

Salvation in the Psalms

Today In Your Reading...

We covered nine psalms. While I am not accustomed to reading that many in one sitting, it was interesting to get a fly-by view of these incredible works. They seemed to tell one big story, *the story of salvation*. Look back with me for a minute to consider this wonderful picture and its valuable truths.

First, **there is a God who made all things; creation gives evidence of His existence.**

"The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship" (19:1).
"Only fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God'" (14:1).

Second, **though man is part of God's perfect creation, by his own choice he is imperfect, fallen and corrupt.** "They are corrupt and their actions are evil; no one does good. All have turned away from God; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not even one" (14:1-3).

Third, **the Lord has offered us salvation, a way out of our sinful state to right standing with Him, all through His Son Jesus.** "Oh that salvation would come from Mount Zion... How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep me from my sins! Don't let them control me! Then, I will be free of guilt..." (14:7; 19:12, 13).

Fourth, **God's Word is a blessing to us if we will honor and obey it.** "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart... They are more desirable than gold; they are sweeter than honey. They are a warning to those who hear them; there is reward for those who obey them" (19:7-11).

Fifth, **those who put their trust in the Lord will have everlasting life.** "You will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your godly one to rot in the grave. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever" (14:7; 16:10, 11).

Finally, **the Lord will return to Judge all men, small and great; He will defeat and punish His enemies.** "You will capture all your enemies. Your strong right hand will seize all those who hate you. You will destroy them as in a flaming furnace when you appear. The Lord will consume them in His anger; fire will devour them" (21:8, 9).

Daily Reflection

It is amazing that there are 150 individual psalms, yet there is a consistent message across them all. What does this truth tell you?

In light of these truths, David constantly examined his heart and mind for those things that were not pleasing to God. What are those things in your heart and mind that do not please Him?

"May the words of your mouth and the thoughts of your heart be pleasing to Him, for He is your Lord, your Rock, and your Redeemer" (19:14).

Today In Your Reading...

We read some of the more well-known psalms. No doubt you recognized some of the passages. For example, many of the lines from *Psalms 22* were descriptive of Jesus' death on the cross. "My enemies surround Me; they have pierced My hands and feet. My enemies stare at Me and gloat. They divide My clothes among themselves and throw dice for My garments" (v.16-18). Those who delivered Him unto death said, "Is this the One who relies on the Lord? Then the Lord save Him! If the Lord loves Him so much,, then let the Lord rescue Him" (v.8). Then, Jesus replied, "My God, My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" (v.1).

Of course, we read perhaps the most famous song of all, *Psalms 23*, the classic Davidic analogy of our Lord as the great Shepherd. *Psalms 24* also has some familiar lines, such as, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The world and it's people belong to Him" (v.1). "Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, invincible in battle" (v.7-10).

However, rather than dive into one of these stellar passages, I'd like to focus our attention on a common theme that is prevalent throughout the *Psalms*. It is obvious in nearly every poem or song that David wrote that he was regularly in distress; and when David was in distress, **his fallback position was to put his trust in the Lord to rescue him.**

"O Lord, do not stay away," he wrote, "You are my strength; come quickly to my aid" (22:19). "Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for You are close to me" (23:4). "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. I trust in You, O God. Do not let me be disgraced or let my enemies rejoice..." (25:1).

Daily Reflection

When soldiers are overwhelmed by the enemy, they have a fallback position, some distance from the frontline, where they can find protection and relief in the midst of an attack. **Believe it or not, in the heat of battle or life, you too run to a fallback position.** You turn to someone or something for strength; you retreat to some person, place, or practice to "escape" from the heat of battle. What is that for you? Why have you chosen this as your fallback?

Oftentimes, people run to the Lord as their last resort to solve their problems or to provide them respite from their pressure or pain. Is He your last resort? Are there other things or other people to whom you turn for help before the Lord? If so, what does that communicate about your trust in Him?

It is clear that **the Lord was not David's last resort but his first resort.** When he met with crises or difficulties (and even when he didn't), his fallback position was to trust in the Lord. Do you trust Him enough to run to Him?

Forgiven

May 9 — *Psalms 27-32*

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Day 129 — 236 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We covered six psalms, four of which are songs of thanksgiving for David's safety in the midst of his enemies. *Psalm 29* is a song of praise, ascribing honor to the Lord for His glory and strength. However, *Psalm 32* is a standout in my mind, a psalm of praise for God's forgiveness, a psalm that every believer should read regularly.

We are not told exactly what specific event David had in mind when he wrote *Psalm 32*, but it is hard not to think of his adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent deception and destruction of Uriah her husband. Until Nathan the prophet confronted the King with his sins, David might have thought that he was above the law, that he had gotten away with murder, that he would escape the eye and judgment of God; but, once Nathan revealed his treachery as evil before the Lord, David felt the weight of his sins like at no other time in his life.

David described his struggle with the heavy guilt of his actions, "When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night Your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat" (v.3, 4). **Unconfessed sins agitate our conscience, distract our minds, and gnaw at our souls.** They mount up pressure and squeeze the joy out of us, plunging us into depression and death.

However, **the weight of wrongdoing is not meant for our destruction but for our conviction.** It is the Holy Spirit convincing us of our errors, our coming short of the glory of God. That conviction is meant to lead us to repentance and, ultimately, to forgiveness and freedom. Paul wrote, "The sorrow that is of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation..." (2 *Corinthians 7:10*).

When David finally confessed and repented of his sins, he described immeasurable joy and freedom, for all his guilt was gone! "Oh what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin" (v.1).

Daily Reflection

Have you experienced the joy of forgiveness, a release from the weight of guilt and shame? Describe it here.

How often should you confess your sins and ask for forgiveness for wrongdoing? Support your answer.

Perhaps you are struggling with unconfessed sin. You are sensing the Spirit's conviction but your pride has refused to give in. Listen to David, "Let all the godly confess their rebellion to God while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment" (v.6). **Satan would have you crushed by your guilt and shame. The Lord would have you set free!** Let Him restore your joy today — confess, repent, and be forgiven!

Describing the Indescribable

Today In Your Reading...

We continued in the *Psalms*. Although we read the more well-known *Psalms 37*, with passages like, "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desire" (v.4), "Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act" (v.7), and "The Lord saves the godly, for He is their fortress in times of trouble" (v.39), my attention today was drawn to *Psalms 36*. David recognized the gravity of our sin, but then he contrasted it with the greatness of our God.

In his attempt to describe the indescribable attributes of the Lord, David used aspects of nature. While **Someone who is supernatural cannot be measured by something that is natural**, it is all David knew and all that we can fathom. For example, he wrote, "Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the **heavens**" (v.5). Simply put, God's love for us is as limitless as outer space. Then, "Your faithfulness reaches beyond the **clouds**" (v.5). God's constancy and dependability extend beyond what we can see; in short, He can always be trusted.

David continued, "Your righteousness is like the mighty **mountains**" (v.6). God's purity or holiness is fixed, immovable, and enduring. Then, "Your justice is like the **ocean depths**" (v.6). His discernment and understanding are deep, profound, and wise. Paul echoed David's words, when he wrote, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out" (*Romans 11:33*).

Next, David wrote, "All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of Your **wings**" (v.7). God cares for His own as a gentle mother protects her little ones. Then, "You feed them from the abundance of Your own house, letting them drink from Your **rivers** of delight" (v.8). The Lord's provision is both bountiful and never-ending.

Finally, David wrote, "For You are a **fountain** of life, the **light** by which we see" (v.9). John described Jesus in a similar way, "In Him was life and the life was the Light of men" (*John 1:4*). New life in the Lord is fresh and constant, energizing us with the joy of our salvation. Also, "His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (*Psalms 119:105*). With it, we can see our world and circumstances as God does.

Daily Reflection

If you were David, attempting to describe the indescribable, what terms would you use?

What are some of your favorite attributes of God? Explain why these are important to you.

Skeptics often dismiss the God of the Bible because He is too big to comprehend. They want a deity that they can understand, explain, or hold in their hands, someone who is more relatable to us as humans, like the gods of mythology. Personally, **I would have a God that is not like me, fallen and finite**, but one who is indescribable, larger than life, unable to be comprehended by my little brain, and able to do things that I cannot explain. **In that God, I would have hope in His power to save me from myself.**

Collect and Die?

Today In Your Reading...

We read six more of David's psalms. I particularly like *Psalms 40* which includes a clear picture of salvation, "The Lord lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to God" (v.2, 3).

However, today I was struck by David's frustration in *Psalms 39*, particularly his disappointment in the brevity of life. "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered and that my life is fleeing away. My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to You; human existence is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows..." (v.4-6).

He continued his disgust with the meaninglessness of his activities, "...All our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth for someone else to spend" (v.6). David's sentiments sound much like those of his son Solomon who wrote in *Ecclesiastes*, "I hated all the fruit of my labor which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me; and, who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor... This is vanity" (2:18, 19).

Two questions came to mind as I read these words. First, since life is short, and "all our busy rushing ends in nothing," **where are we to find hope?** It makes no sense to put our hope in ourselves, other people, wealth, possessions, or in our activities, for all of these things are temporal, passing away. **How can we find lasting hope in such transient things?** David asked the same question, "So Lord, where do I put my hope?" He also found the right answer, "My only hope is in You" (v.7). It is the Lord, who is eternal and who is much bigger than our puny exist-

ence on earth, who provides us with direction, purpose, and salvation from this brief and troubled life.

The second question I found myself asking is **how do I avoid wasting time and money?** The answer to this question is tied to the answer of the first question. *Since God is the One who gives meaning and purpose to life, then He is also the One who gives meaning and purpose to my time and money.* They are both on loan for me to use for Him. **The collect-and-die mentality is not of God. He would rather we invest in and influence people on His behalf.**

Daily Reflection

Evaluate your use of time. Are you using it for temporal or eternal purposes?

Evaluate your use of money. Are you using it for temporal or eternal purposes?

No matter how you have spent your time and money up to this point, you still have today. **Choose to reject the lie of collect-and-die and rather invest and influence.** Invest in God's work and influence others on His behalf.

That the World May Know

Today In Your Reading...

We continued the psalms of David, which were a journal of sorts, where he recorded all that God meant to him and all that He did for him. For example, he wrote, "I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. O my people, trust in Him at all times. Pour out your heart to Him, for God is our refuge" (62:5-8).

In another psalm he wrote, "Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth! Sing about the glory of His name. Tell the world how glorious He is. Say to God, 'How awesome are Your deeds...' Everything on earth will worship You; they will sing Your praises shouting Your name in glorious songs. Come and see what our God has done. What awesome miracles He does for His people" (66:1-5).

Again, he wrote, "Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what He did for me... May Your ways be known throughout the earth, Your saving power among people everywhere" (66:16; 67:2).

Few people are like David, in that few people are song writers, poets, or preachers. Few people have all of their most intimate thoughts and prayers published for everyone to read. Still, in another sense, **we are all to do what David did — praise the work of God in our lives.** We may not have David's gifting, but we most certainly have David's calling. *We may not have David's skill, but we still have his assignment.* That assignment is to reflect the glory of God to those around us, both through our words and our deeds. **We are to praise the Lord so that the world may know Him,** who He is and what He has done.

Daily Reflection

"Come and **see** what our God has done, what awesome miracles He does for His people! Come and **listen**... and I will tell you what He did for me!" (66:5, 16).

How are you *visibly* reflecting what God has done in and for you?

How are you *audibly* sharing what God has done in and for you?

Do your works praise your God? Do your words praise your God? If this is your assignment, what is your grade?

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (*Romans 10:14*).

God of the Nations

Today In Your Reading...

We continued in the psalms of David, most of which are consumed with his praying for safety from his enemies. It is obvious in whom David trusted during times of trouble. His words repeatedly exalt his divine refuge and Rescuer.

However, in the midst of David's praise for his God, he made a claim that stood out to me today. He wrote, "All the nations will come and bow before you, Lord" (86:9). In this passage, David listed several reasons why the nations would bow before Him.

First, **the Lord made the nations** (v.9). The development of individual nations was God's idea. After the Flood, He gave the command to multiply and fill the earth; and, when Nimrod rebelled against that command and kept everyone together, it was God's idea to disperse them according to their language at the Tower of Babel. Nations were to be used in God's plan, particularly in bringing about the Promised Savior. Since all men and nations were created by God, then all men and nations are accountable to God and His commandments.

Second, **there is no one like our God among the gods of the nations**. Satan has distracted and clouded the minds of people for ages, regarding the worship of God, by introducing all kinds of "competition" — idols, images, myths, false gods, and other religions — anything to keep people from finding and serving the One True God. However, our God has proven that He alone is the Lord of heaven and earth, and there is no other. Creation bears witness to His presence, the Bible is distinct among all books, His Son Jesus is unlike anyone who has ever lived, and Christianity has separated itself from all the religions of the earth. There is no one else like our God. He is the One True God.

Third, **the Lord is great and He performs miracles**. Our God has separated Himself by His deeds. He is the Creator of all things, the Deliverer of His people Israel, the God who became flesh in Jesus Christ and performed feats that cannot be explained. He also defeated death at the resurrection of Christ. No other God can claim these unexplainable feats.

Finally, **the Lord is the Judge of the nations**. While God created all men and nations, and He loves all men and nations, He must also keep them accountable to their deeds. Their rejection of Him and rebellion against Him do not go unnoticed and will not go unpunished. While Jesus, at His first coming, offered the only way to be made right with God, when He comes for the second time, He will not return as Savior but as Judge. That will be the day of reckoning for all men and nations. Their rebellion will be checked; and, whether they believed in Him or not, they will bow before His presence and confess that *He alone is God of the nations*.

Daily Reflection

While the Lord our God is God of the nations, nations are just comprised of individuals, men and women like you. Is our God the God of the individuals in your nation? Explain.

Our God is the God of the nations but He also wants to be your God, and **He wants to use you to reach the nations for Him, starting with where He has placed you.**