

August 23: Psalm 119: 49-104 and 1 Corinthians 4

The psalmist declares that he receives hope from God's word. As believers, God's word can be a source of comfort to us, even during times of trial. The psalmist proclaims that he has kept God's ordinances, seeking God's favor with all of his heart. He identifies that God has treated him well, The LORD is good and what He does is good. A lot of these verses relay the importance of maintaining God's commands. They also show the deep relationship that the psalmist has with The LORD. As His people, we can have a deep relationship with Him as well.

In the New Testament reading, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of their need to be humble. Some folks have become arrogant. From what we can gather in the letter, there are some that want to evaluate Paul. However, he will not take it from them. The One that evaluates him is God Almighty.

Things have gotten pretty rough in Corinth. There is no one there to set the example, so Paul has sent his protege Timothy to them. The point of sending Timothy there was so that he could show the Corinthians how to act.

August 24: Psalm 119: 105-176 and 1 Corinthians 5

The Lord's word is a light for the path and a lamp for the feet. It will keep us from stumbling. It provides good guidance. If we want to be upright, then we should immerse ourselves in God's word.

The Psalm addresses the issue of double minded people. The psalmist is still being pressed by the wicked folks around him. They do not fear God. The psalmist does, so he will not fear the evil ones. Instead, he fears The LORD.

This psalm wraps up with praise for God and His righteousness. The last stanza asks that the author's cry would reach The LORD and that he would receive understanding. Throughout the psalms, and this psalm in particular, we can see the broad variety of emotions that the psalmist communicates to God. God does not expect us to come to Him with our stuff in order and communicate what we have done. Instead, He wants us to come to Him with our hurts, our wounds, our fears, our scars, our thanks, our praise, and our worship. Whatever we are going through, we can take it to God. He is always there to listen!

In the New Testament reading, Paul addresses an issue of sexual immorality. From what we can gather in the text, a son is in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother. This immorality was not even tolerated by the Romans. In fact, it was a capital crime that led to the guilty either being executed or banished. Yet, this is happening and no one in the church is addressing it. The people are puffed up with pride rather than feeling grief about it. They are willingly choosing to not address the problem.

We know that we are not to judge. That is God's business. However, it is important that as believers we keep each other accountable. I have a great group of guys that keep in touch with me through the week and we encourage one another in prayer and call each other out when one

of us starts getting off the path. We do that because we are all believers and we want to get better. That is not judgment, that is accountability. In the same vein, we cannot judge those on the outside of Jesus because they do not know. We cannot expect those outside the faith to act like those inside. We would not expect a dog to act like a cat and vice versa. Why would we expect non-Christians to act like Christians?

August 25: Psalms 120-123 and 1 Corinthians 6

Psalms 120 is one of the first psalms of ascents. The psalms of ascents were designed for pilgrimage processions to celebrate the seasonal feasts in Jerusalem. This psalm speaks of lying lips and deceitful tongues, referring to gossip and rumors. Meschech was located southeast of the Black Sea and Kedar was an eastern plain located at the northern part of the Syrian Arabian desert.

Psalms 121 sings of God's protection. The psalmist lifts his eyes to the mountains and sees that his help comes from The LORD. The LORD made the mountains; He is the maker of heaven and earth. He protects His people, so they have nothing to fear.

Psalms 122 prays for peace in Jerusalem and Psalms 123 seeks God's favor.

In the New Testament reading, Paul addresses an issue of believers filing lawsuits against other believers. It is sad that these believers could not just let things go and work it out amongst themselves. Since they can't just turn the other cheek, they wind up taking their issues to the worldly court system to settle a matter that they could not. It is a blight on the church as a whole. How can these folks promote forgiveness while failing to practice forgiveness amongst each other?

Paul also addresses the issue of sin in the life of a believer. Everything is permissible. However, not everything is good. Not everything builds up. As believers, we should seek to engage in activities that build up and give glory to God instead of seeking out pleasures for ourselves. We have been purchased for a very high price. Since we were bought by God through Christ's blood, we should glorify God with our bodies.

August 26: Psalms 124-127 and 1 Corinthians 7: 1-24

Psalms 124 is a Davidic song of ascents. This psalm focuses on the help The LORD has given them. If God had not been on their side, then they would not be spared from the enemy. If God had not been on their side, when the evil men attacked them, they would have destroyed them. God is looking over them. That is not to say that David and his men did not have to put any effort into it. We cannot pray for a hole and then just stand with a shovel in our hands.

Psalms 125 speaks of Israel's stability. The nation's stability comes from The LORD. The LORD will banish evil doers, but the upright will prosper. Psalms 126 gives praise for Zion's restoration. This one closes by saying that the one carrying a bag of seed weeps, but will return with shouts of joy as he carries sheaves back. This again points us to the need to do some work. The seed is not going to sew itself. As believers, we have to do some work if we expect to see any fruit.

Psalm 127 speaks about the futility of doing things outside of God's plan. Unless it is built by The LORD, it will falter and fail. Even if guards stand a diligent watch at night, it is futile unless God is protecting that city. As we develop our plans, let's commit them to The LORD. He will ensure their success.

In the New Testament reading, Paul gives advice to married couples. Paul explains to the husband and wives that they belong to the other now. They are a partnership. They must submit to one another. Paul also gives advice to anyone unmarried to not get married unless they lack self-control.

The Corinthians all come from various walks of life. Paul encourages them to remain in whatever life situation they are in. This is so that they can have an influence on the people around them. Similarly, as believers, we are not to hide ourselves from the world. Faith is a contact sport and sometimes the best sermons are preached by a brother or sister that serves and loves like Christ without speaking a word.

August 27: Psalms 128-131 and 1 Corinthians 7: 25-40

Psalm 128 expresses the happiness people find when they fear The LORD. If we fear God, then we will seek to do His will rather than follow the will of the world. Those that fear The LORD will prosper.

Psalm 129 brings concerns about the oppression the psalmist has felt. Not only has the author been oppressed, but so has Israel. The psalmist asks The LORD to make their enemies like grass on the rooftops.

Psalm 130 is a call for Israel to put their hope in The LORD. He is the One that will redeem them. He is the One that will take away their sins. The LORD is their only hope, they should put all of their trust in Him. How has God delivered you?

Psalm 131 is a Davidic psalm. The author wants to go back to basics. He wants his heart to be humble and not filled with pride. He wants to approach God with a childlike faith.

In the New Testament reading, Paul continues talking about marriage issues. Essentially, he says that it is better for the believers not to get married. His reasoning is that if they are married, then their spouses will serve as a distraction from their work for The LORD. If they have spouses, then they will have to consider the spouse as they move forward. This is why it is important to find a spouse that is also a believer. That way you can work together for The LORD.

August 28: Psalms 132-135 and 1 Corinthians 8

Psalm 132 is a request that God would remember the trials and hardship that David endured. David did not have an easy time getting to the throne. He had many years of treachery he had to fight through. God brought David through it all and placed him on the throne.

Psalm 133 opens with a reminder of how good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) get along and live together in harmony. Parents do not like it when their children fight. Our preference is that they would get along. On a larger scale, God prefers that we all as brothers and sisters in Christ get along. As a bunch of believers, do we work together to move God's mission? Or do we sew discord amongst the body? If we are sewing discord, what does that show to people outside of the faith?

Psalm 134 is a call to evening worship and Psalm 135 is a psalm of praise. It praises God because He is great. He freed the Israelites from the Egyptians. His name endures forever; His reputation will carry through the generations. His reputation carries on today!

In the New Testament reading, Paul writes about the issue of believers eating meat that had been offered to idols. From Paul's vantage, there is really no issue here. The meat was offered to something that is not real, so it has not been tainted. However, the consumption of this meat could cause people to stumble. Since some had come from pagan backgrounds, it was hard for them to wrap their brains around the fact that this meat was okay to eat. Paul explains that it is better for them to abstain from eating the offered meat if it would cause another one to walk away from the faith or struggle in their walk. Paul closes this chapter by saying, "if food causes my brother to fall, I will never again eat meat so that I won't cause my brother to fall." Do we care enough about our brothers and sisters to go as far as Paul would?

August 29: Psalms 136 -138 and 1 Corinthians 9

Psalm 136 is a great psalm that reminds us that God's love endures forever. There is no end to it. Give thanks to The LORD for He is good, His love endures forever! He does the great wonders, He spread land on the waters, He made the great lights. God can do anything; He created all of this out of nothing (ex nihilo). God is the creator, His love endures forever, and we should give Him praise.

Psalm 137 is mournful in tone. This particular psalm was written during the time of the exile. the exiles would gather and weep over Zion by the rivers of Babylon. The psalm asks how they can sing on foreign soil. It is a legitimate question. These people are grieved because they lost their land, the land that God Himself gave them, and now they simply want to weep. The psalm closes with a description of the horrific atrocities meted out on them. They have suffered tremendous injustice. The psalmist asks for The LORD to intervene and destroy the enemy.

Psalm 138 is more thankful in tone. This psalm speaks of God's answer to prayer and fulfillment of His promises.

In the New Testament reading, Paul asks if he and Barnabas do not have the same rights as the disciples do. He asks if they have sown spiritual things is it not right for them to reap material benefit. He reminds them that the temple priests were fed off of the temple offerings. Essentially, he is saying that he is entitled to compensation for what he has been doing, but he has not taken any compensation. Paul was a tent maker by trade and that is how he made his living.

This chapter closes with the reminder that they are all running a race. They should run with endurance as if they were after the crown. We should put all of our effort into running the race for Christ. We should bring our bodies under strict discipline. As believers today, we have an awesome opportunity to make an impact for The LORD. Let's do the work He has called us to and give all the glory to Him!

August 30: Psalms 139-141 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Psalm 139 sings of God's immense knowledge. It is hard from our finite human brains to really fathom how involved and how knowledgeable God is. A great example that was given to me by a mentor many moons ago goes along these lines: When you sit and watch the sun beam come through a pane of glass, you see little flecks of dust in the air. God is aware of all of those flecks of dust. He even sees the ones that we do not see. That is how big God is! We could spend our entire lives trying to sum up how great and awesome He is, but we would never be able to.

Psalm 140 is a cry for deliverance from the enemy. The proud men hide a trap, the psalmist asks that he will not fall into it. He asks that those who bring trouble on him will have hot coals heaped upon them.

Psalm 141 is another prayer for protection, but this time it is not the enemy the psalmist is concerned about. Instead, he is asking to be delivered from sinners. He asks that he not desire the things that the sinner has. Instead, he asks for correction by the righteous. The psalmist is more concerned about being holy than the comforts of the world. What would we rather do? Would we rather do what makes us happy or what makes us holy?

In the New Testament reading, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Israelites had witnessed the wonderful things God had done for them, but they still rebelled. They were freed by Him, they were led by the pillar of smoke and fire, they were fed in the desert, and they drank water from the rock. Despite all of this, some still managed to stray from God. As believers, we must guard ourselves from falling into the same trap!