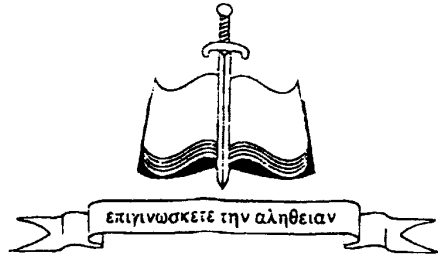


EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



PSALMS 135 - 150
(The Deuteronomy Psalms)

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

[BOOK 49-O]

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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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PSALMS SECTION FIVE**THE DEUTERONOMY PSALMS – PSALMS 135 - 150****PSALMS 135****INTRODUCTION**

This is not a psalm that you will read and feel a freshness of ideas, for every verse is an echo of an earlier one, from either the Mosaic Law or other Davidic Psalms. The author is in doubt, and many jumped to the conclusion that the Psalm was written by an author in the second temple period, but it is most likely from the days of Hezekiah, and the king himself may be the author, as he was of many of the Songs of Degrees.

There are thirty eight references to God in the twenty one verses of the psalm. It is a very godly psalm and the Lord is at its centre. It is also a psalm that refers to or sums up many of the great doctrines of the scriptures and so the follow up doctrinal study section to this psalm is extensive.

This Psalm begins the last section of the Deuteronomy Psalms, and as such it is a formal and very powerful call to praise the Lord. If the Lord is the centre of our life and worship we will be stabilised on the path of life. Hezekiah is the king who leads the people through its darkest hour in the Assyrian Invasion, and its brightest revival under Isaiah. If this is his psalm, we see him here at his spiritual best; drawing the great words of the past into a hymn of praise and honour to the God who has delivered him and the nation. He knows that only in Christ Centeredness is there any hope for their future also.

PSALMS 135:1-21

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD. 2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. 3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant. 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. 5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures. 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. 13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. 14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants. 15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. 18 They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them. 19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: 20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTION

**1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD.
2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.**

Three times the psalmist calls aloud for the entire congregation to praise the Lord. This is a call of many of the psalms. Psalms 106:1, 112:1, 113:1, 134:1. It is right and proper for pastors and worship leaders to call to the Lord's people to worship and praise the Lord. It is also right and proper for us to repeat ourselves in our enthusiasm to get the Lord's people to praise the Lord. It is good that we praise Him and call on all of the Lord's people to praise Him also.

It is also good, as we saw in the last psalm, to gather in the courts of the temple and praise the Lord as often as we can. It is a great thing to gather with the Lord's people and praise His holy name. Worship is a wonderful shared celebration of our fellowship as members of the ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD. It is a joy to celebrate and praise the Lord our God, who has given us all a new family relationship because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Psalms 92:13, 96:8, 116:19, 134:1. We have a new relationship with the Creator and the creation through our faith in the Lord; let us praise His holy name for this all that flows from it.

**3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.
4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.**

Again the call is to praise the Lord. We cannot say this enough to the Lord's people. Pastors, be ready to call the people of the Lord to praise His Holy Name as many times as you feel led by the Holy Spirit through each and every church service. God is so good, and we don't thank Him enough for His goodness; let us praise Him for His goodness right now. Just stop reading and praise the Lord's name, wherever you are reading this!

It is good to pray and praise, and it is even better to sing and praise, as a song is easy to remember and it is easier to relax and sing at times than to pause and formally pray. God wants us to pray and sing, and let praise fill our hearts. This is an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. There are many similar passages also that give us the same message as verse 4. Israel is blessed of the Lord, through its place in the PLAN OF GOD and so are all who enter the plan by faith in the Saviour. Psalms Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6, Psalms 105:6.

5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

The CHARACTER OF GOD and the PLAN OF GOD are great indeed, and we are in the arms of the One who is above all things and all powers. We are in the hands of the One who made this space-time universe; indeed He is the author of space and time, and will replace them one day with eternity. Deuteronomy 10:12-22, 33:27, 29, John 6:39-46, 2 Peter 3:10-18. We have a relationship with the One who is beyond all the demonic forces that impress some foolish people. Psalms 48:1, 86:8-10, 96:4, 97:9, 145:3.

A number of years ago an author produced a book called, "Your God is Too Small". It was a powerful encouragement to lift up our eyes as believers and see the full wonder of the glory of God. Our God is an awesome God, and we need to recognise that fact and praise the Lord's name.

**6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.
7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures.**

The Lord was not following anyone else's plan for the creation; He was doing His own work and following His own plan! Psalms 115:3. We need to remember this as we pray and think through things, for often we pray arrogantly, as if the Lord is answerable to us for some detail in the plan we disagree with! We need to reflect a little more on the Sovereignty of God in its association with the Love of God, but also recognise our limitations as children of space and time. Many details of the Plan of God will only be understood when we are the other side of eternity. We must maintain our humility this side of time, as many things are beyond us at this point, even with the Holy Spirit to help us.

All the forces of nature are under the Lord's control and the unravelling of nature we are witnessing today with super storms as we draw towards the end of time is in the Lord's hands. We must recognise that we are just creatures under the Creator. We must pause and reflect upon the "signs of our times" and see that when we have "hundred year storms" every year, and earthquakes increase annually, then we need to hear the words of scripture and reflect upon the soon coming of our Lord and Saviour for us. Refer to the BTB studies under PROPHECY. Nature is under His control and we need to go to His Word thoroughly to understand it. As SIGNS increase we must urge the people of God to be serious students of the Word of God; not just three point sermon hearers.

**8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.
9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.**

The Lord dealt with evil men and women thoroughly through history, but the largest selective judgement operation against any nation to the date of this psalm had been against Egypt, when the Lord killed all the first born of the land. The first born were dedicated to the gods of Egypt and so in this judgement an entire generation of priests and sacrifices were eliminated from the paganism of Egyptian culture. Exodus 12:29-33. Each of the signs and wonders done by the Lord through Moses had targeted some of the gods of Egypt. Exodus 5-12. The signs and plagues upon the land of Egypt over the months they came were not in any way random; they were targeted and increasingly severe judgements upon the pagan gods of that land.

Behind all the "gods" were demons, and each of these demons was judged in the process of the plagues upon them. Psalms 96:5. Their power was shown to be real, but limited against the power of Almighty God. They were wonders and SIGNS for the Egyptians to see and change their religion, but they failed to heed the significance of the signs, and so the ultimate elimination of their priesthood, present and future, had to occur. Judgement is God's "strange work" but the Lord will do it if He needs to in order to achieve the results required by the plan of God. Isaiah 28:21. God's plan will be fulfilled; there is no doubt about that.

**10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;
11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:**

The Lord dealt with the enemies of Israel, and He did so thoroughly. All kings who stood against Israel were eliminated. Numbers 21:1-3, 21:21-32, 25:16ff, 31:1-8, Deuteronomy 3:1ff. All who stood against the Plan of God were slain where they stood. None opposed the Lord's plan and lived. Even the prophet Balaam paid the ultimate price for trying to curse Israel, and died in his sins, with his stolen gold around him then taken by the Israelites.

The message of the scripture is absolutely clear; if anyone stands against the will of the Lord God, then that person is doomed. None oppose God and live for He is the Creator and the One in control of the universe. These named kings were just a few of the many who would fall as they opposed the true God in the name of their devil worshipping gods. The gods of the pagan nations are demons and they are judged. Joshua 12:1-34. Refer to the BTB study on HEATHENISM AND GOD CONSCIOUSNESS, DEMONS, and RELIGION.

12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.

13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.

The land of Canaan was an inheritance for the Canaanites but they lost it due to the extreme evil of their demonically inspired religion. Their iniquity was not beyond hope when Abraham was amongst them, and there were even some of them saved in the days of the patriarchs, but the day came when the "iniquity of these people was full". Genesis 15:16. They owned their land, inhabited it, and prospered in it, but lost it due to their persistent sin and evil. They were recipients of judgement under the operation of the FOUR GENERATION CURSE. Exodus 20:4-7.

This is a judgement especially reserved for pagans who persist in godless and immoral evil, with hatred of the true God, for more than four generations. Those who oppose the Lord disappear from the earth, but those who serve the Lord prosper forever, for the Lord's name and glory will be honoured forever. The fulfilled plan of God is the Lord's memorial forever. This earth will disappear but the PLAN OF GOD will go on forever. ETERNITY FUTURE is in the Lord's hands and the events beyond time will mean that forever God's name is glorified.

14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

The Lord will always judge His people, and we can rest assured of that. We will be judged and assessed as we walk through life, and then assessed for rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Refer to the BTB study on this subject below. While all believers will stand before the Lord to receive REWARDS AND CROWNS for their faithful and Holy Spirit filled service, all unbelievers will stand before the Lord also, but they will face the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT for eternal damnation. Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 6:2, 9:27, 10:27, Revelation 20:11-15.

We are in no danger of eternal damnation as children of God by faith, but remember the clear teaching of the passages above, if we as believers persist in walking according to the flesh, rather than walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be judged, and the Lord will withhold blessing from us. This is the concept behind the Lord "repenting Himself" concerning His servants. It means the Lord will withdraw blessing.

The Lord's desire is to bless His people but He will "change His mind" about that if we are not walking in SPIRITUALITY. Carnality always brings judgement, because we are simply not made to be carnal. Carnality has its origin in Satan's self centeredness, and it is his path we follow if we go that way. We are BORN AGAIN by faith in the Lord, and we are equipped and provided for all situations in order to walk spiritually, and if we do not walk in OBEDIENCE to the Law of the One who saved us, then we will lose rewards and opportunities for further service.

We have no excuse for not walking in the provision of the Lord for us, for the Lord has given us everything. To walk away from the path made for us by our Creator is foolishness. God is reluctant to judge, but will if we force Him to by being persistently foolish. Deuteronomy 32:36-41, Isaiah 28:7-27, Amos 7:2-9, Hosea 11:8-11, Matthew 7:13-23. The following of our own carnal nature is stupid, but the ultimate foolishness is to follow after the worship of idols made by other men's hands. Idolatry is rightly mocked vigorously by the authors of scripture. Psalms 115:4-8, Isaiah 40:18-31, 44:6-20, 46:5-7, Jeremiah 10:3-13.

16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;

17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths.

These verses occur in other places (as we have seen above) but they are worth repeating, for satanic religion cannot be mocked too vigorously. RELIGION is Satan's main tool of deception in this world. IDOLATRY is the worship of anything other than the Lord God, and it is man's alternative to the truth and the need to bow the knee to the truth.

Satan's marketing strategy to get people to worship things is clear; by getting people away from the true God he makes his religion lovely to the eyes and the senses generally, and then entices the deceived people into alcoholism, drug taking, gross immorality, and even murder of others. He gets them involved in things that so compromise them that they believe they cannot be saved, and in their despair he kills them. Religion is a great evil, as it stitches people up into a tight bundle of death. First Satan kills the moral centre, then the spiritual sensitivity to truth, then the soul towards others, who are then used for self centred pleasure, and finally he kills what is left of the self centred person's body. Refer to the BTB studies, on SATAN – ADVERSARY.

18 They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.

19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:

The great sadness about those who follow after false gods, idols, and demonism, is that they become like the idols they follow eventually. Satanic religion always kills the soul and body eventually and the worshipper of evil becomes as dead as the idol they worship.

Satan hates mankind, for mankind is the source of his condemnation before God, for every saved man and woman is testimony against his own evil choice to reject God's sovereignty over him. When an inferior creature like a human being responds to the gospel message Satan is condemned, because it proves that he, as a superior creature is 100% responsible for his rebellion, and that he is worthy of condemnation, for if man can repent, so could Satan. This is at the heart of the ANGELIC CONFLICT, and why he hates us as thoroughly as we saw above in the John 15:18-21 passage that I referred to earlier.

The priesthood is urged to protect themselves from any temptation to idolatry by their praise and worship, and so are all of us today as the Lord's believer-priests upon the earth now. Our protection against the temptation to idolatry is in our worship and praise, and so let us praise the Lord with all our heart.

20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.

21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The order to the entire House of Levi (all the priests, Levites and singers) is repeated strongly; there is urgency in the order to worship, for to let worship slip is to open the door of temptation to BACKSLIDING from the truth. All who have a healthy respect for the Lord need to openly express that aloud. The "fear of the Lord" is the healthy respectful celebration of the Lord; it is a complete acceptance of His lordship and holy character as Saviour and Lord of our life. The Lord wants all of us; not just a partial commitment. Any lukewarm faith is no faith at all. Let us read the warning to the churches in Revelation 1-3 and be very scared of our slackness.

The Lord gave all to ensure we could be saved from sin and death, and freed from the murderous control of satanic deception. What is our response to this "so great salvation"? Hebrews 2:3. The psalmist calls us to see clearly what we have been delivered from and fully and whole heartedly respond to the Lord. The whole house of Levi is called to centre their worship in and around the restored Temple and be the focal point for the people to let them see the Lord in the Levitical Sacrifices.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Israel is God's treasure, and we also in the Church today are God's treasure. God values us and adores us and we are special to Him. We are kept and guarded by the Lord. Refer to the BTB studies below on ETERNAL SECURITY. Let us praise the Lord for His "so great salvation", and let us recognise in such worship that we have the serious obligation to not just praise, but serve, that others might be brought to faith and safety also.
2. There is no doubt about the Plan of God being fulfilled through the power of God. The Lord is clear in His Word that His will is going to be done, and all knees will bow before Him. It is just a matter of time before victory is achieved. No-one will stand against God and live long. Let us stand for the Lord and His truth and leave the fate of evil men to their own choices, but let us give them the gospel in Holy Spirit power and clarity. The Lord will judge all who stand against His clear will, and we can leave judgement to the Lord. Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10.
3. We either walk obediently following the Plan of God in this life, or we walk in carnality following our own self centred desires. If we walk after the flesh, we will lose opportunity for service and worship in time, and will lose rewards and opportunities for deeper worship in eternity. Carnality is for losers; spirituality is for winners. In Christ we are meant to be winners. Let us walk in the Spirit and be the people God has enabled us to be.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

TRIBULATION IN MATTHEW 24

TRIBULATION – SIGNS

RAPTURE

RAPTURE – PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE:

SIGNS

HEATHENISM AND GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

ANGELS – DEMONS

RELIGION

JUDGEMENT – FOUR GENERATION CURSE

ETERNITY FUTURE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE

JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

SALVATION – REGENERATION: BORN AGAIN

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OBEDIENCE

IDOLATRY

ANGELS – SATAN – ADVERSARY

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BACK-SLIDING AND RECOVERY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY – HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

ISRAEL

OFFERINGS – LEVITICAL OFFERINGS REPRESENT CHRIST

NOTES

PSALMS 136

INTRODUCTION

This psalm is the companion to Psalm 135, and the two put together give us binocular vision of the subject of praise for the God of the nation Israel. Whereas the earlier psalm looked at the foolishness of the idol based alternative to genuine worship, this psalm before us looks at the amazing mercy of God, and its incentive to praise and worship. As we look at false worship we ought to be more committed to true worship, but as we reflect upon the mercy of the Lord we ought to be even more committed to the expression of true worship and praise to the true God. Let us reflect upon the MERCY of God and praise the Lord with open hearts and loud voices.

PSALMS 136:1- 26

1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. 5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. 7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: 8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: 9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever. 10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever: 11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever: 12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever. 13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever. 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever. 17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: 18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: 19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: 20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever: 21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: 22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever. 23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever: 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. 25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. 26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

REFLECTION

**1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.
2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.**

In the first four verses each major Hebrew name of the Lord is used, and it is a reminder that the Trinity is in the Old Testament and the names of God all served to teach the people aspects of the Character of God. The Lord is over all the demonic forces. They have power only for a time and are all inferior to the Lord, and even to believers who walk in the power of God. 1 John 4:4. The Lord is to be praised and honoured, for His mercy endures forever.

The sinfulness of the majority of mankind, and the multitude of evil men and women which persistently goes after Satan has never exhausted the mercy of God towards all who will bow their knee towards Him. No matter how bad any woman or man has been; they can receive the mercy of God. If they are still alive, and they repent, they will receive the mercy of God, for it goes on forever! The worst man has been saved, and that was the man who became the Apostle Paul. 1 Timothy 1:15. None is beyond the grace, love and mercy of Almighty God. He is to be praised! Refer to the BTB studies on GOD – NAMES AND TITLES, TRINITY.

**3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.
4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.**

Each of the major titles for the Lord have been used in these first four verses, and as every aspect of the Character of God is recalled the believers are urged, with full knowledge of the glory and majesty of the Lord to praise His holy name. It is the Lord alone who does “great wonders”, and the Lord alone whose mercy endures forever, for the Lord alone is beyond space and time, and is the Author of this universe and the One who has prepared the next one. Psalms 72:18-19, 86:8-13.

**5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.
6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.**

At the heart of a full appreciation of God's power and majesty is the full understanding of the creative power of God, who made the heavens and the earth. Psalms 8:1-9, 19:1, 89:2-11. The Author of the present space and time universe is also the Maker of the future eternal state. We are presently creatures of space and time and cannot think beyond its restrictive categories. In Christ, through the ministries of the Holy Spirit, we understand a little, by way of inspired glimpses, of the future state, but these are glimpses only. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:1-9.

We stretch ourselves towards understanding the things that are to come after time is past, but we are stretching “beyond the bounds of sense” for our limited minds. It is in praise and worship that we understand most about the glory, majesty, and mercy of God. Worship gives us a greater glimpse of eternity than any philosopher has ever had. Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 1:6, 6:20.

7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever:

8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The Lord is the Maker of the sun, the moon and the stars, and we worship the Creator, not the created objects that He will wind up when they have done their job. At a couple of places earlier in our commentary on the psalms we have seen that the Lord has already wound up many of the stars, and all we see is there light travelling towards us now. The sun and moon are still here, but many of the stars are already gone, and yet many people worship the stars and the sun and the moon! The sun and the moon were and are worshipped by many upon the earth, and yet the call of the Word of God is that we might worship the Creator of them, not the temporary objects of this present creation. Let us just look back at an earlier passage from Psalms 134:3 in the earlier volume of the EBCWA Commentary on the Psalms.

Psalm 134:3 **“The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.”**

We have seen a number of times that the psalmist returns to the thought of God as the Creator after praise and worship have been urged. There are over thirty references to the heavens in the Psalms and each serves to ground the worshipper in the reality that we are worshipping the One who made the heavens and the earth.

The heavens declare the glory of God. Psalms 19:1. The stars also declare the power and plan of God, for they have nearly all been already extinguished to meet their scheduled observable departure in terms of the Plan of God. Most of the stars are millions of light years away from the earth. The light we see from them tonight has been travelling for millions of years to get here in time for us to see them tonight. The Bible teaches that during the Great Tribulation period one third of the stars will be seen to fade and die. Revelation 8:12. Now even if the Great Tribulation is one hundred years away (and I don't believe it is that far at all) then these stars must already have been extinguished several million years ago for their lights to fade at exactly the right time in the Tribulation.

The Bible also teaches that all the heavens and the earth will be “folded up” and put away like an old tired blanket, and all will be replaced by a new heavens and a new earth that is well beyond the scope and wonder of the present space-time universe. Isaiah 65-66, 2 Peter 3:10-18, Revelation 21:1ff.

Once again reflect for a few minutes on this biblical prophetic fact. If all the stars will be seen to be wound up and put away, and from the earth it will be seen to occur, then the galaxies whose light has been travelling towards us for 200 million years must have already been extinguished! If they will be seen to fade in a future day, even a thousand years down the track, they must have already been extinguished. It is only their light travelling towards us now from an empty space! Now don't think too long on this without a spiritually mature friend beside you because it is a bit overwhelming, but this is what the psalmist is asking us to reflect upon together as we worship.

We worship the Creator and finisher of the universe He made! What we see tonight in the sky has mostly already gone, it is just the light of long dead stars that still travels through empty space, but we don't need to be depressed about that because God is clearing out space and time because He has something better to reveal to us! Think, reflect, and then praise the God who is a lot bigger and more wonderful than we often allow ourselves to think about! God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He has something for us in eternity that is better than we can even think of now! God's best for us is yet to come. Praise His holy name.

9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The moon is so powerful it creates tidal flows and surges. The phases of the Moon decide how high the tides will be. A celestial body that is able to move vast oceans and create currents and tidal rises and falls is mighty indeed, but how much greater is the God who made it. The One who created the celestial bodies is to be worshipped, not the celestial bodies. The One who created the heavens is the One who judged those who worshipped the celestial bodies.

The Egyptians worshipped the sun god Ra, and their eldest were dedicated to him. The judgements upon Egypt were so strong because of their dedication to the sun, moon and stars, and their rejection of the God who made them all. The Lord's mercy however endures forever and the Egyptians became strong Christians for many centuries, and the faith of Jesus still exists there today, and many will be saved yet from Egypt. The Lord's mercy truly goes on forever.

11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The Exodus was a miracle of deliverance, of organisation, of leadership against rebellion after rebellion, and of signs and wonders that have never been equalled. The miracles associated with the Exodus were more dramatic than those of the ministry of the Lord Himself during His three years service before the Cross. There is no period of history in which more miracles occurred and yet the people rebelled! They didn't just rebel once, but again and again. I counted over thirteen

major recorded rebellions during the Exodus by people who had seen more miracles than any people before or since. Luke 16:19-31, Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13.

Let us not follow the example of the Exodus Generation, but let us worship the God whose mercy endures forever, and goes way beyond the sinfulness of mankind. God delivered them with His strong hand, even though they were unwilling and unworthy, and the Lord brought their children into the land, even through the obstacles created by the unbelief of their parents. Deuteronomy 11:1-9.

They were formally and very solemnly warned to pay attention to the words of Moses, for then they would be kept safe and delivered into their inheritance in the land. Deuteronomy 11:16-23. The same principles apply to us; we inherit all the Lord has for us as we obey the word and submit ourselves to its directions. Refer to the BTB studies OBEDIENCE, SUBMISSION.

**13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:
14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:**

The Lord showed His total control over the forces of nature at the Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds) in Exodus 14:10ff. The Lord ordered them forward and as they moved in obedience the Lord drew back the waters and the people crossed on dry ground. The Lord dealt with the sea, and ordered the people forward to walk through the midst of it. The Lord cleared the way, but the believers still had to obey and move forward through the path prepared for them. We must move forward today, taking advantage of the provisions of the Lord for us. The refrain was to be sung by all the people who heard this psalm sung by the Levite singers. All were to sing aloud, "for His mercy endures forever". Amen, so it does.

**15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.
16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.**

The believers could take advantage of the provisions of the Lord for their salvation but when the army of Pharaoh of Egypt presumed to take advantage of the Lord's work without accepting the Lord; then they were judged. The very forces of nature that the Lord had used to open a way for the Israelites were turned against the Egyptians who rejected the Lord's control over nature. They were nature worshippers but nature turned upon them, for the Lord is the Lord of all He has made, and those who reject His ruler ship will have the very forces of nature they revere turn upon them.

The wilderness areas of Arabia were able to sustain the great numbers of the Israelite people and their flocks and herds all through the forty years of the wanderings because the Lord ensured there was always manna for the people and fodder for the animals. This was a miraculous provision for around 30,000 plus people. Deuteronomy 32:45-47, 33:27-29. If God could keep His people through forty years, can He not keep us through our life time?

**17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:
18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:**

Many people trust in power and its mightiest exponents. The strongest kings, with the greatest armies, with all the mighty military weapons of the day could not stand against the plan of God; none ever can. The Jewish people and their kings were warned in advance not to trust in the trappings of power, but in the Lord. Deuteronomy 17:16, Psalms 20:7, Isaiah 31:1-3, Hosea 1:7. God does not need the military forces of men to destroy His enemies, for the Lord's legions of angels are far more scary than anything man can assemble. When the old prophet Elijah and his pupil Elisha saw the power of God's army it was in chariots of fire! 2 Kings 2:11, 6:17.

All the great kings and their mighty armies which opposed Israel in the land of Canaan were destroyed, each and every one. Joshua 11:18 – 12:24. All the famous men who have ever stood against God have been rendered corpses in God's time. Evil men live just long enough to bring others to judgement, and so that they cannot accuse God of hasty judgement when they stand before Him. All who hate the Lord and serve evil with Satan will be dealt with by the Lord. Revelation 6:12-17, 19:19-21, 20:11-15.

**19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:
20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:**

The two kings mentioned here were particularly nasty brutes and were determined to exterminate the Israelites. As they wished upon Israel, so was done to them and their people and their lands were given to the Israelites. Deuteronomy 2:26- 3:11. These people had plenty of opportunities to repent and accept the truth, as the family of Rahab and the Gibeonites would later do. Joshua 6:23-24, 9:3ff.

The Lord's mercy was not shown to these evil kings, but it was available to them. The Lord's mercy was shown to the people of Gibeon, and to the family of Rahab, and that mercy endures forever. Rahab becomes an ancestor of the humanity of the Lord Jesus! The survival of Rahab and her family is the example of what could have been for all the Amorites if they had repented of their evils and worshipped the true God, but they chose to stay in their paganism. When people choose to follow after Satan they get exactly what Satan offers, and it is sin and death!

21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever:

22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The land of the rebels against the Lord's right to rule over them was given to the Israelites. The people of Israel took courage from the Lord's hand over them and they advanced into the land and took possession of it. Only their lack of faith hindered their total seizure of the land. They stopped short of total victory due to lack of faith, and that is so often our epitaph! Joshua 10:25, 16:12-13, 16-18, 24:13-15. We need to learn from the Israelite's failures, as well as from their successes, and walk by faith not in fear. All they had to do was keep on advancing and keep on trusting in the Lord's mighty power to keep and protect them. That is all the Lord requires of us also! Isaiah 59:16-20, Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Peter 1:13-17.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:

24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The Lord knows we are dust; He knows we are weak and pathetic at times. Psalms 103:14. The Lord seeks to lift us up in spiritual power and with spiritual focus and energy. In our humanity we are fragile, but in the FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT we are powerful. The Lord knows we fail, and that is why He has provided CONFESSION OF SIN AND FORGIVENESS. The Lord knows we are people facing daily difficulties due to our OLD SIN NATURE and the temptations that come in the devil's world.

The Lord remembers and the Lord has provided for us with the MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. His mercies continue towards us forever. We are redeemed from our enemies by the Lord, and the main enemies of man are sin, death and the devil, and the Lord has redeemed us from these enemies. Refer to the BTB study on REDEMPTION. The price for our salvation has been paid, and it was the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:18-25.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The Lord provides our "daily bread", and we are encouraged to pray for this and give thanks for it. Psalms 104:24-35, Matthew 6:11. If God provides for the fish and the birds, will He not provide for us? Matthew 6:25-34. The Lord will provide for us on His path for us. Let us simply ensure we are on the path the Lord has called us to walk and then we can walk securely along with confidence in the Lord's provisions. Let us walk and as we do give thanks for the Lord's provisions for us on the path of His choosing.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The Lord's mercies continue forever and all who bow before Him and walk His path through this life are recipients of His mercy. Let us ensure we walk as we ought, and along the path the Lord has called us to walk, for then we can claim the provisions that the Lord has for us on that path. Let us give thanks for the Lord's goodness lasts forever, and it is focused upon meeting all the needs of His people as they serve Him here. Let us advance down the path the Lord has called us to walk and serve the Lord in the power and strength He gives.

DOCTRINES

MERCY

GOD – NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD

GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD – TRINITY

GOD – TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD – TRINITY IN THE TITLES OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OBEDIENCE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUBMISSION

HOLY SPIRIT – FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

SIN – OLD SIN NATURE

HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO MAN

SALVATION – REDEMPTION

PSALMS 137**INTRODUCTION**

This psalm dates most likely from the years just following the captivity, possibly with some re-writing later. The perspective is clearly that of the people once they have returned and are looking back to their time by the rivers/canals of Babylon. There were three deportations of the Jewish people into Babylonian Captivity.

The first was of nobles in 605 BC, and Daniel and his three friends went at that time. This was a deportation of the best of the land to be trained in Babylonian arts and culture to become rulers within the Empire. 2 Kings 23:24 – 24:1, 2 Chronicles 36:1-7, Jeremiah 52:28, Daniel 1:1-7. Quite a large group of nobles went into captivity at this time, and the Temple treasury is taken also at this first time.

The second was after the first stupid rebellion of the Jews in 597 BC. The last of the general leadership of the Army and the trades are taken in this captivity, with the last king who is a direct descendent of Solomon leaving the city in chains. His uncle, renamed Zedekiah, is made client king of a “nation” that has now been reduced to the poorest people, left behind simply to ensure the harvests are brought in and tribute in grain, wine and oil produced for the Babylonians. 2 Kings 24:2-16, 2 Chronicles 36:9-10, Jeremiah 52:29.

It is likely that Ezekiel was taken into captivity in this second group. They are marched to Babylon in chains and are forced to work on the canals. Psalms 119 may be their song as they marched into captivity. It is this group and the next that also possibly sing the Psalm we read here. The foolishness of the Jewish people was such that Zedekiah organised a third and fatal rebellion. All he had to do was serve the superior conqueror and he would have prospered, but he was an arrogant religious unbeliever and he rejected the teaching of Jeremiah, and he heeded the plots of stupid men and rebelled again.

The last siege was terrible and final. Nebuchadnezzar had showed great patience with the Jews but after the third rebellion he left few alive and burned the cities of the land to the ground and destroyed the walls of all fortifications in the land. He left the smallest number of people possible to be able to keep the vines and olive groves working. 2 Kings 24:17 – 25:30.

The terrible evils done by the Jewish royal household to their own people, and their almost total rejection of God's Word and His prophets led to their destruction as a nation, just as Moses had warned it would one thousand years before. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30. God had tried everything to stop them and bring them to repentance before the city and nation was destroyed but they rejected every appeal to repent. 2 Chronicles 36:13-16, Ezekiel 22:19-31, 23:28-35, 33:29-33. Refer to the BTB study on ISRAEL – NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE.

The Babylonian invasion and subsequent Captivity was terrible indeed. The population of the land may have exceeded one million people, even after the destruction wrought by the Assyrians one hundred years before. Of that vast number of people only a few thousand survived to go into captivity, or flee into Egypt. Those who fled south were to be rounded up by the Babylonians when they seized that land fourteen years later.

Why did God's people get to such a place? They had rejected the words of the prophets and had failed to follow through on King Josiah's religious reforms, but had returned under Jehoiakim and his equally evil son Jehoiachin, to a synchronistic religion that allowed the paganism of the other nations to dwell alongside the purity of the faith of Israel. Idolatry had corrupted the people. God sent His prophets Habakkuk and Jeremiah, and then Obadiah to warn the people, but they rejected their words. The words of the author of Chronicles are sad but terribly true.

2 Chronicles 36:12-21.

Verse 12. “And he (Zedekiah) did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. 13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. 14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.”

The people had rejected Jeremiah right up until his words were proved completely true, but by then it was too late for them, and even though he was proved right, the people in the land who survived fled into Egypt taking Jeremiah captive

with them rather than doing what the Lord had ordered. Jeremiah 41-45. Jeremiah dies with the Jewish exiles in Egypt, but sends his written material by the hand of Baruch to the exiles in Babylon, and it gets directly into the hands of Daniel. God gives him the insights into the meaning of the work of Jeremiah and the significance of the seventy years of exile. Daniel 9:1-2, Jeremiah 25:11-14, 29:10-14.

Daniel, working with Ezekiel, brings in the revival that the people need to restore their spiritual life and they are readied to return when the opportunity comes in 535 BC. Ezekiel encourages them about their return. Ezekiel 28:25-26. The people had to endure the suffering of the Exile and Captivity to learn to turn from their previous evils and never go there again. This psalm before us records the psychological legacy of sadness at the terrible suffering they endured. They learned the lesson of exile, but it was a terrible one to learn. Hebrews 12:5-15.

The Lord does not stop the full impact of the Fifth Cycle of National Discipline falling upon them. They were a nation that had rejected the truth and worked great evils, and so their cup of evil was full, and their judgement was to drink that cup in full. Isaiah 51:17-23, Jeremiah 25:8-17, Ezekiel 23:28-35. As they had done to godly people amongst them, so it was to be done to them, and as they had despised God's holy prophets, so they would be despised. Their judgement was to drink in full the cup of God's wrath upon them for the evils they had done.

This is a principle of God's dealings with men that goes through all of history. We see it graphically most recently illustrated in World War 2 in the terrible judgements unleashed upon Nazi Germany and the militarist Japanese Empire. Both these nations did great and terrible evils, murdering millions of innocents in their wars and in the massacres in their concentration camps and prison camps, but also the wholesale slaughter of civilians in Russia and China especially. Over 20,000,000 people, as a conservative estimate, were murdered by these fascist armies.

Many feel the bombing of the cities of Germany and Japan was terrible, and they were, but the citizens of these nations reaped exactly what they had sowed, and even though there were chances to end the war early they never came to fruition. It was as if the Lord stopped there being any alternative to total destruction of those who had begun the evil. God is not mocked by man; as we reap, so we will sow, and the children often suffer with their godless, foolish, or evil parents. Galatians 6:7-8.

PSALMS 137:1- 9

1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. 7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

REFLECTION

**1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.**

The exiles would have been in total shock as they were marched to Babylonian Captivity. All of them would have seen their families and friends killed by the enemy or by disease or the famine that accompanied the sieges. Possibly as small a percentage of the total population as 1-5% may have survived the invasions to even go into captivity. The survivors would be traumatised people, and deep and profound distress is one of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, and these people could all have been expected to be suffering from that as a result of what they had seen in the destruction of their land.

Refer to the notes at the end of this chapter to see a handout on this disorder for survivors today. It gives a glimpse of the mental state of these biblical people. These people in Babylon would have emerged from the fog of their trauma only as they laboured in the mud of the canals of Babylon and felt the full horror of their fate and that of their dead friends and families.

They were in such a traumatised state that they couldn't sing the psalms, and the enemy mocked them for this, asking them to sing their songs. Their guards ordered them to sing their songs and make them happy songs, but the people were too traumatised to speak or sing. Tears are bone fide in some situations and weeping is to be expected, and these people wept and mourned for their great discipline. They deserved it, but they suffered greatly as they faced its full horror and the awfulness of what had happened to them as a people.

The prophet Zechariah records that in a future day the people of Jerusalem will weep even louder and more powerfully as they face their greater sin; that of rejecting their Messiah and maintaining their rebellion until the last moment of their history. Zechariah 12:10ff. Refer to the BTB studies on SUFFERING, WEEP AND HOWL, WEEPING.

4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The answer to the question in verse four was provided by Ezekiel who would lead the revival amongst the exiles along the canals. He would teach the people to once again serve the Lord their God and deal with the past idolatrous evils that caused their suffering. He would lead them back to the Lord, and Daniel, from the palace, would protect the people and ensure they got the book of Jeremiah released to them also.

The people did learn to sing the Lord's songs again and when the people returned to the land in 535 BC many of the singers went with the first returning group and they were ready to start the worship services again. Ezra chapter 2. They never forgot their love for their city and their land. During their time in Babylon their tongues did cleave to the roof of their mouths in thirst as they toiled, and the divine discipline worked its work, for the Lord caused all these things, and the people repented as a result. Ezekiel 3:23-27.

The first generation of exiles mourned deeply for their losses, but they finally heard the prophet Ezekiel, made their houses and had large families, so that when the time came to return there were 40,000 people ready to leave and return to the land of their fathers, with possibly as many staying in Babylon. The joy of living again in Jerusalem was the anticipated joy that they focused upon as the years of their exile ended.

7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

As the people reflected upon what happened to them they remembered the people around the land of Israel who had delighted in their destruction and urged the Babylonians to destroy everything there. All who joined in the destruction of the Jewish people with the Babylonians were to be judged by the Lord for their evil. They had cried aloud for the city to be destroyed to its foundations and they assisted in the work.

The people of Israel ask for the Lord's judgement upon them. The prophets announced their judgement, for the Lord heard the prayers of His people and justice would be done. Jeremiah announced the Lord's coming judgement upon those who joined with the Babylonians. Against the Moabites – Jeremiah 48. Against the Ammonites, Edomites, and Elamites – Jeremiah 49. Against the Babylonians themselves – Jeremiah 50-51. Ezekiel also announces such judgements. Against the Edomites he pronounces doom in Ezekiel 25:12-14, 32:29. All who stand against God and His people pay the price of divine judgement.

8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The great sadness of these words helps us understand the terror of the fall of Jerusalem and the other cities of the land. As in the Nazi holocaust infants and children were killed, for only those old enough to work as slaves were of any value to the victorious armies. The children were taken by the feet and had their brains smashed out on the rocks. This is the horror that parents had to live with for the rest of their lives. Their adult sins led to the destruction of all they held dear.

As the Babylonian army had done to the Jewish people however the conquerors of Babylon would do to them. Babylon fell without much bloodshed at all in 536 BC. Only in the palace of Belshazzar was there much bloodshed for the majority of the local people welcomed Cyrus the Great as a liberator from their corrupt king. Within forty years however Babylon rebelled against the Persians and the rebellion was put down with great savagery and this is when these things described here occurred to the Babylonians. As we sow we reap! God is not mocked, and all sinful and evil men are judged in time and eternally.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Obedience is the only way to please the Lord. As the old song says, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to "trust and obey". Let us not follow the path of disobedience and rebellion that Israel and Judah followed. Let us follow the prophets and walk closely with our God and obediently to His Holy Word each and every day of the Life God has given us.

2. Those which stand against God's people, God's Plan, and God's power will be judged. If they are still standing at this point, it is only a matter of God's timing, for all who oppose the Lord will die and will be judged eternally.

THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT OF TRAUMA ON PRESENT STRESSFUL EVENTS

Different events will have different traumatic impact on different people, and what is defined as "traumatic" will vary for different ages. A group of diverse people of various ages and stages in life, going into the same traumatic event, will have diverse reactions to that event. Variables that affect the impact of a traumatic event are:

1. The nature of the event (natural, man-made) and the level of personal threat felt.

2. The duration and intensity of the event(s).
3. The potential for recurrence.
4. The control felt through the event; how active and empowered they felt.
5. Previous life experiences which "prepared" them for being active, "in control".
6. Personality traits of low self esteem, poor locus of control, poor stress coping.
7. Personal health crisis at the time, which led to further feelings of weakness.
8. Pre-existent mental health issue; especially anxiety/depressive/personality disorder.
9. The age or developmental stage of the person at the time a trauma strikes.
10. Faith/philosophy that provides robust resilience, frame work of understanding.

The "normal" response to abnormal events will be "abnormal" symptoms of distress, for they are "in proportion" to the events experienced. Dr Viktor Frankl, who went through Auschwitz, made the following point. "There are certain things, when they happen to us, if we don't lose our mind, it is only because we didn't have a mind to lose!" This is the criteria for assessment in such situations; what is in proportion to the event must be considered "normal". It is the persistence of disturbing symptoms that leads to the diagnosis of a "disorder". A disorder is a cluster of symptoms that have "disordered" the life of the individual; it's enjoyment and function is affected. A traumatic event early in a person's life may affect their ability to handle later events that have powerlessness elements in them. Powerlessness events in the present for them will trigger extensive symptoms (described below) as the survival centre in their Mid-Brain really reacts to the present on the basis of the pain and distress of the previous experience from the past.

The clusters of symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder (which may become Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) if they persist longer than one month) are as follows:

1. DISSOCIATION - Numbing, detachment, being "in a daze", feeling unreality while in the midst of the awful reality.
2. RE-EXPERIENCING - Recurrent thoughts, images in the mind, dreams, flashbacks to episodes, reliving the events.
3. AVOIDANCE - Marked avoiding of stimuli that arouse any memories or recollections of the event.
4. AROUSAL - Marked increase in anxiety and arousal of emotion and it's associated symptoms; sleep loss, concentration difficulty, hyper-vigilance, startle response
5. DISTRESS - Impairment of normal social function due to the distress felt.
6. These are not caused by any substance abuse, or other pre-existing cause, and persist for longer than 3 weeks and occur within weeks of the events. Note – the onset of physical-psychological symptoms can be delayed by physical injuries. The way the Lord has made us, we may not feel PTSD symptoms until after the body has physically healed and we can handle them better.

These symptoms are often baffling and powerful, and are deeper than ordinary logic, for they stem from the Mid-Brain automatically, not from the Cerebral Cortex. Some people facing present stress will have much deeper feelings of powerlessness triggered by the present experience, and their behaviours will be quite primal, and make little sense to others and even themselves.

Our challenge facing present stress and trauma is to develop a strategy that faces the present situation, but also assists us cope with the legacy of past events that may have compounded the present for us. At the heart of the strategy must be certain elements; firstly we must ground ourselves in our CORE VALUES, secondly we must do all we can to build perceived STRENGTH AND POWER, and thirdly we must boost our brain chemical SEROTONIN levels by activities that recharge our batteries and so position us for better coping.

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DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUFFERING

WEEP AND HOWL

WEEPING

PSALMS 138**INTRODUCTION**

This psalm of David now begins a specific Davidic praise section of this last book of the psalms. It may be that the next eight psalms were “discovered” after the exile and grouped together here in this last section of the Psalms. However and whenever they were grouped, I believe they are grouped here in a Holy Spirit inspired place, for they occur appropriately after the first three psalms of this section and are reflective praise offerings. They fit well after thinking about the Captivity and the lessons of the Exile.

In light of the suffering of the people these psalms from five hundred years before give the people prophetic encouragement which reaches right into their situation as they rebuild national life after the destruction of the previous two hundred years, under both Assyria and Babylonia. Prophetic truth works like this. We read a passage written a hundred or so years before our day and yet the Holy Spirit brings it right into our day and encourages us with the freshness of its truth. As we look back we are reminded that the Lord has all of history in His hands; truly it is “His story”.

PSALMS 138:1- 8

1 I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD. 6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

REFLECTION

**1 I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.
2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.**

It is whole hearted worship that the Lord seeks and David was loved by the Lord because of his whole hearted love. David failed the Lord and fell into gross sin at times, but he allowed the Holy Spirit to convict him, and he bounced back through earnest CONFESSON, and so was restored to fellowship and knew God’s forgiveness. Psalm 51. He did not resist or quench the Holy Spirit’s work. David never felt smug about his past sins, for he knew he didn’t get by with his sin without great pain through it. He suffered greatly, and so did his nation as a result of his failings, but he understood grace and mercy and bowed before the Lord when he needed to.

David is an encouragement to all of us who have fallen short of the Lord’s standards. If we are still alive when we wake up to our sinful state, there is still hope for us! He understood the ONE THING that matters, and that is peace with God through dealing with any sin that separates the soul from the Saviour. David understood this and obtained DELIVERANCE by GRACE, through the MERCY of God. Refer also to the BTB study on BLOOD SACRIFICE, and SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT.

David understood just how great was the grace, love, and mercy of God towards him. He stood before the very pagan gods and praised the name of the Lord. David was ready to honour the Lord’s name before the enemies of Israel and God. He stood for truth, and stood boldly against all who believed otherwise. David did not care for anyone’s opinion other than the Lord’s.

Verse two carries an additional and very powerful principle about worship and Christian living. All worship was done in Israel facing towards the Temple in Jerusalem. The reason for this was that it recognised the blood shed on the altar, which was the sole ground for the acceptance of the believer. David worships facing the blood stained altar, remembering that he can approach the Lord because of the blood shed for him alone. He also recognises the wonderful CHARACTER OF GOD. He especially identifies the Lord’s “loving kindness” towards him and all believers, and the wonderful provision of God’s truth for us through the Holy Word of God.

Notice his staggering words then. God has “magnified His word above His name”! There is a vital truth in this and so pause and hear it carefully. It is through the Word of God that we learn of the character and works of God. It is the Word that provides all the information upon which we can stabilise our lives and walk with God in the right manner. The Lord wants us to feed upon the Word and magnify its importance even ahead of praising His name, for praise will come as long as we magnify the Word in our life.

Can you see this believer? It is only as we lift up the Word of God that we learn of the character and plan of God, and so we magnify the name of God, and are led into holiness of life and holy passion in our worship and praise. Refer to the BTB studies on BIBLE, for the magnifying of the Word of God will stabilise the people of God in the Plan of God!

**3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.**

God does not delay answering our prayers, and any delay in us hearing the answer is due to either, the Angelic Conflict, our lack of readiness to hear the answer, or just the right timing for us to hear the answer. Psalms 34:4-6, 77:1-2, Daniel 10:12-21. God doesn't need to wait for any additional facts to come in before answering our prayers, for God is beyond time, and so the future, the past, and the present are as one to God. David knows that he is heard and answered immediately. He knows this because he reads and believes the Word of God. Refer back to the earlier BTB study on PRAYER.

The way the answers to prayer comes through to us, and the timing of the answer's arrival, are used by the Lord to strengthen our faith, so that we become "big souled". This is the best way to translate the word that the KJV English translation of the Greek word "makrothumia" translates as "patience". God wants us to build the power of our soul and become more powerful in our soul, trusting Him more and more. When we hear the Lord's words in answer to our prayers or questions we are always staggered at the wonder of God's Plan, and hearing the Lord is always the open door to praise. When we hear the Lord speak to us we will always burst into praise and worship. Worship is the out pouring of the results of patience in the soul.

**5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.
6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.**

Evangelism is often best done by the witness of the life of a transformed man or woman. David knows that when people see him changed by God that they will be more open to the reality of faith for themselves. They will sing in the ways of the Lord when they see and hear his testimony. The glory of the Lord is great. Psalms 22:22-27.

EVANGELISM begins with the life being transformed by faith in the Word of God. As we are transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in our life people will "take note that we have been with Jesus". Acts 4:13. Arrogance blocks that process, and humility opens the door for it. It is the recognition of God's greatness and our smallness that opens the door to truth getting hold of the soul completely. While we cling to any arrogance there is a limited amount that truth can do with us, for our fat headedness gets in the way. God respects and hears the lowly, who truly recognise that they are creatures, not the Creator! The proud cannot see God because their own view of themselves gets in the way! When people believe they are their own god, then they will not give way to the true God! Isaiah 57:13-15, 1 Peter 5:5-9.

**7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.
8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.**

Once we have stabilised ourselves within the solid rock of the Character of God and rested upon His plan we are in a place where all our worries can be cast upon the Lord with complete relaxation. Psalms 23:3-4, 66:10-12, 1 Peter 5:5-10. We can know that the Lord will revive us when we are exhausted and that the Lord will guide us when we are in danger from enemies. Psalms 71:20-21, 119:49-50. The powerful arm of the Lord will save His people when they walk where He wants them to walk and do what He wants done!

There is no doubt about the power of God to save, for we do His work and there is always power to do the Lord's work. God's powerful right arm is ready and able to deal with the enemies of truth, and they will be dealt with. Our job is to walk in the truth, and the Lord will protect us there. Psalms 44:3-8, Micah 7:7-10. God will save us when we do His work! His reputation depends upon it!

God will always complete (perfect) the work that concerns His plan, for the Lord's plan will always be accomplished. All we need to do is ensure we are walking in the plan and we are sure to be kept and protected there. We are the work of God's own hands and the Lord will not ever forsake His work! Salvation is by grace, and that means it is God's work. Psalms 71:6-15, 2 Timothy 2:12-13, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 18-25. We will fail the Lord at times and fall short of His standards, but He will never fail us, nor fall short of power to assist us. We are to relax and walk in the power of the Lord and we will be safe and secure. What an amazing God we have! Let us praise His name as David does here.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The Lord's opinion about us alone matters. It is the Lord's will that matters not any other thing in this life. It is only His "Well done" that carries any significance at all. All else is fluff and nonsense. The successes of time are restricted to time and end with it, but those who do the will of the Lord are blessed forever. Let us stand with David and praise the Lord with a whole heart and total devotion to His will for us. Let us devote ourselves to the service of the Lord, for in His path for our life there is hope and safety.

2. Let us lift up the Word of God so that all hear the truth of God's Holy Character and the wonder of His Plan for mankind. Unless we teach the Word in Holy Spirit power the people of God will not know the truth, and if they do not know the truth they cannot be kept free from dangers, distortion and disasters. Pastors teach the Word. 1 Timothy 4:7-16, 2 Timothy 3:16 4:5.

3. God answers our prayers and we are heard in all things we bring before Him. Let us praise the Lord in advance of our hearing the answer, for we know from scripture that we are heard. Faith says thanks with the "amen" of each prayer. Faith expresses thankfulness with all prayers, and praises the Lord for the answers to prayer as the prayer is offered. Hebrews 11:1-3. All prayer is to be offered "with rejoicing and thanksgiving". Philippians 4:4-7.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

ONE THING

DELIVERANCE

GRACE

MERCY

BLOOD SACRIFICE

HOLY SPIRIT – SINS AGAINST THE SPIRIT

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

BIBLE – BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER

BIBLE – WORD OF GOD – HEBREWS 4:12

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – EVANGELISM

DAVID – NOBILITY

Notes

PSALMS 139**INTRODUCTION**

This is a favourite psalm for many down the centuries, and is very much a favourite of mine. It has the freshness and power we expect from David as he reflects upon the holy character of God and the need believing mankind has of correctly seeing who God really is and eliminating any nonsense about our understanding. Attacks on Davidic authorship depend upon linguistic arguments, but David travelled to many neighbouring countries and received diplomats from many places, and would, like ourselves when exposed to new words, have borrowed some. Be careful of linguistic arguments alone to challenge accepted authorship.

Everything about the feel of this psalm cries aloud for David as its author. It is a call to holy and intelligent worship. It is the call of a man who has seen who he is and now knows who God is and bows before His majesty. This is intelligent and humble worship, but it has the great strength that true humility always possesses. This psalm illustrates the truth, that when we truly see God as He is, we are lifted up to where He has designed us to be.

PSALMS 139:1- 24

1 O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. **2** Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. **3** Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. **4** For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. **5** Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. **7** Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? **8** If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. **9** If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; **10** Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. **11** If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. **12** Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. **13** For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. **14** I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. **15** My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. **16** Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. **17** How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! **18** If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. **19** Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. **20** For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. **21** Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? **22** I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. **23** Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: **24** And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

REFLECTION

1 O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

The first thing that grips our souls as we read these first verses is the intimacy of the relationship between the psalmist and the Lord God, the Creator of the universe. Paganism produces dead RELIGION, but only biblical faith produces a relationship like this one we see illustrated here. God knows us and He desires to know us. We are not "things" in His universe that are of no consequence in amongst the vastness of time and space, but we are loved creatures of an all knowing Creator. We are blood bought creatures, and the God who made us has held nothing back from us, but freely given us all things that we need to be saved, and to become His servants forever. 1 Peter 1:14-25.

Refer again to the previous BTB doctrinal studies on the CHARACTER OF GOD, THE PLAN OF GOD, ETERNAL LIFE, SALVATION, GRACE, MERCY, and refresh your spirits in the truths of the WORD OF GOD which reveals to us the love of God towards us as His blood bought children. Through the blood of Christ shed for us we have been lifted up from creatures to become children, members of the ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD, under the FATHERHOOD OF GOD; all through our POSITION IN CHRIST. It is the joy of these things that fires up David's mind in these first verses before us. Psalms 11:4-5, 17:3, 56:8-11, Luke 9:46-48, 1 Corinthians 3:20, 4:5. God is the One who knows the "thoughts and intents of the heart". Hebrews 4:12.

Our thoughts are known by the Lord our God and our Father through our relationship with our Saviour the Lord Christ Jesus. We are known, and the thoughts that wrack and torment us at times are known. Our philosophical agony and existential questions are all known by God. Many of the things we grapple with in our mind we do not have the mental capacity to fully answer this side of eternity, but in Christ Jesus we have the relationship within which the answer will be found in eternity to all our questions.

God sees each time we rise to go into some action or other, and each time we sit and rest and then watch our thoughts spin within our head. We grapple with things that are too big for us, but in Christ Jesus we are in the only relationship

that will provide the answers when we can understand them. God knows our thoughts and assists us even in our prayers to articulate the things that otherwise we couldn't find words for.

Hear the words of Paul about this and what it means for us, for one of the great promises of scripture emerges from this truth. **Romans 8:26-28.** *"26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

What is to be our response to this understanding of the wonder of the love of God for us? The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us clearly; we open our Bibles, and we open our hearts and boldly live out our faith in every detail of our life. **Hebrews 4:11-16.** *"11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

**3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.
4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.**

The Lord is our Protector and our Shield from dangers. He "compasses" our path; that is, He surrounds our forward path and ensures we are safe and secure as we advance on His track for us. Psalms 3:3, 23:2ff, 28:7, 33:20, Proverbs 30:5. When we lie down we are not alone and vulnerable, but He overshadows us with His powerful presence to keep us safe. Psalms 121:1-8. The Lord has all the ways we are to walk encompassed in His plan for us, and as an integral part of the plan there is provision for every step of the way.

Our thoughts and our words are known to the Lord. The Lord hears both our petitions and the desires that are behind them. God's omniscience protects us on our journey, for the Lord knows all the details about this vast universe and we are kept by the power of the One who has all the details under His control. How safe are we believer? We cannot be more secure than we are, and so let us banish fear or worry. Psalms 50:19-23, Hebrews 4:12-16.

**5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.**

We are effectively surrounded by the power of God. The Lord's power has gone before us and has followed after us to ensure we are not attacked from the rear. We are urged to get our spiritual armour on, and keep alert to evil's policies, but the Lord is our screen defence and we are safe because we are surrounded by His powerful presence. Underneath are the everlasting arms of the God who loves us and has the power to keep us safe. Deuteronomy 33:27, Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 John 4:4.

When we really understand the care and protection of the Lord over us we face something far too wonderful to fully comprehend this side of eternity. The wonder of God's care is too great to fully comprehend, but by hearing it and understanding just a little we can praise the Lord that much more powerfully. We cannot understand all of the wonder of God's plan for us this side of eternity, but we can know enough to praise Him in the highest, and that is the least we can do. We can then serve the Lord and the Lord's people with all our heart, and mind, and body, ready to put our very body on the line for the Lord and His people. John 10:15-18, 13:12-17, 15:12-17, 1 John 3:16.

**7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.**

Jeremiah again identified the truths here several hundred years after David. Jeremiah 23:23-24. He identified also that the false prophets think that they could escape the judgement of God, but they cannot. Jeremiah 23:21-32. As God keeps the saint, He deals with the "aint". Jonah identified that there is nowhere to hide from the Lord, not at sea or in the belly of a great fish. This was both a gracious and a terrifying thing for Jonah. Jonah 1:3-10, 2:1-9. Ananias and Sapphira in the early church made the same mistake that the false prophets of Israel made; they stupidly thought that they could hide the truth from God. They paid with their lives. Acts 5:1-11.

There is nowhere on this earth or beyond it where a man or woman may hide from the justice and also the mercy of God. The unbeliever cannot hide from judgement, but if they call upon the name of the Lord they will be saved also, for their sins have not hidden the mercy of God from them either. Isaiah 43:11, Acts 2:38-41, 3:19-21, 4:12, Revelation 6:12-17, 7:14-17, 19:11-21. To all who fly into the heavens and to all who go deep under the earth, the Lord is there for them, and they have the assurance that there is nowhere to hide from the Lord, for good or for ill. Isaiah 55:6, 56:1. While we live we can select whether we receive God's mercy or His judgement; there is no third option, nor any "opt out" clause.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

These verses are a real encouragement to sailors on wild and treacherous seas, for when the storms rage we relax in the care and protection and presence of the Lord. Even if we rise up and fly away into the heavens, and of course we can and do engage in flights like this, there is nowhere we go that is beyond the Lord's care and protection. Wherever we are, there the Lord is with us to guide us and keep us. When Jesus said, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age", He meant every word of it. We are kept, and we are guarded from evil when we walk with the Lord. Psalms 63:6-10, 73:22-24, 143:9-12, Matthew 28:20.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

At times depression will rise up and be overwhelming to us all. I have just returned to my computer to write these words after spending the last hour with a bright, intelligent, lovely young woman, who has recently been suicidally depressed because her life has lost its direction. A close friend of hers suicided a year ago and she has been sorely tempted to join him in recent days. The darkness has covered over her and she has no assistance from friends or family. Within a very short time of discussion she had seen a path forward and the darkness lifted, for if we focus forward the darkness can always be grown away from and escaped.

We move away from the dark clouds, for they seldom lift on their own if we stay stationary in this life. Refer to the BTB study DEPRESSION. The Lord calls us to advance on a path that will lead us into the LIGHT, and our challenge is to WALK IN THE LIGHT through the dark patches and glorify God in the process.

With a strong faith in the Lord we can have light about us in the darkness. We can get sorely tested at times and experience serious depression in the devil's world; there is great evil around us at times and the effect of these things can be overwhelming. The heart felt cry of the Lord from the Cross, prophetically foretold in Psalm 22 can be our own cry under pressure. Psalms 22:11-21. The Lord wants us to express our worry and concerns to Him and lay our grief upon Him for He will carry us through. Psalms 55:22, 75:1ff, Philipians 4:7, 1 Peter 5:5-10.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

The Lord is the One who "owns" and "possesses" the power of our body organs. Our "reins" (kidneys) are in the Lord's hands. From our mother's womb we have been covered and kept so that we can fulfil our role upon the earth. This is one of my favourite verses, for I was under great threat as a child in the womb of my young mother.

She was under pressure to abort me, and had to flee the country from my violent natural father after my birth. I was cared for by the Lord, and I live only because the Lord guarded me in her womb, and protected me after her flight, bringing me into a lovely Christian home where I would meet the Lord in my teenage years. We are all "fearfully and wonderfully made". As I revise these words in late July or 2011 I remember the death of my adopted parents two years ago and give thanks for their protection and godly mentoring and the grace of God that kept us all.

Even with all the things that are wrong in our bodies, (legacies of the fall in our fallen genetics) we can praise the Lord, for if we "go with" the way we are made, we get the best out of our present bodies and minds. With cancer patients I can always say, "Let's go with the way the Maker has made us and get the best we can get out of our Immune System". I know I am not misleading them when I say this, for the Lord has made us well, and even the effect of thousands of years of satanic attack have not broken the divine image we still carry within our bodily systems. Psalms 92:1-6, 104:24, 111:2.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

The essence of who each of us truly is has not been hidden from the One who formed us in the womb. The Lord knows our DNA and has made us to fulfil a part in the divine plan. Each of us have been "curiously wrought". Some are quick to humorously add, "and some of us are more curious than others!" We are all made differently, and each have a different part to play in the Lord's Plan for us. Many never really understand themselves in this life, and so miss the life they should have enjoyed, but all believers are encouraged to accept how the Lord has made them, and embrace it with joy. Let us say with vigour; "Thank you Lord for making me truly me, uniquely me, and Lord I embrace the job you have given me to do and the gifts I have from you to do it well!"

In the Lord's book we are recorded and every part of us is recorded and known by the Lord. God is the God of the details, and nothing escapes the Lord's notice. Let us realise we are kept by the One who doesn't miss anything! Let us confess our sins, for all are seen by the Lord, and nothing is hidden, but let us embrace the Lord's goodness and serve Him in joy and power. Our very tears are stored in the heavens; the Lord knows our heartaches and He hears our prayers and has answered us before we have finished speaking. Psalms 56:8-11, Malachi 3:16-17.

**17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!
18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.**

There is joy when we meet the Lord in spirit and in truth, for we see how great His thoughts are towards us. The Lord's thoughts towards us are precious indeed. The sum of the Lord's love for us is beyond all accounting. The joy of awaking each morning is the joy of waking in the love of the Lord again. His joy is renewed every morning! Psalms 31:19, 36:7, 40:5, Lamentations 3:23, Ephesians 3:9-13. No matter what the events of the days and nights, when we awake, we awake with the Lord watching over us. We are either with Him in heaven, or He is with us upon the earth; there is no third option for the believer. Refer to the BTB studies on SPIRITUALITY, DEATH and DYING GRACE.

**19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.**

The Lord will slay the wicked, but He will slay the wicked in His time, not in ours. We are often less charitable to evil people than the Lord was to us! When we face hatred from evil people we seek their judgement, but the Lord first seeks their salvation. Judgement is God's "strange work", not His preferred work. Isaiah 28:21, 2 Peter 3:5-10. We will be hated by those who hate the truth, and that is simply because we stand for the truth and they don't like what we stand for! It's normal for them to hate us and to be expected from such people. We mustn't take their hatred personally, even when they make it clear that it is personal! They hate us because they first hated the Lord! John 15:18-25.

The enemies of the truth will swear at us and blaspheme the name of the Lord, but we are not to get angry at them, but rather see them as sinners for whom Christ died. Our challenge is to give them the Gospel message and pray for them, not call down God's vengeance upon them too quickly. God will judge them if they persist in evil, but shed a tear for them, for if they get to that place, they will suffer damnation forever! Revelation 19:16 – 20:15. Read this passage from Revelation and feel sorrow for the lost, for their fate is terrible indeed. If we cannot feel their pain we have no right to ask the Lord to judge them! We were enemies and we were saved, and so let us pray for that mercy and grace to be received by all who hate us for the truth's sake. Romans 5:10.

**21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.**

Having identified that it is the Lord's will for us to pray for our enemies, we must also recognise that it is normal for a believer who loves the Lord to feel great anger and even hatred towards those who blaspheme the name of the Lord who loves us and has given Himself for us. Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:28. We will hate those who hate the Lord, but we must then recall that He died for them, and still pray for them while they live and there is hope for their salvation. We can be grieved at sin, at evil and at the lives and fate of those who live in evil, and this grief is "good grief".

"Good grief" is grief that is true, appropriate, noble, and shows that we have the right standards and beliefs. It is good that we cry for the lost as Jesus did, both at the tomb of Lazarus, and outside the walls of Jerusalem. Matthew 23:37, John 11:35. It is also good that we have hatred towards the persistent and determined enemies of the truth and do not ever let our guard down against them, be they angelic forces or human powers. Psalms 101:3-5, 119:136, 157-158, Revelation 2:4-6.

There is a balance to be found between caring for the lost and praying for their salvation, and hating all they do, and being ready to see them judged eternally. It is not wrong to hate the enemies of the Lord, for they will be judged eternally if they persist in that position. We must see things God's way, and realise that persistent rejection of the truth means you love a lie, and there is no room in eternity for such people or such angelic beings. These wicked people and the evil demons they prefer to God will be eliminated and we need to be relaxed about that, and even be happy about that.

The enemies of the Lord Jesus are our enemies! We may pray for them while we can, and witness to them if we are able, but we will eventually rejoice in their judgement if they maintain their hatred of our precious Lord. David challenges us to maintain the heart of the Lord towards the lost, and that means mercy is offered until justice is administered. As James reminds us; there is no mercy finally for those who show no mercy or any love of the truth. James 2:13.

**23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**

When we face the need to pray for our enemies, and for those who hate us and abuse us awfully, we need to keep our hearts clean through that time. We must ensure that we hate evil, and do not allow any negativity in the hatred of evil to overflow to self-centred things in our own life. Any anger must indeed be righteous anger, as it was with the Lord. Matthew 21:12-13, John 2:13-17. It is easy for hatred and anger to overflow from an appropriate object to an inappropriate one. I see people in my clinic for "Anger Management"; these are people who have become angry at a criminal, but then had that anger fester away inside them, and they have got angry at their wife or children later, quite inappropriately.

It is all very well to speak of "righteous anger", but all too often the anger we express is anything but righteous in the end. Let us ensure that we let the Holy Spirit convict us of sin, and find any wicked way in us, and lead us away from evil and into the paths of everlasting life. Deuteronomy 8:2-6, Proverbs 17:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:6-9. Let us neither quench nor resist the Holy Spirit's work within us. Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are known and we are loved by the God who gave His Son for us. Our anguish ridden thoughts are known, our deepest worries are known, and our existential questions are known, and the Lord has heard all our prayers. Let us praise His Holy Name and let us draw near His majesty in full assurance that we are indeed loved and all that occurs in our life will work out for glory in Him.

2. We are safe in the Lord's hands, and so let us advance down the path of life He has called us to walk with courage and boldness. Let us apply our faith in strength of purpose to do all that the Lord has called us to do. We cannot get out of His caring grip, or from His protecting arms. John 6:36-46, 10:27-30. Let us praise Him for His loving care over us.

3. Let us ensure that we heed the ministries of the Holy Spirit in conviction of any sins that will lead us into paths that are destructive. Let us heed the Holy Spirit's ministries within us and follow the Word of God and live righteously before the Lord and mankind. While we are entitled to hate those who hate the Lord, let us ensure that hatred does not overflow into greater evils that will destroy our lives and witness.

DOCTRINES

RELIGION

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE

SALVATION

GRACE

MERCY

BIBLE – WORD OF GOD – HEBREWS 4:12

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD

GOD – FATHERHOOD OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

DEPRESSION – PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH IT

LIGHT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

DEATH

DYING GRACE

HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

HOLY SPIRIT – OPERATION

PSALMS 140**INTRODUCTION**

This rings true as a Psalm of David. It is similar to his psalms from early days on the run from Saul and he was certainly a man that knew adversity and hatred of enemies. Many sought his life and hunted him like a wild bird. 1 Samuel 26:20. The ANGELIC CONFLICT is very real, and all who stand for God will come under great attack and face great SUFFERING and abuse at times. We are warned of this clearly in the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 4:12, 2 Corinthians 1:6, Galatians 5:11, 6:12, 1 Thessalonians 3:4, 2 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Timothy 2:9, 3:12, 1 Peter 3:14, 4:15-19. As David suffered many enemies, and it was a badge of honour for him that those who hated him hated God also, just so it is with us.

Our enemy's hatred towards us is honourable if they hate the Lord also, for that means we are hated for the right things, and that is the point the apostles make in the passages above. No believer is to be hated for doing evil, but if we are hated for the sake of the Lord and His work, then we are to rejoice in such malice towards us. We are to put our spiritual armour on each day and stand through each day in the power of the Holy Spirit, and trust our life into the Lord's hands, for He will deal with our enemies, either by leading them to the Cross or placing them in Hell itself. We are to cast our cares regarding attacks upon the Lord who is our defender and our shield. Psalms 7:10, 59:9, 16-17, 62:2-6, 89:18, 94:22, 1 Peter 5:5-10.

PSALMS 140:1- 13

1 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man; 2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah. 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings. 5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah. 6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. 7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. 8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9 As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. 10 Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

REFLECTION

**1 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man;
2 Which imagine mischief in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.**

We face a choice in the Angelic Conflict each day, and it is a choice that will either empower us or disable and distract us. It is the choice to walk in PRAYER or in fear. We cannot defend against all verbal and other assaults that evil men will launch upon us, for some will be seen and can be challenged, but many will not even be known until well afterwards when we hear what has been said or done against us.

We must choose each day to cast our life into the hands of Almighty God and trust the Lord to defend us and protect us from all evil, or we will waste energy worrying and attempting to counter the moves of evil people and demons we cannot see. God is our defender and our shield from evil and wicked men and angelic beings, and He defends us so that we can focus all our energy on obedience to His will for us this day. Matthew 6:25-34.

David makes it clear that the assaults upon him that he is speaking of are beyond his control or counter action. He mentions the "imagining of mischief" in the hearts of the evil men and women. He is not privy to their plots and plans let alone their thoughts, but he knows that they are malice filled towards him. They are gathered for war against him with all their energy and malice filled hearts.

David is not paranoid, he is real in his danger assessment here, and if we stand for the truth we need to be as aware as David was about the malice of Satan towards us. We need to stand by FAITH in the Lord's PROMISES and be firmly determined to walk in the Holy Spirit's power in the PLAN OF GOD for our life. God's power is available for all who are WALKING IN THE LIGHT of God's Word and in His Holy Spirit's power. David commits his way to the Lord for protection, for the Lord alone can protect us against unseen dangers, and He will do so. Habakkuk 1:1-5, 2:1-5, 3:16-19.

**3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.
4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.**

The malice of the enemy may be as poisonous as a snake's bite at times. The hatred of the enemy is a surprise to some lovely believers at times. They do not know hatred themselves and they are shocked at the extent of the malice they face for no personal reason. I have heard people say many times, "What have they got against me?" Also I have heard

said, "I have never done anything to them". They have not done anything to them, but just being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will cause hatred to rise in a servant of Satan, for every believer is a standing rebuke to them.

They hate us because they hate the Lord Jesus, and that is a good enough reason for them to loose the malicious poison in our direction! We protect ourselves against such malice by prayer alone. Psalms 17:5-10, 37:32-40. They desire to completely "overthrow our goings". They want to destroy our mission and our ministry, and everything that is precious to us is a target for their malice. Only God can stop them in their tracks. The Lord is our defender and we are safe in His arms, and we are to learn to rest there.

5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah.

The malice of the evil people is associated at times with great cunning also, but their plans are limited and their ability to harm us is restricted to certain things. Satan is not as powerful or as smart as he wishes us to think he is. Neither are his servants as smart or powerful as they may think they are. They are not able to lay their snares upon the path of the Lord for us, for that is a cleared path by the power of God Himself. God clears the path ahead for us and we are safe while we walk along His path, but if we go off the path "by the wayside" then we can fall into the snares of the devil's people and demonic forces.

They can lay their mines on the side of the path but the Lord clears the minefield on His path for us. We are safe in the footsteps the Lord makes for us. The Lord keeps our feet from falling as we stay on His path for us. Psalms 18:33-38, 40:2, 56:13, 66:9, 116:8, 121:3, Matthew 7:13-23. When we get our eyes off the Lord's path and start to envy the wicked, only then are we in danger of wandering from the safe path, and our feet then are in danger of falling out from under us. Psalms 73:1-7, 21-28.

**6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.**

The right response to the Lord's protective arms around us is to strongly affirm our stand with the Lord. The right response to satanic attack is also to strongly announce for all to hear our allegiance to the Lord. The affirmation of faith is the rebuke of the Devil that we are ordered to give often through each day. James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-11. The Lord is our God and, "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world". 1 John 4:4. We do not stand in our strength, for that is none at all against demonic forces, but we stand "in Christ" in the full power and with the full authority of the God who made the heavens and the earth.

There are times when we get hammered by evil forces and when we fall due to sin or stupidity on our own part, but it is unwise for our enemies to "rejoice over us", for the Lord will pick us up when we look to Him, and He will guard us again and bring us to victory. Psalms 35:24-28, Micah 7:8-10. He is our shield and the helmet of our salvation. We are safe with the Lord in body and soul. We keep our head safe when we stabilise our minds upon the doctrines of God's Word. Refer to the BTB study POSITION IN CHRIST.

**8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah.
9 As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.**

David's insights into the psychology of wicked men are significant ones. He knows that only the Lord can alter the thinking of wicked people; they certainly do not respond to the logical arguments of the people they hate. God alone can shift them, and set up road blocks to stop their wicked plans from coming to fruition. They grow in arrogance with every success they have, and so their failures are important to hinder their growth in arrogance. David knows that only if they fail dramatically is there any chance of them being stopped permanently or changed in any way.

David wants them held back from attacking him, but he also wants them held in a place of humility, where they will damage no-one else, and where there is a better chance of them being changed, and neutralised, (and possibly saved also?). He wants the counsel of the ungodly to unhinge itself, and for their own malice to turn upon themselves.

There is both a desire for justice here and a desire to see these people confronted with enough truth that they might not hurt anyone else. David wants them to be convicted of their sin and evil and stopped in their tracks, but he is realistic about their possible salvation (it's not very possible because they enjoy their evil work).

The people David is up against here are what we call today the "Borderline Narcissistic Personality Disorders" and they are hard to change or shift in behaviour at all. They are not convicted of any sin by one piece of evidence against them, for they will escape anything but the best laid traps, and escape conviction from anything except the best case against them. Unless they are overwhelmed by the evidence of their evil they will excuse themselves, lie, cheat, and often escape from its consequences by their sheer pig headed rejection of all truth that doesn't suit them. David wants these people "nailed" by such overwhelming evidence against them that they are stopped dead!

**10 Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.**

These words indicate just how “hot” David is about the evil these people have worked; he really wants them to suffer. I can understand David’s feelings here and before we condemn him for being harsh, let us remember these people are condemned by God to hell fire for their unrepentant evils. Revelation 20:10-15. David wants them to suffer the pain and anguish that they have caused so many others. The evils they do are awful, and the suffering they cause is terrible indeed, and their punishment must be in the zone that is seen to be just and fair, given what they have done upon the earth to others.

The only punishment for the determined offender in the matter of evil in their life on earth is that they do not “rise again” to repeat their evil eternally. God will end evil’s reign upon this earth at the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT and then evil is over permanently and eternity begins without the devil or those who have followed him in time. These people unhinge themselves and undermine themselves, and David’s prayer is answered completely. God is going to judge these people and it will be harsh, but it will be just and fair given their persistent evil.

Evil is restricted to this space-time universe, and as the universe is folded up and put away so is the evil that was let loose upon it. 2 Peter 3:9-18. In verse eleven David prays that the evil people will not be allowed by God to get established and become dominant upon the earth. This prayer is answered in the Millennium, and in the new heavens and the new earth, but in present time the principle he ends the verse with explains the main way God keeps evil under control today.

Evil people eliminate each other and the violent people are hunted down by even more violent ones. The Lord is in control of the growth of evil even now, and the evil men and women on the present earth have a limited opportunity to practise the full malice that some would work if they had an open cheque to do it. Their lack of power or money, their ill health, and their aging bodies stop them working the worst they could work. Even in the Great Tribulation period there will be limits set upon what the enemy is able to do, and many of those limits are the limits inherent within the nature of evil itself.

The Lord’s return ends their brief attempt at world domination and their plan for the destruction of all goodness. Satan will not be able to argue he didn’t have a full opportunity to work his malice for he will in that day, but he won’t be able to pull it together, for his entire team are evil and lust driven narcissists and borderlines, and they can’t work together, even if their eternal lives depend upon it!

**12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.**

David can end his prayer for justice with the affirmation that rests upon the character of God and the stability and certainty of God’s Plan. The Lord will support and maintain the cause of the afflicted, and will support and assist the godly poor. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. This is not a verse to justify lazy people waiting for others to feed them, but refers to people who through no fault of their own are poor and need help. Refer to the BTB studies on POVERTY, WELFARE.

Those who stand for righteousness will always give thanks to the Lord for His character and plan and all who walk morally upright will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever. It is a good place to end the psalm, with a call to morality and righteousness, reminding all believers that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is righteous living and moral standards that do not bring the Lord into disgrace. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. There is no place for the workers of evil in God’s eternal universe. Evil will be judged and it will be judged thoroughly and finally. Let us accept this truth and move forward with confidence in the Lord for today and tomorrow.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Having cast our cares upon the Lord let us advance forward into the Plan of God for our life this day with strength and focused power. Let us not allow any distraction or worry about being attacked by the enemy, keep us from our obedient walk through this day. Let us walk with the Lord and depend upon His power to keep us safe as we walk. “The just shall live by faith!” Habakkuk 2:2-4.
2. We are completely safe on the Lord’s path for our life. The challenge for every believer is to walk close to the Lord along His path and then we avoid the snares of the devil to the sides of the way. The Lord will protect us from the malice of the enemy as long as we are walking along His path for us.
3. Let us keep our head safe from evil thoughts and from all manner of temptations. Let us do this by feeding daily upon the Holy Word of God and drinking in its refreshing truths. God’s Word protects our head and His power protects our path, for our path is His own for us and we are safe with our God to guide us. Let us advance into today with confidence and courage and do what is required of us in the safety the Lord gives. We will either end this day in heaven with Him, or He will be still walking beside us and His Holy Spirit will be within us. Either way we are blessed in the Lord. Hallelujah!!!
4. Evil unhinges itself over time, and our main way of dealing with evil people is to be good in all we do, and through prayer utilise the power of God to disable their plots and plans. Evil is inherently self destructive and often can be left to itself to implode. In the end even the worst that Satan can do in the Great Tribulation will not do the job to eliminate God’s people off the earth. Satan will unleash all his malice in that day, but it is no-where near powerful

enough to defeat God's people walking in His plan for their lives. 1 John 4:4. We are on the winning side, and so through prayer, worship, and Holy Spirit filled service, let us live as people who believe this 100%.

DOCTRINES

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUFFERING

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

PROMISES

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT

LIGHT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE

POVERTY

WELFARE

NOTES

PSALMS 141

INTRODUCTION

There is a serious plot around the time of the writing of this psalm. It has again all the hallmarks of David's reign and may relate to a plot against him by any number of courtiers or at any number of situations. There are a number of powerful local enemies that have gathered against him and the threat is real and dangerous. David needs the Lord's deliverance and he rests upon the reality of that. The reality of God's presence overcomes the reality of the enemy's threats. There are major textual problems with verses six and seven, and the meaning of the poetry is much speculated upon. We will make our assessment in the context of the earlier verses as to the most likely words and meanings here and we will see that the "difficulties" evaporate quickly.

PSALMS 141:1-10

1 Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. 4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties. 5 Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. 6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. 7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. 8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute. 9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

REFLECTION

**1 Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.
2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

The cry of the king is urgent and passionate. He cries aloud to the Lord in serious concern and deep anguish of soul. He pours out his concerns before the Lord and pleads for early intervention to deliver him from dangers. It is a good thing to open our hearts to the Lord and really disclose all the anguish we feel within. The Lord seeks honesty and openness from us regarding our fears, worries, questions and concerns, and we have the promise of the Lord that He hears us and will deliver us. Psalms 40:13-17, 69:16-18, 70:4-5, 71:1-2, 12-16, 143:6-9.

The picture of prayer in verse two is a beautiful and accurate one. Our prayers are sweet to the Lord, as the incense that rose from the Altar of Incense in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The Altar of Incense spoke of prayer that was sweet to the Lord for it came from hot coals taken from the Brazen Altar of sacrifice.

It was "blood covered" prayer. Refer back to the BTB doctrinal studies on BLOOD SACRIFICE, PRAYER, and then study the doctrine TABERNACLE, and LEVITICAL SACRIFICES. We can know our prayer is heard because it is covered by the blood of Jesus, and He has asked us to pray in His holy name, and in His name all things in accordance with the Plan of God are done. There is no doubt about prayer being answered if it is in Jesus name, and in accordance with His will. Matthew 6:7-13, John 14:12-17. Brethren, let us pray our way through each day!

**3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.
4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.**

When we pray for the Lord to answer our earnest desires we need to be sure that we are walking in purity of heart, mind, behaviour, and lips. David is aware that under extreme pressure we can yell, scream aloud, swear, and curse, and say all manner of evil things ourselves. We can utter judgements upon our enemies that we are not entitled to utter, for judgement is the Lord's not ours! "Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay." Romans 12:9. David does not want to behave like a pagan as he faces pagans and false brethren. We are to cast our burdens upon the Lord and leave judgement in His hands. The Lord is far more capable of judging evil men and women than we are. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Our God is a consuming fire!" Hebrews 10:31, 12:29.

David wants the Lord to keep him from any hasty oaths or foolish utterances towards the plotters against him. Those who stand against God's ministers and God's ministries stand against God, and are to be left to the Lord to judge. We are not to take the divine imperative of judgement to ourselves. We are to "keep the flapping door of our mouth" firmly shut. It is the word for a curtain type door used here and it is an appropriate one for the mouth, which flaps like a curtain all too often!

The senior pastor of my church has always urged the people to pray for their enemies, and ask for the Lord to bless them, for he argues rightly, the only way the Lord can bless them is to save them and make them spiritual first! If you ask for blessing upon those who despitely use and abuse you, then you have placed them firmly under the convicting

ministry of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 5:44, John 16:8-11. Do not envy the evil man; pity him for the judgement that is coming upon him, and leave him to the Lord's conviction or judgement, but pray for their soul. Proverbs 24:1-8, 19-20

David then alludes to a number of principles for godly action that his son Solomon will record later in the book of Proverbs. David is concerned that he might be kept from evil in his heart, and kept from evil actions with his hands, and also that he might not be tempted to join with the evil people and eat their covenant food and so make any wrongful agreements with them. There is to be no compromise with evil in any way at all, and no godly action against evil is ever to be evil itself! David was very aware of the importance of praying for the Lord to keep him from hasty action. He had been close to murdering all the household of Nabal due to an insult by him, and was stopped by Abigail. 1 Samuel 25:23-34.

He is concerned that he in no way resembles his enemies, nor is seen to be associated with them in any way. Read the following passages from Solomon's Proverbs and see just how many clearly find their origin in these sayings/psalms of his father David. Proverbs 1:7, 15-20, 2:10-15, 4:14, 8:13, 11:17-19, 12:20-22, 14:22, 15:1-4. (Possibly these proverbs refer to the incident of David with Abigail.) Proverbs 16:1-4, 17:11-13, 20:22, 23:1-9.

5 Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

David is ready to take any blows, either in words or with hands or weapons, from righteous people. He is ready to hear and receive correction, rebuke, or encouragement to alter his life course, but only from those who work and walk with God. David is ready to be wounded by the Lord if that is what it takes to be corrected and placed back on the path of God. He would rather lose an eye, or limb, and walk with a limp with God, than be wrong in his words or actions.

The Lord will make this point to the disciples, dramatically calling them to be ready to cut off a body part that offends the Lord by a wrongful action. Now the Lord is not calling people to literally cut off their hands or feet, or put out their eye, but to see that dramatic action is required of every believer to get their lives right before the Lord, and if they do not take dramatic action, then they are in danger of hell fire. Matthew 5:27-30.

It is always a great thing to be corrected by the Lord, for then, with the life changed, you are ready for more thorough and acceptable service. Correction is like the application of healing oil to the genuine believer. The genuine believer sees that they are healed and restored by being corrected, and so are made fit for service again. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is a readiness to accept correction by a spirit filled brother or sister. Hebrews 12:5-15.

David passes this test of genuine faith here in his readiness to be corrected if he is wrong in any matter. He knows that genuine correction will not be violent or abusive. The true pastor is not a habitual "striker" of those who disagree with him. 1 Timothy 3:2-10. Gentleness is also a FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. David knows that godly people will be at prayer for his "calamities" even as evil people will create calamities. By the fruit of their lives the two categories of people are known; genuine brethren pray for us, and false brethren plot and plan against us. Matthew 7:13-23.

6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.
7 Our (possibly "their") bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.

These verses have been subject to a great deal of speculation, but let us read them in the context, and I believe that even the confusion about some of the words may clear. David is ready to be corrected and even physically hurt by righteous men who are in the Lord's service. He is not ready to give one inch however to the workers of iniquity and the servants of Satan. The enemy is to be withstood and he seeks neither alliance with them, nor any dealings with them. No matter what their titles and status in society (judges) he asks the Lord to overthrow them in stony places. This is a way of saying for them to be driven from civilization (where they can mislead others) into the wild and stony lands and there be defeated totally.

"Stony ground" is a picture of negative volition to God's Word and will, and so pictures a place of judgement of negative volition. In this place of judgement he asks that these evil people hear the sweet words of truth that he has always said and be rebuked by them before they die under judgement. He wants these people to be corrected and rebuked before they are judged, and the image of bodies being hewed like wood cut for a fire is a graphic one, but one that the Lord picks up in John 15:1-6. David is ready to be hewn like wood himself, but he will stand for the truth until the end. Refer to the BTB study WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT.

8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Having left the evil people under the hands of the Lord for judgement David lifts his eyes to the Lord for his own deliverance. He has recognised the malice and violence of the enemy, but he has cast all his cares upon the Lord firmly and finally. 1 Peter 5:5-10. David's eyes look to the Lord alone for deliverance; not to money, not to friends, not to luck, not to powerful forces, but to the Lord alone. Psalms 25:15-17, 123:1-2, Isaiah 41:17-20. We can trust in the Lord, for He will not leave us destitute, but He will deliver us from all the evils we face along the sides of the path He has called us to walk.

As we saw in the last psalm, the enemy will lay snares for us along the sides of the path we are called to walk, but they are no danger to us if we keep to the path. The enemy knows our Old Sin Nature areas of weakness and can play well to them. Satan knows the best temptations to put in front of us and we need to be standing firm in the filling of the Holy Spirit, with all our spiritual armour on! If we are not alert to attack we can be taken out of the game of life for a time! Refer to the BTB studies again, on FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, CHRISTIAN SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6.

The enemy is focused upon the entrapment of all believers; he seeks to destroy ministries and all the people involved in them. Our challenge is to be alert and walk in the light of the Word and the filling of the Spirit. Psalms 119:105, John 3:19-21, 8:12, 12:35-46.

The more active and spiritually successful the ministry is the more we will be attacked as the servants of the Lord within it. Intense satanic attack does not mean you are off the track of the Lord, it often means you are right on it and Satan does not like the work you are doing. Rejoice in such affliction, for it means you are winning eternal REWARDS AND CROWNS in the Lord's service, but stay alert, and like David draw near the Lord in prayer every moment you walk forward in His service. Let us be prayerful as we advance in our spiritual service and let us have the heart of David and rejoice in our affliction, for we suffer for the Lord's sake and He will uphold us through it all. Philippians 3:1, 7, 4:4-13, 1 Peter 1:6-9, 4:12-13.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us come before the Lord with all our cares and concerns, and bring our prayers in His holy name, and win accordance with His will for our life. All that is in the will of the Lord will be done, and our prayer in this spirit is sure of powerful answer. Let us pray expectantly and urgently on all matters that are concerns to us.
2. Let us pass our enemies over to the Lord for His gracious dealing with them. Let us pray for blessing upon our enemies, for if they heed the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which such a prayer is requesting, they will be saved and transformed into our friends. Let us leave judgement in the Lord's hands and never resemble in any thought, word or deed the evil people who oppose our spiritual work.
3. Let us be ready to be corrected in all things, in order that our service might be more acceptable to the Lord, and even more holy and powerful. Let us be teachable and open to correction in thought and deeds. Let us earnestly seek the best that God has to offer.
4. Let us stand in the Lord's will for us, and walk along His called path for us, with our spiritual armour on and the Holy Spirit active within us. We stand in spiritual power only.

DOCTRINES

BLOOD SACRIFICE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

TABERNACLE

OFFERINGS – LEVITICAL OFFERINGS REPRESENT CHRIST

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT

HOLY SPIRIT – FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SOLDIER: CHRISTIAN SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

PSALMS 142**INTRODUCTION**

This psalm is stated to be written while David was in the cave Adullam. 1 Samuel 22. David has heard that the priests and all their families have been murdered and he has barely escaped with his own life from Saul. He has had to travel many weeks over to Moab and then back again to take his family to safety from Saul's wrath. He is close to despair in this psalm, and many times in his years on the run.

The late Dr Viktor Frankl, who went through Auschwitz Concentration Camp and other death camps, said of pressure and its effect upon us the following. "There are certain things, that if they happen to you, and you don't lose your mind, then it is only because you didn't have a mind to lose". David comes close to losing his mind at times, and he has good reasons for feeling as he does. David is a man who faces extreme pressures for a long period of time. 1 Samuel 26:20-29. If you ever think you have had a tough time over a period of years, just read the book of Samuel and see what David had to endure at the hands of Saul.

Great men and women are often asked to walk hard paths, for it is only along hard paths that real character is built. It is only as we learn faith in difficult places that the Lord can use us in greater tasks. Only the best troops get to fight and win the greatest battles. Only the bravest win the Victoria Cross. These medals are not given for looking good on the parade ground, but for bravery in the field, and that bravery only occurs when people have learned to soldier in difficult places for many years. Training for real battle takes years of hard work.

In our Armed Forces they do not like putting men or women into combat roles until they have been trained in hard places for at least three years. God wants us to be tough and testing times only come to train us to be tougher; the Lord does not allow testing to come to break us, but to make us stronger. We are called to a long campaign with the Lord as our General; we are not called to a short sprint! 2 Timothy 2:1-10, Hebrews 12:4-15.

PSALMS 142:1-7

1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. 4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. 6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. 7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

REFLECTION

**1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.
2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.**

David has really poured his heart out to the Lord; he has held nothing back from the Lord. He has been in great distress and expressed all his pain before the Lord. David is in the deepest distress, for he is hunted by the king with his entire army. From a human viewpoint David has no hope at all to escape. It is only the fact that he knows he is anointed to be the future king that can give him any hope, for if he believes he is to be the king, then the Lord will not let him die at the hands of Saul. 1 Samuel 16:1-13. On two very interesting occasions the Lord places Saul in David's hands so that David can kill him, but David will not slay the king, for he trusts the Lord to lift him up, and he will not come to the throne by murdering God's anointed king, even though Saul has gone bad. 1 Samuel 24:1-15, 26:9-26.

It is a hard thing to be hunted like a wild animal and have the persistent malice of a once good man targeted on you. David had his wife taken from him, his job taken from him in the palace, and his home taken from him. He had to move his entire family several hundred miles away for their own safety, and he was hunted by Saul for nearly ten years! This is pressure, and he has a few questions to ask the Lord and they are real ones! The Lord doesn't mind us asking questions of Him, as long as we are 100% honest with the Lord and pour all our heart's desires out to Him. Read the EBCWA Commentary in the chapters of 1 Samuel that we have referred to here. Psalms 77:1-2, 141:1, Romans 8:24-28.

**3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.
4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.**

David was overwhelmed, but he knew the Lord was with him in his distress and that the comfort of the Lord was around him in his distress. The Lord knew his path, for the path he walked was the Lord's, and when he got off the Lord's path the Lord would, upon David's repentance, lead him back to the path of truth and safety again. David made mistakes in his walk, but because he always prayed and returned to the Lord, no wrong turn was fatal to him. The Lord is good to us, as He was to David, and the Lord brings us back to the place of safety whenever we stray away from His path.

Psalms 51:1ff. The Lord is not waiting to judge us; He is waiting to bless us! We are not dealing with an angry God as our Saviour, but a loving God. Isaiah 28:21, Ezekiel 18:23, 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9.

The enemy has laid out snares to catch David and done all they could to ensnare him and destroy him, but David is in the Lord's hands. It is important that David remembers this for he cannot depend upon men; for even the best men are inadequate to support and protect us against the malice of satanic forces. He had wonderful men who were very loyal, but their advice was often wrong.

On both occasions where the Lord led Saul right to him and he could have killed the king, his dearest friends advised him to do so. 1 Samuel 24:4, 26:7-11. David must not depend upon his friends for advice or strength; he must rest upon the Lord's Word only and walk with God not trust the words of men. No men could save or advise him, but the Lord did advise and save him and David was obedient, and therefore David was delivered to become the king eventually.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

The Lord alone is the refuge of the believer; we have no other hope than in the Lord. The only power that can keep us alive is the power of God. The Lord alone is our refuge and the Lord alone is our hope when forces gather against us to take our life. God alone has the power to protect us and bring us through. Psalms 46:1-11, 62:6-7, 91:2-10.

He cries out to the Lord to hear his cry, and he acknowledges that he has been brought very low in spirit indeed by events. David was depressed and he had good reason to be. Many people had died as a result of Saul's malice towards David and he felt responsible for their deaths. Many of his men died in the wilderness in battles against Saul's forces, the Philistines and the southern Arab tribes they fought. He was always outnumbered and the enemy forces always had superior weapons and castles to hide in.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

He felt trapped where he found himself at this time; as if he was in prison. When you have served the Lord under pressure for a time you will know exactly what David is saying here. At times I have felt like I have been trapped in a vice, and financially I am still there as I write this. Like David I have been caught in a situation I cannot change for over ten years now (in 2014) and the pressure has been and remains intense. His prayer is my own, and has been for some time, but like David I praise the name of the Lord, for he has answered my prayer with great Christian friends, and the Lord has bountifully blessed in the midst of the pressure.

My situation is still financially impossible, but it has been that way for ten years now, and I praise the Lord for the answer that is yet unseen, but is coming to deliver me, and meanwhile I serve the Lord in all ways I can. As I have been writing these words I have been listening to the Irish Christian musician Robin Mark, and he has been singing his song from Isaiah 61, "Put on the garments of praise, for the spirit of heaviness". Psalms 146:1-9, Isaiah 61:1-3. These verses contain the promises we can cling to under the pressures that David faces, and many of us will face these very things as we soldier on in the Lord's service. They have been my song through these long years and I rejoice in their meaning.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God wants us to pour our heart out to Him in prayer. David was under great pressure and he poured his heart out to the Lord and found rest for his soul there. Psalms 37:7, Matthew 11:28-29. Let us pour our heart's worries out to the Lord and find the rest He has for us in our walk with Him. God wants us to be 100% honest with Him and He will answer our concerns.

2. The Lord wants us to put on the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness that can all too often overwhelm us. Like David we can put off our heaviness and take up our faith in the Lord's path through our troubles. The Lord will bring us through to victory in Christ Jesus. Men can at times be encouraging, but they lack the power to assist us in real pressure, but the Lord can always deliver us. We have a God who seeks to bless us, not judge us. Hallelujah!

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

NOTES

PSALMS 143**INTRODUCTION**

This is another psalm of David and expresses great suffering and distress on the writer's part. In the Septuagint the psalm is assigned to the days of the "Great Rebellion" of Absalom his son. There is no higher distress than that of a father whose own son has turned against him and is trying to kill him. The suffering of David in this matter was at the highest level imaginable. 2 Samuel 15-19. David had to face up to the Great Rebellion as a punishment for his own sin with Bathsheba, and he saw it that way. David did not get away with his sin with that woman, and he paid a terrible price for it in consequences that flowed on into the rest of his life.

Sin will always be forgiven when confessed, but at times the consequences set loose by the sin may not be able to be stopped, and may flow on as part of divine discipline for the sin. David faced terrible consequences for his terribly wicked behaviours relating to Bathsheba and Uriah. Even though the flow on effect was terrible the cursing of it was able to be turned to blessing as he walked humbly before the Lord and sought the Lord's path through this time. Refer to the BTB studies on CONFESSION, DISCIPLINE OF BELIEVERS, SUFFERING, and TEMPTATION.

PSALMS 143:1-12

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.**
- 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.**
- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.**
- 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.**
- 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.**
- 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.**
- 7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.**
- 8 Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.**
- 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.**
- 10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.**
- 11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.**
- 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.**

REFLECTION

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.**
- 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.**

David does not want the answer to his prayer based on anything other than the perfect CHARACTER OF GOD. He knows he will be heard and he wants to be heard on the basis of God's absolute faithfulness and righteousness. God is faithful to us. Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful to us. 2 Timothy 2:11-13. God hears us, not because we are worthy of being heard, but because of our relationship to the Lord Jesus which will always be honoured. Refer to the BTB study, POSITION IN CHRIST.

David knows that he is a sinner saved by grace, and that if the Lord dealt with him in terms of his righteousness, then he wouldn't have any hope at all. No-one is justified in terms of their own righteousness if the Lord is making the rules on the basis of absolute standards, for no man is ever justified by himself. We are all sinners in need of a Saviour. The only way for mankind to be saved is by the work of God on our behalf. Isaiah 43:11, Acts 4:12, 16:31, 17:26-31. Refer to the BTB studies on SALVATION – SIN, BARRIER BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, JUSTIFICATION.

- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.**
- 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.**

The enemy has nearly succeeded in destroying David's ability to resist and fight back. The enemy has practised what we call psychological warfare, and even David's soul has been persecuted, and he has felt depressed and distraught by the pressures put on him. The enemies that have assailed David have "put his lights out"; his soul has been darkened.

We still use this phrase today in English, and we also use the phrase, "to get into the head of the person" to describe the impact of a person playing with the mind of another and making them psychologically debilitated. David feels as if he is "half dead"; one who is amongst the dead. We also use this phrase, and the phrase, "dead man walking", to describe that "half dead" feeling we get under extreme pressure. Mental and spiritual desolation and aloneness is a terrible thing, and that is where this great level of mental pressure has placed David.

5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

It is interesting to note that as we grow older we often spend more time reflecting on how things used to be, and how often we long for past glory days. This is not a good thing to do for too long. It is normal to grow nostalgic as we age, but looking back is wasting time that should be spent in prayer for the future; even if it is not our future we ought to be in prayer for others. 1 Timothy 5:4-16.

The elderly ought to be the prayer warriors of the church, and such people can turn a church around. While we live and have breath we have something to do, and need to focus upon discovering it and doing it. When under pressure we can find ourselves acting as if we are old people, and no matter what age we are, the Lord doesn't want us to act as if we are "old people"! We can spend time longingly look back to the great things we did in the past, and long for that sort of day again, but the Lord wants us to see what is to be done today, and spend our energy doing that.

Thinking too deeply about the things we have done in the past, but looking with despondency at the pressures of today, is a sign of DEPRESSION. When we only look back and have no ability to do anything now, we are in a sad state, and that state is called depression, and we need to attack it with all the energy we can muster. There are things we can do to reboot our energy and enthusiasm for life, and the first thing we can do is stretch our hands forward to the Lord in prayer. The second thing we can do is hunger and thirst after the truths of God's Word, for then we will be fed with truth that will encourage and strengthen our weak knees again. Hebrews 12:1-15.

We have a race to run in this life and we will know when we are finished; we will be looking at Jesus face to face! Until we have died we are not finished our race upon this earth, and the Lord expects us to be still working and moving forward! 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Paul writes these words awaiting execution! He is ready to leave the earth at this point and has finished the course the Lord set for him, but until this point he was 100% active; working by day and preaching by night! Acts 18:1-3, 19:9-12, 2 Corinthians 11:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8-13. Refer to the BTB study on WELFARE, WORK.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

8 Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

David is feeling desperate and feels that time is running out for him before he dies. He feels death is close at this point, and yet in truth, it is years away! He is in a serious way, and this is an encouragement for many of us who are feeling that the Lord has made us wait for his answers to prayer for what feels like too long. If David could wait, learn patience, and build strength in so doing, then so can we. David wants to see the truth soon, and he feels time is running out for him, and it is alright to tell the Lord that is what we are feeling. The Lord doesn't criticise David for these thoughts, and He answers his prayers, so we can be encouraged to really disclose to the Lord our feelings.

David just longs to feel the loving kindness of the Lord again. He longs to feel the love of the Lord again. He affirms again that it is in the Lord that he trusts. He seeks to walk closer to the Lord and really and truly be on the Lord's path for him through life. He seeks no other path and destiny than that which the Lord has for him. He lifts himself up towards the Lord alone, for in the Lord alone is his trust. The Lord alone can deliver him. It is good to remind ourselves of this and say it aloud each and every day. Psalms 25:1, 86:4, Lamentations 3:22-24, 41.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

We need to flee to the Lord with all the passionate desire for escape of a person pursued by a lion. We do not take our distress seriously enough if we sit with it and do not flee with it to the Lord. God wants us to flee to his arms and trust him in all things. God wants us to "cast all our cares upon him", for He truly cares for us! Psalms 34:1-4, 61:1-4, 1 Peter 5:5-10.

We all need to be taught to do the work of the Lord and the Lord will teach us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Refer back to the BTB studies on the MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. God will always meet the needs of the obedient servant. All the Lord asks of us is that we obey his Word and follow the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is good and all that the Holy Spirit will do within us is good, and we will be led to a morally upright life. The FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is righteousness in behaviour and witness. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David desires to be "fired up", speeded up, and made more powerfully enthusiastic for the Lord's work. How powerfully do we desire this? He desires to serve the Lord more powerfully and bring more honour to the name of the Lord. It is this enthusiasm that the Lord seeks from us all. It is this constant daily revival that the Lord seeks from us. Revival isn't meant to occur every decade or so, for to be effective it must be an ongoing renewal of the spirit of the people of God so that their enthusiasm for service grows each and every day. Psalms 85:4-7, 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 138:7, Habakkuk 2:2-4, 3:2, 16-19.

The Lord alone can bring us out of troubled times and circumstances and He will in accordance with his path for our life. All of those who afflict our souls, and assault our spirits and bodies, will be dealt with by the Lord. The Lord is the one who will vindicate us and bring us through to glory. Let us praise His Holy Name as we advance in our called service. Let us say aloud each day, "Lord, I am your servant!"

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. If you are reading these words then you are not dead yet! If you are not dead yet then the Lord has something for you yet to do upon this earth, and you are expected to do it. If you lack energy and motivation you need to attack the depression that grips you with all the spiritual strength you can muster. Depression is to be attacked, never tolerated and lived with.

2. It is the Lord alone who is our strength and our hope. We can trust no other power than that which is found in God. The Lord alone is our strength and our hope for deliverance.

3. It is obedience to the will of the Lord that He seeks from us. If we are in SUBMISSION and OBEDIENCE to the Lord's will, then we will always be supplied with all that we need to serve the Lord and bring glory to His Holy Name.

4. Daily revival and renewal is the need for the church that will remain the primary need until the Lord's return. We need constant refreshment of our spiritual lives to fire up our energy for the work the Lord has called us to fulfil. Let us not just pray for revival and renewal, let us deal with sin, feed upon the Word and open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit, and so bring renewal and revival.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DISCIPLINE OF BELIEVERS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUFFERING

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

TEMPTATION

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

SALVATION – SIN – MAN'S NEED FOR SALVATION

SALVATION – BARRIER BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

SALVATION – JUSTIFICATION

WORK

Notes

PSALMS 144

INTRODUCTION

In this present world we have war and rumours of war, and we have the Lord's word upon it, that this will be the state of affairs to get used to until He comes. Matthew 24:6-8, Mark 13:7. The Lord's specific word to us regarding both "hot" and "cold" wars is that we are not to be "troubled" by the increase of these things, for they are simply the sign that the end is drawing near. David sets us an example of a mature believer facing the wars of his own day. He didn't let his spirit get troubled by events, but simply relaxed and served his Lord, and fought hard and well whenever he had to. Refer to the BTB doctrinal studies on PEACE and WAR.

As David confronts pressure situations again and again he demonstrates faith in God and assurance of God's power and plan. It is this flow on effect of doctrine in his soul that makes David our spiritual mentor today, as he has been in all the days since his life and death. He is distressed by real pressures, pours them out to the Lord, rests in the promises of the Lord, and draws strength from the Lord's Character and Word, and so is not permanently "troubled". This remains the challenge for all believers of all ages; that we might confront reality without escapism into fantasy, and confront any awful reality with Bible doctrine and faith. Hebrews 3:7 – 4:12.

PSALMS 144:1-15

- 1 Blessed be the LORD my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:**
- 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.**
- 3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!**
- 4 Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.**
- 5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.**
- 6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.**
- 7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;**
- 8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.**
- 9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.**
- 10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.**
- 11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:**
- 12 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:**
- 13 That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:**
- 14 That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.**
- 15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.**

REFLECTION

- 1 Blessed be the LORD my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:**
- 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.**

It is always good to confront trouble by beginning in praise, and blessing the name and power of the Lord. By putting on the "garments of praise", the "spirit of heaviness" is cast off. Isaiah 61:3. David praises the Lord who is his strength in the many battles that he is called to fight in his days upon the earth. David faced battle after battle and he doesn't develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because the fears that are naturally associated with each and every battle are dealt with by prayerful dedication to the Lord's path for his life. If a soldier enters a battlefield with his eyes fixed on the Lord's path through it, then he will do his duty with no fear of any consequences to him. Psalms 23:4, 1 John 4:18. It is of interest that David does develop depression due to his sin with Bathsheba.

Battle Courage is a MENTAL ATTITUDE that develops through hard training and application of faith into circumstances. By spiritual growth and the development of total trust in the Lord the believer matures and becomes an OVERCOMER. Refer to the BTB doctrinal studies on MATURITY, and OVERCOMING BY FAITH at the end of this chapter. A good soldier who fights well is one who is trained in war to the tips of his fingers. He strikes his enemy with 100% force every time, without hesitation or holding back any energy. He is totally focused upon his job in the battle, without any distracting thoughts.

David has been trained by the Lord to be the best soldier the world has ever seen because, when he was spiritually right with God, he was a man without FEAR or distraction from his task. Psalms 18:1-6, 30-38, 46-50. Psalm 18 forms a good pair with our psalm here as another psalm of encouragement for soldiers under pressure. We are all called to be soldiers in the Lord's Spiritual Army. 2 Timothy 2:1ff.

The Lord is the source and ground of stability in “goodness”. God is good, and his character is stable, and it is upon the stability of the person, power, and plan of God that we find the ROCK of our own stability. The Lord is our ROCK; the great STONE upon which we build our spiritual life and destiny. David pictures the Lord as his strong tower of defence, and as his shield to protect him from the flying unseen arrows that the enemy will loose against him at times.

We are up against unseen enemies as well as seen ones. The bullet flying towards us is not seen or heard until it passes us or hits its mark. We have no way of protecting ourselves from the assaults of the enemy, but the Lord is our protection, and the spiritual armour we are provided with will keep us safe. Psalms 44:3, 60:11-12. Men cannot protect us from the ANGELIC CONFLICT, but the Lord can and does. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.

David sings a psalm very similar to this one towards the end of his life. He sings it to all his court so that they also might share his faith in the Lord and depend upon the Lord in their future rather than depend upon their own abilities and limited powers. 2 Samuel 22:2-51. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary on this chapter as it forms the best consolidated expression of faith in the Lord in all the scriptures and expands upon the thoughts of this psalm perfectly. The Lord’s presence with him is the strength of David, and this explains why he was able to do things that were humanly impossible without God’s power and presence. All of mankind will eventually recognise the truth that those who stand with God are victorious, and those who stand in any other place are deceived fools who are trusting in lies. Jeremiah 17:17-21.

3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4 Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

A correct view of the power of man and the power of God is what keeps us safe from deception. We deceive ourselves in the foolish pride and arrogance that we are more powerful than we are. Satanic deception centres round this OLD SIN NATURE tendency of mankind to narcissism/self centeredness. David was great because he recognised his smallness. He was only in danger, and caused disastrous sins for himself and his nation, when he forgot this fact. We are temporary and limited inhabitants of a created planet; the third rock from the sun in a minor galaxy in a vast universe.

Let us pause and truly reflect upon our smallness and the vastness of the universe, and then reflect that the universe is already winding up and will be replaced! We have a DESTINY as believers only because we are part of eternity through our relationship with Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. We are small and we “pass away”, as will this entire universe, but those who do the will of the Lord live forever with Him. 2 Peter 3:9-18, Revelation 21-22. In Christ Jesus we are transformed from people who “pass” to become “forever people”. John 3:16, 36, 5:24, 6:40-47, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 1 Timothy 1:16. Refer to the BTB study ETERNITY FUTURE.

5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

Man is limited and all too often pathetic, but God is absolute in power and majesty. God is the Lord of lords and King over all kings, and maker of the heavens and the earth. He is the Alpha and Omega of time and space. God began all things in this present universe and He will end all things in it and fold it up and put it away. 2 Peter 3:10-18, Revelation 1:8-10, 21:6, 23:13. The Lord can shake the earth with earthquakes and create the volcanoes that have nearly destroyed all life on this planet before. The Lord is able to create the violent electrical storms that are associated with volcanic activity.

It is interesting that David is able to describe these things and yet he had never witnessed such events himself. Abraham sees such things in the tectonic eruption that destroys Sodom and Gomorrah, but outside this record in Genesis 19:27-30, and the record of the lightning and tectonic activity around Mt Horeb, (Exodus 19:18ff), it is not clear that David had seen any such things himself. David reads the Word and the things he learns therein are as powerful to him as the things he has seen with his eyes in nature.

This is one of the things that made David great; he could learn from scripture without seeing everything in person. God’s Word was as real to him as what he saw, tasted, touched and heard. David certainly may have experienced earthquakes, for they have always been common in Palestine, and he combines his physical experiences with his doctrinal learning, and spiritual perception and spiritual growth is the result. Psalms 18:7, 68:8, 77:18.

7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

David wants deliverance from the immediate pressure he faces; he wants rid of the pressure and the people who are causing it to him. It is the “strange” people who cause the trouble. This is a reference to the unbelievers in the midst of the nation. The “strange” person is the person who is a “stranger” to God and wants to remain that way. It is the word used of the pagan seductress that is the most dangerous to Solomon’s sons, and Solomon realises their power, having fallen into sin there himself. 1 Kings 11:1-10, Proverbs 2:16, 5:3, 20, 6:24, 7:5, 20:16, 22:14, 23:27-33, 27:13.

These are people who are led by their Old Sin Nature’s areas of weakness, with pride and lust dominating and driving them forward. A pagan patient of mine joked with me a short while ago about his business. He said, “I base my business upon the greed of man, as it is the most dependable emotion out there”. He is a ruthless and very successful businessman and he truly knows fallen man! David saw this also and prays for the Lord’s protection against those who are driven by their lusts and follow after evil. Lies are their stock in trade, and deception is their right hand tool. John

8:44. Let us not be fooled by Satan's devices; let us be "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves". Matthew 10:16, 2 Corinthians 2:11.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

David praises the Lord and speaks enthusiastically of writing a new psalm to render more praise to the Lord. David sought opportunity to praise and glorify the Lord. This is a challenge to us all. Do we seek new and exciting ways to praise and honour our Lord? Are we keen to learn new songs to bring glory to his name? David couldn't wait to get his musical instruments into his hands to have a music session and write new material to praise the Lord. It is this passion for worship that the Lord longs to see in each of us.

David knows the Lord is his deliverer and he knows just how dangerous the enemy's plots and plans are; they seriously seek David's life. David knows the odds against him, but he realises that one man with God is always a majority in any battle. If the Lord be for us, no power can stand against us! Romans 8:31. David affirms the truth as he worships, and this is to be at the heart of all worship.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:

12 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:

Once again David repeats the request that he might be "rid of" those wicked people who attack him. They are "strangers" to faith, to truth, and to goodness. The false nature of these people is repeated again from verse eight. This refrain is not tautology, but emphasis.

The biggest danger I see with people who are fooled by wicked men and women, is that the good people have forgotten just how evil the bad ones are! The shock that I see amongst my clients is palpable when they confront the persistent lies of the wicked. Most polite and pleasant people, be they believers in the Lord or not, still believe in moral goodness and are honest. Honest people find it hard to understand those who lie by habit as Satan's people do. I had a relevant conversation with a senior Human Resources Advisor to a University yesterday.

She is grappling with thoroughly dishonest and devious staff members who have created great trouble in the university. She and her managers have found it hard to deal with these people because they lie so easily and often. They have escaped censure or condemnation to date because their lies have been so devious that they have caught the honest people off guard, and so they have escaped conviction as a result. They have also become emboldened as a result, and are accusing honest people of dishonesty in the process now.

The HR Director was baffled by these people, and I had to explain the nature of evil (although in HR language it is a discussion of "Personality Disorders"). As I spoke with her things started to make sense to her, and she could see she was dealing with "evil"; with persistently and bafflingly dishonest people. The only good thing about them is their habit of dishonesty will catch them out if you are ready for it and can lay a powerful trap for them.

In business it is possible to catch these people and fire them at times, but they are very resilient and will pop up again unless thoroughly and publicly disgraced. The problem for David is that he doesn't have the time or energy to rule the land and try to entrap these evil people, so he simply asks the Lord to keep him safe and deliver him from these wicked people. These people will speak great swelling flattering words to lull you into a false sense of security and then they will unleash their malice secretly when you are relaxed and not expecting it. 2 Peter 2:18, Jude 16.

They are Satan's main weapon to destroy good organisations and always have been his key troops. They always look good, and know how to act well. They dress well and have the right words to say. They flatter and praise and stroke the pride of anyone foolish enough to believe the opinions of others about them. David knows that the future of his dynasty rests upon his ability to spot these people and eliminate them, or the Lord's ability to eliminate their threat. He wants his sons and daughters to be established, like strong living plants, and well polished marble in the palace, but he knows that these evil people will destroy everything however, unless they are stopped.

13 That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

14 That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.

David wants prosperity, not for himself, but for his nation. The picture of prosperity here is agricultural and speaks of blessing for the farming people, not more golden bracelets upon the arms of the rich in the palace. His image of prosperity is earthy and ordinary, not wealth based for the rich. Many speak of prosperity in terms of gold and silver only, and the reason they do that is because then they have "currency" that they can spend upon their own lusts. Emotions are great things, and are to be enjoyed in the right place with the right people, but self centred lust is always an evil.

We ought to be lust filled towards our wife or husband, and we ought to enjoy each other's body and soul in joy, but that emotion needs to be contained within the marital bounds that the Lord has set. Legitimate expressions of emotion/lusts will also be "other-centred" rather than just self centred. Sexual love between loving partners is focused on the other person, to bring pleasure to them, not take pleasure from them. The fruit of genuine love is giving, and the fruit of evil remains always the same; it is a taking from others. God judged those who lusted in the Exodus, and he still hates such self centred attitudes. Numbers 11:34, Psalms 78:18, 81:12, Galatians 5:16.

Lusts that overrun the legitimate boundaries for their expression are always evil and destructive. David is clear on that, and he lived to regret that in his own lust for Bathsheba he overflowed a legitimate desire for sex and created misery and disaster for many. He fully dealt with that terrible error on his part and made no excuses for himself. Psalms 51:1ff. We are not to be self centred in our desires, and we are to spot those who are, for that is a hall mark of a satanic presence in that life.

David longs for the elimination of evil from his land, not so that he can relax in his palace and play with more gold, silver, and precious stones, but so that his people can have prosperity down on their farms and that their animals will be settled, relaxed, fertile and safe in their stalls. God's prosperity is never given to "consume upon our own lusts" but as blessing for others. All that God gives us in spirituality is to be given away to bless others; the only question is how and when. 1 Corinthians 10:6, James 1:14-15, 4:1-3, 1 Peter 2:11,

15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.

The people who are truly happy are not the people with more things to fulfil their lusts in enjoying, for the more such people have the more they want! Have you ever noticed that wealthy but self centred people never stop lusting after more things to lust after! It is bizarre to see it work out, but these people cannot just relax and enjoy the simple things of life, but are always lusting for more and more, and are less and less satisfied with it.

The happiest people are those who know the Lord, love the Lord, and feel loved by Him. If we know we are settled into the family of God for eternity we are able to relax and enjoy all the Lord gives us now. With the Lord as our God we can relax about time and eternity and enjoy both. Without the assurance that the Lord gives we cannot relax and enjoy this life at all. Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalms 33:12, 65:4, 89:14-18, 146:3-5, Ephesians 1:3-5, Colossians 2:6-10.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God wants us "without fear". Romans 8:15, Philippians 1:14, 1 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 13:6. David is our mentor as to what faith is and how it works out in the life of the obedient servant of the Lord. As we feed upon the Word of God often, believe it, and apply it into the fabric of our daily life, so we grow in spiritual strength. As we do this we get used to walking in the Holy Spirit's power and learn to trust the Lord more and more. As we do this we develop strength in faith, and faith in the God who loved us and gave himself for us builds dynamic faith and spiritual power to banish all fear.

Let us walk in faith today and banish fear. We don't banish fear by ignoring the very real threats we face, but by confronting them in faith that the Lord's power and plan is always the victorious path to be on. We do not walk through this life by stupidity and denial of reality (we leave that to Satan's people), we walk by faith in the power of the God who made the universe and has another one ready to replace this present one! The God who has this power is keeping us and will bring us through to victory. Let us celebrate Him today by our obedient walk through today's pressures.

2. Man is for a moment in time unless he/she faces the truth about their present place in the universe, and so finds their place in eternity through relationship with Christ Jesus. This is a big part of the "Gospel" message; let us proclaim it loudly. The only path to eternity for man is through the Lord Jesus. "There is no other name given under heaven whereby men must be saved!" Acts 4:12.

3. Like David before us, God's Word must be as real as what we see in daily life, and when we learn from doctrine as fast as we learn from experience we will be maturing in our faith as David did. Let us feed upon the Word of God today, and tomorrow, and the next day, for in it we learn and grow and are made ready for the tasks the Lord has for us. From reading passages in the Word we learn of God and learn more reasons to praise God. Let us lift up our voice in praise as David did. Let us have his enthusiasm in all things spiritual.

4. Jesus knew what was in man. John 2:24-25. The Lord knew the evils of man and he guarded himself from their malice and evil. From the Word of God we can know these things and we ought to be well armoured against them. Let us take the Word seriously and have our spiritual armour on. Let us protect ourselves from temptations from our own Old Sin Nature, and those of others. Believers are not meant to be foolish or easily fooled by Satan's devices. The Word of God warns us about all the tricks of Satan and his people, and from our own Old Sin Nature we understand human weaknesses. Let us apply the Word to experience and keep ourselves safe in the devil's world. Matthew 6:25-34, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9.

DOCTRINES

WAR

PEACE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MENTAL ATTITUDE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MATURITY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MATURITY – CROSS TO CROWN

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OVERCOMER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – OVERCOMING BY FAITH

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DESTINY OF BELIEVERS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

FEAR

CHRIST – ROCK: CHRIST AS THE ROCK

CHRIST – STONE: CHRIST AS A STONE

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT 19

ETERNITY FUTURE

SIN – OLD SIN NATURE

TEMPTATION

Notes

PSALMS 145**INTRODUCTION**

This is an alphabetic Psalm. Each verse of this psalm starts with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Of the eight alphabetic psalms four are David's, so it was a form that he felt comfortable using as a poet and song writer. There are twenty two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and it is the letter "nun" that is missing in this psalm. There is no special significance in this that is apparent to any of the commentators, although for David there will be some significance. That might be a question for him in heaven, but only he can answer this, the commentators have no intelligent explanations. It is a majestically crafted psalm that is considered by some to be David's greatest expression of formal worship to the Lord. It is a song titled "Praise" and is the last of the final group of the book, and the last one ascribed to David. Its themes are majesty and mercy, and eternity is in its first and last verse.

It has been divided into four verses:

Verses 1 – 6 The Greatness of God
 Verses 7 – 10 The Goodness of God
 Verses 11 – 13 The Glory of God
 Verses 14 – 21 The Grace of God

Dr W G Scroggie ends his reflection on this psalm by stating, "The future is not a matter of opinion". This is a good summary of David's psalms generally and this one in particular. There is no doubt about the Lord's character, plan, and purpose for each of us; we are challenged to praise Him, for with him we can only have victory in this life. His faith in the Lord is unshakeable and strong, for he saw that there is no doubt about how the world was to end, or our lives were to end. We are in the Lord's hands, will be in the Lord's hands, and we are going to the Lord's arms. We are secure in Him. He is mightily to be praised.

PSALMS 145:1-21

1 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.
5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.
6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.
7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.
8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.
9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.
10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.
11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;
12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.
14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.
16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.
18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.
19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.
20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

REFLECTION

1 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

In earlier psalms there is a specific reason mentioned to extol the Lord. Psalms 30:1, 68:4, 71:14. In this psalm David just extols the name of the Lord for no specific reason other than that the Lord is God. He just rejoices in who God is and praises his name. He blesses the name of the Lord forever and ever, for he knows that the Lord is to be blessed.

Every day he wishes to bless the name of the Lord, and every day he will praise the name of the Lord forever. Every day he remembers that the Lord has given him everything that he enjoys this day and he praises the Lord for all He has done to make this day a special one for David. The challenge for us is to see each day as a special day for us, for it is special; we will never have today again! Psalms 72:15, 119:161-165,

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

I often think about the book written many years ago now, "Your God is Too Small". It rang true as I read it as a young man, and it challenged me strongly to lift up my view of the Lord and understand a lot more of the Lord's majesty. Louie Giglio, an American pastor, has made a wonderful series of DVD recordings on this subject, and they have been amazing for our youth group and the older folks, because we need to be challenged; we have an awesome God who is great beyond our wildest imagination! These are DVD recordings that I do not believe will date because they challenge us about the timeless question of "How Great is Our God", and that is the challenge David gives us here. Even Hollywood put out an amazing movie – "The Far Side of the Moon" that strengthens faith in the awesomeness of the mighty God.

The riches of God are unsearchable; beyond all thoughts of man to understand fully. Let us really appreciate and praise our Lord and God. The wonder of God is the subject for each of us to pass on to the next generation, each one passing the truth on to the next. Exodus 12:24-26, Psalms 44:1-3, 78:3-7. Let us take this instruction seriously, for the Lord wishes us to share with our children our joy in the Lord. If we cannot share that joy, then we need to examine ourselves. Psalms 4:4, 26:1ff, Proverbs 17:3, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

David will not speak of his problems, or of his questions, but of the perfect CHARACTER and acts of God; he will speak of the honour of the Lord's majesty, and of the amazing works of God. David will focus upon the Lord and his majesty and greatness in this psalm, for by worshipping as all men ought to do he will find rest for his soul. Matthew 11:27-30. People try to find rest by unburdening themselves to psychologists and their doctors, and even to their priests, but only in the assurance of eternal safety that flows from understanding something of the CHARACTER AND PLAN OF GOD is there any hope for man.

God has done and does wondrous things. The entire creation cries aloud of the presence of a creator who has wonder at the core of his work. The right thing for man to do is worship. Worship opens the door to hope and then to confidence. When men see what God has truly done a deep awe fills their souls, and the true "fear of the Lord" grips them; it is a holy terror of standing in the presence of awesome power and majesty. David allows himself to be overwhelmed as he thinks about the power of God, and this is always a good place to start worship. Psalms 40:9-11, 66:2-5, 71:14-19, 72:18-19, Daniel 2:28-30, 4:1-3, 34-37.

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

All men will one day praise the Lord. Even the unsaved facing judgement will bow their knees before God, no matter how unwillingly. They will finally and thoroughly admit the Lord is truly God above all. Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10. The Lord will make the enemies of the truth the "Footstool of his feet"; He will have total victory over them all. Refer to the BTB study FOOTSTOOL.

In heaven we will not be able to stop praising the Lord and counting our blessings, but the challenge David gives us is to start now, and praise his holy name as loudly, fervently, and fully as we ought to for all we have received. Refer to the BTB study GIFTS RECEIVED AT SALVATION. Many believers do not know even a few of the great gifts the Lord has given us when we were saved, and great worship is to be enjoyed by just praying your way through these things. Psalms 86:5-15.

The Lord is gracious towards us; He is full of grace, and grace is his unmerited favour towards us. God seeks to bless us not judge us, and his compassion towards us never fails. He is not quick to anger, but is full of mercy and love. His mercy is not just ordinary mercy that men may have occasionally, but "great mercy" that goes beyond all the characteristics of even the best of men. Psalms 36:5-10. What we have in Christ is far more than anything we could ever imagine available anywhere else. All else is worthless against what the Lord has done for us and given to us in his gracious plan for our eternal salvation. Philippians 3:7-14.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

The Lord is not selective in his blessings, but has provided blessing to the "just and the unjust". Matthew 5:43-48. Over all his creation the Lord has revealed his character in his works, and those works are awesome and they are good. The beauty and majesty of the creation ought to bring every person to their knees, and all will fall on their knees one day. Psalms 25:8-11, 36:5-7, 104:31-35. All the works of the Lord praise his name and they bring all who know the Lord to join the creation in proclaiming the glory and majesty of the creator. When we sing we join creation itself. The saints of the Lord always take every opportunity to praise the name of the Lord. A number of the psalms make this point strongly. Psalms 96:11-13, 98:1-9, 135:19-21, 136:1ff, 148:1-13, Malachi 3:16-18.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

The Lord Jesus will reign one day upon the earth. The Lord's Millennial Kingdom will be glorious indeed, with the entire earth restored to its pre-flood glory, material, and environmental prosperity after the ravages of the Great Tribulation

period. There will be a heaven on earth for 1000 years before the Lord winds up this present creation and judges all who have stood against his righteous rule, both angel and man. Revelation 20:1-15. Refer to the BTB study MILLENNIAL KINGDOM. God has the power, and man presently has the opportunity to recognise that and serve him in gracious thanks. The role we have is to make known the mighty works of God and his majestic power. We are here to spread the "good news" (GOSPEL) of the person, power and plan of God. Matthew 28:18-20.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

The kingdoms of man are temporary, but the Lord's rule is eternal. The Lord's Millennial Kingdom lasts upon the earth 1000 years, but his reign is eternal and will last forever. Once the devil, his demons, and all his human servants are eliminated in the Lake of Fire, the old tired universe is folded up and put away and replaced by the eternal creation and we move into that place.

Even in time the KINGDOM of the Lord has been in operation and when people become believers in the Lord Jesus they have been joined into it. Satan is the "prince of this world" through the fall of man and the entry of sin and evil into it, but he has never been, and never will be its king, for the Lord is, always has been, the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16.

Through all the generations of mankind the Lord has been drawing out a people for his holy name. Psalms 146:10, Isaiah 9:6-7, Daniel 7:13-28, 12:1ff, Zechariah 12:10ff, 1 Peter 2:9-10. There is no doubt about how this world's human history will end, for the Lord will be victorious and He will rule openly upon the earth, just as He now rules in the hearts of his servants. Even now the Lord's power is seen in upholding his servants when they fail and fall. Psalms 37:23-24, 94:16-19, Micah 7:8-10.

The Lord will always lift up all who bow before him. All we need to do to access the blessing of the Lord is to bow before his majesty and accept Him as our Saviour and Lord, and even when we later sin and walk away, blessing is restored when we bow our knee and return obediently to his path for us in this life. The Lord blesses his people when they bow to his will and do it. "Thy will be done" was the Lord's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and it needs to be our prayer each and every day. Matthew 26:39.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

All creation looks to the Lord for its food. Psalms 104:19-30. The scriptures appear to teach that all living creatures worship the Lord in their own way and acknowledge the lordship of Christ in the provision of their food and take orders from the Lord when required for the plan of God to be fulfilled. The sacrificial animals from the Garden of Eden onwards are honoured for their sacrifice on man's behalf and there is no heartlessness or cruelty used in any sacrificial system the Lord puts in place for man to use. All creation worships the Lord and the Lord provides for all.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

There is no shadow of turning with the Lord in his character and plan. The absolute dependability of the Lord is a thing we can rest upon. God is righteous in all He does and holy in all his works. Psalms 50:6, 89:14, 99:3-4, Romans 3:5ff. If we have any doubts about any action of the Lord, those doubts are based upon our inadequate grasp of the facts. We are to take such things to the Lord and await his full and satisfactory answer. 1 Peter 5:5-10. We cannot be closer to the Lord as his children than we are. We are heard in all we say to him and in every prayer we ask of him. If we are honest in our prayers and pour out our hearts to the Lord, then the Lord will answer our prayers; we have his word upon it. Refer to the BTB study on PRAYER again.

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

In the BTB study on PRAYER we have seen that each prayer is divided into "Petition" and "Desire"; what we say, and then what we really want which is locked behind the request. God looks to the heart of his servants and will grant our heart's desire. He will hear us when we cry aloud for help, and He will save us and deliver us into his eternal kingdom. The Lord preserves his children so that they can fulfil his plan for their lives. Psalms 31:23-24, 37:27-31, Romans 8:28-30. He saves his children and He judged his enemies, for unless the wicked are judged there will be further abuse of the innocent and the Lord has set a limit to evil's rule over men, and that limit is called THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT. Psalms 1:6, 9:17-20, Revelation 20:1-15.

21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

David's concern for himself, and for us all, is that we might use our bodies as holy vessels to praise and honour the Lord. Our mouth is made to praise the Lord not curse our fellow man and God. Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:1-2, James 3:9-16. We are to present our bodies as a daily "living sacrifice: to the Lord. We live in our bodies to praise the Lord, and anything short of that is not good service rendered to the Lord for all He has done for us. Let us use the bodies God has given to his glory and use our mouths for his praise. Psalms 71:7-8, 21-24.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Our God is great indeed and we need to praise the Lord for just how great He is. We do not lift up our hands and voices enough to praise the Lord for his goodness. Let us praise his holy name and bless his name for who He is and what He has done. Let us praise the Lord every day, for every day is one we will never have again.
2. Let us begin our worship in “holy terror”. This is not a slavish fear, but a true “fear of the Lord”, in respect and awesomeness as we contemplate the majesty of the Lord and his wondrous creative power. Refer before to the BTB studies, CREATION and SIGNS AND WONDERS. Let us also remember all that the Lord gave us at SALVATION, in GRACE, MERCY, and the right to CONFESSION OF SIN AND FORGIVENESS.
3. “Thy will be done”. This is the prayer that must pass our lips each and every day as we dedicate ourselves to the path of God for our life. The Lord’s will alone is worthy of our effort, for all our plans are nothing.

DOCTRINES

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

GRACE

MERCY

CREATION

FEAR

SIGNS

MIRACLES – PURPOSE

FOOTSTOOL

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIFTS RECEIVED AT SALVATION

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

SALVATION

KINGDOM

KINGDOM – MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE

PSALMS 146**INTRODUCTION**

The last five songs of the book of Psalms are all festal songs of praise and gladness. The problems that psalmists raised in earlier psalms are all forgotten, and the book ends in solid and sustained praise and worship. Three of these psalms are assigned to Haggai and Zechariah in the Septuagint translation. They are songs of praise to the Lord that may have been a part of the worship services in the Second Temple period. They sing of our joint triumphant faith.

PSALMS 146:1-10

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.**
- 2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**
- 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**
- 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**
- 5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:**
- 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:**
- 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:**
- 8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:**
- 9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.**
- 10 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.**

REFLECTION

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.**
- 2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**

The enthusiasm in the worship is what strikes us first in this psalm. The psalmist is totally excited about worshipping the Lord. This is why many believe these last psalms were written by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, as they were the two men who accompanied the Exiles on their return as their prophets from the Lord. They were the men who spoke for the Lord to the generation that needed to rebuild the temple and restart the worship of the nation. There was a delay in rebuilding the temple and these two men worked tirelessly to urge the people to finish the task, and they led the worship when it was finished.

They were passionate about obedience to the Lord and they were blunt with the people about their sins. Haggai identifies that the people have no financial prosperity because they have failed to apply the Word of God and be obedient, and finish the building of the Temple. Ezra 5:1-5, Haggai 1:5-6. The people had built their own houses and were active in their economy building activities, but nothing would work well for them until the temple was finished. Haggai 1:9.

The people got moving again under the prophets encouragement, and against the opposition of the enemies of Israel they finished the job. Ezra 6:14-18. Many complained when they saw the small size of the initial building when they compared it to Solomon's great building, but their attitude was rebuked by the prophets. Ezra 3:10-13, Zechariah 4:10. Haggai prophesied that greater things would happen in that house than had ever happened in the Temple of Solomon. Haggai 2:4-12.

These are the two prophets that lead the singing for the new temple and rejoice in the Lord's prophetic word that this temple would see Messiah coming, and of course it did, for this was the building that saw the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The psalmist-prophet here in Psalm 146 praises the Lord for his person, power, and plan, and he rejoices in what God has done and what God will do.

- 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**
- 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**

Many believe that if they have what they term "powerful friends" then they will be safe in this life, but no man is all that powerful and able to save them. Princes are only as powerful as the Lord allows them to be and the smallest cells in their body can turn against them, and they will be dead of cancer in months. The most "unexpected accident" can occur to any person and they are eliminated from this earth in a millisecond. They breathe out their last breath and they are gone back to the earth, and all the hopes and plans they had are gone!

Many great schemes have been lost or destroyed with the death of a crucial person in that scheme. All the thoughts, plans, hopes, and dreams of that person die when they die. Pause and reflect upon this fact and see why we cannot trust in men and women for anything, for the Lord alone decides the time of their death and that changes all the details around them. We are frail and we depend 100% upon the Lord alone. Psalms 62:6-9, Jeremiah 17:5-10.

**5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:
6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:**

Many deceive themselves and are deceived by others regarding happiness. I have read stories of celebrities who say they feel “happy”, and state loudly that they are 100% happy and content with life, and yet I have then read of their suicide within weeks of reading their happiness story in the magazine! The ancient Greeks had seen this problem in their own day with the “beautiful people” who were their celebrities and fame seekers, and they said, “Call no man happy until he is dead”.

What they meant was that the only time you can be sure a person was happy in their life was after it was over, and they had expressed no regrets at their passing. It was only looking back that the real assessment of happiness can be made. The psalmist is sure that the people who have the Lord God as their Lord and Saviour are the only truly happy people on the earth. Psalms 33:12, 39:7, 71:1-5, 84:10-12, Jeremiah 17:7-8.

The reasons why the psalmist believes this are then spelled out. The people who trust the God of Israel are happy because they have the creator of the universe as their helper and their hope for the future. If the master and creator of space and time is your hope, then you truly have hope! God alone controls time and space and so to depend upon the Lord means you depend upon the one who can give you assurance in all circumstances. The Lord is the one who “keeps the truth forever” and can be depended upon regarding all the things He has said. Psalms 89:1-2, 98:1-3, 100:5.

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:

8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

When we are oppressed by enemies of the Lord, then the Lord will rise up to deal with those who oppress us. We can leave our cause with the Lord and He will redeem us. The Lord alone can deliver food to the hungry through all manner of means. Men are unreliable in the delivery of aid, but the Lord will ensure his people are fed in his work, for the Lord’s reputation depends upon it. If God’s people starve in his work then the Lord is shamed, for if he cannot feed his own people, he has little power to achieve his objectives.

One old lady when being mocked by her pagan son about her simple faith in the Lord responded to his critical comments. She said, “If God does not look after me he will lose far more than me; he will lose his good name and his reputation as the Almighty God”. She was right and the word affirms it strongly; the Lord will keep us while we walk obediently along his path for our life and witness.

The Lord loves the righteous. Now note that, for if we are walking in unrighteousness we cannot claim these promises. Refer to the BTB study again on PROMISES. The Lord will deliver us in whatever way we are needing deliverance, and that means to be lifted up when the enemy has cast us down, and be released from prison when the Lord wants us out and serving him elsewhere.

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

God is on the side of the righteous, and that means He is ready to defend all those who need his assistance to walk along his paths. The unrighteous poor, who are poor through sin and evil are not covered by these promises, and the persistently wicked prisoner need not ask for help until they have bowed their knee to Him, but even then, through faith they are able to be lifted up. Those who walk persistently in wickedness will be overturned off their path in life. The Lord is not mocked by evil men and women for long.

These people will be judged and dealt with by the Lord. The only issue is the timing of their defeat and eternal damnation. They change this state of affairs only through repentance and salvation, but if they will not bow their knee in time, they will at the last great Judgment. Refer to the BTB studies on JUDGEMENT, POVERTY, WELFARE, GOOD WORKS. The Lord will reign forever, and the worst that Satan can do is not enough to change the plan of God by one millimetre. The Lord will be victorious and reign for all eternity, and the enemy will be defeated and all evil people will be eliminated forever.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Worship stabilises and centres us in the truth. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah argued the Lord’s case to the people and got them standing for the truth again, and then they led them in the praise and glory of the Lord. Pastors, this is our job before the Lord; to call God’s people to stand for the truth and then to worship and rejoice in the truth.

2. We praise the Lord for what He has done and we thank the Lord for all He is and will do in the future. The challenge of worship is to place the past, the present, and the future into the same worship and praise message, for there is no doubt that as the Lord has done, so He will do. We can totally relax with the Lord. We do not trust in frail men, but in the power, person, and plan of the Lord alone.

3. Let us not be fooled by evil people taking welfare money from the church. God's money must only be used for godly objectives only. Those who have become poor through evil or wicked life styles are never to be assisted until they have repented of those life choices that led them to disaster. The early churches were very careful about this and Paul identified that only certain widows qualified for assistance and the others were to be dismissed from the list. 1 Timothy 5. Let us be godly in our use of the money given to the Lord's work and ensure it is not used to keep evil people from life change by making them comfortable in their sins.

DOCTRINES

PROMISES

POVERTY

GOOD WORKS

WELFARE

JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE

PSALMS 147

INTRODUCTION

This is a psalm that truly illustrates the importance of all the Old Testament names for God as aspects of the divine character and work. Refer to the BTB doctrinal study on NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. The name referred to as the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, occurs five times, in verses 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, and refers to the creative power of Almighty God, who is the covenant God of Israel. The word for praise, Hallelujah, incorporating the abbreviated form of this holy name of God occurs at the beginning and end of the psalm, verses 1 and 20. Elohim, the plural form of the name of God, occurs three times, verses 1, 7, 12. It refers to the unified Character, Plan, and Power of the Godhead. The third name used in this psalm is Adonai, in verse 5, which is the name for God that speaks of relationship between God and man, where God is our "Lord", and where we are his humble servants.

The liberal theologians who like to bring doubts upon authorship at every turn have difficulties here, for they argue that the different names for God come from different periods and schools of Israel's history. This is of course nonsense, and none would argue different authors for this psalm, although some have argued it is a composite of other psalms from different periods.

Study reveals it is clearly a psalm written for the Second Temple worship, and centres round praise to the Lord for the restoration. It is also most likely a psalm written by one of the post exilic prophets. It is a song of praise to God for the clear manifestation of his power, revealed in the restoration of the nation, and the wisdom, majesty, creative power, and goodness of the Character of God. Once again we have the false view of the liberal's "god of the old testament" blown away. False teachers and false theologians argue that the "god" of the Old Testament is a harsh covenant tribal god, but each and every psalm proves such nonsense the lie it is.

This psalm especially eliminates that viewpoint, for we see all the characteristics of God sung of that the liberals want to emerge only in the New Testament. The Bible view of God is uniform throughout the scripture, and as REVELATION opens up men's understanding more emerges, but by the time Moses is writing the Pentateuch, the doctrine of the CHARACTER and PLAN OF GOD is there for us to see. Prophetic truth is added and a deeper understanding unfolds through time, but all the basic doctrines are there in the Torah.

God's holiness and goodness are well understood by the people of Moses day, let alone the people of the Post-Exilic Persian Province of Judea. They sing as we do of the fullness of the wonder of the Character and Work of God. God's character deserves praise and from Moses song of praise through to the psalms of the days of Zechariah and Haggai, Nehemiah and Ezra, and finally Malachi, we see the chorus of thankfulness that characterises genuine believers through the ages.

Praise and worship is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit that indicates a doctrinal understand on the part of the person singing. It is good to praise the Lord, Psalms 92:1, it is pleasant to praise the Lord, Psalms 135:3, and it is right to praise the Lord, Psalms 33:1. God is the creator God who made the realm of nature, and He is the covenant God, who has chosen his people Israel, and has a special plan for them to fulfil through history. As the creator of space and time, and the Lord of history, He is to be praised and honoured and obeyed.

PSALMS 147:1-20

- 1 Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.
- 2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
- 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.
- 4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.
- 5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.
- 6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.
- 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
- 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
- 9 He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.
- 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
- 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.
- 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.
- 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.
- 14 He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.
- 15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.
- 16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.
- 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?
- 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.
- 19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
- 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTION

- 1 Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.
- 2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

Immediately the love of the psalmist for the Lord emerges from the joy of his song of praise here. His love for the Lord and his open passion for the character and work of God is evident. The early apostles were abused by their countrymen for their faith in Jesus, but the persecutors had to take note that they had been with Jesus, and they had been transformed by Him. Acts 4:11-14, 5:29-42. People who do not sing of the glory of their God do not truly know the Lord God. To know the Lord is to be transformed by that knowledge and to praise the Lord with your mouth, and your life. To know God and what He has done for you is to be a worshipper and a singer of praises to the Lord. Psalms 63:1-7, 122:1-6, Revelation 5:9-14.

WORSHIP AND PRAISE is not a burden to a genuine believer; it is a joy, a privilege, and a habit. Refer to the BTB studies ALTAR OF THE SOUL, APPROACHING GOD, CAPACITY FOR LIFE, FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, and THINKING BIBLICALLY. The Jewish people returning to their blasted city of Jerusalem were required to undertake two generations of rebuilding until the city was strong again.

They had arrived back in 535 BC under Zerubbabel and Joshua, with the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and that first generation rebuilt the temple and their houses, but the city was still 60-80% ruined until the days of Nehemiah around 445 BC, when the walls are rebuilt and the remaining houses were restored and rebuilt completely for the expanding population. Many of the scattered exiles have re-gathered to the land in the period of the psalm's writing, from all parts of the Persian Empire where they were scattered. From the reference in verse 2 this psalm may date from a time even later that the two initial prophets, and may even come from the days of the last prophet Malachi around 397 BC.

- 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.
- 4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

The Lord is the healer of our souls and bodies. The Lord alone can bind the spiritual wounds that we bear as a result of being born with an Old Sin Nature into a fallen world. We come to the Lord for SALVATION and we all need healing from the hurt we have picked up on our journey through this life. The Lord heals the inner hurts and also binds up the open wounds; at the visible and invisible levels the Lord deals with our pain and distress.

At the point of salvation we received numerous blessings of healing, and also spiritual giftings that are far more wondrous than most believers realise. Refer to the BTB studies on these subjects; BLESSED IN HEAVENLY PLACES, BLESSING OF THE BELIEVER, GIFTS RECEIVED AT SALVATION, SPIRITUAL GIFTS. The one who made, has numbered, and named all the stars, is the one who has healed our inner pain, and bound our outer wounds. We are in the hands of the one who made the universe. We are safe and we are known and loved. John 6:35-40, 10:27-30.

- 5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.
- 6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

It is not even in doubt that the Lord will keep us, protect us, and bring us through to victory. We worship the God over all creation, and the Lord of all. God is great, and has greater power than we can imagine, for He is beyond the limits of

space and time. Satan himself is a creature of space and time, and the demons are likewise limited to space and time. They have great power within this present universe, but it is still limited. The Lord alone is limitless in power. There is however one thing God cannot do! God cannot violate his own perfect holy character. We can absolutely depend upon the character and plan of God, for it rests upon the unchangeability (Immutability) of God, not upon any actions of our own. Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Timothy 2:12-13, 1 Peter 1:3-5.

The Lord is infinite in power, beyond the bounds that limit all creatures, and this fact is the key to understanding the dependability of the Lord, for He is the author of eternity as well as time, and He has made us for eternity. Refer to the BTB studies on ETERNAL SECURITY. The Lord can be depended upon eternally, and the new heavens and the new earth will be without the stain of sin. Sin and evil are limited in their scope and will be eliminated; the meek will inherit the new earth, and the wicked will be judged and eliminated from the new creation. Matthew 5:3-10, 2 Peter 2:4-9, 10-18, Revelation 20-22.

7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

When we realise the wonder of the Lord's deliverance of us we will burst into songs and prayers of praise. All musical instruments were to be used to praise the Lord in solo and in choir. All the works of the Lord were to be praised, from the wonders of creation and nature, to the glory of salvation and the recreation of the universe itself. God has made the world wonderful. Man is destructive of the natural environment, but the Lord has made all things well, and the Lord will restore the earth after the ravages of the Great Tribulation upon it.

The worst that Satan can do, will not destroy the earth and its people, and the Lord will return, defeat the enemy, and reign upon the restored earth for a thousand years. There is no doubt about the power, plan, and majesty of God. What the Word of God says will come to pass. Zechariah 10:12 – 14:21, Revelation Chapters 5 – 22.

9 He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

God is the provider of food for all the creatures of the earth, and the Lord is the provider of food to the people who serve him in spirit and in truth. The Lord's challenge to us is to trust him and rest upon his provisions for us. Matthew 6:25-34. The message of the Lord is clear within this challenge. We are to trust in the Lord's ability to provide for us, not within the abilities of the powerful men and their weapons of war. The horse was not a means of conveyance in Israel, it was transport for warfare. The Israelite rulers were not to "multiply horses" for such a build up of armies was not God's way of protecting them. Deuteronomy 17:16ff.

By the days of the later prophets the worship of the human body had begun to become the dominant form of paganism, led by the Greek peoples. This "cult of the beautiful body" has remained with us until modern times. They worshipped athleticism and their athletic events were famous by the days of Persian Empire. The Olympic Games had been held regularly since 776 BC, and by the days of the Exiles return were the famous Games of the ancient world. Over time the Isthmian Games held at Corinth would become bigger, and under the Romans, richer events. Other great games were the Pythian Games, and the Nemean Games. The Apostle Paul will use athleticism as a powerful image for the maturing Christian, but not for the worship of the body, but as a symbol of the self control of the athlete. Refer to the BTB study ATHLETICS.

11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

The Lord takes great pleasure in the worship of his people. The FEAR of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom because it is a full acceptance of the reality of the creator-power of God and the creature nature of mankind. Proverbs 1:7, 20-23, 2:1-11, 3:1-7. Truly understanding who we are brings us to our knees in worship, and then lifts our hearts to praise the God of glory. When we get a real grasp of the wonder of the creative power of Almighty God we are lifted up in wonder and we then see that the character of the Lord is our hope and the PLAN OF GOD is our confidence.

We can be confident in the MERCY of God, for in him alone there is PEACE. When the people of Israel looked at the rebuilt city of Jerusalem they looked at the visible representation of the mercy and peace of God, for after the destruction wrought under the Assyrians and the Babylonians there was little hope for Israel's recovery ever, but God had over ruled the expectation of men. God has brought them back and the Lord has a future for them.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.

14 He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

These verses make it even more sure that this psalm dates from after the rebuild of the gates and walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah around 445 BC, and may even date from the days of Malachi fifty years later. Jerusalem is a strong city once more, with guarded gates and a prosperous agricultural economy keeping the people in the place of prosperity. The people are truly blessed within this city and its economy is now stable again as part of the great Persian Empire. Nehemiah 6:1ff.

15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

The Lord is active as the Lord and God of all the earth. The Lord is not the “divine architect of the deists”; He is the active creator and sustainer of the universe and the protector of his people. The Lord sends his orders out and they are obeyed. The Lord’s words are given immediately and they are received and obeyed immediately. The ancients understood the time delays that man faces. They could spend months getting from one place to another, but they understood that the Lord’s words arrive in time wherever they are required.

They understood that when men pray they will speak directly with the God of heaven, without time delay, and that the Lord’s answer to their prayers arrives in the right time wherever it is needed. We are creatures of space and time and we have limitations, but the Lord is the author of space and time and there are no such limitations with God. The Lord is the God of heat and cold, who is able to blanket the ground and make men’s teeth chatter. The power of the Lord over the elements of nature is total.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.

The blasts of the hot winds from the desert were the common example of the power of nature, but the most interesting to the ancient people was the falling of snow and the freezing winds that brought the solid ice and snow that formed in heavy drifts that so baffled them and made their teeth to chatter.

The apparent solidity of the snow was then gone in a few hours when the sun shone and the warm winds blew off the deserts around the land. The solid ice and snow melted and formed the rivers that replenished the land. This cycle of nature was the most unusual for the people of the Middle East and it underlined that the Lord was master of the universe, and was powerful in the extremes of heat and cold.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Immediately the psalmist shifts from the power of God over nature to the power of God over man. The Lord who rules the winds, the rain, the snows and the heat of the sun, was also the ruler of history and protected and blessed the household of Jacob. God’s hands are upon his people for their protection. His hand of protection and guidance is especially upon the Jewish people, not any other. No other nation has been blessed as Israel has been and we, as Gentile nations, enter His blessing, through the blessing of Israel. Romans 9-11. Refer to the BTB study of Israel and also the EBCWA Commentary on Romans Chapters 9 – 11.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Worship is the natural outpouring of a mature understanding of the power, person, and plan of God. All mature believers desire to worship the Lord and delight in the worship of the Lord. It is right and proper to render the Lord worship for who He is and what He has done. The Lord loves hearing the worship of his people, for it means they are facing the truth and responding to it whole heartedly. The Lord is the Creator and the Saviour of all who come to Him, but He is especially the God of Israel and his hand is over them until the end. The final chapter of Israel’s history has already been written, and it is the story of their redemption as they turn to the One who they pierced. Zechariah 12:10ff. Let us give thanks for what the Lord has done, but let us also praise the Lord for the glories that are to come when Israel embraces its Messiah, for they will enter the Millennial Kingdom in joy through the sadness of the Great Tribulation.

DOCTRINES

GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GOD – NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

CHRIST – NAMES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

CHRIST – DEITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

REVELATION

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ALTAR OF THE SOUL

CHRISTIAN LIFE – APPROACHING GOD – HEBREWS 10:19-22

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CAPACITY FOR LIFE

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THINKING BIBLICALLY

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BLESSED IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BLESSING OF THE BELIEVER

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIFTS RECEIVED AT SALVATION See page 101

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIFTS – SPIRITUAL GIFTS

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

ATHLETICS

FEAR

MERCY

PEACE

ISRAEL

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

PSALMS 148

INTRODUCTION

This psalm is a “Hallelujah Chorus” of praise to the Lord. It was clearly used in the Second Temple period as a worship song to be sung by the Levite singers and possibly the people also. It is likely that it was sung in parts, with the people expected to know this psalm by heart and join in at appropriate places, but this is not fully known. It divides neatly into two halves, with praise from the heavens in verses 1-6, and then praises from the earth in verses 7-14.

The reasons for the praise are given in verses 5-6; the Lord is the creator and the sustainer/controller of the universe. We are in the hands of the one who made all things and so we can relax and praise Him, for he has all things in his hands. Our destiny is in his hands, for the whole world is in his hands. Psalms 102:25, 111:7, John 10:28-29, Hebrews 1:10. Hallelujah!

PSALMS 148:1-14

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

REFLECTION

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

The ancient "high places" were places of sacrifice, both true and false, under the Judges, but by latter days had become the centres of paganism and compromise RELIGION. 1 Kings 3:2, 13:32-33, 15:14, 22:43, 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, 15:4, 16:4, Jeremiah 32:35, 48:33-35. The tops of most hills had been captured by false religion by the time of the last kings of Israel and Judah. Satan's COUNTERFEITS had become the dominant force in the land before the nation went into Exile.

It was for this reason that there was no hope for the people to be saved from the military disaster at that time of God's righteous judgement against his corrupt people. 2 Chronicles 36:14-16. One of the great things about the Babylonian Exile was that it got the last vestiges of paganism out of Israel. They were from that time determined to follow the Lord and recapture the old pagan sites and make them God's land again. Isaiah 57:7-15, Ezekiel 6:3-13.

Worship retakes the land. It was the worship of the people that drove out the power of the last of the pagan gods (demons). They were destroyed and sent away from the land by the power of prayer and worship upon the very places that they had previously been honoured upon. Every high hill was to be taken by the people of God and a worship service held there. This remains the way to retake the pagan places of our land; worship transforms people and the places they worship in. God was to be praised "from the heavens" and from the high places of the land, and in a high and lofty manner.

The name of the Lord was to be "lifted up" like the mountains. I love this verse and apply it every time I fly in a plane above the clouds. Their worship was to soar like the eagle in the heavens, and be as awesome as the sight of the snows on Mt Hermon. Man was to lift up the praises of the Lord and sing aloud, but also the angels were to do the same. Both man on earth, and above the earth, and the angels in heaven and upon the earth, were all to sing the praises of the Lord. Psalms 89:5-14, Isaiah 49:13, Revelation 19:1-7.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

These verses will be fulfilled with the coming of the Lord Jesus to reign over this earth. He was taken into the clouds and from the clouds He will be seen to arrive. Zechariah 14:1-18, Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1:9-11. The psalmist however is not waiting for that day, but is ordering the creation to praise the Lord now. All the heavens above and the waters in the clouds and storms will give thanks and praise the Lord. The entire creation will animate in that final day of the Lord's Coming and praise the Lord.

In a manner of speaking the entire creation praises the Lord now but when the Second Advent occurs the praise will reach a crescendo that has never been seen since the creation itself. All creation praises God in its grandeur and beauty, but the creation is a fallen image now; when the Lord comes it will be restored to the state it was in when the world was freshly made.

Every time we look into the heavens, or fly through the clouds in a plane we ought to read and pray through these Hallelujah Psalms and let our praises ring from the clouds in anticipation of that day when He comes. People often look for a passage to read when flying; well the Hallelujah Psalms are a good starting point. We know the Lord is coming, and so let us praise him now for the things He will do then, just as we praise him for the things He has already done. Let faith work out of our hearts in praise and worship. Hebrews 11:1-3.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

God spoke and the heavens were created. The power of God's words made the universe. We have the equation today in $E = MC^2$ that gives us a glimpse of the creative power of the energy of God, but it is only a glimpse. An old philosophy professor of mine told me to read Einstein's book "A Short Theory of Relativity". It was a very small volume, under 60 pages, and so I began, and slowly became more and more confused.

I knew enough to know roughly what he was saying, but I was humbled by this little book, much as I was later by Viktor Frankl's book that came out of the Death camps, "Man's Search for Meaning". My old professor, with a smile, asked me how I found Einstein's book. I told him that I was sure Einstein understood the theory, and I could tell he was right, but I certainly didn't understand it. He smiled even more broadly and said, "That is how that book can help you. Whenever you think you know too much, read that book and it will keep you in the right mental space; that of humility."

God's creative power is the power that we need to sit with and meditate upon more often, for it will keep us humble. Psalms 33:6-9, Jeremiah 10:10-13, Amos 9:5-6. God said the word and the worlds were in existence. All things were created by the Lord and in our own lives we rest upon the power and majesty of the Creator God. God has established the equations that at times men stumble over and discover. God set up the rules for this creation, but they are only for this space-time creation and all we see, and all that is beyond our sight in this creation, will all pass away one day and be replaced by ETERNITY. 2 Peter 3:9-18.

We are too limited in our views of God at times and the psalmist encourages us to lift up our eyes and see the truth about the Lord. The decrees of God will not be broken, and the plan of God will be fulfilled. There is no doubt about how this universe will end; it will end as it began through the words of God. Proverbs 8:22-31. Refer to the BTB study on the DIVINE DECREES.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Upon the earth itself the most unlikely assortment of creatures and objects are now ordered to praise the Lord. This assortment of elements and strange creatures is meant to strike the mind as strange. All the forces of nature and the wild elements of nature are still under the Lord's control and bow before their creator. The largest and wildest creatures of the sea are under the Lord's power. To the Hebrew peoples the sea was dark and mysterious and there are seriously large creatures in the sea that frighten even the naturalists that study them today.

I have seen sharks over twenty feet long that can swallow a man in a couple of bites! They send a shiver down my spine even now in memory. I have shivered in a snow storm and walked through packed snow and ice. My teeth have chattered on a freezing day in the wild places of this world. Even today I chuckle at this Psalm, for I have twisted my ankle by falling due to black ice on my back steps after a freezing night. The Lord reminds me that the things I do not see can be the most powerful and dangerous. These things are not associated in our minds with praise, and that is why the psalmist brings them in and tells us, even these will praise the Lord. All that is wild will praise the Lord one day, and the order has gone out for all nature to be filled with praise and glory to the Lord.

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

Now we move to a more mixed group of living things praising the Lord. The "creeping things" are the only scary living things here for all the other items mentioned are things that are grand and uplifting, or useful and helpful to man. The mountains and hills provide the areas where the cedars and the olives grow, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air provide food for man. All these created things have their purpose and value to mankind; and all "things" that the Lord has made will praise him, for they have all been made to ensure man has an environment that provides all we need to live and find our Creator and Saviour. The entire universe is made to bring us to salvation; it is the divinely appointed stage upon which mankind can find and serve their maker. Having found our maker, or rather been found by Him in Christ, let us praise Him!

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

It doesn't matter how great the person, they are still human beings in need of a saviour and lord. All the great people of the earth are just as needy as the most humble, and all people everywhere need to bow before their creator, judge, and saviour. All ages, all social classes, all races, all cultures, need to find their maker and serve Him in spirit and in truth! John 3:5-8, 4:23-24, 1 John 4:1-13. All the people of the earth need to praise the name of the Lord their God, for that is the right and proper thing to do for creatures towards their creator.

God has lifted up his people Israel, prospered his people, and appointed a destiny for all his people by faith, both Israel and those who have come to Him by them. Romans 9 – 11. The right response is to praise Him. Let us praise him for who we are, because of who He is and what He has done for us! Refer back to the BTB studies on CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Oh believers, Oh Pastors of the Lord's flock, let us praise the Lord right now for all he is, all he has done, and all he will do. The Lord will be victorious, and so let us praise him now for that victory yet to come. Let us by faith claim the victory now and rejoice in its future reality. Let us walk in the joy of faith today! Hebrews 11:1-3.

2. God has the entire universe in his hands. There is no danger to man of anything happening beyond the will and purpose of God. This present space-time universe is made and will one day be unmade and replaced. We are in the hands of the one who made the universe and will bring in its replacement. We are safe in the everlasting arms.

3. Let us praise the Lord for who we have become because of who the Lord is and what He has done for us. We have become members of the ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD through our POSITION IN CHRIST. Let us praise Him.

DOCTRINES

ANGELS – SATAN – COUNTERFEITS OF SATAN

ANGELS – SATAN’S STRATEGY AND TACTICS

RELIGION

ETERNITY PAST

ETERNITY FUTURE

GOD – DIVINE DECREES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DESTINY OF BELIEVERS

CHRISTIAN LIFE – POSITION IN CHRIST

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD

SALVATION – REGENERATION: BORN AGAIN

PSALMS 149

INTRODUCTION

This is the second to last of the Hallelujah Psalms. It is specifically a “new song” of praise, and is dated, as are the others, from the Second Temple period when they people sought a new song to sing for their new temple and the renewed hope of Messiah’s coming to that place. Zechariah 12:10 – 14:10. When Jesus was born, all knew where He would be born, (Isaiah 7:13-16, 9:6-7, Daniel 7:22, 9:25-26, Micah 5:2, Malachi 3:1-3), and there was an anticipation that He would be born around this time. The prophet Daniel had been very specific, indeed even to the year of his arrival. Daniel 9-11.

The timetable began with the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC and the prophetic clock started ticking towards Messiah at that point. This psalm comes from this time period, after the prophetic clock has started to tick, and is a song of anticipation of Messiah’s victory over all the foes of the land and his establishment of the kingdom. The kingdom of Messiah will be established; the prophecies about this demand a real and physical fulfilment, but we still wait for that day. 1 Corinthians 11:26. This psalm will gain its full significance when the enemies of righteousness are totally defeated by the Lord’s coming in power and majesty to rule over the earth. Zechariah 14:1ff, Revelation 21:3-7.

PSALMS 149:1-9

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.**
- 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.**
- 3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.**
- 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.**
- 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.**
- 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;**
- 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;**
- 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;**
- 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.**

REFLECTION

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.
 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
 3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.**

The greatest thing about the Millennial Kingdom is that the Lord is reigning over the entire earth and only believers are left upon the earth; there are no wicked people left once the Millennial Kingdom is in full swing! The entire earth is then the congregation of the saints. In that day the earth is "new" and there is a new song demanded and this is it. We saw early in the Deuteronomy section how the songs there were to be sung as the Lord walked across the Kidron valley, and others were to be sung as he took his throne, well this psalm begins the worship of the Millennial Temple when it is set up fully and begins regular worship.

The people of Jerusalem have cleansed their city then and the place is purged of the old evils of the past, and only God's praises are heard there. Israel will rejoice, and the children of Zion will lift up their voices and praise the Lord their God. Worship will be song, dance, and prayer. I see today people trying to "dance before the Lord", and frankly every time I have seen it tried; it appears either sexual or stupid. Please believers, let us wait until the Lord reigns and we have proper instruction in what "dancing before the Lord" means. Only when the Lord rules will we see the truth about what this means.

- 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.
 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.
 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;**

God takes pleasure in his people and He glorifies the meek and humble who seek to worship and honour him with their worship. Some argue that the Lord is honoured by the worship of the dancers and flag wavers of today's western churches! I admit this is just my spirit being unhappy with what I have seen to date, and the Lord may honour the spirit of the dancers and flag wavers, but when people are either embarrassed or sexually provoked by an action, I am concerned!

We must be careful of course here, for Michal, David's estranged wife, was insulted by David's "lack of royal dignity" when he danced before the Ark as it came into Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 6:16-23. Read this section carefully in the EBCWA Commentary on that important passage for a full discussion on this important topic. The key point to take from Michal's judgement is that her contempt for David was related to her royal pride; she would not be seen in public doing anything except looking gorgeous and royal. David was abandoned in his worship, for his love for the Lord was way above his sense of personal "royal dignity".

Let us ensure that pride does not interfere with worship in any way. When we worship the Lord our eyes ought to be on Him, not upon others around us. What they think of us is to be no concern at all, but having said that, we will not distract others worship by our own, or be a sexual temptation to anyone else either!

I have had to close my eyes when dancers have "done their thing" by the altar in churches I have attended, to block my eyes from sexual temptations. No actions of people worshipping should have sexual overtones, be they by male or females. This sort of sexualized dancing or acting is not right, for it is not Christ centred worship, it is self centred narcissism! David was not sexually tempting anyone. He had simply cast off his royal robes and as an ordinary man, in ordinary (but clean and pressed) working under garments, he was praising his Lord. Michal couldn't stand that loss of royal dignity, and so she lost her position as a queen as her judgement. So, let us praise the Lord by voice, and by posture, and "move around" doing it if we are so moved by the Holy Spirit, but let us be godly at all times.

Remember the FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT will never tempt another to sin of any kind! By the fruit of an action is the source of the action known. Matthew 7:13-23. I must add at this point, that only in African churches have I seen people dance before the Lord with joy, and there has been no distraction from worship in any way. It may be that the people who have moral and cultural dancing in their cultures will teach the rest of us to do this with honour to the Lord and no embarrassment or shame.

- 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;
 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;
 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.**

The worshippers of that early day in the return of the Exiles and those of the days after the Lord's return need to be standing with their two edged swords in their hands. They are not there for decoration, but for action. We know that the saints are to return with the Lord to execute judgement with him over the earth, and it may be that some of the evil and wicked are still alive right until the early stages of the rule of the Lord, and their execution is left to the saints who they had previously abused. It may also be that these verses simply apply to the exiles of Judah who had to fight for their religious freedom against all the surrounding nations.

The general nature of the statements here however make me believe the returning saints will say "amen", and hunt out the last evil people upon the earth and eliminate them under the direct orders of the Lord. Only at the time will we know

the truth of the application of these verses, and there will be no misunderstanding of the Lord's orders and no injustice will be done. All injustice and all wickedness is over when He reigns, and all evil is removed from the earth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us praise and worship the Lord in all appropriate ways we can discover, but let us be careful of "dancing before the Lord". Our western forms of dance have been too influenced by satanic "dirty dancing", and sexually erotic dances are not godly or right to have anywhere near worship. We must remember that the pagans danced before their gods also in David's time, and his dancing was not of that type. It was not sexual or seductive, and was visibly different in every way to the pagans.

We need instruction in this, and I am happiest if we wait for the Lord to give it personally to those who will dance in that day in Jerusalem, for then the people of the world can learn proper and respectful dancing. Until then, please, let us not have foolishness in our churches! As noted above, my experience tells me that many African brethren have this right, and I do not criticize them at all, but join with them in joy whenever I am there. Maybe today the western churches need to send their worship leaders to believing African churches? Let us be holy in our worship.

2. Let us praise the Lord in the presence of our enemies, for the day will come when the Lord will order all of the believers upon the earth after his coming to eliminate them in his name. The Lord will judge the wicked upon this earth, and the people of God will play their part in that. Let us read and reflect; our God is a consuming fire, and He will judge the wicked. Let us give the Gospel now, while there is time for the wicked to become part of the fellowship of the saints! The day will come when it will be too late for them. Let us fulfil the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-21.

DOCTRINES

KINGDOM – MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

CHRIST – FIRST AND SECOND ADVENTS

PSALMS 150

INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of power in the thirty seven Hebrew words that make up this psalm. This is a praise chorus for singing by all the people and for ending any worship service through all time reminding the people as they leave the altar to praise the Lord through every minute of every day. It is the doxology of the book of collected psalms and stands with passages like Isaiah 40:28-31, and Jude 24-25, as passages that any service may be ended with. It is the reminder that we are never to feel we have praised the Lord enough, for He is worthy of all praise. Revelation 19:1-6, 21:3-6.

PSALMS 150:1-6

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.**
- 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.**
- 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.**
- 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.**
- 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**
- 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.**

REFLECTION

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.**

The order to praise the Lord comes again and again in this psalm, but is an order that all the saints sing aloud. There is no burden to answer the command of the Lord, and it becomes an article of praise in itself. I never rejoiced in any orders I ever received in the Armed Forces, and I certainly never sang them, but the order to praise the Lord is a song to us, for we rejoice in answering the command. What a joy to be able to sing aloud to the Lord. We are to pray and praise in the sanctuary, in the very place that stands for the glory of his power we praise Him. Psalms 29:9, 66:13-17, 116:18-19, 118:19-20.

- 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.**

Praise the Lord for who He is, and for the mighty acts that He has done. Count the actions of the Lord in history and praise the Lord for each you hear about. This is the joy of Bible study, for every verse we read opens the door to new praise and glory in the wonderful acts of the Lord through history. Psalms 145:5-6, Revelation 15:3-4. The Lord's greatness is not just amazing, but it is great and excellent in all its aspects. The Lord is amazing and wonderful. We need to get a clear picture of the greatness and wonder of our God. For too many believers, their view of God is too small. Let us see the wonder of our God and glory in his holy name. Psalms 96:4-6, 145:1-3.

- 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.**
- 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.**
- 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**

The orchestra of ancient Israel is now listed before us. The musical instruments of that day still exist today in the Middle East, and many modern instruments have derived from the ones recorded here. Both the strings and the wind instruments are mentioned and the percussion section also. I recommend a search of either the internet or your Biblical Encyclopedia under Ancient Musical Instruments. Then look at each of these instruments and see their pictures and read about them. All I want to note is the truth that every musical instrument ever made is able to be used to praise the Lord.

There are those who want to argue that music shouldn't be used in worship, but only the human voice, well they have a shock coming, because every instrument will be used to praise God in the future Kingdom of the Lord, and every instrument should be called into the Lord's service today. Let us make a joyful noise to the Lord! Believe me when I say, that when I sing, I make a joyful noise unto the Lord, but Hallelujah, the Lord doesn't get upset at my poor singing, for He sees my heart of praise towards Him!

- 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.**

Every living thing is called to praise the Lord. I have seen my dog bark and also seen it cry, but one day every living creature will breathe out blessing and worship to the Lord and sing his praises. Maybe the animals will speak once more, as they may have in the Garden of Eden. The order is clear, and all living creatures will hear and obey in that day. Let us all praise the Lord my friends; He is worthy of our praise. Let us praise him today and forever. Philippians 4:4. Amen.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God is the God of Almighty Power. Let us praise him for the power He has and the glory He gives us all in the riches we have in Christ Jesus. Let us praise Him with every instrument we have, including the human voice. Let us

praise the Lord in purity and in joy at what He has done, is doing with us, and will do forever. We have an amazing God, and let us praise His Holy Name.

DOCTRINES

MUSIC

As I write these last words in the Commentary of the book of Psalms I come to the end of a project that we started in 1993 to write a teaching Commentary of the whole Bible. It was designed for the pastors of the Third World that they might teach their people and train new pastors from these books at no cost to them. As I rest my fingers from typing I give thanks to Almighty God that He has brought us through to this point where the last book is completed. We will keep working on other projects but this one has been completed. It is the grace, mercy and love of God we give thanks to, as we finish this. What has been achieved was impossible from a human perspective. Truly, with God all things are possible.

Praise His Holy Name.

Dr John C McEwan
Dean EBCWA
Auckland New Zealand 16 November 2009.

What a joy to revise this material in the depths of winter of 2014 and rejoice again in the Lord's work through us all.