

Monday, October Thirtieth

Read through the Bible



The Psalms: Book One
Week Six



Imagine two children fighting with each other in the back seat of your car. “I’m playing with this toy!” “No, I had it first! Now give it to me!” You try to calm them down, but both of them keep yelling at each other. Finally, you hear a slapping sound, and one of them cries out, “Hey! He hit me! Aren’t you going to punish him?” In today’s psalm, David asks a similar question to God as he continues to endure mockery and slander from his enemies.

Read: Psalm 35

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Psalm 35 is commonly referred to as an imprecatory psalm. These psalms call for judgement and misfortune against the writer’s enemies (or those perceived as enemies of God). So what exactly are David’s reasons for writing this particular imprecatory psalm?

- What is David’s plea to God? (see verses 1-3)
- How does he question God’s response time? (see verse 17)

As impatient people, we want our prayers answered now! Like David, we can’t understand why God would allow us to continue to suffer in our current situation when He could simply fix it right then and there. God’s timing is not an easy thing for us to understand, and it is often only much later that we begin to perceive the purpose in His delay.

- How does David double down on his original plea? (see verses 23-24)

David wanted what we all want – somebody to rise to our defense (v. 23). Fortunately, God sent His Son to our defense, and in doing so, vindicated us in His righteousness (v. 24).

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

How has Jesus come to your defense lately? Take time in prayer to thank Him for contending with the enemy for your salvation.

Tuesday, October Thirty-First

500 years ago today, Martin Luther submitted his 95 Theses, or propositions, to outline some apprehensions he had of current church practices (indulgences, in particular). By writing out his concerns, Luther hoped to shed light on what he perceived as abuses of power within the church structure. However, he soon realized that the leaders of the church were too wrapped up in their political and economic ventures to see the error of their ways. In today's psalm, David takes a look at some of the blinding effects of those unable to see the error of their ways.

Read: Psalm 36

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to David, why is the wicked man not cognizant of his own sin? (see verses 1-2)

Can someone be so great that they can do no wrong? In the opening verses of the psalm, David reminds us of the dangers of vanity. You see, when we flatter ourselves, we often refuse to see the error of our ways (v. 2). As a result, we also neglect to seriously address the sin in our lives.

- How does verse 4 suggest that the wicked man is constantly seeking to do evil?
- What characteristic of God does David see during this challenging time? (see verses 5,7, and 10)

Notice how David describes God's love – it's far-reaching (v. 5), it's incomparable (v. 7), and it's constant (v. 10). As we experience our own challenging times, it is comforting to know that God's love is exactly what we need and what we can depend upon in this often complicated and broken world.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In what ways have you become callous to sin in your life? How can practicing humility with others expose that sin to you?

Wednesday, November First

In track and field, there are many different types of runners. Some train for quick races like the 100-yard dash. Other train for longer races like a marathon. How you train, then, depends on what type of race you're running for. In today's psalm, David prepares his listeners to train for a much longer race.

Read: Psalm 37

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why does David say we should not fret over or be envious of those who carry out evil deeds? (see verses 1-2 and 7)

While we may fear the wicked, David wants his listeners to know they should not worry because, like us, the wicked eventually die too. That may not give us much solace in the present, but David isn't really concerned with the present. Instead, he's hopeful of a future in which the righteous will dwell with God forever.

- How does verse 25 give us a clue as to when David wrote this psalm?
- Throughout this psalm, David compares the righteous and the wicked. What are the final outcomes for the two? (see especially verses 37-38)

Many people today have a hard time understanding why "bad" people flourish while "good" people suffer. Perhaps you have thought about this when comparing yourself to someone you deem to be wicked. Psalm 37 reminds us that while the wicked may flourish in the short run, the righteous will flourish in the long run. We're not racing in a sprint; we're running a lifelong marathon!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

We often find ourselves fretting about things we cannot control. In your prayers today, list three things you're currently worrying about, and surrender them to the Lord.

Thursday, November Second

Once a defendant has been found guilty of a crime by a jury, he is given a sentencing date that usually takes place within a week of the verdict. During this sentencing, the defendant is often offered an opportunity to express his sorrow and remorse for the crime he committed. After he has given his statement, the judge is to consider his sorrow and remorse when deciding on a sentence. *Is he truly sorry? Does he understand the error of his ways? Does he show an ability to learn from this?* For better or for worse, the answers to these questions often shape the judge's decision on how long to sentence the defendant. In today's psalm, David explores what it means to express his sorrow and remorse before his great Judge.

Read: Psalm 38

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Psalm 38 is commonly referred to as a penitential psalm or psalm of confession. The writers of these psalms express sorrow and remorse for their sin. As you can see, David is overcome with these feelings as he confesses his sin to God.

- What physical ailments has David experienced on account of his sin and guilt? (see verses 4-8)
- How has David laid out his sin before God? (see verse 9)
- How does David confess his sin? (see verse 18)

Sometimes, we tend to make confession a little more difficult than it needs to be. As you can see in verse 18, David gets right to the point – he confesses his sin, and expresses his sorrow for what he has done. Sometimes when we plainly confess our sin to God, we leave no room for us to justify or rationalize our actions.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

How do you express sorrow and remorse for your sin? How are you reminded of the Gospel when you confess that sin?

Friday, November Third

As George Bailey stood atop the bridge in *It's a Wonderful Life*, he wondered whether his life was truly worth living. After all, his employee had misplaced a significant sum of money, there was a warrant out for his arrest, and he had alienated his wife and kids in the process. Deep down, George wanted to believe he had a wonderful life, but his present circumstances showed otherwise. In today's psalm, David also expresses this degree of hopelessness.

Read: Psalm 39

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Who was this guy Jeduthun mentioned in the introduction to Psalm 39? While we don't have too many details, we do know he was one of the musicians who led Israel's public worship (see 1 Chronicles 16:41 and 25:1-3).

- What did David hope to do? (see verse 1) What did he end up doing? (see verses 2-3)
- How does David describe a person's life before God? (see verses 5-6 and 11)
- With what tone does this psalm end? (see verses 12-13)

As we've walked through these psalms together, you've probably noticed that David's psalms have a pretty distinct pattern to them: the psalm starts with pleading and lamenting, but ends with hope and trust in the Lord. In Psalm 39, however, we don't see this pattern. Instead, David ends his song hopeless at what lies ahead. The key here, though, is that David's hopelessness does not stop him from praying to God. Even in this moment of despair, David still believes that God listens to his cry. It's comforting to know that He also listens to ours!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

How does the Gospel demonstrate that you have every reason to be hopeful for the future?

Saturday, November Fourth

Back in the Fall of 2014, people all around the St. Pete area started talking about some exciting news – Trader Joes was finally coming to the area! For years, people had to drive to Sarasota or South Tampa if they wanted to get their hands on their favorite crunchy snacks and sweet treats. But now, Trader Joes would open right on 4th Street for Pinellas County residents to enjoy. People were so excited by this news that they started spreading the word all over the area. Trader Joes didn't need to advertise; avid followers had done it for them. In today's psalm, David cannot help but share of the wonders of God with others.

Read: Psalm 40

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does David describe God's timing in regard to his prayers? (see verse 1)
- How does David speak of God's wonders with others? (see verses 9-10)

Remember that children's tune, "This little Gospel light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"? David's psalm puts forth a similar idea – when you experience the wonders of God, you can't help but share it with others!

- What are we to do when we seek God? (see verse 16)

On Sunday mornings, we've been going through the five 'solas,' and the fifth one is "Soli Deo Gloria" ("For the Glory of God Alone"). One of the common themes throughout David's psalms is that we should take the time to exalt God and give Him glory. Simply put, we are to give God credit and thanks for all He's done!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In what ways do you share the wonders of God with others? In other words, how do you tell people about the great things God has done and is doing in your life?

Sunday, November Fifth

Guess what? It's flu season. ☹️ As much as we try to avoid contact with others, most of us inevitably end up with some sort of nasty cough or debilitating flu sometime during this Fall season. In today's psalm, David has fallen ill, and his enemies attempt to use his illness to their benefit.

Read: Psalm 41

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What do David's enemies and even his close friend think will happen to him? (see verses 5, and 7-9)
- What is David confident that God will do? (see verses 3 and 10)

David was clearly sick when he wrote this psalm, and many believed (or better yet, *hoped*) he would die. While David is confident God will deliver him from this ailment, he ultimately places his health in God's hands as he gives Him glory (v. 13).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Together, we've read 41 Psalms over the past six weeks. Now it's your turn. Write your own psalm or song of praise. It doesn't have to be beautifully crafted or perfectly wordsmithed, but it should express your praise and devotion to God. Because we have been given the forgiveness of sins and salvation through the perfect work of Christ, we have much to give Him praise for!

Well, that's the end of Book One of the Psalms! I pray your time in God's Word has given you a worship-filled experience as you reflected upon both the blessings and challenges of the Christian life. It's truly been a pleasure reading along with you! I'll be back in December with our next book...Philippians. – Vicar Chris

Questions? Comments? Contact Vicar Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.