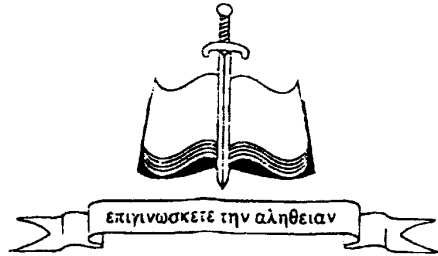


EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



PSALMS 42 - 57
(The Exodus Psalms)

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

[BOOK 49-H]

(Revised Christmas Day 2015)

Dedicated to my three intelligent, beautiful, and wonderful daughters.

To Abigail Jacinda McEwan (Bachelor of Fine Arts – Fashion and Design)

Born 31 July 1984

To Esther Daisy-May McEwan (Certificate in Vet Nursing, Bachelor Of Education)

Born 25 August 1986

To Susannah Gwendoline Florina-Fay McEwan (Bachelor of Arts, First Class Honours, Art History, MA(Hons))

Born 19 February 1993

May they, and all other believers who strive to live well, continue to know the truths of living and powerful fellowship with Christ Jesus that their dear Grand-parents knew – whose deaths as I wrote this Commentary so influenced its power and focus.

**Dr John Cameron McEwan
MA(Hons), Dip Tchg, PhD, VRD, JP**

Dean EBCWA

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

HOW CAN I BE SAVED?

Salvation is available for all members of the human race.

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation, neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

How do I become a Christian?

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

The results of Salvation

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:
My sins are taken away (John 1:29),
I possess eternal life now (1 John 5:11,12),
I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),
The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (1 Corinthians 6:19),
And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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For further information contact Dr Peter Moses at PO Box 163 Armadale WA 6992 or email Brian Huggett brianhuggett@bigpond.com.au

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PSALMS SECTION TWO**THE EXODUS PSALMS – PSALMS 42 - 72****INTRODUCTION**

The Psalms are arranged in five specific books. Book 1 covers Psalms 1 – 41, and is tied to the book of Genesis, book 2 covers Psalms 42-72 and is tied to the book of Exodus, book 3 covers Psalms 73-89, and is tied to the book of Leviticus, book 4 covers Psalms 90 – 106, and is tied to the book of Numbers, and book 5 covers Psalms 107-150, and is tied to the book of Deuteronomy. The book of the Psalms gets into its final form in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah when books four and five of the Psalms appear to be added to the earlier collection. The longest Psalm, 119, dates from the time of the Exile to Babylon in the early sixth century, but there are others that may date from the times after the Exiles return in 535 BC, and even some from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century BC.

Psalm 42 begins the second book of the Psalms. Psalms is divided into five books, each named after a book of the Mosaic Pentateuch, this section being the set of Psalms tied to the book of Exodus. The dominant name for God used in this section is “El”, translated “God” it means the Almighty One, and reminds us that it was by the almighty power of God that the Israelite people were delivered from Egyptian bondage and brought into the Wilderness of Arabia. The name for God “EL” is used 207 times in this book of the Psalms, well ahead of the other four books.

The other names for God are also significant to note here. The name “Adonai” is used 19 times, also ahead of the other books, but the Tetragrammaton, the name JHVH, translated Jehovah or Yahweh, “the covenant making God”, is only used 31 times, whereas in book one of the Psalms it is used 277 times, in book 3 it is used 43 times, in book 4 it is used 101 times, and book 5 it is used 226 times. This use of the names of God in the Psalms is a glimpse at the very different themes of the five Hebrew divisions of the book. Refer to the BTB study on NAMES OF GOD below.

The Psalms in this section begin with the “Psalms for Sons of Korah”, who were the Temple singers, and they certainly sing praises to the Lord. There are also Psalms of Asaph the Scribe, and David himself. The Psalms in this section are from the full period covered by the early history of Israel, from David’s day around 1000BC, through until the days of Hezekiah around 701 BC, and Josiah around 620 BC, when the second and third books of the Psalms are gathered into their final form. There are Psalms in this section that cover the full spectrum of topics covered by Psalms. There are straight doctrine teaching Psalms like Psalm 50, Penitential Psalms like Psalm 51, Messianic Psalms like Psalm 68, 69, Nature Psalms like Psalm 65, and a number of imprecatory (Cursing of enemies) Psalms like Psalms 52, 58, 69.

Psalm Forty Two is a Psalm of worship and praise. It expresses the hunger of the doctrine led believer for deep fellowship with the Lord their God and Saviour. It is described as a song for the sons of Korah. We need to recall the incident that makes these Temple singers incredible indeed, for there should have been no sons of Korah, Dathan or Abiram, for their fathers were rebels against Moses leadership and divine instruction. Numbers 16:1ff. All sons who stood with their father Korah died with him in God’s judgement upon these evil men and women, so it must have been that at least one son of Korah stood against his father’s evil and separated himself from his family and stood with Moses before Divine Judgement fell upon them. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary on Numbers 16.

These singers lost all their ancestors in the rebellion yet would sing of the grace of God and their love for God, singing both songs they wrote, and songs written for them. They were testimonies of FAITH and GRACE, and they sang of the perfect JUSTICE of God in their own lives and the lives of their ancestors. Ezekiel 18:1-9. Refer to this passage and then the BTB studies on the topics.

PSALMS 42:1-11

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. **2** My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? **3** My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? **4** When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. **5** Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. **6** O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. **7** Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. **8** Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. **9** I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? **10** As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? **11** Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

REFLECTION

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

The soul of the psalmist “pants” for deep fellowship with the Lord, just as a fallow deer pants after a deep spring of pure water after a run across the desert places. This is a beautiful picture of an animal that is graceful, energetic and focused. These three qualities are meant to be true of us also. We are meant to be beautiful in our works; with the fruit of the Holy Spirit active in our daily life and making us pleasant to the taste of all we meet. Believers ought not to be ugly of spirit and soul, for the Holy Spirit will make us attractive to others, for that is the purpose of fruit; it draws in the eaters to spread the seed that is hidden within the fruit. Do we pant for the fellowship of God? Many believers don’t “pant” after anything because they are too lazy to ever feel really thirsty or hungry. 2 Corinthians 5:9, Colossians 1:29, 1 Timothy 4:10.

Do we work to the point of exhaustion? Paul did, and so did the other apostles. This is the standard for us all and yet we fall so short of it. If you really work hard and perspire in a job role all food and fluid is sweet to the taste. The exhaustion that flows from hard and long work produces a real appetite, and makes the plainest food taste wonderful. Many are never going to feel this, but the Psalmist draws the picture as a test for us and we need to test ourselves against this. I have had to prepare the funeral of my old mother over these last days. I met with the minister yesterday and we spoke of the details for the service of celebration for my mother’s long Christian life. I commented to the minister that in light of the end of our life, I cannot understand mediocre believers who do not throw themselves into their faith and work. Life is just too short to waste time in a half hearted, lukewarm faith that doesn’t produce real fruit in the life.

The psalmist is absolutely sure of his desire, and it centres in fellowship with the true God over all, for anything other than this is pointless and empty. It is only fellowship with the real God that offers any hope for the individual, for fake faiths are more frustrating than no faith at all. The psalmist longs to come and stand before the Lord in worship; he is counting the days until he can stand in the temple again. His desire is to stand before the Lord’ house and worship the one who has loved him and given him a path to follow through this life. Psalms 36:7-9, 63:1-12, 143:5-7. It is reality that people seek on their journey through this life, and reality is only found within a living and powerful relationship with the real God, not any tin-pot gods. Jeremiah 2:13, 10:10, John 5:24-27, 10:10.

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

Most people upon this earth mock passionate faith. Let us just relax and come to terms with that fact, for it was true in David’s day, just as today. More mock the truth than serve the truth, and most are a little bit threatened by people who are passionate for the truth. We are warned that as we advance towards the end times that more and more will be open “mockers” of our passionate love for the Lord, and be filled with hatred towards the truths of God’s Word. Luke 18:32, John 15:18-21, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Hebrews 11:36, 2 Peter 2:8-19, Jude 4ff.

Notice the psalmist’s reaction to the mockery; he wept for those people. Psalms 102:7-11. His tears are not the self centred tears of a person who is ashamed and humiliated by the mocking; they are the tears of a genuine believer who feels great sadness at the state of the souls of those who mock him. These people cannot see eternal realities and mock them, but the psalmist feels the pain of their coming judgement. These people mock the believer’s passionate commitment to God when there is trouble in his life, and there is no evidence of God helping him. They ask him where his God is when trouble comes, and they mock his patience. Job 2:9-10. These people insult the believer’s faith and the believer pours his tears out to the Lord. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

The path of life of the believer who is determined to be a strong and passionate servant of the Lord is going to find that the company around them soon dissipates when they realise how passionate he is. It is a lonely walk to walk with passion for God, because most people prefer the calm, settled, and respectable walk of “ordered religion”. God wants our whole heart and mind and body, but religion is more popular and always has been, because it makes few demands and then you go home and carry on as you always have done. The psalmist weeps as he thinks about the great crowd that went up to worship and praise, and how few have stayed in a spiritual place and rejoice in their close fellowship with the Lord. All the people kept the holy day, but most have polite faith, not passionate faith!

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

The impact of the abuse of others is depressing and it is easy to get overwhelmed at times by it. The psalmist is upset and cast down in spirit, and it is not wrong to feel depressed when there is something to be depressed about! I love the work of Dr Viktor Frankl who said, “There are certain things, that when they happen to us, and we do not lose our minds, it is only because we didn’t have a mind to lose”. Depression is not a sign of sin, but failing to deal with the issues that may have created it can be a sign of sin. The psalmist is “cast down” emotionally and rightly so, for he contemplates the death and eternal judgement of his neighbours, relatives and friends. They are people he grew up with, and now they mock the truth in a way that indicates they do not love or even know God. Refer to the BTB study on DEPRESSION.

The psalmist casts himself before the Lord and opens his heart to God for healing. 1 Peter 5:1-9. He gives himself an order, and that order is to express hope/confidence in the Lord. The prophet Isaiah understood the importance of this order. His words in Isaiah 61:3 have been put to song, and it expresses this thought. We are to “put on the garments of praise to replace the spirit of heaviness”. Paul builds on this thought in the New Testament. Colossians 3:8-17. There are things to put off and things to put on to transform the thinking and with that cognitive shift to change the emotions.

As we think so we will become over time! Proverbs 23:7. By taking the negative emotions and transforming them by positive worship we transform the emotions over time. By actively starting to praise God we build power to cope with situations, and we strengthen our faith on the way. Depression is eliminated by active strategies that mobilise our deep inner reservoir of energies. The best “mobiliser” we have of our spirit, our bodily energy, and our Immune System itself, is Holy Spirit filled worship.

When we see the countenance of God in the scriptures we are empowered by the glimpse of God we get. It is Holy Spirit taught doctrine which fires up the body, soul and spirit. The “help of his countenance” is what we get every time we open the scriptures, and so let us open them and teach them in power every time/opportunity we can take to teach. Sometimes there are places that I refer to as “magic places”. This doesn’t mean they are witchcraft places, but very special “magical/refreshing” places that recharge our batteries more than others.

There is scenery that lifts up our spirit and there are places that depress us. When we are down it is good to travel to places that lift us up and have a picnic there. This doesn’t mean we spend thousands of dollars to visit exotic places, but identify the places that are locally powerful ones for lifting our spirit, and then go there. I will encourage cancer patients to identify such places and go there with their loved ones and picnic and rejoice in the lifting of their spirits there. For this psalmist it is the view of the Jordan River Valley that lifts his spirit most and he has a favourite hill there to worship from.

**7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.**

The great thing about the place the psalmist has chosen to sit is that he can hear the roaring of the waters beneath him in the valley. As he looks at the raging waters and the bubbling of the torrent he thinks of the power of God, and also the power of the turmoil he feels within him. He feels the surging power of the waves of pressure that have swept over him in recent times and he looks at the raging power of the waters of the river and takes comfort, for he is in the hands of the one who made the waters.

Many years later the prophet Jonah would experience this drowning feeling as he was cast into the sea by the pagan mariners. Jonah 2:1-7. Jonah has the same response to this experience of depression also, and lifts up his heart to worship from the depths, and imagines the temple of the Lord and focuses his imagination upon it and lifts his heart towards that in worship of the Lord. No matter where we are we can imagine a powerful place for worship and lift our heart and worship. Jonah was in the most uncomfortable place imaginable, and he was able to worship.

At times the billows of pain, despair, and distress go over our heads. We can be overwhelmed totally by the distressing things of this world that we must face at times. It is not being overwhelmed that is important spiritually, it is how we come up the other side of the experience that matters. The psalmist sees his pain, sits with his pain, and heals his pain by worship. He contemplates the majestic power and integrity of God and so is lifted up from his place of distress. He experiences the loving kindness of the Lord towards him through his worship.

Often in worship this will be my experience; as I sing and pray the Lord gives me a glimpse of His love towards me in the midst of my distress. This is our hope and our encouragement; the Lord remains faithful to us. Refer to the study in the BTB, GOD CARES FOR US! If we have scripture in our memory we can sing the song of the Lord in the night, and pray through each day that we face troubles. Ephesians 5:15-21, Colossians 4:2-6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. Refer to the BTB study PRAYER.

**9 I will say unto God my rock, “Why hast thou forgotten me?” “Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, “Where is thy God?”**

The Lord is meant to be our rock! Refer to the BTB study CHRIST – THE ROCK. A rock is a place of security and stability. To build upon the rock is to build upon a place of stability. Matthew 7:24-25. Foolish people build on the “shifting sands” of man’s opinions, but the intelligent people build upon the rock of God’s character. Refer to the BTB study GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD. All else shifts and is unstable, except the character of God, and the believer who is stabilised upon God’s holy and immovable character is stable in their thinking and emotions. This is God’s purpose for us all.

It is easy, if you are not stabilised upon the rock, to start to doubt the Lord, and even think you are forgotten by God. When the waves of extreme pressure sweep over us we can be overwhelmed by things and feel it is all too much. We need to claim the promise of God from 1 Corinthians 10:13, but often we do not; we just moan and groan like the Israelites did during the Exodus! Hebrews 3:17 – 4:6. Remember this section of the Psalms are the Exodus Psalms and the Exodus was a time of testing of the people by God, and moaning by the people towards God. We are to learn from them not repeat their errors.

We will mourn at times because of the pressures we face. Once again, reflect upon this reality. There are things that it is absolutely right to mourn over, because they are sad, upsetting, and possibly also frustrating. Mourning is normal but moaning is sinful. The most frustratingly sad thing is the oppression and persecution of the enemies of the truth against us. We stand for the truth and we want the lost to find peace in Jesus, but we are persecuted for the truth. It hurts to care about people who hate you are trying to hurt you. If those who hate you are old friends their attacks are like the wounds of a sword in the bones; the pain is deep and at the highest level.

The insult of the pagan is direct and terrible, for they insult God and only an act of God will answer their abuse and we cannot demand that sort of action. The Lord told a parable about the family of Rich men and Lazarus the Beggar, Luke 16:19-31. These rich men lived well and ignored spiritual realities until it was too late, and the words of Abraham to the oldest brother in Hades was clear; let your brothers read Moses and learn about God from his words. Miracles are not provided to fools who have ignored the Word of God. Luke 23:8-11, 39-43.

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The chorus of the song ends the Psalm here. This may have been sung several times as the entire Psalm was sung by the sons of Korah. The psalmist now sings about his hope and confidence that remains secure despite the great power of the waves of persecution and pressure that have swept over him. He is secure because his hope is in the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. He hopes in the creator of space and time and so he is secure in his confidence. No matter how bad he feels at times he will transform his emotions by worshipping the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is worship that transforms things and will produce the healthy countenance for the believer. We can look good and be good because the Lord is our God and the PLAN OF GOD is absolutely secure for us. Psalms 43:5.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. It doesn't matter what our ancestors have done, and how evil they were, for each generation stands alone before the Lord, and each person is judged in accordance with their own sins and their own good works. Ezekiel 18:1-9. No-one is to be judged by their parentage, but by their second birth into the Royal Family of God through faith in Jesus. Refer to the BTB study SALVATION – REGENERATION-BORN AGAIN.

2. How passionate is your faith believer? Are you panting for the fellowship of the Lord as a tired and thirsty deer pants for water? Are you doing enough to even get that thirsty? We have no end of polite form of faith today, but God calls us to passionate faith. We have many who will turn up for a worship service and then head home unchanged by it. God wants us changed by our relationship with Him.

3. Worship is a powerful anti-depressant, for by releasing the power of praise we change the very chemistry of our bodies. Let us praise the Lord with all our strength, for even if it is small at the time we start, by the time we have praised the Lord our God for who He is, we will be empowered by the end. Let us use worship as our main anti-depressant. Also ask the important question. Are we putting time aside regularly to rest and recharge our inner batteries? Are we recharging with worship as we ought? Are we taking time out with our families and having picnics in awesome places to deepen our fellowship with each other? Let us worship the Lord in fellowship with others, alone in our room, and in the cathedral of the open spaces of this world.

DOCTRINES

GOD – NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD

GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT GOD – TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GRACE JUSTICE

DEPRESSION – PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH IT GOD – GOD CARES FOR YOU

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

CHRIST – ROCK - CHRIST AS THE ROCK

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD GOD – THE PLAN OF GOD

SALVATION – REGENERATION-BORN AGAIN

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

PSALM 43**INTRODUCTION**

This Psalm needs to be read in combination with Psalm 42, and some consider it a chorus, or ending to the former song. It is also addressed to the sons of Korah, for them to sing at assigned times as part of the Temple service. Like the earlier one it probably dates from the days of Solomon, but may be a Psalm of David.

PSALMS 43:1-5

1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

REFLECTION

1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

This reads very much like David, but it may also be Solomon, and may date from the rebellion of Jeroboam and his flight to Egypt. At that time Solomon knew for certain that his Egyptian wife was very likely a fifth columnist in his harem and a traitor to him and his kingdom. Jeroboam fled to Egypt and found refuge there and the Egyptian Pharaoh plotted to use him to seize the throne after Solomon's death. 1 Kings 11:26-40. The plot was successful due to Rehoboam's stupidity after his father Solomon's death. 1 Kings 12:1-20.

From all these things happening in the latter years of Solomon's reign it may be that this Psalm is written by Solomon, but we cannot be sure, as most commentators accept these songs for the sons of Korah as David's Psalms, and date them to other earlier incidents in the life of Israel's united monarchy. I see the description of the enemy of the writer as one that fits Jeroboam perfectly, and of all the enemies of David and Solomon it fits Jeroboam alone.

The author is clearly writing about a serious attack upon his leadership that involves a foreign power with its own powerful king. This cannot be any of the minor kings around the United Kingdom, as both David and Solomon's armies controlled these places. Only Egypt was beyond their sphere of influence and unable to be controlled or conquered. Egypt alone had to be left in the Lord's hands, for all other nations had been given into Israel's hands.

The words of the prophet Ahijah were absolutely clear to Jeroboam about the judgement of Solomon and his house. 1 Kings 11:29-39. Solomon had sinned greatly and by this later time in his life was suffering from the heart disease that appears to have killed him around 60 years of age. If he is the author of this Psalm it is a heart felt cry for God to deliver him and his kingdom, and the Lord's answer is given by Ahijah; the kingdom is protected only until Solomon's death, and then the failure of Rehoboam to follow godliness sets the seal of God upon his destruction and the total loss of the kingdom of Judah's power and wealth to the Egyptians within five years of Solomon's death. 1 Kings 14:21-30.

2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

Solomon is battling carnality through the last years of his reign and he finally loses the battle and dies under divine discipline. At this point, if it is indeed his Psalm, he wins the battle and through worship casts his cares upon the Lord. 1 Peter 5:5-9. Refer to the BTB study below on CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS, and SPIRITUALITY.

The writer feels deep mourning at what has happened, but the next verse will reveal that he knows there is a lesson in the midst of this for him. He does the right thing, which is come before the Lord, and seek the Lord's guidance, light upon the path ahead, and answer to the problems he now faces. There is only strength in the Lord when we face attack by powerful and deceitfully evil people. Zechariah 10:12, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13.

A believer has no other source of winning power than the power of God, but if we draw on that power through prayer and worship we can rise up in strength that baffles the pagans around us. Isaiah 40:28-31.

3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

These verses indicate to me that the writer knows he is in error in some way and seeks the Lord's light upon the path, but also upon his sin, that he might address it. God's Word brings light to our path, and clarity to our minds and hearts. Psalms 40:11, 57:3, 97:10-11, 119:105-107.

If the author here is Solomon this verse is a poignant one, for the words of the prophet Ahijah tell us that he never got around to the life change that the Lord demanded of him, and so he died under discipline rather than under DYING GRACE. He wanted the Lord's light, but he preferred the "deeds of darkness" and so he refused to deal with the idols that had filled Jerusalem through his own sinful actions, and his religious compromise destroyed his kingdom and the right of his line to rule. 1 Kings 11:1-10. The Lord Jesus will not be descended from Solomon, but from Nathan. Luke 3:31.

We must do more than pray for LIGHT, we must walk in the light. Refer to the two BTB studies on LIGHT, and WALKING. The writer here seeks the light of God to bring him to the "tabernacles of God". This is a prayer for more than just temple worship, for the plural indicates he wants to dwell in the places the Lord has for him in this life and do the things the Lord wants him to do there. The kings of the United Kingdom built great palaces for themselves and their harems, and they had misery as a result. God's challenge to us is to build our worship and service not bricks and stones. Buildings can be shaken and destroyed, but the legacy of spiritual service is forever.

The writer seeks the tabernacles of God's provision, not the palaces of his own plan and schemes. While he says this in his distress, he will not follow through with godly actions after he feels the grace of deliverance. All too many of us do this. We seek the Lord in difficult places and then we ignore the Lord's holy demands upon our lives at later times. It is finishing the race that wins eternal rewards, not starting it and then getting distracted and sidetracked! 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Refer to the BTB study REWARDS AND CROWNS. Let us focus upon finishing our race and winning the prize – there are no prizes for people who don't keep their focus on the race and winning the prize.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

Once he is clear as to his path ahead, then he will worship in the temple at the altar of the Lord. He will then worship with pure joy for he will see the Lord's will clearly and be able to rejoice in what God is going to do. He will take up a musical instrument himself and praise the Lord his God. Refer to the BTB studies MUSIC, and MOTIVATION. He is highly motivated to praise the Lord and give thanks for the deliverance he believes will come, and the answer to prayer that he believes he will receive.

"FAITH is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". Hebrews 11:1. To express faith is to act as if your prayer is already answered before the answer is physically seen. Faith means we see a thing as solved and resolved by God as we pass it over to Him for solution. Faith calls "amen" as an affirmation of the Lord's readiness to act, and the certainty that He has already acted to answer our prayer. Faith is not therefore passive, but an active moving forward on the basis of what God is doing and going to do, rather than what we see here and now.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? (And) why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

This is a great verse for those of us who work in psychology and counselling, for it reminds us that even after we express confidence and have hope we can still experience waves of anxiety, doubt and despair at times. I find myself constantly encouraging believers with this fact. Many feel that their faith is weak because they still experience waves of doubts. All that tells them is that they have an Old Sin Nature and the "dark side" of us doesn't want us to walk in the light. Feel the fear and do the job before you anyway! Feel the doubts that the Old Sin Nature will throw up but keep moving forward.

Fear and doubt just proves we are normal, and we need to affirm this and then worship afresh and recharge our faith batteries and keep our focus forward upon the Lord's coming answer to our prayer. We need to tell our self to remain confident and assured "in the Lord". There is assurance no-where else! The Lord is the one who lightens our countenance and He is the one who recharges our batteries, and He is the one who answers all our prayers, just as the Lord Jesus said He would.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We need to teach believers the vital importance of casting their cares upon the Lord in prayerful confession that they might obtain forgiveness. 1 Peter 5:7.
2. Do not just ask for light from God, but actually walk in it! James 2:14-26. Hearing the truth and seeing the light and then rejecting its guidance in daily life is called hypocrisy and apostasy! Such actions place the person under the judgement of God.
3. Let us pray with focused purpose and strong faith. Let us express faith in the Lord our God, and let us apply the principles of faith and call prayer answered when we say "amen". Let us see the answers to prayer as the Lord sees them, and always step out in obedience to the Lord's will, expecting the answers to come in God's time. Until we have all the things we need for certainty let us step out into the certainty of direction and service we have.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

DYING GRACE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

MUSIC

MOTIVATION

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

PSALM 44

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is a song of distress after reverses in battle, and it acts as a recall to the worship of the Lord as the only antidote to defeat. It reminds the people that in this life there will be troubles, but they will be resolved if the believer comes to the Lord. John 16:33, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Peter 2:9. Jesus Christ is the OVERCOMER, and we are meant to be OVERCOMING BY FAITH in all areas of conflict and distress. There will always be difficulties, but these will be overcome if we walk closely with the Lord and cast our cares upon him. 1 Peter 5:5-9. The Exodus Generation faced impossible odds, but they walked the path of the Lord, even though it was with a rebellious heart, and they were brought through because of the faith and obedience of Moses. Exodus 12:21ff, 15:1ff, Psalms 78:1ff, Hebrews 3:5 – 4:10.

PSALMS 44:1-26

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. **2** How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. **3** For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. **4** Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. **6** For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. **7** But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. **8** In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah. **9** But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. **10** Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. **11** Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. **12** Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. **13** Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. **14** Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. **15** My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, **16** For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger. **17** All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. **18** Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; **19** Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. **20** If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; **21** Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. **22** Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. **23** Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. **24** Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? **25** For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. **26** Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

REFLECTION

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

We build our faith by learning of the work of God with our ancestors and taking courage from those actions of the Lord, and claiming the same work upon our path. God remains the same throughout the ages, and His power remains available to us on the same basis as it was available to our ancestors; that we are obedient to the commands of the Lord. The purpose of the pastor is to “feed the sheep” with the truths of God’s Word, and do so on a regular basis. We are called to be “HERALDS of the King” and that means being ready to state openly the King’s policy whenever we are able to be heard. Isaiah 50:4, Colossians 4:6, 1 Timothy 4:7-16, 2 Timothy 4:1-8. We are to be SALT in the earth. Refer to the BTB studies below.

What God has done in the past is the clue to us as to what He is able to do today if we will listen to his words and obey them. Let us hear the words of the Lord’s story with his people and rejoice in his on-going power to deliver and to restore us to joy. Numbers 21:14-30. God’s planting of the Israelites in the land involves his supplanting the people who had originally been given the land.

The evil people lost their land because of their paganism and evil practises, and Israel needed to remember that they also held the land on condition that they obeyed the Lord. God judged these people and finally, when they didn’t repent of their evil, He drove them out, and the message is clear; the Lord will drive the Israelites out if they persist in their rebellion against the Lord. Psalms 78:55-66, 80:7-19.

It was not the military strength of Israel that delivered them, for they were few in number and inferior in weaponry to their enemies. It was the Lord’s power that gave them security, and it was the Lord’s strength that gave them deliverance. They were solemnly warned by Moses not to forget that it was the power of God that delivered their enemies into their hands, not their military prowess. Deuteronomy 8:17-20, Joshua 1:5-9, 24:13-20. It is God’s special favour that granted them the land, and the Lord’s special blessing was upon them to keep them in the land. Deuteronomy 7:6-11. We are blessed because of our relationship with the Saviour, not through any power, ability or character we have. It is GRACE all the way for us, just as it was with Israel.

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

The Lord is our king! Think for a minute about what that means. It means we owe the Lord our total and complete obedience in all things; He is our king and we are His people. Refer to the BTB studies, PROPHET, PRIEST, KING, and OBEDIENCE, SUBMISSION. We are used to democracies that have no authority or respect structures and so we find the total obedience of the ancient world difficult to comprehend, but comprehend it we must, for this is the standard we are called to with Jesus. Psalms 74:12, 89:18, 149:1-2, Isaiah 33:22. The King over all has ultimate authority to command deliverance for any people, for His will must be obeyed. The psalmist asks for deliverance for the nation Israel. The nation is referred to as “Jacob”, not Israel, as the sinful and fallen nature of the people is in view here.

To gain victory over the enemies of Israel the people need to walk closely with the Lord alone. If God’s people walk with God, on God’s path for them, in God’s power, and in obedience to God’s Word and will, then they are unstoppable. There is no power upon the earth that can deliver a believer into disaster if they are walking powerfully in the will of the Lord for them. 1 John 4:4. “Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world”. Those who rise up to oppose God’s people and God’s work are up against the mighty power of God that will be expressed directly against them, and through God’s people. Psalms 18:25-34, 118:10-18, Isaiah 41:9-16.

It is not the power of our weaponry that will save us, but walking in the way of God that will give us deliverance. The bow was the distance weapon and the sword the close quarter weapon of the ancient world. Both were useful, but without the will of God being followed, both are useless as a defence. The smart soldier has his weapons, knows how to use his weapons, but does not trust his weapons to save him; he trusts in the quality of his king who gives the battle orders. Battles rarely are won on the raw courage of one soldier, but they are always won by the superior strategy of the king who rules over the army. We place our trust in the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords, for He has all the facts and He has the plan that will work out. We are on the winning side.

Verse seven reminds us that we will be hated by the enemies of God. As long as we are hated by the right people we are on the right path through this life. God has saved the people of Israel, and He will save them again. Right until the end of

history the Lord will ensure His plan is followed and there is absolute certainty about the way things will work out. Refer to the BTB study THE PLAN OF GOD, and SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS.

Security for the future is found by frail man only in the plan of God that encompasses all things, because God is the author of Space and Time as the creator. We are here upon the earth to be winners, not losers. Satan is the loser in the great drama of space and time, but the believer who follows the Lord Jesus Christ is a winner. Let us live and be the winners we are.

Verse eight reminds us that we will be hated by the enemies of the truth, and that good men and women are as well known by their enemies as by their friends. John 15:18-27. There will be oppressors at times, and they are to be dealt with by prayer, for the Lord will directly deal with all who oppose His people. Matthew 5:10 -12, 43-48, 1 Peter 3:13-17, 4:12-19. Go to the EBCWA studies on these passages and read them slowly and prayerfully, for as the days grow darker, we as believers need to be ready for the persecution that is coming to many in the LAST DAYS.

These passages of the Psalms and from the New Testament need to be memorised by believers so that without their written Bibles they can encourage themselves with the recalled memories of the truths of the Word of God. Refer to the BTB study PERSECUTION and the two studies on the LAST DAYS.

- 9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.
 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.
 11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.
 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.
 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.**

When a nation before God goes off the path of God's will they will receive DIVINE DISCIPLINE. God was very clear to Israel about this, and gave them clearly identifiable signs that they were under discipline, and one of the signs was defeat in warfare. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-28. When an Israelite Army was defeated it was to be seen as the Lord's warning to them and judgement of them. They were not to put down a military defeat to "bad luck", for such a concept is foreign to God's people; if they lost, it was because they had sinned in some way.

Once they saw that, they were to stop in their tracks and offer the sacrifices of confession and repentance and pray for the Lord's light upon them to show them their sin that they might forsake it and walk in godly paths. Only when they did this would they be delivered. While they harboured iniquity in their hearts, and desired sin more than godliness then the Lord would not hear them. 1 Samuel 7:2-9, Psalms 66:18, Jeremiah 5:7-9, 23-31, 34:12-20.

When an army panicked and fled from their enemy in the ancient world they were decimated. To flee and turn your back on an enemy was great disgrace and also great danger, for their archers would find their mark in your back as you ran away. The well known verse, "Be sure your sin will find you out" referred specifically to cowardice in the face of the enemy. Numbers 32:23. The results of defeat in battle were awful for the civilian population, with rape, enslavement, and the theft of all their earthly goods. Jeremiah 12:1-4, 14:7-12, 17:5-10, 32:27-35.

There is judgement, but there is also hope for those who accept the Lord's offer of salvation, but it is conditional upon their repentance for their sins and evil life styles, and repentance needs to be accompanied by genuine life change. The judgement described by the Psalmist occurred upon the people in the Assyrian crisis of 725 – 700 BC, and again in the Babylonian invasion 605 – 586 BC. The people suffered defeat and finally total deportation due to their refusal to honour God and make the life changes required. God is not mocked; if His people play act (are hypocrites) before Him, then they will experience judgement. Only genuine repentance and life change removes judgement from us. Galatians 6:7-8, Hebrews 10:30-31, 12:29.

The pagans around about God's people will always rejoice and mock them when they are being disciplined by God, for all they see is the Lord letting His people get hammered and they don't see why. The enemy of God loves to mock God's people at any opportunity, and a believer's sinful life and resultant judgement gives them that opportunity to mock.

This is why a believer's carnality is such a disgraceful thing; for by committing stupid sins the believer gives the enemy ammunition to use against the church. It is bad enough that believers are mocked, but to open the door to have the truth mocked because of our stupidity is a terrible thing. Once a believer realises what they have done they need to cast themselves upon the Lord's mercy through confession and repentance. Only this will lift the burden of judgement. Psalms 123:1-4, Ezekiel 36:16-27.

- 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.
 15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,
 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.
 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.**

When God judges He judges severely and even the pagans will be astonished at the extent of the judgement upon Israel and Judah because of their idolatry and associated pagan evil life style. Jeremiah 18:11-17. This psalm is a prophetic one regarding the coming judgements under Assyrian and Babylonian power. The early psalmist prophetically sees the judgement coming and warns the people and their kings of the certainty of God's actions against them if they persist in their evil choices.

The writer hears the blasphemies of the enemy against God and his people and he calls the Lord to hear also. God does of course hear the blasphemy of men against Him and He acts to redeem his people and judge his enemies in accordance with his plan and its time table, not our own. Psalms 74:18-23, 79:10-13, Isaiah 37:1-7, 15-29.

The psalmist still pleads his innocence before the Lord, for he has indeed not forgotten the Lord, but the fact of judgement means he must have disobeyed the Lord. This is the distinction we need to make ourselves and ensure that we walk closely with God and deal with the foolish sins that separate us from living fellowship with our God. We know God, we have not forgotten God, but we have walked away from the truth in thought and deed, and so we face discipline.

**18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;
19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.
20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.**

The psalmist maintains his faith through the time of testing and discipline. The psalmist casts himself upon the Lord's righteousness and justice here. They have been severely disciplined but they are keeping their eyes fixed upon the path that the Lord has called them to walk. They have been broken in spirit in the wild and desolate places of the heart. The abode of dragons is a way of saying the worst of desert places in the land, but it is far more than this physical thing.

The greatest wild place is within the mind itself; it is the dry harsh torment of spirit when you feel bereft of hope and meaning and purpose. These people have been brought low by the Lord's judgement of them, and they are at a loss to fully appreciate, at this point, why they have suffered so badly. They haven't served other gods, and they lay their heart open before the Lord on this matter.

Part of confession of sin is the readiness to open the heart and mind to the Lord's examination and revelation. "Examine yourselves" is the order of scripture. Psalms 4:4, 26:1ff, Proverbs 17:3, 2 Corinthians 13:5. The Holy Spirit will convict the open soul of anything that needs dealing with. John 16:8-11. God will search the heart for things that need resolution and our job is then to resolve them by CONFESSION. Hebrews 4:12-13, Revelation 2:20-23.

**22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.**

There will be times for some believers of every generation when persecution comes with horrific violence. There will a time in the last days when persecution comes universally to the Church. At these times of pressure the believers caught up in the midst of them need to rest upon the character and stability of the person and work of Jesus. The Lord does not sleep when believers suffer! (Verse 23) Such an accusation is a disgraceful thing, but many believers under pressure have felt this and the psalmist is to be congratulated for his honesty in expressing it.

We can all feel like this at times, but the truth is far from our fears. The Lord our God is not Baal that He sleeps. 1 Kings 18:27ff. The people have been "cast off", but not from the family; only from their place of blessing. God does not discipline those that are not His own; they are being punished for their good, not their evil. **Hebrews 12:1-13**. Read this passage in the EBCWA Commentary, for it details the path to peace of mind and health of body that this psalmist only briefly hints at in the Psalm before us.

If we face great pressure and discipline for stupid sins we have foolishly entered into, then we need to repent, confess, and humble ourselves before the Lord. If we have not sinned, but the suffering upon us is for other purposes, then like Job we need to humbly await the Lord's answer for us. God does not hide His face from us, nor fail to hear our genuine prayers. We are loved and heard, but we must wait for the Lord's timing for the answers to our prayers. God is not to be ordered to do things by us, but obeyed by us. Prayer is not to be abusing our creator and saviour, but humbling our self before Him.

The psalmist gets to the right place in the last two verses of this Psalm. He is humbled and has his head firmly in the dust before the Lord. This is the right posture in prayer for the repentant and confused believer. The only right we have to ask for anything before the Lord is the right He gives us in His grace, love and mercy towards us, as expressed through the Cross of Christ. It is the Cross that opens the door to our redemption and deliverance from troubles into heaven. Psalms 66:10-20, 119:25-32, 130:5-8.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. It is not by the might of man, nor the power of man, but by the spirit of the living God that we achieve the goals He has set for us. Zechariah 4:6. Let us be obedient to the Word of God and walk by means of the Holy Spirit and so fulfil our destiny as the children of God. Romans 15:13-19, Ephesians 6:10, 1 Peter 1:5. What is done in our own strength has no value eternally, but all that is done in the power of God has value and significance for all eternity.

2. We have strength in and through Jesus alone. It is in His power and direction alone that we have any hope, joy and purpose. There is a plan and we are a part of that plan. The challenge for all believers is to know the plan and be obedient to every part of it to which we are called. Let us walk in obedience and serve in submission to the Lord's will, for there alone is safety now, and eternal rewards.

3. How battle ready is your church membership pastor? How ready are the individual members to withstand the persecutions that are coming? How many believers in your church can recite psalms from their memory, and recall the passages of the New Testament that are needed to encourage them in dark days. Let us be very wary of the emotional religion that is masquerading as Christianity today, where people are going forward for emotional encounters with the Lord but are not being stabilised in the truths of scripture. If God's people are not strong in their faith they will fall into distress, despair and mental disorder under the pressures that the Bible makes clear are coming to the church in the last days. Let us train our people as we should, so that they can stand!

4. When divine discipline comes upon them, the believer is to bow before the Lord in humility and seek the Lord's light upon their life that they might repent of any evil that is there. We are to be ready to open the secret places of the heart to the Lord and really do business with God. God wants our obedience and holiness in the secret places of the heart. Let us deal with the sins that trip us up and be holy before our God.

NOTES

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OVERCOMER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OVERCOMING BY FAITH

CHRIST – MINISTRY AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

HERALDS

SALT

GRACE

CHRIST – PROPHET, PRIEST, KING

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OBEDIENCE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUBMISSION

GOD – THE PLAN OF GOD

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

PERSECUTION

LAST DAYS – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS

LAST DAYS – DENIALS THAT CHARACTERISE THE END TIME CHURCH

ISRAEL – FIVE CYCLES OF NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DIVINE DISCIPLINE OF BELIEVERS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

PSALMS 45

INTRODUCTION

This is a marriage song, or as called by the older commentators, a “nuptial ode”. It has a parallel in the Song of Solomon and that poem is the closest to this psalm. Some think it was written by Solomon on the occasion of his marriage to the Egyptian princess. 1 Kings 3:1. Whatever the origin of this psalm, it was a song for singing before a marriage ceremony, and has been sung through the centuries in that context quite appropriately.

The sons of Korah are again the singers for whom it was written. It is a passionate song about the beauty of the bride and groom. It is a song that reminds us that every detail of our life is to be enjoyed in the Lord’s plan for us. It is also a reminder that without real passion no marriage should go ahead. Polite and loveless marriages are an abomination before the Lord.

We are made to be loved and adored by our marriage partner, and to love and adore our partner, and no-one should enter into marriage if they do not fulfil this basic biblical requirement. If you do not passionately adore your marriage partner then there is something wrong – correct it before you cause sin to grow, for man and woman is made to love and be loved. It is a song that reminds us to dress and act to our best standard for our loved one, and be real in our love, and open in our shows of affection to the one we love. Refer to the BTB study MARRIAGE.

Having said these things, it is a song that has a dark side to it, for the beautiful appearance of this bride and groom is not matched over time by their steadfast love for each other. This couple look great and start well, but finish very badly indeed. It is a song that reminds us that it is the end of our lives that provides the real evidence for the reality of our promises to each other. Once again the theme of the earlier Psalm comes through – it is finishing the race that matters, not starting well. Solomon could not end his life with the words of Paul. Our challenge is to serve and love, and maintain that loving service until the end. 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

PSALMS 45:1-17

1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. 6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. 9 Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. 12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. 13 The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace. 16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. 17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

REFLECTION

1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

As I write these words I am contemplating the funeral of my elderly mother which we will hold later today (in 2009). Opening God’s Word and studying it in these early hours of the morning is the best possible preparation for that funeral. My mother and father would perfectly fit the wonderful early verses of this psalm in their life. Together for nearly sixty four years they set an example to many of quiet loving fellowship throughout their life.

My elderly father, at ninety years of age is still just hanging on to life, but is relaxed about going to meet his Lord and be reunited with his beloved wife in heaven. (He will die this very evening after the funeral of his wife). The nurses in the Rest Home all speak of their love as a couple, and each had said to me in turn, “I wish I could have the life long love I see in this old couple”. It is this standard of marital love that is the biblical standard.

Both came to the Lord later in life, although both went to church at many times earlier in their life. The Billy Graham Crusades here in New Zealand in the 1950s had a big impact upon them, and both served in their own ways in their local

church through their life. They set me a good and godly example of living and loving in their own quiet way. They were truly God's provision for my young life.

Our psalmist begins this Psalm of married love by speaking of the king's appearance and character. He speaks of the king in noble and grand terms. He makes five points in these first verses:

1. The subject is a good subject in this Psalm. There is something morally, ethically and personally good in a godly and committed marriage. Stable marriage = stable community. The reverse is seen to be the same also; instability in marriage produces instability in communities. There is God's policy for mankind, which is GOOD, and there is Satan's policy to destroy mankind, which is EVIL. Our writer speaks of God's policy here; for loving, stable, and faithful marriage is God's plan for us all.

2. It is easy to praise the young king of this Psalm, and the writer readily pours words onto paper about him because of his character and physical beauty. This king is tall, dark, and handsome, strong and noble, and he is a godly and wise man. He is mature beyond his years and with his other characteristics is an appropriate husband for a princess to marry. He is what we refer to today as the "total package"; he has good looks, physical fitness, a great warrior, a wise man intellectually and emotionally, and he is godly. He is every mother's dream for her daughter to marry.

3. He is "fairer than the children of men". He is more handsome than all the ordinary people, and it is as if he is of another category of being; such is his physical beauty. There must be passion in a marriage; a genuine love for that person that makes them emotionally and sexually beloved. Without passion there is no marriage in the biblical sense. Each of us find attractive different looking people, and that is just as well! As the Lord has made us, each will be drawn to love different people, and for each of us there is our "right person". This king is attractive to his beloved, but not necessarily to others. Remember, true love is in the eye of the beholder! It is wonderful to hear the praise of a husband for his wife and a wife for her husband; for each the other is the best thing that has happened to them, and that is how it is meant to be.

4. This King has grace upon his lips. This is more than just wisdom, but it is spiritual maturity in the delivery of that wisdom. This person tells the truth, but he tells the truth in love. John 17:17-19, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13.

5. This man is "blessed forever". This is not hyperbole and over exaggeration, but the simple truth that applies to all who are mature believers in the Lord God. We are blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:3, Hebrews 3:1. Our relationship with God through the person and work of Jesus opens the door to eternal blessings. Refer to the BTB studies below on BLESSING. Sadly this man will rob himself of many eternal blessings by his later decisions and life style. His BACKSLIDING will cost him blessing in time and eternity. He is still blessed eternally with eternal life, but he loses a great deal of peace of mind in time, and he does not inherit the rewards he could have eternally.

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

This man is a man who can wear and wield a sword. He is ready to fight, physically fit to fight, trained to fight, and mentally able to go into battle. His sword is not decoration; it is a tool that he is able to use powerfully. I have said to my own daughters that they are not to bring any man home to meet me who isn't able to fight for them. If a man is not ready to protect his wife, his children, and his home, he is unfit to be a husband of that woman. Women must mentally, physically and spiritually respect their husbands, and if they do not, their marriage will unravel over time.

Mutual respect, admiration, and adoration are crucial for long term success in marriage. Accidents and old age may alter this ability to stand and fight, but the young husband must be ready to be a warrior, and wield a sword for his wife; at very least this sword must be the sword of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 4:12. Refer to the BTB study below on CHRISTIAN SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6. Even if the husband is a man of peace, or disabled in some way, he must be a fully trained and equipped Christian soldier who wields the Word of God with focused power.

The prosperity referred to here in verse four is the success of the king's missions upon the earth. The prayer of the psalmist is that he finishes his allotted course in life and be victorious in all he is called by God to accomplish. Psalms 110:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2:13, 2 Timothy 4:1-8. The king will be successful if he maintains his spiritual walk with God. This is referred to in the FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT that the psalmist lists in this verse; truth, meekness, righteousness, and ability to teach vital things.

This is a mature believer who speaks without arrogance and self centeredness (meekness), and who speaks the truth in righteousness. This last point is an important one that the early church strongly stated. All its ministers had to have their lives audited before their appointment to any pastoral role; as they had to be righteous in life and lips. Psalms 63:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4. The words they spoke had to be both godly and serious. The "terrible things" here is not a reference to awfulness, but to awesomeness! The minister of God's Word is to speak things that bring people to their knees before the Lord their God. 2 Peter 3:10-14.

5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

When warfare and battles are needed the king needs to be ready to rise up and kill the enemy. The arrows were the light artillery of the ancient army and the king needed to understand the use of archery and be an expert himself in archery. He had to understand strategy, but also be an expert in actual combat so that his men respected him. There were to be no “ivory tower” academically only trained leaders. All leaders were to be people of character, of doctrine, and of military might. When people met a real leader they were to be in awe of the person. This remains the standard for pastoral leadership today; when people meet a pastor they should stand back and say, “That is a person of real strength and character”. If we cannot say this of a pastor, then they ought not to be in the role.

The power of the leader is in their source of power. That source of power needs to be a stable and strong relationship with the living God. The throne of the king is established only by the grace of God and in accord with the plan of God. Solomon will lose his lasting place in that plan due to his persistent sinful life pattern. The Lord makes that clear to him directly, through two appearances to him, and through the prophetic ministry of the prophet Ahijah. 1 Kings 11:9-13, 29-39.

The sceptre of the king stands for earthly rulership stability and certainty rests upon the relationship the king has with the Lord God over all the heavens and the earth. When the king/ruler loses their dynamic and spiritually alive relationship with God they lose their grip upon the authority they have been given. Remember, all authority to rule upon the earth is given by God, and if the ruler does not follow the plan, then that right to rulership is lost. There is a sort of “divine right of kings” in the Bible, but it rests upon the king doing the will of the Lord in all things, and the king’s right to rule is terminated by God when they persist in sinful or evil patterns of behaviour. 1 Kings 17:14-20.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

At this early point in the king’s reign he loves the truth and hates evil. He stands for righteousness and hates all manner of wickedness. Because this ‘FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’ is alive within him at this point he is given authority to rule by the Lord. The double attitude is the indication of a spiritually active and growing believer. We need to love the truth and equally hate the opposite. A believer needs to understand the policy of God and the policy of the enemy of mankind. Their love needs to be focused upon the person, and policy of God, and their hatred needs to be focused upon the plan and works of the devil. Refer to the BTB study Satan’s STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

The Lord’s certification of His servants is in the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and this involves their attractiveness as doctrine filled believers. The “Oil of Gladness” refers to the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life that others can see; it is the fruit of spiritual joy that overflows and draws others into that person’s circle of life so that they might discover a share of the blessing of God’s grace also. Truly mature believers draw others into their lives and bring blessing to them.

The purpose of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is that it attracts unbelievers to the Gospel, and strengthens weak believers in the truth. The picture of the “Ivory Places” is a picture of the palaces of the king, with their ivory inlaid walls. The perfumes are the perfumes of the kings that remind all who enter that they are visiting a wealthy, powerful and blessed monarch. Let us bring to others the “sweet smelling savour” of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life. Exodus 29:18 - 41, 2 Corinthians 2:14 - 16, Philippians 4:18.

9 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

This king is a man with many beautiful serving girls to attend to the palace duties but he is not to be distracted by them, and the new wife is to live in such a way that there is no possibility of the king being distracted from her. In all successful marriages there is a mutual commitment to keeping each other safe from sexual and other temptations. 1 Corinthians 7:1ff. Both people need to keep themselves fit, healthy, and be focused upon each other, meeting the others emotional and sexual needs, so that neither sexual frustrations nor emotional upsets have any opportunity to destroy the spiritual-physical bonds that hold them firmly together as a couple.

Sadly Solomon failed in his duty to his wife and the “Song of Solomon” is his admission of that great failure on his part. He writes of it with sadness, but he then still failed to stop his fornicating, and so he was judged by God, and he lost his right to have a son follow him in power and glory. 1 Kings 11:1-13.

The new queen was a glory to behold; she is beautiful, perfectly dressed in the finest clothes, and she has been brought up to be a queen. There are tabloid “queens” in Hollywood today who behave in the most disgracefully immoral way and in public act like the “trashy” people they really are. They are people with no breeding, no education that fits them to be wealthy and powerful, and no manners. This queen of our Psalm is altogether different.

This queen stands with regal confidence, having been born a princess and brought up to carry her role with dignity. She is ready to be a princess of Israel and that means putting aside all her past life as a princess of Egypt. 1 Kings 3:1. Once again however we must use that word, “sadly”, for with sorrow I must record again Solomon’s failure to follow the Lord’s

will, and convert his wife to the true faith. She remained a pagan and he made the great error of building a pagan temple for her.

11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

If the princess will continue to act with decorum, dignity and doctrinal wisdom then the king will love her all the days of his life if he maintains similar biblical character. Happiness is determined by their mutual and separate moral and spiritual choices. This remains the heart of marital happiness today. It is the daily separate, but mutual decisions to follow the truth that keeps us safe from temptation.

All the people who see them will stand and honour those who are spiritually mature and noble in their lives and lips; the people of Tyre were the “modern-cultured” people of this day, and they will honour this princess as she walks with God and her husband maintains his spiritual eldership. That word “sadly” pops up here again, for both Solomon and the princess of Egypt fail God and each other, and there is great unhappiness in their marriage and family life. Their son Rehoboam lives to make a complete fool of himself as king, and he loses the kingdom. 1 Kings 14:21 – 31.

The husband is to be the Lord to his wife, and she is to worship him. Now ladies don’t stop reading at this point, but hear me out! The husband is to be as God to the woman, and speak the words of God to her. He is to be worthy of worship and adoration, and if a woman turns up her nose at this concept she proves herself publicly a fool who married a fool.

We are to be worthy of worship from our partner, and husbands, we are to be as the Lord to them, and speak only words of God to them. Their spiritual and material blessing is to be our concern as husbands and we are to serve our wives as Christ served the church, ready to lay our lives down for our wives. If anyone is unworthy of worship, then let them do business with God and grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord, and so they will become as they are meant to be. Ephesians 5:21-29, Colossians 3:14 - 19.

13 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

The appearance of this princess when she enters the wedding ceremony takes people’s breath away. Her clothing glints with woven gold and she looks every inch a noble princess. We are warned against too flashy dressing in the New Testament, but to put our emphasis upon the moral and spiritual characteristics that are to be ours in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:9-10. This woman and her companions look stunning and are the picture of beauty and grace, but the reality is “sadly” not as it appears. Most commentators just sing their way through this passage, but I am sorry, I am a historian, and the truth must be pointed out to burst the false bubble of fluff and nonsense! This woman is not what she seems to be, and Solomon is not what he appears to be. Their marriage ceremony is a fake Hollywood show; it looks lovely, but there is no lasting spiritual depth, and so there was no lasting physical blessing in time.

They are overjoyed in the ceremony, and everyone has a great time, and it is “written up” in all the “newspapers”, but it is a sham in the end. The loving couple come into their palace with rejoicing and enter their sexual relationship with joy, but so many other women are added into this harem that their marriage is ruined over the years and is in the end a disgrace. It is not how we start but how we advance and finish that matters. It is twenty four hours since I started to write the initial version of the commentary on this chapter, and I have just returned from the Hospital where my old father has just died. We buried my mother yesterday and he has now passed into heaven and in a few days we will bury him with my mother ready for Resurrection Day.

As I reflect upon their marriage of 63 years I see great contrast to the couple in this Psalm before us. My mother and father had a lovely but simple and humble wedding, were well dressed in the Post World War 2 styles, but not flashy, and they made promises that they fulfilled in 63 years of married life. They set an example of loving fidelity all their days and the staff at the hospital praised their love, and all said they wished to have the love they saw my parents share. What a contrast between the king and his princess and my two wonderful parents, my girls grand-parents! My parents set a wonderful example of Christian love, respect and fidelity to my girls and they have done well in life to date as a result, but Solomon and his “jet set” wife will set another example altogether and their son will lose the kingdom!

Solomon had all the wealth, wisdom, and power but had misery in his love life. He wasted himself in his harem of a thousand wives and lost his peace of mind in time and his eternal rewards, whereas my parents died as ordinary people, but they lived lives of extra-ordinary love in Christ Jesus and went to their eternal reward. They didn’t care for show, and they were better prepared for their lives, enjoyed them more, and are better “dressed for eternity” than Solomon was in the end. The words of Jesus ring in my ears today. Matthew 6:28-34.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Solomon was indeed remembered in all generations, and even today people speak of his great work in building Jerusalem and making his great temple upon the mount of God there. He had many children and many sons, but all were

failures as rulers and princes, for they grew up surrounded by immorality and false pagan religions. His children grew up in a pagan court with a father who had written scripture, but went into immorality and religious compromise. Solomon is still remembered, but by biblical scholars he is remembered as the wisest man who by poor decision making became the very fool he warned others about. I praise Solomon for his honesty in Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, because he identifies himself as that fool and warns us about following his foolishness.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Are we “fit to marry”? This is the question that the Bible indicates in many places ought to be asked of every prospective husband. Let us challenge our young people in the churches to be “fit to marry” before they come to us and ask us to conduct a service. Let us challenge our youth groups to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only strong and spiritually stable Christian Soldiers are fit to marry. Let us make sure our people can wield the Sword of the Spirit with power.

2. Let us make sure that all those who are appointed to pastoral offices are fit to serve according to the biblical standards of the Pastoral Epistles. Refer to the BTB study on PASTOR-ELDER below and check out your people on this basis, as only those who are qualified biblically are to be given authority in the Lord’s Church and formally ordained into ministry.

3. Let us be sure we do not over-emphasise appearance without having the full reality behind it. Appearance ought to be always appropriate, clean and tidy, but not a showy display of wealth and power. Let us dress as becomes the people of God; with the dignity and crisp cleanliness that speaks of a soul and body in the service of the King of all kings. We are to have dignity in all we do, and we are to be as far away from “Hollywood glamour” as we can be. We are not to resemble pagans in any way at all, for we serve the King of kings and we need to be clear in our witness to this fact. 1 Corinthians 11:13-15, 1 Timothy 2:8-10, 1 Peter 3:3-9.

DOCTRINES

GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS – MARRIAGE

EVIL

GOOD WORKS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BLESSED IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BLESSING OF THE BELIEVER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

ANGELS – SATAN’S STRATEGY AND TACTICS

CHURCH OFFICERS – PASTOR-ELDER

CHURCH – ORDINATION

PSALMS 46**INTRODUCTION**

We are rock solid with the Lord as our God. There is no security apart from the security that the creature has within the protective arms of the creator. Underneath the believer are the everlasting arms of God. Deuteronomy 33:27. We are worshipping the God who made the world and all that is in it. We serve the Lord of hosts who is the one who is always there for us and will never leave us or forsake us. Psalms 41:13, 90:2, 100:5, 103:17, Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:5. This psalm has been linked by commentators with two others of similar theme, Psalms 47 and 48. They have been referred to as a "Trilogy of Praise". The "God of Jacob" is a lovely phrase of encouragement, for Jacob is old Israel's name associated with his weakness, and it reminds us that the Lord is there for us in our weaknesses.

PSALMS 46:1-11

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. 6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

REFLECTION

**1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**

A living faith in the real Lord God over the Universe is a powerful thing. Genuine faith allows the believer to find security in the truth about themselves, their world, and their God. This means they can orientate themselves in all situations, for they know the mind of God through His revealed truth. A refuge is a place of safety in difficult times and situations. The truth is a refuge in difficult times because it is stable and secure. Lies are never any refuge at all, because the only thing you can be sure about them is that at any minute they may unhinge, and your world will unhinge with them. Deuteronomy 4:1-9, Psalms 62:6-9, 91:1-9, 145:17-18.

God's character is stable and His word is trustworthy. These certainties are refuges and sources of strength in dark days. When the days darken we need to trust our lives into the stability of certainties and we can be sure that the Lord is a certain help in trouble. God has the power and the will to assist us. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to a knowledge of the truth, but always within the exercise of their free will. 2 Peter 3:9. Prayer is our means of fellowship with God, and our connection with the Lord's will for us. God is a present help, but we must be connected with Him in prayer. The local Fire Service can be very helpful, but your phone must be connected to the Emergency Services in order to call them and get the help you need. 2 Samuel 22:1-8, Psalms 18:1-6.

FEAR is a subject that is well discussed today, and yet the simple solution to fear is often not discussed directly; we fear when we are not stabilised in certainties. The only certainty that we can have is that of the knowledge of God's Word, His Will and His Plan for us. Once we are sure of the Lord's will for us we ought to be able to relax and do the work that we are required to do. There is nothing to fear if we are working and walking along a path that God has called us to walk.

It doesn't matter if the foundations of the earth are removed and shaken by the most violent earthquake; the believer will be stabilised in the truth throughout the shaking of the earth. There are some serious earthquakes and other frightening things coming to the earth in the last days, but believers at the time can stabilise themselves in the promises of God; they are secure and safe while they do the things the Lord has ordered them to do. The Lord will keep us while we are doing His will. Luke 21:8-11, 2 Peter 3:10-18. Since writing these words in late 2009 the South Island of New Zealand has experienced over 12000 earthquakes since September 2010, three of which were extremely devastating with nearly 200 lives lost and a major city flattened. We have had to claim these verses in passionate love for the Lord for we have faced things that most have never seen before except on television.

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

It is not wrong to be afraid of seriously scary phenomena, and so the evil actions of awful people can raise big fears, but it is always wrong to listen to our fears, and not do what is right. Fear is normal, but it is not to be heeded or attended to; what is right is to be done irrespective of the emotions attached to that path. Psalms 93:1-5. When the waters roar above and around us we are to pay attention to the doctrines of God's Word, not the scary sounds in our ears. We are to get into the habit of obedience and do what the Lord requires of us.

Even though the earth moves beneath our feet we are not to shake in our spirit or quiver in our body. Let the mountains shake beneath us, but do not let our spirit shake within us! The promises of the Word of God are to be more real than the things that cause us to fear that are around us. The creator God is our Lord; who then shall we fear, for the Lord made all things and can unmake all things, and make them all anew. Psalms 114:4-8, Romans 8:28-39.

4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The vision here becomes an important part of the picture of the New Heavens and New Earth that later prophets see. It is a vision of the future rulership of God as Lord and King over all the new creation without any sin entering in to blot the picture. Our present world is a fallen world through the ANGELIC CONFLICT in ETERNITY PAST. The future is one that is entirely different to our present world in ETERNITY FUTURE, and the vision of it in our mind reminds us of the PLAN OF GOD, and the certainty of the victory of that plan.

Today we await the fulfilment of the plan of God, but then we will see its glory, for the Lord has by then moved to judge, and the evil days are over forever. The Lord's move will be "right early"; a phrase that means in exactly the right time for the Plan. Ezekiel 47:1ff, Revelation 21-22.

Pause and reflect upon the phrase, "right early"; exactly the right time in the plan of God. A verse immediately comes to mind. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9. We see in terms of space and time in sequences of events, but we must remember that the Creator God is beyond space and time and sees all things as one, and so there is no past, present or future with Him. The Plan of God is certain, for it has already occurred in the context of eternity! All this is too marvellous to understand with our presently limited minds, but we will one day.

I got a glimpse of this truth within the deaths of my two godly old parents over this last week(2009). I had prayed for them to be released from their old and tired earthly tabernacles, and the Lord answered my prayer, but not as I had wished; my father died in the night following my mother's funeral. Looking back I could see that his death was "right early" – in exactly the right moment for him and her. She had gone on to heaven first, and she had her funeral day to be honoured alone by her church for all her good works, and then he followed after she had been honoured in her own right, not just as his wife. In these little things we see a glimpse of the Lord's plan unfolding and we can be sure of all its details into the future.

The certainty and mental stability of the believer is based upon their knowledge of the Plan of God, and that knowledge comes from their hearing, understanding, and believing the Word of God. An important image of the Word of God is that of the washing of water over a person. It is a great picture of the living Word, as a fresh and life giving stream to be drunk from deeply, and also used to wash the person clean. Both images of washing and drinking are used of the water of the Word. Refer to the BTB study BIBLE – WORD OF GOD IN HEBREWS 4:12. Refer also to Exodus 15:23-27, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalms 1:1-3, Jeremiah 17:7-8, Ezekiel 47:12, John 4:9-13, 7:37-39, 13:5ff, Ephesians 5:26.

The image of the Eternal City in Ezekiel 47 records that the stream of life flows from under the great altar and heals the world with its life giving waters. Is the image that the Psalmist also sees in this vision of the ultimate victory of God over the forces of Evil. All the reformed earth is made holy in the end; for all evil is dismissed from the earth and the entire universe. Revelation 20:10-20. All things are made new and clean and holy forever.

This process begins at the point of salvation for the believer, when we are transformed, and continues through death into eternity, where all things are "made new". 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Peter 3:10-18, Revelation 3:12, 21:1- 5. In this creation we see God if we look for Him in the details, but in the new creation God will be in the midst, and we, freed from the shackles and limits of space and time ourselves will see Him as He is. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Remember the phrase, "the heathen raged", for this is a reminder of the hatred of unsaved and unrepentant mankind against their Creator and Judge. Psalms 2:1-4, 83:2-8, Isaiah 8:9-10, 37:21-36. The enemies of the Lord our God have always hated and raged against all genuine believers. They always have and they always will, until the end when they join their master in the Lake of Fire. We may look at the raging of the enemies of the Lord today and take heart from their evil works and know that their days are short. We may take comfort from our sure knowledge of the end of all things, and rejoice in the Lord's final and perfectly timed deliverance. Habakkuk 3:17-19. God is our refuge!

We get used to looking around us at the natural world and marvelling at its many wonders. It is a good thing to do this and remember the creative power of God that even the fall of man and the entry of sin and evil into the world has not dimmed. Let us remember that the Bible teaches us clearly that just as the Lord made this present universe, so He will unmake it one day and remake a new universe.

Even the modern scientists speak about nuclear implosion and the “black holes” of the universe into which all matter is being steadily sucked. The Bible has spoken of such things for at least two thousand years! Read carefully again 2 Peter 3:10-18. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary on this passage and really reflect upon its content. The world will implode and be “folded up” like a cloth and put away forever.

God has something better than what we see! Pause and reflect upon this for a moment and all concerns about the future disappear. God is with us, for us now, and waiting for us later! We are secure in the arms of the one who could love Jacob; because if Jacob could be loved, there is hope for every man and woman upon the earth! Refer to the BTB study on JACOB.

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

The Lord has made the earth, and so the Lord has the right and the power to destroy the earth and reform this universe, and the Bible teaches that He will. 2 Peter 3:10-18, Revelation 21-22. The psalmist urges the people to look at the state of the earth after the Lord has moved to judge a people through natural catastrophe, and direct judgements upon the earth by acts of God. He also encourages them to simply see the results of natural forces that remind us of exactly how fragile our hold upon life and the planet really is.

Our modern “Green” political movements are trying to “save the earth” but the Bible is clear, the earth cannot be saved, for it has a time frame to go through and then it is to be destroyed and replaced. We are to be biblically minded not earth bound in our logic and thinking processes about “global warming”, for the Bible also teaches about this phenomenon, with the associated pollution. Read the EBCWA Commentary by Dr Moses and myself on Revelation 6:12-17, 8:5 - 13, 9:2. Greenpeace and other so called “Green” groups won’t save anything; only the coming of the Lord Jesus will save this earth, and then it will be only for a further 1000 years for then it is “folded up” and eternity begins. Refer to the BTB study, SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS.

The final references in this section are to the abolition of warfare, by the removal of the weapons and means of warfare from the earth. The two powerful weapons were the spear and the bow and both will be shattered into pieces, for they will not be needed again. Swords and knives can be implements, but the bow and the spear are to kill only, and even the killing of animals will likely be banned in the Millennium except for sacrifices. This is hinted at in Isaiah 11:1-10, 65:17-25. The war chariots had no other purpose than as fighting platforms, and they will be used for fuel in that day, for there is no fighting to be done at all. War is abolished by the arrival of the Lord Jesus, and only then! Refer to the BTB study on WAR.

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

What is to be our response to the pressures of life and worries about the state of our health, our marriages, our families, our nations, and our world? We are to be quiet and “sit with” our problems in light of the realities this Psalm has raised. If we panic and rush about in confusion and fear, then our confusion will deepen. The challenge of the psalmist is to draw quietly close to God and quietly remember the facts of life about this universe and the evil that is presently in it.

We are to remember that sin and evil entered this universe and it will be exiled forever at one point. God will be glorified in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the name of the Lord will be exulted amongst all the heathen nations, for all will bow their knees one day. The Lord of Hosts is with us, and His plan will be fulfilled at one point and there will be total victory over sin and evil and all they brought into the world.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us ensure we preach the Plan of God in certainty and strength. If each believer understands the plan of God into eternity, they have a solid foundation to look forward with. It is seeing the end that gives us perspective from our place in the battlefield. If we are certain of the final victory and have a clear picture of what it looks like we can be stable in our thinking in the midst of terrible pressures, for we know the ultimate end of them. Let us preach doctrinally pastors, so that the Lord’s people have clear focus forward and absolute assurance in their hearts as to how things are going to end.

2. With a clear understanding of the Plan of God there is no room for fear to dominate our thoughts on the way. Fear is an ankle tapping emotion that is normal, but for the doctrine filled believer an unnecessary hindrance. Let us feel the fears that are normal to the Old Sin Nature, but then label them as such, and advance anyway towards the battle that the Lord has asked us to fight. Let us be strong in the Lord and walk in the power of His might, and not be weakened by the fears of the Old Sin Nature’s dark side. Luke 11:21, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:10, 2 Timothy 2:1, Hebrews 11:34.

Strength is to characterise the mature believer, and it will as we fulfil our duty as pastors and train God’s people to be strong in the Lord through their faith in the Word. Let us teach strongly and so enable the people to become stronger by the day in the power of the Holy Spirit upon the living Word of God in their hearts.

3. The limits of space and time are worth pondering, but not for too long lest you lose your mind in the process. We are creatures of this present world, but in and through our new position in Christ Jesus we are people of eternity also. This world is not as solid as we think. The light from the stars has been travelling towards the earth we are told for millions of light years. What this means is that the light from the galaxies that we see may be simply photons still travelling through space; the galaxies that produced them may have already exploded into stardust millions of years ago, and we will only see this in years to come.

We are told that during the Great Tribulation Period, a third of the star systems will be seen (from earth) to fail and their light coming to the earth will cease. Revelation 12:4. Reflect upon this phenomenon if you doubt the Plan of God. Some of the star systems are 100 million light years away and many are further away! This means that millions of years before man existed God had pre-timed the death of a third of the stars to coincide with the Great Tribulation period! Rejoice in the Lord believer, for in His person and His plan you have no worries!

4. The end of time gives meaning to the times of our lives. If we recall the details of the end of time we are in the right place to celebrate now the Lord's victory. Even in the midst of our troubles now we can celebrate the victory that the Lord will achieve in his perfect timing. We are certain of his victory, and we can be certain now of our deliverance from whatever situation the Lord has placed us in.

DOCTRINES

FEAR

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

ETERNITY PAST

ETERNITY FUTURE

BIBLE – WORD OF GOD – HEBREWS 4:12

JACOB – THE PATRIARCH

TRIBULATION – SIGNS

WORLD

WAR

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

NOTES

PSALMS 47

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm, the second in the trilogy, amplifies the sovereignty of God and praises the Lord for who He is and His creative ruling power. This Psalm records praise for the character of God, and as such is true WORSHIP. Today the term “worship” is used to describe song services that may be about any and all subjects, but biblical worship was always seen to be praising God for who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do. Let us be challenged by this Psalm to return to the roots of worship and truly lift up our voices in praise and honour to the Lord of glory. Worship will stabilise the doubting soul, for reminding ourselves of the character of God reminds us we are in good hands. Deuteronomy 33:27-29, Isaiah 61:1-3.

PSALMS 47:1-9

1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. 2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. 5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. 8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

REFLECTION

**1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.**

My dear old father had many spiritual blessings last week before he died. He had never said “Halleluiah” aloud in worship, nor ever clapped his hands in his old church, but he praised the Lord and His Word in his last week as he heard his minister and myself read it to him. It was both sad and enjoyable to hear him softly say that word aloud. I was sad because his very polite and conservative faith had never given him permission to really express any passion for the Lord, but I was happy for him that at last, as he headed out of his earthly body to meet his Lord forever, that he found his voice to praise the Lord aloud.

All too many of us are constricted by our backgrounds in the area of worship. The psalmist urges us to “clap our hands” in joy, and raise our voices in a shout of exultation and triumph. He urges us to praise the Lord for whom He truly is; He is the Lord “most high”, and He has “terrible” (awesome) power, and rules over the entire universe. The awesome sovereignty and power of the Lord is the starting point for worship, for when we accept His true power and position as creator and judge, all else in this life falls into its correct place.

Traditionally this psalm is assigned to Solomon, and it is thought to have been written to celebrate the return of the battered old Ark to the centre of national worship in the new Temple he had built. The story of the Ark’s arrival into the new temple high above the old city of David is told in 2 Chronicles 7. It was a day to remember the grace and mercy of God towards His people.

The battered old Ark had been captured by the Philistines, and then returned, was hidden away for over twenty years, and then spent the next decades in temporary tents until the days of Solomon’s temple. 1 Samuel 4ff. Solomon’s praise and worship excelled even his father David’s as he had brought the ark into the City of David over forty years before. That was a day of open rejoicing for the king and the people when the Ark was brought into the old city of Jerusalem by David. 2 Samuel 6:1-19, 1 Chronicles 13:1-8, Psalms 132:1ff.

David had desired to build a Temple for the Lord, but the Lord forbade him from doing so because of his blood thirsty past. 2 Samuel 7:1-29. Read this chapter in the EBCWA Commentary, as it demonstrates David’s great spirit of humility, and his grace oriented way of thinking. David accepted the Lord’s verdict over his life. He was forgiven and he knew that, but he realised that his warlike life had a consequence for him, and excluded him from some service for the Lord. We can be forgiven for all sins we confess before the Lord, but the flow on consequence of some sins is such that we cannot serve in some areas of the work later because the earlier sin has ruined our reputation in the community.

David had a reputation for blood letting, and he would sadly go on to adultery and murder. 2 Samuel 11. He repented of his evil deeds, Psalms 51, but he was excluded from the Temple building project because of his sins. He couldn’t build the Temple, and he accepted the Lord’s words, but he could prepare for it to be built later. He prepared nearly all the items and funds that Solomon would need to build the temple and David gathered them on the site that would later be used for it. 1 Chronicles 21:18 – 22:19. He would sow and Solomon would reap, and both would do the work of the Lord by each playing their part! 1 Corinthians 3:6-15. Solomon would build the temple when spiritually most switched on in his life, but he would drift downhill over the years and the glory of the temple and its gold would be lost to Egypt within five years of his death.

Let's hear the words of David from that earlier time and reflect upon the true nature of worship.

Psalm 98

1 O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

7 Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Does our joy mirror David's joy here? This is a great example of biblical worship; let us ensure that we do not fall short of this standard, for we have since the Cross, even more to thank God for than David and Solomon had.

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

It is the Lord who protects us; no other power is able to keep us safe. As a keen historian all my life I have delighted through the years to study how many times the Lord alone has moved to save His people and protect His Word in situations where humanly speaking all should have been lost. The study of World War 2 is very clear on this.

Germany and Japan should not have lost the war! They lost because of amazing, incredible mistakes that Hitler and the Japanese made, and because of many extra-ordinary acts by Allied forces that halted their otherwise invincible foes. No force can stand against the will and plan of God. As we see the days darken around us, let us be mindful of the certainty of the final victory of the Lord that will occur, and have faith and courage, and keep doing our assigned task upon the earth. Psalms 18:46-47, 81:13-16.

Our REWARDS AND CROWNS are in the Lord's hands for assigning to us. We will receive the Lord's inheritance for eternity; for He is the one who assigns each of us our eternal rewards. Matthew 25:31-46, 1 Corinthians 3:12-23, Ephesians 1:15-18, 1 Peter 1:3-5. All too often believers pray for what they want when the best that we can have in this life and the next is what the Lord wants for us. Let us pray the Lord's prayer; "Thy will be done". Matthew 26:42. What God wants for us will always be better than what we desire for ourselves.

As with the earlier Psalm in this trilogy, Jacob is again mentioned, and we are reminded by that reference, that if the Lord could love Jacob, then He can love us. Just as Jacob was forgiven his short comings so are we, and just as he was guided so will we be guided if we draw near to the throne of grace in prayer. Hosea 14:1-9, Ephesians 2:4 – 10, Hebrews 4:12-16, 13:5-6. Refer to the BTB study GUIDANCE – THE WILL OF GOD, and PRAYER.

5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

The Lord has entered His temple with a shout of exultation; God has blessed the Temple at its inauguration with His cloud of presence. 2 Chronicles 7: 1 – 14, Psalms 24:7 – 10. The Lord will move with a shout, and we must be ready to move forward in obedience with a shout of joy, or a shout of courage and determination, also. We have nothing to fear in the presence of the Lord on his path for us through our life. "To the Lord belong the issues of our death", for "precious in his sight is the death of his saints". Psalms 68:18 – 20, 116:15, Jeremiah 15:1, 24:4 – 7. God is with us; so who shall we fear? Romans 8:28-34.

The Lord's glory in our life is to be proclaimed to all through our open and private praise and worship. We are to raise our voices in praise to the Lord. Three times the psalmist orders the believers to sing, sing their hearts out to the Lord. We are to sing aloud in praise to the Lord. Let us say "enough" to polite and weak kneed worship, and embrace passionate and forthright worship. We are praising our King, who loved us and gave himself for us; so let us abandon ourselves to his praise, for He is worthy of all our praise. Psalm 118:21-26, Zechariah 9:9, Revelation 4:11, 5:9-12. Let us praise with all our heart and mind, and not be guilty of any lukewarm faith, for such a faith is no faith at all. Revelation 3:17-20.

7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

Notice the phrase at the end of verse seven; "sing with understanding". I feel like standing up at this phrase and singing a loud "Hallelujah!!!" So much of our worship music is brainless repetition, and we need to train people (through their singing) to think as they worship. Worship needs to be intelligent and focused upon the Lord. We need to have our thinking engaged and we need to encourage people to worship with all their hearts and minds. We worship the king, and He reigns over all the earth.

Even though Satan may have his people in positions of power, the Lord actually still reigns and his will is always finally done. Matthew 4:8-11. Satan tries to deceive his followers into thinking he is more powerful than he in fact is. God is on

the throne of heaven and Satan may do what he does by permission only; he is a creature, not the creator! Job 1:6-12, 2:4-6. Even though the Fall of Man allowed Satan to have power through sin his power is limited. God remains upon the throne of the heavens and the earth.

9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

When all the people of Israel gathered before their king they gathered fully armed, with their shields and spears in a great army. It is this assembled host that the psalmist pictures here. Shields were often made of hides or wood covered in bronze, and were burnished to shine in the light. The bronze covered shields were used to try to blind any enemy they fought by shining the reflection of the light of the sun off their shield. It is this shining and glittering host that the writer pictures; a host that stands for dignity, power, glory, and might. All the sons of Abraham are together in power and might and they are gathered to glorify the Lord their God.

Notice that it is the sons of Abraham, not just the sons of Jacob, and all the sons of Abraham includes many of the Arab and Gentile nations as well as the Jews. This is the picture of the prophets of the end of the Great Tribulation. The Arab nations have as many believers within them as the Jewish nation has, and as the joint "sons of Abraham" they worship the Lord together in Jerusalem. The Lord is "highly exulted" by this victory over all their hatred, for they are finally united in welcoming back the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 60:1-14.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. How long is it since you clapped your hands together in joy? How long is it since you lifted your voice in exultation and triumph? How long is it since you did such things in the church worship service? The psalmist encourages us to be abandoned in joy in our worship and express our loving appreciation to the Lord for all He has done for us. We must always work within our own temperament nature and some people are naturally reserved, but the psalmist encourages us to be as open and expressive in worship as we would be in our meeting with a long lost friend or loved one. Be challenged pastor, and challenge the Lord's people under your care to show love to the Lord openly.

2. Have we taught the CHARACTER OF GOD enough in our churches recently? The Lord's people need to understand the awesome power of God as the creator of space and time, and the universe that is in this present creation. When we understand the power of God all our problems are placed into the right position; which is at the foot of the Cross. We are in the hands of the one who made the universe! How secure are we? Let us teach more of the creator's power, so that believers might truly rest into the arms of the one who holds the universe together and has pre-programmed the stars to fail at exactly the right time for the Plan of God. Revelation 12:4. The stars that are programmed to fail in the Great Tribulation period have already died; it is only their light that still travels towards us. Reflect upon this fact and ask yourself, if God can pre-arrange for the stars to fail millions of years before that failure will be seen from the earth, cannot that God deal with your problems now?

3. David was denied the right to build the Temple, and he accepted God's verdict over his life and set his heart to do what he could to enable his son to build the Temple. David's role was to prepare all that was required for the later building. He was faithful to this task and got the non-perishable building supplies ready and gathered the funds for construction. Solomon used all this material and wealth and gathered the perishable supplies (the wood) and built the Temple. Each played their part and each was blessed. Let us encourage the Lord's people regarding this vital truth in ministry. Let us challenge the Lord's people to find their task and do it alone. Let us challenge them all not to be envious of another person's tasking, but to do their own before the Lord. 1 Corinthians 12:14-30. It doesn't matter what the reasons for the Lord's choice of tasks for each of us to complete are, let us simply apply ourselves to the tasks and do them.

4. The Lord our God is king indeed. Let us worship him as our king, with all our hearts and minds.

DOCTRINES

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

GOD – DIVINE GUIDANCE – THE WILL OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

NOTES

PSALMS 48

INTRODUCTION

This song is truly a song of my youth as a believer. I was saved in the late 1960s and the choruses that we sung were taken from the Psalms and other places. Called "Scripture in Song" they taught many of us the Psalms in modern musical arrangements. We sang them with passionate gusto and all of us have remembered their words. Singing scripture is a marvellous way of remembering scripture. We need to sing the Psalms again in our churches, for they are an "ever present help in times of trouble". Psalms 46:1.

As my father died this last week he desired above all the visiting pastor read him the Psalms. It is the Lord who breaks our bonds, and it is the Lord who delivers us through death into eternity. Let us praise the Lord with the words that encouraged the Israelites 3000 years ago. We stand on good ground as we sing the psalms, and let's not worry about whether we sing traditional tunes, modern tunes, with or without music, for all these things were done through the centuries.

PSALMS 48:1-14

1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. 6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. 8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah. 9 We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. 10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgements. 12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

REFLECTION

**1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.
2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.**

"Great indeed is the Lord", and "greatly He is to be praised". Psalms 86:10, 99:3-4, 145:3, 147:5. Do we praise the Lord enough? Do we praise the Lord greatly, and magnify his holy name as we ought? The Lord is GREAT; far above what we can even imagine, and yet we act as if the Lord has limits, and we are in danger within his plan for us. Praise the Lord for who He is believer, and then you will receive the inner power of the Holy Spirit, that will always flow from heart felt worship. Worship revives the spirit of mankind. Let us worship as we ought every day, Hallelujah! The beauty of this hill is hidden to us today because of the events upon its slopes over the centuries and the graves down its slopes.

The city of Jerusalem was the city of God for Israel, for the Lord had chosen it as the place for the Temple to be built. Two have stood upon the hill there and a third will stand there for 1000 years during the Lord's reign upon the earth. The mountain of the Temple is the "holy mount". Today the two mosques stand there, but the Millennial Temple will one day be there. Refer to the BTB study KINGDOM – MILLENNIAL KINGDOM, CHRIST – RETURN OF OUR LORD.

This mountain is a place of tension and violence today; with Arab and Jew in conflict over it, and violence at times around it. This place is blood soaked ground from the thousands of years of battles over this hill. It is truly the centre of the world, for the worlds three great religions centre upon this hill and look at its Eastern Gate (The blocked up "Golden Gate") as the place where Jesus will ride back into this city to take rulership over the entire earth from this place. It is the city from where the Lord will rule the earth, and the Temple upon this mount will be the throne of the Lord.

Do not be distracted by the two mosques – they and the temporary tribulation temple alongside them will all fall over either in the Northern invasion before the tribulation (Ezekiel 38-39) or during the tribulation Richter 9-10+ earthquakes – Revelation 6:12, 8:5, 11:13-19, 16:17-21.

**3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
4 For, lo, the kings were assembled; they passed by together.**

The only true refuge we ever have is the peace within our heart that comes from knowing we walk in the plan of God for us. God is our refuge, and his promises are our security in tight places. Refer to the BTB study PROMISES. No palace is a refuge, for evil men can break into palaces and destroy them. All the great palaces of the ancient world are ruins today. Palaces do not last, but the plan, power, promises, and presence of God does last.

God is our refuge and God alone! We are secure in his hands! Deuteronomy 33:27-28, John 6:36-40, 10:27-30. We have ETERNAL SECURITY in our position in the Lord. All the kings of the earth will pass before the Lord and do him homage as their Lord, but before that all will rebel against him. Zechariah 14:9-11.

**5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away.
6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.**

Many kings will assemble in the LAST DAYS of the GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD to attack the Lord's people in Jerusalem and they will try to destroy the Jewish people totally in those days. Many of the people will be killed or captured, but others will fight on and be relieved by the coming of the Lord Jesus to deliver them. Zechariah 13:7-9, 14:1-5, 9-15. The last battle will be horrific and the use of tactical battlefield Nuclear weapons is described in the scriptures relating to that last battle. Isaiah 29:5-6, Zechariah 14:12-13.

It will be a fearful time, with only a third of the total population of Israel surviving the last battles, and only half of the city of Jerusalem surviving. FEAR will be the normal thing for most people in that day, but calm will characterise the believers, for they know the timetable for the Lord's return and can calculate the day of his return from the prophetic information given in the scriptures once certain events occur. Refer to the BTB study SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS, TRIBULATION IN MATTHEW 24, TRIBULATION – SIGNS.

**7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.
8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.**

The naval forces and ships of the West will be smashed to pieces in that time by the fierce winds the Lord sends upon the seas. Man will be defeated by the forces of nature in the hands of the creator, and by the Lord's direct intervention. Man learns by what he sees and hears. The people of God have seen the Lord act in history in Jerusalem. They have heard the words of the prophets as they spoke upon her streets, and they have seen the actions of God upon her streets, both the blessings of the opening of the Temple and the cursing associated with judgement as the city fell to invaders.

God's promise is that while time lasts this city will be his place, and it has been a city that has spiritual power throughout its time. Even when the Romans sought to make it a Roman city after the second Jewish war in the 130s AD the city drew believers back to it, and by the days of Constantine it was the centre of faith again. Remember, the word "forever" is a time word, and means while time lasts. This earth will be gone one day, and eternity begins, beyond space and time, and in that state there will be a New Jerusalem. Revelation 21-22. Refer to the BTB study JERUSALEM.

**9 We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.
10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.**

How long is it since you have thought of the "loving kindness of God"? It is amazing the impact upon ourselves of the death of our parents, even when very old. My parents death over this last week has made me so thankful for the loving kindness of God shown through them that I have been surprised just how many times I find myself giving thanks for them and all the grace, mercy and love of God I received through them.

God is loving and kind, and we are to be like him towards others. The FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT includes loving kindness as a key element of the character of God that a genuine believer manifests. We are called to show the character of God towards others. Psalms 40:10-11, 63:1-4. The Lord's character is seen "in the midst of the Temple", because the Temple portrayed the grace provision of God for the salvation of mankind through the BLOOD SACRIFICE and FEASTS OF ISRAEL. Everything about the Temple system spoke of the character and plan of God.

Our praise is to be offered, "according to the name" of the Lord. Our worship is to take its cue from the character of God and the names of God. The NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT are themselves a source of worship, for each name tells us about the power and majesty of the Lord our God. It is good to simply pray our way through the list of the names of God. God's power (right hand was the way to symbolise power in the ancient world) is righteous power and always used in accordance with the plan that has been working out since the world began. Our God is a righteous God. 1 John 2:1, Revelation 16:5-7.

**11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgements.
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.**

The Lord will be victorious and Mount Zion will indeed one day rejoice, for her King will establish his kingdom from her top and a new temple will be built to cover her old blood soaked stones. Finally all Judah will be glad, because all the Jewish people will rejoice in their Lord. All Israel will see that the Lord was righteous in all He did. Zechariah 12:10-14. It all begins when Israel "looks upon him whom they pierced". Jeremiah 31, Romans 11:1ff. Refer to the EBCWA Commentaries on these chapters and rejoice in the future plan of God for his people.

The people are encouraged to walk around the walls of Jerusalem, and at each tower announce the glory of God and proclaim his praise. This occurred after Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of the city, and the completion of those walls began the prophetic countdown to the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nehemiah 8:1-10, 12:27-42, Daniel 9:24-27. Refer to the

BTB study DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS. After each military victory the people were encouraged to walk the walls in holy and worshipful procession again, for it was the rebuild of these walls that looked forward to Messiah coming.

**13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.
14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.**

The psalmist urges his people to walk about the city and look hard at her defences and then reflect upon the stronger defences of the character and plan of God for them all. The psalmist wants his people to reflect upon the beauty of the great palaces of David and Solomon, and the great walls that were built then. The palace of Solomon was twenty years in the building, and he had several thousand workmen on the project!

Its foundations have now been removed, but in its day it probably covered a great deal of the hill to the west or north of the temple Mount. It was a vast place, with his thousand wives plus servants living there, it was a small city itself. All this glory was swept away and as we walk around the walls today we can reflect upon the temporary glory of man in this place, but then remind ourselves of the great glory of the Lord that will last until the end of time. We are in the Lord's hands for our life and for our death, for our days are in his hands. Psalms 68:20, 116:15. Refer to the study on DYING GRACE. All the glory of man is but for a moment, but the glory of God is forever.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us praise the greatness of the Creator-God, and the greatness of his plan and purposes as we move through history. Let us praise the Lord for his mercies in the past, but let us lift up our voice and praise him for his glorious plan into the future.
2. Loving kindness characterises the Lord's attitude towards us, and the same spirit ought to characterise our dealings with others. Let us be sure that the Holy Spirit rules our life and produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit for us.
3. Let us praise the Lord for who He is. Let us proclaim the power, person, and plan of God. Let us worship the one who has the whole world in his hands, for our destiny is secure with Him.
4. Let us remember the plan of God both from the past and into the future. The study of biblical prophetic truth is vital for the stability of believers as we enter the last days of this present Age. The Lord's Plan goes right through from eternity past into eternity future with glory, and so let us preach and teach the truth about the past and the future destiny of this world and ourselves. Refer to the BTB study DESTINY OF BELIEVERS.

DOCTRINES

KINGDOM – MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

CHRIST – RETURN OF OUR LORD

PROMISES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY

LAST DAYS – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS

FEAR

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

PROPHECY – DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

TRIBULATION IN MATTHEW 24

TRIBULATION – SIGNS OF THE TRIBULATION

JERUSALEM

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BLOOD SACRIFICE

FEASTS OF ISRAEL

GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DESTINY OF BELIEVERS

DYING GRACE

PSALMS 49

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm runs a parallel course to the theme of Ecclesiastes. It records the futility and pointlessness of what one commentator calls “worthless worldly wealth”. Man, apart from a vital relationship with God that provides meaning and purpose, is just like the beasts that perish. All our life evaporates away, and it doesn’t matter how rich and powerful we are, we all turn to dust and blow away.

These themes have become very powerful to me as I have faced the death of both my parents over this last ten days. After each of their deaths I had to visit the Old Folks Home where they were living and clear out their rooms. Their entire worldly goods amounted to five sacks of clothes each. As I carried these from the Home each time I reflected upon the frailty of man, and the emptiness of worldly goods. I thought of Paul at the end of his life, with some manuscripts and parchments to pass on, and one set of good clothes. 2 Timothy 4:13.

What matters is our spiritual legacy, not our physical belongings. Everything we own goes eventually to others, but only our spiritual legacy lasts the years and bears fruit eternally. My parent’s legacy is far more than their old clothes, for they loved the Lord and brought me up in the love of the Lord, and so their faithful service has borne fruit in my life, and that of my children who also love their Lord.

The legacy of the most powerful unbelievers like Nero is nothing, but the legacy of Paul and Peter, whom he executed, is everything, both now and forever. The legacy of once powerful people in my society is also nothing, but my godly old parent’s legacy is blessing forever.

It is this perspective that the psalmist wants us to get clearly in our minds and sing about through the months, weeks, and days of our life. 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Earthly wealth is a vapour, and soon is gone forever, but earthly service for the Lord bears fruit eternally in the universe to come. Matthew 6:25-34, Luke 12:22-34, James 4:13-17.

PSALMS 49:1-20

1 Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together. 3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? 6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8 (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) 9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10 For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. 13 This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. 20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

REFLECTION

**1 Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.**

The preacher has the responsibility to communicate truth and communicate it clearly and effectively. If the herald is not heard, then they have not done their job for the King. Our responsibility as HERALDS is to preach clearly and as often as we can, but the responsibility of each person hearing our words is to respond to them. Jeremiah 1:17-19, Ezekiel 2:1-8, 3:8-11, 16-21. Once the truth is clearly presented, the herald has done his job, but if they haven’t presented the words clearly, then the King will require explanation from them. All people are to hear the truth, but what they do with the truth is over to them. Let us be sure we have the urgency to ensure that all who hear have opportunity to hear the truth about the Lord. Psalms 34:11, 78:1, Proverbs 1:20-23.

The rich and the poor are equal in God’s sight; there is no “blessing” upon the rich that makes them spiritual or special above the poor. It is the content of the heart that sets people apart in time and with blessings that last into eternity. Proverbs 22:1-2, Jeremiah 5:3-9, Matthew 5:3-8, James 1:9-11, 5:1-8. All the peoples of the earth are “together” in the end; we all are heading towards death.

I had a discussion with a pagan lady this week who has nightmares every night. She dreams in vivid colour of the violent death for herself and her son. She had this boy to a violent man and he has continued to harass her. She has no hope for time or eternity and yet has avoided facing the questions of faith and her end. I challenged her directly with the truth; she is on a track in life that ends at death, and only a fool ignores the destination as they live on the path. She understood this immediately and has begun her search for a faith that works. There is only one faith that truly works and my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will open the door for her to see that in the days and weeks to come. John 16:8-11.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

As Moses did in his last speech to Israel, as recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-4, so the psalmist does here. He announces that he is giving the doctrines of God in this Psalm, and that the people must understand his words or their lives will head in the wrong direction. He refers to his words as "wisdom", which is the technical term for a biblical doctrine. This was a way for the authors of scripture to call attention to their words and underline their significance, and urge the believers to strongly and urgently apply them. The believers need to hear the truth, believe the truth, and apply the truth.

The psalmist has meditated upon these things for a long time and he knows them as God's Word to His people. He will communicate them by means of parable and song, so that by two easy memory tools the people might hear, understand, believe, and remember the truth. Parables and stories are easy to remember and songs are easy to remember, and the importance of bible doctrine is such that these two means form the best way for believers to recall truths that they need to remember. God's truths are "dark sayings" only to those who reject God. 2 Corinthians 3:13-17, 4:3-4, Ephesians 2:1-5.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

"Days of evil" come to all of us at some point in our lives. On this journey through life we will have many times when we face sickness, distress, and for some, quite terrible and traumatic events. When these things occur what will be our stability? If we serve the Lord we will face great attacks at times, and may experience a hatred towards us that resembles that towards our Lord. John 15:18-27.

FEAR is however not an option for the believer in the Lord, because we are part of the Lord's eternal plan and are safe within that plan. Those who hate the Lord and His servants may actually surround us at times, but we are urged to keep our focus upon our position in Christ Jesus, our role for the Lord, and our destiny with Him forever, and so keep doing our work. We are not to be distracted from the Lord's task for us by any threat or attack; we are to serve Him and leave our protection in His hands.

The most powerful enemies of the truth will always be "prosperity gospel" people. This ought not to surprise us, for Satan, down the centuries, has always promised prosperity in time to his servants, and he delivers it for a time to them. WEALTH is no evidence of spirituality; any more than POVERTY is an evidence of divine discipline or judgement. Psalms 52:4-8, 62:10. This last verse is the most powerfully direct verse in the Old Testament about the deceitful nature of wealth. Wealth flies away like a bird over time! Proverbs 23:5. Wealth is not to be trusted. Luke 12:16-31, 16:19-31.

7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

8 (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

No matter how much money we have we cannot redeem our brother from eternal judgement. No indulgences can ever be purchased to redeem a soul from hell fire. It is incredible that the Old Roman Church of the Middle Ages ever stooped to the level of selling indulgences. No one can pay the price for the sin of man except the Saviour God who perfectly paid the price.

Men's money and other goods are all passed on to their descendents; we take nothing with us into eternity to barter our way with God. We either are covered by "the precious blood of Christ", or we are not! Refer to the BTB studies on SALVATION and REDEMPTION. The only action that "lasts forever" is an action achieved by God's power. Mankind as fallen creatures, are simply not in the "forever" category, unless we change that through salvation. The redemption of a soul is the most precious thing, and the curse of sin and death upon mankind ends forever for that soul, when they accept God's remedy and leave their arrogance and rebellion against God behind. 1 Peter 1:3-5, 18-25, 2:4-10.

9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

10 For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

ETERNAL LIFE and ETERNAL SECURITY are both there for the believer in their POSITION IN CHRIST. As believers in the Lord we enter a new and special place even as we live upon this fallen earth. At the moment of salvation the believer enters into union with Christ and is beyond the attack of the Angel of Death.

When death comes to the believer it comes as a friend; for "precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints", and "to the Lord belong the issues of death" for the believer. Psalms 68:20, 116:15. In and through our relationship with our

Creator and now Saviour God we enjoy rest from worry about death, for it is truly now, absence from this body, and being face to face with the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Galatians 2:20. Refer again to the BTB studies on DEATH, and DYING GRACE. We do not see death, we see Jesus, John 5:24, 8:51-58.

Once again I rejoice in this Psalm in the light of the recent deaths of my parents Matthew and Marcia McEwan and now my wife's cousin Charles Makaea, over these last ten days. Each of these three people died as believers in the Lord and they died in grace and with absolute confidence of resurrection. They will receive resurrection bodies at the Lord's return, at the place where their bodies were laid in their graves.

Right now each of them are rejoicing with the Lord in heaven, in what Paul calls an "intermediate bodily form" (1 Corinthians 15:1ff, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8) awaiting that final day when the entire Church receives their Christ-like body in the last day of the Church Age. Refer to the BTB study RESURRECTION. This is Paul's very clear and precise teaching to the Thessalonian and Corinthian churches. We bury our dead in sure and certain hope of resurrection. Read the two Corinthian passages in the EBCWA Commentaries right now if you do not have assurance and clarity of thinking on this matter.

Our dear Cousin Charles Makaea was a great church leader and mentor for the Niuean Island Church Community. He loved the Lord and served the Lord's people all his older years since meeting the Lord. He was a living testimony of a changed and triumphant life in Christ and a joy to be around. My wife and I will miss his cheery smile and ready humour and his church will miss his biblical and practical wisdom. We are sad at his death because we are sorry for ourselves! We would have liked more time with him, but he was ready to go to be with his Lord and he said as much to his wife and children.

My own parents were also ready to go to be with their Lord and we farewelled them both at a great old age in the confidence that we will be going to be with them one day. As David was confident of seeing his dead child again, so are we that we will see our loved ones in Christ Jesus. 2 Samuel 11:17-23. We bury the bodies of our loved ones and they "see corruption", and these earthly bodies rot away, but for the believer this is not the end, but the beginning of a new phase of their existence in heaven.

11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.

12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.

The arrogance of many foolish people is seen in the grand names they give for their houses and the large or significant items of wealth that they treasure (like their great jewels, or boats). They call their palaces, jewels and yachts after themselves, and yet these grand and expensive things are only "for a brief time" before thieves destroy, enemy armies burn, frauds eliminate them, or other people inherit them and the names are either changed or they are lost to rust or decay anyway. If our fame and fortune is earth bound then it will last as long as the moths don't eat it and the rust does not destroy it. Jesus will speak directly of these things, and challenge His hearers to value the things that last eternally rather than the things of time that rot or decay. Matthew 6:19-21.

The scriptures are filled with warnings about these things. Proverbs 23:4-5, Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, Luke 12:16-34, 1 Timothy 6:5-10, James 5:1-8. Anyone foolish enough to be still clinging to the false beliefs of the so called "prosperity gospel" should be casting their system away from them after reading the above verses. If this is an issue for you believer, please study each of these passages in an EBCWA Commentary and be corrected and relieved of such nonsense.

We all live and die, just like the animals, and the only thing that separates us is the resurrection reality that is in Christ Jesus for those who are His. No matter what the "honour" other people give us, the fame we enjoy lasts no longer than the people who give it to us. All that man gives is temporary and temporal. The honour of man does not abide; only those who love the Lord and are the objects of His love abide forever. Let us ensure we, "abide in Him, and His word abides in us". John 15:4-10, 1 Timothy 2:13, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 2:6-17, 24-28. Refer to the BTB study ABIDING IN GOD.

13 This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

The future of the godless rich is misery, but the eternal future of the believer is joy forever with their Lord. The way of the godless is indeed "folly". It is foolishness to base your life and destiny upon things that obviously do not last beyond this life, and yet so many deceive themselves in their life styles. Our newspaper this very day spoke of a "celebrity drug ring" where sportsmen and socialites all have been exposed as drug takers and immoral people through the arrest of one con man who sold them their drugs. Their lives are proven a sham and their futures are now in doubt as prison awaits many of them. Their lives were "folly" built upon the escapism of the drug world.

Satan loves to deceive foolish people who do not want to bow their knee to the Lord but who are quite happy to bow their knee to a drug dealer and bar owner. We must bow our knee to someone in this life, and each person decides who they will worship and Satan will prove himself every time to be a bad master.

"Time will tell" is the saying we have in English to repeat the principle at the end of verse thirteen. The posterity of fools will often repeat their foolish words, and at the funerals of the lost I have heard all sorts of foolishness said about where

the lost person now is! This saying may have two explanations; the first is that the children follow the foolishness of their parents, but the second is that the children see the foolishness of their parents. Sadly the second option is less common.

It is more common for fools to be followed by greater fools. It is only the work of the Holy Spirit that changes lives, not fools seeing the truth. John 16:8-11. When a fool sees the truth they are simply more driven to hide from it with drugs or alcohol. Let us be the Lord's heralds who tell the truth and proclaim the truth so that the fools are without excuse before God.

The end of the lost is to be laid in the grave, just like the bones of the animals that are slaughtered for food or sacrifice. In the ancient world of Israel bodies were laid in a tomb for a year until the flesh rotted off the bones. The "corruption" of the body was well known because of this, as the stench of rotting flesh was readily smelt when graves were reopened for new burials. After a year the bones of the dead person were then gathered, washed, oiled and reburied in the family tomb, often in a bone box or Ossuary.

The people who were in charge of the bones and burying were "righteous/upright" people who did this service to the dead. It was a noble and good thing to do to care for the body of the dead, for to touch a body made that person unclean and unable to worship in the community for a number of days. The person who cared for a body was putting their own religious life on hold to care for the dead. Numbers 19:11-22.

It was a gift of love to the dead to care for their body, and no matter how lowly the person who did this, they were, in doing it, superior to the dead! The greatness of the past status of the now dead person, did not alter the fact of the decay of their body, nor their total reliance upon the loving care of a righteous person who cared for their body. All the power structures were overturned by death; they always are overturned! The most beautiful person becomes just an ugly rotting skeleton after death. Beauty is but for a season upon the earth for the lost, but praise God in eternity we have the beauty of the Lord forever.

The psalmist is really singing of dark things here, and yet he is singing of good things to reflect upon, for the believer has no worries in the area of death and burial. We have an heavenly destiny and the fate of our body is irrelevant to us, except that we want our funeral to be a testimony to our living faith, which by the time of our funeral, has come to its triumphant goal in the arms of Jesus.

**15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.
16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;**

The psalmist's assurance is now contrasted strongly to the doubts, fears and confusion of the pagans of whom he has spoken so far. The psalm will end with a strong statement of faith in the resurrection power of the Lord, and the assurance of the believer in the face of death. The believer may strongly state, "I know my redeemer lives!" Job 19:25.

The pagan commentators upon the scripture, who delight in mocking the truths of the Word of God, attack the very thought of eternal life and speak of the "evolution" of such "ideas". Their falsehood is easily exposed by serious students of the Word of God, for from the beginning, the people of God sought to bury their dead loved ones in the company of those they sought to stand with on resurrection day. From the oldest book (Job) to the youngest books (Gospel and Letters of John) the Bible speaks of the confidence of the saints in physical bodily resurrection.

In light of the reality of death, and the certainty of the end of all earthly things, believers are urged to have a different attitude towards the wealth of others. Many people, even believers themselves get envious and jealous of the wealth of others. They look and lust after the things of others. This is foolishness for the believer who by their envying has lost their eternal life perspective. We seek a city that does not pass away, not the temporary glories of man that do pass away! Hebrews 11:10, 11:16, 13:14.

The order for believers is clear, "Do not be worried about others becoming wealthy, when you are still poor!" Do not think that the Lord is judging you by this, nor that you are somehow being treated badly by the Lord, and that it is "unfair". Relax and trust the Lord to give you what you need to do what He has called you to do, for He will always do that! Philippians 4:4-13.

**17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.
18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.**

Wealth is deceptive, and all who trust in it are to be disappointed, but all who trust in the Lord will be delivered and they will praise Him forever. Ecclesiastes 12:1-14. It is resting in the love of the Lord for us that stabilises our hearts and minds. All else is a vapour other than the grace, mercy, love and gifts of the Lord God who loved us and gave Himself for us. When we die we carry nothing away with us except our status as the friends or enemies of God. The glory of all men dies with them, and only the eternal rewards given by God last for eternity. While men live they bless themselves by their deeds, and others will also bless them as they do well, but it is not the "well done" of men that lasts. Matthew 25:21-23.

**19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.
20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.**

“Always look on to the end”. (W G Scroggie). The race takes its meaning from the winning post and all who fail to break the winning tape are just “losers” of the race. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Timothy 4:1-8, Hebrews 12:1-3. Refer to the BTB study ATHLETICS. We are called to run our race with an intelligent focus upon the end, and the end for our humanity is death, but the end for our spiritual life is heaven with the Lord where REWARDS AND CROWNS are assigned for spiritual performance upon the earth. It is only the finish line that defines the race results, no actions beforehand count unless they lead to the final triumph. Let us keep our eyes fixed forwards.

The ungodly dead will not see the light of day again, for their fate is judgement and eternal death. They had their “day in the sun” and they wasted it upon things that do not last. They sought honour and the fame that foolish men like themselves give to other fools, and so they died. They died without hope, without purpose, without joy, and without eternal life, for they died without a real relationship with the only One who gives life. John 3:16-36. They died like the animals they petted, and they are gone like the vapour from their cigarette smoke.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All that we build materially in this life is gone in a few years. Let us not be attached to the things of this world, but rest our hearts and minds upon the things that last forever. Let us serve the Lord with confidence in our eternal destiny and a focus upon the eternal rewards that the faithful will receive rather than any temporary baubles given in time by men.
2. Let us ensure that we abide in the Lord in daily living fellowship with the One who loves us, and let us ensure that His Word abides in us as our strength to stabilise us in difficult times and places. What separates us from the animals is our eternal destiny with the Lord forever in a resurrection body like our Lord's.
3. Do not give way to envy believer. Do not give way to jealousy or bitterness at another's wealth and your own poverty. You are called to be content in all places you find yourself and trust the Lord to bring you through all the places the Lord has led you into. God can be trusted, but riches cannot be trusted. Riches grow wings and fly away. Proverbs 23:5.
4. Let us ensure we preach the doctrines of eternal life and eternal rewards, so that all might know the truth and focus their lives intelligently upon their eternal destiny, not the temporary baubles and praise of time. Let us live with our eyes fixed upon eternity.

DOCTRINES

HERALDS

FEAR

POVERTY

WEALTH

SALVATION – SIN - MAN'S NEED FOR SALVATION

SALVATION – BARRIER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

SALVATION – REDEMPTION

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

DEATH

DYING GRACE

RESURRECTION

ABIDING IN GOD

ATHLETICS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

PSALMS 50**INTRODUCTION**

This Psalm is a frighteningly powerful vision of the final judgement of mankind. It is a glimpse of the absolute nature of God's judgement and the finality of it. It is a Psalm that the Lord echoes on His last night in the Olivet Discourse. Matthew 25:34-46. As He sets His heart and mind to go to the Cross, He tells the disciples that the destiny of all mankind will centre upon their response to Him demonstrated by their attitudes and actions towards others. Man will be judged by the believing fruit of their lives. Matthew 7:13-23.

PSALMS 50:1-23

1 The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. **2** Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. **3** Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. **4** He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. **5** Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. **6** And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah. **7** Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. **8** I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. **9** I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. **10** For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. **11** I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. **12** If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. **13** Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? **14** Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: **15** And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. **16** But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? **17** Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. **18** When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. **19** Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. **20** Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. **21** These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. **22** Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. **23** Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

REFLECTION

1 The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

There is a coming day when the Lord of glory returns to this earth to judge it. This is, as C S Lewis said, "The visited planet", and it will be visited again. As the Lord left the earth after his First Advent, just so will He return to it. We have the angel's word on this. Acts 1:6-12. The entire earth will see His return, from the east to the west. His return will be a triumphant progress, possibly over one full rotation of the earth. It is clearly long enough in its progress for unsaved mankind to feel the fear of His return and for some to bow their knee and accept His Lordship in that eleventh hour. Isaiah 1:12-22, Hosea 10:8-13, Luke 23:27-31, Revelation 6:12-17. Refer to the BTB studies on FIRST AND SECOND ADVENT, RETURN OF THE LORD, DAY OF WRATH.

Out of the darkness of the 'GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD' the light that shines is the light of God to end that time with judgement. There is hope in these last days because the survivors of Israel do repent and return to the Lord their God and recognise the great evils they have done. Zechariah 12:2-14. There is a great battle raging around Jerusalem and it involves weapons of mass destruction. Atomic and other terrible types of weapons are actually described as being used in two passages of scripture. Isaiah 29:5-12, Zechariah 13:1 – 14:15.

The terrible battle that will kill two thirds of the population of Israel in that day is ended by the Lord's return to the Mount of Olives. He ensures the defenders are able to escape and then the attackers are wiped out. It may take months to clean up the land after this last Great War; referred to as "the Battle of Armageddon". The battle ends with the Lord's return to Jerusalem, to Mt Zion itself. He will build a Temple for His reign upon the earth, and this Millennial Temple will surpass anything previously upon this hill, and Ezekiel's vision covers more detail than we have for the earlier temples upon this hill. EZEKIEL Chapters 40-47.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

Many will argue as we draw towards the end of this phase of human history that God is silent and the coming again of the Lord is simply a "myth". 1 Timothy 4:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:1-4, 2 Peter 2:1 – 3:9, Jude 14ff. When the Lord comes He

does not come as the “gentle Jesus”, but as the Judge of mankind, with fire and tumult. The Second Advent is not a pleasant thing for the unbelievers, for it is the end for them, but for the believers it is joy in the midst of carnage, for His coming is deliverance for them. Psalms 18:7-12, 97:1 – 7, Daniel 7:9 – 14, (Revelation 20:1ff), Nahum 1:3-11, Habakkuk 3:3-7, Malachi 3:2-7, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12, Hebrews 2:1-4, 10:28-31, 13:28-29.

As you read these passages recognise that the nature of the Lord’s Second Advent is well described all through prophetic history and it is a judgement indeed upon those who have rejected Him. The Lord will judge His people, and none will escape, for He made all of mankind, and all people individually must give their account to Him. There is no escape for those who thought they could ignore His claims upon their lives. Isaiah 11:1-5, Revelation 20:11-15.

**5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.**

There is only one way to “make covenant with God”, and that is by the blood of the sacrifice. In our Age of history this means to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Refer to the BTB study BLOOD SACRIFICE. Only the precious blood of Jesus removes the sin barrier between God and man. We are not saved by our own works, but by His perfect work alone. Ephesians 2:1-8, 1 Peter 1:17-25. We are saved by God’s GRACE alone.

All the saints will be gathered by the power and direction of the Lord; none will be lost to the enemy who are not meant to go ahead into heaven through the doorway of death. The enemy will have victory over no believer at all, for even those the enemy kill in the last days will receive eternal rewards as the Lord’s martyrs. Refer to the BTB study REWARDS AND CROWNS.

In today’s world we see the enemy rampant in power and influence. Our media mocks the truth and celebrates immorality and evil. We are surrounded by the sounds of evil and sin, and these things are celebrated. Many believers are slack towards the Lord. Matthew 24:9-14, 1 Timothy 4:1-4, 2 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 2:1ff. We do not see the heavens or the earth exult the name of the Lord today, except on rare occasions. It is intriguing just how wonderful the Lord is in this, in ensuring that the message of the reality of the wonder of His power as the Creator God gets out through media inspite of the dominance of evil.

The Louie Giglio DVDs on the Hubble Space telescope pictures are an amazing testimony to the creative power of God. The movie, the “Far Side of the Moon”, on the Moon Missions of NASA, is another testimony to God’s creative power from pagan Hollywood. Even from the very place where paganism dominates we have seen a small number of incredibly powerful movies that testify to the truth from the midst of the falsehood that chokes the life out of all else.

**7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.**

The people of Israel are especially addressed in relation to this time of world history, for the days leading up to the Lord’s Second Advent are referred to not only as “The Great Tribulation” period, but also as “the time of Jacob’s trouble”. Jeremiah 30:7, Zechariah 12:2-14. It is in this time frame that the Jewish people “look upon him whom they pierced”. Zechariah 12:10. It is in this time frame of the worst persecution that ever breaks upon the Jewish people that they find their Messiah, and the remnant according to faith is delivered by the Lord’s return.

The testimony of the Lord is “against Israel” in this day, for their track record has been one of rejection of the truth through until this time. They have kept up their sacrificial system through prayers and rituals after the Temple was destroyed in 70AD and the Lord does not reproach them for that, but they are held accountable for rejecting their Messiah. They missed the Lord, and kept on with the shadow, when the reality had come. Hebrews 10:1ff.

When they are convicted of the truth about Jesus being their Messiah there is national mourning by the remnant of the people who are left alive after the invasion of their land. They weep for the sins of generations of Jews who have died under discipline due to their rejection of the Lord their Messiah. Zechariah 12:11-14. They have kept their rituals going through the centuries, but they all looked forward to a Messiah who had already come and been rejected by them. Can you see the reason for the great weeping of Israel in that day? Read carefully the Zechariah passages and feel the pain of Israel in that future day.

**9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.
10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.**

They are not abused for their sacrificial system, but they are reminded that their sacrificial system was only bone fide while it looked forward to the Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross. Once the Lord had died on the Cross the Temple sacrifices were redundant. Hebrews 8:1-13. Moses built upon the patriarchal practise, under the Lord’s direct instruction, received on the holy mountain Horeb, and all that was done looked forward. Hebrews 9:27 – 10:10.

There was never any intrinsic value in animal sacrifices, for the Lord owns all the animals on the earth. The only value of the animal was in their depiction of the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:18-28. Refer back to the BTB study of BLOOD SACRIFICE, LEVITICAL OFFERINGS. All the sacrifices in the world now amount to nothing, for the Lord’s work upon the Cross is sufficient for all the sins of mankind. It is his work that is to be accepted and embraced, and man’s works are to be ended in grace and thankfulness.

**11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.
 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.
 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?**

The Lord does not want offerings to be given to Him unless the heart is right. The death of animals needs to have significance or it is simply the waste of animals and birds that belong to the Lord anyway. God does not need the sacrifices of men. The mocking tone is deliberate in the Psalm, for the believer must remember they are worshipping the God who made the worlds, not some pathetic demon behind a pagan god. God is not hungry for blood or sacrificial wine; God is hungry for our loving response to His mercy, love and grace. Psalms 51:17, Isaiah 57:13-15, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, 12:7.

**14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:
 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.**

The greatest sacrifice to the Lord is the sacrifice of praise; the greatest offering is the life of the person coming before the Lord. God seeks our lives a "living sacrifice" to His service. Romans 12:1-2. God seeks our thanksgiving for grace received. Hosea 10:12-13, 13:9-10, 14:1-2. To "pay our vows", means to keep our promises to God. As believers we owe the Lord our life and service, and to pay our vow means to deliver our lives daily as a living sacrifice to His work and will.

When we are in fellowship with the Lord we have the confidence to call upon the Lord in our day of trouble and be assured of receiving His blessing, deliverance and direction. Our correct response to this deliverance is further service to the Lord that brings glory to the Lord's name. We are here to glorify the Lord in all we do. We are required to bring glory to the Lord as His servants and need to shoulder this responsibility and live spiritually and powerfully. Matthew 5:14-16, John 15:7-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11. Refer to the BTB study SPIRITUALITY.

**16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?
 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth my words behind thee.**

The believers have been challenged strongly, but the unbelievers are warned in even stronger terms. The lost are to be warned of their fate if they do not repent. We cannot save the lost ourselves, but we are responsible to give them the biblical truth, in order that the Holy Spirit may convict them of their sinful state. The biggest danger for the lost is that these unbelievers are religious and yet unsaved.

The hardest person to reach with the Word of God is the person who is absolutely convinced that they are saved and a friend of God, and yet their heart is far from God. These people "declare the statutes of God" and yet they do not know God! They speak of the covenant of God, and yet they have no fellowship with God. They speak of God and yet they ignore the claims of God upon their lives. They prove their unbelief by their absolute rejection of correction from God's Word. They hate instruction from the Word, and throw God's Word behind them and forge forward in immoral paths that violate the Word and will of the Lord for them. Proverbs 1:7, 28-29, 5:12-13, 8:36, John 15:18-27, Ephesians 5:11-13.

**18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.
 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.**

These pious hypocrites described earlier are people who are happy with thieves stealing from others, and are content with the company of adulterers and will readily join them in their evils. Proverbs 1:10-19. There are many people who secretly rejoice in the exploits of the evil and the criminal. They themselves wouldn't partake of such evils directly but are happy to benefit from them, or rejoice in the tales of evil. They are content with lies whenever they suit their purposes, and they are careless with words and their tongues readily speak evil things of others. They practise the "abomination sins" that the Lord hates. Proverbs 6:16-19.

**20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
 21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.**

The sins of the tongue are many and wicked. To speak evil of others is a sign of great evil in the soul. If a person is evil, it is right to speak honestly about their evil, but it is wrong to speak wickedly of sinners who need a Saviour, for the goal of all believers is to be their salvation, not their slander. We are challenged by these words, not to speak evil of our brethren, nor be bitter towards those who have wronged us when we can do good things for them later. This is hard to do, but a requirement for all believers.

The people of Israel were so used to getting away with these sins that they thought God didn't care about them. They were fatally wrong, for the Lord gave them grace to repent, not time to continue in their sins! Their error was thinking that God was just a man like themselves and that God could be "fooled" or impressed by the things that impress men. God makes it clear that they will see the truth very clearly one day, but it may be a day too late for their salvation. Revelation 20:11-15.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

The danger is often not open rejection of God, but casual “forgetting” about God. It is the denial of reality that is the greatest danger for mankind. We forget the truth and so slip quietly and foolishly into greater error by the day. The slide is gradual at first, but when people forget the truth they lose discernment over error and their slide will become more and more rapid over time. Their end will be terrible the Lord warns. They will be torn to pieces by the Lord if they do not repent and there is none that can deliver them from the Lord’s hands if they persist in rejection of the truth.

The alternative to their error is worship of the truth, and they need to find their voice to praise and honour the true God of glory before it is too late. God seeks real worship from transformed hearts, not the parroted phrases of people playing with religion. It is godly conversations that show transformed hearts, and God wants reality in life, lips and worship, not play acting from His people.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us preach the reality of the future Advent of the Lord. He does not come a second time as the “gentle Jesus”, but as the King and Judge of fallen man. Let us be sure the people know that rejection of Him is a serious thing.
2. We are here upon the earth to serve the One who gave Himself for us, and to bring glory to the Lord’s Holy name. Let’s be sure we are worthy of the Lord’s name in and through our service. Let us walk in the power of the Holy Spirit alone, and in the light of God’s Word alone. Only then can we be sure of bringing glory to the Lord.
3. There is one unpardonable sin, and that involves full and final rejection of the claims of the Lord upon the life of the person. Let us remind the religious unbelievers we meet of their need to fully bow their knee to their Saviour and Lord, and not let their religion stand between them and saving faith.

DOCTRINES

CHRIST – FIRST AND SECOND ADVENTS

CHRIST – RETURN OF OUR LORD

DAY OF WRATH

DISPENSATIONS – THE TRIBULATION OR THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

TRIBULATION IN MATTHEW 24

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

BLOOD SACRIFICE

OFFERINGS – LEVITICAL OFFERINGS REPRESENT CHRIST

GRACE

SALVATION – BARRIER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

SIN – ABOMINATION SINS TO THE LORD

SIN – OLD SIN NATURE, FRUIT OF THE

SIN – UNPARDONABLE SIN

PSALMS 51**INTRODUCTION**

This Psalm is well known as David's Penitential Psalm after his adultery with Bathsheba and his conviction of sin by God through the prophet Nathan. Read the EBCWA Commentary on the chapters of 2 Samuel that are relevant to this Psalm now, as seeing the extent of the sin, and the way the Lord deals with David immediately will give you the background that is useful to understand here. The passage is 2 Samuel 11-12. These two chapters plumb the depths of a man's lust, but also they open David up to the grace, mercy and justice of God like no other event in his life or history itself. I know of no other recorded incident in history that comes near this one as an illustration of forgiveness upon repentance. If David can be forgiven, then any person who accepts God's conviction can be forgiven.

This incident teaches more than simply the message of grace forgiveness, it also teaches the principle of the flow on consequences of some sins. David is forgiven, but the consequences of his actions over that terrible year when he was out of fellowship with the Lord flow into his kingdom for the rest of his life. He is forgiven, but there are evils he has let loose that must run their course. David will have to learn that the cost of his sins is great for all around him, but that cursing is turned to blessing even then, if the people involved cast their cares upon the Lord. 1 Peter 5:5-9. Refer to the BTB study CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS.

As a general of an Army he does the "unforgiveable" as far as his loyal men are concerned; he seduces and fornicates with his most loyal servant's wife, and then he organises the murder of his most loyal servant to cover his adultery. He then marries the woman he fornicated with and in a pious show of hypocrisy he "makes an honest woman of her". It is all a sham and as fake as it can be until Nathan enters the palace and convicts him of sin.

David's actions were not unusual for pagan oriental monarchs of the day, and are not unusual in the world of crime families through the centuries. The shocking thing was that this was God's monarch; this was God's servant, the "sweet psalmist of Israel". David had done more than betray the trust of his people, and betray a loyal friend. He had betrayed God and made the name of the Lord despised amongst the pagans and believers of his own court.

He was known as the man of God, and he had brought the Lord's name into disgrace as only a worship leader can. At a human level he had let down his people and betrayed his loyal friend and soldier Uriah, but at the level to which he was called as God's leader of Israel, he had betrayed God and disgraced the holy name of his Lord and God.

PSALMS 51:1-19

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. **2** Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. **3** For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. **4** Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. **5** Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. **6** Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. **7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **8** Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. **9** Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. **10** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. **12** Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. **13** Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. **14** Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. **15** O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. **16** For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. **17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. **18** Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. **19** Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

REFLECTION

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Nathan's words cut through David like a knife; "You are the man!" 2 Samuel 12:7. Nathan's words were measured and accurate. He had told David a story that excited David's sense of what was right, but his emotion was just pious hypocrisy by this point. Nathan blows away all his hypocrisy and the Holy Spirit nails David to the palace wall in true guilt.

Guilt is important in this case, for it correctly identifies the appropriate emotion for David to feel. He ought to be ashamed and shocked at himself. He is shocked to the core, for what he has seen in the evil man in Nathan's story is indeed himself and he correctly labels his deeds as evil and sinful. Until he confesses his sin he is right to feel guilt. His sin is

the ultimate insult to his God who placed him as king over Israel. David is not responsible to his people, but to the One who placed him on the throne.

This is why the force of verse four is so powerful. We see sin in terms of the people affected, but that is simply the flow on effect of evil. Many will die as a result of David's sin; possibly as many as a hundred thousand people will die as a result of David's sin! He himself will pay terribly for this sin through the rest of his life, for there are some consequences of this sin that cannot be stopped. This is a point to reflect upon, for while forgiven we cannot stop consequences.

Many in the battle against Ammon will die, but far more Israelites will die in the Great Rebellion led by Absalom later. All of these things are terrible consequences of David's sin, but the sin was directly against his anointing as king by God. He has insulted the One who placed him on the throne to do His will; he has directly insulted God and turned away from righteousness and holiness.

David does the only thing he can do; he casts himself upon the mercy of God, who he has insulted so deeply by his actions. It is only mercy that he can claim, for that is a characteristic of the CHARACTER OF GOD and as such is his only hope for forgiveness and restoration. When we come before God we come on the basis of the character of God alone. When we come before God we cannot come on the basis of any character we have, for all our righteousness is as dirty rags in God's sight. Isaiah 64:6, Romans 8:5-11. When we have sinned we have no excuses that can be made; we have only God's mercy to cast ourselves before. We are sinners and fools without hope, except the hope of God.

David appeals to the mercy of God and the loving kindness of God. He bases his appeal in the Character of God. He knows that God's love is greater than man's sin, and he knows that God's loving kindness is greater than anything that man can imagine or think. Isaiah 55:6-11. He asks for the Lord to "blot out" his transgressions. He is not minimising his sins here, but actually amplifying them. He is recognising that SIN is a total violation of the standards, character, and plan of God.

He is recognising that his sins are multiple and unforgiveable under the Mosaic Law, because they are deliberate and determined evil actions. The Mosaic Law offered hope for sins of ignorance only. Leviticus 4-5, Numbers 15:24-29. There was only execution and eternal damnation for open, deliberate, and persistent rebellion against the holy standards of God. Refer to the BTB studies on SALVATION and GRACE below.

He knows he cannot offer up any sacrifice with the priesthood to be heard by God, for his sins were deliberate and malicious, and showed a total disregard for the holy anointed role he had been given. He had insulted God, and could not trot along to the Temple and offer a bullock and be forgiven in this situation. He needs mercy before he can offer any sacrifice. He asks that the record of his sins be "blotted out" of the book of works that is used as the basis of judgement for mankind. Revelation 20:12-15. Refer to the BTB study JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE.

He is asking for God to imitate the action of the scribe upon papyrus, whereby a written line was wiped away with a wet sea sponge. (This is called "Expiation"). He wants the very record of his sins removed from the record of God concerning his life. In grace, mercy and righteousness God will do this for David, just as he has done this for every believer through the ages. This is mercy in action on God's part. This is amazing grace, and it is the grace we receive also!

**2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.**

David recognises he is unclean morally and ethically. He realises that he stands dirty before God and in need of God's help, for he cannot cleanse himself. God alone cleanses man from the stain of sin. Ezekiel 36:24-32. It is the blood of the Saviour that alone cleanses us from sin and washes away the stain that has come to us from the devil. Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:19-22.

Earlier in his life he had prayed Psalm 19, and in verses twelve to fourteen in that Psalm he had expressed his need for forgiveness and cleansing, but here he fully faces the true extent of his sinful state. Read and compare Psalm 19 with Psalm 51 and you will see that the first seems almost polite and respectable, but Psalm 51 is raw and passionate and painful. There is anguish in the words of Psalm 19 but there are tears and soul pain in between every line of Psalm 51.

David is holding nothing back, for he has sinned so greatly that he is overwhelmed by his true guilt. Guilt is at times "false guilt" and as such, it is always destructive, self indulgent and of no value, but "true guilt" is useful and will work out in the life that sits with its sin to produce genuine repentance. Guilt alone does not mean repentance. Guilt may mean, "Sorry we are caught out in our sins", but repentance goes way beyond sorrow; it goes to a complete change of heart and mind, and it involves a sincere determination to walk another path than the sin stained path we have been on.

David recognises his sin and its consequences to his spiritual life. He has yet to see the full consequences of sin in his life and the lives of the others who will suffer in the years to come because he let such evils loose at the heart of his kingdom. He realises as he prays the full terrible enormity of his sin, and he seeks God's removal of the great burden he has placed upon himself through his lustful stupidity and evil.

His sinful actions are always flashing back in his mind and he does not experience any pleasure as he thinks of the sexual encounter with Bathsheba, he is thinking only of the murder of his friend and the terrible evil they have done. It is

of interest to note that although Bathsheba may have been a passionate mistress/wife for a time their love was quickly over. With most lovers this is the sad truth – fornication doesn't last the distance when it is without integrity to start with.

Within twenty years David barely even recognised Bathsheba! When she finally comes in to speak to him about Solomon being king he barely even recognises her. She is not mentioned by name after their affair is over with Solomon's birth until David is dying. Do not speak of this "love affair" as anything other than what it was; a sinful affair that was falsely "sanctified" by marriage. The birth of Solomon is legitimate and he will be king, but he will continue the sexual sins of his father and will not have David's deep repentance until it is too late for him and his kingdom.

Bathsheba is not mentioned in the scriptures again until Nathan, the now elderly prophet, approaches her and seeks her assistance to ensure Solomon becomes king quickly and without any carnage. 1 Kings 1:11-31. Read this passage and see the cold formality of the last meeting with this lover and recognise the terrible truth that illicit love affairs nearly all peter out! Things built upon dishonesty don't have a good foundation to build great things upon.

The cold embers of fornication nearly always blow away as the dust they are. Bathsheba is lacking in discernment even after the ascension to the throne of her son Solomon, and she quickly loses her influence when she backs a foolish request by another lust filled son of David as recorded in 1 Kings 2. She is a non-entity in the court before and finally also after David's sin with her. She made a play for him, and she won him, and she gained a king as her son, but she lost any real happiness she might have had as the loved and loyal wife of Uriah the Hittite.

I have worked with many who commit adultery and run off with their lovers, both male and female. None finds the long term happiness they claim they are seeking with adultery; for you simply cannot get gold from lead! You cannot find glory from the ground of disgrace: you cannot find joy from the misery of others. The old fornicator's statement rings true; "If I leave my wife for you, then the only thing you can be sure of, is that I will leave you for someone else one day". Isaiah 59:12-15, Jeremiah 3:21-25.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

David's sin was ever before his face, for every day he saw Bathsheba he was forced to think of her loyal murdered husband Uriah, and he was forced to remember the evils he did to cover his sins. He also was forced as time went on to reflect upon the flow on evils that occurred in his court, from the rape of Tamar to the Great Rebellion of Absalom. His great sin was against God directly, for it was a direct insult to the great position He had anointed David to hold. The sin wasn't against Uriah, or Bathsheba, or his people, for they were all simple victims of David and Bathsheba's lust; the sin was directly against God.

Let us pause and reflect upon this for the truth of this statement of David's remains powerfully correct for us all. All sin by a believer is directly against God, who has called us His children. We are members of the Royal Family of God in Christ Jesus and need to live lives worthy of our calling. 1 Peter 2:9-12. Our eternal spiritual wages are to be REWARDS AND CROWNS of God's grace, but the "wages of sin" is eternal death. Romans 6:23, Revelation 2:11, 20:12-15, 21:8.

Sinful acts violate our holy calling as believers and members of the Royal family of God, and are direct insults to the Lord's grace shown to us. The order given to all believers is clear; live lives that are worthy of your high calling in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 4:1, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-11. David recognises that all sin is done "in God's sight". Nothing is hidden from the Lord God, and David sees now that he is seen! Adultery behind closed doors is never behind any doors at all as far as the Lord is concerned. All is open to God's sight and no man may hide any action from the Lord.

Let us remind ourselves and each other of the Lord's moral standards, and the Lord's omniscience. Nothing is hidden from God who made all things. Some people have argued with me regarding the guilt associated with sin, and said that the pleasant memories of their past sins are enjoyable to reflect upon, and at least they have lived and not been boringly moral! In any situation where this has been said I have pressed that person, and their "sweet memory" of their past sin very quickly evaporates and what they then speak of is the bitterness of their memories. There are no sweet memories of evil, only depression, and that is what David appears to suffer from for the rest of his life.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

David is not insulting his mother (and father) here. His mother conceived in a sinful state, because we always do conceive as fallen human beings, in a sinful state. We are fallen people, and we bring a sinner into the world when we bring a child into the world. Children are not innocent, but inheritors of their father's Old Sin Nature. This is why the Virgin Birth needed to occur, so that Jesus was born in His humanity without an Old Sin Nature, so He could be the perfect sacrifice for sin and our Saviour.

We are all born sinners and need a Saviour from our first breath. Now David himself identified that children who die early are automatically saved by the Lord, and he expressed this confidence in the salvation of children who die when his first child to Bathsheba dies. 2 Samuel 12:23, Matthew 18:10. Only one child has ever been born as Adam was made; without the Old Sin Nature, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. Refer to the doctrines in the BTB below, OLD SIN NATURE, and VIRGIN BIRTH. The Lord is the Saviour of all, reversing the curse brought by the first Adam's sin.

Man delights in deceiving himself and being deceived by Satan the enemy of man. We fool ourselves about the nature of truth and the nature of error. All adulterers that I have ever worked with deceive themselves about the nature of their actions, and only over time do they confront the full stupidity and evil of their actions. It is when their lust dies, or they see the many weaknesses of their lover, that they face the truth about their actions. Deceivers have deceitful weaknesses!

Read through the story of David in the EBCWA Commentary in 2 Samuel and you will see that there is no happy ending for David and Bathsheba; they have no happy married life after their adultery. She becomes just another wife in the harem and shares "her man" with wives and concubines. David's own weakness will flow onwards and be writ large in the pathetic life of his son Solomon. David doesn't correct his polygamy and so it destroys his sons. 1 Kings 11:1ff.

God's will for all mankind is for faithful monogamous MARRIAGE not POLYGAMY, and all who err in this reap a whirlwind of distress through their later life. Deuteronomy 17:17. David realises his sin, but he keeps thinking at that point and asks what God really wants for him and his life now. Many get so emotional that they stop thinking, but David keeps going and reflects upon the Word of God that he knows, and seeks the Will of God for him. He knows that the Lord wants him to walk in the "light of the Word", and he does so in most areas, but never gets around to the harem issue.

After the nation has gone into Babylonian Captivity a later psalmist will sum up the lessons learned by the people from their sinfulness that led to the captivity, and it will centre in the revival of the Word of God in their lives. Psalms 119:25-35, 79-89, 105-107. God doesn't want academic knowledge in His people, He wants life changing doctrinal truth to transform them and make them truly the children of the living God. God wants inner transformation of His people, so that Bible doctrine is at their very heart. Romans 12:1-2.

**7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.**

Don't run off and speak of "medicinal herbs" in relation to the hyssop, for that is not the purpose of David's reference to this herb. This was the herb, branches of which were used to dip into the blood of the sacrifices and sprinkle the door posts in the Exodus, (Exodus 12:20), and then later the blood of the sacrifice for leprosy. The cleansing of the leper was done by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice upon them by means of the hyssop. Leviticus 14:5-7.

The hyssop was also used in the sacrifice of the Red Heifer which was a crucial sacrifice for the preparation and consecration of the priesthood. It was burnt in the sacrifice, and also used for the sprinkling of the "holy water" of purification. Numbers 19:1-7, 17-19. This "holy water" was then to be used to purify all who had come into contact with a dead body, either by accident or deliberately as part of a funeral.

If we put all these references to hyssop together we can see what David meant by his phrase, "purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean". It refers to the blood on the lintels that covered the Exodus Generation, the sanctifying sacrifice that set aside the priests for service, and the cleansing blood and water that recognised the cleansing of the leper from leprosy.

On the Cross the "blood and water" that came from His side after His death was a sign that brought together all these symbolic elements and proved to the Apostle John that the sacrifice for sin that had occurred was perfect and complete. John 19:31-37. It speaks of the grace provision of God for the washing away of the stain of the sins of mankind. It speaks of the perfect work of God to deal with the sin of man. David is asking for the supernatural work of God to cleanse him from his sins.

He recognises that only the blood of the perfect sacrifice for sin can take away sin, and only the washing of the pure water of God's provision can cleanse from its stain upon the life. He places himself under the gracious provision of God for his salvation; only the Lord can wash the terrible stain of his sin away. Isaiah 1:15-20, Revelation 7:13-17. All David hears in his sinful state is his busy mind telling him how evil he is, and he longs for the cleansing of God so that he can know joy again. He seeks the FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT's presence.

David's deep pain is expressed in the picture of a broken bone, and for any who has had such a thing they know the pain he is describing. He is feeling such deep pain that he can barely speak, but he knows that at the hands of God he will be cleansed and restored to a place of joy and gladness. Salvation and forgiveness are sweet indeed, and only God can transform such a guilt ridden and tortured soul. These verses are indeed the promise of salvation and joy for all, for all sinners may know God's peace, if they will only come to Him and cast their sins down at the foot of the Cross. Matthew 11:28-30.

**9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.**

Once again David seeks total and complete forgiveness, and that means the Lord forgets the sin! This may seem incredible to us at first sight, but it is actually what the Lord does with our sins. We are told by the Psalm of David this very truth, upon which he now rests his petition to the Lord. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psalms 103:9-17, Ephesians 3:18-19. David understands the heart of God, just as he now realises the heart of man is desperately and deceitfully wicked. There is no peace for those who are wicked in their hearts. Isaiah 57:20-21, Jeremiah 17:7-9. David will suffer depression as a result of his evils, but he is forgiven them all!

One of the great truths about the way God deals with us is that we never get what we deserve for our sins. Genesis 33:11, Psalms 103:10, Joel 2:26. The Lord has dealt with David in grace, not in vengeance. God was entitled to destroy David for his great sins, but in grace he appealed and judgement was turned to grace and mercy through David's repentance here expressed in this Psalm. David's prayer is for a transformed life and heart, and for his spirit to be restored so that he knows the sweet fellowship with God that he had enjoyed before his sinful carnality. His prayer of confession is answered by God, as is every repentant sinner's prayer answered in grace and mercy.

He will feel great sadness at what he has done, and the depression regarding this will dog him every day of his remaining life. That is not God's punishment, but natural human consequences of betraying your friend to death for lust. He must sit with his sadness, for he worked to produce it! Depression over the past is not a sign of lack of forgiveness it is simply a sign that now you understand holiness! Learn holiness now believer and avoid the guilt later!

**11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.**

In the Old Testament period the MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT differed to our period since Pentecost. The Old Testament believers were not all filled with the Holy Spirit, who was only given to special people for special tasks. Our present Church Age is the first in which there is universal filling of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament believer could lose the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their life due to sin or simply to the completion of their spiritual tasking.

We are blessed indeed in the Church Age to have the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we need to walk worthy of the Lord so that we are always filled with the Spirit and powerful in our service. Refer to the BTB studies below on the ministries of the Holy Spirit in both the Age of Israel and the Church. David has lost the filling and the fruit of the Holy Spirit and he longs for that joy again. Romans 6:21-23, 7:4-6, 9:16-23, Galatians 5:22-26, Philippians 1:9-11, James 3:17-18, 5:1-6.

**13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.**

David realises that if he is forgiven and restored to full spiritual power again, that it is not for himself, but that he might serve others in his spiritual state. We are not here to relax and enjoy spiritual gifts and fruits, but to share them with the lost and the brethren that the blessing of the Lord might be multiplied to all who will receive them. His role as a believer is to minister salvation to the lost and blessing to the saints, and his sin has hindered both ministries. Sin stops ministry dead in its tracks.

David takes full personal responsibility for his sins without blaming Bathsheba or even referring to her. He refers to his "blood guilt" and truly he was guilty of military murder; he carries the blood of Uriah on his hands. He takes the full responsibility for his sin and leaves Bathsheba to take responsibility for her part in the drama that unfolded between them.

David is ready to praise the Lord for his deliverance and sing to all of the grace that he has received, which means he is ready to be publicly humiliated for his sins also. He is ready to make his sin public and his confession public in order to praise the Lord for his salvation and deliverance. He is ready to put his "privacy" aside and look to ways that his experiences can assist others. This is the sign of genuine repentance; life change and openness about the past.

We need to be very suspicious of those who have "gaps" in their CVs. Those who are not open about their past are hiding things, and that means they have some elements of narcissism and that means more sinful patterns remain within them. When there is life changing repentance from a sinful life pattern there will always be transparency, openness, and a genuine desire to help others afterwards. If people are not transparent in their dealings and have no desire to help others they have not been genuinely changed by God! These are two "fruits" of the Holy Spirit's work.

**15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.**

David understands the heart of God towards mankind. God seeks life change and morality in life, and then open and free worship. David knows that he cannot worship unless the Lord "opens his lips"; unless he is forgiven and restored to Holy Spirit filled status. True worship is only ever Holy Spirit filled worship, for man alone cannot truly worship in their human strength. It is the Holy Spirit that produces real and powerful worship amongst men and women.

God doesn't want us to spend money on sacrifices and doing rituals that lack reality; God seeks genuine life change and then expression in worship. Sacrifices were the way to worship in David's day, but these sacrifices needed to be offered from a pure heart that had already done business with God through confession of sin. It is not the ritual that matters to God but the reality behind it. John 4:23-26.

**17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.**

PSALM 52**INTRODUCTION**

There are evil people in this world and there are some who are just malice filled towards us. The Lord warns us that there will be those who hate us as much as they hated Him. John 15:18-27. This Psalm comes from the time when Doeg the Edomite came to Saul, betrayed David and tried to get David killed, and succeeded in murdering all the priests at the Tabernacle site at Nob. It was a terrible thing for Saul to allow this malice filled pagan to execute the priests, and it was a sin and evil that led to the execution of Saul's entire house and the end of his own line. 1 Samuel 21:1-15, 22:9-23.

The evil malice of the enemy knows no bounds, and the believer at such times is required to rest upon the Lord's plan and Person, and trust Him to lead them through and right the terrible wrongs done by the evil men. God is not mocked and judgement will fall in the end upon all who abuse God's people. Those who mock God and His people face terrible judgement. Luke 18:32, 22:63, 23:11, 36, Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 10:31, 12:28-29, Revelation 20:11-15.

PSALMS 52:1-9

1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually. 2 The tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. 5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. 6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: 7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. 8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. 9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

REFLECTION

**1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually.
2 The tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.**

The boasting of evil men will be a constant challenge through the life of every believer. Psalms 10:2-11. You will always meet Satan's people who have great earthly success and who boast of it in your ears and throw their success and your struggles in your face, with an insult to God in the midst of it. In this world we will have tribulation at times, but we need to remember the Lord's promise, that He has overcome the evil forces behind this world. Matthew 28:18-20, John 16:33, 2 Thessalonians 3:16.

Those who hate the Lord and reject the Gospel delight in celebrating their temporal successes, for by their drunken boastings they forget that they head for death and total uncertainty. They want to believe that there are "no certainties" after death, but the Bible tells differently and our job is to confront them with the truth of judgement if they persist in their rebellion against their Creator and Saviour. God's goodness endures forever, and the boasting insults of unsaved men against God do not alter or affect the wonderful and perfect character of God. Psalms 103:17-18, 107:1-2, 121:1-8, 1 John 4:7-10.

The uncontrolled tongue of evil men and women is indeed a terrible weapon. More deaths have been provoked by careless or hate filled words than by any other means. Psalms 64:2-6, Proverbs 6:16-19. Notice how many of the biblical "seven deadly sins" in the Proverbs passage are sins of the tongue. Once evil words are said they keep on working. Gossip does not rest, but keeps moving from person to person and doing more evil as it goes. The tongue may be used for health or death. Proverbs 12:18. We must guard our tongues, for the evil done by false witness and gossip is great and keeps working its poison for years after the words are out. Let us be a blessing to others, and say nothing in public that is not for the blessing of others. 2 Corinthians 4:1-4, 11:13-15.

**3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.**

The evil person is identified by the fruit of their lips and life. They love evil and delight in the works of evil. Refer to the BTB study on EVIL, for it is Satan's policy as opposed to God's policy, and we need to recognise the subtlety of the enemy's plans. There are people who love lies more than truth, and deception more than honesty. In today's world they are called "Personality Disordered People", but the Word of God is clear and forthright; they are evil and they are fools. Let us not mince words and provide meaningless psychological descriptions of people's behaviours; let us spot the source of their evil and name it for what it is. When a person has a deceitful tongue, identify their fruit and call them the sons and daughters of evil that they are.

5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

The Lord will judge these people finally, and they will face eternity in the Lake of Fire if they do not repent of their evil, but our job here and now is to identify them quickly and avoid them thoroughly. The evil people of this world do not expect God to act in history and are mortally offended when God does act. They expect to get away with their sins and act surprised when we challenge them that the Lord will judge eventually.

God will “pluck” all people from their dwelling places eventually, for we live upon this earth by permission only, and the day comes when our time here is up. We are all alive at the pleasure of the Lord also, and the godless rich and healthy overlook the fact that they live and move and have their being courtesy of the Lord’s grace alone. The smallest cell going crazy inside the body will cause a fatal cancer, and it doesn’t matter how great and wealthy that person is, they are just as dead as the poorest and most insignificant person.

Let us remember the fragile state of our life and leave behind us any arrogance at all. The day will come when the righteous, who have been abused by the godless, will laugh aloud as the arrogant and evil are caught by God. It is not wrong to seek the judgement of others, especially those whose evil has created carnage for God’s people. We seek the salvation of the lost, but it is not wrong to seek the judgement of those who have rejected the Gospel and are doing evil to the godly.

Many believers feel that they cannot seek the judgement of God upon the evil, and that they must always be seeking their salvation and never their judgement. There is a time when we ask for judgement, and it is all right to do so. Remember the picture that John draws in Revelation when the saints who have been executed for their testimony ask the Lord, “How long before justice is done?” Revelation 6:10, 6:9-11, 7:9-17. While they might be saved we pray for that, but we also remember the justice of God and seek judgment when the time for that has come.

7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

What is said when the once rich and powerful fall into judgement? The words of verse seven are heard and they are words of rebuke. When people trust things that can evaporate away they trust a mirage. All material things are just mirages; they have no lasting substance. There is no fellowship in hell, just mutual loathing for those who in time lorded it over other pagans! Isaiah 14:9-11. Read Isaiah’s vision and see that there is no fellowship of any sort in Hell – there is no rejoicing, nor joy at all, just total and absolute regret and despair forever. Revelation 20:10-15.

Things are temporary and if we trust our riches rather than our relationships we are on unstable ground. When people trust God who cannot let them down, they rest upon certainty. Rich people who are focused upon their own wickedness are heading towards judgement. Psalms 73:7-11, Hosea 12:7-8. Refer to the BTB study WEALTH, MONEY, WORLDLINESS.

8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

When a person trusts in their temporary wealth, they will fail through time. When people trust in the deep resources of Almighty God, they will succeed in all God requires of them over time. We are to be like the “green tree”. This is an image of drawing up water and nutrients from roots that are deep into the resources of God. Psalms 1:3-6, Jeremiah 17:7-8, Ezekiel 47:12. Our task before the Lord is to put our roots deep into the Word of God and draw up biblical truth daily, and apply it daily. We live in this world, but through our living relationship with God, we are actually living in the Temple of God. We are where God dwells at all times, because we are in living and powerful relationship with God.

9 I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints

The result of realising the greatness of our powerful relationship with God is joy in the heart and praise from the lips, and this will overflow into both individual and corporate worship and rejoicing. Refer to the BTB study PRAISE AND WORSHIP. Have you ever felt the emotion of verse nine believer? How long is it since you expressed this as David does here? Have we seen that “God does it” in our lives?

God does all the things that matter in our lives! It is this grace realisation that must overwhelm us if we want to really experience the power of God, for our most secure source of power and focus is praise and worship that flows from realising the truth. The truth is seen most clearly through accurate and strong doctrinal biblical teaching. Let us teach the Word of God in power, and let us follow it up with open praise and worship.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us guard our tongues from evil words. If we cannot bless, let us not speak. We are called to be heralds of the King of kings and so we need to ensure that our words are the oracles of God. Let us be fearful of saying things that are wrongful. Romans 3:2, 1 Peter 4:11.

2. Let us be vigorous fruit inspectors for evil fruit. We must identify the evil fruit of negative people and learn to label them for what they truly are, and avoid them. Let us call evil for what it is and stop making stupid excuses for nasty people. They are nasty and they need to be identified as such.

3. Let worship be our strength and power, and it will be as we allow the Holy Spirit to go to work on our hearts and minds through biblical and doctrinal study, for the overflow of all true biblical study is praise and worship.

DOCTRINES

EVIL

WEALTH

MONEY

WORLDLINESS

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

PSALM 53

INTRODUCTION

The entire book of Ecclesiastes will flow from this Psalm (possibly in its earlier form as Psalm 14). It explores the philosophy and viewpoint of the “fool” who has excluded God from his/her thinking. The foolish person makes temporary things appear important to their mind’s eye, when they will all rust, rot, or disappear in other ways. They cling to the temporary as if it is permanent, when the only permanent thing is relationship with God the Creator and Saviour of mankind.

David lays the foundation for the philosophical exploration of his son Solomon later. Man without relationship with his Creator is a fool indeed; it is like getting on a plane that is going to crash and saying, “I’ll worry about it when we get closer to the end of the flight”. We are created beings heading for an appointment with death, and only a true fool ignores that reality. Matthew 5:22, Luke 12:16-21.

PSALMS 53:1-6

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. 2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. 3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. 5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. 6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

REFLECTION

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.

It is foolishness to say there is no Creator. It is foolishness to look at order and system and cling to the belief that it all evolved from chaos and disorder! It is a violation of reason to argue that order came from chaos to create this world without a mind behind the universe. The reality is that people don’t really reject the logic of a creative mind behind the universe, what they are rejecting is personal accountability. They do not want God because they do not want to be accountable for their actions. Psalms 10:4-14, Romans 1:21-28.

I have met people who call themselves atheists but they are anti-theists; they actually hate God, because they don't want to be answerable to anyone. They want to live to themselves only. Atheism is actually ultimate narcissism! Atheism is not morally neutral; it is biblically labelled as "wickedness", for it is rejection of the Creator's right to tell the creature what is expected of them. Those who speak and believe this way are workers of iniquity, and cannot do things that are "good", for they have rejected the grounds of goodness, for only the Creator can set that ground truly in place. All else is speculation if we do not have the word of the Creator as to how we are to live. They are caught in the Day of Judgement facing their Maker with no hope, for their works are evil. Galatians 5:16-21, Ephesians 5:11-12, Revelation 20:13-18.

2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.

3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

The Lord is not the "absent watchmaker" who has wound up the universe and is letting it run down by itself; He is the active Creator and Saviour who watches and actively seeks the best for mankind. God watches the good and the evil and notes their actions, and for all of mankind there is a day when man must give account. For the unsaved this day is the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT, for the believers in the Lord, this day is the JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. Psalms 11:4, 33:13-19, Romans 14:10, Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:13-18.

God actively seeks for the hearts of mankind. None will ever say in the end of time that their damnation is unfair, for all will know that they walked away from the truth, and resisted the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Refer to the BTB studies, HEATHENISM AND GOD CONSCIOUSNESS, and, HOLY SPIRIT-OPERATION. The Lord our God has provided the path that leads to salvation, and it leads to the foot of the Cross of Jesus. Isaiah 53:3-12, 64:6-9, Ezekiel 36:24-27. We can seek the Lord only through His work for us, and His greatest work is the work of salvation. The work of creation is "finger work" for God, but the work of salvation is the great work. The work of Jesus upon the Cross was greater than the work of the creation of the entire universe. Psalms 8:3, Ephesians 2:4, Hebrews 2:3.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

David asks the question that is on every wise believer's mind; why do the unbelievers persist in such foolishness? Does the unbeliever have no brains at all to persist in their atheism? There are no such things finally as "intellectual difficulties". The problem with the unbeliever is that they do not want to bow their knee to God. To fight against God is the act of a fool. Who can win as a creature against the Creator of the universe? These people are not just intellectual and moral fools, they are evil to the core once they have settled into their active rebellion against God.

Have you ever noticed that believer? An unbelieving friend may be a true friend until the day they fully and finally reject the Gospel message, and then they will become negative to an extreme towards God, the Church and believers generally. They will "eat up" the people of God if they can. This is a reference to the full extent of the malice of Satan towards believers; from open hatred, verbal abuse, to financial attack, and even to murder. John 15:18-27. We need to rest upon the Lord, and His protection over us in such situations. Psalms 27:1-3, 48:14, John 10:28-30.

5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encamped against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.

Those who insult God and His people have no fear until it is too late to save them. Fear is meant to be protective for mankind. We feel fear that activates our Adrenal system, in order that we might fight or fly from danger. Fear is designed to assist us with an appropriate action, but the unbeliever has rejected the fear of the Lord, and so they are unable to act appropriately in the presence of God.

They continue in their rejection and rebellion, and so they finally come to the place of judgement when they see God. It is only then that they truly know the truth about the One they have rejected, and it is then that the fear they feel is overwhelming, but it is too late to save them. They have despised the Lord their God, and finally their rebellion is crushed in judgement. There is no mercy shown to those who have shown no mercy! God is not soft in judgement; God is final and just. There is no hope for the person who dies in a spirit of rejection against their Maker.

6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Prophetically David sees the coming captivity of his people and their return from their final exile when the Lord returns to be their King. David sees right to the end of the Age of Israel; to the last actions of the Great Tribulation period. David sees that the people of Israel will be delivered fully and finally, even though they have been rebellious and evil. David sees that there is hope for them when they embrace their Saviour. Zechariah 12:10.

There is the greatest rejoicing in all of human history when the Jewish people find their Redeemer and Saviour, but it comes after great remorse and mourning. Zechariah 12:11-14. There is no rejoicing like that of people who have discovered the love of the Lord for them. Let us rejoice in the Lord and praise His name for who He is, for the wonder of His saving plan, and for what He has done and is doing in history, but also for what He is yet to do, and most certainly will complete. Isaiah 12:1-6.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We will all be held accountable for our actions upon this earth. Man is on the road to judgement; either for eternal damnation, or eternal rewards for service. Let us preach the judgements of God so that the saved and the unsaved might know the “fear of the Lord” and be challenged to the core of their being.
2. Let us pray for the conviction of the Holy Spirit upon the lost in accordance with John 16:8-11. The Spirit will convict the lost of their need of a Saviour and will lead them to Jesus, but they are personally responsible for their response. Let us pray for conviction and a broken heart that will bow before the Lord on the part of all the lost we know. Let us recognise, and preach the truth about the Last Judgement. The only ones who join Satan in the Lake of Fire will be those who have deliberately decided to join him there, because they have ultimately rejected God’s righteous claim upon their life.
3. The godly “fear of the Lord” will keep us from the panic stricken fear of men. We will be the target for the malice of evil men, but we can relax in this if we rest in the power, plan and person of God. Let us teach the Word and encourage the believers to walk in the Holy Spirit’s protective power, for then and there alone they are safe.
4. There is hope for each person only in and through their acceptance of the Gospel message. Let us preach the Gospel message every time we have opportunity to do so. All men will know the “fear of the Lord” one day, but our desire must be that the lost might know the “fear of the Lord” now and be saved, rather than wait until they receive fear on the Day of Judgement.

DOCTRINES

- | | |
|---|---|
| JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE | JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST |
| HEATHENISM AND GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS | HOLY SPIRIT – OPERATION |

PSALMS 54

INTRODUCTION

David was plagued in his early years by treachery at the hands of men of his own tribe of Judah. When he hid himself in the wilderness of Ziph to the south east of Hebron he was betrayed to Saul by the men of Ziph. David was faithful to those who assisted him and ruthless to those who did not. 1 Samuel 23:19-29, 26:1-25. In both situations where David is betrayed by the men of Ziph he is delivered by the Lord, and enabled to turn the last instance into a blessing and open the door to a time of peace for himself from Saul. God enables him to turn cursing into blessing. 2 Samuel 16:12, Micah 7:5-8, Romans 8:28-39, 12:9-16.

PSALMS 54:1-7

1 Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. 3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah. 4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. 5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. 7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

REFLECTION

- 1 Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.**
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.**

David understands the basis of all prayer requests. All prayer rests upon the holy character of God. We make requests to a God who will honour His holy name by delivering His holy people. Refer again to the BTB doctrinal study on PRAYER, and THE CHARACTER OF GOD. When Moses was in doubt about his holy call to lead the Israelites he was encouraged by the giving of the name of God to him. Exodus 3:13-17. By reflecting upon the reality of the holy and dependable character of God Moses stilled his doubts and focused his mind forward.

This is our daily challenge; as we face the little “daily disasters” to stabilise ourselves upon the reality of the Person, power, plan and purpose of the Lord for us. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Psalms 30:5, Nehemiah 8:10, Habakkuk 3:16-19, Zephaniah 3:17, James 1:2.

Let us remember the things that must be in place before prayer is heard and answered. Firstly we must have a saved relationship with God. Let us “examine ourselves” and ensure that we are indeed the children of God. Those who stand in doubt of their salvation, who have never known the fellowship and fruit of the Holy Spirit need to humble themselves before the Lord and accept Him as Lord and Saviour. 1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Having been assured of salvation and the gifts received at that point, the believer needs to examine their lives for any sin that may have affected fellowship with the Lord and CONFESS that sin. (Refer to the BTB study GIFTS RECEIVED AT SALVATION). Having been assured of SPIRITUALITY the believer may now address their attention to their petition and their desire in their prayer.

Before prayer is uttered aloud it is good to examine the heart’s desire that is being expressed in the prayer and the way that desire is being expressed to ensure that both are aligned with the plan and purpose of God for the believer. Having prepared our prayer in a formal request, then let us pray as David prays and pour our heart’s deep desire to the Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us. Galatians 1:4, 2:20.

David knows he is heard, and that every word registers with the Lord who loves him, and so do we. We make our prayers in the assurance of God’s love and care for us, and the certainty that He has a plan for our life, and that anything that occurs to us will “work together for good”. Some things will not be good or pleasant, but in God’s plan they will work together for good. Romans 8:28. We cannot be separated from the love of God as his children. Romans 8:29-39.

3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

The people of Ziph were Israelites, members of David’s own tribe of Judah, therefore all distantly related to him. They had become “strangers” to him. How is this possible? How is it today that fellow believers can become strangers to us, and enemies of our very soul, and even opponents of God’s purpose? The betrayal of the Ziphites is a fact of life for David, and the betrayal and opposition of other believers towards us is a fact of life in the Church today. Our enemies are often close to us, and even members of our own church fellowship. These people may be carnal believers, or make believers, but they will be more dangerous to our ministry than any open pagan ever is. Psalms 55:12-17, 59:3-5, Micah 7:6, John 13:18.

In this world we will meet hatred and have persecution, but the Lord has overcome the powers of this world. Matthew 5:11-12, John 15:18-27, 1 Peter 4:12-19. When persecution and troubles come we must stand upon the promises and reality of God’s Word. This means we must have walked with God in the light of His Word and sent the root of our faith deeply into the doctrines of the Word. God’s plan and Person are revealed through the Word of God, and if we are stabilised in the Word we are safe under pressure. Psalms 1:1-3, Jeremiah 17:7-8, Matthew 13:18-23.

We are to stabilise ourselves in the truth of the Word of God, and we will notice that those who attack us most vigorously are those who do not value the Word of God. They do not have the presence of the Lord before their face; indeed you will notice on your walk through this world, that the more people avoid the Word of God, the more serious opponents of the work of God they will be.

**4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.
5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.**

God is our helper, and He is a helper who has far more power than the princes and politicians of this present world. Psalms 118:5-9, 13. The Lord helps us, guides us and delivers us within and through His power and plan! The Lord not only delivers on the outside from the pressures we face, but He delivers our soul from anguish and despair on the inside also. Romans 8:31-32. Notice Paul’s logic in this passage from Romans Chapter Eight. If the Lord our God did not withhold the Person of the Lord from us, but sent Him to the Cross to be our Saviour, will He withhold anything else from us that we need to fulfil His plan for us? This is the “logic of grace”, and it is logic we need to remember under pressure.

The Lord will reward all believers for their work done in the power and plan of God. 1 Corinthians 3:8-17, Colossians 2:18, 2 Peter 2:13, 2 John 8. We have great rewards in eternity for faithful service here. Refer back to the BTB study REWARDS AND CROWNS. While the believers who serve well are rewarded in eternity for their faithful service, so are the unbelievers rewarded with their wages for the evil they have worked. The devil has recruited them and he won’t pay their wages, for he is a “liar from the beginning”, (John 8:44), but the Lord does “reward” all those who have worked evil with Satan their lord for what they have done. All who have done evil get exactly what they are entitled to! 2 Timothy 4:14-15, 18, Revelation 18:4-8, 20:13-18.

**6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.**

David has dealt with his sin, and he has passed the enemies of the plan of God over to God for judgement. He is able to bow before the Lord and be sure that he is heard. He can now approach the Lord and offer the sacrifice of repentance and praise and be sure he is heard by the Lord and that his prayers will be fully answered. He praises the Lord’s holy name, for he knows that the Lord is good and all He does is good. Let us praise the Lord, for He is GOOD! Psalms 52:9, 92:1, 147:1.

All troubles that we are led into as part of our walk with God through this world will be just resting places on our journey. No trouble will end our life or witness in the Lord, for each and every hardship on the path that God has prepared for us, has within it a way of deliverance and a cause for rejoicing in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 10:11-13. We can bless the Lord as we walk through troubled times, for He is with us to deliver us from all that we have been led into by the Holy Spirit.

As we have been led, so we will be delivered. Genesis 48:15-16, 1 Samuel 26:24, 2 Samuel 4:9, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 18. David sees with the eyes of faith, and recognises that the Lord has already dealt with his enemies and he can see that in his mind's eye, for what is in the plan of God is certain to David, even though it hasn't actually happened in time yet. Hebrews 11:1-2. Refer back to the BTB study on FAITH.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The joy of the Lord is my strength! Nehemiah 8:10. Have you praised God with these words this day yet believer? We are told to daily put off the spirit of heaviness and replace it with the garments of praise. Isaiah 61:3. The remedy for a broken or stressed heart is always to apply the healing medicine of praise and worship. Let us teach the Lord's people about the power of praise, and let us apply this medicine daily into our lives and hearts.

2. Prayer is not us battering down God's reluctance to bless us. Prayer is connecting with God's Plan for us, and His active love towards us. Let us pray with powerful focus upon the will of the Lord for our life.

3. Have you been able to pass over to the Lord's discipline those who attack the ministry of the Word? Have you noticed that those who attack the Lord's work most seriously either hate the Word, or have some warped and heretical view towards it? Pass them over to the Lord for discipline as Paul does his strongest opponents. 1 Timothy 1:19-20. Having passed over to the Lord those who attack you, press forward in the work that the Lord has given to you to complete. Do not be distracted from your task by the assaults of those who hate the Word and the work of God.

4. Praise the Lord believer every day, for He is good! The goodness of the Lord is our confident strength under pressure, and He is the One who will lift us up and in His holy name we can praise Him and rejoice in His plan for our life. "Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil", for the Lord is with us to keep us and bring us through to the end He has prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. Psalms 23:4ff, Hebrews 1:10, 4:3, 1 Peter 1:20. We are secure in His person and plan, and so let us praise the Lord every day for the greatness of His grace towards us.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – THE PLAN OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIFTS GIVEN AT SALVATION

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DIVINE DISCIPLINE OF BELIEVERS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

PSALM 55**INTRODUCTION**

Anyone who thinks that the life of a king was pleasant needs to read the Psalms daily to see how many times David despaired and struggled with his destiny. He had to daily “cast his burdens upon the Lord”, and every day he had to remember that the Lord alone gives stability and security as we walk the dangerous paths through this world. 1 Peter 5:5-9. The betrayal of friends is even worse than that of enemies or acquaintances. The hardest thing in ministry is facing the awful reality of the malice of the attacks of those who have been close to us and yet betrayed everything we believed they stood for. Only in the fellowship of the Lord is there the strength to handle such things.

PSALMS 55:1-23

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; 3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. 4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. 7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. 8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. 9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. 15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. 16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. 18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. 19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. 21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

REFLECTION

**1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.
2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;**

At times it can appear that the Lord is “hiding” from us. We can be waiting a long time for the answer to some prayers, but the wait is worth while if we are walking with the Lord, for even as we wait the Lord will be teaching us something, if we pay attention to the process. David asks to be heard often by the Lord, and we are to be encouraged by this when we also cry out to the Lord in deep distress and plead for the Lord to hear us. We can be assured that He does hear us. Psalms 5:1, 17:1, 64:1-4, 80:1, 7, 14, 84:8-12. We can pray with the assurance that we are heard by the Lord and blessed by Him.

The Lord “attends to us”, and this phrase means more than just hears our words. The Lord attends to every detail of our lives, and knows every detail about our past, our present and our future. Nothing is hidden from the Lord, and no care is hidden from our needs. “The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”. Deuteronomy 33:27. God will carry us to the very end of our lives, into the tough years of old age. Isaiah 46:4. The very hairs of our head are numbered, and so the God who knows such inconsequential details also knows all the facts that have consequence for our survival. Matthew 10:30, Luke 12:7, 1 Corinthians 4:5.

It is fine to mourn for sin and to grieve for our losses in this life, even if they are only temporary. It is human to mourn, and the Lord Himself mourned for the state of man facing disease and death at the grave of Lazarus, and He was going to raise him from the dead within minutes. It is all right to mourn. John 11:33-37, 41-44. In the limits of our earthly body, and in the diseases that come to us, we may find ourselves “groaning” in our spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:2-4. The Holy Spirit will assist us to pray about these deep groanings that we can feel in the hard places of this life. Romans 8:26. Do not feel guilty about groaning at times believer, just be sure you groan to the Lord alone. Cast yourself at the foot of the Cross, and “body slam” your problems onto that blood soaked ground also! 1 Peter 5:5-9.

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

The voice of the enemy was loud and angry in David's ears. The enemies of Israel delighted in verbal abuse, and the enemies of God's people still do. When people verbally abuse you, either directly or to others with lies and negative observations about your faith, what do you do? We are challenged by the scriptures to take all things to the Lord in prayer. The verbal abuse of the enemy is to be taken to the Lord, and the physical abuse is to be taken to the Lord. Verbal attack and actual physical attack (oppression) are both covered in verse three. These people are "wicked"; they serve the enemy of God and man, Satan himself.

Two things are mentioned about their attacks. They claim that David is working iniquity, when in fact they are. They are anger filled and they hate David. These two things remain true for all workers of iniquity and followers of Satan, at national as well as individual levels. We have seen this recently where certain states arrest members of other states who are foolish enough to come too close to their borders, and stage mock trials where the innocent captives are accused of all sorts of things and then jailed for their "crimes". It is a fake process and tissue of lies, but the hatred is real, and the malice is severe. Satan hates us, and we need to remember this fact. John 15:18ff.

**4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.**

There is a deep anguish when you face the hatred of those who barely know you, if at all. It is a baffling and awful thing to confront nameless rage, and mindless hatred. David is pained by it, as I have been when I have met this sort of thing. The easiest thing to do, and the things most often done in history, is to try to kill such people, and this is the reason for so many wars through the years. Satan hates mankind and his goal is mankind's destruction; even in the Great Tribulation period he will try to kill all of mankind before the Lord returns to save the believers.

The Great Tribulation period is a time when the full malice of Satan is let loose upon mankind but God's plan calls for there to be deliverance, and there will be deliverance for the saved. Satan is not all powerful, and even when he has his "best shot" at being a tyrant he cannot pull off his plan. Satanic malice is limited by God's person, plan and power, but it is also limited by its own narcissism! At times however it will still overwhelm us with its sheer malicious force unless we are ready for it.

David is not fearful of dying, but there is terror at times as to the manner of his death, as there is with each of us at times. When we face a slow agonising death with pain and distress as companions it is a fearful thing. David feels the "terrors of death", but as we will see, he deals with these emotions by taking them to the throne of God's Grace, and there he seeks the Lord's answer to his pain.

Fear, anguish, worry, and deep concerns about self and others will wash over us like a wave at times. They will fall upon us like an avalanche or rock fall, and that is the image that David uses here. He uses this same image in Psalm 18:1-5 and binds the solution together with the image in that Psalm. A full stress reaction is described in verse five and this affirms the normal reaction of man to being overwhelmed by real and powerful fears and worries. Deep soul fear, trembling of limbs, and a horror of what might occur to him, all sweep over David's soul and body.

This is what we today call a "Panic Attack", and it is worth noting this, and remembering that if David had these symptoms, then they are normal, and the challenge is simply dealing with them, not beating your self up for having them. At times depression and anxiety will sweep over us as a result of what we have experienced. I recall the statement of Dr Viktor Frankl, who emerged from the Death camps of World War II. He said, "There are certain things, when they happen to you, and you don't lose your mind, it is only because you didn't have one to lose".

There are events that we face in this life that will cause depression to us, and there are events that will cause a strong anxiety reaction. It is not the reaction that is wrong; it is normal. The challenge for the believer is to take biblically sound action to deal with the very real emotional reaction we have experienced. We will all be overwhelmed at times, but it is what we do with this feeling of helplessness that determines our spiritual status and usefulness in the crisis.

**6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.
7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.**

The greatest desire of mankind is for rest and recharge activities, or lack of activity. We seek an easy road if we can find it. This basic urge of mankind is important to understand for it is our natural tendency when facing hard things. It is why so many fall into the trap of drugs and alcohol as the tranquilizers of lives that seek escape rather than victory. It is natural to seek to run away from trouble, and flee from pain and hardship. We are however, as soldiers in the Lord's Army, called to stand and fight against evil, and we are called to take the road of battle and eventual victory. Ephesians 6:10-17, 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:3-10.

It is the hard road that the Lord calls us to and He does not lead us to believe anything else! Matthew 7:13-20, John 15:1-17. We are called to be fruitful as the Lord's grape vine, and it is well to remember that grapes grow best in the toughest land. It is not the rich and fertile lowlands that make the best wine; it is the rough, often dry, and barren soils that grow the best grapes.

We are called to walk the narrow path, and take the high road through the tough places. We are called to weed our soil of the sins that will grow up and choke us, and avoid the distractions of "easy money" and an easy life style that will seduce us away from the Lord's path for us. Proverbs 1:10-19, Matthew 13:18-23. It is always tempting to watch the

birds fly away from the threat of the crouching cat in the garden and day dream of taking wing and flying off to a place where stress doesn't exist. Today we can do this, courtesy of the Airline Industry.

As believers it is not wrong to take regular holidays, in fact we ought to do so to recharge our batteries. C H Spurgeon was criticised by some dour saints for his annual holidays on the Mediterranean Coast. They spoke of "wasting money", but he countered with the correct point; that it is far more evil to "waste God's servants" by over work.

It is not wrong to dream of escaping from pressures for a time, and at times we can do this in our holidays. We are to take one day off every seven days to rest and recharge. That is ordered by scripture as a standard instruction for mankind's well being. Every twelve weeks, if we are under pressure, we ought to be taking a short break to rest and recharge, and certainly every year we need a holiday of some form or other. In days when I had no money I would seek holidays where no money was required; to do something in a place that was a rest and recharge place. There is always a place that we can find to rest ourselves after great exertions, and we need to pray for the Lord's open door to locate and utilise such places.

Paul did this. Read Titus 3:12-13. Paul spent the winter in a spa town of the Dalmatian Coast and rested and recharged with his team in prayer and Bible study. A holiday doesn't need to be sitting in a deck chair, but we need to make time to rest and relax; however that appears to us and our nature. The danger is not to take rest and recharge breaks that refresh us ready for the battle again, for if we don't have holidays, the day will come when we either die of stress or "go mad", and then we will wander off into the wilderness! That is what David fears for himself.

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

David would do anything to escape the "windy tempest" of the rage and malice he faces. I know what he means, as under pressure too long we start to buckle and we will think of anything we can do to escape the awful pressure. David seeks the Lord's intervention to deal with the evil people attacking him. David sees their malice in the city and their strife filled mouths speaking evils. He seeks the Lord's actions to deal with the tongues that assault him, and so ought we to seek the Lord's help. The Lord can deal with those who assault us on His path, and He will. Let us rest in the Lord's protection and claim it in times of stress.

David is coming to the end of his tether under the pressure he faces and he tells the Lord so. It is not wrong to tell the Lord bluntly that we are running out of energy and hope at times. God wants our honest conversations in prayer, not pretence that all is well. If we are at the end of our coping power we need to pour our heart out to the Lord about that, and claim 1 Corinthians 10:13 and ask for immediate action by the Lord. The Lord cares for us, loves us, and has had the plan for us ready from eternity past, so He is the One to lay out this before us. Refer back to the BTB study GOD CARES FOR YOU.

10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

The walls of the city were the place for people to walk and talk in the ancient world. They were broad and often the only open and reasonably straight roads in ancient cities, as the roads within the walls were simply lanes connecting houses. The enemies of David were walking the walls every night and conspiring against him in whispers. He knew about this, for his spies and guards would report secret meetings and the details of some of the plots had reached his ears, and the result for him was sadness as he reflected upon these people's malice. They planned mischief and if it was rebellion they planned, then it was mischief with great sadness, for many would die in such an event.

The later rebellion of Absalom led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people in the many battles and sieges. Once rebellion is being discussed there is an atmosphere of disease in the city and that is what David feels. Many ministers feel this same thing in the church where the elders or others plot against them in secret. It is a hard thing to lead people when you know that envy and malice drives many of them. Refer to the BTB study JEALOUSY.

12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:

13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

The worst thing about the planned rebellion and betrayal of the kingdom, was not that it came from enemies, but that it came from people who David had thought were his friends and family. The attacks of one's sworn enemies is to be expected, and it is easy to take decisive actions against those whose malice is well known and who have a track record of evil against you. What is really hard is to see that the attacks come from those who are friends, and who could have been expected to be loyal, and to whom David had been thoroughly loyal in the past.

People who have a history of hating us we can be prepared to fight against, but someone who has loved us in the past is harder to guard against. We expected love, loyalty and dependability from them. Even harder is to be betrayed by a friend who also was a believer, and with whom we had worshipped together. David's enemies are those of his own intimate friend network; men he had trusted and shared intimate moments with at prayer. These were people he had spoken of all sorts of intimate things (sweet counsel) together.

I have only had two examples of serious attacks upon me in my life in this category. The first was a fellow Naval Officer who let off two bombs to liven up a training exercise! I was the officer in charge and so had to be the last man out of the area after my sailors were all safe. Three years later I got back to work! That idiot who lets the bombs off was the only other Christian in the entire unit. He was a fool and I faced terrible consequences as a result of his actions.

The other time was recently when I was attacked by a fellow counsellor-psychologist who falsely accused me of academic dishonesty. It took me a year to clear my name thoroughly, and it was very stressful. This man could have asked me any question about my qualifications and I would have answered him, but he cowardly attacked me through our professional ethics committee. Even though I was totally cleared of any wrong doing, it was sad to think that another believer had done that to me. I know David's sadness here. The greatest betrayal ever was that of our Lord by Judas, who had enjoyed sweet fellowship with Him for three wonderful years before. Our Lord knows what it is to face the worst that we can experience. Hebrews 4:14-16.

15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

David is blunt here, and he is right. There is a time for mercy and forgiveness and there is a time for judgement and death. When people have betrayed their friends for evil purposes and so sold themselves out to evil that they have got to this point, they are too dangerous to be forgiven and restored to work with you again. To restore such people to their past positions without total repentance is to simply open the door to greater evil. We must be clear on this in ministry; when people claiming to be believers have proved themselves betrayers of what is precious, they cannot be given further opportunity to bring the Lord's Holy name into disrepute.

We may personally forgive such people, but we must never restore them to a role where they can work evil again. I can forgive, and have forgiven both men who did such evil to me, but I would never place them in any position with responsibility for the lives of people, or the fate of a ministry. They have proven themselves untrustworthy and cannot be given the chance to destroy good works again. We must understand forgiveness and apply it personally without danger to the Lord's work and to missions that Satan loves to destroy. Refer to the BTB studies on CHURCH OFFICERS – PASTORS AND ELDERS.

I have seen two churches fail to apply these principles for pastoral leadership. In one case they appointed a convicted thief as their treasurer, and they lost their church building fund! In the other they appointed a paedophile to lead a youth group and so brought total disgrace upon the Lord's name in their local community. Both men had sinned as believers and had been jailed as church members. In both cases it was argued that after their jail time, "they had been transformed by the power of God", but their previous actions indicated their Old Sin Nature weakness, and they were barred from all further service in leadership by the clear teaching of the Scripture. God's Word is clear in the Pastoral Epistles that all leaders must be "well spoken of in the world".

Transformed lives are great, but the sordid past of a believer permanently bars them from having the opportunity to disgrace the Lord again. An unbeliever who is guilty of great sins may be lifted up to leadership once they have grown and been tested over time and found strong and stable. Paul is an example of a murderer and persecutor, but he was tested by the church for years before he was accepted as a leader. Galatians 1:15 - 2:2, 1 Timothy 3:3ff, Titus 1:7-16.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

David doesn't trust those who have proved themselves untrustworthy and he will not raise them up to any leadership role of responsibility ever again, but he will keep on trusting the Lord. People may fail us, but the Lord never will fail us. David sees that people cannot be trusted, but God can be, and He will save David from the plots and schemes of evil men and women.

David will not have one time to cry aloud to the Lord but regularly through each day he will lift up his voice to the Lord and seek the Lord's guidance and deliverance. He has absolute assurance that the Lord will hear his words and answer his deepest needs. Psalms 5:1-3, 50:14-15, 73:28, 91:11-16, 109:4, Daniel 6:10-13. David prayed three specific times a day formally, as did Daniel later, but he also prayed fervently at other less formal times, and he casts his cares upon the Lord, as we are encouraged to do also. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.

19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah.

David is now looking back at the incident that led to the Psalm before us. He is delivered and he is relieved and secure in his relationship with the Lord. He now sees that there were many more with him than were against him, and the crisis is over with victory to his kingship. When we are under attack the enemy forces always look fierce and strong, but they may not be as strong as they appear to be. It is only as we set our faces for the fight and take on the enemy that we truly find out how tough they were. In most cases we find the enemy was not as strong as they appeared to be initially, for the Lord is with us, and so "greater is He that is with us than he that is in the world". 1 John 4:4.

David also has the complete assurance that the Lord will deal with these rebels, even if he personally hasn't done so. David can leave them to the Lord and not bother any more about these individuals after the rebellion itself is extinguished. The challenge for us all is to be able to "pass over" individuals to the Lord for discipline without feeling we must pursue them for "justice". God will deal with these people and there is no escape from the One who is eternal.

19b. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

These men who are rebels against David have lived "charmed lives" and so they believe they are beyond the judgement of God and immune to prosecution. No terrible changes in their lives have occurred to date and so they foolishly think they are safe from all judgement and harm. They do not fear the Lord, nor consider that they will be held accountable at some point. Psalms 73:3-6.

These people are baffling when you have seen calamity come to many, for they act as if they are special and nothing bad will happen to them. When these people face calamity they really fall apart. Their problem, like most self centred and arrogantly evil people is narcissism; they believe they are "entitled" to only good things. They couple this with a total disregard for others rights, and for their own responsibilities. This is the profile of most evil people you will meet, and they are people who arrogantly trample over everyone else's rights, but demand their own with vigour.

These people break their word whenever it suits them. They are natural and deliberate liars and con-men. They will say anything that will suck you in and deceive you, and then they will take your money and disappear. Their words are smoother than oil, but there is no reality behind their promises, except the certainty that you will be abused and stolen from!

These are evil deceivers and need to be identified and avoided. These people talk peace but their swords are already out to kill you suddenly. This is naked evil and believers must be ready for these people, for they have always been Satan's shock troops to destroy ministries. Believers who are not ready to spot evil by its terrible fruit will be abused and have their ministries destroyed by these wicked people. Matthew 7:13-25.

22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

David has learned from this experience of betrayal. He has seen who are evil and having prayed and then dealt with them is relaxed that the Lord was clearly in charge all through the process. Looking back we always see the truth, but the challenge of faith is to affirm the truth before we see it clearly, and loudly affirm the deliverance of the Lord. Faith gives thanks for deliverance before it actually occurs, because the believer is so sure that it will occur. God will not see His righteous servants moved from their strong position as His children. The only reason the believer "gets moved" is when they leave their faith and wander from the path of God. If we stand fast and hold the Word as more real than our testing circumstances then we will live to see the deliverance of the Lord.

We are to cast our cares upon the Lord, for He cares for us. Psalms 27:14, 37:5, 42:10-11, Isaiah 50:1-9. God will sustain us, because He knew from before time what we would need and it is already there for us; all we are tasked with doing is to come before the throne of grace and ask for what we need. There is no shortage in God's provision, for it is already waiting there for us to ask for. Remember believer the Lord has had eternity to prepare for our needs and all is there in heaven ready for delivery! It is only lack of faith and/or our own unconfessed sin that separate us from the blessing that is there for us. Psalms 66:18, Isaiah 59:1-2.

We can leave the evil people to the justice of the Lord and they will be dealt with by the Lord in the Lord's time. Psalms 7:14-16, 59:12-13. They will all go down into the pit of destruction eventually, and will have their lives shortened. Our job is to trust the Lord and keep moving forward in the task the Lord has set us and leave the enemy to the Lord. Proverbs 10:27, John 3:36, 10:10.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. It is not wrong to moan and groan at times, for in this present world we will be overwhelmed by sadness and pressures at times. The only thing that is wrong is to keep the pain we feel within to our self, for the Lord wants us to share our burdens with Him, for He died to take our burdens with our sins. Let us cast our cares upon the Lord and when overwhelmed by emotion, let us rest in the ability of the Holy Spirit to communicate our deep pain to the Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us.

2. It is not wrong to feel depressed at times, nor experience strong anxiety reactions when certain things occur. These reactions are normal when the causes are severe. It is where we go with our depression or anxiety that determines where physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually we will end up. Let us take our strong responses to events to the Throne of Grace and bring all matters of concern to the Lord in prayer. Let us turn our weeping into joy, and put off the spirit of heaviness by embracing and putting on the garments of praise. Isaiah 61:3.

3. We are called to be soldiers in the Lord's Army. That means we are to put our spiritual armour on each and every day, and we are called to stand and fight under pressure. Let us be spiritually strong and ready to deal with the difficulties that arise around us. It is not wrong to take holidays, as every soldier takes leave, to rest and recharge for the next battle. Let us care for our self and act and live as the spiritual soldiers we are called to be.

4. Discernment is required to survive in ministry, for if you trust the wrong people, they will destroy all you hold dear and show no remorse for their evils. There are wicked people about, and we need to recognise this reality or we will become their next victims. Let us teach discernment by teaching the words of Jesus, for they alone will keep God's people safe from the wicked servants of Satan who will attack us at times.

DOCTRINES

GOD – GOD CARES FOR YOU

SIN – JEALOUSY

CHURCH OFFICERS – PASTOR-ELDER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – STABILITY

NOTES

PSALMS 56

INTRODUCTION

David prays again in this Psalm in absolute confidence in the promises of the Word of God. Refer to the BTB study PROMISES. He faces enemies who are malicious and vigorous in their assaults upon him. The number of attacks upon David is a surprise to many believers who wrongly expect an easy road as a follower of God. David's constant battling against evil men and women reminds us that all servants of the Lord are in the ANGELIC CONFLICT. This Psalm has been traditionally dated from the events in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. Read this passage now and reflect upon it before entering the Psalm and reading it through.

David faces his fear again, and he faces it in faith. He argues with his Old Sin Nature's tendency to fear and doubt, and wins the battle for his mind, and rests in his faith. It is another wonderful picture of the believer's daily battle with doubts and fears.

W G Scroggie, the great biblical commentator of the 1930s through to the 1950s observed of this Psalm the following. "When our foes are many, proud, cruel and determined, we should not look at them with fear, (verses 1-2) but to God with trust (verse 3), until we can altogether trust and never fear (verse 11)." This Psalm, like all of David's Psalms is an "out breathing of his soul to God" (Scroggie – The Psalms Volume 2 – page 38.) He completes his assessment of this Psalm by stating; "Only let your fear be of God, and not of the foe, for he who fears Him need fear no-one else. This does not mean that we shall ignore or belittle the foe, but that in God we shall always outlive him. Your step will be light when you walk in the light."

PSALMS 56:1-13

1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. 4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. 5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. 7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God. 8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book? 9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me. 10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

REFLECTION

1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.

The enemy were assaulting David daily by words or deeds. They wished to “swallow him up”. This is an image of evil, as of a great wild animal eating its prey whole so that not a scrap remains upon the ground. David captures in these words the “raging/roaring lion” who is Satan. James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9. The malice of the enemy reminds us that the challenge for all believers is to walk worthy of the Lord and be focused on WALKING with the Lord one day at a time.

Each and every day we need to rest upon the Lord’s everlasting arms, and claim His promises. Each and every day we need to remind ourselves of His care over us, His plan that includes us, and His power that upholds us. Deuteronomy 33:27, Matthew 6:25-34.

David appeals for the tender mercy of God. Once again he begins in the right place for prayer to begin. He begins by speaking of the righteous and holy character of God. God’s very nature is merciful. David begins his prayer by reminding himself of who God is, for it’s upon the CHARACTER OF GOD that all prayer rests. Psalms 57:1-3, 69:13-16, 136:10-20.

Verse one begins by reminding man of the mercy of God and verse two ends by reminding us of the Omnipotence (All Powerful nature) of God. The enemies David has are many, but many men are no match for the One true “Most High God”. All the powers of all the enemies that can come against us are no match for the smallest amount of the power of the God who made the heavens and the earth. Isaiah 57:13-15, Daniel 4:34-37.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

The right way to deal with FEAR is to take it before the Throne of Grace. Hebrews 4:16. David recognises that there are times of fear, when we stand before obstacles or threats that overwhelm our emotions. It is not wrong to feel fear, for that emotional surge of power is a natural response to danger; it is however always wrong for a believer to stay in the place of fear. Our POSITION IN CHRIST gives us the privilege and the right to seek the Lord’s mercy and deliverance from the situation that causes our fear, and from the fear itself. Psalms 34:4, 55:4-5, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, 7:5-6. As we grow in the knowledge of the holy character of God, and really understand His awesome power, any fears of what men may do to us evaporates away.

Trust comes as a result of getting to know someone so thoroughly that you can relax in their company and rest upon the integrity of their character. This is true of people and this is also true in our relationship with God. Many believers are baffled about how they can trust the Lord in a situation they face, but the reason for their bafflement is that they have not drawn near the Lord in Bible study and prayer through their years upon the earth, and so the Lord is a stranger to them, rather than a well known friend.

God seeks our friendship through His Word, and the Lord made this very clear to the disciples as is recorded in John 15:4-17. As we get to know the Word of God we get to know the Character of God, and we grow in the grace and the knowledge of God, and trust Him more and more as the days go by. It is secure knowledge of the doctrines of God’s Word that closes the door on fear, and opens the door to praise and worship in power. Isaiah 61:3.

5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

The greatest flattery of a person’s ideas is imitation and plagiarism of those ideas. When you write great things you will find no end to the number of people with lesser minds who will steal your ideas and publish them. This is one form of attack upon us, but the one David refers to here is the twisting of ideas by malicious enemies. Paul also faced this, and Peter comments upon it. 2 Peter 3:14-18.

When you stand for the Lord, you can expect the enemy to try in every way possible to undermine you personally, your reputation, and your work. Malicious gossip and miss-quoting of words is a good way to undermine reputation and thereby discredit the teaching of people, and this has long been a Satanic strategy towards good pastors and teachers. When attacked this way rejoice in the Lord, for it means that the enemy finds you a big enough threat to try to undermine you.

The thoughts of evil people towards God’s people are always evil. Many believers are baffled by the malice of the followers of Satan, but we have no need to be baffled, for their hatred of us is to be expected. John 15:18ff. Their thoughts are evil, and their plans are for the death of the ministers of the Word, and the destruction of the ministries of the Word of God. Satan hates the Word above all else, and any who teach it thoroughly and well are his special targets. Every pastor-teacher ought to rejoice in attack for this very reason; you are clearly doing your job as a pastor.

The rebellious nature and strategy of these evil people is described. Firstly they harbour evil thoughts, then they gather together with others who also think evil, then they begin an intelligence gathering operation in order to later attack the believer. They watch the believer’s steps to seek things that can be twisted against them. They hide and wait for opportunity to attack them. They seek the soul of the believer, but our soul is safely “hid with God”. Colossians 3:3.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

These people look as if they may escape by means of further lies and deceit. At times it appears that evil men and women do escape the consequences of their actions in time. We have seen many evil greedy men and women escape with millions in dollars of other people's money over recent years as a result of the financial-banking crisis. The greed of these evil bankers destroyed many companies and individuals and many of these wicked people are still living in their mansions and have their "stolen" money in their banks. Because it was legally taken, it is safe from government intervention.

How do we deal with this evil? Firstly we forget greed ourselves, and we face jealousy and envy and recognise the truth about money; that it lasts for time only. Study the great moves of the Holy Spirit through history and you will notice that God's work needs little money. God uses prepared, obedient, and devoted people who place themselves upon the altar of service. The money needed to achieve things will then come, but it will not be vast amounts, just enough to achieve the goals.

God hates the evils that have occurred over recent years. Truly America's business system has become "Mystery Babylon", driven by all the evils of the Old Sin Nature of man and the malice and self centred greed of the Satanic system of WORLDLINESS. Revelation 17:1-18. God will judge fully and finally the entire Satanic system of world government and finance in the Great Tribulation period, but right now He will deal with the evils we see in accordance with His Plan and in His timing. The evil ones will not escape by more iniquity, for the righteous anger of the Lord will cast them down to the lake of Fire with Satan, whom they serve. Revelation 20:11-15.

David knows that the Lord understands his "wandering ways", when he loses concentration and stumbles about. God knows the tears of His saints, and keeps our tears shed at the consequences of sin and evil. Our works are in God's Book and we will receive eternal reward for all we do in the filling of the Holy Spirit. David knows that his weaknesses are known, forgiven, and that the Lord sees his heart's desire, and his hearts pain. Malachi 3:16-17, Matthew 10:28-31.

9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.

10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.

David speaks as if his prayer is answered as it is spoken aloud, and in fact our prayers are answered even earlier than that. Our prayers were known from eternity past, and have all been answered in eternity past, and have their fulfilment in time. We are challenged to stand like David in absolute certainty regarding answered prayer. We have been heard, we are heard, and we will be heard: we have been answered, and we will see the answers coming in time. Let us rest in the eternal plan of Almighty God. Refer back to the BTB study PLAN OF GOD.

As David prays he pictures his enemies falling backwards and fleeing from the power of God. This illustrates a good habit to get into in prayer; it is the habit of seeing the answer to the prayer as we pray it. Let us be fully aware of our request as we make it, and so picture its answer coming from the Lord. Faith expresses a desire as if it has already been answered. Hebrews 11:1. This confidence is built upon the certainty of God being with the believer in power.

There is no doubt about the presence of God with us in our prayers as spiritual believers. Only carnality stops answers to prayer. Psalms 66:11, Isaiah 1:15, Jeremiah 5:25, Habakkuk 1:13, Acts 8:22. David does not wait to see the answer to his prayer before he bursts into praise and worship. David praises the Word of God because it is through the Word of God that he has his confidence. Even as an author of scripture, he praises scripture, for in it he finds his certainty and confidence in prayer.

11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

Verse eleven triumphantly repeats the earlier affirmation. Having gone through his petition and expressed his distress he repeats the basis of his faith; he rests upon the perfect character and power of the Creator-Saviour God. Psalms 27:1, 112:6-8, Isaiah 51:7-8, 12-13. Man is no source of fear if the Lord is in charge of your life. No men can harm you if the Lord is guiding you.

David has made a solemn vow to the Lord in his prayer. This vow is not mentioned in the Psalm before us. The event that may be behind this Psalm is instructive for David had fled to Achish, Philistine king of Gath. He had fled from the demon possessed/influenced Saul of Israel to the pagan king of Gath. He quickly discovered that he had gone from the frying pan into the fire and as he pretended to be mad to escape, it appears he prayed his prayer and promised a sacrifice of praise when he was delivered.

Many of us have prayed this prayer; "Lord if you will deliver me I will do this for you...." Be very careful of such prayers for the Lord will hold you to your promises. These are not "deals" with God, they are promises to be fulfilled upon deliverance. We don't need to make deals with God for all the answers to our prayers are already there from eternity, so no deals can be made. Once we understand this fact, let us offer up a thanksgiving offering of praise at every opportunity, and seeing a prayer answered is a good opportunity to offer up a sacrifice of praise. Psalms 9:1-3, 21:13, 59:16-17, Isaiah 12:1-6.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

The threat to David in Achish's city of Gath was real. It had been an act of foolishness on David's part to seek shelter there at this time, for as the killer of Goliath he was a marked man there. Even though he made this error of judgement and showed lack of faith in God, he was still delivered when he cast himself upon the Lord. When we have made any errors of judgement we are where David was here and we have the same path he took in the Psalm open to us. We are challenged by David to pour our heart out to the Lord and leave our concerns with Him, with absolute assurance of an answer to our prayers.

David is thankful for deliverance from death in Gath, and he ends by praying that he may pay attention to the Lord's guidance in the future so that he never falls into such a trap again. He wants his feet kept safe from falling over into danger in the future. His desire is to walk with the Lord and show light, not be extinguished as the result of an error in judgement on his part. He seeks a closer walk with God.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us confront our fears in faith. Let us praise the Lord in knowledge of the Word of God. Let us encourage each other to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord. Only as believers grow in their secure knowledge of God's holy character will they be able to trust Him more and more in the ups and downs of life. Pastors, let us teach with power and consistency so that the people might know the truth and the truth might set them free from their fears. John 8:32-36, 10:10.

2. It is good to remember where prayer is answered. God's Plan flows through time, but was made before time, so everything needed is already provided for us. Prayer grasps hold of an eternal storehouse of answered prayer and claims it into time. Let us see prayer as eternity touching time, and then any enemies will be put in their place of insignificance.

3. It is also good to remember that the sacrifice of praise is appropriate to offer whenever prayer is answered in time. It is good to praise the Lord for answered prayer well ahead of the answer being seen. Once we see the answer to prayer let us really rejoice in the Lord, and praise Him for who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.

4. David made an error of judgement in going down to Gath, but his prayer turns disaster into deliverance. He rests upon God's plan for his life and it is always bigger than the potential disasters our foolishness gets us into. David is delivered from Gath, and by pretending he is mad he escapes from the fatal consequences of his "mad" decision to enter the city in the first place. This story in David's life is a great encouragement to us for it reminds us that our life is not over until we see the Lord face to face, and until then we are to pray to the Lord, and trust the Lord's plan for us.

DOCTRINES

PROMISES

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

FEAR

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

EVIL

WORLDLINESS

GOD – THE PLAN OF GOD

PSALM 57**INTRODUCTION**

This Psalm may date from David's flight to En-gedi or from during his time in the cave Adullam. 1 Samuel 22, 24. It is not clear as to the exact occasion, but the themes are similar to the earlier Psalms in this group. David faces a series of extreme "calamities". He does not face one problem but multiple challenges to his faith and his hope for the future. David has found a safe place in his time of great distress, and it is not just the hiding place of his army, but the hiding place of the soul where he knows the power, Person, and plan of God for him. He faces great troubles but he experiences through his prayer great triumph. As W G Scroggie notes, "There can be no triumph where there is no trouble".

PSALMS 57:1-11

1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. 3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah. 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

REFLECTION

1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over past.

Once again David cries aloud for the loving kindness expressed in the mercy of God towards His children. It is to the God who loves us that we still appeal for mercy, and our pleas are met with grace. Hebrews 4:12-16. God gives "more grace" to us. James 4:6, 1 Peter 1:2. The prayer of Peter to the early churches was that Grace, mercy and peace might be "multiplied" to them.

It is abundant blessing that the early saints sought, and it is abundance that we need to focus upon in our prayer. God does not just want to answer our prayers, He wants to pour His answer in bounty upon us so that all who see might praise the glory of God. We are here upon this earth to bring glory to God and we bring that glory to God when we open the doors of heaven with our believing prayer. Psalms 56:1, 69:13-16, 119:76-77.

David affirms his faith; he trusts in the Lord's plan, Person and power. It is the Lord alone who he trusts in this situation of overload of pressure. No man can save him, but God can and will, and he believes this fully. He pictures the Lord as a mighty eagle overshadowing its chick. David sees himself as the helpless chick of the eagle, dependent totally upon the Lord for his protection and food. Psalms 17:7-8, 36:7, 61:4, James 5:10-11. He knows that the calamities will sweep by eventually, for all trouble does pass, but it is surviving the process, and celebrating God's triumph that is important.

All trouble will pass in time, it's the damage it does as it flows over us that is the issue for the person in the eye of the storm. Some psychologists teach their clients to imagine the trouble they have passing, and then ask them what they will say looking back at it. From that perspective of "after it is gone", what insights do they gain about how to deal with it now? This is helpful, but the biblical approach is more powerful.

2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

When we let out cries of distress, to whom do we utter them? When we get distressed where do we take that distress? David took his deep emotions to the Lord who dealt with his distress, for he knew that the Lord alone could handle the "big things" in his life. God does all the things that matter for David, and he is under no illusion that he needs the Lord for all things in his life. Psalms 138:8, Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, Hebrews 13:20-21.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

God's connection with the earth is not distant. Salvation and deliverance is near to us. Isaiah 55:6, 56:1-2, Romans 13:11. We think in terms of heaven being "out there" millions of light years away, but that is thinking in terms of space and time, but God is the Creator of space and time, and eternity is as close as our hand or breath. We are not far from the edge of the universe at all, for eternity touches time in the presence of the Lord with us every day.

David knows that the Lord can send from the heavens to the earth in a millisecond; there is no distance at all. God sees and is active in the universe, and God will save David from the disaster he looks at in this situation. God will act; David is absolutely confident of that fact, and he is sure that God's actions will lead to his deliverance. Psalms 144:3-8.

4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

David feels like he is surrounded by wild Asiatic lions each ready to tear him apart. Psalms 17:12ff. The violent nature of those who hate the Lord and His servants can really surprise us at times. We must be ready to recognise this level of violent malice or we will be hurt badly by these people. James and Peter back up David's warning a millennium later. James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9. Satan is like a lion seeking to tear apart those who are not alert to his strategy and tactics. Refer to the BTB study below, SATAN'S STRATEGY AND TACTICS. The enemy will burn, stab, spear, shoot arrows, and cut at us.

David describes a full weapons arsenal as the tools of trade of the evil people attacking him. They will seek to destroy him in any way they can. Evil will try to destroy us from afar and from close by; only vigilance against the evil people around us will keep us safe from their sudden attacks. The challenge of every church is to keep their people safe from evil attack by vigilant Bible teaching and quick action when fake brethren are spotted in the group.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

David just bursts into song at this point. Having described the malice and serious weaponry of the enemy who are attacking him he looks up and praises God's glory. This is the clue to the best way to deal with pressure; it is always by means of praise. Isaiah 61:3. Whenever we face real pressure from evil the first thing to do is look up and praise God. Praise will lift the spirit and restore health and strength to the soul and body. God will indeed be exulted "above the heavens", for as the Lord made them, so He will one day dissolve them and remake them. Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1ff.

This universe is temporary! Have you stopped and considered that fact this very day? In an earlier psalm we looked at this, but it is worth pausing and reflecting again. The Bible is very clear as to the fate of the stars we presently see in the heavens. The first great shock for mankind about the reality of the stars we see is during the Great Tribulation period. The light from one third of the stars will fail at a set point in the Great Tribulation period. Revelation 6:13, 8:12. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary on these passages.

Given that the light from many of the stars has been travelling to the earth for millions of years, this revelation/prophecy means that most of the stars in our sky do not even exist at this point; it is only their light still travelling to us that we presently see. That light will be seen to fail in the Tribulation period, but it will give testimony to their destruction millions of years before, it is just that it has taken several million years for the light of their demise to reach us! Do you see how God will be exulted above the heavens, and above the earth in that day?

All men will see fulfilled scripture and will understand that these many stars had to have died millions of years before the event is seen, and they will know that the bible recorded this prophecy 2000 years ago. Can you see the shock in the faces of the unbelievers who don't want to believe in God at that time? They will be looking up at empty patches in the sky, and hearing about God's prophetic words! They will see the light of a third of the stars go out! God will be exulted above the heavens, for these stars will be seen to be gone in one day, but God will not be!

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

David has praised the Lord for his ultimate victory, and is looking up until he finishes his praise, and then he looks down again and sees the new attacks and plots of the enemy. Praise will not necessarily stop the assaults and plots of the enemy against us. Praise gives us temporary respite from assault and a rest and recharge for our spirit before we face the battle again.

In this world we will have battle and trouble! Remember the words of the Lord, "In this world you will have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome this world". Matthew 28:18-20, John 16:33. In the midst of the troubles and tribulation and warfare that will come to us we may have peace in our spirit, as we stabilise ourselves upon the Person, power and plan of God. Isaiah 26:3-4, John 14:27, 2 Thessalonians 3:16. Refer to the BTB studies on OVERCOMER, STABILITY, and THINKING BIBLICALLY.

David looks around and sees the on-going malice of the enemy towards him. He gets overwhelmed again as he sees them digging man-traps for him in the wilderness paths, and laying ambushes in places to try to kill him by either stealth or open battle. Many enthusiastic believers today affirm aloud, "Prayer changes things", and it is true, it does, but it may not remove the threat, the attacks, and the anguish they cause at times. It is not sinful to be overwhelmed at times, even just after a prayer and praise session. The malice of the enemy does not sleep, and when we look around we will feel that hatred towards us again and be saddened by it. The challenge is to bring our feelings back to the Lord.

The challenge is also to see the end of their malice. Often the enemy will fall into the very trap they laid for us. The three men who have seriously and publically attacked me in the past have each fallen into their own traps over time. I have had to wait for up to seven years in one case, but each one fell into his own trap in the Lord's timing and justice. Let us see, with David, that leaving our enemies to the justice of God is far better than trying to get justice upon the earth in a court of man's law. We cast our cares upon the Lord, trust in His Plan for us, and move forward in acceptance of His will for us. Psalms 142:1-3, 143:3-6, Matthew 26:39-44.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

David feels great pain at the plans and schemes of the enemy, but he stabilises himself again in the truths of God's Word and the specific promises of God regarding his protection. David's "heart is fixed", and stabilised upon the promises of the Word of God. Psalms 108:1-2, 112:6-8. God's Plan for him is more real than the threats of the enemies of God and David. God's power is more real than the threats of those who work with Satan. David knows that he has a destiny upon the earth and into eternity, and that all the powers of hell will not prevail against God's Plan for his life. Matthew 16:18.

David will not stop praising God's holy name, and after facing the sadness of the malice of evil again he has re-fixed his heart upon the truth of scripture and the reality of God's Plan for his life. David will face the enemy and he will sing into their faces of the glory and majesty of the God who will judge them. It is this level of assurance that moved Paul steadily forward in his own life with praise in the midst of terrible troubles. Romans 5:1-5, 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.

Our path through this life may resemble David's and Paul's rather than the wealthy and relaxed pagans we may meet on our way. If we are genuine soldiers of the Lord we will be in battle at times and those battles may be very hard. If we have the same mentality that David and Paul had, then we will walk safely and with praise through all the enemy throws at us. Ephesians 6:14-18.

David is calling to himself to play the instruments of praise in verse eight. He is calling himself to shake himself out of any depression still felt about the malice of evil and expresses his faith in full orchestra of musical melody! We have to shake ourselves out of any depression or anxiety we feel when we face evil. The Lord won't shake us out of our emotions; we must do so! Hebrews 12:12-15. The reason the Lord leaves us to do this is that by shaking our self out of our emotional state we gain power over our emotions, and that builds our inner soul strength.

David needs to express his faith, for faith unexpressed is inadequate and weak faith that will evaporate away over time. It is only faith that is expressed in action that builds spiritual strength into the soul and spirit of man. James 2:14-26. David will get up early and praise God through his song writing and song singing, and he is singing bible doctrine. It is the Word that we ought to rise up to study each and every morning.

9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

David is ready to testify to the truth about God before his own people and those of other nations. Open testimony to the truth is important to utter, as it challenges the lost and strengthens the saints. Psalms 2:1, 18:39, 22:22-24, 96:3, 138:1-5, 145:10-12. The Lord is great in mercy, and all may be saved if they will respond to the Word and the reality behind it. Psalms 85:9-13. God is always able to "save to the uttermost" all who come to Him in faith. Hebrews 7:25. David proclaims this truth to his friends and enemies.

Paul's desire was by any means in any way that he might save some! 1 Corinthians 9:20-23. Paul has the mental attitude of David in this matter; he sees that the greatest praise we can give God is telling others the truth about the Person, power and plan of God for them. We want to serve the Lord in bringing glory to the name of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

David ends the psalm by singing again his hymn of praise to the glory of God, who has made the earth and the heavens and will remake them one day; he gives God the glory for his life, his destiny, and the plan that he is a living part of on the earth and into heaven itself.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All trouble "comes to pass", and one day it will be over. How do we want that time to be? Let us make it a time of triumph and rejoicing by making the process a prayer saturated time. By walking through troubles in prayer we secure the path of God for us through them, and so we can be confident of triumph in the end.

2. Let us remember the malice that is in Satan's heart towards us as believers. Satan and his servants hate us and seek our destruction as a lion seeks to eat its prey. We are to recognise the truth about the malice of the enemy and keep ourselves and our loved ones safe from evil. Let us teach the truth solidly and share the truth passionately, and so keep young believers safe from the evils that will otherwise overwhelm them. Let us ensure that those who have the "fruit of evil" in their life are spotted quickly in our churches and exposed thoroughly and exiled totally so that they have no opportunity to lead the young believers astray into evil. Matthew 7:13-25, Galatians 5:19-21.

3. Let us look up to the heavens and remember two vital facts. Firstly, the Lord made the present heavens and earth and all that is in them. Psalms 8:4, Hebrews 2:6. We can presently look up with awe at the galaxies, and marvel at the wonders that the Hubble Space Telescope has revealed to us, but then we can marvel at the temporary nature of all these things. God made this universe as decoration for the Angelic Conflict; it is a giant backdrop to the drama of redemption.

The second thing to reflect upon is the prophetic truths in the Revelation of John which tell us clearly that one third of the stars will be seen to fail in the Great Tribulation period (they must already have gone out of existence, for their light travels to us through millions of years) and that the entire universe will be wrapped up and put away after the Millennial Kingdom is completed and the Last Judgement of mankind is done. A new heaven and a new earth, and the New Jerusalem, are then created by God for eternity. 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21-22. Let us pause and reflect upon these eternal realities revealed to us through biblical prophecy far more often.

4. Pastor, let us teach the people of the Lord to praise His holy name more than we do. Let us encourage God's people to praise the Holy name of the Lord as they learn more of the wonders of His creation and coming recreation of all things. Let us truly see and render the sacrifice of praise and service to the One who has all things in His hands.

DOCTRINES

ANGELS – SATAN'S STRATEGY AND TACTICS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OVERCOMER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – STABILITY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THINKING BIBLICALLY