHER DAVID, YOUR SERVANT, SAID BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,

WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES PLOT IN VAIN?

<sup>26</sup> THE KINGS OF THE EARTH SET THEMSELVES, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER, AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS ANOINTED"

<sup>27</sup> FOR TRULY IN THIS CITY THERE WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST YOUR HOLY SERVANT JESUS, WHOM YOU ANOINTED, BOTH HEROD AND PONTIUS PILATE, ALONG WITH THE GENTILES AND THE PEOPLES OF ISRAEL,<sup>28</sup> TO DO WHATEVER YOUR HAND AND YOUR PLAN HAD PREDESTINED TO TAKE PLACE."

Even when evil was given its hour to reign, God was still in full control.

All their raging was utter foolishness. And what is God's response to such foolishness?

"HE WHO SITS IN THE HEAVENS LAUGHS; THE LORD HOLDS THEM IN DERISION."

Holy laughter.

I don't have many experiences of this kind righteous laughter. Yet we see this response to the foolishness of evil throughout Scripture. From Elijah taunting the priests of Baal by saying their god must be going to the bathroom to Jesus regularly roasting the legalistic scrupulosity of the Pharisees. These scenes display holy ridicule, righteous laughter.

To me, these examples often sound a little arrogant, but this only reveals an area that I need to grow. As Christians, we need a category for righteous, holy, God-honoring laughter at evil. Allow me to illustrate by using a well-known literary story.

Imagine a naked man being celebrated and paraded through town with crowds exclaiming how much they

adore his beautiful expensive clothing. Everyone is piously applauding this naked man's clothes—everyone, that is, except one little child. This child doesn't care what others think, and

Similarly, when the tiny kings of the earth conspire to throw off the bonds of Almighty God and his holy Law, there is a sense in which laughter is the only reasonable response.

he isn't influenced by how seriously everyone else is taking the ceremony. He simply sees the truth, the ridiculous truth, the naked man waving on a horse truth, and can't help but laugh out loud, "Haha! The emperor has no clothes!" His laughter opens the eyes of everyone around, and soon, the laughter has spread like wildfire. Yes, the spectacle was sad. It was filled with sins that should be mourned: arrogance, greed, posturing, and lies. But it was

also so foolish that it deserved laughter. No amount of confidence or posturing could make the naked king be clothed. The child's laughter in the story is the only voice of reason.

Similarly, when the tiny kings of the earth conspire to throw off the bonds of Almighty God and his holy Law, there is a sense in which laughter is the only reasonable response.

As Christians, we can hold Psalm 2 up to any group of people who "set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed" and recognize their foolishness. The law of God is not merely a suggestion or some good advice for a pleasant life. It tells us how the world actually works, no matter how many kings, peoples, school boards, late-night newscasters, or bloggers try to deny it. God made man in his image, male and female he created them. Christ is King. He is seated at the right hand of God. And his enemies are his footstool. To say otherwise is to invoke the holy laughter of God.

This is helpful to remember in a world that continues to reject the Mes-

siah and welcome lies. The raging of the nations against the Messiah can be infuriating, terrifying, or heartbreaking. But we should not fear. Instead, we should recognize a little more often that the kings of the earth have no clothes on; they are only fooling themselves while "He who sits in the heavens laughs."

# Day 1 – Psalm 2:1–6

- 1 Describe the people in verses 1–3 that are against God. What do they are doing? What do they say in verse 3, and what does it mean? What are some modern examples of people trying to “cast away of the cords of God”? To what extent is this possible?
- 2 In what way is God’s laughter a voice of reason? How is it an appropriate response to mankind’s plotting against him?
- 3 When you look at the way our world tries to reject Jesus, what is your primary emotion? Is it anger, fear, sadness, or something else? What do you think God wants your emotion(s) to be?

## Day 2 – Psalm 2:7–9

- ① Acts 13:33 quotes verse 7 and calls it good news. Why is it good news that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God? How does his sonship change our relationship with God?
- ② What does it mean that the nations are Jesus's heritage and possession? How should this affect our witness? Since God has given nations to Jesus, how should you view news and events of the world?
- ③ What does an iron rod symbolize or imply about Jesus's abilities? Who gave Jesus his authority? Read Revelation 2:26–28. What does Jesus do with his authority?

## Day 3 – Psalm 2:10–12

- ① What traits or attributes characterize these kings and rulers (recall verse 2)?
- ② Verse 10 gives a warning. Are warnings generally meant to hurt or help people? How so? Do these people deserve help?
- ③ What kind of life is the psalmist calling the kings and nations to in verses 11–12? What warnings may God be giving you? What are you going to do about those warnings?

# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study Ephesians 1:20–23

...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named,

not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Three

P S A L M 3

Salvation Belongs  
to the Lord!

E M M A R A I N S

PSALM 3

*A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.*

O LORD, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;  
many are saying of my soul,

“There is no salvation for him in God.” Selah

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,  
my glory, and the lifter of my head.

I cried aloud to the LORD,  
and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah

I lay down and slept;

I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.

I will not be afraid of many thousands of people  
who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O LORD!

Save me, O my God!

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;  
you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the LORD;  
your blessing be on your people! Selah

# Salvation Belongs to the Lord!

## Emma Rains

David, King of Israel, had some serious family issues. Second Samuel 13 tells us how Amnon, one of David's sons, cruelly violates his half-sister, Tamar. Understandably, she is desolate, and her brother, Absalom, is furious. He held his peace for a whole two-years until, at the most opportune moment, instructing his servant to murder Amnon. After the murder, Absalom fled to save his skin and lived in exile for three years. King David mourned over Amnon for a long time but ultimately desired reconciliation with Absalom, so David pardoned him and brought him back into his presence.

You'd think that Absalom would express gratitude and rejoicing in his *returned-prodigal-son-ness*. Instead, he hangs out at the city gates, bad-mouthing his father and making sure everyone knows just how much better life would be if he were king instead. Apparently, he was a very handsome man with great hair, which didn't hurt his case either. He spends four years whispering in the people's ears before he decides it is time to make his move. He deceptively got

permission to go "worship" the Lord when, in reality, he was instructing his followers to declare him king at Hebron. Fortunately, David caught word of Absalom's plans and fled Jerusalem with his whole household for fear that Absalom would swoop in and attack them all. From this sorrowful journey of David's, we get Psalm 3.

We'd be missing a key part of the story if we didn't go back a little further in the context though. It is easy to read this story, and Psalm 3, and see David as the righteous victim who has every right to plead for God's help. He didn't give Absalom any good reason to rebel. After all, he had even pardoned him for murdering his brother. However, if we look at 2 Samuel 12, we find more layers. After David rebelled against the Lord by committing adultery with Bathsheba, he receives a visit from Nathan the prophet. Nathan delivers these crushing words of God to David: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." Thus

says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun'" (2 Samuel 12:10-12). It's no coincidence that in the very next chapter David's children violate and murder each other in terrifying ways. And just in case David (or we) missed the connection between Nathan's prophecy and Absalom's actions, 2 Samuel 16:22 tells us, "And Absalom went into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." Absalom's actions are unmistakably a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy to David. So, when we read Psalm 3, we should definitely see the heartbroken father whose son has betrayed him, but we also must see the culpable sinner who knows that his sorrow comes from his actions.

In light of this complex and painful situation, how does David take his sorrows to God? And what can we learn from David's prayer?

David comes to God with honesty. In verses 1–2, David lays his troubles before the Lord. Not only do many seek David’s life, they attack his faith in God, saying, “There is no salvation for him in God.” His enemies threaten not only his body, but his soul, and David doesn’t try to pretend it is not a big deal.

David remembers the truth (verse 3). David does not dwell excessively on the trouble at hand. He knows the truth: God protects him, lifts him up, and is his glory — and David declares this in the face of his troubles.

David remembers what God has done. Verses 4–5 give us reasons for David’s faith in verse 3: God has proved himself to David by protecting him in the past. When David cried to God before, as he does now, God answered him. Even when David lay down and slept in complete vulnerability, perhaps lacking even strength to cry out to God, God still woke him in safety the next morning.

When, like David, you face difficult, messy, traumatic, painful situations, God does not ask you to put on a smile and pretend you’re okay.

David declares his faith in God (verse 6). Once David has brought to mind the ways God saved him in the past, he has something to say to his fears of verses 1–2. Though his enemies might number into the “many thousands,” he will not be afraid. Though they might question

his soul’s salvation, David knows where he stands.

David calls on God to act. The strength of David’s faith that God will hear his plea is striking in verse 7. Despite knowing that he is partly culpable for the situation he’s in, David believes that God is on his side. David knows that God’s primary interest is glorifying himself, and he trusts that God will do that by upholding him, the chosen king of the chosen people.

In verse 8, having finished his prayer, David takes a step back from the situation and declares, “Salvation belongs to the Lord,” and asks for God’s blessing on the whole people of Israel. He doesn’t forget the big picture amidst a messy and complicated situation: no matter what, God always possesses the means to save, and no matter what, the chosen people of God need his blessing.

When, like David, you face difficult, messy, traumatic, painful situations, God does not ask you to put on a smile and pretend you’re okay. You can bring your troubles honestly before him. But you should not sit in despondency and forget what God has already done for you. I am guilty of this over and over and over again—each new problem feels more significant than the last, and past salvation feels distant and unimportant. But with David, I—and you—must remember that when we cried to him, he answered us. And knowing that, we can cry to him again. We know something that David only looked forward to: that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ grant us eternal salvation and that these current troubles will someday pass away. So, be honest with

God, plead with the Lord, call him to act, and ultimately declare with David, “Salvation belongs to the Lord!”

# Day 1 – Psalm 3:1–4

- 1 Read 2 Samuel 15. What is the context of David's situation?
- 2 What is David afraid of? David seems to have both spiritual and physical fears. Based on these fears, what do you think is most important to him in this situation? What fears do you have, and how do you handle them? What do your fears reveal about your priorities?
- 3 What transition does David make in verse 3, and why is this important for his prayer? What truth is used here to combat fears? What truth can you apply to your fears?

## Day 2 – Psalm 3:5–6

- ① Read verse 5 and Psalm 23. Meditate on God’s provision of rest and restoration in the midst of enemies.
  
- ② In verse 6, David responds to his fears from verses 1–2. How does he go from fear to trust in God? What are some positive things you can do to combat your fears?
  
- ③ Like David in Psalm 3, we live in a world where daily life activities (like sleeping) happen in the territory of those who say “there is no salvation for him in God.” How does Psalm 3 help us think through trusting in God as we navigate this world? Describe the things in this world that you feel are against you. How is God for you in these situations?



## Day 3 – Psalm 3:7–8

- ① David makes another transition in verse 7. What is it, and how does it follow from the steps he has taken before? What acts of discipline did he do and what were some positive outcomes? What is one good habit of grace you could get into your daily plan to help you combat fears?
- ② David has great faith that God will save him from his enemies. Why? What should our faith in God's victory look like now, in the New Covenant?
- ③ What can we learn about prayer from Psalm 3? What salvation does David speak of in verse 8? How can salvation through Jesus impact your fears?

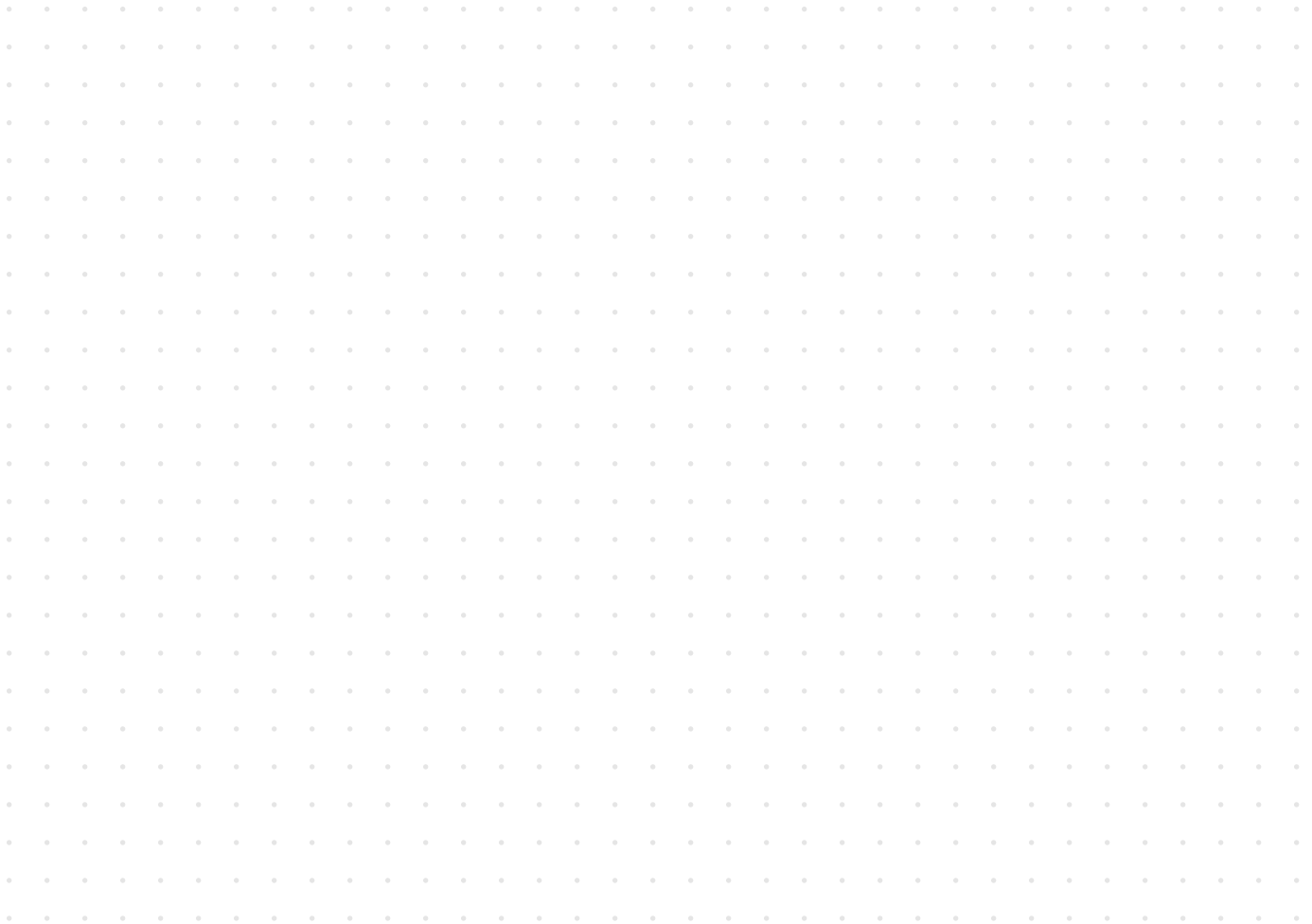
# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study Hebrews 2:14–15

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,

that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to life-long slavery.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Four

P S A L M 4

Leaning on the  
Faithfulness  
of the Lord

M A T T S U N D Q U I S T

PSALM 4

*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.*

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

O men, how long shall my honor be turned  
into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek  
after lies? Selah

But know that the LORD has set apart the godly  
for himself;

the LORD hears when I call to him.

Be angry, and do not sin;

ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be  
silent. Selah

Offer right sacrifices,

and put your trust in the LORD.

There are many who say, “Who will show us  
some good?

Lift up the light of your face upon  
us, O LORD!”

You have put more joy in my heart  
than they have when their grain and  
wine abound.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in  
safety.



# Leaning on the Faithfulness of the Lord

## Matt Sundquist

At some point in our lives, we all have faced situations that seemed bleak and hopeless. Around this time last year, my sister discovered she had ovarian cancer. She is a single mom and has two college-age kids. The initial prognosis was not good. I vividly remember my cries to the Lord during that season. First and foremost, my wife and I prayed that God would save her soul and that she would know him as her savior and also fervently prayed for God's healing. I knew and trusted that God was in control and that his plan would prevail; but more than anything in those moments, I needed to know that he heard me when I cried and that he would answer my call.

God is faithful, and my sister's cancer is now in remission. We know it can resurface at any time and could be more aggressive the next time but are so thankful that the Lord has extended her life. We are still praying for her salvation, and I hope you would join me in those prayers! This experience has helped me understand what it feels like to be pleading with God and leaning on

him to help me trust in his faithfulness when everything seems to be spinning out of control. Reflecting on God's faithfulness and promises and knowing that he heard me when I called was one of the things that kept me grounded during that time.

I love the Psalms because it gives us such a clear glimpse into the raw emotion and the reality that goes on in our hearts. I see this in Psalm 4.

### **The Lord hears our prayers and is faithful to act.**

David starts this psalm with a plea that God answer when he calls. David then immediately calls to mind God's faithfulness and how the Lord has given him relief in the past. David knows that God is faithful and will hear him. He proclaims, "you have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!"

Similarly, in Psalm 3:4, David says, "I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. I lay down and slept; I woke again for the LORD sustained me." Over and over

again, God has shown his faithfulness to David, especially in the face of trials. In Psalm 4, David calls these moments to mind and pleads that God will do it again. When we call upon the Lord in times of need, our natural response should be to remember God's faithfulness and how he has been there for us time after time. It is a powerful thing to remind our souls of this.

In verse 2, David then pivots from lifting this prayer to the Lord to directly addressing men who the verses imply are defying God. Most importantly here, David calls out the truth that God has his people, and he hears them. That's an amazing promise that we can hold to firmly.

Tying all of this together is God's love for his children. He will hear us when we call. He is faithful to act. He has done it before and will do it again. It is he who puts joy in our hearts. He gives us peace.

### **Be angry and do not sin.**

David continues this Psalm by admonishing in verse 4, “Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.” Ephesians 4:26–27 quotes this phrase: “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”

Though not explicitly stated, the flow of the psalm seems to link David’s expression of anger to the ungodliness of those men who love vain words and seek lies. David had a reason to be angry. It’s clear that not all anger is sin and is even more clear that having just reason for anger certainly does not justify sin. We need to be very careful not to let our anger consume us and ought to guard our hearts against wanting to seek revenge ourselves. It is God who repays and who will judge rightly. We are called to reflect in silence. We’re called to resolve any anger in our hearts even before the sun goes down, so we do not give the devil an opportunity.

The point is, God is the judge—not me. Rather than thinking I know best, I ought to respond by going to God in worship and putting my trust in him.

### **God puts joy in our hearts.**

In verses 6–7, David again remembers the Lord’s faithfulness. This time, he reflects on how the Lord has filled him with joy. He knows that the Lord’s joy is so much better than anything the world can bring. Even when someone has an abundance of material possessions, food, and wine — these things cannot produce lasting joy, and the joy from the Lord is so much greater and better.

Where are you hoping to find joy? As I think through the most challenging times in my life, I can see that it was God who filled me up in those moments. No possession or abundance of wealth could ever have provided sufficient joy for me. I have found that my heart is quick to forget this when everything in life seems to be going well, and temptation creeps in to try to seek earthly things for joy.

This reminds me of the importance of setting my mind on Christ and of his words to us in Matthew 6:19–21,

DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL, BUT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN AND STEAL. FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO.

In like manner, earthly things do not produce peace and safety. Verse 8 highlights that God alone—no one and nothing else—can give us safety. Therefore, we have peace knowing that if God is for us, who can stand against us?

### **Love ties it all together.**

Tying all of this together is God’s love for his children. He will hear us when we call. He is faithful to act. He has done it before and will do it again. It is he who puts joy in our hearts. He gives us peace. He is the only one who provides us with safety. He does all that and so much more because of his love

for us. We will only begin to scratch the surface of understanding the depth of this love.

Paul’s words to the Ephesians in chapter 3, verses 14–19 drive this home for me:

FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE FATHER, FROM WHOM EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH IS NAMED, THAT ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY HE MAY GRANT YOU TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN YOUR INNER BEING, SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH—THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY HAVE STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL THE SAINTS WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD.

## Day 1 – Psalm 4:1–3

- 1 Define *distress*. Describe a time you were in distress. Reflect on how you experienced God's presence in your distress. How has he shown his faithfulness to you?
- 2 Why do you think that David pivots from speaking to God to calling out those who oppose God in verse 2?
- 3 Do you feel God's presence when you call to him? Do you trust he hears you? Are there times when you have had to fight to believe this truth? Have there been times when this truth was the only thing that got you through? Reflect on the Lord's faithfulness in these times.

## Day 2 – Psalm 4:4–5

- ① What does David mean when he says, “Be angry, and do not sin”? See also Ephesians 4:26.
- ② What does it look like for us to offer right sacrifices (verse 5)? What does David link with right sacrifices in verse 5? Why is trust in the Lord so critical?
- ③ Reflect on the things you put your trust in for situations happening in your life right now. Are there any areas where you need to surrender your fight for control and trust God? What role does ‘offering right sacrifices’ play in trusting God?



# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study John 15:10–11

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his

love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Five

P S A L M 5

# Pray Like David

L O G A N B R E N N E C K E

PSALM 5

*To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.*

Give ear to my words, O LORD;

consider my groaning.

Give attention to the sound of my cry,

my King and my God,

for to you do I pray.

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;

in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you

and watch.

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;

evil may not dwell with you.

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;

you hate all evildoers.

You destroy those who speak lies;

the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and

deceitful man.

But I, through the abundance of your

steadfast love,

will enter your house.

I will bow down toward your holy temple

in the fear of you.  
Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness  
because of my enemies;  
make your way straight before me.

For there is no truth in their mouth;  
their inmost self is destruction;  
their throat is an open grave;  
they flatter with their tongue.  
Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
let them fall by their own counsels;  
because of the abundance of their transgressions  
cast them out,  
for they have rebelled against you.

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;  
let them ever sing for joy,  
and spread your protection over them,  
that those who love your name may  
exult in you.

For you bless the righteous, O LORD;  
you cover him with favor as with a shield.

# Pray Like David

## Logan Brennecke

There is only one hero in the Bible: God. He is the one who manifested himself among us in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who conquered our sin and now reigns supreme forever (2 Timothy 1:10). Our aim then is to be with God and be like him — to be like Jesus. In Leviticus 11:45, God says, for the second time in just two verses, “...be holy, for I am holy.”

Yet, we have an innate tendency to elevate the mere humans around us to levels we should not. Paul dealt with this at Corinth. He writes to them in 1 Corinthians 1:12 “...each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’” He responds by asking them, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?” Paul makes it clear that we should be following Jesus, not fellow humans. He reiterates the point in 3:4, “For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not being merely human?” However, this is not to say we cannot learn from one another. It is to say that we must guard our hearts against exalting fellow believers

to a status that only God holds; whether that’s Paul, Cephas, or in the case of Psalm 5, David.

He already knows  
your every need; he is  
sovereign, and has said so  
in his word. He will take  
care of you. He already is  
taking care of you.

So, in looking at David’s life through the Psalms we must always keep in mind that he was a sinner banking all his hope on Jesus, the coming Messiah. But, with that reality in mind, there is much we can learn from him. In fact, we are encouraged to imitate others—so long as they are imitating Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” And if you’re looking to imitate someone who daily fought to be holy and who was in constant prayer with the LORD, then David is your guy. God even calls him “a man after my heart” (Acts 13:22)! And

in Psalm 5, David provides an excellent example for how we should pray when we are going through trials, and in all of life.

One thing I love about David’s prayers is that he cries out to God about his troubles, but he never just stops there. David lays out his troubles, then declares God’s promises to him. It is as if David is saying, “I have this great trouble, but you know that, God. You know everything, and you rule everything, and you have already promised to take care of me. Therefore, I’m not going to focus on my troubles mainly, but on your goodness to me!” This is incredible faith!

Psalm 5 can be broken down into three categories:

- David’s Situation: he’s groaning (verse 1) and he’s crying (verse 2) because of his enemies (verse 8), and verses 9–10 describe how terrible these enemies are.
- David’s Requests: to be heard and considered by God (verses 1–2); to be led in righteousness and on a

straight path (verse 8); that his enemies would be cast out (verse 10); and that God would protect his people to the point that they can rejoice and sing for joy (verse 11).

- David Proclaims God's Truth: God hears his voice (verse 3); God does not delight in wickedness, and evil may not dwell with him (verses 4–6); David knows he will live in God's house and worship him (verse 7) and that God blesses the righteous and covers him with favor as with a shield (verse 12).

Or, you can think of it as *where*, *what*, and *why*.

- *Where* I am at in life right now? I'm telling God my situation.
- *What* I am requesting from God? To be rescued. To be led in righteousness.
- *Why* am I crying out to God? Because he loves me and has promised to take care of me, always.

So often though, our prayers—at least for me—end up sounding like this: “God, I have this trouble. Have you heard? It's bad. Really bad. Like, *really*, *really* bad. Please help me. Did I mention it's bad?” It's almost embarrassing when you compare that to how David prayed. My typical prayer is basically saying to God, “My trouble is so big I'm not sure you can do anything.” Ouch!

My hope as you go through these psalms is that you pay attention to and imitate the examples set by David. Yes, cry out to God about your troubles. He is ready and excited to listen to and comfort you! But don't stop there. He already knows your every need; he is sovereign, and has said so in his word. He will take care of you. He already is taking care of you.

Proclaim his goodness. Proclaim his mercy. Proclaim that your sins are forgiven in Jesus and God has you, forever. You are in his family. He loves you. You will ever sing for joy, even now.

# Day 1 – Psalm 5:1–3

- ① Read Psalm 5 and note how many times David says what God does. Now count how many times David proclaims a truth about God. Think about your prayers. How does the amount of time you spend asking things of God compare to the amount of time you spend declaring truths about him? Do you think your level of trust, hope, and joy would increase if you did more of the latter?
  
- ② Define *lament*. How is this a psalm of lament? Why is it a good habit of grace to pray in the morning? Why is prayer a good way to handle lament?
  
- ③ Define *groan*. What groaning have you been doing? Have you been bringing these to God? See 2 Corinthians 5:1–5.

## Day 2 – Psalm 5:4–8

- 1 Define *wickedness*. Why is it important to know that God does not delight in wickedness? What does God delight in?
- 2 Define *boast*. What do you boast in? Can boasting be good? In what ways is boasting bad? See 1 Corinthians 1:27–31.
- 3 In verses 7–8 describe how the psalmist David turns to God. What does David ask of God? Describe David’s demeanor. Write out a prayer asking God to lead you in righteousness and make your way straight.



## Day 3 – Psalm 5:9–12

- ① The “for” in verse 9 tells us that verse 9 is giving a reason for verse 8, and verse 8 mentions David’s enemies. When we think of enemies or read descriptions like, “their throat is an open grave,” we typically think of other people and not ourselves. But Paul quotes Psalm 5:9 in Romans 3 to help explain how sinful every person is. Read Romans 3:9–20. How does this passage change your understanding of your heart?
  
- ② Notice the contrast of verse 10 and verses 11–12. How does God respond to those who rebel against him versus those who take refuge in him? Read Deuteronomy 6:13 and Luke 12:5, and then Psalm 18:30 and Deuteronomy 6:5. How do we both fear and love the Lord? What must you do for a refuge to be of any help? (See Proverbs 18:10.)
  
- ③ Define *exult*. What do you tend to exult in? What does it mean to exult in God?

# Day 4 – Cross Reference


## Study Romans 8:22–26

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now

hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Six

P S A L M 6

# Cry to the Lord

S T A C Y B R E N N E C K E

PSALM 6

*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to The Sheminith.  
A Psalm of David.*

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,  
nor discipline me in your wrath.  
Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;  
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.  
My soul also is greatly troubled.  
But you, O LORD—how long?

Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;  
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.  
For in death there is no remembrance of you;  
in Sheol who will give you praise?

I am weary with my moaning;  
every night I flood my bed with tears;  
I drench my couch with my weeping.  
My eye wastes away because of grief;  
it grows weak because of all my foes.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil,  
for the LORD has heard the sound of  
my weeping.

The LORD has heard my plea;  
the LORD accepts my prayer.

All my enemies shall be ashamed and  
greatly troubled;  
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a  
moment.



# Cry to the Lord

## Stacy Brennecke

Crying hard is not pretty. I remember being so embarrassed and vain as a girl by how extremely red my face got after crying (probably over nothing really). The swollen redness lingered way too long, caused people to do a double take, and brought on the teasing by my jokester brothers (though looking back, the teasing was probably good for me). Grief is far messier than simply being “not pretty.” If you have ever gone through a period of grieving, it isn’t long before you start to see changes in yourself — both physically and to the core of your soul. In Psalm 6, David shares the intensity of his grief in vivid language: “...my bones are troubled. My soul also is troubled” (verses 2–3). Later he says, “I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears...my eye wastes away because of grief” (verses 6–7). David experienced weariness, physical and emotional pain, lack of sleep, and tears upon tears. But thankfully, the story didn’t end there for David, nor will it for those who trust in the Lord.

Psalm 6 is divided clearly into two parts. In the first seven verses we see David’s intense cries to the Lord for help. David is physically broken (due to difficult circumstances we don’t have the details of, possibly arising as a consequence of sin) as well as broken over the sin he sees in his life. Then, in the last three verses, the tone changes drastically and we see a confident declaration that the Lord has heard his cries.

### **Bring Your Pleas to Your God** (verses 1–7)

Studying through the first section, we see David pour out his soul and the expression of his distress over the sin he is experiencing and the physical circumstances that are outside his ability to fix. Here, we see some examples of how to bear our souls to God.

- Bring your complaints *to* the Lord (verses 1–4; 6–7). Notice how often David says, “O Lord.” Five-times in four verses! David goes directly to his God. He isn’t just putting a complaint-fest down on record; he

is bringing his complaints to the Lord, *specifically* telling God his troubles and pleading for him to *specifically* answer. “Be *gracious* to me...for I am *languishing*...*Heal* me...for my bones are *troubled*” (verse 2, emphasis mine).

- “Treat me like a son” (verse 1). Notice how David didn’t ask that God would not rebuke him at all, rather that God wouldn’t rebuke him *in his anger*. David knew that “the Lord reproves him whom he loves” (Proverbs 3:12), and he also knew that God’s anger consumes his enemies “like stubble” (Exodus 15:7). David sees his sin and his need for discipline.
- Wait on the Lord alone (verse 3). David also sees that his deepest waiting is a waiting on the Lord. “My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord—how long” (verse 3). He, of course, is waiting for the distress of his soul to be taken away, but he knows that this is from the Lord, and the Lord alone.

Nothing will change until the Lord acts.

- “No merit of my own” (verse 4). David saw the massive chasm between his own tiny, corrupt, human self and his holy, magnificent, powerful God. In seeing the gap, he understood that he had nothing to give the Lord, no merit to ask for mercy. Instead, he pleaded “save me for the sake of your steadfast love” (verse 4). David knew his hope for deliverance was in the steadfast, unchanging love of God alone.
- For his remembrance, for his praise (verses 4–5). David wanted deliverance so that God would be remembered as a saving God. And after remembering, he and others would praise the Lord for his mercy. *This* is why David is pleading for mercy: for the Lord’s renown.

### **Confidence in the God Who Hears (verses 8–10)**

At verse 8, the psalm has an abrupt shift. And triumphantly so. Why is this? Why the sudden confidence, David?

- David was not confident in his strength but in the Lord’s hearing him (verse 8). David doesn’t seem one bit squeamish to tell his enemies to depart from him, despite being a sinner himself. How is this possible? Wasn’t he just in agony over his own sin and weakness? Notice the “for” in verse 8: “Depart from me...*for* the Lord has heard the sound of my

weeping.” David’s victory over sin and his enemies was dependent upon the Lord’s character. David’s God is a God who hears his children’s weeping. I picture a child at a playground being bullied. The child cries out loudly and when he sees his daddy has heard him, he has the confidence to stand his ground. He knows his daddy’s character, and the fact that his daddy has heard his cry means that his daddy *will* act. That is the kind of father David has.

- The God who hears and accepts (verse 9). Underlying all of David’s confidence is something that he understood only partially: the gospel. “The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer.” I picture David, knowing that blood was required to cover his sin and that God, in his holiness, would need to accept this sacrifice, albeit incomplete. The sacrificial system was a shadow of the Sacrifice to end all sacrifices. David’s plea was heard and his prayer accepted on the basis of the Lamb who would come, David’s Son, David’s Lord. Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection are the reason God could accept David’s prayer.
- Victory won (verse 10). This last verse seems like a strange way to end the psalm. Why not just end with praise or something? What strikes me is the contrast we see here between those who belong to the Lord and those who don’t. In verses 2–3, David says his bones are *troubled* and that the wait for the

Lord to answer feels *long*. Here, in verse 10, we see that his enemies will be *greatly troubled* and that they will, in a *moment*, be put to shame. They will “turn back.” David is painting the scene for those who do not cry out to the Lord. David’s security, from those who hate him and from his own sin, comes from God alone, the God who heard his pleas on the basis of his great mercy.

Sure, you do not have the same enemies David had. Most likely, you are not hiding in caves, being hunted down for the kill (although maybe you can relate to David because there are people in your life out for your harm). But, you do fight your sin and suffer through countless painful circumstances. Regardless of the specifics of your struggles, *do you believe that God is there when you call?* He promises to hear the humble cries of his children and to answer them. So, don’t hold back. Know that the Lord will discipline those whom he loves. Grieve to the Lord. The fight against sin is long and painful. The brokenness of this world gives us grief that threatens to overwhelm us. But there is abundant acceptance with God and great victory because of the finished work of Jesus. Cry out with David, “O Lord,” and wait for the mercy he will extend.

# Day 1 – Psalm 6:1–3

- 1 Read Psalm 94:12, Proverbs 3:11-12, and Hebrew 12:6. Define *discipline*. What do these passages teach us about discipline?
- 2 Why is discipline a blessing from the Lord? Do you fear the Lord's discipline? Why shouldn't you fear the Lord's discipline?
- 3 What trouble is the psalmist facing? Define *languish*. The psalmist is asking for grace. What do you think that is? What do you ask for when you are languishing?

## Day 2 – Psalm 6:4–7

- ① What arguments is the psalmist using in verses 4–5 for why God should help?
- ② Define *grief*. What griefs have you experienced in life? Read Isaiah 53:3–4. In what way has Jesus borne our griefs?
- ③ What do you typically run to when weighed down with grief (whether over conviction over your sin or hard circumstances)? How should the truth that Jesus can sympathize with our sufferings and is our perfect High Priest affect where we run with our weaknesses?

## Day 3 – Psalm 6:8–10

- 1 Describe the psalmist's level of confidence in God. Do you have a similar level of confidence? Why or why not?
- 2 Read Hebrews 7:18–28. How can you be confident that the Lord hears you?
- 3 Describe a time you wept. What is God's demeanor towards you when you weep?



# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Seven

P S A L M 7

The Lord Is  
Righteous

J O N F U E H R E R

PSALM 7

*A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush,  
a Benjaminite.*

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge;  
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,  
lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,  
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.

O LORD my God, if I have done this,  
if there is wrong in my hands,  
if I have repaid my friend with evil  
or plundered my enemy without cause,  
let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,  
and let him trample my life to the ground  
and lay my glory in the dust. Selah

Arise, O LORD, in your anger;  
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;  
awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.  
Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered  
about you;  
over it return on high.

The LORD judges the peoples;  
    judge me, O LORD, according to my  
        righteousness  
    and according to the integrity that is in me.  
Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,  
    and may you establish the righteous—  
you who test the minds and hearts,  
    O righteous God!  
My shield is with God,  
    who saves the upright in heart.  
God is a righteous judge,  
    and a God who feels indignation every day.

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;  
    he has bent and readied his bow;  
he has prepared for him his deadly weapons,  
    making his arrows fiery shafts.  
Behold, the wicked man conceives evil  
    and is pregnant with mischief  
    and gives birth to lies.

He makes a pit, digging it out,  
and falls into the hole that he has made.  
His mischief returns upon his own head,  
and on his own skull his violence descends.

I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his  
righteousness,  
and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD,  
the Most High.



# The Lord Is Righteous

## Jon Fuehrer

I don't think often enough or deeply enough about God's righteousness. I like to tell myself I'm taking the shortcut to the end of the story to where God's righteousness meets God's mercy at the cross of Christ. In reality, I'm just not sure I want to see how far down the rabbit hole I can go if I try to begin to grasp the righteousness of God. See, we humans have a context for our righteousness, but it only goes skin deep. Psalm 7 confronts the distance between our righteousness and God's. Look at how David describes his righteousness:

O LORD MY GOD, IF I HAVE DONE THIS,  
IF THERE IS WRONG IN MY HANDS,  
IF I HAVE REPAID MY FRIEND WITH EVIL  
OR PLUNDERED MY ENEMY  
WITHOUT CAUSE...  
— PSALM 7:3-4

Do you notice anything about David's words? They are all action oriented: "...if I have done this," "wrong in my hand," "if I have repaid," or "plundered." Our human conception of righteousness is

focused solely on the outcome of our actions. David doesn't ask the question of whether there was wrong in his heart or if he hated his friend even if he repaid him with good. He asks about what happened, not what he felt or thought. What does God see? Psalm 7:9 says:

OH, LET THE EVIL OF THE WICKED COME  
TO AN END,  
AND MAY YOU ESTABLISH THE  
RIGHTEOUS—  
YOU WHO TEST THE MINDS AND HEARTS,  
O RIGHTEOUS GOD!

Or, in 1 Samuel 16:7 we read,

BUT THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL, 'DO  
NOT LOOK ON HIS APPEARANCE OR ON  
THE HEIGHT OF HIS STATURE, BECAUSE I  
HAVE REJECTED HIM. FOR THE LORD SEES  
NOT AS MAN SEES: MAN LOOKS ON THE  
OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD  
LOOKS ON THE HEART.'

God is looking far deeper than our actions and outcomes. Jesus highlights this point in Matthew 5, during the

Sermon on the Mount, when over and over again, he confronts our good behavior and sound actions with the reality of our hearts. We say, *don't murder*; Jesus says, *don't be angry with your brother*. We say, *don't commit adultery*; Jesus says, *don't have lustful intent*. God is gravely concerned with the state of our heart. And what does he see when he looks at our heart? "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). He sees that: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Romans 13:10-18). And elsewhere it is said, "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Later on, as David ponders his deeds in Psalm 7, he confesses that if his endeavors have been truly evil that the “enemy should pursue [his] soul and overtake it, and let [the enemy] trample

Don't gloss over the disparity between God's righteousness and our own just because it's hard to hear. Let that depth remind you of the chasm that Christ crossed for you, and let your heart rejoice all the more for it.

[his] life to the ground and lay [his] glory in the dust.” How much more then should an infinitely righteous God respond to such evil? Again Psalm 7:12-13 provides some insight when we read, “If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts....”

Do you see what I mean about not going down the rabbit hole? Why would I want to dwell on God seeing past my actions to the state of my heart when I know that what he finds there will lead him to nock a flame-tipped arrow? Precisely because we know how this story ends for those in Christ. God's righteousness really did meet God's mercy at the cross. “I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High” (Psalm 7:17).

Due to *his* righteousness, the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands is nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Don't gloss over the disparity between God's righteousness and our own just because it's hard to hear. Let that depth remind you of the chasm that Christ crossed for you, and let your heart rejoice all the more for it.



## Day 1 – Psalm 7:1–5

- ① David seems to be accused of a crime. Why do you think he calls out to the Lord for defense over an earthly matter? Is David guilty? Have you been wrongly accused of doing something? Explain.
- ② What imagery comes to mind when David talks about the lion? Where else is similar imagery used in the Bible?
- ③ What is the nature of David's plea in verse 3–5? Is the charge against him a just one? How does David seem to plead?

## Day 2 – Psalm 7:6–11

- ① David is appealing to God as a judge in these verses. What is the purpose of a judge? What is the difference between God’s judgement and human judgement?
- ② Why would David ask God to judge him according to his righteousness? Was David’s request earnest?
- ③ Why would God test the minds and hearts? Describe the shield metaphor that David uses. What does it mean that God feels indignation every day?

## Day 3 – Psalm 7:12–17

- ① Does God's response to sin seem just? Does the severity of the consequence change our perception of justice? Should it?
- ② Compare and contrast Psalm 7:14 with James 1:15. What is the progression of sin?
- ③ Why is David giving thanks to the Lord due to the Lord's righteousness?

# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study 1 Corinthians 15:21–22

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For

as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

### Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Eight

P S A L M 8

# Stargazing

S A R A K R Y C H



PSALM 8

*To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.*

O LORD, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of  
your fingers,

the moon and the stars, which you have  
set in place,

what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the  
heavenly beings

and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of  
your hands;

you have put all things under his feet,

all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

# Stargazing

## Sara Krych

The autumn air is still, and I can barely see my breath as I exhale. A slight shift in weight causes the gravel to crunch beneath my feet. The only sound is an obstinate cricket counting the days before the first frost, and in the stillness, I lift my eyes to the night sky. The new moon allows the stars to reveal their presence. At first, I only see the brightest constellations, but as I let my gaze linger the multitude starts to appear, filling in the spaces that once seemed blank until there is almost a haze of brilliance that I know is still only a shadow of what exists. I feel a catch in my throat. The feeling that began in awe and wonder has slowly given way to a trembling fear, an awareness of the smallness, the seeming insignificance of my being.

WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL  
OF HIM, THE SON OF MAN THAT YOU  
CARE FOR HIM?

Psalm 8 is typically the first passage that comes to mind when I find myself overwhelmed by the majesty and vast-

ness of nature. But, like all Scripture, I do it a disservice if I isolate a few of its phrases from the immediate context, and more so, the larger context of the whole Bible. First, the passage starts and ends with the same statement: “Oh, LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” These bookends show us that our Lord’s majesty—not the majesty of nature—is the main point of this psalm. Then, before David talks of the heavens, he gives an example of how God uses the weakest among us—babies and infants—to defeat his enemies. The theme of God displaying his power through the weak is seen repeatedly throughout the Bible. God frequently uses the least qualified individuals to accomplish his purposes (Moses, Gideon, David, and Jonah, to name a few). However, it is most apparent when Jesus quotes this psalm to the chief priests and scribes to silence their objections to the children crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” in the temple on Palm Sunday.

The psalm goes from speaking of babies to the glory of the heavens, the

moon and the stars that God has set in place by “the work of his fingers,” yet another reminder of how even in comparison to the biggest thing we can imagine—the universe—our God is still greater. And then the question is raised about why God would think, much less care, about men. But on closer inspection, this psalm isn’t talking about “man” at all in the sense of humankind. The title “Son of Man” is seen in several other places. First, Daniel 7 prophesies about a Son of Man who comes in the clouds and is presented before the Ancient of Days. He is given all dominion and a kingdom that will never pass away. Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man more often than by any other title, and in doing so identifies himself as

It is through his suffering and death that we are saved; because he became like us by becoming subject to death, we can become like him and be called children of God.

a heavenly being who is sovereign over all things, as we see later in Psalm 8:6–8. So what does it mean that the Son of Man, referring to Jesus, was made a little lower than the angels? The question is answered in Hebrews 2, which also quotes Psalm 8. He was made a little lower than the angels so that he could experience death. It is through his suffering and death that we are saved; because he became like us by becoming subject to death, we can become like him and be called children of God.

So when I'm gazing up at the night sky and start to sense that fear creeping over me, I don't have to stay there. Yes, I am small, and our God is so big; but he loves us so much that he sent his Son, the Son of Man, to become like us and to reconcile us to himself. Instead of letting that fear take hold, I can turn in gratitude and worship to the God who made the heavens with his fingers, and who calls me his own.

OH, LORD, OUR LORD, HOW MAJESTIC IS  
YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH!

# Day 1 – Psalm 8:1–2

- ① Describe the importance or significance of a name. Describe how you feel when your name is called out for doing something good in front of a crowd.
- ② Define *majestic*. Why is God’s name majestic? Study Philippians 2:4–11. Describe the power and significance of Jesus’s name.
- ③ Why does the psalmist bring in “babes and infants”? What point is he trying to make? See Matthew 21:14–17.

## Day 2 – Psalm 8:3–4

- 1 Describe the magnitude of the works that God has done. Describe a time you felt insignificant in light of the enormity of creation. Define *mindful*. How does it make you feel to know that God is mindful of you?
- 2 Why do you think Jesus often chose to refer to himself as the Son of Man, versus the Son of God? What does the title “Son of Man” communicate that is different from “Son of God”?
- 3 Study Hebrews 2:5–9. How does the author of Hebrews understand and apply Psalm 8?

## Day 3 – Psalm 8:5–9

- ① Study Genesis 1:28–30. What role did God give Adam? Study Romans 5:12–21. What are the consequences of Adam’s failure?
- ② Where else do we see dominion over nature given to mankind? How is this a foreshadowing of things to come?
- ③ Think of a time when you felt too inadequate to be used or cared for by God. What does the Bible tell us about our weakness? How should it cause us to respond to God’s glory?

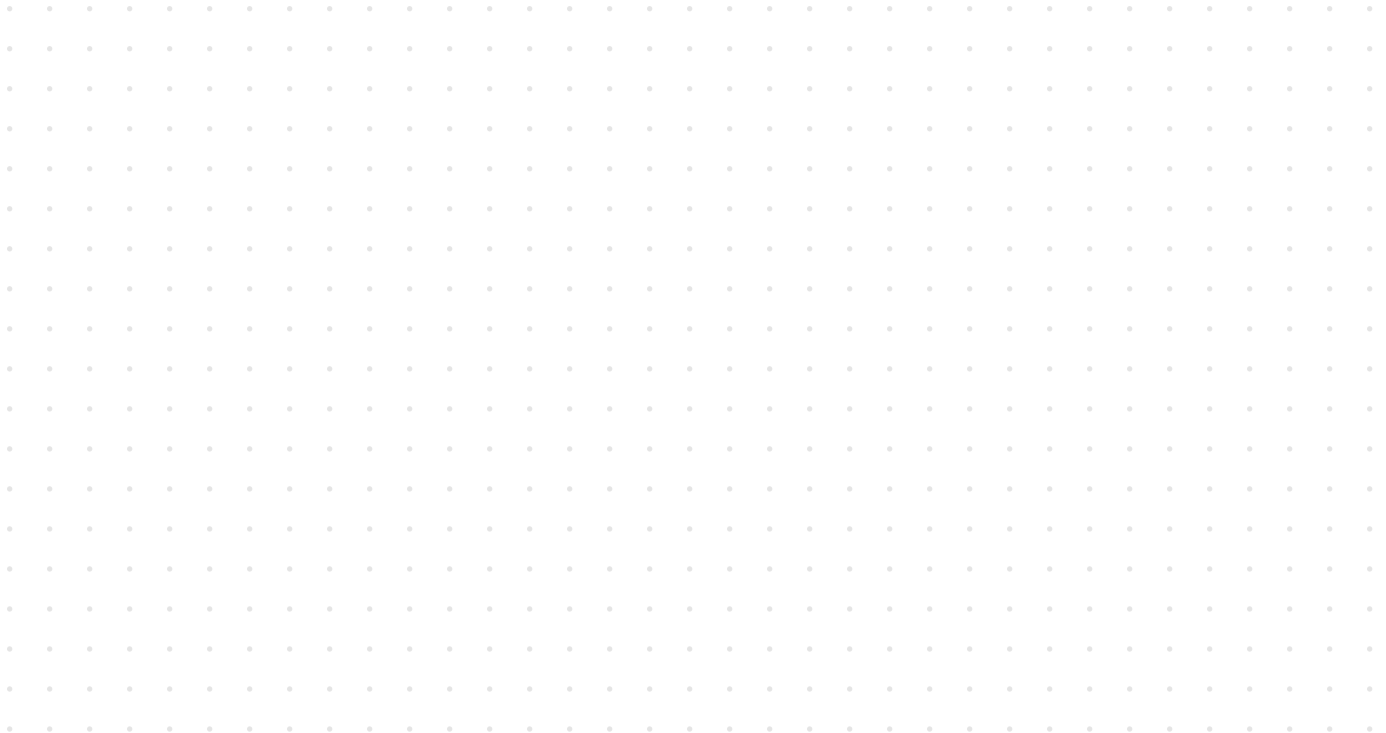
# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study 1 Ephesians 1:19–23

and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and

above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

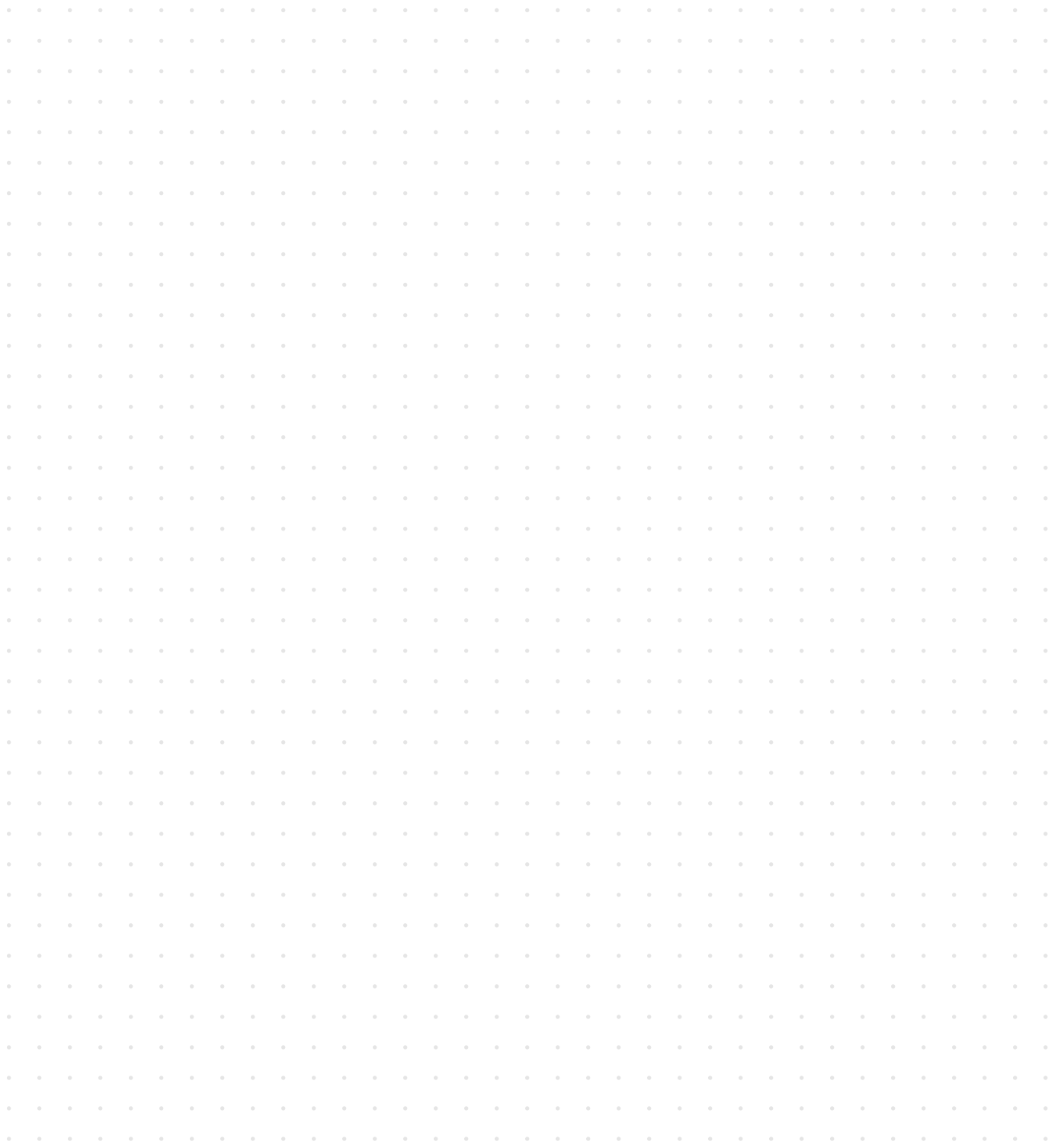
## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Nine

P S A L M 9

Death Is  
Forgetfulness

T Y L E R H O L L E Y

PSALM 9

*To the choirmaster: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.*

I will give thanks to the LORD with my  
whole heart;  
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.  
I will be glad and exult in you;  
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

When my enemies turn back,  
they stumble and perish before your presence.  
For you have maintained my just cause;  
you have sat on the throne, giving  
righteous judgment.

You have rebuked the nations; you have made the  
wicked perish;  
you have blotted out their name  
forever and ever.

The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;  
their cities you rooted out;  
the very memory of them has perished.

But the LORD sits enthroned forever;  
    he has established his throne for justice,  
and he judges the world with righteousness;  
    he judges the peoples with uprightness.

The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,  
    a stronghold in times of trouble.  
And those who know your name put their  
    trust in you,  
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those  
    who seek you.

Sing praises to the LORD, who sits  
    enthroned in Zion!  
    Tell among the peoples his deeds!  
For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;  
    he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

Be gracious to me, O LORD!  
    See my affliction from those who hate me,

O you who lift me up from the gates of death,  
that I may recount all your praises,  
that in the gates of the daughter of Zion  
I may rejoice in your salvation.

The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;  
in the net that they hid, their own foot has  
been caught.

The LORD has made himself known; he has  
executed judgment;  
the wicked are snared in the work of their own  
hands. Higgsaion. Selah

The wicked shall return to Sheol,  
all the nations that forget God.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten,  
and the hope of the poor shall not  
perish forever.

Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail;  
let the nations be judged before you!  
Put them in fear, O LORD!  
Let the nations know that they are but  
men! Selah



# Death Is Forgetfulness

## Tyler Holley

**W**e all live in the land of the dead. To be alive in this world is to be aware that my life will inevitably end. To be alive is to realize that I am a dead man walking. My death is the giant mountain that looms so high on the whole horizon of my life and casts a shadow on all my joys and happiness. Why does all this matter? I will one day die. Even my joys die. That which brings me happiness today can be empty tomorrow. Indeed, death is not only something in my future but it is also a kind of contagion that pollutes my life even now. Entropy and decay are the destiny and current experience of all things.

I imagine those living in German-occupied France during WWII felt that death—embodied in the Nazi regime—constantly haunted them. Death could come at any time. It had already come for those they knew. They could no longer enjoy what they once did. All their daily actions were performed in the presence of death. The looming cloud of death formed the thick fog of their existence. Now imagine what it

would have been like to be sitting in your home and to hear the door bust in. You know your time has come, yet your neighbor comes in and says, “The Germans are defeated. We are free.” Hearing those words changes everything. Before, the presence of German forces was the defining aspect of your existence. But now, the fog has lifted.

In Psalm 9, David prays to God, the one who “lifts me up from the gates of death” (Psalm 9:13). The “gates of death” suggest that death was once a kind of city in which he lived. It was a walled-in city where he was held captive. Much like German-occupied France, David lived in a death occupied world. Death was his master. However, David affirms that this was not always the case. He did not remain in that city forever. David was emancipated and brought out of the gates of death and into the gates of the daughters of Zion (Psalm 9:14). In Zion, he “recounts all your praises” (Psalm 9:14).

However, there is a sad fate for those who do not recount the praises of God. All those who forget God, and are there-

fore wicked, “shall return to Sheol” (Psalm 9:17). “Return”? It is almost as if they wanted to come out of the grave, Sheol. They wanted to emerge from the gates of death like David, and yet they are cursed to return to death, to the grave, to Sheol.

To recount the gifts of God in your present is to emerge from the gates of death and to enter into the gates of life, because life is about receiving from God and praising him for it, not grasping on to what has already passed you by.

But notice the difference between those cursed to return to the gates of death and David, who enters the gates of the daughters of Zion. The difference is that David “recounts” the praises of God but the wicked “forgets” God. Indeed, this whole psalm is one of David’s recounting. But this difference—

the difference between recounting and forgetting—shows us something about death and life. All things die, but God never dies. All things die, but God's gifts arrive new every day. Even the gifts of God die, but his mercies are new every morning.

All that we love in this world will die. All our possessions will fade. Even the people we love will change. Too many marriages end with phrases like, "He isn't the man I married," or "She used to be so fun, but now she is always angry." In these scenarios, we lose that person we loved, and for some reason, we end up with someone we don't love. Everything and everyone passes through the stream of time such that the joy I experience cannot be held onto in the *present* but must continually flow into the past. In other words, all things die as they pass out of my present and into the untouchable past. This process continues until I reach the end of my life. But all of this is only true if we forget God.

To forget God is to take this endless passing of all things into death as the definitive element of existence. To for-

get God is to forget that he gives new gifts every morning. To desperately grasp on to what was yesterday's gift is to hold on to death. But to embrace the next moment as a gift from God, and to praise him for it, is to open yourself up to life. Here is the difference between recounting and forgetting. To recount the gifts of God in your present is to emerge from the gates of death and to enter into the gates of life, because life is about receiving from God and praising him for it, not grasping on to what has already passed you by.

If this is true, then you daily pass from death to life, and that means that resurrection is the definitive element of your existence rather than death. God is the God of the living. Everything dies, but if you thank the Lord for your today, death has lost its sting.

# Day 1 – Psalm 9:1–6

- 1 Describe what it looks like to be thankful to God with your whole heart. Are you thankful to God? Why? Take some time to express your gratitude to him.
- 2 Look for each instance the psalmist says, “you have.” What are all the things mentioned in the psalm that God has done?
- 3 In 9:1–2, list out the things that the psalmist will do as denoted with “I will”. What practical steps can you take to align your life to act likewise? What needs to happen first in your heart to realign your actions?

## Day 2 – Psalm 9:7–14

- 1 Psalm 9:7 begins with “but.” Describe the contrast between verse 6 and verses 7–8.
- 2 Study 9:9–10. Define *stronghold*. How is the metaphor used here? Who is the stronghold, and why is he one? For whom is he a stronghold? When is he a stronghold? What important qualification is needed for those who go to him as their stronghold? Why do they go to him? What do they trust in? What do you trust in?
- 3 In 9:11–14, how does the psalmist respond to the truth he has just proclaimed? What are some of the things that God does? Look throughout Psalm 9 for the word *recount*. Define *recount*. In what ways should you be recounting?

## Day 3 – Psalm 9:15–20

- ① Define *judgment*. In these verses, is God executing right judgment? What are the effects of this on the psalmist and the people? What have the nations done to deserve this?
- ② What is Sheol? Who goes there? Does that place still exist, and do people still go there? Who are the people whose hope will not perish? What does it mean that they will “not always be forgotten”? What category of person do you fall into?
- ③ Describe the type of prayer the psalmist is praying in the last two verses. What have you prayed for today? How might your prayer be shaped by Psalm 9? Review Psalm 9 and your notes and write a short prayer based on your observations.



# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Ten

P S A L M 1 0

God's Power Is  
Made Perfect in  
My Weakness

S H U A N G S U N D Q U I S T

PSALM 10

Why, O LORD, do you stand far away?  
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor;  
let them be caught in the schemes that they  
have devised.

For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,  
and the one greedy for gain curses and  
renounces the LORD.

In the pride of his face the wicked does  
not seek him;  
all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

His ways prosper at all times;  
your judgments are on high, out of his sight;  
as for all his foes, he puffs at them.

He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved;  
throughout all generations I shall not meet  
adversity."

His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and  
oppression;

under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.  
He sits in ambush in the villages;  
in hiding places he murders the innocent.  
His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;  
he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket;  
he lurks that he may seize the poor;  
he seizes the poor when he draws him  
into his net.

The helpless are crushed, sink down,  
and fall by his might.  
He says in his heart, "God has forgotten,  
he has hidden his face, he will never see it."

Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand;  
forget not the afflicted.

Why does the wicked renounce God  
and say in his heart, "You will not call  
to account"?

But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation,  
that you may take it into your hands;  
to you the helpless commits himself;

you have been the helper of the fatherless.  
Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer;  
call his wickedness to account till you  
find none.

The LORD is king forever and ever;  
the nations perish from his land.  
O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted;  
you will strengthen their heart; you will  
incline your ear  
to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,  
so that man who is of the earth may strike  
terror no more.



# God's Power Is Made Perfect in My Weakness

## Shuang Sundquist

**O**n January 1st, 2018, my husband and I got back from a Chinese Gospel Conference in Chicago. A very special delivery came in and I got my Green Card after filing my documents all the way back in September in 2016! The Lord chose the perfect timing to issue my Green Card so that I could go back to China and celebrate my first Chinese New Year with my family since coming to the United States in 2013. But fear and anxiety soon pursued my soul before I had a chance to celebrate my “American New Year gift from the Lord.”

Let's move the scene back to the Summer in 2014, when I first told my mom that I had made a sincere decision to follow Jesus for the rest of my life.

The afternoon before, Matt—my then boyfriend and now dear husband, and I had to come back to the United States. My mom had already cried so much thinking of my departure from her that her eyes and face were swollen and red. She asked me, “should you go to your grandpa's tomb now since you're leaving tomorrow? I don't under-

stand. You used to be the best filial kid in this family. And the first thing you would always do was to ‘see’ grandpa after coming back from school since you were in high school. What's wrong with you now?” I smiled to my mom and begged her pardon to leave for a second.

I found Matt and told him what happened, not daring to speak aloud in any Chinese or my countryside dialect. My knowledge about Christ was very little at that time, but I knew he is the Lord. Matt and I cried bitterly and quietly together, for he knew that my family had sacrificed everything to send me to study overseas and how much it had haunted me that I eventually had to confess my faith in Christ before my parents. We held our hands together, kneeling down on the ground, and started praying earnestly for God's mercy that I would not be forsaken by my family for my faith, for the Lord knew I was weak.

About half an hour later after our praying, our faces were swollen, too. I found my mom sweeping the floor and requested a private conversation in my

bedroom with her. In most Chinese homes, there is no conception of “having a conversation with our parents.” The only way to demonstrate love and care is simply serving and working hard. Therefore, laziness is literally considered as the absence of love or the absence of morality. My mom kept sweeping with her head down, trying to avoid me seeing her swollen face and eyes. I urged her and tears choked my voice, and she finally followed me to the room.

I kneeled down to her, and said, “Mom, today, I have something really important to tell you, and I hope you would feel more loved than ever after this thing.” She totally lost her voice, and was trying to get me up from the ground and hugging me. I got up and found my Chinese Bible under the pillow and showed it to her. I was surprised by her first reaction, “What? You're a Christian?” For I had never heard a vocabulary of “Christ, Jesus, or church” as I was growing up in the countryside. “So, mom, you already know the existence of Christ and Christians?” She

answered readily, “Yes, those Christians are bad. They’re hypocrites. They keep saying every day, ‘you shall love your parents-in-law’, yet, those people only blaspheme, curse, and argue with their old ones. They’re bad people! Don’t you dare to become one of them!”

Nevertheless, we are entrusted to achieve greater things, not by how much we have already understood about God’s kingdom, but by how much we have not yet understood and only come to understand through a living faith expressed in complete obedience and trust.

Her response was different from what I expected, and Matt and I had not even been informed enough to pray for this. But somehow God opened my mouth, “Mom, I don’t know why those people do that, and I certainly would not follow those who call themselves Christians but nothing about what Christians should do can be found in them. But one thing I am sure is that I do follow Christ, and his name is Jesus and he is indeed a good guy.” (Background: a little over a month before I went back to China in 2014, there was a cult called Oriental Lightening who proclaimed that Christ has come. An innocent woman was murdered in public at McDonald’s in Shandong Prov-

ince after refusing to follow that cult, and she was beaten to death by a family who follows Oriental Lightening. My mom might have heard this news, but I never confirmed with her on this.)

And my mom continued, “I don’t support you to become whatever Christian you proclaim, yet I love you. Therefore, I don’t intervene your decision on this. I know you are a sincere and determined child, and I need you to agree with me on these three things” (In China, when people say “约法三章, yuē fǎ sān zhāng, setting up three agreements, it actually can mean “setting up many agreements”).

I said, “Please say whatever makes you feel comforted.” She answered, “One, I am and shall be the only and the last person in this family knowing that you’re a Christian, and you shall not disclose your identity to anyone including your father and sister and the whole extended family. Two, don’t you dare to talk about your God with me in whatever conditions, for I don’t believe any God, for your father’s and my “面朝黄土背朝天 miàn cháo huáng tǔ bèi cháo tiān,” faces are constantly towards the dirt and backs towards the hot sun and our life is not easy, to raise you and your sister is not easy. We should deserve your respect. Third, don’t you dare to become a bad child like those people, that only shame and guilt would cover the faces of mine and your father’s.”

Again, the Lord gave me the words to answer which were completely not from me, “Mom, before I knew Christ, I did not know how to love you, for my love was limited, selfish and condi-

tional. If I was still that person, I surely would not agree with these three things, for you know I am a stubborn and determined daughter. But now, because of Jesus, I am a new person and I’ve learnt how to truly love you. Yes, to honor and love you, I want to show my obedience towards your requests. Yet, my God is such a powerful God. If he chooses to reveal himself to you, then there is nothing I as a human being can intervene or stop. And I know he will do this to you as he did to me.”

That conversation probably took about two hours, for both my mom and I were swallowing tears in our throats and words did not come out as smoothly as how I am typing them out now. The Lord remembered my mom and visited her many times, yet she is still hardened in her heart though God’s miracles have been revealed to her one after another.

So, back to January 1st, 2018. I had prayed for the early arrival of my Green Card so that Matt could have enough time to ask for time off work to go back to China for the Chinese New Year. The Lord granted my prayer, yet “many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand” (Proverbs 19:21). It was very clear to both of us that it’s God’s will and plan that I go back alone for a couple weeks before Matt got there. “No, Lord! I can’t go back alone! Without Matt’s protection and presence, I will be looked down upon and laughed at for my faith. For they look at kindness as a sign of weakness, for what I say never mattered in this family. But they respect and love Matt, and they see more



about you from Matt, not from me. I need him, and I need my husband to be my stronghold and help me hold fast to you. You know, I am just a woman, and I could barely be born even when I was in my mom's womb if the gender test was not misinterpreted. Lord, please do not forsake me, and show me you are present with me. Lord, please remember me as your servant; comfort me and establish me with your holy words. I have put your teachings in my heart so that I might not sin against you. Lord, why not look upon your servant with mercy and grace again?" I cried the whole afternoon and laid huddled up in the corner. My husband prayed and prayed God's words over me, but my heart refused to accept comforts. "For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes" (Psalms 119:83).

I called my spiritual friend and told her I was not well. She is a fearless warrior for Jesus—a wise mom homeschooling five children and about to foster another one, a godly wife to a Christ-loving husband, and a postgraduate from Harvard University. I don't remember many details of our prayers over the phone, but God prepared words for her to tell me. I think she prayed for total surrender of obedience to Christ and that I would be filled up with the Holy Spirit and equipped with the Word of God. She often prays these things for me.

The Lord was with me. All those things I was afraid of happened eventually. But, through this trip alone, the Lord saved four souls, allowed for five Bibles to be given away, and for many

people to hear the story of Jesus and the Bible. And my mom even asked me, "Did you finish reading your Bible for today yet?" Sometimes, she would peek at the Bible for a long time on the bed with me before sleep. She regretted for having me "约法三章, yuē fǎ sān zhāng" with her. She came to tell me, "I am so sorry to have forced you to hide the fact that you are a Christian from your dad and your sister, and I think you should tell them now...."

When I look back at the path how the Lord directed and guarded me with his invisible but powerful hand, my soul echoes with the pleas coming from the psalmist in Psalm 10, "Why, O Lord, do you stand far away, why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" There are seasons in our lives that we don't feel the presence of God's work in renewing our minds and transforming our attentions to where Glory stands. Nevertheless, we are entrusted to achieve greater things, not by how much we have already understood about God's kingdom, but by how much we have not yet understood and only come to understand through a living faith expressed in complete obedience and trust. And through many walks with the Lord, as this one I shared above, I've learnt the importance and sweetness of instructing my heart and soul to only listen quietly to my Shepherd, for he recognizes my voice and gives me strength to hear and listen to him. For nothing is invisible in his sight and nothing can thwart his hands, "But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands" (Psalms 10:14). I really celebrate the sense of "triumph"

the psalmist has experienced at the end of his pleas, "the Lord is king for ever and ever; the nations perish from his land" (Psalms 10:16). That's our end too!



# Day 1 – Psalm 10:1–11

- ① There are three main characters in these first eleven verses: the Lord, the wicked, and the poor. How do each of these characters relate to one another?
  
- ② Who seems to have the power in the beginning of this psalm? Find and describe all the actions that person does.
  
- ③ Reflect on the actions of the wicked and consider how they pertain to your life. First, describe how you have/haven't done these things, including your inner-thoughts. If so, work to confess them one by one before the Lord who sees everything on this earth. Secondly, have you ever been wronged by someone who has done these things? If so, bring the ways that you've been wronged before the Lord, and ask him to grant them repentance and to give you a posture of forgiveness towards them.

## Day 2 – Psalm 10:12–15

- ① In verses 12–15, the psalm’s perspective shifts. Describe the shift you see. Who did the psalmist focus on in verses 1–11? Who is the focus of verses 12–15?
- ② What did the afflicted ask the Lord to do? What are the specific actions they request of the Lord?
- ③ Do you believe God will act on the pleas of the afflicted? Do you have a story of triumph from a time when God has answered your pleas?

## Day 3 – Psalm 10:16–18

- ① The Lord is king forever! How does the Lord express his kingship as described in these verses?
- ② Often in literature, the present tense is used to communicate timeless truth. For example, we don't say, "The Sun *used* to rise from the East." Instead, we say, "The Sun *rises* from the East." Identify all the present tense statements in verses 16–18. Why are these significant?
- ③ The future tense is often used to predict or promise something that has not yet happened. Find all the statements that include the future tense in this passage. What do these statements mean to you personally?

# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study 1 Matthew 5:1–5

“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, al-

though the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Eleven

P S A L M 11

Seeing  
Through Your  
Circumstances

M I K E P O L L E Y

PSALM 11

*To the choirmaster. Of David.*

In the LORD I take refuge;  
how can you say to my soul,  
    “Flee like a bird to your mountain,  
for behold, the wicked bend the bow;  
    they have fitted their arrow to the string  
    to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;  
if the foundations are destroyed,  
    what can the righteous do?”

The LORD is in his holy temple;  
    the LORD’s throne is in heaven;  
    his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.  
The LORD tests the righteous,  
    but his soul hates the wicked and the one who  
    loves violence.

Let him rain coals on the wicked;  
    fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the  
    portion of their cup.  
For the LORD is righteous;

he loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold his face.

# Seeing Through Your Circumstances

## Mike Polley

**H**ave you ever felt like you can't catch a break? I've caught myself thinking many times, "Why did all these things happen at once? It's been one thing right after the other!" Out of all the people that have a legitimate claim to say this, King David is high on the list.

For much of his life, David found himself in challenging circumstances. He was frequently pursued and endangered by Saul. After several attacks while playing music in Saul's house, he was then chased by Saul's army throughout the land. David often lived in a state of circumstantial uncertainty, yet he found stability in God despite the instability all around him. Psalm 11 gives us an up-close picture of David's precarious life. Regardless of what prompted the psalm, the words of David speak hope and truth into our uncertain or challenging circumstances.

Psalm 11 can be divided into two parts. Verses 1-3 is an appeal for David to flee. Verses 4-7 is David's response to this appeal. Initially, it is difficult to ascertain who is appealing to David

— is it a literal person or not? Furthermore, the appeal may be genuine and misguided, or it may be in jest. And, is it intended to tempt David to flee literally to the mountains, or to his God for help?

With these interpretive questions in mind, one way to take verses 1-3 is: "Look, David, there are many around that seek your life. They are bending back their bows; they are fitting an arrow in the string right now! They are ready to shoot you because you are upright in heart. You've had close calls before, but your luck is going to run out. Use some common sense! If the foundations are destroyed by the wicked, what can the righteous do? What are we able to do when men break the law of God and only do what is right in their own eyes? David, you may be able to count on protection in a society that seeks good, but they seek evil. They don't fear God, and are ready to strike."

A second way is that the one making the appeal is mocking David, telling him to "flee like a [little] bird to your mountain" (verse 1). It's as if the blasphemer

is saying, "Go find your God and plead with him because the wicked are strong and the righteous can't stop them. Try and run to your God—go and appeal to him—maybe if you reach him he will help."

The situation gets darker and darker and ends in verse 4 with the question, "What can the righteous do?" And both interpretations of the previous three verses draw the same implied conclusion: nothing. The rhetorical question implies that the righteous are helpless and alone in a society that does evil.

At face value, fleeing seems reasonable considering the circumstances. The problem is that the second view sees God as far too small, and the first view disregards him altogether. The advice to flee comes from the perceived circumstances and sees no further. If the one advising David to flee sees God at all, they see him as outside of the situation who needs to be brought in — as a God who is, at best, unaware of David's trouble.

As David recounts the appeal to flee, he looks with eyes of faith and sees through the situation to his true circum-

stance. He contends with the advice immediately. David declares in verse 1, “In the Lord I take refuge, how can you say to my soul, flee...” The Lord is his refuge! Why would he flee? If the Lord is already David’s refuge, why would he go and try to find him? The Lord is *much* bigger than his advisor or adversary thinks. As the psalm continues, David declares five truths in response to the advice to flee.

#### 1. “The Lord is in his temple” (verse 4)

The Lord is not missing. He is not out to lunch. Instead, he has a temple and he is in it. The Lord is present with his people, and he is present with David. Since the Lord is home, he is available to help.

#### 2. “The Lord’s throne is in heaven” (verse 4)

Kings have thrones, and the Lord’s throne is in heaven. His throne is an eternal throne and his rule is boundless. David need not enter the heavens to find God. God is not confined to a heavenly temple, nor the earthly tabernacle. He is David’s refuge and is ours as well. He is not a God of one city or single location, but his kingdom is above all kingdoms, and his throne above all thrones.

#### 3. “His eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man” (verse 4)

God is home, he is on his throne, and he *sees*. He doesn’t see what appears to be, but what is. What David is going through is not lost on him, and is not misunderstood by him. He sees the reality of the circumstance and not just the appearance. God sees the reality of *you*, not just the appearance you give off. He

sees, and he hears. When you cry out to him in faith, he will be found!

#### 4. “The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked” (verse 5)

God knows all and looks upon all, but not in the same way. He sees the righteous and tests them, but he sees the wicked and hates them. It’s significant that testing and hating are contrasted here. The Lord tests, refines, upholds, and loves the righteous and their deeds. He is not giving them wrath but a momentary trial. He is not giving them punishment but discipline. Fruit is the result for the righteous, but the wicked will find no benefit. Instead, wrath and judgment “shall be the portion of their cup” (verse 7). The Lord sees from his throne and will judge from his throne. David desires to be found faithful to God, more than he desires fleeing to safety.

#### 5. “The LORD is righteous...the upright shall behold his face” (verse 7)

The upright shall behold his face! The Lord—whose temple and throne is in heaven, who loves righteousness and hates wickedness—will bring the upright into his presence. David will be with the Lord. This reality is fixed and sure. The wicked may seem to possess control and significant influence, but their end is destruction and they are like “chaff that the wind drives away” (Psalm 1:4). David believes this, embraces it, and hopes in it. The upright *will* behold his face. The eyes of the flesh only see the worldly strength of the wicked and the hopeless plight of the righteous. But God sees what is true. And, by grace, so does David. David sees through and be-

yond his circumstance to his God who governs the world, including the wicked. He is the God who sees the righteous and the wicked, and judges accordingly; the God whose face is shining upon David, and will one day shine upon you!

Whatever the circumstance you may be in, God remains the same. Your circumstances may appear one way, but remember that appearances can be deceiving — or at least incomplete. God isn’t detached; his character is steady and his love is near. David wasn’t immune to worry, fear, and doubt, but he ran to the Lord with all his needs and spoke truth to his soul. He fought against what *appeared* to be true and clung to what ultimately is true. His circumstances didn’t immediately change, but his joy undoubtedly did. His faith bore fruit, and his soul was helped! God eventually delivered him through the trial, and David became the king, just as the Lord had promised. David knows the Lord is his refuge, and therefore he is safe.

God turns away none who come to him, and through the reconciling blood of Jesus Christ, all who come in faith shall behold his face. Right now, Jesus calls you to trust him, find hope in him, and believe him when he says, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). So, trust him, and by faith may his unfailing Word be the lens through which you see your circumstances.

# Day 1 – Psalm 11:1–3

- ① Define *refuge*. Where does the psalmist find refuge? Why? Where do you find refuge? What does that look like for you? In what ways do you seek refuge in the wrong places? What does Hebrews 6:13–20 say about refuge?
- ② Define *crisis*. It appears there is a crisis in verses 1–3. Describe the crisis.
- ③ What “foundations” might be destroyed? Have you had any of your foundations destroyed? How did you respond? What can you glean from 1 Corinthians 3:10–15?

## Day 2 – Psalm 11:4–5

- ① Describe where God is right now. In what ways can this be comforting and helpful? In what ways is this a challenge for your soul? Read Isaiah 6.
- ② What does God do in his holy temple? What does he love, and what does he hate?
- ③ Describe *testing*. In what ways is testing a good thing? Are you being tested right now? What does that look like in your life? In what ways can you see that this is a good thing?





# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study James 1:2–4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

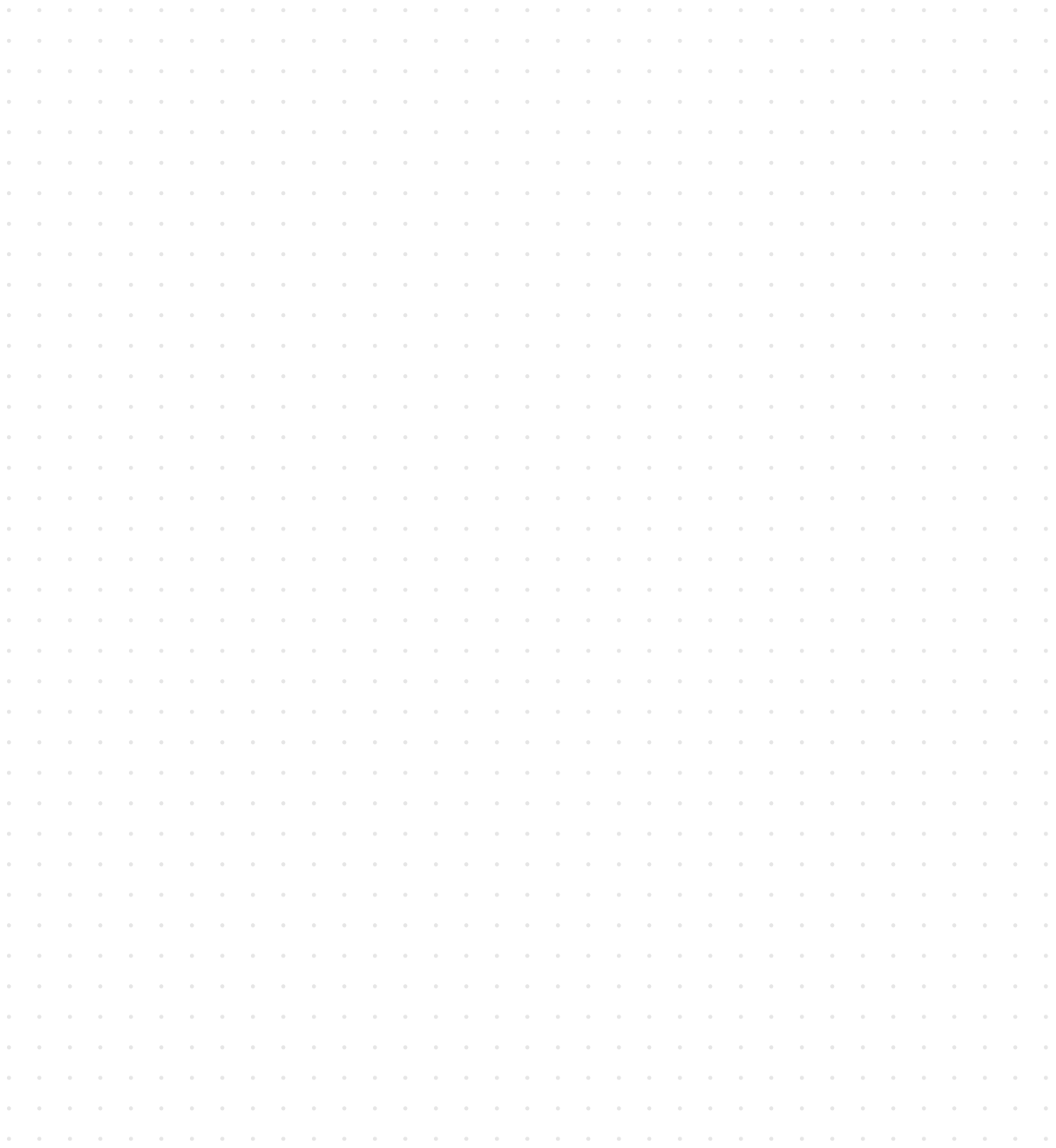
And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

## Notes

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# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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Week Twelve

P S A L M 1 2

Who Is Right, and  
Who Is Wrong?

M I C H A E L T H I E L

PSALM 12

*To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone;  
for the faithful have vanished from among the  
children of man.

Everyone utters lies to his neighbor;  
with flattering lips and a double heart  
they speak.

May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,  
the tongue that makes great boasts,  
those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail,  
our lips are with us; who is master over us?"

"Because the poor are plundered, because the  
needy groan,  
I will now arise," says the LORD;  
"I will place him in the safety for which  
he longs."

The words of the LORD are pure words,  
like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,  
purified seven times.

You, O LORD, will keep them;  
you will guard us from this generation forever.  
On every side the wicked prowl,  
as vileness is exalted among the children of  
man.



# Who Is Right, and Who Is Wrong?

## Michael Thiel

“Who is right, and who is wrong?” is a tricky question because it all comes down to the answer “it depends.” Before drawing a conclusion, the circumstances and context must be accounted for. There are some instances when *right* is only a matter of opinion. For example, one may think chocolate ice cream is better, and another may think vanilla ice cream is better. Neither is right or wrong—it is simply an opinion.

But what about deeper matters, such as, which god is god in our cultural lineup of options? For example, someone might say, “What is true for me is truth for me, and what is true for you is truth for you.” Well, this is impossible. Two people can’t be right if they believe opposite things. Even in the trivial example earlier, only one type of ice cream can *truly* be the best (at least in theory). But when it comes to the ‘god question,’ if a person says that what is true for them is true for them, and Jesus says “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me,” then either that person is right or Jesus

is—not both. In fact, Jesus taught and said enough things to simplify the question: either Jesus is God, or he isn’t.

And if Jesus is God, then truth relies not on you but on God. If Jesus is God, then this objective truth is outside of you, which means you must learn and grow and change to align your life with what Jesus says is true and right.

Apart from God’s intervention, we all innately have a “double heart,” meaning we twist facts based on the conversation.

In Psalm 12, we come across liars. A lie is fundamentally a false statement. It usually involves deliberate intent to deceive. But regardless of motive, a lie is not right, it is wrong. But what makes a lie a lie? It is a lie because there is some foundational truth that is not being held to. For example, if the National Board of Ice Cream declared that, without a doubt,

based on many tests, chocolate ice cream is the best, and a person told his neighbor that indeed vanilla ice cream was best, that would be a lie. The statement is not in alignment with truth. Again, this is a trivial example—and I don’t think there is a National Board of Ice Cream—but there is a ‘National Board of Truth’: it is called the Bible. The Bible declares that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the one true God and there is no other. So, people must either orient themselves to this truth or live out of accordance with reality. When a person self-declares that they determine what is true and what is not, they are orienting around a lie, not God.

Our hearts are prone to lie and twist things. In fact, in the Garden of Eden—right after Adam and Eve disobeyed God—they started to twist facts and lie. They did so to protect themselves and make themselves look good. And we have inherited this. And the people in Psalm 12 have inherited this. We find neighbors lying to each other. Apart from God’s intervention, we all innately

have a “double heart,” meaning we twist facts based on the conversation.

Contrasting our words, which by default we think are the best and most brilliant words ever spoken, is God’s word, which is pure and true. Our issue is when we don’t believe God’s words. So, who is right and who is wrong? Well, God is right. And there will always be people who claim that truth is found apart from Jesus and apart from the Bible. But God will keep his word. And God will guard those who keep his word.

# Day 1 – Psalm 12:1–4

- ① What do you believe to be truth? Where do you go to for truth? Who around you do you feel is speaking lies? What do you believe is at the heart of their lies?
- ② Define *flatter*. Describe how lies are linked to “flattering lips.” What is a “double heart”? Have you experienced interactions like this? In these types of interactions what is the goal or intention of the one speaking the lies?
- ③ What is the prayer of the psalmist in 12:3? Describe the liar in 12:4. Think about your week. What are some words that you said that were in the realm of half-truth or a lie? What were you aiming for in that moment? What do you wish you would’ve done differently?

## Day 2 – Psalm 12:5–6

- 1 Review your notes from week 1 on Matthew 12:33–37. What truths from that passage apply to Psalm 12?
- 2 Contrast truth about God in 12:5–6 with the life of the liars in 12:1–4. Describe who the poor and needy are. What does God think about this situation?
- 3 Describe God’s words. Do you agree with the psalmist? Study Proverbs 30:5–6. What call to action is there for your life based on these verses?

## Day 3 – Psalm 12:7–8

- ① Who is the Lord keeping and guarding? What do you think that looks like? Are you included in those who he is guarding?
- ② Look at 1 Peter 1:3–9 (focus on verse 5). What does Peter mean by “being guarded” in that passage?
- ③ Do you feel, or can you relate to, the psalmist’s words of 12:8? How so? Who prowls in your world, and how do you handle that?

# Day 4 – Cross Reference

## Study John 8:43–47

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his

own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

## Notes



# Day 5 – Sermon Notes

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