



DEVOTIONAL
PSALTER



CROSSWAY

ESV Devotional Psalter
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INTRODUCTION

The Psalms are unlike any other portion of Scripture. This is the one book of the Bible written to God. We are taught in many other places in Scripture how to pray. Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:5–15). Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). But the Psalms are themselves prayers.

In this way the Psalms are uniquely suited to foster communion with God. The Psalms give voice to our hearts. The wide range of human feeling is here given concrete expression. We are given language to address God with thanks and praise, but also with our feelings of desolation or despair or overwhelming guilt because of our sin.

And through it all we see the Savior walking through the Psalms. He is the one who embodies and fulfills all that we find in this book. He gives us supreme reason to give thanks and praise to God (Ps. 107:1). He is the one who experienced true desolation and despair, enduring separation from God so that his people never will (Ps. 22:1–2). Jesus rinses us clean through his atoning work and assures us that he has wiped away all the guilt of our sin.

These profound and precious truths have led to the creation of the *ESV Devotional Psalter*. The purpose of this ESV edition is to foster communion with God amid all the ups and downs of daily life in this fallen world. The devotional content is meant to facilitate fellowship with God in the words of the Psalms. The devotionals are therefore intended not to replace deep

engagement with the Psalms but rather to help the reader move deeply into this book of the Bible—and thereby to move deeply into communion with the triune God. Whether one reads through this volume straight through, day by day, or instead opens it in a less programmatic manner, the devotionals will consistently draw the reader's eye back to the words of the Psalms themselves, leading to reflection and prayer.

May you find consolation and comfort, assurance and grace, and indeed the very Savior himself as you ponder God and his presence in your life through the *ESV Devotional Psalter*.

ABOUT THE ESV

The Bible

The words of the Bible are the very words of God our Creator speaking to us. They are completely truthful;¹ they are pure;² they are powerful;³ and they are wise and righteous.⁴ We should read these words with reverence and awe,⁵ and with joy and delight.⁶ Through these words God gives us eternal life,⁷ and daily nourishes our spiritual lives.⁸

The ESV Translation

The English Standard Version® (ESV®) stands in the classic stream of English Bible translations that goes back nearly five centuries. In this stream, accurate faithfulness to the original text is combined with simplicity, beauty, and dignity of expression. Our goal has been to carry forward this legacy for this generation and generations to come.

The ESV is an “essentially literal” translation that seeks as far as possible to reproduce the meaning and structure of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. We have sought to be “as literal as possible” while maintaining clear expression and literary excellence. Therefore the ESV is well suited for both personal reading and church ministry, for devotional reflection and serious study, and for Scripture memorization.

¹Ps. 119:160; Prov. 30:5; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18 ²Ps. 12:6 ³Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23 ⁴Ps. 19:7–11 ⁵Deut. 28:58; Ps. 119:74; Isa. 66:2 ⁶Ps. 19:7–11; 119:14, 97, 103; Jer. 15:16 ⁷John 6:68; 1 Pet. 1:23 ⁸Deut. 32:46; Matt. 4:4

The ESV Publishing Team

The ESV publishing team has included more than a hundred people. The fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee benefited from the work of fifty biblical experts serving as Translation Review Scholars and from the comments of the more than fifty members of the Advisory Council. This international team from many denominations shares a common commitment to the truth of God's Word and to historic Christian orthodoxy.

To God's Honor and Praise

We know that no Bible translation is perfect; but we also know that God uses imperfect and inadequate things to his honor and praise. So to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and to his people—we offer what we have done, with our prayers that it may prove useful, with gratitude for much help given, and with ongoing wonder that our God should ever have entrusted to us so momentous a task.

To God alone be the glory!
The Translation Oversight Committee

BOOK ONE

PSALM 1

- 1 Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.



The first psalm serves as the gateway to the entire book of Psalms, stressing that those who would worship God genuinely must embrace his Law (or Torah)—that is, his covenant instruction founded on his redeeming grace. This psalm addresses topics found also in the Bible’s wisdom literature and makes them

the subject of song. When we joyfully sing this psalm, its values become ours. We are changed.

In a sustained contrast, Psalm 1 reminds us that in the end there are only two ways to live. And whatever else happens in our lives today, the crucial, bottom-line question is: which of the two ways described in this psalm will we embrace? Beneath the never-ending list of “to do’s” clamoring for our attention lies the fundamental choice to receive instruction and influence either from God or from fools. Will we listen to the voice of life or to the voices of death? Will we breathe in God’s life-giving instruction, sinking deep roots (v. 3), or will we breathe in the empty instruction of those who “will not stand in the judgment” (v. 5)? Will the trials still to come in our lives prove us to be deep-rooted trees, incapable of being blown over, or will they show us to be chaff, blown away by the slightest breeze?

Happily, this psalm and its two ways to live are not a choice between stoic obedience or gleeful disobedience. The first word of the psalm makes clear that true, solid happiness—what the Bible calls “blessedness”—is found in God and his Word. Verse 2 reiterates—“His *delight* is in the law of the LORD.” Nothing can compare with the blessedness—the fruitfulness, the flourishing, the prospering, the delightfulness, of a life saturated with the Word of God.

Walk with God. Soak in his Word. Take his yoke upon you (cf. Matt. 11:29). You will be blessed—truly happy, with a happiness the winds of trial cannot blow away.

PSALM 2

- 1 Why do the nations rage
 and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
 and the rulers take counsel together,
 against the LORD and against his Anointed,
 saying,
- 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart
 and cast away their cords from us.”
- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
 the Lord holds them in derision.
- 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
 and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- 6 “As for me, I have set my King
 on Zion, my holy hill.”
- 7 I will tell of the decree:
 The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
 today I have begotten you.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your
 heritage,
 and the ends of the earth your possession.
- 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
 and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
- 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
 be warned, O rulers of the earth.

- 11 Serve the LORD with fear,
 and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son,
 lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
 for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.



When we as the people of God sing Psalm 2, we remind ourselves of how God made David and his descendants to be kings, tasked with carrying out God's redemptive purposes in the world. In the face of overwhelming opposition, this psalm exults in the promises made to the Davidic king at his coronation. With its prospect of a worldwide rule for the house of David, this psalm also looks to the future, when David's ultimate heir, the Messiah, would indeed accomplish this.

With the coming of the Messiah, this psalm's triumphant portrait of the Davidic throne takes on heightened significance and finds its ultimate meaning. Believers today are the heirs of this psalm, and its promises come to rest on the worldwide church and its faith in the true and final Davidic heir, Jesus. Those who take refuge in him have found the only truly safe place in this broken world. Those who persist in resisting God and his rule, even if they are powerful "rulers of the earth," will be finally defied and justly destroyed.

Despite whatever tumults rock our lives today, David's greatest son, Jesus himself, has been installed as the ruler of the world. One day this kingship will break open in universal acknowledgment and the universal execution of perfect justice. For now, we

can go forth in the glad assurance that in Jesus we will one day leave behind forever the futility of the present. Every injustice in our lives will be undone.

Take heart. We are on the right side.

PSALM 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

- 1 O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
- 2 many are saying of my soul,
“There is no salvation for him in God.” *Selah*
- 3 But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
- 4 I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah*
- 5 I lay down and slept;
I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.
- 7 Arise, O LORD!
Save me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.
- 8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;
your blessing be on your people! *Selah*



This is the first psalm with a title. David wrote this psalm, we are told, as a response to the heart-wrenching experience of being violently pursued by his own son, Absalom (see 2 Samuel 15–16). We see in this psalm how a man of God models genuine faith in the midst of dire circumstances. What must it have been like to be murderously hunted by his own child?

David felt utterly overwhelmed by the sheer weight of opposition: “Many are rising against me” (Ps. 3:1); “many thousands of people . . . have set themselves against me” (v. 6).

What strengthens David, however, is not strength mustered up from within. What stabilizes him is not self-generated optimism. David knows that earthly help is worthless when the tidal waves of life threaten to overwhelm and drown us. Instead he looks to God: “But you, O LORD, are a shield about me” (v. 3). This is the posture of faith. Only in this way does David’s internal frenetic anxiety die away so that he can sleep in peace once more (v. 5). Self-divesting trust in God is the channel through which the deliverance and power of God may flow.

What threatens to overwhelm you today? We have an even greater source of calm than David did, for there is one who did not strike God’s enemies on the cheek (v. 7) but instead let himself be struck on the cheek. Indeed, he experienced the ultimate rejection, being nailed to a Roman cross. Jesus allowed himself to be truly overwhelmed by his enemies. The result is that believers can be confident that every overwhelming experience they face is from a loving Father to help them.

PSALM 4

*To the choirmaster: with stringed
instruments. A Psalm of David.*

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

2 O men, how long shall my honor be turned into
shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after
lies? *Selah*

3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for
himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

4 Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be
silent. *Selah*

5 Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

6 There are many who say, “Who will show us some
good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!”
7 You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine
abound.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.



This psalm expresses quiet trust amid troubling circumstances, combining the classic psalm categories of “individual lament” and “psalm of confidence.” Many take this psalm to be a companion to Psalm 3, because 4:8 seems to echo 3:5. Perhaps the two psalms were meant to be read at the beginning and end of a single day, since the past tense of 3:5 sets Psalm 3 in the morning while the future tense of 4:8 sets Psalm 4 in the evening.

Psalm 4 echoes the feelings of being overwhelmed that are expressed in the previous psalm. Here, however, David is in anguish not simply because of overwhelming opposition but because of the slander and taunting of his enemies. This is the pain not only of fear but of shame as well (v. 2).

David is expressing the battle that rages within our heart at night as we lay our head down on the pillow. On one side is stacked up all of the clamoring accusations and misunderstandings and painful words of the day—of actual people in our lives or of demonic attack or of our own fallen minds. On the other side is the Lord. Both beckon to us; both invite us to listen. In the darkness of that moment, David makes up his mind: he will trust in the Lord (v. 5). The result? A greater joy than any material prosperity could ever provide (v. 7); a peace that supplies contented sleep (v. 8).

Trust in the Lord. He has set you apart for himself (v. 3). You are his. You have been united to his Son, and the sufferings of this present age can only

heighten your future glory and joy (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16–18). Tonight, you may go to bed in peace. You could not be more secure.

PSALM 5

To the choirmaster; for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;
consider my groaning.
- 2 Give attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you do I pray.
- 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and
watch.
- 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.
- 5 The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
- 6 You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful
man.
- 7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast
love,
will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in the fear of you.
- 8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

- 9 For there is no truth in their mouth;
their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.
- 10 Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of the abundance of their transgressions cast
them out,
for they have rebelled against you.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.
- 12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover him with favor as with a shield.



This psalm is another individual lament and is the first instance of a psalm that includes prayers for the personal downfall of one's enemies. Such psalms are not expressions of petty annoyances or insults but are cries to God for justice in the face of bloodthirsty and deceitful persecutors.

This psalm is one of many places in the Bible where we can be greatly encouraged by the sheer earthiness of the Bible. Despite being the religious book of billions, the Christian Scriptures are not abstract or ethereal, disconnected from the visceral emotions and experiences of life in a fallen world. The Bible is concrete, tangible, and rooted in gritty reality. David is “groaning” (v. 1). Disgusted by the deceitful schemes of the wicked, he pleads with God for justice, for a

righting of wrongs, for the evil of the wicked to be returned on their own head (v. 10). Such language—even more, such prayer—sounds abrasive to modern ears, immersed as we are in a culture of tolerant niceness. Yet David knows that for God to tolerate wickedness would undermine the very character of God and his righteous purposes for the world.

Content to leave the punishment of all evil in God's hands, David directs his heart elsewhere. He does not let thoughts of evildoers fester in his mind but finally rests in God, his refuge (vv. 11–12), who must do what is right.

And so God did. At the climax of all of human history, God showed us just how concrete and tangible he was willing to become, in the ultimate righting of all wrongs. Refusing to remain abstract or ethereal, the second person of the Trinity became one of us, knowing all of our weaknesses except sin.

Are you groaning today? Your reigning Savior knows what that is like. He too groaned, on a cross, so that every groaning you now experience may result in your ultimate strengthening.

PSALM 6

*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments;
according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor discipline me in your wrath.
- 2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
- 3 My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O LORD—how long?
- 4 Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?
- 6 I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
- 7 My eye wastes away because of grief;
it grows weak because of all my foes.
- 8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my
weeping.
- 9 The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD accepts my prayer.

All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly
troubled;
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a
moment.



David is in anguish. He is in the valley. Life is suffocating him, apparently because of interpersonal strife (v. 8). His very soul is in agony (v. 3). But this is a suffering that is physical too, affecting him to his very bones (v. 2). We are given a portrait of David alone on his couch, weeping like a baby. His life has gone into meltdown.

Through it all, to make matters worse, he is keenly aware of his own sin and guilt, as evident from his opening words, in which he asks the Lord to withhold his heavenly rebuke and discipline.

Where does David go in such distress?

“The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer” (v. 9).

Amid the storm of his life, David looks not out, at his circumstances, nor in, at his own internal resources, but up, to the Lord of mercy. Unloading the burdens of his heart to God in prayer, David does not apply a formula to his pain but rather this: God. When we are brought into the dark valleys of life as we journey through this fallen world, we have, and we need, one thing: God. And we can know that we have the Lord with us, moment by moment, because he sent his own Son to walk through this world’s sorrows. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). And why? So that God could withhold his “anger” and “wrath” (Ps. 6:1) from us despite our deserving it. Bringing our complaints and

afflictions to God in Jesus' name, we can know for certain that "the LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer."

PSALM 7

*A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD
concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.*

- 1 O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,
2 lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.
- 3 O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,
4 if I have repaid my friend with evil
or plundered my enemy without cause,
5 let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,
and let him trample my life to the ground
and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*
- 6 Arise, O LORD, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.
7 Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about
you;
over it return on high.
- 8 The LORD judges the peoples;
judge me, O LORD, according to my
righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.

- 9 Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
and may you establish the righteous—
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God!
- 10 My shield is with God,
who saves the upright in heart.
- 11 God is a righteous judge,
and a God who feels indignation every day.
- 12 If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;
he has bent and readied his bow;
13 he has prepared for him his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.
- 14 Behold, the wicked man conceives evil
and is pregnant with mischief
and gives birth to lies.
- 15 He makes a pit, digging it out,
and falls into the hole that he has made.
- 16 His mischief returns upon his own head,
and on his own skull his violence descends.
- 17 I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his
righteousness,
and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD,
the Most High.



The certainty of a final day of judgment is not meant to be a matter of trembling and anxiety for believers. Instead, it is meant to be a matter of deep consolation. David has been slandered by a man of the tribe of Benjamin—a fellow Israelite is verbally attacking him.

Leaders, in particular, know what this feels like, but all believers can testify to times in which they were misunderstood, misrepresented, or otherwise treated unjustly. What does David do?

Note first what he does *not* do. He does not exonerate himself *before others*. He does not explain to others how mistaken this accusation is. Instead, he takes his complaint to God. As he does so, David pleads for divine vindication based on an honest assessment of matters: “The LORD judges the peoples” (v. 8). Liberated from his own need to defend himself, David places judgment solely in the hands of God.

It might seem perplexing that David asks God to judge him according to David’s own righteousness (v. 8). But we must understand that David makes clear throughout the Psalms that his only hope of being acquitted before God is God’s own mercy (“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love,” 51:1; “Give ear to my pleas for mercy,” 143:1). David is also simply pursuing the truth. Note that in verses 3–5 he asks that he would be assessed accordingly if he is indeed in the wrong. David is not putting on blinders to his own sinfulness; rather, he is asking for truth and objective honesty to be pursued.

Are you misunderstood today? Even if you are sure you are in the right, why not be wronged rather than fight back, even in subtle ways (1 Cor. 6:7)? After all, our Lord Jesus himself was right his whole life yet treated as wrongfully as anyone in human history—“yet he opened not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7). And why? So that for all the times we truly are in the wrong, we can be truly exonerated and acquitted, despite what we actually deserve. Reflecting on this gospel freedom, we are freed from insisting on defending ourselves now.

PSALM 8

*To the choirmaster: according to The
Gittith. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in
place,
- 4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
- 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the
heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
- 6 You have given him dominion over the works of
your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
- 7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



The Bible restores our human dignity, scarred but not lost in the fall. Alluding to the opening chapters of Genesis, where mankind is called to exercise dominion over the created order, David brings us to praise God for the remarkable care he has entrusted to us. He is the God of the heavens, having placed the stars in their orbits, and yet he has entrusted to humanity the care of the earth. When he speaks of our being crowned “with glory and honor” (v. 5), David speaks of the image of God bestowed upon every human.

The references to “foes,” “enemy,” and “avenger” in the course of praising God for his creation remind us that there was also a fall (v. 2; Gen. 3:1–24). Yet despite our fall into sin, God still dignifies his people as the stewards of his creation (Ps. 8:5–8; Gen. 1:28–31).

And yet we need a Savior to overcome not only personal sin but also the fallen condition of the creation (Gen. 3:15, 18–19). By quoting this psalm, the writer of the book of Hebrews later clarifies that Christ, our Savior, is the perfect representation of the humanity described in this psalm (Heb. 2:6–8).

The One through whom the world was created (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2) came to restore the image marred at the fall. Verses 1 and 9 of Psalm 8 not only serve as bookends for the psalm; they also anticipate the end of all things, when Christ’s enemies will be made a footstool for his feet and his name will be majestic through all the earth (Eph. 1:22).

PSALM 9

*To the choirmaster: according to
Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole
heart;
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.
- 2 I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.
- 3 When my enemies turn back,
they stumble and perish before your presence.
- 4 For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne, giving righteous
judgment.
- 5 You have rebuked the nations; you have made the
wicked perish;
you have blotted out their name forever and
ever.
- 6 The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;
their cities you rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.
- 7 But the LORD sits enthroned forever;
he has established his throne for justice,
8 and he judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with uprightness.

- 9 The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
- 10 And those who know your name put their trust in
you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who
seek you.
- 11 Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in
Zion!
Tell among the peoples his deeds!
- 12 For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- 13 Be gracious to me, O LORD!
See my affliction from those who hate me,
O you who lift me up from the gates of death,
- 14 that I may recount all your praises,
that in the gates of the daughter of Zion
I may rejoice in your salvation.
- 15 The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid, their own foot has been
caught.
- 16 The LORD has made himself known; he has executed
judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own
hands. *Higgaion. Selah*
- 17 The wicked shall return to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.
- 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

19 Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail;
let the nations be judged before you!
20 Put them in fear, O LORD!
Let the nations know that they are but men!

Selah



David writes this psalm in the midst of international strife and tumult—not unlike our own days in the twenty-first century. While many believers around the world today live in relative political stability, many others, like those in Israel in David’s time, do not. The news headlines each morning remind us of the unrest of the world and of the anxiety that accompanies such unrest.

“But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness” (vv. 7–8). God is never caught by surprise amid global upheaval and strife. He is never perplexed or left groping for solutions. He reigns. And one day, all that is done in this stormy world will be brought into the light and into judgment.

Our part is to trust him. David does not take a posture of haughty superiority when he considers the godlessness of the nations. Rather, he remembers his own need: “Be gracious to me, O LORD!” (v. 13). David does not deserve God’s help; it is a matter of God being “gracious.” David lifts his eyes, and ours, beyond the walls of this life into the unending world of the next life—“The needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever” (v. 18). Indeed, it is only the needy who cry out for God’s help. Our need is all we bring. As he delivers us in times of adversity and in our ultimate

need—the need for saving mercy from him, which has been granted to us in Christ—we sing with David and rejoice in God’s saving mercy (v. 14).

PSALM 10

- 1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far away?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
- 2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor;
let them be caught in the schemes that they have
devised.
- 3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,
and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces
the LORD.
- 4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him;
all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”
- 5 His ways prosper at all times;
your judgments are on high, out of his sight;
as for all his foes, he puffs at them.
- 6 He says in his heart, “I shall not be moved;
throughout all generations I shall not meet
adversity.”
- 7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and
oppression;
under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sits in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places he murders the innocent.
His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;
- 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket;
he lurks that he may seize the poor;
he seizes the poor when he draws him into his
net.

10 The helpless are crushed, sink down,
and fall by his might.

11 He says in his heart, “God has forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will never see it.”

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.

13 Why does the wicked renounce God
and say in his heart, “You will not call to account”?

14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation,
that you may take it into your hands;
to you the helpless commits himself;
you have been the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer;
call his wickedness to account till you find none.

16 The LORD is king forever and ever;
the nations perish from his land.

17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted;
you will strengthen their heart; you will incline
your ear

18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that man who is of the earth may strike terror
no more.



The tone of Psalm 10 turns sharply from the psalms that have come just before. Here we find the psalmist distraught at the victimization of the helpless. And this cruelty seems to come not at the hand of foreign nations but at the hands of fellow Israelites—fellow members of the people of God.

The sight of such evil carried out against fellow humans—fellow members of God’s people—can easily cause deep cynicism and emotional fatigue. How does one persevere in the face of horrors done to others, especially horrors perpetrated by those who ought to have been the kindest? Everything in us screams out for justice.

David feels the same way, but he realizes that “you [the Lord] do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands” (v. 14). The Lord will “do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed” (v. 18). God will, one day, right all wrongs, straighten out all that is bent, and rinse this world clean of all injustice.

And how do we know this? Because in the middle of human history God proved the lengths to which he was willing to go to undo injustice. He sent his own Son, the one man who was ever truly just, to go to a cross and swallow all of the injustice of all of those who would simply trust in him. Does this mean we can overlook injustices committed against the helpless today? On the contrary—it means that we are freshly empowered and motivated to fight the horrors of this world, knowing that the horror of our own sin has been justly wiped away, by sheer grace, in the work of Christ, received by faith.

PSALM 11

To the choirmaster. Of David.

- 1 In the LORD I take refuge;
how can you say to my soul,
“Flee like a bird to your mountain,
2 for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
they have fitted their arrow to the string
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
3 if the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?”
- 4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD’s throne is in heaven;
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.
5 The LORD tests the righteous,
but his soul hates the wicked and the one who
loves violence.
- 6 Let him rain coals on the wicked;
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the
portion of their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.



Those who walk with God experience a range of trials, a few of which are mentioned in this psalm. They are told to flee to a mountain (v. 1), implying that they are vulnerable and unprotected. They are shot at (v. 2), implying that they are the target of attacks, such as verbal ostracism. But God “is in his holy temple,” and “his eyes see” (v. 4). Nothing goes unnoticed by the Lord of heaven. He will bring justice one day. And on that day, “the upright shall behold his face” (v. 7). Have you considered this promise? Have you taken it down deep into your soul?

What does this promise mean? The term “upright” refers not to the sinlessly perfect but to those who operate out of a basic trust in God, knowing their imperfections; those who, like God, love righteousness and hate wickedness (v. 7). What does it mean that believers will see the face of God?

It means we will become ourselves, finally. It means dawn will rise on the dark gray of this fallen world. It means final rest will be ours. It means we will be with the One of whom even the best earthly friendships are only a faint glimpse and to whom the most sublime earthly joys are finally pointing. As the very end of the Bible puts it: “They will see his face” (Rev. 22:4).

PSALM 12

*To the choirmaster: according to The
Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone;
for the faithful have vanished from among the
children of man.
- 2 Everyone utters lies to his neighbor;
with flattering lips and a double heart they
speak.
- 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great boasts,
4 those who say, “With our tongue we will prevail,
our lips are with us; who is master over us?”
- 5 “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy
groan,
I will now arise,” says the LORD;
“I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”
- 6 The words of the LORD are pure words,
like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
purified seven times.
- 7 You, O LORD, will keep them;
you will guard us from this generation forever.
- 8 On every side the wicked prowl,
as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

This psalm is a community lament, suited to occasions when the people of God are under the authority of liars in positions of leadership. Note the repeated theme throughout the psalm: dishonesty with the lips.

What is the pain of dishonesty? Why does being lied to, or lied about, hurt so deeply? Is it not because we are being misrepresented such that others think more poorly of us than they ought? In other words, who we really are, and what others think we are, become separate realities instead of corresponding. Being lied to is also a barbed pain. We are being manipulated or taken advantage of; we become a victim of another's deceiving words.

God comes to us in that darkness and says: "Because the needy groan, I will now arise. . . . I will place him in the safety for which he longs" (v. 5). And note what the psalmist then says: "The words of the LORD are pure words" (v. 6). That is to say, God, unlike the liars in leadership, is not being deceptive when he promises this.

And what does he promise? Safety. Deliverance. Calmness. God delights to rescue us in our need. How do we know this? Because in Christ he's already achieved the greatest deliverance and accomplished our greatest safety—deliverance from hell and condemnation, safety from Satan and eternal death. Jesus groaned on the cross in this life so that you and I need never groan in the next one.

PSALM 13

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

- 1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- 4 lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
- 5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.



David is on the verge of despair. His emotional resources are spent. He sees no way forward. Darkness closes in. He feels as if God has forgotten him.

This is not an isolated experience, shared by merely some of us. It is an experience that all of God’s children walk through, in ways and times and seasons unique to our own journey and walk with the Lord.

Where does this psalm lead us? As is the pattern of the Christian life, David begins in darkness but fights toward light; he begins in feelings of death (v. 3) but moves toward life; he begins, in a sense, in crucifixion but moves to resurrection. For David knows he can trust in God's "steadfast love," his covenantal insistence on delivering his people (v. 5).

But if David can bank everything on God, even when on the brink of despair, how much more can we today? For David saw God's steadfast love only in fairly abstract terms, in past acts of deliverance through events such as the exodus. We see God's steadfast love in concrete terms, in the great climactic act of deliverance in the person of his own Son. Jesus Christ was steadfast love embodied not merely in an event but in a person.

PSALM 14

To the choirmaster. Of David.

- 1 The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.
- 2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children
of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.
- 3 They have all turned aside; together they have
become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.
- 4 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread
and do not call upon the LORD?
- 5 There they are in great terror,
for God is with the generation of the righteous.
- 6 You would shame the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is his refuge.
- 7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of
Zion!

When the LORD restores the fortunes of his
people,
let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.



The apostle Paul quotes Psalm 14 in Romans 3, the greatest passage in the New Testament describing universal human sinfulness. We can see why Paul does so when we read this sobering lament. David emphasizes that not a single person acts justly throughout his life. We live in a world that does not operate the way it was meant to. Sickness, disease, strife, dishonesty, theft, backbiting, bitterness, selfishness—a world that was created beautiful has become ugly in many ways, brought into ruin through mankind's sin.

Especially painful are the ways in which God's own people are afflicted by evildoers (v. 5). "Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!" laments David (v. 7). What David saw dimly we see clearly. Salvation would come out of Zion—but not salvation for Israel alone. For Israel was not merely victimized by human sinfulness; they themselves were part of the problem. They were not exempt from human evil. Salvation would come out of Israel, but it would be for all the world.

Sin is universal. No one is exempt. But grace is universally available. No one need be exempt. All that is required is a trusting faith in Jesus Christ, the living embodiment of the salvation that came out of Israel.

PSALM 15

A Psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your holy hill?
- 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right
and speaks truth in his heart;
- 3 who does not slander with his tongue
and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
- 4 in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honors those who fear the LORD;
who swears to his own hurt and does not change;
- 5 who does not put out his money at interest
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things shall never be moved.



The psalm speaks of one who is truthful “in his heart” (v. 2), one “in whose eyes a vile person is despised” (v. 4). Such a person has a certain moral internal compass or perspective. This is someone who “honors those who fear the LORD” (v. 4)—that is, he lives in reverent devotion to the Lord, inside and out.

To such a life we are called. But who can claim to live such a life perfectly?

Verse 1 speaks of dwelling on God’s holy mountain.

Strikingly, this exact phrase is used earlier in the Psalter in what is, according to the New Testament, one of the most christologically charged psalms: Psalm 2. In Psalm 2:6, Yahweh says: “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill” (same Hebrew phrase as in 15:1). In Psalm 2, though, God is not asking who will dwell on this holy mountain. He is declaring whom he himself has set there—a man whom the New Testament identifies as Christ himself (Heb. 1:2; 5:5).

Who shall dwell on God’s holy hill? Jesus.

To dwell on God’s holy mountain means to pass into and abide in the temple. But Jesus did not come simply *to* the temple; he came *as* the temple. Jesus dwells on God’s holy hill not by entering a humanly made building in order to meet with God but by entering a divinely made body to meet with us. The Word “tabernacled” among us (cf. John 1:14). He himself does what the temple was meant to do—to restore man to God, to rejoin earth to heaven, to bring the “walking together in the cool of the day” of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:8) back to reality once more.

PSALM 16

A Miktam of David.

- 1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.”
- 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent
ones,
in whom is all my delight.
- 4 The sorrows of those who run after another god
shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour
out
or take their names on my lips.
- 5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
- 7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- 8 I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be
shaken.

- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being
rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
- 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
- 11 You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.



This psalm ushers believers into a renewed confidence and contentment in the care of the Lord. The ringing note on which the psalm ends has been deeply calming encouragement to saints down through the ages. “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (v. 11). Nothing else is needed. “The LORD is my chosen portion” (v. 5).

Have you tasted this? Have you been freed from the endless quest to secure stability and joy in the things of this world? Have you been ushered into the invincibility of knowing that no matter what you lose in terms of your health, finances, marriage, children, job, emotional sanity, the Lord is your ever-present refuge and life?

Three hundred years ago the pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards captured the glad contentment of this psalm when he said in one sermon:

The heart of a godly man doth freely choose God and Christ for his portion. Take away all torment and set hell aside and he could and might have his choice and he would choose God rather than anything else. If the godly

man might have his choice either to live always in this world in the enjoyment of all manner of worldly prosperity or else in God's time die and go to heaven to dwell forever there in the enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ, he would choose the latter.

PSALM 17

A Prayer of David.

- 1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry!
Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!
- 2 From your presence let my vindication come!
Let your eyes behold the right!
- 3 You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night,
you have tested me, and you will find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not
transgress.
- 4 With regard to the works of man, by the word of
your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
- 5 My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.
- 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my words.
- 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O Savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.
- 8 Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
9 from the wicked who do me violence,
my deadly enemies who surround me.

- 10 They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
- 11 They have now surrounded our steps;
they set their eyes to cast us to the ground.
- 12 He is like a lion eager to tear,
as a young lion lurking in ambush.
- 13 Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him!
Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,
- 14 from men by your hand, O LORD,
from men of the world whose portion is in this
life.
- You fill their womb with treasure;
they are satisfied with children,
and they leave their abundance to their infants.
- 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your
likeness.



David in Psalm 17 is afflicted by unjust accusation and hostility from his enemies. In both words (v. 10) and actions (v. 11), his accusers seek to bring him down.

The anxiety, pain, and resentment that arise in the midst of such attacks can feel overwhelming. Everything in us longs to defend ourselves, to fight back, to vindicate our name. But what does David do? He rests his heart in God and in God's final justice. He appeals to heaven for vindication rather than seeking to execute it on earth. David knows deep down that God is the "Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand" (v. 7).

Yet it is painfully clear that while God promises to be with us, he does not promise to relieve in this life every earthly pain and injustice. Thus the note on which David ends: “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness” (v. 15). Whatever unfolds in this life, David knows that one day he will be at rest in the presence of the Lord.

If David knew this, how much more ought we—we who see the length to which God would ultimately go, at the height of human history, in “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), to send his Son through death and out the other side: Jesus Christ, the God-man, whom we will indeed see one day soon face to face (Rev. 22:3–4).

PSALM 18

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

- 1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.
2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.
- 4 The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.
- 7 Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.

8 Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.

9 He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.

10 He rode on a cherub and flew;
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around
him,
thick clouds dark with water.

12 Out of the brightness before him
hailstones and coals of fire broke through his
clouds.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice,
hailstones and coals of fire.

14 And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.

15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

16 He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.

17 He rescued me from my strong enemy
and from those who hated me,
for they were too mighty for me.

18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
but the LORD was my support.

19 He brought me out into a broad place;
he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

20 The LORD dealt with me according to my
righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he
rewarded me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his rules were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away from me.

23 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from my guilt.

24 So the LORD has rewarded me according to my
righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his
sight.

25 With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself
blameless;

26 with the purified you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you make yourself seem
tortuous.

27 For you save a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.

28 For it is you who light my lamp;
the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

29 For by you I can run against a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.

30 This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

31 For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?—

32 the God who equipped me with strength
and made my way blameless.

33 He made my feet like the feet of a deer
and set me secure on the heights.

34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

35 You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your right hand supported me,
and your gentleness made me great.

36 You gave a wide place for my steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.

37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them,
and did not turn back till they were consumed.

38 I thrust them through, so that they were not able to
rise;
they fell under my feet.

39 For you equipped me with strength for the battle;
you made those who rise against me sink under me.

40 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
and those who hated me I destroyed.

41 They cried for help, but there was none to save;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer
them.

42 I beat them fine as dust before the wind;
I cast them out like the mire of the streets.

43 You delivered me from strife with the people;
you made me the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.

44 As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me;
foreigners came cringing to me.

45 Foreigners lost heart
and came trembling out of their fortresses.

46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,
and exalted be the God of my salvation—
47 the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples under me,
48 who rescued me from my enemies;
yes, you exalted me above those who rose
against me;
you delivered me from the man of violence.

49 For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the
nations,
and sing to your name.

50 Great salvation he brings to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his offspring forever.



The Lord's strong deliverance of David from Saul elicits from David a song of love (v. 1). The Lord has delivered David from deadly peril at the hands of an aggressive and hostile enemy. David recognizes that it is only by God's mercy and provision that he has been spared.

While David does appeal to his own uprightness, we should remember two things. First, the events of this psalm are described in 2 Samuel, the book in which David's greatest sins are narrated. Second, David is not claiming sinless perfection but is merely acknowledging that Saul has been aggressive toward him in a way far out of proportion to what David deserved. David is being treated unjustly. But God has delivered him.

But the psalm is not merely biographical of David, nor is it simply pietistic words for the worshiper.

When David speaks similar words elsewhere, it is apparent that the purpose of the preservation of his line is to provide a Redeemer for the world (2 Sam. 7:4–17; 22:1–51). Indeed, the note on which he ends this psalm is of God’s covenant commitment “to David and his offspring forever” (Ps. 18:50). It is only in Jesus that this commitment finds its pinnacle and truest fulfillment. God’s gracious character and care find their ultimate revelation in Christ Jesus. When we look at our Savior, we are seeing the flesh-and-blood embodiment of the care and provision that God showed to David.

We can trust God, no matter how dire the circumstance. For in the gospel the direst of circumstances—our deserved condemnation and an eternity in hell—have already been emptied of their threat and power.