

July 12: Psalms 4-6 and Acts 16: 16-40

David gives praise to God for vindicating him against his enemies. He asks how long the exalted men will insult him and they will chase after worthless things. "How long" is an expression that shows concern for the duration of a person's condition. This indicates they have been insulting David and loving worthless things for a very long time.

He continues to give praise in Psalm five, though he starts asking that The LORD would listen to his cry. God has made David's life abundant. He has much to be thankful for. David calls the people that take refuge in God to rejoice.

Psalm six indicates that David was suffering from something. We are not told exactly what he is suffering from. However, based on what he writes, he believes that there is some underlying sin that is causing his suffering. In those days, when poor health or other bad things came upon a person, it was believed that it was a result of a sin. Whatever David is going through, it is clearly rough. His pillow is wet with tears. In all of this current suffering, David knows that God will deliver him. He looks to the future when his enemies will be defeated. David takes it all to The LORD. He takes his joys, praises, hurts, and gripes. One thing that Psalms shows us is how relational God is with His people. We can take all of our joys and concerns to Him in prayer and petition.

In the New Testament reading, Paul and Silas continue traveling. They met a girl that had a spirit that allowed her to tell the future. This spirit showed her that Paul and Silas were followers of the One True God. Paul becomes frustrated with her pronouncements and orders the spirit to come out of her. It is interesting to note that the spirit knows of the One True God and is obedient to His servants. When the spirit leaves, the owners of the girl realize that they cannot turn a profit off of her anymore, so they go to the officials and have Paul and Silas put in prison.

While in prison, Paul and Silas sing hymns of praise and pray. An earthquake hits and frees the men. They do not run out of the cell. Instead, they remain. When the guard sees the gate is open and assumes the men fled, he prepares to kill himself, but Paul and Silas let him know they are there before he does. It might seem extreme that the guard would immediately think of suicide to get out of his plight. However, if Paul and Silas had left, the guard would surely have been executed. When the guard sees the men are still there, he comes to belief. He and his household are baptized and become believers in Christ.

July 13: Psalms 7-9 and Acts 17: 1-15

Psalm seven is David's cry as he seeks protection from his enemy, Cush. We do not know exactly who Cush was, but scholars believe he is one of David's enemies from the tribe of Benjamin. Whoever the enemy was had to have considerable power. David is concerned that if God does not intervene then he will be torn apart by the enemy. In this Psalm David also speaks of the consequences for failing to repent. God will sharpen His sword against them and string His bow.

Psalm eight is also known as a creation hymn. David is writing with this to speak of God's creative majesty and His wonder. When we pray, do we take into consideration all of the work of God's hands? He has made some amazing things in the universe. His creation proclaims His majesty!

Psalm nine is a celebration of God's justice. As humans, we have an idea of justice. We expect bad people to fail and good people to succeed. However, we do not always see the downfall of wicked people. David has seen his enemies retreat from him. He sings praises because God drove them from him. The LORD has executed judgment against David's enemies. Rather than believe it was his own might that drove them away, David gives credit to The LORD. He is the One that made it happen!

In the New Testament reading, Paul and Silas go through Amphipolis and Apollonia on their way to Thessalonica. Paul went to the synagogue in Thessalonica and began teaching them. Some of the God-fearing Greeks and prominent women came to belief in Jesus through his preaching. However, the Jews become jealous that their mission is successful. So they gather a mob and start a riot. When night falls, Paul and Silas are sent to Berea. The people there were more open to receive the Gospel message. Many prominent Greek women and some of the men come to belief in Christ.

July 14: Psalms 10-12 and Acts 17: 16-34

David expresses concern about what seems like God's distance from him. He asks how long God will hide His face from him. Even when it seems like God is far away, He is still there. Sometimes He is silent as we go through trials and tribulations to see how we will respond. When we are going through these tests, we can fully trust that God is there with us.

In Psalm 11, David talks about taking refuge in The LORD. This is the safest place for him to be. If he climbs up into a tree, his enemies only have to string a bow and shoot at him from there. Truly the only real refuge any of us will find is in Jesus.

Things seem more destitute for David in Psalm 12. He cries that no faithful people remain. All of the loyal folks have disappeared from the whole human race. Despite this cry of seeming injustice, David closes the Psalm with the understanding that The LORD will guard and protect us.

In the New Testament reading, Paul is in Athens. He reasons with the Jews. He argues with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The philosophers accuse Paul of being a "pseudo intellectual". Paul uses the shrine to an "unknown God" to make his point. They are worshipping the one God that they do not know. The pantheon of gods that they followed did not create the universe, it was God Almighty that put it all together. Paul reasons with them and explains about Christ's arrival and His atoning death on the cross. This message is met with ridicule, though some come to believe.

Back then, and even today, it seemed ridiculous to people that God Almighty would send His Son to die on the cross. Some pagans looked upon God as being weak because He had suffered

and died. They did not realize His power. Even though we may be ridiculed today because of our faith, let's keep witnessing by deed and word in all we do. If people are going to make fun of us, it might as well be for our faith in Jesus.

July 15: Psalms 13-16 and Acts 18

David again expresses anguish that The LORD does not seem to be present with him. He is concerned that his enemies will claim triumph. Still, he holds out hope for deliverance.

Psalms 14 is an admonishment against sinners. A fool says that God does not exist. They are corrupt and do evil works. God looks down and sees that there is not one on earth that is good.

Psalms 15 gives us insight to what it looks like to live a Godly life. They live honestly and practice righteousness. They do not slander with the tongue. No gossip proceeds from their lips.

David sings of his confidence in The LORD. He has nothing good in his life except for God Almighty. God sustains him and keeps him. His spirit rejoices and his body rests securely. My prayer is that we all have this same confidence in God. I pray that we can rest in Him like David.

In Acts, Paul leaves Athens and goes to Corinth. He starts in the synagogue, but when they will not listen, he shakes his robe, and proclaims their guilt in failing to understand him. Their condemnation is their fault, not his. Many of the Corinthians come to belief and the church in Corinth is founded. Paul remained there for a year and a half. The Jews stirred up an attack against Paul. They took their ire to the proconsul Gallio, asking him to intervene on their behalf. Gallio refuses. Since it deals with their religion, he directs them to sort it out. Paul then heads back to Antioch.

July 16: Psalms 17-18 and Acts 19: 1-20

David asks for God's protection. He prays that vindication will come from God. David speaks of God testing his heart. The LORD tests and tries people. Only He can determine who is righteous and just. David will seek God's face in righteousness and be satisfied in His presence. Are we satisfied in God's presence?

Psalms 18 was written when God deliver David from Saul's hand and his other enemies. He gives praise to God for helping him out and bringing him this far. The LORD is his strength and his rock. In verse four, when David speaks of being tangled in ropes, this refers to our inability to escape from the clutches of death. He thought he was near to being crushed by his enemy, but God brought David out of it. God is faithful and proves Himself over and over.

In the New Testament reading, Paul comes across disciples of John the Baptist. Unfortunately, these men had not heard of the Holy Spirit. They had been baptized by water, but they had not been baptized in the Spirit. Paul takes time to explain to them that Jesus was the one that John the Baptist was pointing them to. He baptizes them and they begin speaking in different languages and prophesying.

God is doing great and wonderful works through Paul. Some Jewish exorcists see that Paul is successful and try to use the name of Jesus in their exorcism efforts. They command the spirit come out by “Jesus that Paul preaches”. The response of the spirit is interesting. It says it knows Jesus and recognizes Paul, but it does not know who is ordering it out. These men were trying to invoke Jesus to do things on their behalf, but they didn’t know Jesus. As a result, calling on His name did nothing for them. The spirit overtook them, and they fled in humiliation. Others found out about what had transpired and came to belief.

July 17: Psalms 19-21 and Acts 19: 21-41

We continue reading praises to God for the glorious things He has done. David speaks of creation declaring God’s glory. The sky proclaims the work of God’s hands. They do not speak to show His glory, but they communicate how great God is.

David draws a line between intentional sin and unintentional sin. As humans, sometimes we do not see the sin that we commit. Sometimes those sins are unintentional. However, we are blessed that God will point out the unintentional sin in our lives. Further, God will keep us from willful sin. I think that the more aware we are of our intentional sins and the more we confess them to God, the more He opens our eyes to the unintentional sin in our lives.

David gives praise for God’s deliverance in battle. The “day of trouble” could mean any distress, however, in this particular case, David is speaking about enemies. Psalm 21 is a continuation of the Psalm 20, giving praise for victory. It is not David’s triumph, instead the victory belongs to God. David is quick to point out that he has only overcome his enemies because of God’s blessing.

In the New Testament reading, Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he remains in Asia for a while. During his time in Ephesus, there is a major disturbance created by Christianity. There are people upset that they will lose their jobs over people following the Way. These folks fashioned idols for the pagan gods and realized fully that if more people became Christians, less people would buy their product and even the temple of Artemis might be impugned. A riot breaks out amongst the Jews and the Gentiles. However, the crowd is calmed by the city clerk. He does not defend the Christians. Instead, he cites the law of the Romans. They were in such a rush to condemn Jesus and the church, they had violated civil and judicial procedures.

July 18: Psalms 22-24 and Acts 10: 1-16

Psalm 22 speaks of the cross. David asks the question as to why God has forsaken him. Jesus will use the same words on the cross. The idea of being forsaken in this regard is that God is far away, He is hidden from David in his time of need. The practice of dividing clothes was a common practice in Middle Assyrian laws. A criminal’s clothes would be given to the prosecutor or those carrying out the punishment.

Psalms 23 is one of the most familiar psalms. This psalm speaks of the crook, the shepherd's hook. David compares God to a shepherd, taking him through the rough spots so that he can get to the green pastures. God will lead us through some rough times to get us to where we belong. Many of you know the difficulties I had in ending my last career. Times got dark and some craziness happened, but I can look back and see what God was doing. Every day I wake up thankful that God led me through it and brought me to where I belong!

Psalms 24 speaks of the crown. God is the owner of everything. He is king of all. God alone is worthy of all worship and praise!

In the New Testament reading, Paul leaves to go to Macedonia. He learns of a plot on his life, so he travels a different way to get there. Paul uses discernment here. He could have continued on and fallen into the trap, but he decides not to go that route. Rather than be arrested (or worse) and cry persecution, he simply avoids it. He arrives in Troas and begins preaching. The sermon went well into the night. A young man got so tired that he fell asleep and fell from the third story. The text says that they picked the boy up dead. However, Paul says that his life is still in him. There is debate over whether the boy was actually dead or not. Peter had revived Tabitha after her death, so it was definitely feasible for Paul to resuscitate this person. Many believe that the boy was knocked unconscious when he fell. He looked dead, but his life was still in him.

July 19: Psalms 25-27 and Acts 20: 17-38

Psalms 25 speaks of God's justice. David asks that he not be disgraced. He understands that those who do not wait on God or act treacherously will be disgraced. David does not want to fall into that pit. He wants God's ways to be known to him. He seeks God's truth.

Psalms 26 has a rather bold statement in it. David asks that The LORD try him and test him. He asks that his heart and mind be examined by God. David is confident in what the outcome will be because he lives by God's truth.

Psalms 27 speaks of God's salvation and light. David has nothing to fear because of who he belongs to. As believers, we have nothing to fear since we are owned by Him as well. Knowing that we cannot be snatched from His hand, we can feel courageous and strong to go and live for God and do His will for our lives.

In the New Testament reading, Paul leaves Ephesus. He gives a farewell address to the elders. There is a lot of crying because Paul informs them that they will never see his face again. Paul is somewhat reluctant to go. He knows that when he leaves, someone else will come in and try to pollute their minds about the Way. He says these people will have deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them. Not much has changed in the last few thousand years. There are still groups out there that will twist Scripture to make it mean what they want it to say. Others will pick and choose certain Scriptures to justify things. We cannot be like that and we certainly should not fall for it when people twist God's word. It's up to us to be Biblically literate!