

Unfailing Love

May 14 — *Psalms 103, 108-110, 122, 124*

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections

Day 134 — 231 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

For several weeks now, we have encountered in David's psalms two words that are hard to ignore. They are the words "unfailing love." These two words appear in the Bible 121 times (NLT), 78 of which are in the psalms. Today, we read these words four times.

"The Lord is merciful and gracious; He is slow to anger and full of **unfailing love**" (103:8).

"For His **unfailing love** toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth" (103:11).

"For your **unfailing love** is higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds" (108:4).

"Help me, O Lord my God! Save me because of your **unfailing love**" (109:26).

All of us have some understanding of what love is, so I will not try to explain it. We have loved and been loved. However, *what is impossible for us to understand fully is the love of God*. How can we fathom that which is higher than the heavens? However, I would like for us to consider briefly this idea of a love that is unfailing.

We are told in Scripture that God is love; it is His nature to be loving (1 John 4:8). If love is His nature and He is an infinite Being, then His love is also infinite, meaning it is immeasurable, without limits; and, if God's love is infinite, immeasurable, and without limits, then it is without end and, therefore, unable to fail. Noah Webster defined "unfailing" as something that is **"not capable of being exhausted, an unending source of supply."** This explains why we, as finite beings, cannot comprehend the infinite love of God; instead, we can only use words like David did and describe it as an "unfailing love."

Daily Reflection

God created you in His image. You are dear to Him simply because You are His. **Despite your sins and shortcomings your God loves you.** Even though you may deny Him, disappoint Him, or despise Him, His love for you does not waver. He pursues you, no matter what you do. In fact, He loves you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for you, to redeem you, and make you right with Him.

God's love is not going away; it is undeniable, immovable, and unflappable. He loves you with an everlasting love! **His love is not stingy or conditional, but rather He lavishes His love on you; it is free and abundant.** Consider these verses about His great love.

"God demonstrated His love toward you, in that while you were a sinner, Christ died for you" (Romans 5:8).

"Though you were dead in your trespasses and sins..., God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love... made you alive together with Him" (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5).

"Who shall separate you from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

There is no denying it — *your God loves you with an unfailing love!* Think on this truth today; let it sink deeply into your heart and mind. May it be an encouragement and a source of joy.

You are loved by Someone who will never stop loving you. His love never fails!

The God Who Sees

Today In Your Reading...

We continued in the psalms, reading two of David's shortest songs — *Psalms 131* and *133*. I love how these two are placed side by side in our reading today. In *Psalms 133*, David praises the wonderful thought of God's people dwelling together in peace and harmony. However, **God's people cannot be at peace with each other until they are personally at peace with God**, which is the subject of *Psalms 131*.

Then, we read one of David's most beautifully-written and well-known works, *Psalms 139*. Who can read these words and not be prompted to wonder at our God, to praise Him for who is, or to thank Him for what He's done? While it is not my goal to pull out every detail of David's song here, I would like to consider his message as a whole. It includes four truths.

First, **God knows everything**, including everything about us (v.1-6). In fact, He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows the kind of person we are. He knows our hearts, our thoughts, and our words, even before we say them. He knows where we are and where we are going; and, He has a plan for our lives. "He charts the path ahead of us and tells us where to stop and rest." Truth be told, "before we were born, our lives were recorded in His book; every moment was laid out before a single day had passed" (v.16). God knows everything.

Second, **God sees everything**, because there is not a place in heaven or on earth where He does not dwell (v.7-12). "We can never escape from His spirit; we can never get away from His presence." We cannot hide anything from God; He sees it all. Even when we are alone, concealed by darkness, or in some remote location, He is there. "To Him, the night shines as bright as day; darkness and light are both alike."

Third, **God can do anything** (v.13-18). While we are amazed at creation or at the miracles of the Bible, the greatest creation or miracle is that of life, particularly human life. How do our bodies work? Why do our bodies work? How does each part know what to do and when to do it? The meticulous details and complexity of the human body are too wonderful for us to fathom. We are God's greatest creation; we are His most amazing miracle. How marvelous are His works!

Daily Reflection

The final truth that David shared is this — **knowing what we know about God, how can anyone willfully offend Him?** David rails against those who set themselves against the Lord (v.19-22), but, then, he pauses at the end and looks at himself. How can he point fingers at others when there are things in his own life that are offensive to God? He asks the Lord to search him and point out anything that displeases Him.

How should these truths affect the way you live?

Recognizing that God sees everything you do, hears everything you say, knows everything you think, and can do anything He desires should produce in you **a healthy fear** of the Lord. Not that you are to be afraid of God but that you should desire to please Him, to search your heart and see if there is any wicked way in you.

The Missing Nun

Today In Your Reading...

While we read four more psalms, two of which were not David's (88, 89), I would like to concentrate on *Psalms 145*. This song is different than the others because it is written in the form of an acrostic. David started each line with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet. However, the Hebrew letter *nun*, which is our letter "N," was missing from the list. Later, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, the "missing nun" was finally discovered (1948). It says, "The Lord is faithful in all His words and gracious in all His works."

I love the concept of using the alphabet to praise God. It expresses the idea that the Lord can be praised in every way that we know how. From A-Z we can glorify His name, and, still, we cannot cover every aspect of God's character. But, I like that David tried.

Personally, I find that, in this psalm, David communicated one of my desires or goals, when he wrote, "I will bless you every day" (v.2). When I awake in the morning, my first thought is to thank Him, for the gift of rest and for providing me with another day. My next thoughts are to express my desire to use that day to serve Him. As I spend time in the Scriptures and in prayer, writing and reflecting on His word or His works, I find myself praising Him for various things.

I want to be a blessing to God and a blessing to others. **I don't want to be "a missing nun,"** who is blind to the many blessings of God and who never returns thanksgiving or who never reflects praise of Him to those around me. The "missing nun" is ungrateful, self-absorbed, and inconsiderate. The "missing nun" does not seize opportunities to tell God how much he loves Him or tell others how much He has done for him. The "missing nun" does not recognize His purpose and, instead, lives for his own agenda, his own ambitions, and his own praise.

Daily Reflection

What about you? Are you "a missing nun," or are you one of those "letters" that praises the Lord with your words and works?

What thoughts do you have when you awake in the morning? What goals do you have in a day?

How would you describe "a missing nun"?

"I will praise you, my God and King," wrote David. "I will bless you every day; I will praise you forever! Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! His greatness is beyond discovery! Let every generation tell of Your mighty acts. Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue. I will proclaim your greatness" (v.1-4).

All of creation sings praises to our God. The rocks cry out, the trees clap their hands, the sun, moon, and stars reflect the glory of the Lord. Everything that God has made somehow praises His name. Shouldn't people praise Him too? **Don't be the "missing nun!" Don't be silent!** Bless His name and tell of His greatness!

The Rut of Ritualism

Today In Your Reading...

We looked at three psalms, all written by Asaph. Remember when David was organizing the effort to transport the Ark to Jerusalem and prepare for the Temple construction, Asaph was assigned to lead the singers (*1 Chronicles 16:5*). He was a Levite, a skilled musician, and, evidently, like David, a terrific song-writer. It seems that his position as choir director was permanent, as later we find “the sons of Asaph” had followed in their father’s footsteps. Twelve of the psalms bear the name of Asaph or his sons (*50, 73-83*). The Israelites esteemed him as a great poet and perhaps even as a prophet.

Of the three songs of the day, I was particularly drawn to *Psalms 50*. Asaph paints the picture of a courtroom in which God is passing judgment on His people. He is the Judge, Israel is the defendant, and the heavens and earth are witnesses. “The Mighty God, the Lord, has spoken; He has summoned all humanity from east to west. Heaven and earth will be His witnesses as He judges His people” (*v.1, 4, 6*).

What was the charge that the Lord was bringing against His people? It was this — **impersonal, heartless ritualism**. “I have no complaint about your sacrifices,” He said, “or the burnt offerings you constantly bring to My altar; but I want no more bulls and goats... What I want, instead, is your true thanks to God. I want you to fulfill your vows and trust Me... Don’t recite My laws any longer and don’t pretend that you obey Me, for you refuse My discipline and treat My laws like trash” (*v.89, 15, 16*). Ouch!

To summarize, God’s people were doing what was expected of them, day in and day out, without giving any thought to why or how they were doing it. **They were going through the motions of their religion and neglecting to develop a relationship with their God.**

Daily Reflection

Each of us can slip into impersonal, heartless ritualism, going through the motions while losing sight of why or how we are to do them, doing what is expected of us in our religion without developing a relationship with our God. Have you ever found yourself in this place? Perhaps you are there now. How do you avoid impersonal, heartless ritualism and, instead, strive for a **personal, heartfelt relationship**?

God lists some ways to prevent this ritualism from occurring. “**Repent**, all of you who ignore Me. **Give thanks**, that is a sacrifice that truly honors Me. **Keep My path** and I will **reveal** to you the salvation of God” (*v.22, 23*). Jesus echoed these sentiments when He said, “He who has My commandments and **keeps them**, it is He who loves Me; and, He who loves Me will be loved by My father, and I will love Him and will **disclose** Myself to him” (*John 14:21 NASB*).

What insight do you find here from these verses regarding how to cultivate a personal, heartfelt relationship with the Lord?

A Crooked Bow

May 18 — *Psalms 75-78*

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Day 138 — 227 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We continued reading the songs of Asaph. A truth that I was immediately reminded of is that *every person is accountable to God for his deeds*. "It is God alone who judges; He decides who will rise and who will fall" (75:7). All men, small and great, will answer to Him. Even God's people will not escape judgment (*Heb. 9:27*).

However, I cannot read *Psalms 78*, one of my favorites, without being challenged in several areas. First, Asaph recounted all that God had done in and through the nation of Israel. Truth be told, our God is at work in every nation, even our own. The challenge I find here is this: **Do I know and treasure the great things that God has done in my country?** Have I been a good steward of my heritage, noting and preserving the evidences of God's grace and blessing on our land and people?

Second, Asaph expressed the purpose for his history lesson — so that the people of his day "would not be like their ancestors — stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God," but so that "each generation can set its hope on God, remembering His glorious miracles and obeying His commands" (v.7, 8). The challenge here is to **go beyond just knowing what God has done in the past but learning from the successes and failures of those who have gone before me.**

Next, I am not only challenged by the fact that Asaph shared the stories and lessons of the past with others, but I am more challenged by his reminder to share these things with my children. "So the next generation might know, even the children not yet born, that they in turn might teach their children..." (v.6). **Do I readily share what God has done in the past, even in my life, with others, particularly in my home, with my children?** Here is God's design for ed-

ucation. We are not to leave the education of our children to the school, the church, or anyone else. *Parents, it must begin with us!*

Daily Reflection

How are you doing in these areas? Have you neglected, forgotten, or remembered what God has done in your nation, in your own life? Are you sharing these things with others, beginning with your own family?

Asaph described those who forget the lessons of the past and, instead, repeat them, "as useless as a crooked bow" (v.57). **A crooked bow is useless because it does not perform the task it was created to perform.** It is unreliable and, therefore, not trustworthy. A soldier could not use a crooked bow in battle; thus, he would have to cast it aside.

Are you a crooked bow? Are you hitting the target at which you have been aimed? Are you fulfilling the calling that God has placed on your life? Are you a reliable and trustworthy servant or are you forgetful, neglectful, or rebellious?

Let the lessons of the past lead you in the present. Remember what God has done and repeat it to those around you!

The Lord of Lords

Today In Your Reading...

We nearly finished the songs of Asaph; in fact, we will read one more tomorrow. Of the four psalms that we covered today, my attention was captured by the last one, *Psalms 82*, in which the author made a significant statement, that "God presides over heaven's court; He pronounces judgment on the judges" (v.1). Let's take this statement apart and consider its pieces.

First, **in every society there is a judge**, someone who is exercising authority over others. These judges may be called by different names — King, Emperor, Caesar, Sanhedrin, Governor, Parliament, Council, Congress, President, or Supreme Court — but all of them serve the same purpose. They are agents of an institution called *civil government*; and they provide order and justice for the people in a community. Without them, society would disintegrate into chaos and confusion.

Second, **the authority these agents wield is given by God**. As Creator and Sovereign of the universe, all authority is in God's hands. However, for the good of man, God has delegated some of His authority to these agents of civil government, for reasons already established, namely the ordering and preservation of society (*Romans 13:1-7*). Because of this authority, these agents are endowed with power and are often exalted in society. In fact, Asaph refers to them "as gods (or mighty ones) and children of the Most High" (v.6).

Third, **these agents of God are accountable to Him for the use of His authority**. These agents are allowed to use their authority to do several important things, to give direction, to make and enforce laws, to judge between men, and to punish. However, *the authority given to these agents is limited*. Since their authority is rooted in God's authority, their decisions must

be in line with His purposes, their laws must not contradict His laws, and their rulings must not offend His justice. In this case, their decisions, their laws, and their rulings are illegitimate and, thereby, nullified. In other words, **civil government is not allowed to do whatever it wants**. Though it is "lord," it is subservient to the Lord of heaven, the author of its authority.

Daily Reflection

When you consider those who wield authority in society, why is it so easy to get discouraged?

How do these truths provide encouragement in light of those who wield authority over you?

Take courage, these agents of civil government are mere men, who will answer to God for their actions. No matter who they are, no matter what nation or society they rule, *there is a God who reigns in heaven*. **There is a higher power, a Lord of the lords, to which all men, small and great, must answer!** "Rise up, O God, and judge the earth, for all the nations belong to You!" (v.8). *God is in control; therefore, let us not fret over those who control us here.*

A Wise Choice

Today In Your Reading...

We finished the *Psalms* and continued the history of Israel. David has died and the third king has taken the throne. Though the majesty of David's kingdom was remarkable, the riches and rule of Solomon quickly surpassed him.

In order to establish his rule, Solomon eliminated his opposition, among which were his unhappy brother Adonijah, who was planning to overthrow him, Abiathar the priest and Joab the leader of the army, who had both sworn allegiance to Adonijah, and, finally, Shimei, who had show an unfavorable disposition towards David and could not be trusted. While Solomon's actions might have caught us by surprise, they shouldn't. Kings have removed their enemies long before Solomon came around.

It must have been somewhat intimidating for Solomon to follow his father David, a man whom the Lord loved and blessed beyond measure and a ruler that the people cherished greatly. Yet, it was the will of God, and Solomon knew that those were big shoes to fill. Perhaps that is why, when given the chance, Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or rule over his enemies, but instead he asked for "an understanding mind, to govern his people well and to know the difference between right and wrong" (*1 Kings 3:9*).

Simply put, Solomon wanted to judge God's people rightly. Here we get a glimpse of Solomon's maturity. Though he prayed for greater understanding, it is evident that **he already understood one of the essential ingredients for becoming a good leader — wisdom.**

People have sought to be wise since the beginning of time (*Genesis 3:4-6*). However, *they have sought for wisdom in all of the wrong places.* Since God is the only all-wise Being in the universe, it makes sense that He would be the

first place we would turn to for wisdom. Thus, it is written, **"If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God"** (*James 1:5*), for "God gives wisdom to men; out of His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (*Proverbs 2:6*).

Daily Reflection

If the Lord asked you, "What do you want? Ask and I will give it to you," how would you reply? Would you consider wisdom as an option?

Where are some places people look for wisdom? Why are these sources insufficient?

The older I've gotten and the more responsibilities I've assumed, the more I have realized my need for wisdom. Does God still grant wisdom today? Absolutely. Though He may not give you and I wisdom overnight, the Lord tells us to ask Him, for He promises to give it "generously and without reproach" (*James 1:5*).

How, then, do we grow in wisdom? As Solomon said, "Out of the mouth of God come knowledge and understanding." In short, **the wisdom of God is revealed in the words of God.** *The treasure of wisdom is found in the Scriptures.* Read them, study them, meditate on them, and do them, and God will fulfill His promise.