

# Chapter Eighty-Seven

Oh, Love of God!

## Psalm 86

A prayer of David.

<sup>1</sup> Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. <sup>2</sup> Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you. <sup>3</sup> Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. <sup>4</sup> Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

<sup>5</sup> You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. <sup>6</sup> Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. <sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me.

<sup>8</sup> Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. <sup>9</sup> All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. <sup>10</sup> For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. <sup>12</sup> I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. <sup>13</sup> For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.

<sup>14</sup> The arrogant are attacking me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life— men without regard for you.

<sup>15</sup> But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. <sup>16</sup> Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. <sup>17</sup> Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

There is a cry in the heart of the righteous, a cry to know God and to walk with God. It begins with the understanding that we are a needy people who are dependant upon the Lord our God. The Psalmist realized that he needed the Lord to be merciful to him. His trust was in the Lord, and therefore he lifted up his soul to the Lord. He knew that if God would be merciful to him he would then have the joy of the Lord.

Where would any of us be without the care of God? It is comforting to know that God is a good God who is also a forgiving God. We all need the forgiveness of God because we are full of weaknesses as humans. The only hope we have is that God will be gracious to us and strengthen us each day.

Life is full of troublous days, but each trouble that comes our way has within it the power to cause us to grow stronger. When we use trouble as a catalyst causing us to reach for God, we are strengthened by his power and the result is that our faith is then made stronger, and our joy is increased.

We get stronger as we turn to the Lord because trusting in him becomes the reflex of our life. Human strength is a wonderful thing, but it is like the strength of a glove that must have the hand of the workman in it to do any form of work. Our strength is dependent upon his strength. Where he goes, we must go. What he does is the work we are a part of. We cannot do what he must do, but we are there, a part of what he is doing. We often are the visible part of what God is doing, but without the hand of God moving us, nothing of eternal character is ever going to happen. The best we can ever do is to allow God to be the one who moves us. Like a glove that should not be so small that the hand of the workman is held to tightly, or to loose so the hand of the workman is hindered; we should strive to be a comfortable fit for God to do his work through.

The day is coming when it will be clearly manifest who God is. On that day the nations will trust in him. All other gods they have held as gods will be seen to be what they are, nothing. There is only one God, and he is the only one that can save us from the doom that comes to all who trust in anyone or anything in the place of the Lord God Almighty.

The Psalmist cried out for God to teach him his ways. To know God is to trust in him. It's hard for us to trust what we don't understand; therefore, we need to know God. The best way to come to know a person is to understand their ways. The true personality of an individual is only seen when they are perfectly at ease with us. Likewise, coming to know God requires absolute faith and trust in him so that he can be at ease with us. We are so fearful of what we cannot see or fully comprehend.

Well-meaning and intelligent people often fail to learn the simplest truths about God, because, learning about God begins with a willingness to trust in what we can never fully understand. Our hearts are often divided because at one time we trust in what we can see, feel and perceive with our natural senses, and at other more fanciful moments we try turning to the unseen God to see if we can trust in him. The Psalmist realized he needed an undivided heart if he is to please God. With an undivided heart we will fear the Lord, and we will give him all the glory. Praise comes from the lips of those who have learned to trust in the Lord.

People go to church and sing songs with lyrics of praise and worship, but if they leave and fail to walk with God, what does their praise mean? The truest form of worship is expressed in the life of a person who truly trusts in God and sees every event as being a part of their life in God. When, in the heat of a moment of temptation, I turn to God, I am worshipping the Lord! When trials and adversities come against me causing me to turn to God, I am worshipping the Lord!

Wicked men are all about us, but we can trust the Lord to strengthen us and save us from all their wicked plots. When God blesses us it shames the wicked, but God will only do that when our hearts are truly undivided. When we are mature in the Lord and are totally comfortable with his care, outward evidences of his love is no longer needed, but our enemies need to see the outward evidences of God's love for us, therefore, God delights in blessing those he can trust.

"But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Did you know that about God? Some people think that God is against them, that all he is interested in doing is getting in their way when they want to have fun. How wrong that concept is! God loves people, and he loves those who turn to him. He is not against us being happy and living an exciting challenging fun filled life while on this earth, but he is against those things in life that rob us of peace, love and joy! Painting God as some kind of stern disciplinarian that is only interested in seeing humans prostrating themselves before him is Satan's plot against us designed to keep us away from God. This is the concept that all to many people of the world see when they think about God. Those who, on the other hand, have a true love for God in their hearts see God as being a wonderful loving heavenly Father who really loves us and wants the very best for us.

## **Chapter Eighty-eight**

**Born in Zion**

**Psalm 87**

## Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm. A song.

<sup>1</sup> He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; <sup>2</sup> the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. <sup>3</sup> Glorious things are said of you, O city of God: *Selah* <sup>4</sup> “I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me— Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush— and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’”

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.” <sup>6</sup> The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.” *Selah* <sup>7</sup> As they make music they will sing, “All my fountains are in you.”

There is something special about the name Zion. It’s a sort of nickname for Jerusalem. Actually, it is more than that; it is an endearing name that God uses when he is talking to his special people.

The first use of the name Zion was in 2 Samuel 5:7 where Jerusalem is referred to as the fortress of Zion, the City of David. The many references to Zion are used indicating a special feeling in the heart of God for his people.

David had a special feeling about Jerusalem, calling it his city. The use of the name Jerusalem throughout the scriptures connects to the idea that it is God’s special city as well, a sort of capital city of the reign of God. The names Jerusalem and Zion are sometimes used interchangeably when the concept of the people of God is referred to. Thus, when the angel in Revelations was showing John various scenes he said that he wanted to show him the bride, and then he showed him the New Jerusalem. The collective body of believers is referred to as the bride of Christ, and so since the city and the bride are connected, idea would indicate a close connection between the city and the occupants of the city. When the description of the city is given, it is my belief that, it is also a symbolic description of the occupants. The use of the term Zion likewise is sometimes referring to the people of God, and at other times the City of David.

In this Psalm, 87, the Lord puts a special blessing upon the idea that being born in Zion is a special privilege. The question would naturally arise, does that mean that a person would have to be born in the geographical location, or does it mean that they are granted such a designation as a result of some spiritual quality. Perhaps it would indicate a David like spirit about them. At any rate, this Psalm indicates that even the heathen nations will acknowledge that being a part of Zion is a special privilege.

If being born in Zion alludes to being born again, then it would be taken in a spiritual sense. There is no question in my mind that being born in Zion is a reference to the special relationship one enters into when the new birth is experienced. This new birth occurs when a person puts their faith in Jesus as their personal Savior. This expression, being born in Zion, is one of those expressions that can be taken in the natural geographical sense or in the spiritual sense and I feel sure that both are correct.

## Chapter Eighty-nine

### Hopelessness a Bitter Enemy

#### Psalm 88

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to *mahalath leannoth*. A *maskil* of Heman the Ezrahite.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you. <sup>2</sup> May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry.

<sup>3</sup> For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave. <sup>4</sup> I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength. <sup>5</sup> I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

<sup>6</sup> You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. <sup>7</sup> Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your ways. *Selah* <sup>8</sup> You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; <sup>9</sup> my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, O LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you. <sup>10</sup> Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? *Selah* <sup>11</sup> Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? <sup>12</sup> Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

<sup>13</sup> But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you. <sup>14</sup> Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?

<sup>15</sup> From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. <sup>16</sup> Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. <sup>17</sup> All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. <sup>18</sup> You have taken my companions and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend.

If you think things are bad for you, read this Psalm! This poor fellow thought that God had forsaken him and he feared for his very life. There evidently were people who thought he was worthless and surely headed straight to hell. He was in the deepest depths of despair.

How tragic it is when people lose hope! When people feel that even God doesn't care, they are then the victims of no hope. The ability to believe God is based on the ability to have hope that results from feeling that God loves us. If we believe in the love of God, we also believe that God hears us when we pray.

The author of this Psalm didn't give up on God, though he felt like it was useless to even pray. James talks about endurance as being a virtue necessary to those who will be made perfect. For endurance to be developed we must have hard trials, but appreciation for such a concept seems beyond us. What possible glory can come from suffering? Why does suffering for long periods of time develop character? This man who wrote this Psalm had evidently developed a great deal of perseverance. He had suffered from his youth, and it seemed like there was no hope of it ever changing for him, but he still went on praying and making his well-prepared appeal to God.

## Chapter Ninety

### Psalm 89

A *maskil* of Ethan the Ezrahite.

<sup>1</sup> I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. <sup>2</sup> I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

<sup>3</sup> You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, <sup>4</sup> 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'" *Selah*

<sup>5</sup> The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. <sup>6</sup> For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? <sup>7</sup> In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. <sup>8</sup> O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

<sup>9</sup> You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them. <sup>10</sup> You crushed Rahab like one of the slain; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies. <sup>11</sup> The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it. <sup>12</sup> You created the north and the south; Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name. <sup>13</sup> Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

<sup>14</sup> Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. <sup>15</sup> Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD. <sup>16</sup> They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness. <sup>17</sup> For you are their glory and strength, and by your favor you exalt our horn. <sup>18</sup> Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel.

<sup>19</sup> Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you said: "I have bestowed strength on a warrior; I have exalted a young man from among the people. <sup>20</sup> I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. <sup>21</sup> My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him. <sup>22</sup> No enemy will subject him to tribute; no wicked man will oppress him. <sup>23</sup> I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries. <sup>24</sup> My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn will be exalted. <sup>25</sup> I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers. <sup>26</sup> He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.' <sup>27</sup> I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. <sup>28</sup> I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. <sup>29</sup> I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure.

<sup>30</sup> "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, <sup>31</sup> if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, <sup>32</sup> I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; <sup>33</sup> but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. <sup>34</sup> I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. <sup>35</sup> Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness— and I will not lie to David— <sup>36</sup> that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; <sup>37</sup> it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky." *Selah*

<sup>38</sup> But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one. <sup>39</sup> You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust. <sup>40</sup> You have broken through all his walls and reduced his strongholds to ruins. <sup>41</sup> All who pass by have plundered him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors. <sup>42</sup> You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice. <sup>43</sup> You have turned back the edge of his sword and have not supported him in battle. <sup>44</sup> You have put an end to his splendor and cast his throne to the ground. <sup>45</sup> You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with a mantle of shame. *Selah*

<sup>46</sup> How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? <sup>47</sup> Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men! <sup>48</sup> What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave? *Selah* <sup>49</sup> O Lord, where is your former great love, which in your faithfulness you swore to David? <sup>50</sup> Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations, <sup>51</sup> the taunts with which your enemies have mocked, O LORD, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.

<sup>52</sup> Praise be to the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.

With this Psalm we come to the end of Book III. The dates of when these Psalms were written probably varies, but many of them reflect to difficulties the Psalmists felt as they witnessed the pain and struggle that resulted from the sinful ways of the occupants of the land. Many times the confusion of mind that filled them is expressed, but then they would reach for the deeper awareness that they had been taught concerning the faithfulness of God. When their mentor, David, spoke of the faithfulness of God it was from the perspective of one who knew first hand, not as one who recited it from what had been taught to him.

There is no doubt that the authors knew God, but at times their hearts seem to be filled with consternation as they saw circumstances that contradicted their religious world view and their idea about how God ought to behave. It's hard for the natural mind of man to stay focused upon God who at times appears to be very far away from us, and what is happening seems so painful to have to endure.

The author of this Psalm commits himself to the proclamation of the faithfulness of the Lord. He loves the Lord and believes in what the scriptures say about God. Nevertheless, he is filled with questions about why God would allow for such severe conditions to befall the nation and the

king when God had made such glowing promises about his love for David and his descendents. It seems that the author is putting the emphasis upon what he deems to be God's failure, rather than the failure of the nation of Israel. When we consider the goodness of God, we must not take for granted that his love will always be given by the rule of grace if we persist in violating his laws.

Most of the time, as we evaluate our own selves and evaluate the lives of men of old, if we are honest, we wonder why God even cares about us at all. What seemed to be troubling the Psalmist was that the nation was being mocked and plundered, and the throne of David was not what it should be. Despite what it appeared, God was still faithful to his word, though he did have to lift his protective cover from the nation due to their failure to keep his words. Covenant agreements are never totally without conditions. Even though God had committed to an unconditional love for David, it did not preclude the responsibility of his descendents to walk honorably before the Lord God.

God is not a nit-picky God, though the rule of righteousness is. The rule of righteousness is uncompromising and the slightest violation is all it takes to break it. According to the rule of righteousness you are either totally righteous or you are a sinner. There is absolutely no wiggle room, you either are or you are not. Knowing this, and seeing that mankind is not capable of this exacting rule of righteousness, God provided for his flaw of character by giving us a redemptive sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin. God is totally righteous, but we are not. It is a gracious and loving God who would find a way to forgive the iniquity of those who will humbly come to him and ask for grace to cover our infirmity. Because the love and grace of God is so pervasive and given so freely, it is easy to presume upon it.

The reality is that God is so gracious to humanity that people do take his love for granted, and when they see things that are symptomatic of their own failures, they want to charge God with some kind of flaw. The feeling seems to be that God is supposed to be gracious, no matter what we do. When we see trouble coming upon a society or nation, do we blame God or do we examine our own ways to see if we are the reason for the problem?

God's promise to David was a promise God would keep, though how he would do it may not always be evident to natural man. Some people believe that God kept his word through some not to well-known or provable means, and that the kings of England are in actuality descendents of David. Others look at Christ as the fulfillment of the promise. The answer is probably beyond us at this point in time, but our faith in God should not be allowed to falter just because we can't see the answer in a well-proven way. The author of this Psalm seemed to be troubled thinking that God's reputation was somehow at stake. How easy it is to worry about God's reputation instead of examining our own selves to see if our behavior has caused God to lift his hand of protection from us allowing for the enemy to afflict us.

God's conduct toward man is flawless, though those who wish to justify their unbelief do find reasons to doubt. As humans locked into this realm of physics, we fail to see what cannot be seen with the natural mind of man or analyzed with scientific instruments. Seeing what God sees is only possible when we realize that what is visible is not all that there is. Any scientifically minded person knows that even in this realm of physics, there are many realities that can only be understood by the use of the most sophisticated instruments man has been able to create. To believe that there is another realm much grander than this one where the laws of physics are just as real though different is a matter of faith. We talk about heaven, God, angels, and a city that has foundations, and sometimes wonder, where is this place and what is it really like? Some people think that it is many millions of miles away, and that it is governed by the same laws of physics as this world, but I don't think so.

It is my belief that heaven is all around us, and that we see glimpses of this from time to time as we witness the unexplainable events that often occur in answers to prayers. What I believe happens at death is that we leave this realm of temporal physics and enter into the realm of eternal physics with a whole new set of laws. It is at this point where those who have received Jesus go to ever be with the Lord and those who have rejected his love gift of salvation, go into the

everlasting torment of separation from God with all the accompanying results. God's anger against Israel was more than justified, and the idea that he still had a plan for them that reaches into the eternal realm is more than most people can grasp.

It hurts to see people suffer, whether they are Jewish or Gentile. When we persist in stubbornness and resist the loving ways of the Lord, he will deal with us. God wants us as people to make him our God in every sense of that word. God is only God to us when we make him our God. That means we love, seek, trust and obey him. This is not to the exclusion of other interests in life, but it means to put him at the head of every interest. His laws and rules of life preclude all others and govern how we pursue our interests. Failure to do this will bring about discipline from God because he loves us.

## Book IV

### Chapter Ninety-one

#### Psalm 90

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

<sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

<sup>3</sup> You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning—<sup>6</sup> though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.

<sup>7</sup> We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. <sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. <sup>9</sup> All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. <sup>10</sup> The length of our days is seventy years— or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

<sup>11</sup> Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. <sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

<sup>13</sup> Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. <sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. <sup>15</sup> Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. <sup>16</sup> May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

<sup>17</sup> May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.

The eternal existence of God is called to our attention in the opening lines of this Psalm. God is our God and always has been, but he is not always acknowledged. The atheists are not needed as witnesses to establish the reality of God because he has always been. The vain imaginations of man cannot cause God to either exist or not exist. What we think about the subject has absolutely no effect whatsoever upon whether God exists or not. Disbelieving in God may make a person more comfortable in their sinful living, thinking that it doesn't matter after all because God doesn't exist, but does that affect the outcome of our lives or cancel the appointment that everyone has at the judgment seat of Almighty God?

How many years are allotted to man? What is the number of our days? The Psalmist said that seventy years is about it, or if we have the strength perhaps eighty. Today people are living

longer as a result of improved diet, hygiene and medical practices. Sin continues to take its toll and as a result of sinful living some people are dying as a result of alcoholism, STDs, drug overdoses and a host of other causes that are sin related. Some people die simply as a result of the conditions that exist in this world. It doesn't matter what the cause is, it is appointed unto man to die once, and after that comes the judgment.

Time has a completely different meaning to God than it has to man. With God a thousand years is like a day or a watch in the night. It comes and goes, and the impact upon God is like a day is to man. We live within the realm where time is of the essence, where we see life like the sands of an hourglass that is pouring through the tiny hole all to fast. The closer the last grains of sand come to the final moment when all is gone; we begin to realize that it comes before we are ready for it.

God is ultimately in charge of our past, present and future. Before there was anything, God was in charge. He is the one who has control of whether we live or die. He has decreed that we all turn back to dust. We are given an allotted number of days, and we don't know what that number is, but one thing we do know is that no matter how many days we are allotted to live on earth, it will be filled with trouble and sorrow.

This world is made up that way, and when we sin, God knows it. There is no sin that he does not see. His eye is upon the very intent of our hearts and when we transgress, he is aware of it. The anger of the Lord is what ought to be feared. Above all else we should fear God. Moses called out to God for mercy and prayed for his grace upon the day of resurrection. His hope was in the Lord that there would be a better day awaiting him, when God would show his unfailing love.

The fear of the Lord is in short supply these days. One of the characteristics of every lasting revival of the past has been a renewal of the fear of the Lord. When we sin without fear of consequences, we have lost the fear of the Lord. Judgment is not related to fear, that is, judgment comes whether we fear it or not. God will judge us, either here now, or at the great Day of Judgment when all the secrets of the heart of man are revealed.

There is a day of wrath that is coming upon all the children of men. God has been holding back his anger at the careless indifference of humanity. In some cultures God is feared but their religious fervor is misguided due to false teachings concerning God. God is not willing that any should perish, but rather that all should come to him in repentance. The only refuge from the coming outpouring of wrath is faith in Jesus Christ and his redeeming sacrifice. Those who have put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior have the hope of eternal salvation, and because Jesus took their guilt upon himself, they are free from all fear of the wrath to come.

There are so many people today who are the victims of false teachings. This condition exists both in the church world and in the world at large. All over this planet there are people who are trusting in what they are being taught, and what is being taught is often blatantly a lie.

The difference between the children of God and those who are still of the world may not be immediately evident, but in the long run of life, those who trust in the Lord do better than they would have had they not trusted in the Lord. Moses prayed that there would be blessing upon the work of his hands and I believe we should also pray the same.

## **Chapter Ninety-two**



## A Psalm of Comfort and Assurance

### Psalm 91

<sup>1</sup> He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. <sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

<sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. <sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. <sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. <sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

<sup>9</sup> If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—<sup>10</sup> then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. <sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; <sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. <sup>13</sup> You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

<sup>14</sup> "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. <sup>15</sup> He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. <sup>16</sup> With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Troubles come in this world. Wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, floods, outbreaks of disease, violent uprisings, and many other challenges come to test our faith and cause us to reach for divine intervention.

The stories of how God has miraculously intervened in answer to prayer are too numerous to recount. America has been blessed above all the nations of the earth. Many disasters have struck us, but in them all there are stories of divine intervention and protection. One notable incidence occurred during World War II that bears repeating. It was the practice of the Gideons as well as family members to supply the soldiers with New Testaments that also had the Psalms in them to carry with them. One soldier had his testament in his shirt pocket and during a battle was hit by a bullet. The bullet hit the testament and penetrated the pages but stopped at this Psalm 91 as if pointing to the verse, "A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you." Stories of divine intervention have come out of the Gulf War as well. One story is about how the Iraqis had placed a mine field in the location our troops were about to cross but a sand storm arose and blew the sand off the mines so they were just laying there visible waiting to be collected, no doubt saving many lives.

The comfort that comes from the words of this Psalm is legendary. The key words are "He who dwells." All the promises concerning the loving care and protection of the Almighty spring from this dwelling place. But, how does one dwell in this place? Is there a secret formula or password to gain entry? Obviously, we're not talking about a geographical location, but rather, we're talking about a relationship with God. In the day of the Psalmist, it involved all the religious practices of law keeping, but more importantly, it involved a true faith in God using law keeping as a means of expression of that faith. God has always wanted people to love him. The reason for this is that God is love and love returned is most fulfilling.

When a person really loves God, when every prayer comes from a heart filled with love, when every righteous deed is an expression of that love, they are dwelling in the presence of the Almighty. This Psalm declares that the place exists and then proceeds to invite us in. The use of the word "you" is how that invitation is addressed. It is addressed to the reader or hearer, and the promises are for those who will dwell in the shelter of the Most High. The Psalmist introduces us to God first as the Most High and then as the Almighty. Using the name or designation Most High, he is referring to the fact that there is no higher God, he is the highest possible authority and he is also Almighty.

The Psalmist has found this place and describes it as a place we can all find. The King James Version calls this place of shelter a secret place, but the Psalmist doesn't want to keep it a secret. It is there for all who will seek it, and it is a good place where like a bird in a nest finds comfort and protection under the wings of the mother, so we find comfort and protection in the comfort of his care. God's care is even greater than the care of a bird for its young, no matter what the occasion, no matter what the challenge or danger, God is there for us and will protect us. No terror of night will frighten us when we are in his care, no arrow of wickedness that flies at noonday will harm us. Even when people are dying all around us by disease or plague, his protection is still there for us.

We cannot read this Psalm without reflecting upon the encounter that Jesus had with Satan. After Jesus, who John had just baptized in the Jordan River, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, and after fasting forty days, Jesus was hungry so the devil came to him and tempted him to turn stones into bread. Then two other temptations followed one of which was the temptation to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple! It was on this occasion that this Psalm was quoted by the devil.

Does Satan know about the care of God for his people? Of course he does, and I am sure he hates it because he wants to attack us if we will allow it. Satan knows that the scriptures are not just fanciful recitations to bring mental comfort to someone, filling them with false hopes of divine protection, but rather they are very real and powerful, and provide the believer with an impenetrable protection. The only way he can successfully attack a Christian is to get him out of the circle of divine protection. Achieving this goal was what he was attempting to do when he tried to get Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple stating that the angels would bear him up, but Jesus saw through his plot and countered that we must not put the Lord our God to the test.

Acting presumptuously is a violation of the principles of the Holy Spirit and what he has come to do for us. Acting presumptuously is an action of self-will and not an action of divine instruction. Many people, thinking they are acting in faith, have acted in self-will only to be disappointed and sometimes humiliated and it is at this point that Satan is close at hand to tempt them to disbelieve in God and his care. Sometimes people take a scripture or Biblical portion and try to apply it to their situation, they will quote it, claim it, wave it at God and demand that he honor it, but their heart is wicked in the process because it is springing from their fallen nature. Acting presumptuously leads to disappointments and despair, but those who seek the counsel of God find comfort and strength and having received instruction from the Spirit, act decisively and in cooperation with the Spirit finding success and comfort.

The Lord declared through the prophet psalmist, "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalms 91:14-16) God responds to humility and love, and when he finds it, he will nurture it and cherish it.

## **Chapter Ninety-three**

### **Honor to the LORD MOST HIGH**

## Psalm 92

A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day.

<sup>1</sup> It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, <sup>3</sup> to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.

<sup>4</sup> For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands. <sup>5</sup> How great are your works, O LORD, how profound your thoughts! <sup>6</sup> The senseless man does not know, fools do not understand, <sup>7</sup> that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> But you, O LORD, are exalted forever.

<sup>9</sup> For surely your enemies, O LORD, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered. <sup>10</sup> You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; fine oils have been poured upon me. <sup>11</sup> My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries; my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.

<sup>12</sup> The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; <sup>13</sup> planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. <sup>14</sup> They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, <sup>15</sup> proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."

When we sing praises to the LORD MOST HIGH, we are acknowledging him as the highest authority, praising his wisdom even when we don't understand it. Sometimes in the course of life we encounter people who always want to be right. They, in fact, demand that we agree with them and if we don't they become very frustrated and sometimes angry. In this world there are many situations that can be viewed from different perspectives, and when a situation is viewed from one perspective only, the person viewing it is usually totally convinced that he/she is totally correct. It's hard for us to come to the understanding that there is one who is always right because his perspective is totally comprehensive. We are so limited in our view of things that to comprehend that there is actually a totally correct answer seems beyond us to accept. Yet this is what we encounter when we come to God. He is always right, and that right is always the absolute best.

"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created." (James 1:16-18) The Psalmist reveled in the goodness of God, marveling at the works of his hands. He also noted that the wicked would perish though it looks like all is well for them. They spring up and flourish for a time, but all too soon they are gone.

As I ponder the national condition of the United States of America and how seemingly rich and powerful we have become, I also note that wealth is often like a vapor that is consumed in the heat of the day. As I sit here today, the nation has been facing some very disturbing revelations about our so-called wealth. Some of our largest corporations have been misstating their profits by deceptive accounting. Even the previous administration was also misstating the condition of our economy by deceptive accounting to the tune of multiplied billions of dollars. This was done so that things would look better than they really were for the sake of the coming elections. CEOs "cook the books" so that they can justify huge salaries and attract investors who trust them with their life's savings while they squander the wealth on shameful and frivolous practices designed to make them look good. Some of these individuals are now being lead away in handcuffs to face a trial for their misdeeds. Once more we remember the words of this Psalm, "that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed." (Psalms 92:7)

Will this nation that seems to be so rich and powerful vanish from the face of the earth? Some people think it will, but personally I don't know, but of this I am certain, there is no deed done, no lie told that will not eventually be exposed. In the 50s and 60s, our nation sought material wealth, and in the meanwhile the children growing up were being neglected. This resulted in the moral revolution of the 60s and early 70s. Sex, drugs, indifference, contempt for

law and responsible living all contributed to a social breakdown that is now resulting in some very disturbing conditions in our society. The earth that once seemed so solid is shaking under our feet. Is this judgment day or do we look for another? We will see, but it will certainly come.

In the midst of judgment when the wicked are being called into account and people are wondering is there anything that can be trusted, the answer comes loud and clear, "But you, O LORD, are exalted forever." (Psalms 92:8)

There is a bright future for the righteous, one filled with blessings and provisions. The Psalmist declared, "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'" (Psalms 92:12-15)

## Chapter Ninety-four

### Mighty God

### Psalm 93

<sup>1</sup> The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. <sup>2</sup> Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

<sup>3</sup> The seas have lifted up, O LORD, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. <sup>4</sup> Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty.

<sup>5</sup> Your statutes stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days, O LORD.

The character of God is without a doubt the most interesting study about God. The Psalmist observed that God is greater than what he has created. What God has created is a microcosm of what God is all about. As we look at natural creation we see snippets of different sides of his personality and character. Nothing God has created is a true portrait of God, but is a slight glimpse of the glory of his being. Creation reveals some thought patterns and characteristics of the mind of God, but nothing is capable of telling the whole story.

As the Psalmist observed how well God had firmly established the world, it was evident that his throne had been established long ago. The very existence of this complex system of matter and energy with all its related laws that interplay to make and give life the ability to exist, didn't happen in a moment of time. God had many eternal eons to think and ponder and count the cost of all he set out to do. God is never in a hurry nor does he ever panic. Nothing is ever out of his control.

Some people worry about the coming events on this planet and they think that everything that has been predicted to happen must happen right now. Well, let me remind you that God has a well thought out plan that allows for every detail to fully develop and every fulfillment to happen just as it is supposed to. God is not confused, we are. We see in part, but God sees from eternity past to eternity future, and he is in no hurry to do anything. We get in a hurry to do some things because we see everything as being between to fixed points, birth and death. God on the other hand sees everything as being between to unending realities, endless past, to endless future.

Some people look at the Genesis story and get all excited if someone suggests that certain aspects of it took longer than the ticks of our feeble clocks that measure out twenty-four hours

each day, and pound the pulpit stating that it only took seven of these clock measured days to do what God did in creation. I personally know beyond any shadow of doubt that he may have done it precisely that way. Certainly I know that he could have and I also know that whatever he meant by “and the morning and the evening were” is exactly what it was. We live in a very inferior realm to the realm of our eternal God who exists in endless and measureless time. Time is what he wants it to be, and will last as long as he wants it to last. One day, we are told, a mighty angel will declare, time will be no more. What will we do, how will we exist, how will we know when it is the Sabbath, or the Lord’s day or whatever it is that is of time related importance to a theological school of thought?

What I need to know is that God reigns and his kingdom is eternal, and his Spirit is here with me, loving me, guiding me, helping me, teaching and leading me into all that is his purpose for me. There are some urgent matters, such as—getting the gospel out to people who are rushing to their eternal doom unless someone rescues them; talking to youth about the virtue of avoiding the tree where the knowledge of evil comes from and such like.

There is enough knowledge of evil learned by seeing what has happened to others without trying to experience it ones self. So many young people seem to feel that playing with sin is part of growing up, well, it may be part of what happens all to often, but it isn’t what ought to happen. Why spend a lifetime in problems and regrets over some incident that happened in a few moments of time? How long does it take to catch a venereal disease? How long does it take for a girl to conceive a child? To the amazement of many young girls, it doesn’t take long at all! A life can be ruined in a few moments of time.

There are men at the prison where I minister who are spending years of their lives in the prison because they had one bad day, or made one bad choice. Others are there more because of what others did that they were hanging with, than what they actually did. Satan loves to ruin young lives, and he will every time he gets the chance.

In the midst of the pounding surf of life, there is one who is forever mightier. The crashing breakers of life events seek to drown out the voice of God, but he is always there if we will pause and listen.

We have some fixed points of reference as we pass through life. The precepts of God stand as a firm point of reference that never changes. He is always pure, always totally honest, and is never ever shady in any of his dealings. If we will stop and compare our dealings with his, we will see whether our ways are righteous or whether we have engaged in some shady endeavor that is sure to come back to bite us.

## **Chapter Ninety-five**

### **Vengeance**

### **Psalm 94**

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, the God who avenges, O God who avenges, shine forth. <sup>2</sup> Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve. <sup>3</sup> How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant?

<sup>4</sup> They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. <sup>5</sup> They crush your people, O LORD; they oppress your inheritance. <sup>6</sup> They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless. <sup>7</sup> They say, “The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed.”

<sup>8</sup> Take heed, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise? <sup>9</sup> Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? <sup>10</sup> Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge? <sup>11</sup> The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law; <sup>13</sup> you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked. <sup>14</sup> For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance. <sup>15</sup> Judgment will again be founded on righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

<sup>16</sup> Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers? <sup>17</sup> Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. <sup>18</sup> When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O LORD, supported me. <sup>19</sup> When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.

<sup>20</sup> Can a corrupt throne be allied with you— one that brings on misery by its decrees? <sup>21</sup> They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. <sup>22</sup> But the LORD has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. <sup>23</sup> He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the LORD our God will destroy them.

Does God care when evil deeds are being committed, when evil men and women are spreading Godless philosophies that encourage wicked attitudes and conduct? The day of vengeance will surely come and those whose hearts are full of evil will be cast into hell. This is a truth that is steeped in Biblical thought and teaching. This teaching brings comfort to those who have been grossly wronged and have suffered agony at the hand of an evil person.

The fallen nature of humanity is a deep dark pit from which violence irrupts in every conceivable form. It is like a volcano from which obnoxious fumes and molten lava spew forth. It takes many forms, but all are destructive in one form or another. Some people are the recipients of evil deed done against them, and to all appearances would never hurt anyone, but given opportunity will lash out against another who is totally innocent of the crime committed.

The desire to get even or to do to others as has been done to them can be overwhelming. It is not for an individual to get even, or to execute justice against the one who has caused the hurt. Judgment belongs to the Lord who will judge all men righteously. Judgment also belongs to good government, but when an individual seeks justice it is hard to not mix a desire for vengeance into the mix. Vengeance is an action of selfishness; we, however, are called to love. This is why Jesus taught us to forgive and to love our enemies and to do good to those who have done wrong against us. Our hearts cannot contain both vengeance and love because they do not mix in the human experience. Forgiveness must precede loving your enemy.

I have observed individuals who carry unforgiveness in their hearts and it seems to me that if they were to drink pure poison it wouldn't hurt them anymore. It isn't that evil shouldn't be punished; it is simply that desiring to see someone else suffer is a negative condition of heart that has its origin in the fallen nature. Those who have been redeemed desire all mankind to come to the knowledge of the same grace that we have become participants in.

It is refreshing to hear stories of people who have been deeply wronged by someone and in return have sought to share with him or her, the knowledge of Jesus. When people have come to the cross and found true forgiveness of sins, the bitterness that sin has caused vanishes and in its place the sweetness of love fills their hearts.

The question is raised in this Psalm, "Can a corrupt throne be allied with you— one that brings on misery by its decrees? They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death." (Psalms 94:20-21) In the present condition of our nation, where abortion on demand is now the accepted policy of government, one can only wonder how long God is going to tolerate the destruction of innocent human life, especially when it is a governmental policy. Will God continue to protect us against our enemies? How long will he tolerate the sinful behaviors of this generation? No one gets away with sin without consequences, but for some the consequences come in ways they don't understand as being a consequence. Mental and emotional problems, diseases, financial setbacks, negative attitudes that lead to violence, all are consequences of sinful living. It is a loving God that sets up guidelines and gives commands

concerning what behaviors are allowable and what are not. When humanity lives within these boundaries, health and wealth and happiness result.

## Chapter Ninety-Six

### Worship

### Psalm 95

<sup>1</sup> Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

<sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. <sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

<sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; <sup>7</sup> for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, <sup>9</sup> where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. <sup>10</sup> For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." <sup>11</sup> So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

Styles of worship have been changing as new technologies have enhanced musical ability. Like everything else over the past hundred years or so, Christian worship has undergone drastic change. I had to be instructed by the Holy Spirit to see style as simply that, style. It's easy for one generation to view another and condemn them because they do things differently from the way it was done in previous generations. The methods that worked well when I was a child don't work as well today. If we were to look in on how things were done in David's day and then see how they are done today, we would see a drastic difference. On one occasion David stripped down to a mere loincloth, if that, and danced before the Lord. His wife was understandably disturbed by his behavior, but it was an expression to the Lord. She was judged for her condemnation of his behavior, and David was called a man after God's own heart. Was it because his style of worship was a good one or was it something else? My belief is that it was something else. It doesn't take a very smart person to see that it was the fervor and purity of the heart of the man, not his outward appearance that pleased the Lord. David had no desire to be obscene; he simply didn't want clothing to inhibit his ability to dance before the Lord.

I recommend styles of worship that express the heart of people to the Lord that are less questionable, but the level of loving worship must be from the depths of our heart and spirit to please the Lord. We need to know how worthy God is of our worship if we are to worship him with heart felt enthusiasm. Years ago the Lord gave me the opportunity to see people worship in vastly different styles. I visited churches where the atmosphere was stiff and structured, but saw people worship God in sincerity and love. The evidence of their level of worship was not dancing in the aisles, swaying to the music or clapping their hands, but rather, it was the moisture of a tear on their cheeks, as they reverently worshipped the Lord God. I have also seen people wave their arms, sway to music, dance in the aisles and clap their hands in worship to the Lord and they too had moisture on their cheeks as they worshipped the Lord.

Music too has undergone drastic changes. At times it's difficult to keep up with what is the current trend in music. For me, the music I relate to the best is music that facilitates worshipful emotions and gives me the ability to express the love that is in my heart. I have been told that at

some of the concerts, if we can call them that, where young people gather and play their instruments and do all the things that are allowable for Christian young people to do, that sometimes their level of enthusiasm builds to the point where they scream, “Jesus is Lord!” and other such expressions of intense love and devotion to the Lord. I don’t go there because my old ears and body aren’t able to bear such, but I have learned to allow them to worship God in the manner in which they can express their hearts of love.

It is a mistake to judge styles of worship because worship is to the Lord and not man. I admit that I am somewhat conservative in how I conduct my worship because I have seen people who think that worship of God is some kind of emotional experience and seek that emotional experience failing to see that worship is something that comes from hearts. True worship stirs emotions, but emotions are not worship. There are people who with great emotion do all sorts of religious activities, but have hearts that are grossly evil!

How big is God? This Psalm talks about how the depths of the earth are in his hands and how his hands formed the dry land. When God created the earth, did he hold it in his hands much like a sculptor might hold a lump of clay? The picture this presents is one of a very big God and a very small earth by comparison! When we think of God, the question emerges, of what substance is he? Does God have a body as we know a body or is he of some different form? These sorts of questions will undoubtedly remain unanswered in this world, except to affirm that God is Spirit, but does that mean intangible or does that mean of a different sort of substance? It is hard for us to relate to an intangible being, yet what is intangible to us is not necessarily intangible.

As we contemplate such a God, is it unfitting that we would bow down before him? “Come, let us bow down and worship,” the Psalmist invites. “Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” Why? Because “he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” (Psalms 95:6-7)

The Psalm ends with a warning, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” This is what the people of Israel did and it greatly displeased the Lord. So today, as you go about your day, if you hear his voice, don’t harden your heart, acknowledge him, worship him, and obey him. In so doing, you will enter into his rest and he will fill your heart and life with good things.

## Chapter Ninety-seven

### A Psalm of Praise

#### Psalm 96

<sup>1</sup> Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. <sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. <sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. <sup>6</sup> Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. <sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. <sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

<sup>10</sup> Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.” The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. <sup>11</sup> Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all



that is in it; <sup>12</sup> let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; <sup>13</sup> they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

It is time to praise the Lord. If we have been negligent in our worship of the Lord, allowing life to occupy our minds and hearts with all sorts of natural world concerns and in so doing have failed to praise the Lord, there is hope. Sing to the Lord in songs, even in new songs. Have you ever just wanted to sing to the Lord and started making up a song? I have, but I admit they weren't for the ears of other humans! Any song I would make up would never make a hit list or any other list for that matter, but if they express some special feeling of love for the Lord at that moment, I believe God is pleased. I don't think God cares one whit whether a song makes any particular sense or not, or even if it has any musical value, the important thing is that we are expressing our heart and soul to him in some form of expression. If God were a connoisseur of great sounding melodious sounds only, I am sure he would be greatly distressed with some of the sounds we humans make.

Great sounding songs that inspire great worship and praise to the Lord, I am convinced, come from heavenly help. Songwriters are aware that certain songs come to them and that they simply write them down. What that source is, is a matter for speculation. It is, in my opinion, possible that they come from angels or from the Lord himself. Some songs undoubtedly come from the mind and soul of the songwriter. I feel sure that songwriters that have a special relationship with the Lord of private devotional expressions will at times compose songs that express their personal feelings and if written down bless others as well.

This Psalm invites us to sing new songs. New songs add new life into what might become a rather dull and unfulfilling time of worship to the Lord. New sounds and words of expression when sung to the Lord, add a new dimension of worshipful emotions. There is a vast array of potential subjects for songwriters to use. Last night I was listening to a songwriter singing some songs he has composed, and was awed by the variety of songs and subjects he has written about. He was once a part of a group that recorded some big hits in the secular world and I felt sure some of the songs he was singing would be hits in the Christian world if they were published and recorded.

There is good reason to sing to the Lord, he is worthy of our praise! One reason the Psalmist sites is that God is holy. If we could just fully understand the implications of that statement alone we would be filled with worshipful awe. God created all things that exist, and found great pleasure in what he created, all that is, until it was marred by sin. The sin that marred was the sin of disobediently pursuing the temptation to be like God. It was the man against God temptation that caused everything to turn hostile. It is fitting therefore, that we come back to a full acknowledgement that we stand in need of God to fulfill us and to be our companion.

I once heard that the best illustration of what worship is like is to watch a dog and its master. The little animal will look intently into the eyes of its master, studying the face for an acknowledgement of its presence. It's this sort of devotion that God is looking for in man. When we look at a sunrise or sunset, and admire the creativity of God, he is pleased. When we stop and fix something that is in disrepair, he is pleased. When we speak to him about what we are experiencing, he is pleased. Sometimes people think of God as being stuffy and rigid, but when we look at what he has created with all its vast variety, and yet observe that in that variety there is order, we are filled with worshipful awe.

# Chapter Ninety-eight

## Psalm 97

<sup>1</sup>The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.  
<sup>2</sup>Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. <sup>3</sup>Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. <sup>4</sup>His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. <sup>5</sup>The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. <sup>6</sup>The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.  
<sup>7</sup>All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols— worship him, all you gods!  
<sup>8</sup>Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, O LORD. <sup>9</sup>For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.  
<sup>10</sup>Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. <sup>11</sup>Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

The Lord reigns! This theme is expressed over and over again in the Psalms. It's not King David or his descendants who reigns—really, it's the Lord, the high and exalted one who sits at the Father's right hand, he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Even before Jesus was born, the Lord reigned over all the earth. Some people think that Satan reigns over the earth because he is referred to as the god of this world, but the meaning is clear that it is the fallen world he rules over not the earth itself; nor does he rule over the righteous ones who have put their faith in the Lord Most High.

Satan rules over the fallen natures of people who are committed to doing the bidding of their master Satan. The fallen natures of humanity are in a condition of rebellion against the Lord God, and are committed to doing whatever seems to be in the best interest of their fallen natures. Usually this involves activities that are against nature and what God intended for mankind.

It's not surprising that many of the idolatrous religions had very sensual and vile practices involved in their religious practices. Drunken orgies were common practice legitimized as being a part of their religions. It is not surprising that they also threw children into the fire to their wicked gods. Gods were often viewed as angry and needing to be appeased, but it wasn't an idol god that was angry, it was the Lord God. The Lord God didn't require the blood of babies, only faith in a substitutionary sacrifice, the approved sacrifice of the sacrifice animals that looked forward to the real sacrifice for sin that God would make for us.

God has good reason to be angry with humanity; but nothing we can do can satisfy him and turn his anger aside. The only thing man can do to please God is to turn away from Satan and all the activities that he has involved us in, and put our faith in Jesus God's one and only Son who was also the sin sacrifice that God approved.

God is an awesome God! The Psalmist describes the displays of power seen in the storms and sees the lightning as a further confirmation of how powerful God really is. The volcanoes too are a testimony to the power that emits from God. What fools we are when we argue with the wisdom of Almighty God! How ultimately wise is the man who humbly acknowledges his weakness and calls upon God to guide and direct him in the way he should go.

What is so amazing about God is that though he is so powerful that sun, moon and stars are only symbols teaching us about the enormous power of God, he is also a God of gentle care for his smallest and weakest creatures! When man, who God loves with an enormous love, will turn to him, he will make his habitation with him, living in his very heart. God's desire for mankind is that we turn away from Satan the master deceiver, and turn to him, the true and the living God, and stop serving Satan and start serving God. Those who do this become objects of his love and care, and blessings come from the heart of God toward them!

# Chapter Ninety-nine

## Shout for Joy!

### Psalm 98

A psalm.

<sup>1</sup> Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. <sup>2</sup> The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. <sup>3</sup> He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

<sup>4</sup> Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; <sup>5</sup> make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, <sup>6</sup> with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn— shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

<sup>7</sup> Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. <sup>8</sup> Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; <sup>9</sup> let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Again we read the admonition to sing to the Lord a new song. This time the theme is that his righteousness has been revealed to the nations and his salvation is made known.

This Psalm is reflective and predictive, as it looks back at all the wonders that God has done for the nation of Israel and how all the nations have heard of his love for his people, and predictive looking forward to the redemptive work of the cross.

Let all the earth join in the chorus and burst into jubilant song, the Lord is King, the Psalmist declares, and this brings joy to all people! When God is King, true righteousness, justice and bountiful provisions will be for all people. The goal of the legal system of the United States from the beginning has been equal justice under the law, but everyone knows that good intentions often fail to measure up to that lofty goal. Our conception of right and wrong is limited to our feeble understanding of what true righteousness and justice even looks like.

Over the years, our laws have been modified to accommodate the sinful desires of first one group and then another, and in the process the concept of purity and righteousness has either been ignored or forgotten. When the King of kings comes, and we firmly believe it will be soon, he will come with an agenda of workable justice that will be righteous and fair to all people no matter what nationality, monetary advantage, or cultural background. All religious concepts and teachings will be forever removed in the light of his divine presence. The arguments concerning whose doctrine is correct will be forgotten in the presence of the man called truth!

Let righteous praises be lifted to the Lord. Sing, shout and declare his goodness forever because, he is the eternal God who never changes. What is truth today is truth tomorrow, what has value today will have value tomorrow. When he comes, there won't be any economic ups and downs to contend with, no aging bodies or deteriorating houses or goods. He will reign in righteousness, and all evildoers will be judged. All the secret orders and vain and false philosophies will have been exposed and the tentacles of their evil teachings will be purged from society.

# Chapter One Hundred

## God Reigns!

### Psalm 99

<sup>1</sup>The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. <sup>2</sup>Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. <sup>3</sup>Let them praise your great and awesome name— he is holy.

<sup>4</sup>The King is mighty, he loves justice— you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right. <sup>5</sup>Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.

<sup>6</sup>Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them. <sup>7</sup>He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.

<sup>8</sup>O LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds. <sup>9</sup>Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

Do we appreciate the presence of the Lord in a service when we gather for worship? The nation of Israel had the tabernacle before the temple was built in Jerusalem, but in each case they had the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat between the Cherubim was located which the Psalmist said was where the Lord sat.

If God did indeed sit upon the Mercy Seat, did they have any concept of the meaning of such an awesome reality? Think about it, God the Most High dwelling among human beings with all our shortcomings and flaws of character; condescending to meet us upon a seat of mercy! Why God didn't wipe us off the face of the planet along time ago is beyond human comprehension.

Let the nations tremble, the Psalmist admonishes because, the Lord reigns! Those who realize that God is a merciful God and bow their hearts and knees before him will receive the mercy he has to offer. Mercy extended results in blessings, but the price of mercy is to acknowledge his authority.

In the time of the Psalmist, God reigned governmentally through the kings from David's descendants. The Lord also blessed the kings who honored Israel and their king. Recognizing God's established authorities is a prerequisite to peace with God. The law is for the lawless and when we humble ourselves acknowledging divine authority we will also acknowledge those in authority over us. During the era of time before the coming of Jesus Christ, God was expressing his will and purposes through the nation of Israel with their kings, priests and prophets. Today he is dealing with the world through his Son Jesus calling all men to the real mercy seat, the Cross of Jesus where God paid the redemptive price for our sins. To receive God's mercy, we must receive his Son Jesus who is the Christ the Savior of the World.

# Chapter One Hundred-one

## Enter his Gates with Thanksgiving

### Psalm 100

## A psalm. For giving thanks.

<sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. <sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

We the people of all the earth, praise the Lord with gladness, because we are also his people the sheep of his pasture. This gospel is not for an exclusive group or nation; it is for all people of every nation, tongue and color. There is a requirement, however; we must enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

It's a sin to be unthankful, because unthankfulness is either a declaration that we disbelieve that God is in control of everything that is happening to us, or that we think we are getting a bum deal from God. Unthankfulness is a very negative attitude and reflects a bitterness and hardness of heart and is the first step down a very steep path into the abyss of hell.

Unthankfulness has its roots in a heart that is sinful and holds the truths of God in unrighteousness. All people are born in sin and as a result have a sinful heart, but when the truth of God is proclaimed and known, and then rejected from being embraced, unthankfulness and hardness of heart result. Holding the truth about righteousness in hardness of heart will lead to trying to explain away or even deny God, or to embrace some concept of God that allows for sinful living. Thus, people will explore all sorts of lesser concepts of God even to the point of worshiping created things that make no demand upon them to repent.

What happens is that God turns people over to a reprobate mind and that leads them to conditions such as homosexuality and every other perverse and evil practice one can imagine and even some that can't be imagined. These conditions are an act of judgment coming from a God who is just in all, and who will turn people over to corruption if corruption is what they want.

When we are admonished to enter his gates with thanksgiving, we are made aware that with out repentance and faith, we can never enter. When we do enter in this manner, we make a grand discovery, God is good and his love and faithfulness endures forever!

## Chapter One Hundred-two

### Personal Purity

### Psalm 101

Of David. A psalm.

<sup>1</sup> I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. <sup>2</sup> I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me?

I will walk in my house with blameless heart. <sup>3</sup> I will set before my eyes no vile thing.

The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. <sup>4</sup> Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.

<sup>5</sup> Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.

<sup>6</sup> My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.

<sup>7</sup> No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.

<sup>8</sup> Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.

Men of old sought earnestly concerning the time and manner of the coming of the Christ. They knew that he was coming because the Spirit was witnessing to their spirit that this was so, but when would it be? They sang their songs of praise and worship, they sang of his great love and justice, but the yearning for that special day still remained. The generations preceding the first coming of Christ lived with the same expectancy as we currently live in anticipating the second coming of Christ. They had false expectations, and misconceptions about what that would be like just as we no doubt have concerning the second coming of Christ. Mainly, they didn't understand the agenda of God in sending Jesus into this world. The agenda of God was not to change this world's political landscape, but rather to change the hearts of men. Changing men's hearts has always been and always will be the agenda of the Spirit of God. These men of old that wrote the Psalms sought earnestly to achieve personal holiness even though it often evaded them just as it does us; nevertheless, strive we must!

The Spirit taught them, as he does us, that maintaining a blameless heart is a necessary prerequisite to pleasing God. They knew and were taught in the law that all forms of idolatry and involvement with demons was strictly forbidden, therefore, they covenanted not to set an evil thing before their eyes.

Faith is what pleases God, a faith that is concrete and never changing. A faith that understands the condition of fallen man and how it is that God in gracious love provided a sin sacrifice for us so that he can now effect a change in us that will result in eternal joy and bliss. Faith is a substance, but not a substance of this world, it has heavenly origin and heavenly qualities that can only be illustrated by a condition of firm belief. Faith is what firm belief embraces, but it is not firm belief. Lots of people have firm beliefs, but do not possess faith. Faith is heaven sent, and eternal in nature. True faith always has an object, and that object is always God. Strong and firm belief can have any object, and even any god. Strong and firm belief is a quality of the fallen nature that often is mistaken for real faith. Firm and strong belief can reach out for Jesus, and when it does, he responds with a gift of faith that results in eternal life.

The book of Hebrews tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for (KJV), but what are those things of which faith is the substance? Is it not that that is heavenly? Sometimes in our ignorance and earthiness we try to say that, that which we hope for is what faith embraces, but is that what it says? Or does it say that faith, real faith, is of the heavenly substance, part of that which is spoken of as the "blessed hope"? The blessed hope is the vision of the eternal kingdom and all that is eternal in nature and how it is that we now look forward to the day when we enter into that blessed reality. Faith is of that reality and is given to each born again person, assuring us of the fact that our name has indeed been written into the Lambs Book of Life.

I suppose that the meaning we attach to a concept such as faith is determined by what is in our heart. If we are full of self-will and are greedy for the substances of this life and world, then the meaning we will attach might well be something metaphysical. Some people use spiritual concepts much like the pagans use witchcraft or strange religious practices such as reciting prayers or even reciting scripture as a sort of mantra thinking that they can somehow generate a power or spiritual energy to accomplish what they hope for.

If on the other hand, what we hope for is an outgrowth from the heavenly vision and calling, what we hope for will be otherworldly in nature, that is to say heavenly. Our hope will be a portrayal of the heart and mind of God that is being communicated to us by the Holy Spirit as he

ministers to us through prayer, meditation and simply walking in the Spirit. As we fellowship with God, it becomes more and more clear what it is that he expects of us as dear children.

True Christianity is about the merging of that which is of heavenly substance with that which is still a part of this earth in such a way that the heavenly can be seen portrayed in the practical applications of everyday life. Christ Jesus came to demonstrate this reality and of him John said that he possessed life, and the life was the light of the world. This life was more than a state of being alive in the physical and natural sense of the word, but rather, was a spiritual substance abiding in a physical body. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we too become the recipient of the heavenly substance of power from on high.

How slow we are to grasp that when a person humbly bows their whole being to worshipful praise and surrender of heart and soul unto God, surrendering all selfish goals and ideals, that he then is a candidate to be filled with divine substances that are heavenly in nature.

The person so filled will embrace the words of this Psalm 101,

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. <sup>2</sup> I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me?

I will walk in my house with blameless heart. <sup>3</sup> I will set before my eyes no vile thing.

The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. <sup>4</sup> Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.

<sup>5</sup> Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.

<sup>6</sup> My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.

<sup>7</sup> No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.

<sup>8</sup> Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.

## **Chapter One Hundred-three**

### **Life on Earth—Both Heaven and Hell Choose Life**

#### **Psalm 102**

A prayer of an afflicted man. When he is faint and pours out his lament before the LORD.

<sup>1</sup> Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry for help come to you. <sup>2</sup> Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.

<sup>3</sup> For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. <sup>4</sup> My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food. <sup>5</sup> Because of my loud groaning I am reduced to skin and bones. <sup>6</sup> I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. <sup>7</sup> I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof. <sup>8</sup> All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse. <sup>9</sup> For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears <sup>10</sup> because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. <sup>11</sup> My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

<sup>12</sup> But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. <sup>13</sup> You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come. <sup>14</sup> For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity. <sup>15</sup> The nations will fear the name of

the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. <sup>16</sup> For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. <sup>17</sup> He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.

<sup>18</sup> Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: <sup>19</sup> “The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, <sup>20</sup> to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death.” <sup>21</sup> So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem <sup>22</sup> when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the LORD.

<sup>23</sup> In the course of my life he broke my strength; he cut short my days. <sup>24</sup> So I said: “Do not take me away, O my God, in the midst of my days; your years go on through all generations. <sup>25</sup> In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. <sup>26</sup> They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. <sup>27</sup> But you remain the same, and your years will never end. <sup>28</sup> The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you.”

“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” (James 1:24-25)

Mighty men have grown strong and wise, but in due time the ravages of old age come upon them and they decline and die. Some people live to be very old, and remain healthy even past a hundred years, but eventually death comes to all.

Suffering is also the companion of many, and life is a constant misery for them. I have said, “the worst of life is better than the best of hell, and the best of life is worse than the worst of heaven!” I am totally convinced that that is a true statement. A friend of mine went to the east coast to visit some friends and family, and upon his return shared how heavy the mosquito population was but also how beautiful it was with a wonderful climate. I have yet to find a place where in the midst of great beauty there aren't also some reminders that this is not heaven. You may find a wonderful beach where the sun is warm and the sand is clean and you lay down to sun, but don't stay out too long or you will have a terrible sunburn especially if your not used to the sun.

This world is neither heaven nor hell, but fortunately it has some heavenliness about it. For some people life is a challenging and enjoyable experience but for some it is a miserable existence with very few enjoyments along the way. No matter how good or bad, death is the final call to all human beings.

The law of positives and negatives teaches us that where there is a positive the potential for an equal negative exists. Negatives are where the positive is not. Hell is where all positives have been forbidden to enter. Heaven is where no negative is allowed either. This world is where both positives and negatives exist. This life is called the valley of decision, and in it we have a choice, do we want to exist eternally in the place where all is negative, or do we want the joy and bliss of an eternal existence where all are positives? Do we want to experience the love, grace and mercy of God or do we want to be judged unworthy of being a part of the eternal peace of God as a result of believing in Jesus his one and only Son?

The author of this Psalm 102 had experienced way too much hell in this world, but he longed for heaven. He wanted God to bless him with the positives he knew were available, and prayed not only for his life, but also for Zion to be blessed and future generations as well.

He realized that God took note of humanity and how we are held as prisoners, moaning and suffering, condemned to death. He also noted that God was providing for our release from this prison and that future generations would come to know of his love.

Bleak as the outlook sometimes is, there is a wonderful hope for our future because we have a wonderful home in heaven awaiting our arrival. Every story I have heard of people who have seen beyond this world into the realms beyond tell similar stories of both heaven and hell. Those who have seen hell tell of the tormented souls in an eternal dungeon where all is anguish and awful torment. Those who have seen heaven in either vision or visitation, tell of the wonder and beauty of this glorious and vast home. Only utter fools want to go to hell. Only utter fools reject the opportunity to make peace with God! Some people have embraced satanic lies and accepted them for fact, but they will lead them to the torment of hell's fire.



# Chapter One Hundred-four

## Soul—Praise the Lord

### Psalm 103

Of David.

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. <sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, <sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: <sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; <sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. <sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— <sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

<sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. <sup>21</sup> Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. <sup>22</sup> Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

Self-talk is something we all do but not all self-talk is good. It's a good idea to do a little constructive self-talk and this Psalm provides a good guide to healthy self-talk.

Soul, do you remember that all good benefits come from the Lord? Do you remember that it is the Lord who forgives you all your sins? You know the ones, those secret desires that go out side the boundaries of what is divinely acceptable? Those fears, those cunning and intrusive plots, the hostile feelings that you harbor, the lusts, hate, bitterness and desires for vengeance. It's an ugly pit but the Lord rescues us from it all! He bestows love and compassion upon us, and restores joy and even grants the good desires that we have even renewing our youth.

Soul, praise the Lord, from your inmost being praise the Lord! Why not praise the Lord, he is able to create anything and everything, therefore; what he has promised he is able to also give.

Soul remember this, the Lord is gracious and abounding in love! He will not always be angry with you, and because he is full of love, he will not give you what your sins deserve or repay you according to your iniquities.

It's good to know how great God's love is; it is higher than the heavens above! When he forgives our iniquities he removes them as far from us as the east is from the west! Can we measure such wonders? Soul remember these things about God, be reminded often lest Satan tempt you to indulge in useless guilt and remorse. God does these things for us out of compassion like the compassion a father has for his little children he loves.

The days of a man are short and once gone the remembrance of him soon vanishes. Loved ones grieve for a while, but soon the necessities of life press us into action and life dulls even the fondest memories. Even historians soon remember only what fits their agenda, but those who fear the Lord enjoy his love from everlasting to everlasting.

“Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.” (Psalms 103:20-22) Because, “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.” (Psalms 103:19)

## Chapter One Hundred-five

### God, Creator and Caretaker of All

#### Psalm 104

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul.

O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. <sup>2</sup> He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent <sup>3</sup> and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. <sup>4</sup> He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.

<sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. <sup>6</sup> You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. <sup>7</sup> But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; <sup>8</sup> they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. <sup>9</sup> You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.

<sup>10</sup> He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. <sup>11</sup> They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. <sup>12</sup> The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. <sup>13</sup> He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. <sup>14</sup> He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup> wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. <sup>16</sup> The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. <sup>17</sup> There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees. <sup>18</sup> The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coney.

<sup>19</sup> The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. <sup>20</sup> You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. <sup>21</sup> The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. <sup>22</sup> The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. <sup>23</sup> Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening.

<sup>24</sup> How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup> There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small. <sup>26</sup> There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

<sup>27</sup> These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. <sup>29</sup> When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. <sup>30</sup> When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works— <sup>32</sup> he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. <sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. <sup>35</sup> But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

Praise the LORD.

God is a God of wisdom and creativity. The Psalmist meditates upon all the wonders of God as he writes this Psalm. Once again, this Psalm is address to his soul, with the command to praise the Lord. Then in worshipful praise he addresses God speaking of his greatness, splendor and majesty. He takes note that God wraps himself in light as a garment and stretches out the heavens as a tent. It seems that he is thinking about what he is seeing as being something one might do in preparation for of a place to take his rest. There was a process employed in creation and the Psalmist reflects upon it. He sees that at one point even the mountains were under water, that the earth was wrapped in a watery garment, but at the appropriate time, God rebuked the waters and it receded to its appropriate locations. God set boundaries for the water that he vowed they would never again transgress.

He makes clouds his chariot and the wind his messenger, and flames of fire his servants, the Psalmist declared and further observed that the earth is set upon an unmovable foundation. He realized that it is the Lord who causes the mountain springs to give water that runs down the mountains bringing water to water the land. All animals, birds and yes, man, all are fed as a result of what God does in giving water that comes from above. He didn't know how the water is evaporated in the ocean and carried to the high places by the winds, but he knew it was from God that it came, a truth that modern scientists seem to have forgotten. He may not have realized that it takes storms to bring the life giving water to all that is alive on the earth. We cannot live without storms; they are an essential part of the system of life on the earth.

Equally many people have forgotten that the storms of life are an essential part of their spiritual existence. Storms of life cause us to look to the Lord in ways that we never do when events of life are smooth and pleasant; in fact, many times we forget to give the Lord the thanks he deserves. When storms arise and we feel that our little life vessel is about to get swamped, we call out to the Lord and he rescues us. Often the rescue that comes our way is in the form of some unscheduled event that can sometimes be brushed aside as a fortunate coincidence, but that is because we don't see the spiritual beings that are influencing these events. When our spiritual eyes are opened, we see that what we thought were fortunate coincidences, were in fact, divinely orchestrated events in our lives.

God is the one who is in charge of all things that happen upon the earth. It isn't that every event or incident is caused to happen, though some certainly are, but God is watchful and is careful not to allow anything to happen that will go out of control or beyond the acceptable limits of his providential plan. The Psalmist observed how everything works, and was fascinated to see how dependent all the creatures of the earth are upon the Lord. He saw how the ocean teems with life and all of them are dependent upon the Lord to make sure they are fed.

The promise that one day all wickedness will be removed from the earth is a promise that the righteous take comfort in. No longer will wicked men be able to prey upon the vulnerable people of the earth.

I recently had a conversation with a gentleman who was quite concerned about current plans that appear to be leading up to a war. In his way of thinking we should just sit back and do nothing when wicked people plot together to do us harm. Some people live with the illusion that wicked people do what they do because we somehow deserve to be attack or killed. There will be a day when all wickedness will be driven from the earth, and at that time people will be able to plan for the future without fear of some economic downturn or tragic event coming along to interrupt what is happening. The lifespan of people will once more be greatly increased and the Prince of Peace will reign upon the earth.

Without question, God has a reason for things being the way they are. You may wonder, why is this event happening to me? Why am I being subjected to this kind of problem in my life? Rest assured, there is a reason, and in the end God will show us why. We sometimes grope about in the darkness because we fail to enter the place where the light of truth shines brightly. Some people avoid the light because they are afraid that their wicked way will be exposed in the light.

The fear of light is not a valid one, however, because Jesus is standing with grace and healing at the door and when we approach to enter the place where there is light, love and peace, he wipes away our tears, and cleanses our hearts, and heals our minds. If we will come to him and accept his atoning sacrifice, his very life's blood that was shed for us as our sacrifice for sin, and believe in him and accept him as our Savior and Lord of our life, he will grant us access to what is just beyond our present experience of life. The light of truth will begin to shine upon us, and oh what joy awaits us both now and forever.

## Chapter One Hundred-Six

### Remember!

### Psalm 105

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. <sup>2</sup> Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. <sup>3</sup> Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. <sup>4</sup> Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

<sup>5</sup> Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, <sup>6</sup> O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. <sup>7</sup> He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

<sup>8</sup> He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, <sup>9</sup> the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. <sup>10</sup> He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: <sup>11</sup> "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."

<sup>12</sup> When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it, <sup>13</sup> they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. <sup>14</sup> He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: <sup>15</sup> "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."

<sup>16</sup> He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food; <sup>17</sup> and he sent a man before them— Joseph, sold as a slave. <sup>18</sup> They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, <sup>19</sup> till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true. <sup>20</sup> The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free. <sup>21</sup> He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed, <sup>22</sup> to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.

<sup>23</sup> Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham. <sup>24</sup> The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes, <sup>25</sup> whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants. <sup>26</sup> He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. <sup>27</sup> They performed his miraculous signs among them, his wonders in the land of Ham. <sup>28</sup> He sent darkness and made the land dark— for had they not rebelled against his words? <sup>29</sup> He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die. <sup>30</sup> Their land teemed with frogs, which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers. <sup>31</sup> He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. <sup>32</sup> He turned their rain into hail, with lightning throughout their land; <sup>33</sup> he struck down their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country. <sup>34</sup> He spoke, and the locusts came, grasshoppers without number; <sup>35</sup> they ate up every green thing in their land, ate up the produce of their soil. <sup>36</sup> Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their manhood.

<sup>37</sup> He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered. <sup>38</sup> Egypt was glad when they left, because dread of Israel had fallen on them. <sup>39</sup> He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night. <sup>40</sup> They asked, and he brought them quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. <sup>41</sup> He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.

<sup>42</sup> For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham. <sup>43</sup> He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy; <sup>44</sup> he gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for— <sup>45</sup> that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws.

Praise the LORD.

Sometimes we may wonder how God accomplishes his purposes. This Psalm gives us insight into the methods that God employs when he purposes to do something. The Psalmist recalls how the Israelis became slaves in the land of Egypt. They lived there as a result of circumstances that God orchestrated—and how he caused the land of Israel to experience famine that caused the sons of Jacob to go to Egypt in search of food. It was God who had already prepared salvation for Jacob and his whole household so that they could live in Egypt while the cup of iniquity was being filled by the nations that occupied the land of Israel. God doesn't rush to judgment, but judgment always comes to those who resist the dealings of the Lord.

When the appropriate hour had arrived, God delivered the Israeli nation from the slavery of Egypt. When they left they took with them great quantities of gold and silver vessels and earrings and other articles of value. When they entered the land of Israel, they entered into cities and lived in homes they hadn't built. They tilled the soil and ate fruit from trees and vines that they didn't plant.

It's good to look back and remember all the wonders that God has worked in our behalf. The Psalmists often reflected upon the miracles of the past to encourage the people of Israel to trust the Lord. One of the purposes of great miracles is to assure people that there really is a God in Heaven who cares for us. Every event in our lives is watched over, if not orchestrated once we have received Jesus. Once the call of the Spirit is answered in our lives and we receive Jesus, we are then included in all the purposes of God regarding Jesus and his body, his bride, the Church. This plan was conceived in the heart of God before the foundation of the world and all who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior are predestined to come into the fullness of God's redemptive plan. This plan is that all who come to him will also grow into the full stature of Jesus Christ and be made complete by the mighty dealings of the Holy Spirit's power.

If it is true that God has looked after the history of the nation of Israel and orchestrated events to fulfill his purpose in them, isn't it equally true that God is looking after the lives of those who receive Jesus? I am convinced that it is equally true, and perhaps more so now that we have the Holy Spirit living within.

The Psalmist observed how the nation of Israel in their earliest beginnings was a small group but that the protection of God was upon them. When they wandered among the nations and someone would want to do something that would bring harm to them or disrupt God's plan for them, God would intervene and help them. Then that oft repeated phrase is given, "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." (Psalms 105:15) When we are "In Christ" we are in a very privileged and protected place.

## **Chapter One Hundred-seven**

### **Remember the Sins of the Fathers, But Praise the Lord**

#### **Psalm 106**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. <sup>2</sup> Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise? <sup>3</sup> Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right. <sup>4</sup> Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people, come to my aid when you save them,

<sup>5</sup> that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation and join your inheritance in giving praise.

<sup>6</sup> We have sinned, even as our fathers did; we have done wrong and acted wickedly. <sup>7</sup> When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. <sup>8</sup> Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. <sup>9</sup> He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert. <sup>10</sup> He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. <sup>11</sup> The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived. <sup>12</sup> Then they believed his promises and sang his praise.

<sup>13</sup> But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel. <sup>14</sup> In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wasteland they put God to the test. <sup>15</sup> So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them.

<sup>16</sup> In the camp they grew envious of Moses and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan; it buried the company of Abiram. <sup>18</sup> Fire blazed among their followers; a flame consumed the wicked.

<sup>19</sup> At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. <sup>20</sup> They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. <sup>21</sup> They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt, <sup>22</sup> miracles in the land of Ham and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. <sup>23</sup> So he said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them.

<sup>24</sup> Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise. <sup>25</sup> They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the LORD. <sup>26</sup> So he swore to them with uplifted hand that he would make them fall in the desert, <sup>27</sup> make their descendants fall among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands.

<sup>28</sup> They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods; <sup>29</sup> they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them. <sup>30</sup> But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked. <sup>31</sup> This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come.

<sup>32</sup> By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; <sup>33</sup> for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips.

<sup>34</sup> They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, <sup>35</sup> but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. <sup>36</sup> They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. <sup>37</sup> They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. <sup>38</sup> They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. <sup>39</sup> They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves.

<sup>40</sup> Therefore the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance. <sup>41</sup> He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them. <sup>42</sup> Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. <sup>43</sup> Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin.

<sup>44</sup> But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; <sup>45</sup> for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. <sup>46</sup> He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive.

<sup>47</sup> Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.

<sup>48</sup> Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!"

Praise the LORD.

Miracles of salvation come from the heart of God, but those who receive them seldom are worthy of them. When God acts in behalf of people, it isn't because we are good, but rather, because he is good. God wants us to be good, and his Holy Spirit works upon us to change us so we will be good. When people receive the Lord, they are often in need of radical changes first in their heart and then in their lifestyle. The processes of outward change should always reflect the processes of inward change. If our hearts are right, the outward expressions will soon be right as well.

Legalism is like a flame retardant in that it tends to put out the fire of God sent to bring about internal change that comes from the workings of the Holy Spirit. Change that results from internal transformation is a very solid and changeless condition because it's not dependent upon law to bring it about. The working of the Holy Spirit is clothed in love, and love for God in the heart of man is what brings about true and lasting change.

The Psalmist talks about the failings of the nation of Israel when they came out of Egypt and how knowing about God's miraculous deeds didn't mean that they really loved and honored God. In their heart of hearts, they loved idols and the wicked ways of those who worshipped them.

They would repent of idolatry, and when the next opportunity arose, they would sink back into idolatrous sins. The reason was that they never fully obeyed the Lord because in their hearts they loved sin.

Law cannot change a person; it can only restrain them. Jesus Christ is the only answer to the need for internal change. At the time of the giving of the law, internal change was withheld because the sins of mankind had not yet been atoned for. Law was given to restrain man because the love of sin was in his heart. It is a loving God that gives law to the lawless, so that perchance he will repent and not destroy himself with destructive habits and sins.

Even in this era of time when the power of the Holy Spirit is available to bring about change, law is useful in the early stages of Christian growth. Law when violated brings conviction of sin, and repentance brings about an opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit access to our heart in ever increasing measures. Law, when violated, brings judgment and judgment is the catalyst for change. When we are sick to death of sin, the Holy Spirit will answer the cry of our heart and deliver us from the want to of sin. When we don't want to sin anymore, change is well on its way to full expression.

By the time this Psalm was written, the nation of Israel had a history of falling into the sin of idolatry. This included worshipping Baal and Molech the god of the Ammonites. They would come to the shrine with their infants and place them in the outstretched arms of this red hot hideous looking god with the face of an ox for the fire to slowly cook them to death, while the priests would beat drums to drown out the cries of the suffering infant. Thus the Psalmist wrote;

<sup>34</sup> They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, <sup>35</sup> but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. <sup>36</sup> They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. <sup>37</sup> They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. <sup>38</sup> They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. <sup>39</sup> They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves.

<sup>40</sup> Therefore the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance. <sup>41</sup> He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them. <sup>42</sup> Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. <sup>43</sup> Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin.

We may say, "How terrible, how could they do such a thing." Yet, how many parents have allowed their children to watch movies or listen to music that glorify sex outside of marriage, or other equally depraved subjects.

I am appalled when I watch families being torn apart because sin has been allowed to take root within the family in ways that are socially permitted but condemned by God. We wouldn't think of going to an idol temple somewhere with our little children and throw them into the fire to satisfy what some demon possessed, so called priest, is saying is necessary to satisfy this evil idol. Yet, we allow Satan to have his way with our children, but when we see them being destroyed by alcohol, drugs or illicit sex, we suddenly become concerned.

## **BOOK V**

*Psalms 107-150*

### **Chapter One Hundred-Eight**

## Cry to the Lord, He will Redeem You

### Psalm 107

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. <sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD say this— those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, <sup>3</sup> those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

<sup>4</sup> Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. <sup>5</sup> They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. <sup>6</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. <sup>7</sup> He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. <sup>8</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, <sup>9</sup> for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

<sup>10</sup> Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, <sup>11</sup> for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. <sup>12</sup> So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. <sup>13</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. <sup>14</sup> He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains. <sup>15</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, <sup>16</sup> for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.

<sup>17</sup> Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. <sup>18</sup> They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. <sup>19</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. <sup>20</sup> He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. <sup>21</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. <sup>22</sup> Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.

<sup>23</sup> Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. <sup>24</sup> They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. <sup>25</sup> For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. <sup>26</sup> They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. <sup>27</sup> They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. <sup>28</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. <sup>29</sup> He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. <sup>30</sup> They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. <sup>31</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. <sup>32</sup> Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

<sup>33</sup> He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, <sup>34</sup> and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. <sup>35</sup> He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; <sup>36</sup> there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. <sup>37</sup> They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; <sup>38</sup> he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish.

<sup>39</sup> Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow; <sup>40</sup> he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste. <sup>41</sup> But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. <sup>42</sup> The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths.

<sup>43</sup> Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.

Who among us deserves the grace of God? When we consider our lives and all the wrong motives, evil deeds, selfish pursuits and foolish indulgences, we must conclude, certainly not I. Sin is a reproach to any people, but the grace of God stands ready to write a new chapter of loving intervention to anyone who will accept Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Psalmist speaks of a people who are gathered from the four points of the compass, being gathered to a good place of comfort and safety. This could be totally prophetic, even reaching to the present day as we have seen this come to pass with reference to the nation of Israel. They had been scattered to the four winds for about nineteen hundred years, then in the mid-nineteenth century they gathered to their homeland again. They have come from every nation where they have been living as a nation in exile. They came to a wasteland, but they applied themselves to the task of building a nation. They planted vineyards and trees, planted crops and built an infrastructure for water and electricity. They developed an economy and a military second only to the USA. In some ways they have even surpassed those who have helped them achieve what they are today.



Despite their successes, trouble has been their constant companion as the Arab nations have resented their presence and are contesting their land. They are regarded as illegal occupants because in the short term of history, they displaced those who once called this land their land. What view of history you hold to will determine what conclusion you come to concerning whose land it should be. The fact is, at the present time, Israel holds the high ground, as it were, because they are there whether anyone likes it or not. Those who hold to the Biblical point of view see Israel as the legitimate occupant of the land and point to the prosperity that the whole region experiences as evidence. The Palestinians too have been blessed until they decided to cause a renewed round of violence. Of course, they don't admit to causing it because, they see Israel as an illegal occupant.

The Psalmist lists some of the conditions that cause people to reach for blessing saying that some were just wandering about in desert wastelands. Some were in bitter chains, in darkness and gloom being forced to bitter labor, because they had rebelled against the Lord and had rejected and despised his counsel. Some became fools and were afflicted and suffered causing them to cry out to God for help. Others went out to sea becoming mariner merchants probably looking for wealth, but the Lord sent a great storm against them and they were terrified and sought the Lord.

Because wicked men occupied the land, the Lord took away the necessary conditions that sustain life drying up the watersheds so that the land became barren. When the people who cry to the Lord, repent and return to their place where blessings can come upon them, the Lord restores the land to productivity. Pride has a way of entering the heart of people that the Lord begins to bless. Once more the Lord has had to lift some of his protective cover so that the people who are called by his name will be humbled and call upon his name. He is faithful, and even in the midst of humbling circumstances increases their families.

In each of these dealings and subsequent interventions listed the Lord is to be praised. Never, never blame Satan for what the Lord does, oh yes, Satan is involved but it is before we sin the sin that brings the disciplines of God into play. Satan tempts us, but we decide to go for his temptations that lead us into trouble. John 10:7-10 says,<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep."<sup>8</sup> All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.<sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

## **Chapter One Hundred-Nine**

### **God is Able to Deliver**

#### **Psalm 108**

A song. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my soul.

<sup>2</sup> Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. <sup>3</sup> I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. <sup>4</sup> For great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. <sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered. <sup>7</sup> God has spoken from his sanctuary: "In triumph I will parcel out Shechem and measure off the Valley of Succoth. <sup>8</sup> Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. <sup>9</sup> Moab is my washbasin, upon Edom I toss my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph."

<sup>10</sup> Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? <sup>11</sup> Is it not you, O God, you who have rejected us and no longer go out with our armies? <sup>12</sup> Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. <sup>13</sup> With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.

The Psalmist David knew that trusting in the Lord was an essential part of the strength of his nation. If God would just fight for him, no enemy could stand before him. It is better to have the Lord on our side than all the armies and genius of man.

God is worthy of the praises of man. Why not praise him; he is the reason that everything that is here present is here in the first place. When man is on the right side of God, he can expect good things to happen. David expected good things to happen and when they didn't, he was always alarmed.

When it seems that God is not in our corner, we should always stop and ponder, question our life and motives, and seek to understand why. It isn't always that something is wrong, but in my experience, there is a reason. The reason that I have encountered the most is that God is making some adjustments in some area of my life. God wants us to move on from the present place of activities or understanding so that we might learn and become more fruitful.

We are on a journey, passing through this world, experiencing this natural man experience, and when it is over, we will all gather before the great judge to be judged concerning how well or bad we did. For those who have received Jesus as their Savior, judgment is different than it is for those who have rejected him. The believer will go to be with the Lord and the fear of judgment has been taken away because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when he died on the Cross. There is another matter, however, that must be judged, sin having been set aside, did we live our life worthy of his love? Did we fulfill his will and purpose for our life? What about our obedience to the law of love, did we love as we were taught to?

There is another possible reason we experience difficulties in our lives, that reason is Satan. There are evil forces at work in the world and Christians are their prime target. Satan and all his demonic helpers hate Christians and will do whatever they can get away with to make life miserable for them. The fiery darts or flaming arrows spoken about by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 are very real, that is why we are instructed to put on the whole armor of God. When we approach this kind of problem God's way, we will find that he is always there for us.

## **Chapter One Hundred-ten**

### **Dealing with Evil Men**

#### **Psalm 109**

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

<sup>1</sup> O God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, <sup>2</sup> for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues. <sup>3</sup> With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause. <sup>4</sup> In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer. <sup>5</sup> They repay me evil for good, and hatred for my friendship.

<sup>6</sup> Appoint an evil man to oppose him; let an accuser stand at his right hand. <sup>7</sup> When he is tried, let him be found guilty, and may his prayers condemn him. <sup>8</sup> May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership. <sup>9</sup> May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. <sup>10</sup> May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes. <sup>11</sup> May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. <sup>12</sup> May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his fatherless children. <sup>13</sup> May his descendants be cut off, their names blotted out from the next generation. <sup>14</sup> May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD; may the sin of his mother never be blotted out. <sup>15</sup> May their sins always remain before the LORD, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

<sup>16</sup> For he never thought of doing a kindness, but hounded to death the poor and the needy and the brokenhearted. <sup>17</sup> He loved to pronounce a curse— may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing— may it be far from him. <sup>18</sup> He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil. <sup>19</sup> May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him. <sup>20</sup> May this be the LORD's payment to my accusers, to those who speak evil of me.

<sup>21</sup> But you, O Sovereign LORD, deal well with me for your name's sake; out of the goodness of your love, deliver me. <sup>22</sup> For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. <sup>23</sup> I fade away like an evening shadow; I am shaken off like a locust. <sup>24</sup> My knees give way from fasting; my body is thin and gaunt. <sup>25</sup> I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads.

<sup>26</sup> Help me, O LORD my God; save me in accordance with your love. <sup>27</sup> Let them know that it is your hand, that you, O LORD, have done it. <sup>28</sup> They may curse, but you will bless; when they attack they will be put to shame, but your servant will rejoice. <sup>29</sup> My accusers will be clothed with disgrace and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.

<sup>30</sup> With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD; in the great throng I will praise him. <sup>31</sup> For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him.

There are evil people in the world, and David had his share all around him. In the day of King David, evil men often plotted the overthrow of those in authority. These individuals were like a thorn in the cloth of a garment constantly irritating the person wearing it. Carpenters know what it's like to get a sliver in their clothes, sometimes it is so small it's hard to find, but it will irritate until it is found.

In the case of David, it seems that he knew who his enemies were, but because they were people and not slivers, he, being a righteous man, didn't go around killing people just because they were evil. David turned to the Lord with his concerns, calling on God to do what justice would demand. He desired that the whole evil root be thoroughly purged and since evil seems to follow in a bloodline his desire was that the very bloodline be disposed of.

The man in question was the sort of man who lived without mercy. He was a man in a position of authority, but was totally brutal in his ways. How sad it is when people with power use their power to hurt others. When God entrusts an individual with power, he must use that power with compassion and wisdom. There are people who are so in tune with evil in their hearts that they are beyond redeeming grace as a result of the choices they have made. Such people are not to be the object of our compassion, but rather they should be taken to God to be marked for destruction.

If we spiritualize what we see in this Psalm, we will separate between the individual concerned and concentrate upon the proper way to deal with the world of evil. David wanted all the ramifications of this evil to be dealt with by God.

Sometimes when a Christian is called upon to deal with demonic infestations it is necessary to deal with the very lifestyle and environmental causes of the infestation. If a person is carrying an unforgiving heart toward anyone, forgiveness is mandatory.

Some people have been hurt by some very evil person causing them to struggle with this idea because not at all people are a candidate for the grace of God due to their rebellion and unrepentant heart.

The forgiveness of which I speak is not the sort of forgiveness that says what you did was okay, but rather is a heart condition of the offended person that says, I won't allow you to poison my heart and spirit with a desire for vengeance or hatred. It also says that should God permit you to receive a repentant heart and desire forgiveness, forgiveness is in my heart. We must

remember that forgiveness is not pay for a righteous act, but rather is given to an offender as a gift.

Forgiveness does not equal reinstatement, but rather just a desire to show kindness and godly love. There are situations that, due to the heinous nature of a crime against a person, make reinstatement impossible. Forgiveness to an offender, who is also deeply repentant, may open the door of opportunity for a different kind of relationship than could have ever existed before the offence! Love that is given as a gift is of a more noble character than love that is earned.

The environmental aspect of demonization sometimes has to do with activities that involve some sort of paraphernalia. If it is a form of literature, then a book burning is in order. If it is tarot cards or any other articles that associate with fortune telling or physic activities, black magic or the like, they must be removed and destroyed. All articles that have false religious meaning, or are symbols that are looked to as having some sort of power, must be removed and destroyed.

Satanic beings seem to associate with articles that have either been created as symbols of their power, or have been dedicated to some sort of practice that honors the activities of these dark beings. Some people seem to think that doing satanic rituals or getting involved in mystical activities is fun, but Satan is not your friend, he only wants to destroy you or your peace, joy and eternal life.

Concerning the man who was the catalyst for the writing of this Psalm, David said, “For he never thought of doing a kindness, but hounded to death the poor and the needy and the brokenhearted. He loved to pronounce a curse— may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing— may it be far from him. He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil. May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him. May this be the LORD’s payment to my accusers, to those who speak evil of me.” (Psalms 109:16-20) There is a close correlation between a person who is demonically possessed and the person themselves. He speaks of this person as being evil and then speaks of wearing evil as a garment and lastly evil entering him as water seeping into his bones like oil. At this point it is difficult to separate which manifestation of evil is the person and which is the demon.

I have spoken in the past of two ways to cast out a demon spirit from our midst, the first is to cast it out of the person through the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the second is to cast out both the demon and the person. Sometimes the latter is the only appropriate course of action for the reasons cited in this Psalm.

Righteous people have a right to be free. David made his appeal to God for deliverance from this demonically possessed person, though he didn’t use the word demon. He did, however, recognize that this man was an incorrigible. He wanted to be free of him and anyone who might become an extension of the evil.

Turning to the Lord in worshipful praise is always the correct way to seek redress from the oppressions that such an individual can bring to bear upon a person. God sees what we go through and he also knows how, when and why deliverance may be brought to a person. Sometimes God waits to see if there is any possibility to change the people involved, if not he will bring judgment to bear.

## **Chapter One Hundred-Eleven**

## A Messianic Psalm

### Psalm 110

Of David. A psalm.

<sup>1</sup>The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

<sup>2</sup>The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. <sup>3</sup>Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>5</sup>The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. <sup>6</sup>He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. <sup>7</sup>He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

Where is Christ today? Sitting at the right hand of the Father! While Jesus was being interrogated the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

“I am,” Jesus replied, “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:61-62) The first part of this prophecy has already come to pass, and we are waiting for the second part to be fulfilled at any second. Jesus ascended into the heavens and was caught away in the clouds, but the attending angels promised that, just as we saw him go into heaven, so shall we see him come again. This is the hope that fills the heart of every believer that Jesus will come again soon.

How long will it be? Until all his enemies have become a footstool for his feet! What does that mean in real life experience term? I don’t know. Evidently it hasn’t happened yet. When it does, he will come arrayed in holy majesty. His rule will be global in nature, and those who serve him will do so willingly.

The day of the return of Christ to the earth will be a bittersweet day. It will be sweet to those who serve him faithfully from their hearts, but it will be a bitter day for those who live rebelliously in self-indulgence and violence.

There is another very important part to this Psalm for all believers. It is the part about the priesthood of Jesus. This is a remarkable prophecy because in David’s day, all authentic priests were of the lineage of Aaron. There was no previous mention of another superior order of priesthood before this Psalm. David speaking by the Holy Spirit speaks of the priesthood of Christ as being in the order of Melchizedek. The author of the book of Hebrews speaks at some length about this, making a point to mention the important points about this order.

The first mention of Melchizedek is in Genesis and the setting is when Abraham went and rescued his nephew Lot along with the king of Sodom. It was at this point that he met this mystery priest. “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” (Gen. 14:18-30)

Here is the passage in Hebrews 7 that explains what was prophesied,

“This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,<sup>2</sup> and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means ‘king of righteousness’; then also, ‘king of Salem means ‘king of peace.’<sup>3</sup> Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

<sup>4</sup>Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! <sup>5</sup>Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. <sup>6</sup>This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. <sup>7</sup>And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. <sup>8</sup>In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other

case, by him who is declared to be living. <sup>9</sup> One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, <sup>10</sup> because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

<sup>11</sup> If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup> For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. <sup>13</sup> He

of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. <sup>14</sup> For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

<sup>15</sup> And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, <sup>16</sup> one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup> For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>18</sup> The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless <sup>19</sup> (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

<sup>20</sup> And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, <sup>21</sup> but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’”

Jesus Christ is not only King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but also he is our great high priest! It is not possible to claim to believe in the Holy Scriptures and not believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior of the world.

## Chapter One Hundred-twelve

### The Beginning of Wisdom

#### Psalm 111

This Psalm is an acrostic poem, the lines of which start with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD.

I will extol the LORD with all my heart  
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

<sup>2</sup>Great are the works of the LORD;  
they are pondered by all who delight in them.

<sup>3</sup>Glorious and majestic are his deeds,  
and his righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup>He has caused his wonders to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

<sup>5</sup>He provides food for those who fear him;  
he remembers his covenant forever.

<sup>6</sup>He has shown his people the power of his works,  
giving them the lands of other nations.

<sup>7</sup>The works of his hands are faithful and just;  
all his precepts are trustworthy.

<sup>8</sup>They are steadfast for ever and ever,  
done in faithfulness and uprightness.

<sup>9</sup>He provided redemption for his people;  
he ordained his covenant forever—  
holy and awesome is his name.

<sup>10</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.  
To him belongs eternal praise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom! In our world today there are a lot of so-called smart people. They have letters behind their names indicating degrees of accomplishment in the institutions of learning. Some of these smart people have been credited with great accomplishments in the development of new areas of scientific, literary and social advancements. The question is, are they also wise? If they are lacking in this credential of the fear of the Lord, they are not. Definitely, if they are not following in his precepts, they are lacking in understanding! No amount of educational recognition can make up for the lack of understanding that is evidenced by a life that is lived in violation of the precepts of the Lord.

People who fear the Lord appreciate creation but worship the Lord. People who worship created things are either lacking in understanding or are living in rebellion. The righteous ponder and appreciate what wonders God has done in creating such a world as this. Only fools can look at the complexity of created life and not see that a very intelligent being created it. The very laws of science demand that there is a God who is also creator. It is a recognized law of science that all things move from order to disorder. Without the involvement of an intelligent being, disorder never moves toward order. Order is a not natural phenomenon; it is achieved by the work of an intelligent being. A bird takes sticks, feathers or what ever else it can find and arranges them into a comfortable nest, lays fertilized eggs, sits on them until offspring appear, then takes great care to nurture and protect them until one day they are grown enough and strong enough to fly away into a life of their own. There is an order here, but the order is the result of the life within the mother bird. In the presence of life wonderful and mysterious things occur. It has been said that if you take a handful of marbles and throw them on a perfectly flat surface, they will never form a geometrical shape without an intelligent life arranging them into one.

A great scientist was once asked what the odds were that the theory of evolution was correct. His response was report to have been, take an elephant tusk and throw it into the air and have it come down the keys of a grand piano, that is about the same odds that is involved in the theory of evolution. Selling the idea to fallen man is not that difficult if a person is a sinner and loves his sin. He will object greatly to the idea that there is a God to whom he must give an account of himself. Any plausible sounding answer will do even if it only creates reasonable doubt. Those who find it impossible to explain God away will turn to the idea that there are a variety of religious options to chose from and that it really doesn't matter which one you chose to follow because they are all in effect worshipping the same God. This idea seems comfortable to them because only the Judeo/Christian beliefs require holiness of life and character.

Christianity is the most objectionable belief to the worldly-wise individuals because it excludes all other belief systems as being fraudulent and a deception. Those who have embraced a false concept of God have taken great comfort in the idea that what they have believed in is okay, but if what Jesus taught is in fact the truth, they are in big trouble. There are religions that sound very good to the ears of fallen men because they embrace some very wise sounding precepts, and in some cases they are taught to do wonderful humanitarian works, but there is no redemptive work in them. The lie that we can build a tower into heaven was given birth to at the Tower of Babel and is still popular today with a slight revision. It's not stones or physical building materials that are used today, but rather charitable deeds that are believed to compensate for the sins one does.

Some people have a deep rooted sense of insecurity and guilt feeling so they look for a religion that either has strict rules and regulations to live by or provides the opportunity to try to atone for the wrong things they have done.

True Christianity teaches that no amount of effort can atone for even one sin we have done, but rather all humanity lies under the curse of death and will spend eternity in separation from

God and all that is good. But wait, it also teaches that the love of God has provided for a grand redemptive work that cancels all sins in response to a simple faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. No humanitarian works, no fine sounding rituals, no learning a complex system of teachings, no righteous acts or self-abasing deeds, none of those things are needed to atone for even one sin, only faith in the shed blood of Jesus, a true redemptive work, done by God himself in our behalf.

Of all the wonders of God that can be pondered—his acts of creation, his care for creation and his righteousness—it is his compassionate love expressed in the provision of redemption that is so endearing!

The Psalm is concluded with the phrase, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

To him belongs eternal praise.” (Psalms 111:10)

The fear that is spoken of here is not dread of God, the idea that he is somehow looking for a reason to consign us to eternal hell, but rather this fear of God has to do with an awesome respect based on the knowledge of his character, his awesome power, and his compassionate nature. David saw what few people before him ever saw or understood, the unfailing love of God that has made a provision for repentant sinners. David availed himself of the grace of God, seeing his unworthiness, he repented of his sinful ways. God, being the loving Father that he is, had to discipline David for his sins, but at the same time David desired to be the apple of his eye.

The scriptures are filled with examples of how people who were not particularly worthy of notice were taken into God’s loving care because they had a quality of character that was useful in the kingdom of God. It is a wonderful thing to be blessed with the attentive eye of the Lord being upon us. We should never take our relationship with God for granted because; to do so will lead to a careless lifestyle and potentially disastrous consequences.

## **Chapter One Hundred-thirteen**

### **The Righteous Always Win in the End**

#### **Psalm 112**

This Psalm is an acrostic poem, the lines of which start with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD.

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,  
who finds great delight in his commands.

<sup>2</sup>His children will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

<sup>3</sup>Wealth and riches are in his house,  
and his righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup>Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

<sup>5</sup>Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,  
who conducts his affairs with justice.



- <sup>6</sup> Surely he will never be shaken;  
a righteous man will be remembered forever.
- <sup>7</sup> He will have no fear of bad news;  
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
- <sup>8</sup> His heart is secure, he will have no fear;  
in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
- <sup>9</sup> He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,  
his righteousness endures forever;  
his horn will be lifted  
high in honor.
- <sup>10</sup> The wicked man will see and be vexed,  
he will gnash his teeth and waste away;  
the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

Some people live in the dread of what Satan is doing. They see him as being such a cunning and resourceful enemy that they have to constantly do battle against him. They take great pride in being a target of Satan because somehow it seems to them to validate who they are! There is a part of our fallen natures that wants to be a savior to someone else, or to be seen to be a great one, and in some cases, even a person of whom prophetic scriptures speak. People who have been prophetic fulfillments are not people who have sought to be, but rather are people who prophetic roles have sought out. There is a law in the kingdom of God that says that if we are to be great we must become the servant of all. Servants aren't people who seek greatness, but rather, opportunities to serve. When, while serving others greatness happens, that is not by their decree.

The Christian's attention should always be upon what Jesus is doing, granted however; Satan always bears watching. It is true that Satan is a crafty, cunning enemy, but sometimes he gets far to much glory. Some people are quick to blame him for all their problems not realizing that problems happen, that is the condition of this world, but Satan's attacks are upon the mind, heart and attitude of people as a result of the problems. I have said that it is after something has gone wrong that Satan attacks. He tries to capitalize on events that have the power to challenge us.

Righteous people have the right to live in peace under the protection of the Holy Spirit. The mighty kingdom of God is all about the righteous and when Satan tries to mess with God's people all it does is bring more power to bear upon the righteous and the attention of the Lord becomes increasingly more intense resulting in greater breakthroughs and blessings than would have been had Satan left them alone! If I declare that Satan is a hopeless addict to stupidity; that is somehow an understatement. I suppose the reason that he persists is because too many Christians are ignorant of the great and mighty kingdom of God and as a result when some challenging event happens they resort to carnal impulses that play into the hands of Satan. Satan is only a powerful opponent when we try to challenge him in our fallen nature. Jesus is the conqueror, and Christians who trust in him will not allow Satan's lies to upset them. Here is some good advice, focus your attention on Jesus and don't worry so much about Satan.

This Psalm is a portrait of contrast between what happens to people who trust in the Lord as opposed to those who are evil. When the wicked see that the righteous do well because God is blessing them; they are vexed. Evil people seem to feel that they are the ones who should do the best, probably because they see righteousness as simply rules that when obeyed would restrict them from accomplishing what they want to accomplish. If they cheat and then win, they feel that cheating was good. When in the long term; those who do what is right, work hard and play by the rules, win the big rewards; then the wicked get very upset. Many people try the short road to what they deem to be success, but in the end they pay the consequence for their misguided actions.

The righteous know that no matter what happens in this world, they win because heaven stands with open gates for them to enter into the joys of their Lord.

# Chapter One Hundred-fourteen

## Psalm 113

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore. <sup>3</sup> From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. <sup>5</sup> Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, <sup>6</sup> who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

<sup>7</sup> He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; <sup>8</sup> he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. <sup>9</sup> He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

What praise rises to the throne of God when the people of the earth see the Lord doing great things for his people. How God enjoys doing good things for those who are in need, and appreciate what he does.

When people love God and receive whatever he gives them with thanksgiving and joy, the heart of God is moved to do more and more for them.

When people are demanding and spoiled in their attitudes, thinking that God owes them some kind of blessing, they often go unrewarded. Such people become disillusioned with the Lord and decide to go it alone, thinking that either God doesn't care or that there isn't anything to Christianity after all. I have witnessed the evil fruit of the teachings of some teachers of what I call "hyper-faith" that leads people to believe that God is just waiting around for them to ask for him to perform some miracle or do some healing or give them some financial thing that they desire. There are plenty of gullible people who will listen because their itching ears want to hear about a servant that will enter their life that will give them whatever they want. What better servant to have than God?

Again, God loves to do good things for his children, but when those who suppose themselves to be his children are full of self-will, greed, and selfish desires, God is pushed out of the picture. God has a servant heart, as our Lord demonstrated so beautifully in his life and teachings, but he is no man's slave. God never surrenders his position of divine authority, nor does he give his glory to another. When we come to God as dear children making our requests within the framework of a love relationship, God is often moved to do what it is we want. Always when God responds to a request we make, his response will be conditioned by his love for us. If he sees we need a no answer, he will say no. God is not a miser, nor is he sadistic, but he will not give us a serpent in our life if we ask for bread. Sometimes we think something would be bread for us, but God sees a serpent in the proposed answer. It would be a violation of his heart of love to give us what we asked for.

Satan also presents himself to people as an alternate god servant. "Serve me," he says, "and I will give you the kingdoms of this world." Sometimes he comes to people disguised as a friend, or a potential lover. At other times he will come as a business associate who wants to make a deal, but hidden in the deal is the hook of Satan waiting for the opportunity to draw us away from the Lord.

There are those whose hearts are pure with regard to their desire to worship the Lord. That is what they desire to do, just worship him and serve him because they love him. They demand nothing in return outside what benefits come from such a relationship. They want to be where God is at, do what God is in, and be what God wants them to be. These are true servants of the Lord, and they are precious in his sight.

These individuals praise God just because they love him. When he does something special for them, they praise him for it. They don't complain about adversity, but they rejoice in blessings. These are the people that God elects to be his special people.

Sinners want everything that God gives his blessed people but they can't have these blessings because their sinful hearts have rejected the very path that brings blessings. I am convinced that if sinners could see heaven and all the blessings the righteous will receive eternally, they would do anything required to get in on it. The problem is that what is required is what they are unwilling to give. Their greed for blessing prevents them from being blessed.

Those who are recipients of blessing are often those who are the "little people" of the world. It is a fact that those who are happiest with what they receive from the Lord are the ones with the lowest expectations. Some ministers make efforts to raise the expectation level in people so that they can begin to reach for more in their lives. I suppose there is some wisdom in that, if people are beat down and wounded to the point where the reason for their low expectations is that they don't feel they are worthy of blessings.

One of the benefits of salvation has to do with healing the broken hearted. This is an important part of the process but if God sees a latent greed, it may slow the process because if God blesses some people it only stimulates the fallen nature.

God wants us to praise him in all things, in every kind of circumstance, because this indicates a very healthy relationship with God. There are some people who have low expectations because they simply see more than most people see. They see a kingdom that is not of this world and their hearts are filled with wonderment waiting on the Lord to do what is in his heart to do. Their interests are focused upon the kingdom of God that is being formed in the hearts of people and their joy is in seeing others blessed and growing in the Lord. When God gives them some special blessing, their heart felt response is, "Lord, thank you, but you didn't have to do that!" They love the Lord without being blessed just as much as they love him being blessed because their relationship is not based on divine performance but rather on love.

Praise is a natural and spontaneous response to the presence of the Lord in the heart of the righteous. The righteous praise the Lord when the sun come up, they praise him when it sets, and they rejoice in the fact that all is well because God is always in ultimate charge of everything that happens whether good or bad. They never fear Satan, nor are they concerned about evildoers, because they know that God is greater, and the power of the Holy Spirit is greater, and the power of the great and mighty kingdom of God is greater than anything that can come their way.

So praise him in the morning, praise him at noonday and praise him in the evening, and when you lay your head down for rest, praise him for his mighty works for he is worthy of our praise.

## **Chapter One Hundred-fifteen**

### **When God is Present even Nature Obeys Him**

#### **Psalm 114**

<sup>1</sup> When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, <sup>2</sup> Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

<sup>3</sup> The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back; <sup>4</sup> the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

<sup>5</sup> Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back, <sup>6</sup> you mountains, that you skipped like rams, you hills, like lambs?

<sup>7</sup> Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, <sup>8</sup> who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.

Some friends of ours who live in Nevada lived on a parcel of ground on the side of a hill. One winter there was a very heavy rain that caused a flood of water to come down the hillside and it was heading strait for their home. They prayed for God's protection and the water parted just above their home and only a little debris was left on the hillside at the top of their property at the corner of the parcel. Their home was safe and God received the glory.

Many such stories can be told of divine protection. Sometimes it is a story of changed plans or circumstances arising that alter one's course so that what could have happened or would have happened, didn't happen.

The Psalmist asked the question, "Why was it, O sea, that you fled," and continues asking about the Jordan River that stopped flowing and why even the mountains seemed to skip in rejoicing as the people of God entered the land. What is it that causes cancers to die and disappear, ears to open, eyes that were blind to see again? What caused the feet of a boy that were turned around backward to straighten in the hands of a healing minister I witnessed as a youth? All creation is subject to the power of God and obeys when he commands. Jesus stood at the bow of a little boat in the midst of the Sea of Galilee and simply said, "Peace, be still," and the water became calm. Is there anything too hard for God? When he is in charge, we can rest in peace. When Satan is opposing and the battle rages, we rest in the knowledge that the battle is the Lord's and he is able to handle Satan and his ragtag little group of demons just fine. Satan tries to create the illusion that he is somehow winning in this battle between good and evil, but it is only an illusion.

The boat of our life is sometimes on a stormy sea; we, however, can rest knowing that we are secure when Jesus is in our boat with us, (and he is if we have received him into our heart and life.)

If we are going to fear, fear God. Satan is not worthy of our fear, nor is he worthy of our attention. The less we worry about Satan and what he can do, and the more we focus upon what Jesus is doing, the stronger we become.

While Jesus was here on earth in the flesh, he concentrated upon pleasing his Father and never complained that he was unable to do whatever needed to be done. The will of the Father was always possible to accomplish, and he was always faithful in its pursuit. Jesus never appealed for money nor did he worry that there wouldn't be enough. Life and people operated on a simple plain of endeavor and their personal needs were minimal. Today, things are very much more complex as a result of the development of an industrialized society. As new developments occur, so do the possibilities. It's more complicated to live today, but God's capacity to supply is also just as equal to the task as ever! When we focus upon doing the Father's will, we find that life becomes simpler rather than more complex. The reason is that what we deem to be our needs have to do with desires more than actual needs.

## Chapter One Hundred-Sixteen

## Glory Belongs to the Lord

### Psalm 115

<sup>1</sup> Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

<sup>2</sup> Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" <sup>3</sup> Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

<sup>4</sup> But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; <sup>6</sup> they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; <sup>7</sup> they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. <sup>8</sup> Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

<sup>9</sup> O house of Israel, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield. <sup>10</sup> O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield. <sup>11</sup> You who fear him, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, <sup>13</sup> he will bless those who fear the LORD— small and great alike.

<sup>14</sup> May the LORD make you increase, both you and your children. <sup>15</sup> May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

<sup>16</sup> The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man. <sup>17</sup> It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence; <sup>18</sup> it is we who extol the LORD, both now and forevermore.

Praise the LORD.

Let all glory be ascribed to the Lord! He is the one who causes the conditions to exist that produce blessing! When nations grow strong and people prosper, it is because he has caused the right conditions to abound that bring about increase of goods. When people live with God as their protector and provider, they increase in numbers and become strong both physically and spiritually.

How foolish the heathen are, trusting in a God that is the work of their hands! Equally foolish are those who create a god using their imagination and devise precepts around their imaginary god.

The Psalmist encourages people to trust the Lord, whether priest or citizen, small or great, everyone should trust the Lord! Those who trust the Lord will also praise the Lord while among the living on the earth. Dead bodies cannot praise the Lord so praise must be given while we are among the living. .

God is the maker of heaven and earth; therefore, he is worthy of our praise! Why not praise God? We wouldn't exist without him. Do you love the great out-of-doors? Do you like traveling to beautiful places and do you enjoy the adventure of exploring places previously unknown to you? It is God who made what you enjoy, and he did it for your benefit and pleasure, but in the enjoyment of it, don't forget it is God who made what you are enjoying!

Sometimes we travel the world over, see the wonders of creation and view the sights of the remains of generations long ago. We witness the customs and sometimes strange beliefs of people who are still held in chains of darkness and suppressed by tyrants. We long to assist them and to share our knowledge with them, but sometimes the task seems overwhelming, because darkness is a condition of the soul and light is blocked from entry by centuries of false teachings and traditions that are deeply implanted into their spirits. We marvel that they can believe in the teachings of men like unto themselves, who are also sinners and have died without hope because they found no redemptive power in their beliefs. Sometimes they trust in idols and the paraphernalia of some superstitious practitioner who is equally in chains of darkness.

The problem is as old as the history of fallen men. As long as people have lived having rejected the knowledge of the Lord God, they have wandered in darkness of heart and their superstitious minds have devised all sorts of ideas about an alternative god. Some misdirected scholars have misinterpreted the artifacts they have found and studied that have revealed the existence of strange beliefs and have also studied the beliefs of the Hebrews and wrongly

concluded that they borrowed beliefs from the heathen and refined them. They see what we see as a progressive revelation as simply being an evolutionary process. They admit that what the Hebrews believed was far superior to the beliefs of the heathen but are reluctant to admit that the process began with a pure understanding and deteriorated among the heathen as a result of their rejection of the truth. The very teachings of science that embraces evolutionary beliefs also admits that all things are in a process of decay and dying when the spirit of life is not present. Everything moves from order to chaos where there is no intervention from a superior being to govern it.

The teachings of the scriptures are clear, there is a God in heaven, who is interested in human beings and has given us guidance in the form of commandments and precepts that are for the purpose of enabling us to live productive and happy lives while on earth.

## Chapter One Hundred-Seventeen

### Dying to Sin

#### Psalm 116

<sup>1</sup> I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. <sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

<sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!"

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. <sup>6</sup> The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.

<sup>7</sup> Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.

<sup>8</sup> For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, <sup>9</sup> that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. <sup>10</sup> I believed; therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted." <sup>11</sup> And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars."

<sup>12</sup> How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? <sup>13</sup> I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. <sup>14</sup> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

<sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. <sup>16</sup> O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains.

<sup>17</sup> I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, <sup>19</sup> in the courts of the house of the LORD— in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD.

Do we love the Lord? Why do we love the Lord? The Psalmist says that he loved the Lord because when he cried to him for mercy, he granted it. I love the Lord, but my reason may be somewhat different at this time. In the course of time in my life, I have called upon the Lord on many occasions and he has heard my cry and saved me from the awful circumstances that threatened me. My love for the Lord has increased over the years but I have to say that it has grown in direct proportion to the revelations of his character and nature. The goodness of God to me has been evidenced in so many ways that to recount them would be an effort in futility. Some people think that seeing God do a miracle of healing is the ultimate blessing, but for me seeing some scripture in the light of divine revelation is my greatest joy. The reason is that in every new

insight, that are not new at all, only new to me, I see some aspect of the love, grace, mercy and holiness of God. I witness his faithfulness and love in the things he does and every new insight gives me greater appreciation for this God I serve.

The Psalmist evidently had been at death's door, but when he cried to the Lord, his life was given back to him. This may have been a miraculous healing, or it could have just been the strength to recover, but whichever, the Psalmist saw the hand of God in it. He was very grateful and his gratitude inspired the words, "I love the Lord." He then instructs his soul to be at rest, because the Lord has delivered him.

Have you ever been in a situation that made you feel that, in the natural, all hope is gone? If so, then you know a little of how the Psalmist felt. He felt the cords of death upon him, but his hope was in the Lord. In the midst of his affliction, which he didn't deny, he cried to the Lord because he believed in him.

True faith does not require that we deny our difficulties! Christian Science teaches people to deny their problems, but true Christianity embraces the problem, faces it and calls it what it is, and then takes it in its ugliness and gives it to God who is full of compassion and love for his children. God is the God of Truth. Denying our problems, pains or sorrows is not only dishonest but is downright foolish. Some people think that they have to work up a healing or miracle by some kind of super faith, but I have a different view of things.

I read that faith is the substance of things hoped for—the evidence of things not seen. What are the things hoped for that are not seen? Is this not the kingdom of God? Isn't our hope the blessed hope that reaches beyond the parameters of this world and this life? If faith is of the substance of the eternal kingdom of God, then true faith has the very substance of heaven in it! Faith is then heaven sent and has heavenly substance and character. The problem that many people have is that what they hope for is not heavenly in nature, but rather, earthy and temporal. The great champions of faith were people who lived on earth with heaven in their hearts. When heaven is in our hearts we can smile at the storms of life and say to the storm "peace, be still," and the quiet serenity of the Holy Spirit calms our fears, quiets our emotions, heals our broken bodies, and provides what is needed in our lives. True faith allows us to pray big prayers to our God who is a very big God in the sense that he is absolutely unlimited in power, love, compassion and holiness.

The people of the kingdom are people whose vision is fixed upon what is heavenly in substance, eternal in character, and yet finds expression in the temporal world in how life is lived, what desires motivate and what values are held. A Christian is the merge point of heaven and earth. That is to say, heavenly vision is played out in how divinely given love, joy and peace effect people's lives and the lives of those around them. Heavenly substances of Holy Spirit power are vested in the lives of the recipients of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and life thereafter takes on the added dimension that power from on high brings into the now of our lives. We now drink freely from the cup of salvation, and live in the eternal atmosphere of victory over what is destroying the lives of the unregenerated people of the world.

The Psalmist goes on to say that the death of the righteous is precious in the eyes of the Lord. In New Testament thought this could be taken in the natural sense or in the spiritual sense, or more accurately in both. Natural death comes to all mankind, but there is a death that only the righteous experience. The death of which I speak is the death to the fallen nature and it is a voluntary death that is embraced by those who have responded to the call of the Spirit to live lives on earth while being touched by heaven. The evidence of the reality of such a divine connection is the fruit that is evidenced in the life of the recipient. What the scriptures teach in essence is, no fruit of the Spirit, no divine connection. Truly, the death of the saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord, and in our eyes as well. The resultant love, joy and peace make life a very fulfilling experience and when one closes their eyes in natural death there is a joy and serenity that fills the atmosphere. Where there is distress and pain in the heart of ungodly people, there is peace in the hearts of those who witness the departure of a saint of God.

Those who have been touched by the heavenly gift proclaim “O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains.” (Psalms 116:16) The chains of the fallen nature are very real, but death to the fallen nature frees us from their grip. While in this present body, we have the ability to choose whether to deem the fallen nature dead and to live after the Spirit, or to continue on living satisfying the fallen flesh nature. Those who live after the flesh will of the flesh, unfortunately, reap corruption. The price of compromise is a great one, but the temptations are all about us. There is a remedy however; it is to seek the Lord and to put on the whole armor of God. When we live our lives in the heavenly atmosphere, we will find the strength to deem the old nature dead and seek expressions of the new nature that has come from God.

The death of the saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord because it is a liberating experience. Once we have passed from death unto life—and that is what dying to the flesh is—we are free of the chains of darkness that have held us captive.

Once the power of sin has been broken in our lives, it is cause for rejoicing. Praise the Lord, Praise him when the sun comes up in the morning and when it sets in the evening. Praise him all the day through for his constant care and companionship. Praise him when your joy is challenged by adverse conditions and events, praise him when men say all manner of evil against you. Praise the Lord!

## **Chapter One Hundred-Eighteen**

### **Praise the Lord**

#### **Psalm 117**

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. <sup>2</sup>For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.  
Praise the LORD.

Sometimes all that needs to be said is, praise the Lord! Anyone who fails to give praise to the Lord is not worthy of life. The reason for such a statement is simply that life comes from God, and the very fact of our existence is evidence of his existence. The notion that all of this came about without there being a God is so absurd it is hardly worthy of mention.

Every time we take a breath of air, we are reminded that we couldn't live on this planet without the air we breath. Why should there be air? Why not some poisonous gas? Why should there be substance when in reality substance is really electronics. There is a universe within each molecule, and a universe of stars above us. We are made up of universes so small that the most sophisticated instruments are needed to discern them, and to see the most distant stars we need the help of sophisticated instruments.

There is order within, and order all around us, and yet man is a so rebellious that he declares there is no God! Despite our rebellion and evil hearts, God makes sure the earth stays in its orbit, and the earth is watered so that life can exist. When our way of life is threatened we call upon God who is rich in mercy and kindness even when we don't deserve it.



# Chapter One Hundred Nineteen

## Give Thanks to the Lord

### Psalm 118

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." <sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever." <sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the LORD say: "His love endures forever."

<sup>5</sup> In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. <sup>6</sup> The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? <sup>7</sup> The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.

<sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. <sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

<sup>10</sup> All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. <sup>11</sup> They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. <sup>12</sup> They swarmed around me like bees, but they died out as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

<sup>13</sup> I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me. <sup>14</sup> The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!" <sup>16</sup> The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

<sup>17</sup> I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. <sup>18</sup> The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

<sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. <sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; <sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>25</sup> O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. <sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. <sup>27</sup> The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

<sup>29</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Anguish be gone, because the Love of the Lord endures forever! Let the ministers say, his love endures forever. Let the people say, his love endures forever. Let the whole world declare, his love endures forever!

The Lord delivers us from the bondage of fear, because he is always with us. What power can prevail against us when God is with us? Satan's power is neutralized by the Spirit's power. Like pouring a neutralizing agent on acid, so the power of the Holy Spirit neutralizes the power of temptation. When temptation is upon us, we can turn our attention upon the Lord and meditate upon his love and goodness to us, and as we worship and praise him with a request for deliverance, we find that Satan flees before the power of God. God is more than a resource to turn to, however; he is an abiding friend. When temptations seem overwhelming, he is there to give us strength for the asking, and many times shields from what might otherwise become irresistible.

Satan is never a friend to anyone. If it seems so, remember he is the master of deception. His motives are well known; he wants to destroy our souls. There is no sin worth losing one's soul for. Satan wears many disguises, pleasure being one often used. He also comes disguising

himself as a friend who will listen and sympathize with us when we have reason to fear, hate, or feel discouraged. If we will dialogue with Satan or some person who will listen and enter into the spirit of evil with us, he will lead us along the path of despair. If you want to lose sight of hope, enter into thoughts or conversations about how bad your life is. Look at the negative and hope will soon die.

Look at God and think about his love and power to save, and hope is born and nurtured. As hope grows strong, so does faith. Faith looks up to God who is above our problems and who listens to our cry for help. He intervenes in our behalf in a multitude of ways, sometimes showing us an answer that was there all the while, but we were blinded to by our negative thoughts. Some people even reject God's answer because it isn't what they thought it should be. When our hearts are fully opened to the voice of the Spirit, we will see what we couldn't see before. It is at that point when we have received divine instruction that we look upon our enemy "despair" in triumph, having received our answer from the Lord.

The Psalmist declared that it is better to trust the Lord than to trust in man, a truth all too often ignored if not forgotten. In the rush of life it is easy to trust what we can touch and see rather than to trust what cannot be seen.

There is power in the name of the Lord and the Psalmist found that that power was equal to every challenge. Going forth in the name of the Lord is the road to sure victory.

While visiting in India, the group I was with was asked to go cast the evil spirits out of a house in a village because it had become uninhabitable. I remember the fear that was present with some of the brothers who were natives. They were obviously uncomfortable with the situation, but someone started singing, "In the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, demons will have to flee," and with gusto all of us began to sing. When we entered singing by the power of the name of Jesus, faith grew strong and so did the awareness of our authority. The command was given and the victory was evidenced by the peace of God that fell upon that once demon infested dwelling.

Such is the power in the name of Jesus. Wherever demons are known to dwell, God's power is able to drive them out when faith in Jesus is established and those so afflicted embrace his authority. I have learned that the favorite dwelling place of demon spirits is in the fallen nature of man. The fallen nature is so compatible with demonic activity that they are able to do their destructive work unimpeded. Light is Satan's worst enemy, the light of divine truth that is. This is why he is so opposed to the preaching of the word of God. When people discover that the anguish they feel is from Satan, they turn to Jesus to save them and to bring peace into their lives. What joy there is in serving Jesus when we finally learn that all the bad stuff we have put up with was from Satan. He is the enemy of love, joy and peace! After all is said and done, isn't that what everyone is really looking for.

In life we experience the ebbs and flows of all sorts of challenges to our peace. The Psalmist declared that he was push back and was about to fall, but that the Lord was his strength and his salvation.

Shouts of joy and victory are heard in the camp of the saints. If you don't believe it, visit a praise and worship service where people who have been set free worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

The Lord's right hand has done mighty things, the Psalmist declared, but when Jesus cast out demons and did mighty works it was said to be the finger of God! Sometimes Christians are over impressed with the power of Satan, but compared to God, the mightiest works of Jesus only took the finger of God!

The Psalmist evidently had been very close to death but the Lord had raised him up. It was revealed to him that what had happened to him was meant as chastisement and not as a death sentence. Sometimes we go through a valley of the shadow of death, but when we know that he is with us, we have no fear. If what is happening to us is chastisement, he will reveal it to be such, but in my judgment, most sickness is caused by other than chastisement.

Some people think that Satan is the cause of sickness, and I suppose that is true in the indirect sense, though I do not rule out that Satan does at times cause sickness. I do believe however, that Satan gets far too much credit for what happens to people. He is definitely to blame in an indirect sense, in that, it is Satan that tempts people to do stupid things, to act in ways that causes harm both to themselves and others, and to indulge in sinful practices that expose them to the danger of accidents and diseases. Germs and viruses are the cause of most sicknesses, but bad behavior can definitely put us at great risk that God never intended for us to face. There are many life-threatening conditions that are directly related to some form of sinful indulgence.

Sickness entered the world as a result of sinful living, and was sent by God as judgment. Satan was not the creator of germs or viruses or any other form of disease that attacks from without. There is some reason to question concerning genetic disorders and it is a valid question whether there might be some demonic interference that disrupts the genetic code or interferes with the communication systems of the body sending wrong instructions to the formation of cells within the body causing weakness or deformity to some part of the body.

Some of the damage done to the systems of the body is the result of chemistry. This is not always related to a sinful indulgence, but rather the result of living in a world polluted by what man has created.

It doesn't matter what the reason is, God is still our healer, and when we turn to him in faith believing, we can expect help both in the form of healing and in wisdom to know how to treat certain conditions.

The privilege of the righteous is to dwell in the safety of a relationship with God. No one is excluded from entering into a life of righteous living. Whatever the past record of our life is, God has made a provision whereby we may enter into a life of righteousness. The Psalmist refers to the gate of righteousness through which we may enter. The reason we may enter is that he has become our salvation.

The next verse is somewhat a mystery verse because it refers to something that most people would be unfamiliar with. It is believed by some that this is a reference to the great pyramid of Egypt. Since the Israelites had spent four hundred years in Egypt, they were undoubtedly familiar with the pyramids. They may have even participated in the construction of some of them. In any case, there was a belief that the great pyramid had been built according to some divinely given revelation and was a physical diagram of the history of mankind. A Christian archeologist spent the majority of his adult years in Egypt studying this pyramid. What he concluded from his study of ancient Egyptian writing was, that the pyramid measurements were extremely precise and that a measurement was used called the pyramid inch. It is an exact unit based on the diameter of the earth. It is so exact that it wasn't until the modern space program and the resultant measurements of the earth that its accuracy was discovered. It is slightly different from the standard inch used in the USA.

There is another very interesting observation made that has to do with the verse of scripture before us here in Psalms 118:22-23. In his studies he found that all the dimensions in the pyramid had been reduced by a mathematical factor known as the sin factor. The sin factor had affected all that was portrayed in the pyramids construction. As he studied the pyramid he found that it contained passageways whose length was determined by the number of years that it represented. He found junction points that were points of history that coincided with the length of time from the fall of man to the giving of the law and then an ascending passageway that represented the age of the law. At the end of the ascending passageway was a stone that represented the life of Christ, it was triangular in shape and marked the year of his birth, the beginning of his ministry and his death. There were many more features that may or may not be understandable, and the reliability of all that is contained in it is subject to question since the Egyptians were steeped in heathenistic practices.

The bit about the capstone is of particular interest however, because it has an interesting point to it. As I noted all the dimensions in the pyramid were reduced by the sin factor but when they

came to the capstone that represented Christ, they couldn't apply it. This meant that it wouldn't fit the structure it was supposed to sit on since it would stick out on all sides. The builders therefore rejected it and the result was that the pyramid was left for centuries with a flat top. The pyramid was originally covered with polished marble stones and was a very beautiful sight to behold. The outer stones were stripped away in later years by invading armies, leaving it as it is today. According to what is known about it, the capstone was never put on it. Peter tells us that the stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone of the church of Jesus Christ! In a pyramid it is said that the capstone is also the cornerstone as all sides converge into one point. And so it is that Christ is the point from which all the church descends! In the church, the capstone is the cornerstone.

I feel that it is a mistake to put too much emphasis upon any particular feature of the pyramid due to the fact that demonic activity may have influenced some of the features in it. I do however see that God inspired this reference to it because it teaches an important truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next comes a very familiar scripture, "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalms 118:24)

Each day is special in the eyes of the Lord. Each day brings new opportunities that have never been before. Each day starts like a fresh page that history will be written upon. What we do with our new day is a decision we make, it is ours to invest wisely in or to squander if we will. Even those who must do the dictates of someone in authority over them have choices about their day. The decision to rejoice and be glad in the day that the Lord has made is a right choice. How we look upon our day sets the tone for all that will happen in that day. When we start a day with faith and an optimistic attitude, we are in a mindset that allows for good things to happen to us. Maintaining the attitude of optimism is a choice we make as well and that choice comes when the first challenge to a good attitude occurs.

In the town where I live, a railroad passes through town and when driving from one location to another crossing the tracks can be a problem. They have these switch engines that seem to love to torment those who need to cross the tracks, or so it seems. When you're in a hurry and need to get from one part of town to another quickly, it seems they can be painfully slow about clearing the tracks. It is difficult to be patient when it seems there is no good reason for the delay.

The other day I was at a very busy gas station, when a vehicle next to me was trying to leave. Another car entering pulled into his path of exit blocking him. The vehicle entering needed to go where this man was but there wasn't room enough now that he was blocking the path. I admit I thought some ugly thoughts about the intelligence level of the driver blocking the only path out. After making some previously unnecessary maneuvers, the driver seeking to exit finally was able to leave. I too left but my thoughts were still upon what I regarded as stupidity.

Farther down the road as I neared my house, the path I was traveling was blocked by a car sitting right in the middle of the street straddling the only two lanes of travel. He was also blocking the driveway of the car in front of me that wanted to turn into it. It seemed he was engaged in a conversation with someone and the rest of the world could wait. I was very tired having had a very grueling day to this point and waiting was not what I wanted to do. I saw a way around this situation but when I pulled out to take advantage of it he also decided to move and moved into my way. Finally I was on my way again, but knowing how these things work to challenge our peace, I knew I had done very poorly that day.

You see, I had just come from the DMV office where there was a long line of people waiting to transact some important business that the law requires be transacted. There were a number of employees and several workstations but only one was serving the public. Each person, it seemed took up at least several minutes of this lone person's time at the counter. We stood and stood and waited and waited. Finally after almost two hours of waiting I did my business and left that is when all this other also happened. This was the day the Lord had made for me, would I rejoice

and be glad in it? Things happen and usually I do better than I did that day, but then, most days are not that trying. Why do we do better one day than another?

From experience I have learned that maintaining a good attitude is a choice we make, but it is also much easier to do when we are rested, and feeling strong and good. It's when we are not feeling our best that we are the most vulnerable to making bad choices. I have also learned that I am in control of the attitude I choose and if I purpose to practice patience and love, my day will go better. I don't have to empower other people to affect my peace, but when I let their actions annoy me, I am empowering them to steal my peace. What I allowed to happen the day I described started with a critical attitude about the management at the DMV office, justifiable or not. I started empowering people around me to affect my attitude and love was nowhere to be found.

The verses of scripture before us are also the very verses quoted by the people who were with Jesus as he entered Jerusalem the day of his triumphal entry. We dare not overlook the prophetic significance of these words as they speak so precisely of Christ Jesus our Lord. Our mind go to the day he entered Jerusalem as we read beginning with verse nineteen,

“Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. <sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; <sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>25</sup> O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. <sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. <sup>27</sup> The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

<sup>29</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

These verses when read with the scene of his triumphal entry and all that was about to happen have special significance to Christians as we see Jesus in everything said here. He was entering the gate to bring salvation to people everywhere and he is also the gate through which all men must enter if they wish to have eternal life.

He was the stone the builders rejected, but he is also the capstone over all people everywhere. This day of salvation is the day the Lord has made, and we rejoice and are glad in it. We make our plea to the Lord for him to grant us success but the success we seek is the power to inherit eternal life. We, along with the people who escorted Jesus into the city of Jerusalem, say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.” We echo the words, “From the house of the LORD we bless you. <sup>27</sup> The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us.” The day he entered the city the scripture was fulfilled, “With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.” And so it was that as Jesus rode into Jerusalem the people danced and sang waving palm branches and laying them on the ground before him.

We bow before him to this day and declare with the Psalmist, “You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.”

The Psalm closes with the admonition, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

## Chapter One Hundred-twenty

## Blessed Law of the Lord

### Psalm 119

#### Aleph

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. <sup>3</sup> They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. <sup>4</sup> You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. <sup>5</sup> Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! <sup>6</sup> Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. <sup>7</sup> I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. <sup>8</sup> I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

#### Beth

<sup>9</sup> How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. <sup>10</sup> I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. <sup>11</sup> I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. <sup>12</sup> Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. <sup>13</sup> With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. <sup>14</sup> I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. <sup>15</sup> I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. <sup>16</sup> I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

#### Gimel

<sup>17</sup> Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your word. <sup>18</sup> Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. <sup>19</sup> I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. <sup>20</sup> My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. <sup>21</sup> You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed and who stray from your commands. <sup>22</sup> Remove from me scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes. <sup>23</sup> Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees. <sup>24</sup> Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

#### Daleth

<sup>25</sup> I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word. <sup>26</sup> I recounted my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees. <sup>27</sup> Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders. <sup>28</sup> My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. <sup>29</sup> Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me through your law. <sup>30</sup> I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws. <sup>31</sup> I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD; do not let me be put to shame. <sup>32</sup> I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

#### He

<sup>33</sup> Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. <sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. <sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. <sup>36</sup> Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. <sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. <sup>38</sup> Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared. <sup>39</sup> Take away the disgrace I dread, for your laws are good. <sup>40</sup> How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness.

#### Waw

<sup>41</sup> May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; <sup>42</sup> then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word. <sup>43</sup> Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws. <sup>44</sup> I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. <sup>45</sup> I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. <sup>46</sup> I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, <sup>47</sup> for I delight in your commands because I love them. <sup>48</sup> I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.

## Zayin

<sup>49</sup> Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. <sup>50</sup> My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. <sup>51</sup> The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law. <sup>52</sup> I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them. <sup>53</sup> Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken your law. <sup>54</sup> Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge. <sup>55</sup> In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law. <sup>56</sup> This has been my practice: I obey your precepts.

## Heth

<sup>57</sup> You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. <sup>58</sup> I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. <sup>59</sup> I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. <sup>60</sup> I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. <sup>61</sup> Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law. <sup>62</sup> At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. <sup>63</sup> I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. <sup>64</sup> The earth is filled with your love, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

## Teth

<sup>65</sup> Do good to your servant according to your word, O LORD. <sup>66</sup> Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. <sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. <sup>68</sup> You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees. <sup>69</sup> Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart. <sup>70</sup> Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law. <sup>71</sup> It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. <sup>72</sup> The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

## Yodh

<sup>73</sup> Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. <sup>74</sup> May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word. <sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me. <sup>76</sup> May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. <sup>77</sup> Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight. <sup>78</sup> May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts. <sup>79</sup> May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes. <sup>80</sup> May my heart be blameless toward your decrees, that I may not be put to shame.

## Kaph

<sup>81</sup> My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. <sup>82</sup> My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, "When will you comfort me?" <sup>83</sup> Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. <sup>84</sup> How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? <sup>85</sup> The arrogant dig pitfalls for me, contrary to your law. <sup>86</sup> All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause. <sup>87</sup> They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. <sup>88</sup> Preserve my life according to your love, and I will obey the statutes of your mouth.

## Lamedh

<sup>89</sup> Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. <sup>90</sup> Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. <sup>91</sup> Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. <sup>92</sup> If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. <sup>93</sup> I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. <sup>94</sup> Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts. <sup>95</sup> The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. <sup>96</sup> To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless.

## Mem

<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. <sup>98</sup> Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. <sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. <sup>100</sup> I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. <sup>101</sup> I have kept my feet from

every evil path so that I might obey your word. <sup>102</sup> I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. <sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! <sup>104</sup> I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

## Nun

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. <sup>106</sup> I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. <sup>107</sup> I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word. <sup>108</sup> Accept, O LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws. <sup>109</sup> Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. <sup>110</sup> The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. <sup>111</sup> Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. <sup>112</sup> My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.

## Samekh

<sup>113</sup> I hate double-minded men, but I love your law. <sup>114</sup> You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. <sup>115</sup> Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God! <sup>116</sup> Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed. <sup>117</sup> Uphold me, and I will be delivered; I will always have regard for your decrees. <sup>118</sup> You reject all who stray from your decrees, for their deceitfulness is in vain. <sup>119</sup> All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes. <sup>120</sup> My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

## Ayin

<sup>121</sup> I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors. <sup>122</sup> Ensure your servant's well-being; let not the arrogant oppress me. <sup>123</sup> My eyes fail, looking for your salvation, looking for your righteous promise. <sup>124</sup> Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. <sup>125</sup> I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes. <sup>126</sup> It is time for you to act, O LORD; your law is being broken. <sup>127</sup> Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, <sup>128</sup> and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.

## Pe

<sup>129</sup> Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them. <sup>130</sup> The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. <sup>131</sup> I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands. <sup>132</sup> Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. <sup>133</sup> Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. <sup>134</sup> Redeem me from the oppression of men, that I may obey your precepts. <sup>135</sup> Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees. <sup>136</sup> Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.

## Tsadhe

<sup>137</sup> Righteous are you, O LORD, and your laws are right. <sup>138</sup> The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy. <sup>139</sup> My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words. <sup>140</sup> Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. <sup>141</sup> Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts. <sup>142</sup> Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. <sup>143</sup> Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. <sup>144</sup> Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.

## Qoph

<sup>145</sup> I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, and I will obey your decrees. <sup>146</sup> I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes. <sup>147</sup> I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. <sup>148</sup> My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises. <sup>149</sup> Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your laws. <sup>150</sup> Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law. <sup>151</sup> Yet you are near, O LORD, and all your commands are true. <sup>152</sup> Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.

## Resh



<sup>153</sup> Look upon my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law. <sup>154</sup> Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise. <sup>155</sup> Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees. <sup>156</sup> Your compassion is great, O LORD; preserve my life according to your laws. <sup>157</sup> Many are the foes who persecute me, but I have not turned from your statutes. <sup>158</sup> I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word. <sup>159</sup> See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your love. <sup>160</sup> All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

## Sin and Shin

<sup>161</sup> Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word. <sup>162</sup> I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil. <sup>163</sup> I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your law. <sup>164</sup> Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws. <sup>165</sup> Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. <sup>166</sup> I wait for your salvation, O LORD, and I follow your commands. <sup>167</sup> I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly. <sup>168</sup> I obey your precepts and your statutes, for all my ways are known to you.

## Taw

<sup>169</sup> May my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word. <sup>170</sup> May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise. <sup>171</sup> May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees. <sup>172</sup> May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous. <sup>173</sup> May your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. <sup>174</sup> I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. <sup>175</sup> Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me. <sup>176</sup> I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

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## Aleph

All the laws of God are holy, all creation was formed in righteousness, and there was no flaw in it. Then came the serpent into the garden and as a result sin entered into the heart of man. Sin brought judgment and as a result all creation is in a state of chaos and rebellion. God in loving compassion gave us laws to define what righteous conduct is like and he gave us hope for a better life by giving us a redemptive message. David and the Psalmists had received an insight into the value of the law, and hope of eternal salvation filled their hearts.

The Apostle Paul declared that the law was perfect, but that he was not. Sin in his heart caused pain as the knowledge of the death of sin filled his mind and heart. Consternation resulted when he wanted to obey the commands of the Lord, but found that sin in him made its appeal and deceived him, and when he acted on the sin of his heart, his conscience smote him and the death of guilt and sorrow would fill his heart. The dilemma of failure caused him to search for an answer; then came the knowledge of Christ Jesus and a marvelous discovery was made that there is an answer to the sin problem. The redemptive work of the cross cleared the way for a relationship with the Holy Spirit and when he learned to live by the Spirit he no longer fulfilled the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, there is no condemnation to those who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. The Holy Spirit neutralizes the power of sin when we obey the principles of the Spirit filled life.

Psalms 119 is a celebration of the perfection and blessedness of the law and how the Psalmist loved it. He found the law brought him security in the knowledge that God would fight for him when enemies threatened him. He felt secure because he had not only embraced the law in a religious sense, but rather in the practical application sense. He actively sought to obey it and prayed for insight into the full meaning of its precepts so that he could obey it more perfectly.

One of the wonders of grace is that we who have come to Jesus are declared perfect, even before we have any understanding of the true meaning of the word. I admit that when I was a young Christian I had a very religious concept of what perfection was all about. I had the idea

that to be perfect was to walk around oblivious to the fact that sin existed in the world, and that any awareness of evil somehow meant that I was evil. I confused natural man with fallen man, and thought that natural nature and sin nature were one and the same. I had a hard time with the idea of deeming myself dead until I realized that it isn't the natural man that is an enemy of God but rather the sin in man. When I realized that deeming the sin nature dead was what God wanted, I was liberated to live a life of freedom from sin and a life full of the joy of the Lord. I found that the law of God was clear now in my mind, and my heart rejoiced in the love of righteousness. I learned that righteousness is not a religious term, but rather, it means rightness. When I learned that the laws of God were simply the definition of rightness, and that doing the right thing in every situation is the spirit of the law, I found that I was absolutely free as a Spirit filled believer and that love is a constant in every relationship.

I also learned that as I meditate upon the righteousness of Christ, I gain a clearer understanding of the true meaning of perfection. To know God is to understand righteousness.

When I realized, one day, that a perfect God took dirt and formed man in every detail of his anatomy and declared him good, I was amazed. God loved the man he had created, every atom, every molecule and every complex combination of cells. God created the nervous system, the digestive system, the blood cells and the circulation system, the DNA within the cells, and the spiritual aurora that makes it all work that we call the spirit of life. God also created the reproductive system, and after all was done, he said, "It is good."

God was not afraid of the physical dirt of the earth, but when he speaks of defilement, he uses dirt as a descriptive metaphor. Physical dirt does not defile a man spiritually, but sin does. Being dirty is something we instinctively draw back from and we desire to rid ourselves of it, especially after an activity that brings us into contact with dirt or filth. Christians often run to the Word like people rush to wash and even shower after an encounter with something especially dirty. The Word is likened unto water for its cleansing qualities. In front of the tabernacle was what was called the Laver that was a bowl they kept water in for washing because, sacrificing was a messy business.

Sacrificing was indeed a messy business because; it spoke of the method of lost mankind's atonement for sins and his restoration to fellowship with God. The law was given so that man could understand what it is that is righteous and unrighteous before God. It is the accurate measuring rod to measure all human behavior and activities to see if they are being held within the boundaries of true righteousness. In this age of Grace, we are not being held to the letter of the law in the same way that the Israelites were because the Law along with all its ordinances and rituals were to some extent types and shadows of what was to come. What is here now present is not so much a cancellation of the law, as it is a lifting of the law to the spiritual plain. The emphasis is not on the keeping of the letter of the law now, but rather, taking the very spirit of the commands into our inner being and making them a part of our worldview, our thought processes, or emotional makeup and our lifestyle.

Under the Law, men were to act righteously, but under Grace, men are to be righteous. This righteousness is produced in us by the power and working of the Holy Spirit who was with them before the death of Jesus, but now is in us as a result of his sacrificial death and our faith in him.

## **Beth**

In the second stanza called Beth, the Psalmist asks the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" Then the answer is given, "by living according to your word." How simply put, and how profound is truth!

The doing is not always as simple as the knowledge of the truth, so further instruction with a prayer is given, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands." The next statement is what his prayer is based upon; he had done his part. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

When we have done our part, we can expect God to do his part. How foolish it would be to pray to the Lord to deliver us from alcoholism if we are sitting in a bar lifting a glass to our lips. First get out of the bar; get rid of your alcohol and then pray for the strength to resist temptation and for healing from the addiction to alcohol. If we stay in the environment where temptation is at, we are being very foolish.

When we have done our part and God has answered by doing his part we can join the Psalmist in saying, “<sup>12</sup> Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. <sup>13</sup> With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. <sup>14</sup> I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. <sup>15</sup> I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. <sup>16</sup> I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.” (Psalms 119:9-16)

## **Gimel**

In the next stanza called Gimel, the Psalmist continues his prayer, “<sup>17</sup> Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your word. <sup>18</sup> Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. <sup>19</sup> I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.” How dependent we are upon the Lord!

When the Lord opens the eyes of our understanding, what once looked like an overwhelming temptation is neutralized by the power of truth. There is so much wisdom in the law of God and it is a marvel to behold.

We sometimes take the law of God for granted in this day, because; we forget that when God gave the law to Israel, they were living in a time when the heathen were engaging in some of the most gross practices one can imagine. Our culture has been greatly influenced by the law God gave Israel. Governments worldwide recognize the moral code of the Bible as the fundamental principles upon which good government must rest.

Granted not all governments that have laws against crimes recognize that their laws were God given or even honor the Lord, but that doesn't mean that the understanding isn't based on the knowledge that God gave about proper and acceptable human behavior.

The law that God gave Israel contained instructions about subjects that were light years ahead of the times in which they lived. There were instructions about diet, quarantine, cleanliness, improper sexual practices, how to treat your neighbor and his property, instructions about property markers and many such subjects, all of which made such profound sense, but they could only understand them in a religious sense because scientific knowledge was not yet developed.

The Psalmist was drawn to the wisdom of the Law but he didn't always understand the underlying reasons; thus, he said, “<sup>20</sup> My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.” Nor did they understand that what God did to those who rejected his wisdom was because violation of his laws has such a devastating effect upon both the present and the future.

The Psalmist knew that there was a penalty whether he understood the reasons or not, therefore he said, “<sup>21</sup> You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed and who stray from your commands. <sup>22</sup> Remove from me scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes. <sup>23</sup> Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees. <sup>24</sup> Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.” (Psalms 119:20-24)

## **Daleth**

Next we come to the stanza Daleth. Despite the Psalmist's feeling of desperation expressed as being in the dust, he still is able to make his appeal to God, and desires to be instructed in the precepts of the law and understands that meditating upon the wonders of God is where refreshing and strength come from. Sorrow is draining to the physical strength, and if we continue to sorrow we will become depressed and weary. The Psalmist realized that he had deceitful ways and wanted to be freed from them. He saw the law as being liberating; therefore, he chose to follow

the way of truth and believed that in keeping the law he would be set free. The wicked do not understand that keeping the law is liberating, but the Psalmist had, through sorrow and pain, come to that understanding, therefore; he found that in keeping the law he could now run on the path of liberty! If we could envision a well-defined path going through some very dangerous terrain, we could begin to see the picture that the Psalmist is speaking of. The law is like a boundary marker that keeps us away from what would certainly destroy us, but when we stay within the boundaries, we can run and play and do what is good and righteous without fear of consequences. What joy there is in knowing that we are doing what pleases the Lord!

The law was never intended to be seen as an unreasonable barrier to happiness and peace. Quite the contrary, the law was given by a loving caring God who wanted to protect us from the destructive power of sin. God is not man's enemy, Satan is. Righteous living is not confining to us except when the tempter is present lying to us about what it is he is offering. He tries his hardest to convince us that what he is offering is a little taste of heaven, but the result is that the bitter fruit of hell is what we get if we partake!

## **He**

In the stanza called He, the Psalmist finds another evil lurking in his fallen nature that is pulling him away from the path of liberty; it is selfish gain. We might not see selfish gain as being a problem in our walk with God, in fact some people see the desire for gain as some kind of spiritual blessing and seek God to give them possessions of the world to satisfy their craving for gain. Not only do they want to gain worldly goods, but also, they encourage others to do the same. They use the promises of God as a justification for greed, and wonder why their life is filled with contradictions.

I heard a preacher preaching about what a person can expect if they give to God, and said that they could expect, I think he said, a thousand times more than they gave. Now this is certainly true if we understand how God returns our gifts and giving. There are so many ways that God gives to his people, but a balance in a checking account is usually not the measure of blessing. Greed always wants to measure blessing that way, however. It is a good fundraising technique to dangle the carrot of financial prosperity before potential givers, but is that an honest thing to do? Gullible people will overspend and go into debt and then try to gain God's help by unwise giving in the hope that there will be a financial payoff to rid them of a debt they should never have made. People of the world sometimes do the same thing, only they go to a casino and gamble what little they have in the vain hope that there will be a financial payoff.

I cannot comment on the subject of covetousness without countering it with the truth that God will help us with our needs and desires to give us not only the necessities of life but also to give us some very enjoyable perks as well. There are people who are not greedy, but suffer financially because, they have never entered into a life of giving and receiving from God. There are others who are in the midst of crushing poverty that cannot give financially to God because they just don't have money to give.

It can be a very testing experience when you have been giving and giving out of a heart of pure love and compassion for others and then suddenly your own resources seem to dwindle and perhaps even stop coming to you, and you wonder why God is doing this to you? I have seen this happen to people, and some at least go through such times with peace in their hearts knowing that God is still their source of supply and that in the end he will direct them into whatever else is in store. Our relationship with God is not measured by the here and now, but some people are like the prodigal son Jesus talked about who wanted his inheritance from the father prematurely, and then spent it on excessive living. We are on a journey to heavens door, and while we are on this journey God will have to deal with many conditions of heart if we are to be pure in heart.

Just as blessing is not measured by possessions, neither is faith. Biblical faith is not the ability to believe in something or someone, it is a gift that God gives and is of the very substance

of heaven. It is this knowledge of real faith that caused the author of Hebrews to say that faith is the substance of things hoped for, but the question that follows is what is it we hope for? If our heart is full of greed, we will hope for a pot full of gold. I have often thought about Jesus when he turned water into wine. If he thought like the world thinks, couldn't he just as easily told them to fill them with gravel and they turned it into gold? Just think what would have happened at that feast if they had brought out gold nuggets instead of wine? If Jesus were a hero for changing water into wine, what would have happened if he had satisfied their greed?

There is a path where peace and love and joy are the constant companion of the righteous. These are in the heart of the righteous because God has granted to them the gift of faith. This gift of faith is not the kind of faith that twists the arm of God or carries on like a whining child, but rather is the ability to trust God with every problem and difficulty as well as the ability to accept the good things he sends our way. Those who live for the world focus upon what they don't have, or what they still want, but those who are full of peace focus upon what goodness is surrounding them even when it isn't always visible. The Psalmist desired to understand the precepts of the law and he asked God to preserve his life.

## **Waw**

As we follow the unfolding the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm from stanza to stanza, we see the heart of the Psalmist moving ever closer to the full richness of all that God has in store. As God deals with the issues of an unrighteous heart, he also reveals his unfailing love shown forth in the gift of salvation. This revelation is expounded in the stanza called Waw.

When we are passing through the dealings of God, we sometimes go through the valley of the shadow of death. This is what causes our hearts to change, our affections to reach heavenward, and brings forth the heavenly vision in us. The process is a true metamorphosis from being a child of the world to a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. Salvation takes on a meaning to those who have undergone the process that is beyond the thinking of those who have never tasted this dimension of divine relationship.

To many people who are just beginning their walk with God, salvation is an insurance policy guaranteeing safe passage into heaven when death comes to them. Salvation is more than a guarantee of safe passage, though it certainly is that, but it also is a covenant package containing the full spectrum of divine assurances regarding eternal life, health, wealth, a permanent home in heaven, a relationship with God as Father, a total sense of fulfillment that lacks any sense of want, a deep and abiding love with all the accompanying feelings of peace, overwhelming joy and much more. The greatest part of what we experience is the sense of total security in the knowledge that these qualities will never be removed from us because, they are all the stuff of heaven and are therefore eternal.

Gone forever are the tormenting lusts of the world that can never be satisfied no matter what achievements or possessions are attained. The Psalmist saw this, and prayed, "May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;" he knew that if that became the experience of his life, those who were making fun of him would look and see something that would forever silence them.

Once more the Psalmist refers to the peace that comes from obeying, not only the law, but also the precepts of the law. It is one thing to understand the letter of the law, and quite another to understand all the intricacies of applications and principles of the law. Coming to the point of understanding the full nature of the law, so that it can be properly interpreted, is the job of those who must apply the law; not only to their own lives, but also to the lives of those they govern. When a person assigned the responsibility of governing has fully explored and pondered all the ramifications of the law they must apply, they walk about in freedom.

Don't you enjoy speaking on a subject you fully understand? If you really know whereof you speak, there is a confidence that you will never be asked a question that will expose your

ignorance. The Psalmist was not a slave to the law, but rather spoke of his love for the commands of God that have produced the peace he is now experiencing. The Psalmist also said he lifts his hands to the law that he loves, and meditates on his decrees. I also have done this, that is, made a gesture of “yes”, as I have come into a deeper understanding of some point of divine principles.

## Yayin

The desire for long life is God given and the promise is also given that if we obey the word of the Lord we will enjoy long life. In the stanza Yayin, the Psalmist is reaching for this assurance that he bases upon his faithfulness to the commands of the Lord. There were those who realized the hopelessness of his predicament and mocked his stubborn determination to trust God for healing and restoration to life. There is a difference between someone who is testing God, acting in a presumptuous manner, declaring that God will do thus and so, but lacking the impetus of divine approval of their pursuit, and the person who has an ongoing relationship that has produced faith based upon that relationship.

Those who have established a relationship of faith and whose heart has been cleansed of selfish desires, when experiencing a testing time understand that it is always a good idea to properly determine whether an incident is a development of our ongoing relationship with God or an attack from the forces of evil.

There are times in the journey of Christians that Satan is allowed to attack us in some way, but it is because God is allowing it so that we can be strengthened or instructed in some greater truth that has been hidden from us.

The book of Job is an example of how God uses Satan to accomplish a purpose that Satan is ignorant of. Job was a righteous man, in fact, so righteous that God said he was perfect in all his ways. Satan accused Job of being righteous because, God had a protective hedge all around him and he was unable to really test him. One point in the story that we must not overlook is that it was God who brought up the subject to Satan. When Satan complained, God gave permission to Satan to make a move against Job. Satan seized the opportunity, and with vigor went all out to the limit of God’s permission.

It’s a horrifying story in the sense that Job experienced what few people experience. People with a lesser confidence in God would have turned their back on him and declared him a fraud!

Job, however, excelled once more in his relationship with God, though he did have a legitimate question. Job’s question didn’t have anything to do with the integrity of God, only that, according to his theological understanding something didn’t compute.

If bad things happen to people because they are in violation of some precept, what did he do? After thorough examination by his friends, and his own introspection, he came to an erroneous conclusion that God must have made a mistake. He felt that if he and God could just have a face-to-face meeting he could straighten God out!

Job had a problem that was not even close to being a flaw of character; it was a flaw of theological understanding. Job thought he knew God, but he didn’t understand the greatness of God. God had a motive and the motive was to come into a deeper relationship with this man Job. To do this God had to set the stage for a revelation of his personal greatness to Job and at the same time reveal the total inadequacy of Job. Job was a very wise man and his wisdom stood in the way of a divine revelation of the greatness of God. In other words, Job needed to see himself in true perspective and then he could fully appreciate God. Some people are too big in their own eyes to properly see God and others are too small.

Satan’s attack upon Job was allowed by God to set the stage for a greater revelation of himself to Job.

Fellowship between two people is dependent upon the depth of understanding and appreciation of each other. The relationship of Job to God was limited by Job’s misconceptions.

Once these were corrected, God and Job came into a new relationship. Job now trusted God based upon proper understanding, and God's faith in Job proved to be correct. Now there was a mutual respect and when Job prayed to God, God would listen to Job.

Some of Job's friends lacked this understanding, thus God instructed them to have Job pray for them! This too was an exercise orchestrated by God to help these men come down off their personal arrogance and to humble themselves. This circumstance had driven a wedge of disrespect between these men and Job. They had looked down upon him, but God saw that the greater man was Job. Outward appearances seemed to confirm their indulgence in arrogance, but it was wrong, and God could not let it stand.

Satan was allowed to move upon what Job possessed but God restored double what Satan stole away in the midst of what God was doing. He is so dumb! Satan allowed pride to get in the way of his relationship with God, and he still doesn't get it, God is so much greater than Satan that even when Satan tries to do mischief God wins in the end!

Once our eyes have been enlightened by the truths of God, it's hard to be around those who have deliberately turned away from following the Lord and who arrogantly look down upon those who are righteous.

Keeping our mental focus upon the Lord is the source of our personal victory. The Psalmist turned his thoughts to the Lord in the night season, and his song was about the decrees of the Lord no matter where he had to lay his head at night. Things in life are not always to our personal liking, but the Lord is always with us to comfort and strengthen us.

## Heth

As we move from stanza to stanza in this longest of all Psalm 119, we find some reoccurring themes, the Psalmists respect for the law, his love for God and his law, his annoyance with evil doers, his desire to be healed and delivered and his commitment to obedience. The Psalm is an ongoing prayer and covers a whole array of subjects but underlying is the appeal to God to act quickly in his behalf. It hurts him to see the wicked mock God and seemingly get away with it. He, however, never allows his problems to turn him away from his love for God and he experiences an ever-increasing hunger to know both God and his law better.

The theme of this stanza seems to be the phrase, "Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law." (Psalms 119:61) Have you ever felt that your hands have been tied in some situation where you really wanted to do differently but could not? Steadfastness of walk with God requires that we be totally unshaken by either good or bad.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes a statement that I think is under rated in most cases. He said, "Blessed are the poor in heart," to which most interpreters ascribe humility of spirit as the intended meaning, and I don't discount that it is, however; if we view it as being monetary poor of which he spoke, we would have to conclude that what he is saying is that we are blessed when we are always poor with reference to our heart condition toward God. Beggarly is one choice of translation word. To me this means that the kind of relationship we have with God is totally outside and separate from all monetary considerations. We are in a position with God that is totally unaffected by whether we have money or not. In fact, our very spirit or attitude is unaffected by what our monetary status is. We can have the confidence of the rich, with the humility of the poor, because we have confidence in our God that is based on the knowledge that he is able to supply all our needs according to his riches in glory.

The Psalmist felt his hands were tied, but his commitment to obedience was in full force. He would hasten to obey God's commands and they would rise at midnight and give thanks to the LORD for his righteous laws. Previously he stated that he would remember the law of God at night, but now he is saying he will rise and give thanks. It's one thing to remember and turn over and go back to sleep and quite another to rise and give thanks. It seems that the intensity of his

appeal to God is increasing and his desire to let God know that he is not going anywhere, and that he is intent upon getting an answer from heaven.

Have you ever felt that you touched God with your prayers? It's an amazing feeling to have a sense that what you have just said to God caused all heaven to pause and that all attention is focused upon what you are praying to God! I sometimes feel that we take our prayers too lightly and sometimes hardly believe that God even hears them. It's so easy to take God for granted and treat prayer as though it is some kind of duty to be performed. Prayer is not a duty, but we are instructed to pray with all kinds of prayers. We are told to pray without ceasing, and that the earnest fervent prayer of the righteous avails much.

Jesus sometimes prayed all night to his Father, and some people marvel at that, wondering what did he say that took so long? Prayer is not always words, though words are definitely a part. Jesus had always been in the presence of the Father, and now there was a physical barrier but fellowship was still an ongoing experience for Jesus. How did he pray? We are not told. We don't know whether he knelt or walked about, whether he lay face down or stood in silent reverence. Perhaps he even spoke loudly, though I personally don't think so. He may not have even moved his lips, we will never know. Did he speak to the Father about what was going on, on earth or were they discussing matters of eternal kingdom goings on?

When people really pray we don't always know what is being said, because real prayer is often very private prayer. Earnestness, intensity and all such feelings that go into communication with the Almighty are not expressed in volume of voice, but rather volume heart.

The stanza concludes with a message of love for God and his people. The Psalmist declared that he is a friend of all who follow the precepts of God, and as he views the world he sees that it is filled with the love of God. Once more he asks God to teach him his decrees.

## **Teth**

My wife and me recently acquired two boy little kittens and what a joy it is to watch they run about playing their little games. My wife made sure that all the proper equipment was in place and that their shots were given and at the appropriate time they were neutered. They do many cute little things and they fill our lives with added joy. Sometimes when the door to the outside is open they like to sit and look out at the wonder they see out there, but we know that exciting looking world is full of danger because there are streets where little animals often loose their lives. There is a lot of room in our house and things to do and explore, but the out of doors is off limits for them. They are well feed, loved and cared for as long as they stay where we can protect them, but if we allow them to wander, their lives may very soon end abruptly. It is love that closes the door and protects them from what their natures would otherwise get them into. So it is with our relationship with God. Cats will be cats, and so it should be, but to allow them to run unrestricted would be to flirt with disaster.

God wants us to be who he made us to be. He loves to see us doing fun things and enjoying the life we have on earth. He even does things at times to add another dimension of pleasure to our lives, but he never opens the door to unrestricted exploration. Adam and Eve were not created to experience evil, but disobedience led them away from the protected environment of the garden. Sometimes people find a way to escape the protective cover of divine protection. At first there is a sense of liberty as they run to things they were previously restrained from, but when evil begins to show its ugly face, terrors begin to fill their hearts and they realize that not everything that looked so exciting is as harmless as it once appeared. When sitting looking through the screen door no danger was apparent, why then couldn't we run free?

The Psalmist said that before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he obeys the commands of the Lord! He had come to appreciate the goodness of the Lord and desired more of God's goodness. It is the goodness of God that has created the boundaries that we are to remain within. As we learn about the goodness of God and how it is that he has created the boundaries,



and that it is for our sakes that they are there, we appreciate them and they become more precious to us than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

### **Yodh**

How do people respond when they see you? Do you get the feeling that they are shuddering inside, wishing you would go away? Such is the reaction when we are overbearing, inconsiderate, or brash in our ways.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about love. The Psalmist recognized that it was God that afflicted him, a lesson faith healers need to learn. The Psalmist was not happy about the affliction, but rather only for what the affliction brought forth in him. No genuine Christian glories in affliction, or any deficiency physically, mentally, or emotionally, but rather we glory in the power of God that enables us to function normally despite our inadequacies.

God is all about love and he desires to heal us of the effects of sinful, selfish, deficiencies that have colored our personalities in very negative ways. Before God can write into our inner being the knowledge of truth, he must first erase the errors that prevent proper understanding of truth. This process is sometimes painful to those around us, as well as to us, because we don't understand what it is that God is doing.

At the time of Jesus' ministry there was so much misunderstanding about the commands of God that Jesus had to constantly shed light upon the errors of their misconceptions. One irony is that in the world of Christianity today, God gets blamed for what Satan does, and Satan gets blamed for what God does! Getting this matter straight in our thinking seems to be a monumental task for the Holy Spirit.

I have at times pointed out that God is the creator of sickness as well as health. The very first mention of physical disease was in the Book of Genesis where God smote the Egyptians with serious diseases because of Sarah the wife of Abraham who the king of Egypt was planning to marry. Later the Lord promised the Israelites that he would not put the diseases upon them that he had put upon the Egyptians if they would just obey him. The concept of Satan being the author of disease was first introduced in the book of Job. The question arises; did Satan or God afflict Job? In the dialog between God and Satan, God said to Satan that he had incited him to lift his hand against Job without cause. Satan then implores God to afflict his body, after which God gave permission to Satan to do just that.

I have contended that Satan is not a creator; that if something exists it is because God created it in the beginning. The method used in the book of Job was that Satan incited God to allow him to take action against Job, but even in that God takes ownership of what happened. It is revealed in this instance that Satan is still operating under the authority of what God allows. I contend that Satan's greatest weapon against the people of God is to convince them that he has power over them and in this way he convinces them to allow him access to them by not walking in the protection and provisions of the Lord. Satan wants us to start believing in his power and to get our attention off God's power. Satan will allow us to believe that God's power is great enough to deliver us but he doesn't want us to live under the protective power of God's hand.

I believe that it is better to focus upon our relationship to God and less on what Satan wants to do to us. Even when bad things are happening I am reluctant to give recognition to Satan for it, but sometimes it is evident that he has his hand in it in some way. When I sense that Satan is trying to do some new mischief, I turn to the Lord to be my protector. I sometimes call Satan stupid, and so he is, but I also recognize he is very cunning and his intelligence level is probably far beyond mine. He still is stupid because he is constantly playing into God's hand, and what he does hoping to destroy Christians only refines them. He is only successful to the extent that he is able to deceive people into believing his lies.

The Psalmist didn't blame Satan for his difficulties, but rather he blamed his own ignorance of the precepts and commands of the Lord. He saw that it was the Lord that afflicted him in

faithfulness, because through it he would learn what he needed to know so that he would please the Lord.

It really doesn't matter what the difficulty is in our lives, God's unfailing love is the source of our comfort and hope. God is compassionate and loving in all his ways toward those who seek him and love him. It is his compassionate nature to which we turn in hope of a better life while on earth, but heaven is our real hope. When our hearts don't condemn us, knowing that we have kept the word of the Lord, we are able to look upon our foes knowing that the Lord will vindicate us in due time. Obeying the Lord brings hope into our hearts knowing that we will not be put to shame.

## Kaph

The word of God is full of promises to be appropriated by the people of God. Sometimes we see a promise of some particular blessing and we claim it going before the Lord asking that it might be produced in our life experience. We see, what is to us, an urgent need for the promise to manifest in real life experience. To us the vision is clear and the promise manifested would solve so much suffering, but why must we wait? The Psalmist's experience was just that—wait. He waited, he longed, and his hope was beginning to look like a wineskin in the smoke, all wrinkled and becoming dry and brittle yet he did not forget the decrees of the Lord. He waited and wondered, "How long must your servant wait?"

Real faith is of the substance of heaven, and it comes to us as a gift from God. Sometimes in the midst of our trials and tribulations, what God gives us is the promise of our inheritance and our hope is renewed. Where consternation sometimes enters is when what we need and want is not a hope of future glory, but help in the here and now. If this isn't forthcoming we tend to despair and get weary, and it is at that point that Satan tempts us to curse God and die. Job's wife spoke to him that way, and that temptation has come to many who have put their trust in what they thought God ought to do, but God didn't do what they wanted him to do. Hearing an answer like God gave to the Apostle Paul when he prayed that the thorn in his flesh be removed, is unsettling to their faith. Who wants to hear the words, "my grace is sufficient for you!" What we want is for God to fix our problem so we can get on with our life. This was how the Psalmist felt. Nevertheless, he was committed to serving the Lord. He, like Job, would not give in to the temptation to turn from the path of faithfulness to the Lord.

A friend of mine confided that, one day while being overwhelmed by the pressing circumstances of what he had set out to do, had a choice either to have a nervous breakdown, go out and get drunk, or pray. He chose the later, and peace returned to his heart.

Many great saints of God have found that in the midst of violent storms of life, there is a place of refuge. They learn the meaning of the phrase that God is the God of all comfort.

There is no storm able to destroy the saints of God. Even if their very life is lost in the process, heaven is their eternal home. Some trials are merely a shortcut to heaven, now is that so bad? We cling to this world that is full of difficulties, trials and tribulations, but sometime a loving God would rather just take us to our eternal destiny. Why should we want to prolong our suffering in this world? The Apostle Paul face just that sort of dilemma but in his case, though he seemed to have a choice, he chose to stay here because he saw people that he felt needed him.

The desire to live life to the full is a God given desire. There is nothing wrong with asking God to heal our bodies, provide for our well being, and give us daily provisions according to the needs of life. Asking God to preserve our life with a promise to obedience is a good thing, but if God elects to take us home, we should be ready to answer his call enthusiastically.

## Lamedh

We have explored the faith walk of the Psalmist as he has expressed the pains of his personal sufferings and also he has allowed us to see his corresponding commitment to obedience to the laws of God. Not only was he committed to the laws of God but also he wanted to fully understand the laws and the precepts of God. You see, if we want to really know God, we must understand the full and true nature of righteousness. We are not living under law today in the same way that Israel did, but understanding the law is to understand the true nature of God. Many of the commands of God are still in effect today, not as the letter of the law, but rather simply because they are so very right. Some of the laws foreshadowed greater truths that are manifest in the spiritual realm in Christ. Where Israel missed the point of the law was that they focused upon the letter of the law and failed to understand the spirit of the law. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life, the Apostle Paul declared.

Through sufferings, the Psalmist finally came to the awareness that the word of the Lord is eternal. This is what sets the people of God apart from all the other inhabitants of the earth; it is the eternal perspective. It seemed that it took the Psalmist awhile to gain the revelation that not all of what God is doing is about this world. This world could be looked upon much like a womb in which eternal beings are being formed. All of nature and the events of life are for the purpose of developing eternal souls into what God has ordained that they should be. Just as a baby in the womb takes over much of the physical functions of the mother during pregnancy, the soul that has been given the life of Christ finds that all things are now working together for the good of the soul being formed. The Psalmist now saw that God's plan was not just for his lifespan, but rather, for all generations. It isn't until we begin to focus upon the big picture and get our eyes off our own little existence that we begin to appreciate the enormity of all that God is doing.

I once went through a very trying time in which about half our congregation left our church; many of them left to follow a charlatan, who like a wolf invading a flock, lured them away. While all of this was going on, the Lord was ministering to me in a most unique way. It was during this time that God moved upon me to write the very first book that I have written. It was such a spiritually exhilarating experience that I hardly felt the impact of what was taking place. Instead of feeling hurt, God was giving me insights that canceled the affect that would have otherwise been there. The events that were taking place became the catalyst for new revelations and teachings that God was able to bring to me. I can identify with the words of the Psalmist when he said, "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." (Psalms 119:92)

The problem that had been the catalyst driving the Psalmist to seek the Lord with intensity was still there, but now it didn't matter as much as it once did, now he had understanding of the precepts of God and they are good. Perfection has a boundary, but God's commands are beyond boundaries. We will never be without them, and this is good because through them we have found the secret of life.

## **Mem**

Knowing what pleases the Lord brings confidence to those who follow his precepts. The Psalmist had enemies and counselors, but the law of God was his source of wisdom. He found that the result of his pursuit of God was that he was wiser and had more insight than his advisors. Human advisors and teachers fall short when one has become a student of the word of God. The wisdom of natural fallen man always comes up short when measured against the wisdom of God.

The experience of the Psalmist brought him to a point where the precepts of God were now very palatable. He found that they were sweet to the taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth. The Psalmist came to the understanding that when he was meditating upon the precept and commands of God, God was present with him teaching him. There is no teacher equal to the Holy Spirit who teaches in a manner that gives maximum insight on any subject.

Satan has done an evil thing to humanity, convincing them that the commands of God are somehow distasteful. Fallen men hate the commands of God because their hearts are evil. When we are evil, the desires of our hearts are also evil. People run the world over looking for something to satisfy the longing in their hearts, but there is no satisfaction for the restless feeling and emptiness of a life lived apart from God.

The experience of the Psalmist was that all the struggles with feelings of emptiness and fear had left him as a result of his meditation upon the precepts of God. All feelings of loneliness, emptiness, insecurity, inferiority, resentment, jealousy and rebellion come from the presence of the tempter.

There was a time in my life when I could leave a situation where I especially felt the presence of the Lord and have a sinking feeling come over me not realizing it was Satan tempting me to accept his negative presence. Sometimes when one has lost a loved one the feeling of grief is hard to bear, but those who know the Lord are able to find comfort in the presence of the Lord. We do, however, have a choice in what spirit we will dwell.

When these feelings came over me, I didn't know that I was under attack and being tempted to live in a negative spirit. Some people think that it is normal to be depressed or to have negative thoughts or feelings, but I assure you that it is not. When you are being tempted to think about everything that is wrong with your life, you are under attack. It is not God who fills you with fear; it is Satan! When these feelings start to come, submit yourself to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. It is not possible to live in faith and fear at the same time.

How sweet it is to live in the presence of the Lord! I love the presence of the Lord because my heart is at rest, and the tasks I set my hand to do are much easier when they are not clouded with evil feelings. If while at work, you are tempted to feel resentment, or whatever else might attack you while at work, understand that you are under attack and stop the action of your mind and refocus upon the precepts of the Lord. Love those who are using you, or persecuting you, or just plain ignoring you, and turn to Jesus and realize that you are now a citizen of the eternal kingdom of God and that you of all people have reason to rejoice. Once you experience the joy of victorious living, you will never want to go back to negativity. You, like the Psalmist, will say, "I hate every wrong path."

## **Nun**

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalms 119:105) There are a number of scriptures that have stood out as quotable and this is one of those scriptures. Quoting scriptures is a good thing, but making a scripture an applicable part of your life is better. What better position of faith to take than to make the word of God the lamp for our feet.

As we have noted throughout this Psalm 119, the Psalmist has suffered much, but I have also noted that there is an increasing peace within his heart and less consternation over his ever-present enemies. The Psalmist made it his spiritual lifestyle to put the law of God first in his thoughts and he fixed his heart upon every precept and sought to understand all of them. The more he understood the precepts of God, the more he found joy and peace in the midst of turmoil and pain. The Psalmist took an oath and confirmed it with real life devotion, to follow God's righteous laws. Once more he requests the Lord to preserve his life. He desires that the Lord accept his praise, and still desires that the Lord teach him more about his laws.

The Psalmist was constantly living in danger, but he didn't allow his circumstances to take his mind off the law of God. It is never permissible to put the law of God on hold and commit some evil act that would relieve some problem momentarily. Running from problems is a human tendency especially if we see a way to alleviate the pain. Some people use alcohol or drugs to try to forget their problems, but when they return to their senses, the problems are still there only worse. The Psalmist ran to the word of God to find comfort and instruction, and even though

some problems just don't go away, fixing his eyes upon the Lord and his word, helped him keep everything in proper perspective.

There was a point in my life when everything looked very bleak, yet I sought the Lord. I hungered to know him better and sought him for insight. It was at that point that he gave me a principle to live by that helped me enormously. He showed me that the way to overcome immovable obstacles is to grow. If I set about to achieve growth, what was once a forbidding fence, would be reduced to an inconvenient obstacle. The picture I saw in my mind is a little child in a play pen that has to stay there because it can't climb out, but as it grows bigger the time comes when it can climb over it and eventually just step out of it at will. Usually when that starts happening the playpen is stored away because growth has rendered it ineffective. So it is in life, what was once a problem becomes an annoying inconvenience and eventually is forgotten about all together.

Wicked people tried in vain to trick the Psalmist, but he just kept looking to the law of the Lord, and found that they were his heritage that brought joy to his heart. It didn't matter now, he would be faithful to the word of the Lord to the very end.

## Samekh

Double-minded men are a constant source of disappointment. Pastors often find that unstable people who are a constant drain on their strength surround them. These individuals make bold declarations of strong intentions but as soon as the emotion of the moment is past, so are the intentions. The Psalmist does even want such individuals around him anymore. Perhaps there was a time when these sorts of people brought some kind of hope to him, but now he is well aware of their unstable ways and is weary of them. He now calls them what they are, "evildoers."

The Psalmist now trusts in the Lord and his promises, and wants God's assurance that his hope will not be dashed. If the Lord will uphold him, he will be delivered. He knows that God sees through their deceptions, and will judge them by discarding them like the dross they are. Though his flesh trembles at the law of God, he still loves his statutes and stands in awe of his laws.

## Ayin

After all of life has been lived, it is good to be able to reflect upon one's conduct and conclude that the laws of God have been sufficient and that we have walked upon the path of righteousness. Despite his quest for the knowledge and wisdom of God the Psalmist still looked for the salvation of the Lord and yearned for more understanding and discernment of spiritual truths. He was still aware of those who wanted to bring him down, those who sought to oppress him but he turned to the Lord to protect and deliver him.

Yesterday my wife reminded me about the man who had been laying by the pool of Bethesda for thirty eight years waiting to get into the water when an angel came and troubled the water, because when this happened the first one in would be healed. Due to his condition, someone always got in ahead of him, so he waited and waited and waited. She was reading the comments of an author who said the man was full of self-pity. She didn't agree with the author and my comment was that what I saw was the love of the Father who sent Jesus to the pool just to heal this poor man! There is no record of anyone else being healed there that day, just the paralytic. I feel sure that this man must have despaired over the years of waiting, but he still hoped. He easily could have concluded that God was unfair, or that God didn't care, but wait he did. I wonder if in the planning of the life of Jesus, if the Father looked and saw this poor man lying

there and said to Jesus, “Son, when you go down there you must go to the pool and heal that man, see how faithful he is lying there in hope.”

When it looks like God has overlooked you, hope on. Persevere in your faith walk and never conclude that it is hopeless. God’s eyes are always upon the righteous and he remembers our faithfulness. Faithfulness will be rewarded in the end and hope will be turned to fact. Those who hope in the Lord often speak to the Lord of his need to act. We feel that surely it is time for God to act. How many people have said to a child who wants something, “in a minute,” but to the child a minute seems like an intolerable amount of time. Our calculations of time are not like God’s who sees the end from the beginning. Another oft repeated sentence from children is “are we there yet?” Sitting and waiting is difficult to do when you have all this energy stored up waiting to be released, but some event must happen first.

The Psalmist experience a wonderful development in his spiritual character through the years of waiting, he came to love the commands of God more than that which represented the wealth of the world, gold even pure gold. As his love for God increased so did his hatred for evil. The closer we get to God, the more we feel contempt for sin. Vexation fills the soul of righteous men when confronted with evil day after day after day. Do not despair, God sees and his righteous heart is moved with compassion. The time will come when he will say, it is enough, go heal that broken hearted one. God is the God of new beginnings, and a new day will dawn in due time.

### **Pe**

The Psalmist continues his fascination with the law of God seeing the unfolding of truth as light that gives understanding to the simple. It isn’t necessary to be an intellectual giant to understand the principles of God. The thirst of the soul of the Psalmist is likened unto a panting longing for the commands of God. Yet he still needs the mercy of God to come to him, but comforts himself with the knowledge that God always comes to those who love his name.

While he is waiting for the Lord’s ultimate salvation to come, he wants the Lord to direct his footsteps, meaning his daily walk. It is at this point that he confesses his need to be delivered from sins. Righteous men are often reminded of the fact that while they live in this world, internal sin must be constantly dealt with. The Apostle Paul gave counsel concerning this reality, he said to live after the Spirit and then we will not fulfill the lusts of our flesh. He also told us to deem the sin nature dead, and not to give it any further attention. In other words, when desires for evil press upon you, you need not go there, instead turn to the Lord and he will lift you up! It is the enabling power of the Holy Spirit that is able to neutralize the acid of sinful desires and turn our hearts toward heaven and create a love for righteousness.

As we have studied this psalm, we see changes in the heart of the Psalmist. The oppressors are still there, and he desires to be freed from them, but his heart is being changed be it ever so subtly. In this stanza we see the heart of the Psalmist move from the vexation of the previous stanza to weeping over the sinfulness of those around him. Now he is no longer simply troubled by sin, but sheds streams of tears because the law of God is being broken. It is now more than an irritation that is felt at the law being broken, but rather it is a painful hurt seeing the law he has come to love being broken. When we love someone or something, seeing others belittling it is always painful.

### **Tsadhe**

We live in a day when many who think they are wise are declaring the righteousness of the commands of God irrelevant. They have studied the, so-called, wisdom of man; they know nothing of the wisdom of God. To those who have been enlightened by the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Spirit know that every command of god is right and therefore the God who gave the

commands is a righteous God. We know that living our lives according to the principles and precepts of God will surely result in a blessed life.

My wife and me are about to celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary. We didn't get here by following the current wisdom of man. There were many stress filled years along the way, but our love for God and his commands along with faith in God and our love for each other were more than sufficient to carry us through. God is more than a good God; he is everything that the word of God has declared him to be.

We are now in our "golden years", you know, the years when it takes a lot of gold to keep you going! We suffer some of the symptoms of the approaching end, but constantly strive to push it away. We always believed that we are a part of the last generation, but the reality is that no one knows the day or the hour of the Lord's return. One thing is certain, when life is over for us; we have a wonderful future waiting for us in heaven.

As the years have swiftly past for us, we reflect upon what we have learned about God and his goodness to us, but also we reflect upon the swift slide into evil that we see in the world around us. I have found that peace is my portion, and inheritance in Christ, but maintaining it is dependant upon maintaining my focus upon the Lord. As this Psalm moves from stanza to stanza, I note that there is less attention given to the troubles the Psalmist is experiencing and more attention is upon the goodness of God. In this stanza he simply mentions that his zeal is suffering fatigue because people ignore the words of God. He sees himself as insignificant but even that doesn't dominate his heart. His attention is upon the goodness of God and all that that relationship is bringing into his life. He has tested the promises of God and has found them to be totally reliable.

The Psalmist has learned that keeping ones focus upon the Lord's commands and goodness offsets the troubles of life. Show me a person who is full of joy and always abounding in love and goodness and I will show you a person who has learned to keep his focus upon the Lord despite what life throws at him. No one can live in this world without experiencing trouble and distress, but everyone can live in peace! Peace is the heritage of the saints, but it isn't dependent upon how well things are going. Jesus said to his disciples that he was giving them peace but that it wasn't the kind of peace that the world has to offer. This peace is from heaven above and comes from the Father through Jesus and is imparted into our spirits so that no matter what happens we can draw comfort from it.

The more we understand about God and his ways, the more peace we have with who we are and the more content we are with what God is doing in us. Satan is always trying to take away our peace and sense of well-being. Many people have been infected with a spiritual virus, as it were, I call "visions of grandeur." Someone has told them something or prophesied something to them that was not pure prophecy, telling them that God wants them to do some really great thing and from then on they live with the feeling that they are not living up to the expectations of God! We have a natural tendency to over rate the potential for some kind of greatness. It's so easy to get carried away with the temptation to think that there is some sort of spiritual destiny awaiting us and that the whole wide world will one day see our greatness! The problem with this is that it leaves those who are so infected with the feeling of failure and insufficiency that leads them into depressions and feelings of failure.

Those who have achieved spiritual greatness have always been people who have developed a living relationship with the Lord and whatever is deemed to be greatness has been the result of what they were more than what they did. This is a hard lesson for some people to grasp, though intellectually they understand it, they have such a deep-rooted need to be somebody that the proper application evades them. The person who feels unfulfilled is a person who lacks peace. They are like a restless sea that can never find rest. They want to be a great person of God, but the need to be someone great prevents them from applying the principles that could make them great.

In the course of this Psalm we have seen the Psalmist give up a lot of his idealism that lead him to complaints to God, but a remnant of wishful thinking still exists. It isn't until we come to the place where we recognize that the battle is the Lord's and that the wicked are no threat to him, that we can simply point out to God that there are still needy people and ask him what we might do to help lead them to Jesus that we begin to live in peace.

## Qoph

Peter, writing in the time following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, said to the Churches concerning the salvation they had received, "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you." (1Peter 1:3-4) The Psalmist could only hope for the event to come, but put his trust in the promises of God. He earnestly sought to understand the words of the Lord and Peter said, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." (1Peter 10-12) What a privilege it is to be among those to whom the gospel has been preached! The heart of the Psalmist yearned to understand what we all too often take for granted.

Trouble, distress, stresses of life, and threats of harm are all catalysts that drive us deeper into the Lord. The Psalmist had his share of troubles, but they only drove him to seek the Lord more intently. He would rise early to seek the Lord and he would even stay awake during the night meditating upon the promises and commands of the Lord. He called upon the Lord and asked for an audience with the Lord based on his love. He wanted to continue living here on earth to his full allotted lifespan. The wicked enemies who were far from the commands of God were still near, but he has his heart firmly fixed upon the Lord.

He had settled it in his heart and mind that the laws of God are never going to change. Right will always be right and they are trustworthy and true. It doesn't matter what country you are in, what the culture is like, what time period it is, right is always right and what God says is right is still right.

There are people in our current society who are trying to reason that some sins are not really sins after all. They evidently think that they are wiser than God. With regards to homosexuality, Satan has convinced people that it is not a sin, but rather, it's the way some people's sexual orientation is because they were born that way. They have totally disregarded demonic activity that starts working upon people, sometimes from the womb, causing them to develop ideas and desires that run contrary to nature. Added to this they have also forgotten that everyone is born with a sin nature that gives them a predisposition to one form of sin or another.

No matter how you slice it, sin is still sin and when the work of God tells us that an activity is sin, it is true. Just because more and more people want to indulge in an activity, doesn't therefore make it right. Sexual promiscuity is being widely accepted as being up to the individual, but the problems caused by such sins are so huge that one can only wonder what kind of reasoning could possibly sanction such behavior.

As long as life on earth exists, there is a need for the commands of God to guide us into all truth concerning life and godliness. After much consideration, the Psalmist came to the conclusion that the statutes of God had been crafted to last forever.

Some people will think that it doesn't matter anymore what the commands of God are, that we live under grace and not law now. Of course that is true, however, the principles revealed by the law are still the principles of righteousness. The letter of the law kills, the word says, but the



Spirit gives life. The Spirit we have received is the Holy Spirit, and therefore what was right under law is still right today. This is not a legalistic observation, but rather, a conclusion that is well established by the entire word of God. God gave the Israelis a religious culture that had moral laws and guidelines in it; these have been set aside, but the moral truisms still remain. I see the nature and plans of God revealed in the law and the prophets, and therefore, they are relevant to us today. God doesn't change, just his mode of operations regarding how he deals with man. When Jesus died in our place at the cross, the mode of operations changed, but the same Holy God deals with us in the minutest details of our lives. It is God's love for us that causes him to convince us that sin is still sin, and that we must avoid sinful activities.

## **Resh**

Salvation is the most underrated gift that has ever been given to man. For many people salvation is merely forgiveness of sins and the ticket into heaven. They join a church or go forward at a crusade or evangelistic meeting in answer to a call to receive Jesus. They go home to resume their previous lifestyle with very little, if any, change. They seem to feel that now all is well and when they die, they will go to heaven.

I do not know the boundaries of God's grace, but I do know that the Bible is full of instructions on how to live a righteous life and what it is that pleases the Lord. The Holy Spirit indicated to me that my calling is not to try to define the boundaries of grace, but rather to define the principles of godliness. It isn't as important to try to determine what sins people can have still existent in there lives and still have the benefit of grace, as it is to try to determine how we as people might live without sin and thereby have an unchallenged faith in God that springs from a life of overcoming. No one is saved by acts of personal righteousness; salvation is a gift from God that comes in response to activating the faith that he gave to us. Faith itself is a gift, but activating it is a choice we make.

The wicked are far from the grace of God because they have rejected this gift of love from God to man. One day as I was driving into Reno Nevada from California, while descending from the west into the valley where Reno is located, the city the beauty from that vantage point was extraordinary. As I pondered its beauty my mind went to what I knew of the city and how it is that people come there, for the most part, looking for something to satisfy some carnal desire. Some people come there for a quick divorce or to get married without the requirements of other states. Some people come to gamble in the hope of hitting it rich. No matter what the reason I considered it to be wicked. It was at this point that the Holy Spirit put the question to me; do you know what the greatest wickedness is? I didn't have to wait long for his answer to his own question, "It is rejection of Jesus, God's love gift to the world." I have to say that that was a total concept changing experience for me. I had always thought of evil as murder, or child molesting, or lying or some other vile sexual sin, but it never occurred to me that rejection of Jesus hurts God even more than all the other sins in the world. Rejection of Jesus is an affront to the love of God! He sent his Son into this world to pay the penalty of our sins and when we reject that gift, if allowed to stand, disqualifies us from eternal life in heaven forever.

All sins and wickedness is forgivable, but one sin remains that there is no sacrifice that covers if allowed to stand, that is rejection of the gift of salvation.

The gift of salvation is like unto a gift package that contains a number of wonderful benefits. Forgiveness of sins is probably the most familiar to most people. Along with this is a God ordained destiny that involves being created into the fullness of the stature of Christ. It involves becoming a part of his church, his body, and becoming partakers of the inheritance of Christ.

Salvation is the impartation of the spirit of eternal life imparted by the Holy Spirit. We therefore have become recipients of the same power that raised Jesus from the grave that also will raise us up at the appointed time. God is preparing a wonderful home for us as a part of this

package, and we will live in it in a body that is totally free of sin, sickness, or any of the impediments that have plagued us in this world.

As a result of this salvation gift, we are given access to the throne room of Almighty God by the blood of Jesus whereby we have fellowship with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also given a commission to participate in the distribution of the salvation message to the world and gifts and ministries are also given to us to enable us to do the task.

There is one interesting aspect to this gift package that we get from God as a result of our faith in Jesus, and that is that there is a note in it that states that all of this is just a sampler package (earnest of our inheritance) but that the real thing is laid up for us in heaven! It is by faith that we reach into this package and draw out all the samples to enrich our lives on earth. If we are striving to enjoy the full benefits of one of the samples in our life but it falls short of what we would like to have, just know that this is to remind us that this is only a sampler package, we're not in heaven yet! Healing is in the package but when my body shows the signs of aging, for example, I am reminded that the real inheritance is still waiting for me in heaven. I am blessed with benefits along the way, but the real joy of the salvation package will be fully realized when I see Jesus face to face.

When we look upon the faithlessness in the world, we are filled with loathing over the fact that they have rejected God's gift of love that he secured for us at the maximum possible price, the suffering death of his one and only Son. When a person rejects salvation, what they are left with, at best, is an empty hope of eternal life. A lot of attention has been put upon the Islamic world since the attack of 9-11-01. On the one hand we wonder how people who claim to be godly can be so full of hate and violence, yet is it any wonder when they have rejected God's gift of salvation through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ? Jesus is the prince of peace and God is love. The only place a human being can find peace for their inner soul is by coming to Jesus. He is the giver of life and peace and there is no peace outside of him. True Christianity is not a system of teachings that produce some form of inner peace; it is an honest to goodness impartation of the Spirit of life, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus.

Those who think that it doesn't matter what a person believes so long as they have a faith in a higher being have indulged in an exercise of pure folly. Satan has created a maze of religious teachings in an effort to confuse the issue and I have to admit that it has worked far to well. He beckons people to follow him telling them it doesn't matter what they believe and leads them down first one path and then another, until they are so confused they give up the search for a way to heavens door. Outside the maze and apart from the confusion, there is a voice calling that is full of love saying come to Jesus and find everything your soul longs for. The problem with the voice is that it comes from a narrow way leading to a very small door, and only those who are willing to forsake all to follow Jesus can enter.

When we come to Jesus we no longer look upon the precepts of God as a burden we must bear, but rather as a friend that helps us please the one we love, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a truth that all who love God love righteousness. This is the evidence of true change of heart that results from a born again experience.

### **Sin and Shin**

Great peace is in the hearts of those who fear the Lord. Though rulers of the earth come against the people of God meaning to do them harm, the righteous always have a sense of security in the Lord, when their conduct is acceptable before the Lord. It is displeasing the Lord that is the source of fear for the righteous. There are no threats that have power over the righteous to bring harm to them unless our ways are displeasing to the Lord. His protection is a constant unless he lifts his protection for a reason that his wisdom has determined is necessary for our good.

The Psalmist declared that his heart trembled at the word of God, yet he loved his law. He found the promises of God to be better than one finding great spoil. The Psalmist took time out of his day seven times to give thanks for the righteous laws of God. He also found that he had great peace as a possession because he obeyed the commands of God. The outstanding feature in the walk of obedience in the life of the Psalmist is that he didn't obey begrudgingly, but rather the statutes and laws he obeyed he greatly loved. There was nothing hidden from the Lord in his life, but all was open before the Lord.

It is this level of confidence that springs from a life of obedience to the Lord. When the focus of our life is upon pleasing the Lord, we have great peace.

I once counseled with a person who had been a part of a fellowship where man-made rules for living were placed as commands of God. This was at times an uncomfortable restrictive condition that was causing consternation and guilt. Legalism tends to bondage and bondage leads to despair, but the Lord is the prince of peace and those who live their lives to please the Lord have great peace. Those who put rules upon others may mean well, but it is not for man to try to control others. We are not wise enough to know where to place the boundaries.

In the case of parents, boundaries are the responsibility or if good parenting, but when churches try to micro manage the lives of those who are in their membership, they soon become pharisaical and as times change so do the reasons for the rules. Once rules are put in place it is difficult to abandon them. What often happens is that people start violating senseless rules and those looking on see the contradictions and wonder what is going on. When the spirit of hypocrisy begins to manifest and the door is open to even greater violations. When a person begins to rebel against man made rules the temptation is to rebel against all rules. This leads to a very destructive condition that is more deadly than the legalism that created it.

Wise leaders focus upon a love relationship with the Lord and allow people to work out their own salvation. They instruct them about the necessity to fear the Lord, but leave the work of the Holy Spirit to the Holy Spirit, and avoid trying to manage God's property. Our position as people of God is to be instructors and counselors, correcting the errors through instructions, and counseling in how to please the Lord. We are to avoid putting ourselves in the position of being the one that they must obey, except in the parent/child relationship.

The Psalmist's relationship was a pure man/God relationship without humans getting in between. His obedience was motivated by his personal relationship to God and God's laws. God was his God and no man could interfere with that relationship; its foundation was love.

## Taw

As the Psalmist nears the end of Psalms 119 he is still asking the Lord to deliver him and the search for understanding goes on. He desires praise to be on his lips, but he sometimes strays like a lost sheep. Straying from the consciousness of the Lord's presence is common to humanity. We get caught up in the daily events of life and fail to look up and see the one who is there to help us.

Isaiah declared, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) When needs begin to happen, we cry to the Lord, "give me understanding according to your word." (Isaiah 119:169) When understanding is given, we lift our head in hope and continue upon our journey.

There are times in the course of life when we need a helping hand and there are times when we aren't even aware of our personal need. God is like us human beings or maybe it is better said, that we are after all quite like God who formed us. If we see a child heading for danger, we will reach out and rescue that child, perhaps swooping it up in our arms, even if the child kicks and screams in protest. We ignore its complaint because we know best what is right for the child,

so there are times when we don't know the dangers that God sees, and he swoops us up to protect us.

Once when I was just a teenager, I prayed that God would protect me in my life. As my mind went to the future, I was concerned that I wouldn't lose my way, so I prayed, "Lord do whatever it takes, in fact, I authorize you in advance to do whatever it takes to keep me in your care even if at the time I might object." I worried that at some point, sin might seek to overtake me, and I didn't want to fail to walk with God.

The Psalmist prayed, "seek me" when he would stray like a lost sheep. I am convinced that it is that kind of prayer that always gets the ear of God. If we pray, Lord do whatever it takes to keep me on the right path, and don't listen to my complaining, he will always listen.

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-one**

### **About Truth and War**

#### **Psalm 120**

#### **A song of ascents.**

<sup>1</sup> I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me. <sup>2</sup> Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.

<sup>3</sup> What will he do to you, and what more besides, O deceitful tongue? <sup>4</sup> He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom tree.

<sup>5</sup> Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar! <sup>6</sup> Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. <sup>7</sup> I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war.

Deceitfulness is what complicates relationships and makes real communication impossible to achieve. The fundamental necessity in really knowing someone is that what is spoken is always the absolute truth. There are sometimes things that are best left unsaid, and subjects left that should not be discussed, but even in that it is better to say, "I don't want to go there," than to deny its existence. Evil curiosity is a damning characteristic and should always be turned away from.

A man once asked me if he should question an individual about something they didn't want to talk about, and insist upon an answer, to which I replied, "Are you willing to also disclose all that you might have offended in?" Usually, unless there is a legal or moral reason why an answer is necessary, the reason to press for answers comes more from a wrong motive than from a pure one. Often it is simply that people want to control another party, or pry into something that can be used against them, than to simply want to communicate and understand one another.

Evil curiosity feeds upon gory details, especially if it pertains to some sin committed. The more sin is discussed the more ugly it becomes, and usually the more unlikely it becomes that it will ever be forgiven and forgotten. Isaiah declared, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) If we could ever learn that when a person is repentant and desires to change from a wrong path, that that is reason to rejoice and it is better to leave the past in the past, unless there is a real and valid reason to know the details. Simple curiosity is not a valid reason.

Sometimes in counseling it is important for the counselor to press for detail of some event, not because it is important for the counselor to know, but rather it is important to the process of healing. In cases where people are repeated offenders in an area of sin, it is important to

determine what is the underlying cause and therefore probing the very thought processes may be important to the counselor to understand so that help can be rendered. In a professional situation the information is not secured to be used in a manipulative or demeaning manner, but rather to facilitate the healing and delivering process.

Using information to demean another individual is a very evil thing to do. It only adds hurt, to a situation that is already full of hurt. The reason behind demeaning a person who has offended is to in some way try to get even, but the Bible teaches that vengeance belongs to the Lord and that it is up to him to repay. If judgment is needed, God will do the judging.

There are many reasons for deceitfulness but usually it has to do with fear. People hide information when they fear the consequences of what will happen if it becomes known. Trust is an essential ingredient for full disclosure. I have often said to people while counseling them, that whatever they say is okay, and that I never think less of a person for anything that they disclose because I know about the kinds of problems people have. Nothing shocks me anymore, I think I have heard just about everything, less some of the gory details that I don't want to hear or know about. What is important is that enough is spoken so the offender can get the help they need, that is all. Anything beyond that comes from evil.

Often lies are told to gain some advantage over another person, and it was apparently those kinds of situations that were especially distasteful to the Psalmist.

The Psalmist was distressed because he had been living among those whose hearts are full of war. He was a man of peace but was constantly having to watch out for those who were ready for combat at the slightest little thing. You know, the proverbial chip on the shoulder. People with a warring spirit are people who will argue over anything and usually are sticklers for details. Everything has to be just so or war will break out! So many potentially happy homes have been destroyed because one or both spouses are given to a warring spirit. There doesn't even have to be a good reason for war, it is a way of life for some individuals.

Conditions between nations are sometimes tense even when there is no shooting war going on. Currently we are in the midst of the war on terror. Factions of the Islamic religion are determined to destroy the western nations and anyone who will support them. These seem to have their strongholds in the region we know as the Middle East. Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia are the main players at the present time, and war will likely breakout any day now. The diplomatic game goes on, but our president seems very aware of all the game playing that is happening. War is in their hearts because they hate Israel. Israel is the hook in their jaw that is drawing the nations of the world into the final conflict. There are those who like the Psalmist, love peace but because war is in the heart of the adversaries, peace is far from the world.

The reference to Meshech and Kedar are references to some of the ancient people of the region. Despite the fact that the nation of Israel and those who support her want peace, war remains in the heart of those who hate Israel. Even in the so-called "moderate" Islamic people, hatred of Israel is a common thread. This hatred though not supported by Islam at the time this Psalm was written, was deeply troubling to the Psalmist. It has been a common underlying current that has caused problems all through history, but today it has taken on a more serious note as a result of the enormous wealth that has poured into the Middle East. These once destitute nations are now endowed with great wealth. With that wealth has come the capability to arm themselves with some devastatingly dangerous weapons, and world peace is now threatened. Weapons in the hands of peace loving people are no threat until their peace is threatened. The teachings of Islam coupled with this wealth and power has caused peace to be taken from the world.

The Psalmist cried out for deliverance from those with deceitful tongues, a current cry in the heart of the world. Deceitful tongues still abound all around us in the world today. At every level of society and even government, there seems to be a lack of honor and truth is far from the hearts of the sinful.

Even among Christians there is a lack of devotion to the truth being spoken. I was told by a friend who I trusted that he had witnessed a pastor of a church he was attending stand in the pulpit and tell what he knew to be an blatant lie. Others just exaggerate and try to embellish the truth, which is a lie if told with intent to deceive. My wife's mother used to say, "the truth told with bad intent beats all the lie one can invent."

Jesus Christ is the man of truth and all those who follow him must also be men and women of truth. His Spirit is the Spirit of truth and if we are of him we too must have a truthful spirit.

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-two**

### **Precious Promises**

#### **Psalm 121**

##### **A song of ascents.**

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; <sup>4</sup> indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; <sup>6</sup> the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; <sup>8</sup> the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Looking up is the natural instinct of a person wanting to speak with the Lord. In the case of Israel, it was looking up toward Jerusalem where the ark of the presence of the Lord was housed. Even after the ark was lost to man, it was a common practice to look toward Jerusalem where the temple once stood.

In Biblical thought, up is toward God, down is away from God and toward hell. To look up is to look heavenward, away from the pressures and turmoil of this life. The Lord is our maker and the one who can help us, and when we look to him we look heavenward.

It is the business of Satan to keep people from looking God ward. The New Age concept of god is a god within. They want people to look toward themselves when they pray, to speak to the Christ spirit within, which, of course, is not the real Christ, but rather a self-Christ. This false Christ is the lead into the anti-Christ spirit that is prevalent in the world today.

Satan wants people to be religious, because religion serves his purpose quite well. If people focus upon there religion, they will take their attention off the Lord Jesus Christ and a true relationship with him. People, who join a religion, are taking an inoculation against a true experience with God. It somehow satisfies their deep felt need to call upon God and receiver Jesus.

Look up, really up, into the face of a loving and caring God! God loves you, really loves you! Looking toward the hills was a way of looking toward God, but the Psalmist knew his help came from the Lord and looking toward the hills was only symbolic. When praying some people place their hands together and bow their heads, others raise their hands heavenward, some people speak loudly as if it takes volume to make God hear, others whisper or speak only within their mind knowing that God hears the very thoughts of their minds, no matter really, most of this is form and symbolic, an expression of what is really happening within our hearts toward God.

Up is symbolic also because it is looking away from the earth. What is up in reality is down to a person on the other side of the world. What is up is one way at noon but quite a different way at midnight. If God were in a fixed location relative to the earth, then one would have to look in various directions depending on the season of the year and the hour of the day. We would need to invent some kind of instrument to determine just where God is at any given time, but that is all non-sense. The Bible teaches us that God is Spirit, and Spirit is only located in symbolic ways. Oh, I am sure, that God is in a fixed location all right, but that location is outside this realm of physical matter, as we know it. This realm is permeated with his presence and so is heaven I am sure, thus, the teaching that God is everywhere present is a fact that we can depend upon.

Looking toward God is a spiritual activity and is done in a variety of ways, but faith is what makes it all happen, and that faith is a God given ability, not an action of the mind. Lots of people have the ability to believe in something or someone, but real faith is a spiritual gift that God gives and it is exclusively used to communicate with God. Faith is of the substance of the hope we have in Christ, it is spiritual and Holy Spirit inspired and given. It is directed by the purposes of God and when used within that context is capable of incalculable miracles both in physical and spiritual matters. God faith in action calls upon the very powers of God and his kingdom. It is given for the purpose of expediting the business of the kingdom of God on earth. It is not a toy, or some entertainment gimmick, it is for real work and the real business of God. Faith is also a condition that allows God to do special love things for his people, because where faith is, the pleasure of God is also.

God's people are a special kind of people, because, they are the visible part of a great kingdom that is otherworldly in nature. The people of god are like the tip of a glacier that is seen by those who are out of the water, sticking above the waterline but beneath the surface is where the bulk of the ice is to be found. God wants the tip to be like unto what is not seen, of the same substance of the entire kingdom of God! It is to this end that the Spirit works, bringing the people of God into that reality while at the same time allowing for the expressions of life functions and relationships.

Those who come into a relationship with God come into a relationship of God-promises that are of far more value than anything of this world. The Psalmist shares some of these promises with us in this Psalm, he says, "He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

"The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

"The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." (Psalms 121:3-8)

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-three**

### **Pray for Jerusalem**

#### **Psalm 122**

A song of ascents. Of David.

<sup>1</sup> I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." <sup>2</sup> Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. <sup>4</sup> That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel. <sup>5</sup> There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David.

<sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure. <sup>7</sup> May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." <sup>8</sup> For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." <sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Jesus said, "you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Luke 13:34-35)

Jerusalem was the joy of King David's heart, and it was the place where the temple would be built. It was the symbol of the power of the nation, and the security of the people. The presence of the Lord was there, and David loved to go to the house of the Lord. As long as the people of Israel walked honorably with the Lord, the blessing of God rested upon them, and Jerusalem was the center of worship unto the Lord.

When God the Son took human form upon the earth in the form of the man named Jesus, Jerusalem was a political center and the religion had deteriorated into a part of the political scene and the desire to please the Lord was colored by their desire to get along with Rome. The history of Israel was also blighted by their refusal to keep the Lord in his rightful place within the nation. Idolatry was prevalent and their culture was often corrupted by heathen practices. God dealt with the nation sending them prophets calling them back to the pure religion of their beginnings. God wanted to be their God, but they didn't want to be his people in the way he wanted them to be. They were too selfish, too political, and too willful to call on the name of the Lord in a true hearted worship of Almighty God.

David didn't want Jerusalem to be a political center, a place where political games would be played and men would vie for power; he wanted Jerusalem to be a peaceful place where people could come and worship the Lord and find justice in matters of life. He prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, but the sins of the people drove peace far from their national life. Even David himself failed to live sinless, and he had to contend with war not only being waged against violent neighbors but also within his own house.

What David longed for with regards to Jerusalem is attainable within the scope of every person's life that is willing to walk honorably with the Lord. When people stand in the gate of the life of a person committed to the Lord, they should be standing in the place of peace. Their home should be a house of the Lord where his peace is present and no contaminations are allowed to remain.

Jerusalem symbolically is the capital city of God upon the earth. It rarely lived up to its intended role during the time of the kings, but it still was the place where people could go to find the Lord's house. What Jerusalem symbolized is finding fulfillment in the life of God's people who are the bride of Christ, the city of God. Just as God intended to live among the Israeli people at that time, he now lives in the hearts of all the redeemed of the earth. The same presence, blessing, provision and protection that Israel could have enjoyed, the people of God everywhere can now enjoy as God lives in them. The rules for blessing are somewhat different today, but basically they are much the same.

What God is looking for in people is a faith that is heavenly in nature, that is pure belief in him, that trusts him absolutely without qualification, that causes those who possess it to be totally committed to pleasing him and that they want to know him in a more total sense. Under the covenant of the Law, blessing was dependent upon obedience to the law, now blessing is dependent upon obedience to the law of love. There is somewhat more flexibility under the law of love because under the old covenant the commandments dictated all behavior, under the law of



love, love dictates all behavior. In most instances where commandments were given about moral issues, the actual behavior of an individual will not vary, however the spirit in which they are obeyed is very different. Obedience to laws that are contrary to desires are negative acts of obedience, but obedience that is motivated by love is positive.

When a powerful God given faith sustains obedience to the law of love, the result is that God's blessing is abundantly manifest in a thousand ways. The Psalmist penned these words, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.' For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you.' For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity." (Psalms 122:6-9) If we see that Jerusalem in the day of the Psalmist was a foreshadow of the Church of Jesus Christ and that each member is a citizen of that city, then we will see that collectively we become the fulfillment object of the prayers of the Psalmist.

I know that when this passage is read by most people it is applied to the geographical Jerusalem and prayers are being offered for the peace of that ancient city, but peace for it is probably somewhat wishful thinking until Jesus Christ the Lord of Glory returns to set up his kingdom on earth and to rule the entire world for a thousand years. The New Jerusalem that will come from God will replace the ancient city, and will be inhabited by the church of Jesus Christ. How all of this will finally manifest with reference to the laws of physics and time as we know it now, God knows, but I am sure none of us do.

When I pray for the peace of Jerusalem, I am praying both for the ancient city, and for a manifestation of peace within the Church of Christ Jesus, as we know it now.

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-four**

### **A Cry for Mercy**

### **Psalm 123**

#### **A song of ascents.**

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.

<sup>3</sup> Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. <sup>4</sup> We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant.

I will lift my eyes to your throne in heaven, Oh Lord,

Mankind is a very dependent creation upon its maker. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the foods we eat are all creations that sustain us, and without any of them we couldn't exist. In addition to these basic essentials are many wonderful creations that provide amenities that make life pleasurable and good. Everything we have come from some form of original creation. We have taken substances that God created and worked with them, formed them and reformulated them into all sorts of forms and compounds. What is sad is that man has a tendency to look upon these forms and substances and say, "look what we have done." True, we have developed amazing things, and have developed amazing skills, but what would we be without food, water, and air? Astronauts get into capsules that are attached to huge rockets and ascend

into the sky and beyond our atmosphere but unless they take food, water and air with them, they will die.

God has given this world into the hands of mankind to enjoy, to develop and to use for its purposes so long as we don't violate some basic principles of our existence. We must never forget to be thankful and reverent to God and obedient to his will for us. Just as there are boundaries for the oceans to stay within, and for air to exist so that we will have sufficient oxygen for life, so man must also recognize that there are boundaries he must stay within if he is to exist without serious problems. These boundaries are given to instruct us in how to relate to the God who made us, and to relate to one another in a manner approved by God. If we observe the right of God to regulate how we conduct our lives, and observe all the rules of righteous conduct, we will enjoy freedom and blessing abundantly.

The Psalmist declared that we are dependent upon God in the same way that a servant is dependent upon the one he serves or a maid is dependent upon her mistress. It is because we are totally dependent upon the goodness of God to maintain all the intricate balances of our planet that we call to God for mercy. Let one thing go unrestrained and we would all be destroyed within a very short time. Too many famines, diseases without cures, rain that won't stop, earthquakes that keep breaking the earth crust, all are potential threats to life on earth. It is incumbent upon us that we remember that we are truly at the mercy of God!

There are those who worry that man is destroying the ozone layer around the earth but one volcanic eruption spews more ozone destroying elements into the atmosphere than all the pollutant that man has ever been able to create. Yet, man is the greatest threat to existence upon the earth that there is. It isn't God we have to worry about; it is we. Our sinful ways, our arrogance against God and our selfish independence all contribute to the danger of God simply giving us over to our own destructive ways.

God is a God of love, and he is patient and kind to those who fear and love him. But to the ungodly and arrogant, he is extremely dangerous. God holds the power of life and death and can use that power at any time he wishes. Jesus demonstrated how God is not held within the boundaries that hold natural man by giving life back to Lazarus who was dead and buried.

Some people think that it is Satan who holds the power to take life from man but that is not the case and never has been. What Satan does is sets a condition into play that contributes to the end of life, much like a person might shoot another person with a gun, the bullet doesn't take the life away, but it does set in motion the process within a body, that unless reversed by the skill of a physician will often result in death. We say that someone killed another person, but what really happens is that a person sets up the cause of death within the victim.

This is a fine point I realize, but it is an important point with reference to not giving too much credit to Satan for what happens upon the earth. He is a liar and a deceiver, he tempts and seduces, he shoves, pushes and pulls at people and sometimes possesses them to achieve his desired goals, but God is still the one in charge of ultimate outcomes.

Righteous people are often the blunt end of jokes and ridicule. Arrogant people make fun of those who trust in the Lord. They say that they are weak, and so it is, but admitting that we are weak is a sign of wisdom and the ability to face the reality of our natures. It is because we are weak that we call on an all-sufficient God who loves us and will have compassion on us.

Suffering at in the presence of wicked people is not new. The Psalmist new all about the ridicule of the wicked, but when we endure suffering for righteousness sake, we are setting the stage for the blessing of God to be upon us.

# **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-five**

## **Thanks to the Lord for Protection**

### **Psalm 124**

A song of ascents. Of David.

<sup>1</sup> If the LORD had not been on our side— let Israel say— <sup>2</sup> if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, <sup>3</sup> when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; <sup>4</sup> the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, <sup>5</sup> the raging waters would have swept us away.

<sup>6</sup> Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. <sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. <sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

This Psalm is attributed to David and is a song of thanks to the Lord. He realized that his very existence as victor over his many enemies was directly attributable to the intervention of the Lord. Not only was that the case for King David, but for the entire history of the nation. God has been with them and has protected them and he gave them many miraculous victories over their enemies.

This is not just the testimony of Israel, however, it is also the testimony of the United States and also Great Britain. Many times in the history of our nation, the Lord has worked miraculously in our behalf. Things have happened that have spared countless lives and secured great victories that have made our very existence as a nation reason for giving thanks to God.

Individually, we also have reasons for thanksgiving. Many people have received life-extending interventions that defy natural explanations. I think it is a good thing for people to pause and recount the events that they have experienced that they know was divine intervention. As I write this my mind goes to times in my own life when I definitely see that the hand of God protected me, sometimes from myself and my fallen nature and at other times from dangers that could have ended my very life.

Sometimes God intervenes because we ask him to, but at other times he intervenes because he loves us and what is happening would interfere with his plans for us. God is such a good God that he is watchful to make sure we don't go too far away from his purposes for us. He is merciful and kind and wants the very best for us.

What a wonderful thing it is to know that it is God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth that is our caretaker and often our caregiver. What a comforting realization knowing that God didn't just create us and then leave us to our own devices, but rather, has worked with us and for us to show us the way to live in his blessing.

# **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-six**

## **The Lord Surrounds His People**

### **Psalm 125**

## A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. <sup>2</sup> As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

<sup>3</sup> The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil.

<sup>4</sup> Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, to those who are upright in heart. <sup>5</sup> But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be upon Israel.

Too much blessing often results in complacency, but equally too, much oppression can result in even the righteous turning to wickedness. Faith in God is the stabilizer that keeps the presence of God always with the righteous; therefore, the wicked are not permitted to overly oppress the righteous.

The Psalmist warns that those who start out doing what is right but later turn to evil will suffer the same final punishment as those that were wicked all the while. Just because a person was born an Israelite didn't mean that he was automatically righteous, or that God's favor was automatically with him. Righteousness is a very personal thing; it is relationship with God. There is a saying in Christianity, "once saved, always saved," but is that a valid statement? I remember discussions about this point in my wife's family because her grandfather was a staunch advocate of this teaching, though none of her family followed in his belief. The line of reasoning went, if you are born into a family, then you are of that family despite anything you might do. That you could be disinherited or banished but you would still be a part of the family. The problems with this line of teaching are numerous but the reason it emerged was that at the time it was first conceived it was to counter another teaching that every time you thought a sinful thought, you lost your salvation. Most students of the word have come to realize that neither is a correct understanding. Whereas a person is who he is when he is born and always will be; yet status and relationships do change. Biblically, being born an Israelite does not guarantee any status with God except that he is an inheritor of the covenant promises if he wishes to avail himself of them.

Human logic, and taking conditions that relate to this world and to try to prove a spiritual truth based upon what is true in this world is faulty because, the eternal is not governed by the natural, but the natural is limited by the eternal. Eternal truths always take precedence over the natural. The natural is flawed and therefore inferior in nature to the spiritual; therefore what is true in the natural is not always true in the spiritual.

What we must do if we want understanding is to set aside all human logic and turn to the word of God and let it teach us under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. When I read the scripture without personal bias I find that there is a lot of security for the people who believe in God. Our personal righteousness is not what our salvation is based upon, but what becomes of us in our relationship with God is based upon decisions we make, and how we maintain that relationship.

I find that there are many warnings in the scripture about taking salvation for granted. I find that those who are complacent and indifferent often find themselves on very dangerous ground. The teachings of the scriptures are consistent in that they teach us to pursue righteousness and godliness and to seek to please the Lord and in doing so to secure our place in heaven. Without question, those who believe in him and live a life of pursuit of his pleasure have nothing to fear. Everyone fails in some area of life, and personal righteousness seems to evade even the most committed, but those who are in pursuit of perfection know that it is by faith the we are saved and not by works, and that we are destined to good works and therefore, as we pursue God he creates good works in and through us.

I teach that whereas I don't know the boundaries of grace, I do know that when I am in fellowship with the Lord, all doubt is gone and I do not live in fear, but rather in faith. When all

is said and done salvation is based on what he did, not what I did, but what I did with regards to so great a salvation has a bearing upon my relationship with him.

The most wicked act a person can commit is to turn away from so great a salvation and pursue wickedness. Willful rejection of Jesus Christ is the most wicked act that anyone can commit because; Jesus is God's love gift to the world.

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-seven**

### **Hope at Last**

### **Psalm 126**

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. <sup>2</sup> Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." <sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. <sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. <sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

When, after a long night of suffering, spring bursts forth and a new day has dawned for a person who has suffered, optimistic joy fills the heart. What hope there is in the heart of the farmer who takes precious seed and after preparing the soil, thrusts it into the ground. The joy of sowing is only exceeded by the rejoicing at harvest time.

The nation of Israel had suffered seventy years of captivity after the era of the kings was climaxed by being carried away captive. They had become wicked, following in the customs and religious practices of the heathen nations around them and had forsaken following the Lord their God.

Now the years of God's discipline were over and the exiles were being permitted to return but what they were returning to was a land that had been laying waste for seventy years. Their homes and cities were in ruins and what was ahead of them was going to be a lot of hard work. They had to break up hard packed soil, and build homes from ruins; to say the least, it wasn't going to be an easy task.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are records of some of the struggles of this era of time. God also sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage and instruct them. They were so much like people of today, self-interested, looking after the needs of their families before anything else. Often discouragement set in because the task was long and difficult. The efforts were not without discouragement either, enemies constantly tried to frustrate their efforts. Not everyone is happy when people set out to restore the fear of the Lord!

The Psalmist uses some phrases to express the difficulty they faced and the need they had for the Lord's help. He said, "Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev." (Psalms 126:4) the Negev was a desert region; therefore it could be said, "like streams in the desert." The land seemed like a desert to them when they arrived back. They came with joy and laughter, but reality soon set in. The task ahead of them was going to require help from their God. How overwhelming it all looked! Heaps of rubble, fields that were barren, enemies lurking nearby, but the Lord was near to them because he had commissioned their return.

With tear filled eyes yet they must go forth and sow their precious seeds. The faith of a farmer is sometimes remarkable to contemplate. There are times when by the spring of the year, supplies are down and food is scarce, yet the farmer will not touch the seed grain, because if they eat the grain that has been set aside to sow in the ground, there will not be a harvest in the fall of the year. God has taught us that there are times when, in order to insure our survival, we must not eat what is set aside for seed.

This principle also applies to the tithe. If we want to insure God's blessing upon our financial life, we must use the faith he has given us and plant the seed he has asked of us. God is not greedy; he has requested a tenth of our finances and increase of goods, gifts to God are acceptable and God desires we give them, but he only requires a tenth. This principle is constant regardless of economic conditions, cultures, riches or poverty.

I have often said, I would rather have ninety percent with God's blessing upon it than to have a hundred percent without his blessing. The testimonies of people who have faithfully followed this principle are far too numerous to recount. One thing is certain, when we give to God, he will reward us in a thousand ways.

There are other ways that people go forth with weeping. Many missionaries have gone forth with the precious seed of the gospel message and have come again in due time bearing the harvest of souls won to the Lord. Weeping is evidence of compassion and love for the lost, in this context. The weeping referred to in this Psalm is not the weeping of self-pity, but rather a weeping of realization of the enormity of the task.

## Chapter One Hundred Twenty-eight

### Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

<sup>1</sup> Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. <sup>2</sup> In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.

<sup>3</sup> Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. <sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

It is the Lord that directs all fruitful endeavors. Why labor if the Lord is not in what is being done? I wonder how much of my own life has been wasted because I failed to understand that it is the Lord who is the doer, not me. Many times while raising our children, money was in short supply and so I took the attitude that when the going gets tough the tough get going! I would struggle on in the pursuit of the resources that were needed. It wasn't that I didn't know that the Lord was the source of my supply, but I just didn't realize that he could make my life easier if I would just rely upon him more completely. My self-reliant attitude was deep rooted in my nature, and learning to seek the Lord's guidance was slow in coming. When circumstances would leave me no alternative, I would seek the Lord and he would help me, but I am afraid that all too often when the crisis was over so was my total reliance on the Lord to guide me.

Fortunately for me, God was always with me, and he did look after me, even when I didn't have the understanding to depend upon him fully.

The goodness of God is often manifesting in the graciousness he shows us despite our inadequacies; yet the desire of the Lord is that we enter into rest. One of the men in our fellowship testified that he had gone beyond faith into trust. Despite the possible error in the mode of expression, the thought was well taken; he had learned to trust the Lord, as the saying goes, 24/7. He had moved from running to God with each crisis and had learned to rest in the constant care and provision of the Lord. He had come to the place where he was not fighting the circumstances, but rather, allowing the Lord to guide him through them. This is the rest that awaits all the people of God.

It was this rest that the Psalmist alluded to when he made the statement that he grants sleep to those he loves. This is the rest that the people of the nation of Israel missed in their Sabbath keeping. Keeping the Sabbath was not meant to be a ritualistic keeping of a day, but rather an opportunity to refresh ones body while affirming their dependency upon the Lord. True rest is not laying down for sleep, but rather, casting our cares upon the Lord because he cares for us. Those who have learned to cast their cares upon the Lord can sleep restful sleep, knowing that the Lord is in control.

Those who have learned to trust the Lord can also enjoy a happy and fulfilling family life. There are no greater riches than the heritage of a family that loves and honors you. My wife and I were blessed with a party being given in honor of our fiftieth anniversary a few days ago. Our five children and their spouses put on the party, and what a blessed time it was. My oldest son who is a computer guy, took our family albums and made a video that played the entire time the party was going on. The video went from one family album to the next showing the highlights of our family and theirs. All our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were there as well as many other family members and friends. My wife and I really felt honored and loved by all and it was a wonderful night filled with so many memories.

Those who fail to trust the Lord with their lives miss so much of what God can give. In our imperfect way we have lived a life that impacted a few people along the way for some kind of good. Because we are imperfect we do have some regrets, but because we also sought the Lord those failures didn't count for much that night, nor will they in the eternal scheme of things.

Our quiver is full, and the afterglow of seeing our children serving the Lord faithfully goes on and is also being fulfilled in our grandchildren. There is no greater joy that a parent can find than to see their children following in the way they have taught them.

## **Chapter One Hundred Twenty-nine**

### **Blessing and Prosperity**

#### **Psalm 128**

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. <sup>2</sup> You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. <sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. <sup>4</sup> Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.

<sup>5</sup> May the LORD bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup> and may you live to see your children's children.  
Peace be upon Israel.

It is a good thing to serve the Lord faithfully. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the Word says. The result of living in the fear of the Lord and serving him faithfully is that he will bless and prosper the life of all who live that way. Children will be added to that person and they will see them grow up and have families of their own.

Some people who are full of greed read passages like this and all they see is that God wants to bless his people. The word prosperity falls upon their greedy hearts and they pursue God thinking that it is the way to become rich in the wealth of the world. The blessings and prosperity that the Lord gives flows to those who are pure in heart and whose hearts have been cleansed of all greed! He visits their lives with blessings that come in a thousand ways. What is prosperity after all? Isn't it having what is needed for each day? Isn't it living in a home where love and peace abound? Isn't it the ability to go to sleep at night knowing that God is providing for you and that all is well with your soul?

Those who have come into the rest that is ordained for the people of God are people who are looking forward to spending eternity with the Lord. There is wealth beyond worldly measure, awaiting the people of God. Whatever prosperity is granted to the Lord's people on this earth is a small measure compared to what is the inheritance of the saints.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty**

### **Salvation will come to Israel**

#### **Psalm 129**

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> They have greatly oppressed me from my youth— let Israel say— <sup>2</sup> they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me. <sup>3</sup> Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD is righteous; he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame. <sup>6</sup> May they be like grass on the roof, which withers before it can grow; <sup>7</sup> with it the reaper cannot fill his hands, nor the one who gathers fill his arms. <sup>8</sup> May those who pass by not say, "The blessing of the LORD be upon you; we bless you in the name of the LORD."

Do you have persistent enemies who are always be trying to get it over on you? The people of the nation of Israel have had this as an ongoing experience of their lives in all generations. They have been the object of hate and scorn despite their rejection of Jesus. You would think that Satan would love his own and do all he could to encourage those who turn their back on the only one who can bring salvation, but such is not the case. He continues to heap upon them all the hate he is capable of mustering. The nation of Israel, at this point in time is in the uncomfortable position of being the object of the hatred of the nations around them, and at the same time not under the full protection of God either. Even in their lost state, God does fight for Israel, but not like he will when they fully embrace the Lord Jesus Christ.



I am sure that many of the Israelis have felt like the plowman has been digging deep furrows in their backs, but their faith in God, despite their rejection of Jesus, has given them courage and hope. They are in the unusual position of honoring and loving the God of the Bible, but at the same time rejecting the only source of salvation there is for them or us. Their eyes are blind to all the passages in the scripture that relate to Jesus Christ, and they have not seen how completely he fulfilled all of them and how he proved beyond reasonable doubt that he is the Christ the Son of the Living God. They still believe the lies of the elders that said that he was not the Christ despite all the evidence to the contrary.

The life of Joseph in the book of Genesis is a symbolic parallel to the life of Jesus. In the early stages of his life, he began to be aware that he was destined to be greater than other members of his family. This was revealed to him in dreams and when he shared his dreams with his brothers, they were stirred to jealous anger at him. After all, he was next to the youngest with eleven brothers. Their anger was further kindled toward him when the favor of his father was expressed in giving him an elaborate coat of many colors.

One day while the older brothers were out looking for pasture for their flock, he was sent to check on them. After searching into a distant part of the land he finally found them. Seeing their opportunity, they seized him and wanted to kill him, but one of the older brothers interceded for him, and while they debated the issue they put him in a pit that was nearby.

The story takes a symbolic turn when a caravan of traders appears on the scene, so they got an idea of how to get rid of him. They decided to sell him to be a slave to the traders, so off he went to Egypt where he was sold to Potiphar a high-ranking Egyptian. Joseph soon found favor in his house and was given more and more responsibilities as Potiphar found him to be trustworthy and a brilliant young man.

One day while everyone was gone from the house except Joseph and Potiphar's wife, she began to make a play for him for sexual favors. This was repeated day after day but Joseph paid no attention to her. Finally one day she became very aggressive toward him and grabbed hold of him but he pulled away so she pulled his garment off him as he fled from her. Seeing that she had been rebuffed, she made up a story about how he had tried to force her to have sex with him and used his garment as evidence. Potiphar believed his wife and had him arrested and put into prison where he remained for some time. Joseph was entrusted with many of the responsibilities regarding the prison and prisoners while in prison.

As time went on, a butcher and a baker were put into prison and had dreams that Joseph interpreted accurately for them. Later Pharaoh had dreams that troubled him and in the course of time, Joseph was brought to Pharaoh where he interpreted his dreams for him. The result was that he was elevated to the second in command of all of Egypt and given absolute authority over the entire nation. After awhile and after Joseph had made all the preparations, a famine came to that region of the world and it not only affected Egypt but also Israel.

Back in Israel, Joseph's family was becoming desperate for supplies as the land was becoming more and more desolate due to the famine. The news came to them that Egypt had an abundance of food laid up in storage and so they decided to go to Egypt and buy some supplies. They didn't know that it was their brother that was responsible for the abundance because he had gathered the grain during the seven previous years when there was an abundance of grain.

When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph immediately recognized his brothers but they didn't even imagine that it could be Joseph that they were asking to buy grain from. By now Joseph looked, acted and talked very much like any other Egyptian. He had married and had two little boys of his own.

A series of events followed that resulted in a moment when Joseph finally revealed to his brothers that he, the Egyptian benefactor was indeed their very brother they had sold to the caravan of traders so long ago. It was a very emotional time and the result was that his entire family was moved to Egypt where they were treated with kindness and love.

All of this is very reminiscent of the life of Jesus and the unfolding history of Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Joseph as a type of Christ started out creating an atmosphere of hatred between himself and his brothers when he revealed his kingly destiny that was seen in dreams. Jesus, likewise, got into difficulty with the elders of Israel when he spoke of God being his Father. As Jesus revealed more and more about his destiny and claim to Godhood, tensions mounted into plots of murder. The elders were concerned that all of this was going to bring about a political condition where a revolutionary effort could emerge that would bring disaster upon them and the nation. Just as the brothers of Joseph put him into a pit, so the elders of Israel pressured Pilate into crucifying Jesus and just as Joseph was in the pit so Jesus was placed in the tomb. The brothers of Joseph had him removed from the pit and Jesus came forth from the tomb in resurrection. Joseph was sent into Egypt a type of the gentile world, and Jesus after the message of the gospel had been proclaimed for about 3 ½ years rejected the message and God sent it into the gentile world. There in the gentile world the young body of Christ flourished for a time, but persecution soon resulted in bondage and imprisonment. The body of Christ historically suffered much opposition and the message was repressed and clouded but the true spirit of Jesus eventually emerged and the message began to flourish once more. Even as Joseph was elevated into the highest level of government so members of the body of Christ have occupied top positions of influence and governance in the gentile world. During this time Israel has undergone many forms of suffering and even though they have gone back to their native land, it is the Christian influence upon the western world that is their source of survival. Without the Christian influence, Israel would soon collapse as a nation and the surrounding nations would achieve their goal of the destruction of their little nation. Still rejection of Jesus persists among the Jews, and yet the day will come when this Joseph church will reveal its true identity to the nation in a way that will bring about a reversal of the condition of rejection.

While some people are sitting around waiting for the rapture of the Church, I am waiting for the time when God uses this mostly gentile church to reveal itself to Israel in a manner that is undeniable. I do not believe that God is quite through with the Church yet. We still have a mission to participate in and that is the salvation of the nation of Israel. When our mission is complete, I expect Jesus to return.

Meanwhile, when we see the suffering in the nation of Israel, we need to remember that what they need is not for us to go around saying, “The blessing of the LORD be upon you; we bless you in the name of the LORD.” (Psalms 129:8) But rather, receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior and all will be well with you.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-one**

### **Forgive Me Lord**

### **Psalm 130**

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; <sup>2</sup> O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

<sup>3</sup> If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. <sup>6</sup> My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. <sup>8</sup> He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

When people sin, they sink into a pit of guilt and contact with the Lord is cut off because sin separates us from the Lord. Some people are not aware of the pit because they sin so frequently and have rationalized that it's no big deal, and to them it isn't a big deal. They have become so accustomed to the pit that it feels like home and therefore all discomfort has been lost. It's a fearful thing to lose all sensitivity to sin and to have a conscience that has been seared by frequent sin.

The Psalmist prayed, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy." (Psalms 130:1-2) The Psalmist was aware of his sins and therefore went on to say, "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?" (Psalms 130:3) When he sinned he knew he had sinned, but he wanted to do something about it. He repented; that is what is alluded to in the first verse of this Psalm that says, he cried from the depths. His appeal was to the mercy of God, and he spoke first using the holiest name of God, the tetragrammaton form, YHWH indicated by the capitalization of the entire word LORD, indicating his respect for righteousness, then he asked for Adonai a more personal and feeling side of God, indicated by the spelling Lord capitalizing only the first letter.

This is a translator's technique to distinguish between these two names of God. The same difference of usage is noted in the third verse where he speaks of the fact that God keeps no record of sins. In the latter case, both names are used indicating, though Adonai indicates a softer side of God, it in no way lessens the fact that God is holy, but that even the holiest side of God is also merciful.

God wants us to come to him, even if we are full of sin and have failed repeatedly. He understands that sin makes us feel very unworthy of his love and that knowing the holiness of God, we become shy about coming to him especially with the sin that often besets us. Most people have an area that is especially hard for them to overcome totally in. It may be a temptation to overeat, or a temper that flashes over almost no provocation. Whatever it is, it tends to make us feel unworthy in the presence of a holy God. It seems that God in his love gave us some names to use that are a little less intimidating than the name YHWH. All the names of God represent the same God, but in human usage some are more intimidating than others, so we can use the one we are most comfortable in so that we will come to him! That is what is important, because the only hope we have as failing humans is to come to the God of love and allow him to wipe away our tears and to encourage us to go on while strengthening us by his Spirit's power so we will do better the next time we are tempted.

As we come to verses five through eight, we see the Psalmist using these names of God again, first using LORD, and then using Lord. There is no reason given for doing this, but nothing is done without a purpose when it comes to the word of God. The attention of the Psalmist shifts from repentance to waiting for a response from God, who, because of the Psalmist's confidence in the word of God, knows that he will respond. And furthermore, he is confident because he knows that the LORD is a God of unfailing love! He also knows that with God is full redemption. This knowledge brings comfort and hope to the Psalmist, not only for himself but also for Israel. He waits as a watchman waits for the morning, and then repeats the same phrase giving it double emphasis.

This is the walk of faith, from the time we make our appeal to God, to the time he responds to our request, and sometimes the response is a hearty, yes, and then we must continue to wait for the manifestation of the promised answer. God has his own timetable as to when he will grant any given manifestation. Many people have become weary of waiting, when God has so clearly

indicated that the answer to their request is yes. The author of the book of Hebrews tells us that many of the great champions of the faith died never having seen the manifestation of their faith. Some manifestations of faith come to us quickly in this life, others come after we are with the Lord, but one thing is certain, once God indicates that he will fulfill a given promise to us, he will fulfill it. God's answers are not dependent upon how often we ask, or how many people we get praying about it, but rather it is the earnest fervent prayer of a righteous man that God is most inclined to hear.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-two**

### **Put Away Haughty Eyes and Prideful Hearts**

#### **Psalm 131**

A song of ascents. Of David.

<sup>1</sup> My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. <sup>2</sup> But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

<sup>3</sup> O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.

How hard it is to learn to rest in the Lord. When we are young, we feel invincible and the prospects of early death seem far removed. We go about our lives with the attitude that life is forever, and nothing can touch us. Prideful ambitions drive us, and the feeling that there is some destiny that is going unfulfilled haunts us.

The Psalmist has come to a place of internal rest, not despair. Let us not confuse the two. Resting in the Lord is not giving up on life, quite the contrary; it is coming to the place where we can begin to live to the full. It is coming to the place where pride and vain desires are no longer what drive us. We are now in a position to be led by the Lord into an exciting and fulfilling life that is governed by the Spirit's leading.

It is one thing to be inspired to seek excellence and desire to be the best we can be simply because it is good to do what is right, but being driven by pride, ego or selfish ambitions leads to hollowness and emptiness of life.

The Psalmist learned to be content with who he was and what he was and not to concern himself with matters that were beyond him. He saw his soul as being like a weaned child that no longer needed what he needed as an infant.

I have noted that many people when first starting their Christian life are driven by very carnal desires. They see their spiritual life as an opportunity to satisfy their need for self-worth, and thus begin to pursue all sorts of endeavors. Some of what they do actually turns out to be Spirit directed, but in the beginning it seemed more like it was a need to be noticed or to look important.

A farmer sows seeds and later sprouts appear. The hull of the seed is nurturing the sprouts, but there comes a point where the upward growth seems to almost pause, that is when the young plant is making the transition from feeding on the old seed to finding nutrients in the soil in which it lives. Once the roots have established themselves and the nutrients of the soil are now flowing upward, the plant is ready for serious growth. Likewise, we see the pattern played out in the lives of those who set out to serve the Lord.

Once a person has come to the point of maturity that they are no longer being motivated by carnal desires, but rather the Spirit is motivating them real growth is now taking form in their lives. The Psalmists admonition now comes into play; hope in the Lord.

## Chapter One Hundred Thirty-three

### Preparations for God's Reign on Earth

#### Psalm 132

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, remember David and all the hardships he endured.

<sup>2</sup> He swore an oath to the LORD and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob: <sup>3</sup> "I will not enter my house or go to my bed— <sup>4</sup> I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids, <sup>5</sup> till I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."

<sup>6</sup> We heard it in Ephrathah, we came upon it in the fields of Jaar: <sup>7</sup> "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool— <sup>8</sup> arise, O LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. <sup>9</sup> May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy."

<sup>10</sup> For the sake of David your servant, do not reject your anointed one.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne— <sup>12</sup> if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."

<sup>13</sup> For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling: <sup>14</sup> "This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it— <sup>15</sup> I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food. <sup>16</sup> I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy.

<sup>17</sup> "Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one. <sup>18</sup> I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on his head will be resplendent."

There was a fervor in the heart of King David that demanded that he reverence and honor the Lord God. When David became King of Judah after Saul and Jonathon were slain in battle, there was no temple in Israel. They were still using the tent tabernacle that was made in the wilderness and the Philistines had carried the Ark of the Covenant away. They returned it to Israel on a new cart being pulled by a cow that had just had a calf. It was placed in the home of an Israelite named Abinadab. Later it was moved again on a new cart, contrary to the instructions of the Lord, but along the way there was a very rough place that they had to cross and the ark was about to fall to the ground so the priest put his hand on it to hold it so it wouldn't fall. He fell dead on the spot because the ark was being mishandled. The ark was then placed in another home for temporary keeping while they made proper preparations and inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. They then moved it to Jerusalem and put back in the tabernacle where it belonged.

David longed to build a house for the Ark because a tent didn't speak of a permanent dwelling place for God's presence. He, therefore, desired to build a permanent house for the Lord and his ark. This task was not for David to accomplish however, but his son Solomon was given the task. The intense desire in the heart of David is expressed in this Psalm 132. The issue in the heart of God, however, was not so much concerned with the Ark of the Covenant as it was with the establishment of the house of David.

The ark was a symbol of God's presence and not God's presence. This is a point that often escapes the mind of man when religion gets involved. The house of David was not a symbol; it

was for real. God needed a dynasty of kings to prepare the way and validate the throne of his Son Jesus. Jesus would be God manifest in human flesh, not a man blessed with a god spirit. Jesus is not a symbol of God's presence; he is God. The ark was a symbol of Jesus and therefore what preceded his coming was of greater concern than where the ark was housed.

God had indeed chosen the place where the temple would be built and that was important too. With God, however, everything comes in its proper time and place. The who was more important than the where, but the where is important too. God was concerned and is concerned with Jerusalem because it is his capital city on earth. Its history is intertwined with the occupants and the current events of the earth still are affected by the status of the city and its occupants. The destiny of the city is a bright one and so is the destiny of the nation of Israel. God's original intentions for the people of Israel and the land and city he chose will still find a glorious fulfillment in the plan of God.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-four**

### **Blessed Unity**

### **Psalm 133**

A song of ascents. Of David.

<sup>1</sup> How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! <sup>2</sup> It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. <sup>3</sup> It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

This is a Psalm that needs no commentary. It says it so well that all we need to do is let it sink into our hearts and spirits.

Having lived in a nation where we have two major political parties, we have become accustomed to and even gloried in opposition. Opposition parties are seen to be the means of keeping us from going too far in any direction, a sort of check and balance to protect us from the excesses of emotional responses. When someone says, "I don't think so," we are caused to reexamine our position. Often it is this sort of exchange in the halls of lawmaking that work toward good legislation. There is an old saying, two heads are better than one, and so it is in the exchange of ideas.

Unity is something that has a quality about it that when it exists is not fragile but is very fragile. Unity is a condition of heart and when it exists it enables us to work through problems constructively and decisively. Where it doesn't exist, a spirit of war is in the heart that is driven by agendas that are usually selfish in nature.

The spirit of war is the natural enemy of unity. Many people are afflicted with the spirit of war that is manifest in a very distasteful attitude. What they want they will get, by whatever means is necessary. If it can be achieved peacefully and legitimately, fine, but if not war is sure to erupt. Sometimes wars are fought defensively, and sometimes aggressively.

David understood war, but longed for unity. He must have spent time dwelling upon the glory of this spiritual condition of heart and longed for its full manifestation. It is almost like he

had to give it expression for all generations to behold so that they would never think that the spirit of war is in some way glorious. Every word had to be special and carefully selected so that the beauty of this gem of truth could find a place next to the word peace, and along with the word faith.

Unity is not dependent upon agreement because people can have a spirit of unity and disagree about a host of issues. Neither love nor unity requires agreement because they are spiritual conditions not mental. Parents often are at odds with their children, but there is a love between them that allows for differences of opinions. In the same way, we can allow for differences without feeling threatened unless one party or the other has war in their heart.

We are taught in the scriptures that the spirit of debate comes from the fallen nature, and so it does. The spirit of debate is different from an exchange of ideas that is intended to research a pure form of understanding. Debating or arguing, is a spiritual condition akin to the spirit of war. Where this negative attitude exists the spirit of unity is not present. Unity is a positive and in its purest form is like unto a rare and precious gem. Its beauty is only enhanced by its use. Unity, seek it, use it and cherish it, it is the most rare human quality and is possibly the most beautiful. One cannot be pure in heart without it.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-five**

### **Blessed are Those who Keep Watch by Night**

#### **Psalm 134**

A song of ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister by night in the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

There are special people on earth who never stop praising the Lord. It may be night or day, but the praise goes on. Night can refer to that period of the day cycle when it gets dark and people normally go to bed, or it can refer to those periods of time when life seems dark and the light of hope seems to have vanished. Nothing strengthens the heart in the darkness of circumstances like pausing to praise the Lord. There is no grander display of the glory of God than to look up at the starlight sky on the darkest night. When there isn't even a moon to light our path, the stars are always there in grand display even when there is no other light.

Then there are those nights when storms cover even the sight of stars or moon. When the storms of life are raging and all is darkness and gloom, there is a light that still shines, it is found in the house of the Lord where faithful servants keep the lamps trimmed and the oil supply filled. When sojourners pass by with little or no hope, there is a light that shines. It may not even come from a church, because some churches are dark places, but it is found in the face of those who know their God and have been tending the light of their hearts by spending time with the Lord.

Once while living on a small ranch, I was receiving rent for doing certain chores around the place. Once a year it fell my lot to walk the fence line with some tools and supplies to mend the fence if the barbed wire had fallen or was broke. The terrain was hill country and it had brush

patches that in some cases were quite large. As I followed the fence it eventually went into one of these large patches of brush, and because the terrain was rough there was no telling how I would find the fence if I tried to go around it. It seemed the best plan was to follow it through the brush. So I made my way through the patch. I kept going following the wire for what seemed to be quite a distance and I was somewhat disoriented by now not know which way I was going. I took comfort in the fact that I was still going along the wire and I had to remember that it would lead me out of the patch of brush if I would have the faith to just keep following it. Whoever put the fence up knew where the property line was and it would eventually lead me back home. While in the patch of brush I couldn't see up or to the right or left more than a few feet at the most.

I have thought of that experience many times when it seemed to me that what I was experiencing in life resembled that patch of brush. I successfully completed my task because instead of panicking or giving up and returning, I persevered and kept following even when it seemed that I was just going deeper into this endless patch of brush. I had to trust that whoever put up the fence knew the way and it would surely lead me to the light again if I just would keep on going.

Blessed are those who keep on following the path marked out for us, even when that path seems like a hopeless futile endeavor. Are you on a path of life that seems overwhelming? Do you feel overwhelmed and disoriented? There is one who has his eye on you and knows the end from the beginning. He is never disoriented or confused. Isaiah called him "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

I give you Jesus; because he is the one Isaiah was speaking of. He said, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." He didn't say, to Mary and Joseph a child is given, NO, he said it was to us a child is given. It is Jesus you need when you need a Wonderful Counselor because you don't know where to turn and when what you need is beyond what can see in the natural, you need Mighty God. When comfort is what you need, you need the Fathering arms of Jesus to bring comfort and strength and when the entire world is full of confusion, you are in the presence of the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

When you have walked through the valley of death and have felt no evil because he was with you, your light is burning, and those around you see a great light. Blessed are those who minister by night in the house of the LORD. "May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion." (Psalms 134)

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-six**

### **The Pure in Heart, Praise the Lord**

#### **Psalm 135**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise the name of the LORD; praise him, you servants of the LORD, <sup>2</sup> you who minister in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.

<sup>3</sup> Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant. <sup>4</sup> For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession.

<sup>5</sup> I know that the LORD is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. <sup>6</sup> The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. <sup>7</sup> He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.



<sup>8</sup> He struck down the firstborn of Egypt, the firstborn of men and animals. <sup>9</sup> He sent his signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants. <sup>10</sup> He struck down many nations and killed mighty kings— <sup>11</sup> Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan and all the kings of Canaan— <sup>12</sup> and he gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance to his people Israel.

<sup>13</sup> Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, through all generations. <sup>14</sup> For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.

<sup>15</sup> The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. <sup>16</sup> They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; <sup>17</sup> they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths.

<sup>18</sup> Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

<sup>19</sup> O house of Israel, praise the LORD; O house of Aaron, praise the LORD; <sup>20</sup> O house of Levi, praise the LORD; you who fear him, praise the LORD. <sup>21</sup> Praise be to the LORD from Zion, to him who dwells in Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD.

The Lord is always worthy of praise. Praise and thankfulness are cut from the same cloth. The first chapter of Romans talks about what happens to people, culture or nations that become unthankful even though they have the knowledge of the truth. Unthankfulness starts with holding the truth in unrighteousness, a condition common in our world today. When people love sin and sinning more than they love God, they will find a way to justify their sins. For some people this starts out by listening to the voice of the serpent when he whispers, “has God really said?” Or perhaps it is something like this, “go ahead and don’t feel guilty because you were created that way or you would not want to do this sin.” Other people say, “don’t worry about what the Bible says, after all man wrote it.” Some theologians have said that the Bible is not really the inspired word of God, but rather a record of man’s search for God; thus, has come the attitude of tolerance for whatever it is that you believe about God.

My goodness! What kind of God would leave us upon this earth without some kind of instructions about our life and destiny? People who reject the Bible and its complete message as being divinely given and relevant to every aspect of our life, are left to their own vain imaginations to determine what they think God might be like. It is not surprising that we see so many people turning to the ancient false gods to find answers because those gods were symbols of the wickedness of the fallen natures of the people who served them. Fallen sin natures are just as wicked today as they ever were, and man is capable of all the wickedness of past generations and sometimes it seems even more.

It takes purity of heart to truly praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, therefore, all who serve the Lord. It is especially important to praise the Lord when we are in a position to be seen by the world. Our lives should be a testimony to the cleansing power of the Lord. The highest praise a man can give the Lord is to live a life that is above reproach as far as is possible.

I realize that what living above reproach is to one person isn’t the same to another person. We all come from varying ideas and attitudes about a host of subjects and what is seen as a behavior unbecoming to a Christian by one person is not seen as being bad by another person. If it is not something that is clearly unrighteous by clear Biblical principles, we best leave it alone. Too many people have tried to be God’s little helpers by dictating proper behavior to other people. The Holy Spirit is capable of convicting us of sin, revealing righteousness and instructing us about the coming judgment without us getting into the mix and putting bondage upon one another.

Yesterday a group of men sat together around a breakfast table where the discussion turned to a TV program that had aired the night before. The subject dealt with the financial dealings of a popular evangelist of our time. He was being scrutinized by this news media and they were concerned with his lack of apparent accountability in the realm of finances. He apparently had avoided open accountability for funds that had been raised with certain projects. Because there was no apparent accountability, it left room for speculation as to where the money was going and accusations concerning mishandling and possible dishonesty in the realm of how money was

being used. It is unfortunate indeed when high profile people don't take responsibility for their actions and make every effort to close the door to questionings.

Sometimes churches and ministries have erred in taking special offerings for a project that later had to be canceled and because the offerings were given at the expense of the regular tithe and offerings of the church, a deficit has resulted in the regular expenses that the ministry must cover and therefore, the funds have gone to pay the bills instead of to the proposed project. If this is the case in any ministry, it should of course, be stated clearly that that is what was done. I on one occasion returned a contribution to a donor because the project for which it was given was canceled. I got a letter back with a portion of the contribution and a note of thanks because it was seen as unusual honesty. I personally viewed it as normal integrity. What joy there is in any group when all such dealings are open and above board?

When our hearts are pure before God and our behavior is right before men, we can sing, and should sing, praises unto our God. It is good to praise the Lord! The Lord seems to love to hear the praises of his people. Just as we are drawn closer to one another by complimenting and thanking one another, so we are drawn closer to the Lord when we pause to thank him for the many good things that he does.

The Psalmist speaks of the natural things that happen on the earth, even the storms, wind, rain, lightning all are mentioned as coming from the Lord. Have you ever been to a place on earth where storms don't reach? They're dead places, right? It takes the storms to water the earth and life is dependent upon storms! We may not like them, but nature depends upon them. Sometimes we humans do foolish things like build houses in flood zones, or over known fault lines, and then when the storms or earthquakes come, we are distressed because what we built is ruined. Similarly, when we build our lives using forbidden materials, can we wonder that we are subject to tragic events? Sometimes God allows a life-storm to come and erase some part of our life that never should have been in the first place.

In retrospect the Psalmist saw that the Lord had given many great victories to the nation of Israel and names some of the great kings that had been defeated by God working through the nation of Israel.

When we look back at the victories that God has given, it enables us to believe for victories in the present and in the future. I have made it a practice to look back because it is the source of encouragement to believe for the future. My wife and I just celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and it was an outstanding event. Our children made all the plans and invited the guests. We were excluded from all the planning meetings they had where they planned and laughed and brainstormed. We heard the statement made that it was the best party of its kind that those present had ever seen. For my wife and me it was a very special time of looking at the present and seeing what all the struggles and difficulties of the past brought forth. Seeing our children and their families, our church family and friends was sort of like looking into the face of a baby that has just been born and remembering all the suffering of the pregnancy but knowing that this child is worth all of it! We had all our children and their spouses, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren present, that's thirty-four of us in all. My nephew and his family were all their, and he was the MC of the event.

If I were to say that I am a very rich man, I think it is evident that that is true. The wealth is not measured in money or property, but rather in the lives of those who have been touched by God throughout our lives. We have been permitted to view God at work up close and sometimes very personal. I stand amazed at all the blessings that he has bestowed upon our lives.

I trust that our lives will be a continuing source of strength and encouragement to many others. That is what living for Jesus is all about. All praise to Jesus Christ our Lord!

# Chapter One Hundred Thirty-seven

## His Love Endures Forever!

### Psalm 136

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>2</sup> Give thanks to the God of gods.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>3</sup> Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>4</sup> to him who alone does great wonders,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>5</sup> who by his understanding made the heavens,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>6</sup> who spread out the earth upon the waters,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>7</sup> who made the great lights—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>8</sup> the sun to govern the day,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>9</sup> the moon and stars to govern the night;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>10</sup> to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>11</sup> and brought Israel out from among them

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>12</sup> with a mighty hand and outstretched arm;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>13</sup> to him who divided the Red Sea asunder

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>14</sup> and brought Israel through the midst of it,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>15</sup> but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>16</sup> to him who led his people through the desert,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>17</sup> who struck down great kings,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>18</sup> and killed mighty kings—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>19</sup> Sihon king of the Amorites

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>20</sup> and Og king of Bashan—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>21</sup> and gave their land as an inheritance,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>22</sup> an inheritance to his servant Israel;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>23</sup> to the One who remembered us in our low estate

*His love endures forever.*

- <sup>24</sup> and freed us from our enemies,  
*His love endures forever.*
- <sup>25</sup> and who gives food to every creature.  
*His love endures forever.*
- <sup>26</sup> Give thanks to the God of heaven.  
*His love endures forever.*

This Psalm consists of seven stanzas that all contain the same responsive line, “His love endures forever.” The first stanza says that the Lord is good, that he is the God of gods, and that he is the Lord of lords. The statement that he is good is somewhat revolutionary to the thinking of heathen idol worshippers who worship out of fear of offending the gods. Not only is he good but he is also the God of the gods, meaning that he is the sovereign God who is above all who would aspire to godhood.

There is another sense of use of the term god, or Elohim the Hebrew word, because it was used in various ways in the Hebrew language. When capitalized in the English language it indicates the Lord God, but in other uses it might be used for a king or an important person. It could also indicate an idol or a person who aspires to be a god unto himself, not recognizing any authority over himself. The later use is the one that the Israelis believed was an act of blasphemy and accused Jesus of this because he claimed to be God’s Son, making himself equal to God. Had it not been true, it would have indeed been blasphemy.

In this first stanza then we have the declaration that God is good, that he is the God of god’s and the Lord of lords, or, that is to say, of those who would lord it over other people. Repeatedly they followed each statement with the responsive line, “His love endures forever.” Front and center of all the attributes of God is this declaration. It is the quality that is most often forgotten by the masses of humanity, but the quality that God wants us all to know most assuredly. Everything that God does is motivated by his love. He is love, not hate or vengeance, nevertheless, where love is not, hate is, where grace and mercy are not, vengeance is. Hate and vengeance like all negatives is the absence of the positives. So it is with God, if his love is rejected, the rejecter becomes the object of hate! This kind of hate is more an action of the person so afflicted than of God, because God wants us to come to him where love is. Equally, rejecting his mercy and grace leaves us with the awful fate of vengeance, therefore God said, “vengeance is mine I will repay.” That truth though real, must not be what we dwell upon; it is his love that endures forever that we are to dwell upon.

God is the great God because he is the creator. The Psalmist points to the wonders of what he has done as supportive evidence to the fact that he is worthy of our thanksgiving. He reminds us that he made the heavens, that he spread out the earth upon the waters, that he placed stars, sun and moon in the sky, to bring order and light at the darkest times.

These are symbols of our lives that when we are going through our darkest moments, and it seems that all is darkness, but up there, beyond the clouds that sometimes obscures our vision, stars, and moon are still governing the night, and “His love endures forever.” Yes, what he said is true, he will never leave us nor forsake us. We have only to look up and there he is smiling at us as always with grace and love waiting for us to call upon him.

Again the Psalmist looks back at what God did to Egypt, and to the kings that opposed them, even Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, when they made their way through the wilderness experiences. God also deals with deadly vengeance against the powers of the evil kingdom of darkness when we are opposed in our walk through wilderness experiences as we learn to trust God.

The case for thankfulness continues to build in this Psalm 136, as the Psalmists declares that God remembers them in their low estate. Perhaps this is a reference to the 70 years of captivity when God delivered them though they were again enslaved by a heathen nation, or perhaps a reference to when they were slaves in Egypt. No matter really, unless you are trying to determine

when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for us it is clear, when we are in a situation where we are the lowly one, enslaved by some circumstance, God sees and remembers us. God delivers us from our enemies, and gives food to every creature.

The Psalmist concludes his Psalm with these words, “Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.”

## Chapter One Hundred Thirty-eight

### A Psalm from Captivity

#### Psalm 137

<sup>1</sup>By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. <sup>2</sup>There on the poplars we hung our harps, <sup>3</sup>for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

<sup>4</sup>How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? <sup>5</sup>If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. <sup>6</sup>May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

<sup>7</sup>Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. “Tear it down,” they cried, “tear it down to its foundations!”

<sup>8</sup>O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us— <sup>9</sup>he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

Do not use the songs of Zion to entertain the world! When God gives spiritual gifts to men he doesn't want them used for carnal entertainment or for worldly profit. Holy gifts should always be used for holy purposes.

It is true that the anointing of the Holy Spirit brings out the performer in us. We are at our finest when the Holy Spirit is anointing the ministry that God has given us. Being a performer is not the purpose of the anointing, however. God gives gifts to people for gospel purposes. The anointing of the Holy Spirit works upon the person neutralizing their inhibitions and giving them a confidence to express what he is inspiring within them. Once this has been accomplished the person so blessed is indeed a more confident and charismatic person and some people have taken this blessing and used it for personal gain.

It is allowable for a ministry to take provisions for living purposes from the tithes and offerings of the people of God when it is given for that purpose. People who are blessed by a ministry want to bless back and this is good and acceptable.

I remember when one of the early healing evangelists would go into a town and hold a crusade. He would receive offerings toward the expenses of the crusade and then at the end of the crusade would take a love offering for his personal use. This method stopped all those who would criticize his ministry for wrongful use of money. Everything was declared up front so no one had a right to complain. What he did with the love offerings was his own personal decision.

All Christian ministries, in my judgment need to have very clear money policies that guarantee to the donor that what is given always goes to the purpose for which it was given. Unfortunately some ministries have been careless either by simply not realizing the importance of such policies, or by design because their intentions were not honorable. Some ministries, needing to raise money for operating costs, have appealed to their constituency creating some special project just to raise money but never intending to carry it out. This is grossly dishonest and

shameful, but done in all to many instances. Some individuals have been trained to give to special purposes and only give when there is a special need. Individuals who lack integrity have exploited these sorts of people to raise money for personal gain.

The nation of Israel, in Psalms 137 before us, had been carried away into captivity and while in captivity their captors wanted them to sing the songs of Zion for them. This was appalling to the Israelis who cherished the songs of Zion as being especially sacred to them. The songs of Zion spoke of their love for the Lord and his love and care for his people, how then could they sing those happy songs when they were in grief of spirit because Jerusalem was lying in ruin?

The Lord had dealt harshly against the nations of Judah and Israel, the armies of Egypt and Babylon had been allowed to carry them away into captivity. The ten tribes, that were called Israel at this time, had been carried away into Egypt and from there they were scattered into other nations where many of them remained and never returned again. The nation of Judah was carried away into Babylon where our Psalm 137 speaks to what they were going through. Both nations were originally Israel and both were Israelis but it was Judah that was the inheritor of the promises concerning David and Jerusalem.

When the nation of Judah was being defeated, the their cousin nation, Edom, was cheering on the armies that were defeating Jerusalem. They were saying, “Tear it down; tear it down to its foundations!” This hate for them hurt the people of Jerusalem and they felt that God should judge them for it. Even though God allowed the Babylonians to defeat them, he still would judge them for it. One wrong does not justify another wrong. The Psalm predicted that when the day of judgment would come, that those who would invade them would even take their infants and with pleasure dash them upon the rocks! How tragic it is when people allow themselves to step outside divine protection, where evil is unrestrained.

## **Chapter One Hundred Thirty-nine**

### **Psalm 138**

Of David.

<sup>1</sup> I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the “gods” I will sing your praise. <sup>2</sup> I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. <sup>3</sup> When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.

<sup>4</sup> May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. <sup>5</sup> May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great.

<sup>6</sup> Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar. <sup>7</sup> Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me. <sup>8</sup> The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands.

Sometimes it takes courage to praise the Lord! David declared that he would praise the Lord before the gods, probably meaning those who exalt themselves above God! David faithfully bowed down toward the holy temple where God's presence was thus honoring the name and word of God because God had honored them above all else and furthermore, when he called upon the Lord he answered him! This encounter with the Lord had a profound effect upon David making him bold and stouthearted!

Sometimes it's easier to go somewhere private and bow before the Lord. Have you ever eaten your lunch in a room where the "in crowd" was jesting and cursing and making light of goodness and you wanted to bow to thank God for your food? If I were to say that the atmosphere that surrounds us is affected by our presence, and you have done what you know you should do, you know that it does affect those who see you take a stand, if only symbolically. Sometimes when we just don't enter in to their course joking and refuse to partake of their ungodly ways, our life becomes a rebuke that no amount of words can ever do.

David wanted all the kings of the earth to join him in praise to the Lord. He wanted them to hear the words of the Lord and knew that if they just understood them, they too would praise him.

The Psalmist then turns his attention to the subject of the problem of pride. He has learned that God picks up on pride when it is still afar off. Pride and rebellion are very closely associated and may be inseparable. Then comes the question, which comes first, pride or rebellion? In Satan's case, it evidently was pride. Pride must have taken root in his heart from the attention he was getting from the other angels. He was evidently greatly admired and perhaps some of them were starting to transfer their affections for God to him. He may have been the one that was most often seen and was the source of wisdom and instruction to them. Some believe he was a choirmaster and musician, and therefore was pleasing to those who were served by him.

This is a condition that is seen in the world of the performing arts today just as much as it ever was. Those who possess great talent are often idolized to the point of worship. This idolization results in prideful attitudes in many celebrities causing them to feel privileged and a cut above the rest of society. This adulation results in pride and the pride soon leads to rebellion. The rebellion may not be blatantly against God, but it may be manifest against the teachings of morality and a life of holiness that they know is right in their heart of hearts. The temptation to take a little liberty with a know command has a conscience searing affect and when the sin is desirable, and therefore, repeated, the damage done is becoming irreversible. A little sin here, and a little sin there, soon adds together to cause the soul of the person so afflicted to become hard and calloused to the point where conscience is lost and the barriers against sin are almost nonexistent.

It is a sad thing to witness a person who was once humble in heart, begin to take on a prideful attitude. God sees this change of heart from afar, even before it is seen by man. The changes sometimes are very subtle and start occurring simultaneously to the presence of another temptation. If, for example, a person want to date someone but there is a moral principal that must be violated in the process, the temptation then shifts to questionings concerning the command or prohibition. Questionings soon find support when those around us have already cast aside the restraints we are questioning. If they have cast them aside with no apparent ill effects, we are then tempted to do likewise. This is the road that lost many lost souls have traveled. It is a broad road but it leads to destruction.

God holds humility in high esteem, because those who hold tenaciously to their humility are not likely to wander too far off track. God looks favorably upon those who hold to the knowledge that God is high and holy and we, no matter what the world thinks of us, are still very small in the eyes of God. If the world hates us, God still loves us and will look after us, even fighting for us! When the Lord looks favorably upon us, he will bring about the fulfillment of his purposes for us. He will not forget the work of his hands!

# Chapter One Hundred-forty

## The All Seeing, All Knowing God

### Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

<sup>5</sup> You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” <sup>12</sup> even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

<sup>13</sup> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, <sup>16</sup> your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

<sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

<sup>19</sup> If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! <sup>20</sup> They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. <sup>21</sup> Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? <sup>22</sup> I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

<sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Why try to hide from God? Do we think he doesn’t see and know what is going on in our life? The Psalmist David had come to the understanding that nothing is hidden from God. He knows what is going on even in our inmost thoughts. It isn’t possible to get beyond his reach, even if we were to go to the most remote place on earth or in the heavens, he is still there just the same.

It’s a comforting thought to know that God is everywhere especially wherever we are at. When I boarded a plane and traveled to India, I didn’t have to call home and have the church send a special message to God to notify him that I was now in Bombay India and to please find me so I wouldn’t be without his presence. I was totally conscious of his presence with me, and never ever felt that he had lost track of me. Though I didn’t always know where I was, he did!

It hasn’t been until very recent times that anything was really understood about the process of conception and development of an unborn child, nevertheless, David, by the Holy Spirit, knew that God saw him and knew all about him before his body was formed. We are just now beginning to catch up with what God knew all along, that once conception takes place, the DNA of the child is complete, and all that will be is clearly set forth and the master plan has been determined. The energy of life begins to work within the first cell and soon divides into two cells and each cell carries the same DNA blueprint of what must happen in the formation of the already determined body though yet unformed. David wrote about this in this Psalm as he said that God created his inmost being and knit him together in the depths of the womb, he called earth. It was



also revealed to him that God saw his unformed body, a statement that was once a mystery but now understanding has been given. We now know that that is a scientifically true statement because the DNA is complete from the moment of conception! The whole subject of the viability of a fetus and whether or not it is human is refuted in this Psalm. God revealed that he was complete including his inmost being from the moment he was conceived. There was no period when he was not complete, only unformed. It was also revealed to David that God knew the whole story of his life from this beginning and knew every day he would live before he lived even his first day.

After writing about the creative process and how comprehensive it is, David paused to reflect upon the unfathomable intellect of God, and how precious his thoughts really are! There was still one thing that David didn't understand; why didn't God slay the wicked? He reminds God about how utterly terrible they are, and declares his personal hatred for them because they hate God, and are bloodthirsty and wicked.

Then David reflects upon his own state of heart, and asks God to examine him, to look at his inmost thoughts and to see if there is any offensive way in him. I have to wonder if David had a little pang of conscience when he was expressing his hatred for those who hate God. If God is patient and is not in a hurry to destroy the wicked, who knows perhaps they may repent! When a person commits a heinous crime the response of society often is to execute instant justice upon the person, yet God is not always in the same hurry. Every person will be dealt with in due time, but when God orchestrates delays in the process of justice; it just may be that he is granting the offender a space of time in which to repent.

The subject of love and hate are brought before us in this Psalm, and David felt the impact of hate as he contemplated the greatness of God. We know that God is love, and that there is no wickedness in God, whatsoever. Is there therefore, positive hate? The principle of positives and negatives reveals that a positive is a substance, energy or condition, and that a negative is the absence of the corresponding positive. If love is the positive then it would be that where love is not is hate. For God to hate, he then would have to have within him a part that love is not allowed to enter. I suppose that is true, but the full understanding of that is hard to contemplate. We know from the scriptures that God hates sin, for example. In other words, there seems to be a partition, as it were, in the heart of God that only allows his love to be manifest toward righteousness. If an action or person or other object is unrighteous, it is dealt with outside the boundaries of love. This truth is expressed in various ways in the scripture, but to grasp it in its fullness is difficult indeed.

It seems that God created this earth to be a sort of sorting ground, where human spirits could be dealt with in a state of grace, while eternal matters such as will they become recipients of his love eternally or will they be excluded from his love forever in the place of torment are determined. It is as though there is a way out of the darkness of hate and torment that all humanity are in as a result of sin, and that way is the cross. The cross upon which Jesus died is the port of entry into the loving heart of God, and once sin has been renounced and abandoned, the way is opened into the eternal love of God. This is the challenge all ministers of salvation face; how to get people to forsake sinning and to turn to God with all their hearts so that they will be allowed to come into the love of God that stands available to all humanity, without exception.

David felt hatred for the ungodly not because they messed up in some life issue in a moment of weakness, but rather because they hated God! The hatred that David felt was not the lashing out of an immature spoiled brat, but rather was a deliberate contemplated hatred based upon an action on the part of another human being that deliberately rejected the love of God. If there is such a thing as a positive hate, then David is expressing it in this Psalm. We sometimes speak of loving the sinner, but hating the sin. There comes a point, however, where the sin and the sinner become so one that one cannot hate the sin without also hating the sinner.

Often people struggle with issues of forgiveness, versus bitterness and unforgiveness. Is unforgiveness ever justified? We are not admonished to forgive the unrepentant sinner who

refuses grace and mercy. I counsel people who struggle with this issue, that when a sinner repents, if our heart is full of the love of Jesus, we will not only forgive but also rush to minister love and healing. This is a response of the spirit of one filled with the Holy Spirit of God. What we have in our hearts before a sinner repents is unclaimed forgiveness that stands ready to be given instantly upon repentance.

If unrighteous bitterness is in our hearts, we will be reluctant to forgive, and therefore we put our own relationship with God in jeopardy. The heart of God though capable of love and harsh judgment, is not given to bitterness. The righteousness of God is expressed in the giving of Jesus Christ as the sin sacrifice for the sins of the world and the extension of grace and mercy to a world of sinners. Because God hates sin, there is a necessity to exclude the offending spirits from entering into heaven with the sin that has so plagued this world.

If we are wise, we will pray as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalms 139:23-24)

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-one

### Evil Tongues and Lips of Poison

### Psalm 140

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, <sup>2</sup> who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day. <sup>3</sup> They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers is on their lips. *Selah*

<sup>4</sup> Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from men of violence who plan to trip my feet. <sup>5</sup> Proud men have hidden a snare for me; they have spread out the cords of their net and have set traps for me along my path. *Selah*

<sup>6</sup> O LORD, I say to you, “You are my God.” Hear, O LORD, my cry for mercy. <sup>7</sup> O Sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle— <sup>8</sup> do not grant the wicked their desires, O LORD; do not let their plans succeed, or they will become proud. *Selah*

<sup>9</sup> Let the heads of those who surround me be covered with the trouble their lips have caused. <sup>10</sup> Let burning coals fall upon them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise. <sup>11</sup> Let slanderers not be established in the land; may disaster hunt down men of violence.

<sup>12</sup> I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. <sup>13</sup> Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you.

Wars are first conceived in the hearts of men who are not content with what is their rightful provision in life. Discontentment is the root cause of greed and covetousness drives the heart to war. Contented hearts don’t want what another possesses. When the sins of greed and covetousness are in the heart of an individual, his mind will begin to devise a plot to secure what he desires and often his tongue will begin to speak words against the possessor of the object of his greed.

There is a world of evil that finds expression in the languages of men. Words spoken have power to alter the course of life for people who hear them. Some words build up and encourage the heart of the hearer; other words discourage and cause sickness or death to the person who hears them. Words spoken in anger or bitterness have poison in them that can hurt the heart of the person to whom they are spoken. Thus, the Psalmist warns, "They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips." (Psalms 140:3)

The Psalmist requested the Lord to protect his head in the day of battle. Have you ever considered praying for the Lord to protect your head in the day of battle? Satan is our adversary and he has many helpers. He uses demonic spirits and he uses human spirits who are willing to help his cause. The primary goal of Satan is to dethrone God from his rightful place in the hearts of people. Satan is no friend of humans. He only wants to feed his hate for God. Because God loves humans Satan wants to pervert everything about us and make us a stench in the nostrils of God.

I was in prayer one day in the city where we started Outreach Ministries International, and was asking the Lord to come and visit the city with a divine visitation. In answer to my prayer, I saw in my mind's eye the Lord approaching the city from above, and as he drew closer all at once I saw him pull his head back and to the side in a gesture one would make if he suddenly caught a whiff of a very unpleasant odor. At this point my mind was drawn to a view of the city and to the street where our ministry was located and there I saw in the gutters raw sewage and knew that this was where the stench was coming from. A few days later I saw another vision in my mind's eye that I recognized as being of divine origin. I suddenly saw the same street only this time the shopping centers were gone, and the colleges were also gone, in fact, all the buildings and enterprises that the people of the town held in such high esteem were missing. All I saw was a scene of total desolation and realized that everything that man held in such high esteem was totally a stench and void of any value to God.

We are often subjected to the seductive power of the wealth and pride of the world around us, and are seduced and tempted to place in high esteem that which is totally void of eternal value. The only things that have value in this world are those things that are a part of the new creation that God is creating in this present world. The old order of things is rapidly passing away and God is calling a people out of the darkness and corruption of this present evil world into a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness is the essence of all that has value.

It is our mind that is the battleground upon which this war is being waged. Every seductive power that Satan can muster is being thrown at believers and unbelievers alike. The purpose is to fill our minds and hearts with what is temporal in nature so that we will cease to dwell upon what is eternal and therefore real.

The Psalmist was also concerned about his feet being tripped up, and was concerned about snares that had been set for them. In the scriptures, feet represent our daily walk, and when snares are set for one's feet, this means that there are things that are set in our daily life experiences that have the power to disrupt our walk of victory. Whether those things are tangible and real in the sense that a soldier must face on the battlefield, or are spiritual in nature as most Christians face on an everyday basis, the need for divine intervention is the same.

What the Psalmist was facing was a real war situation and his enemies were real people doing wicked acts of treason against him. He desired that all the trouble they had caused return against them and be heaped upon their heads.

I heard a story the other day about a man who was having a great problem with someone in his life. One day the man received Christ as his savior and stopped retaliating against the offender. The offender noticed this and asked him about it and he replied that he had read that a Christian is to return good for evil and that in doing this he is heaping coals of fire upon his enemy's head. Then he asked him if he was feeling the heat yet, and added that he hoped the coals would burn a hole in his head! I think he missed the part about loving your enemies.

Keeping our minds free of the entanglements of evil influences and our walk free of ensnaring sins is essential if we are to walk in victory.

Those individuals who are in the military are trained to be aware of land mines when walking in enemy territory. One of the duties of the military when conquering an area is to rid it of such devices as quickly as possible so the people who follow will not have to worry about stepping on a life threatening explosive. Some people survive the explosions of land mines, but lose part of their feet or legs as a result of the explosion.

Equally, it is important to identify those snares that Satan has set to either disable or kill a newly formed Christian life.

God desires people to come to him so that they will experience a life changing impartation of divine energy that will result in a righteousness that is expressed in daily living. The Psalmist was aware that when righteousness is in the heart it will be expressed in praise and will result in a life that is lived to honor God.

## **Chapter One Hundred Forty-two**

### **Hear My Prayer, Oh LORD**

#### **Psalm 141**

A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. <sup>2</sup> May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

<sup>3</sup> Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. <sup>4</sup> Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies.

<sup>5</sup> Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it.

Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers; <sup>6</sup> their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs, and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken. <sup>7</sup> They will say, “As one plows and breaks up the earth, so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave.”

<sup>8</sup> But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death.

<sup>9</sup> Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers.

<sup>10</sup> Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety.

I suppose everyone's desire is that the Lord will always listen to his prayers. Some people take it for granted that God will listen and I am quite sure he does hear us when we pray. In fact, I feel sure he not only hears our prayers but also our thoughts when we don't think he hears. Some people think thoughts that I am sure they wish God didn't hear or know about, but nothing goes unnoticed by God. If we want a positive response from God to our prayers, doesn't it make sense that all our thoughts and desires be righteous before a holy God?

There is a link between our daily life experiences and how God listens to our prayers. This is why it is sometimes necessary to begin our prayers with words of apology or repentance to God for our attitude or behavior. If we have been living indifferently, caring only for what can be given to us to give us greater creature comforts, we may do well to apologize to God!

David didn't seem to take it for granted that God would listen to his prayer, so he opened his prayer with a request that God would listen. He wanted God to come to him, knowing that he was in a fixed location, but God is everywhere present. When we ask for God to come to us, it is because we are aware that though God is always with us, yet there are those times when he is more focused upon us, and we upon him and we want those times to be a positive experience if we love God. There are times when we are in a special fellowship with God because we are focusing our life and attentions upon him and our desires are to please him in all our ways. If we have been living indifferently toward God and only acknowledging him in the most cursory ways, is it any wonder that we get a cold shoulder from God?

The tone of David's prayer indicated that he was intent upon pleasing the Lord, so much so that he was also willing to accept the rebukes of righteous men, and when struck in the head by them, he would consider their correction as oil being poured out upon him. It is a sign of real courage when a man will accept criticism gracefully. There are different kinds of courage; one kind is when people put their own life at risk for the safety of others or to rescue them when danger has struck. Another kind of courage is when we deal gracefully with people of a lesser rank in life allowing them to be our instructors and accepting their counsel or help when we are in need of it.

The courage and humility of David didn't mean that his enemies were to assume that he was no longer capable of engaging them in battle. The courage and humility of David as expressed toward God and righteous men, didn't mean that he was weak or unaware of evil plots, he just wanted to have God on his side doing what he couldn't do for himself.

David longed for the day when all wickedness would be eradicated from the earth and righteousness would prevail in all hearts, but until that day there would be struggles and battles but David trusted in God.

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-three

### The LORD is David's Faithful Companion

### Psalm 142

A *maskil* of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.

<sup>1</sup> I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. <sup>2</sup> I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble.

<sup>3</sup> When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me. <sup>4</sup> Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.

<sup>5</sup> I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." <sup>6</sup> Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. <sup>7</sup> Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.

Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

Have you ever felt like you were being forced to live in a cave because every time you show yourself outside your little protected environment an enemy is there trying to do you in? Sometimes the threats we perceive are real, and sometimes they are imaginary, but if you feel

that way, it is pure torment. David felt that way because King Saul was hunting him down like one would stalk prey.

The danger that David was in caused him to turn to God and seek his face for safety. All of David's life would be lived in a danger zone from that day onward. In fact, it all began the day that Samuel the Prophet came to his father's house and pour anointing oil on his head anointing him king! Up to that point in his life he was just another shepherd boy on the Judean hills.

David learned to trust in the care of God and even when he felt faint, he knew that God knew where he was and would guide him in his way. He desired to be set free from the prison of fear. Prisons are prisons when we deem them prisons. Some men who are in real prisons have learned to live within the prison in which they are housed, in the liberty of Christ. When we see ourselves as free men, even if we are in a prison, we are free. Freedom is a state of mind and heart, and many people who have never been in jail or prison are in other kinds of prisons because they don't deem themselves free.

I once wrote a book called Bound Yet Free, in which I discuss this paradox of bondage. In it I put forth the premise that all people are bound in one way or another.

Some bondages are of a positive nature and often are in our lives because we chose them. Such bondages are marriage, business contracts or obligations we enter into and so forth. Care should always be taken in what sort of bondage we allow in our lives.

Then there are those bondages that we have no control over whatsoever, they are thrust upon us, and how we manage them will determine our peace and joy in life.

David didn't ask to be anointed King of Israel; that was God's choice. The result was that since there already was a king, he became a target for assassination. David had to flee from the anger of the king and even though he was loyal to king Saul, he still had to live in hiding. David longed for the day when God would lift this condition from his life, and vowed that he would gather the righteous and give praise to God.

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-four

### Distressed but not Destroyed

### Psalm 143

A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. <sup>2</sup> Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

<sup>3</sup> The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead. <sup>4</sup> So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

<sup>5</sup> I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. <sup>6</sup> I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah*

<sup>7</sup> Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. <sup>8</sup> Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. <sup>9</sup> Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you. <sup>10</sup> Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

<sup>11</sup> For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble. <sup>12</sup> In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

How long have you been in a trial of deep distress, days, weeks, months, years, or decades? Many people have suffered great distress that has lasted for many years. Depression is not a necessary byproduct of distress, however. Righteous people often suffer distress, but their suffering is not like those who have no hope. Suffering to a righteous person is an opportunity to touch the heart of God. The deeper the distress, the deeper the love relationship that becomes manifest as we turn to a loving God who also intervenes in due time. We go to God and tell of our plight and he assures us of his love and that he sees what is happening and that we can trust him in our need. Often relief comes to us in a way that only God could give it, and we learn in a practical way that; yes, he is there for us.

Shortly after my wife and I were married we were assigned a church in northern Oregon to pastor. The congregation was small and so were the offerings. We lived in a part of the church that had been built to be Sunday school rooms but had been converted into a living area. It was often very cold and we didn't have any dry wood for the wood-burning stove. We would try to get some heat from the wood-burning stove, but the only wood we had was wet we weren't able to get it to burn very well. We would bundle up with clothes and sit on the stove, trying to get warm. Food also was scarce because money was also scarce. My wife was pregnant and sometimes had those special cravings that women who have been pregnant all know about. One day she became especially hungry for some meat and thought, "it sure would be nice to have some," let's say, "chicken," because I don't remember exactly what it was, and after a little while there was a knock on the door and a gentleman from the church was there with a package of meat from his freezer! To her amazement it was just what she had been thinking about. A few days later, she became hungry for a different kind of meat and sure enough the same scenario happened again. After the third time she stopped thinking that way because she didn't want to overdo it. It was times like that that reminded us of how aware God is of our needs and desires.

We have at times had greater amounts of available sustenance but it is the times when we have been the hardest pressed that has yielded the greatest treasure of memories. When we are the hardest pressed, it seems that even the smallest amount of help is big. God has been my source of supply for years, and every item of sustenance comes from him, but I admit that it has been those small things that have been my greatest teacher of just how minute the care of God is.

When David wrote this Psalm 143, he was in a very pressing circumstance, hiding in caves in darkness, longing to just see the light of the sun, but he knew that if he showed himself, he would likely be found and killed. He longed for relief, but would settle for just anything that would say to him that God still loved him and was aware of his plight.

David was an innocent man and righteousness was his way of life, but the king was a jealous man and the people of Israel loved David praising him even more than they praised the king. The jealousy of the king soon turned to a murderous desire, but God was with David and preserved his life. Nevertheless, David had to flee and was constantly on the run until word finally came that Saul had been killed in battle. Even after that horrific experience, David was constantly plagued with deceitful men who wanted what he had. The troubles that surrounded him were the catalyst that drove him in his pursuit of God. It seems that without trouble, the human tendency is toward complacency and complacency leads to corruption. The result of David's struggles was a deep and lasting love for God that never left him. Though he sinned, he also knew to repent quickly and deeply. David's sin, though against the Lord, was not motivated by a lack of love for God, only the confusion of his fleshly desires.

Reading the prayers of David are a source of comfort and instruction to all who suffer. David felt real pain, and often struggled with discouragement, but he also found comfort in turning to the Lord. There he would encourage himself in the knowledge of God's unfailing love and the

character of God was a constant source of strength for David. He worshipped God in songs and praises that flowed from a heart that was as sincere as a babies smile.

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-five

### Psalm 144

Of David.

<sup>1</sup> Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. <sup>2</sup> He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

<sup>3</sup> O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him? <sup>4</sup> Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.

<sup>5</sup> Part your heavens, O LORD, and come down; touch the mountains, so that they smoke. <sup>6</sup> Send forth lightning and scatter the enemies; shoot your arrows and rout them. <sup>7</sup> Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners <sup>8</sup> whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.

<sup>9</sup> I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, <sup>10</sup> to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword.

<sup>11</sup> Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.

<sup>12</sup> Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace. <sup>13</sup> Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; <sup>14</sup> our oxen will draw heavy loads. There will be no breaching of walls, no going into captivity, no cry of distress in our streets.

<sup>15</sup> Blessed are the people of whom this is true; blessed are the people whose God is the LORD.

In the days of king David, what was important to the welfare of nations was winning wars. Being a mighty warrior was a prerequisite to being a king in most instances. Protecting the people from an invading army was the most important duty of a king. Kings practiced aggression against weaker nations as a means of securing wealth and status among other nations. The nations that were defeated in battle or intimidated by the reputation of a strong nation could then demand tribute be paid to assure that they would not be invaded and their people put to the sword.

For the most part those were desperate times but kings that had a reputation for being fierce in battle could reasonably assure their people of peace. David knew that he had respect among the nations, but he also knew that his victories were because God was with him. David was able to push the boundaries of the nation back and make more room for the nation to live in, but he still wanted the Lord to fight for them, knowing that peace is needed so people can expect to live a normal life. It's a terrible thing when people have to live under the constant threat of being killed in battle or their family being killed by some invading army. In those days little armies roamed about looking for vulnerable villages that they could invade. They would kill the men, rape the women and steal everything they could carry away and usually they took the women and children and made slaves of them.

David's army was constantly on the alert for such people, but his troubles were not limited to these outlaw bands; he also had to worry about deceitful people within his own kingdom. The



prayers of David reflect these struggles, but he never allowed his troubles to cause bitterness between him and God. David never blamed God for his troubles, but rather, sought the Lord for help. David knew that God was almighty, and all that was needed was for him to take action and the battle was won or the difficulty was solved.

Instead of taking the attitude that God owed David something, he marveled that God almighty even cared about us human beings at all! David wrote, “O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?” This is a question that has been repeated times without number. Men of all ages have pondered the question before God, what is man after all, why do you even care about us? We can offer many ideas as answers, but the one that I come to is John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son.” It’s all about love, not our love but rather God’s love. David understood this love, and often wrote about God’s unfailing love. He saw God as his protector, referring to him as his rock, and he also gave credit to the Lord for teaching him how to fight battles. It is my opinion that David saw all his life as a continual unfolding revelation of the love that God has for mankind. He didn’t see himself as any different from other men who were righteous, but he did understand that pleasing God was necessary. David knew that his success in battle was attributable to the skills that God had given him and often fought men who were stronger and bigger than he. God had been his teacher and David was not ashamed to give credit where credit is due.

David was having an ongoing problem with people who would speak one thing and then do another. This problem seems to be the catalyst for David to write Psalms and to pray prayers, and often he would combine singing and playing instruments with his prayers and would praise God and his heart of worship was often expressed in words that reflected his faith in God. David’s concept of God was that all that God had to do was touch this world, and the enemies would flee.

David also realized that once the enemies were dealt with, there could be a reasonable expectation of peace and their children would grow up without the constant threat of war. When people feel safe and secure, their health is better and their lives are more fulfilling. Instead of spending all their time worrying about what threat is about to befall them, they can find other interests to fill their lives with, music, arts, sports and the development of enterprises that will enhance their lives.

## **Chapter One Hundred Forty-Six**

### **Praise be to God**

### **Psalm 145**

A psalm of praise. Of David.

<sup>1</sup>I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. <sup>2</sup>Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

<sup>3</sup>Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. <sup>4</sup>One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. <sup>5</sup>They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. <sup>6</sup>They will tell of the power of your

awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. <sup>7</sup> They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. <sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. <sup>10</sup> All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. <sup>11</sup> They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, <sup>12</sup> so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. <sup>13</sup> Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.

The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. <sup>14</sup> The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. <sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. <sup>16</sup> You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

<sup>17</sup> The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. <sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. <sup>19</sup> He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. <sup>20</sup> The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

<sup>21</sup> My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

Praise the Lord. Lord, I just want to thank you and praise you for all that you mean to me. From the time I was conceived into this world, you have been there watching over me. Not one thought of my mind has gone unnoticed by you. Every action and reaction has been closely monitored each day. You have opened your heart to me and allowed me to see the glory of who you are and to express to others the power and the might of your kingdom that is above every kingdom, and is eternal in the heavens for ever and ever.

Lord, I want to thank you for every life you have touched that I have been privileged to know over the years. I have talked to people who poured out their hearts secrets and knew that they were people of absolute integrity when they have said that they loved you and wanted you to be the Lord of their lives. When David said that you are faithful to every promise you have made, I testify to the fact that it is true. You faithfully watch over all who look to you, and you give them their food in due time.

Lord, you are righteous in every way, your judgments are pure and without the slightest hint of evil doing. When you consign a soul to hell, it is because it is totally just, having weighed every possible alternative and found them wanting. Your love has been expressed to all in giving Jesus Christ to die for all who will accept your love gift of salvation, but to those who reject your love, justice is just.

Lord, David said that you are righteous and loving toward all you have made and I agree with that statement because I have witnessed your love. Even when people deserve to be judged harshly, you are always holding back. I have never witnessed you lashing out or allowing judgments to be carried out recklessly. I have seen judgments being issued against individuals and America, but I have also been amazed that so few people have lost their lives do to judgment until recently. Its as though you have been holding back giving us fair warning but recently more peoples lives are being taken in attacks, storms, and accidents. You always seem to measure carefully a balance between allowing a disaster and how severe it should be allowed to be to gain the maximum effect without losing the benefit desired which is to cause people to repent and turn to you.

Lord, I have witnessed the reality of the fact that you even grant the desires of the righteous who fear you, in fact, I have seen you dotting over people who are committed to serving you without restrictions. This warms my heart because it shows me how very loving you are and free spirited in how you show your love to those who can accept it. You even follow hard after those who seem to ignore you because they have a friend or relative who loves you and they want them to be a Christian too. I have said that you are like a family man who wants whole families to be in heaven together without one person among them missing. You know how tragic it is if one person who was loved is missing a loved one in heaven, therefore, you reach for them with great love and in mercy do all you can to bring them too.

When I read in your book that you are love, I totally believe it, because that is what you are.

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-seven

### Trust Only in the Lord!

#### Psalm 146

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, O my soul. <sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

<sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. <sup>4</sup> When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, <sup>6</sup> the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD, who remains faithful forever. <sup>7</sup> He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, <sup>8</sup> the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. <sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

Romans 1:18-23 says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”

Unthankfulness is a manifestation of the fallen nature of man that is very repulsive to God. When men who have been given insight into the truth about God, turn away from him and commit ungodly acts it is because sin has hardened their hearts. Some people sin because they don’t know the truth about God, and when exposed to the Gospel they turn away from sin and embrace the truth as a thirsty soul embraces life-giving water. Other people hate God, and want to live sinful lives. Their darkened hearts crave sinful acts and even invent new ways of indulging in acts of perversion. One of the first steps on the slippery slope of departing from the knowledge about God is to imagine him as being something other than what the Bible has said that he is. As people move away from the truth about God into some other concept about him, sinning becomes less offensive to them, because no other god is a Holy God. If a person says, God doesn’t care if I sin or that God understands my situation, you know they have been dabbling in the teachings of those who are disciples of Satan.

There is a concept of God that has been popularized in our time that says that God is the same God no matter what you call him. It says that the Great Spirit of the American Indians is the same as Jesus, or that Allah is the same as the Lord God of the Bible and so it goes through all the different religions that have a concept of god. This philosophy of man says that it doesn’t matter what you call him so long as you are sincere.

We who know the scriptures understand that the great adversary of God is coming as an angel of light, and that if it is possible that even the saints will be deceived. The reason that the saints can be deceived is that too many have allowed this present world to blind the eyes of their understanding to the truth about the true kingdom of God. Sin is being sanctioned in many, so called, Christian circles and therefore, this new concept of God sounds good to them because their sinful hearts have become darkened.

There is a great beast (government) arising out of the sea of humanity that has the imprint of the great dragon, Satan, upon it and it resembles the ancient kingdoms of the past in certain ways. It's a little like old Babylon, somewhat like the Medes and Persians, and has some of the character of the Grecian empire. The old cradle of the civilized world is starting to become the focal point of the New World Order and in the time to come we may see this area emerge on the world stage as the most important and influential staging ground for the Satanic move to take full control of the world. Islam could well be the religious entity that is best suited to the purposes of Satan, but don't worry, Jesus is coming!

It is indeed time to put our trust in God like never before. The Psalmist declared, "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing."

"Blessed is he whose help is in the LORD his God, <sup>6</sup> the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD, who remains faithful forever." (Psalms 146:3-6)

There are events happening on the world stage that must come to pass, but don't worry, God is still in control! The worst thing that any true Christian can do is to become fearful. The kingdom of God is still above all the influences of Satan and each person who has received Christ into their heart and been born again is just waiting for his appearing. While we are here in this world we rejoice in God our Savior, and continue to praise the Lord.

God is still the provider for all his people's needs and those who trust in him are required to keep their focus upon what God is doing and not upon what man or Satan is doing.

The LORD remains faithful forever. "He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD." (Psalms 146:7-10)

It is good to understand that the ways of the wicked are always going to be frustrated by the power of God. There never will be a time when Satan will take over the throne of God. He is trying and will succeed to a point but God is still in control and Satan is a defeated enemy. Praise the Lord!

## **Chapter One Hundred Forty-eight**

### **Psalm 147**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. <sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

<sup>4</sup> He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. <sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. <sup>6</sup> The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. <sup>8</sup> He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. <sup>9</sup> He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

<sup>10</sup> His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; <sup>11</sup> the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

<sup>12</sup> Extol the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion, <sup>13</sup> for he strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you. <sup>14</sup> He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

<sup>15</sup> He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. <sup>16</sup> He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. <sup>17</sup> He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast? <sup>18</sup> He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. <sup>20</sup> He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws.

Praise the LORD.

What a privilege it is to be blessed with the revelation of the word of God! Those who are fortunate enough to have been raised with the knowledge of the Lord God are blessed indeed. I am sure that many people who have been raised with the knowledge of the Lord have taken it for granted and not appreciated that they have been blessed. In fact, I am sure some people have even resented the fact that they know the commands of the Lord, because it would be easier to be ignorant and not have to deal with their consciences when they sin. This is shallow and ignorant thinking however. When one sees the damage that sin does to people, and the deep suffering it brings, appreciation begins to well up within the heart of the person who has been shielded by the protective cover of God's care. It is at this point that praises to God begin to well up within the heart of the believer and songs of praise burst forth from the heart overwhelmed with the goodness of God.

There is a grand old hymn that says, "What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms. I have blessed peace, with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms." We have good reason to praise the Lord! The Lord is gathering his body the church from all over the world. He is indeed building up Jerusalem. He is taking broken and hurting humanity, and healing the wounds and ministering his life giving Spirit into us. Once we were lost but now we are found. Once we were bruise, but now the vital life of Jesus is in us, and we have become radiant!

If God creator of heaven and earth who knows every star and calls them by name, how much more does he know us for whom he gave his very life's blood? Jesus didn't die to save the earth; he died to save sinners!

God is a romantic that is to say, he is into loving people, but not just any person, but those who are humble in heart, that know how to appreciate who he is and who love him for it. Why not love God? He is the one who brings the rain in season and causes the grass to grow. What a dreary place it is where rain doesn't fall! Are we thankful for the rain even though the clouds may seem dreary?

The Psalmist saw that the clouds and the rain are good and are cause to praise the Lord. Even the snow and the frost are gifts from God and the ice winds that freeze everything in its path are part of the plan of God to care for the earth and to bring a bountiful harvest to his blessed people. The freezing of the soil causes the soil to expand and the thaw allows the moisture to enter the soil that has been supernaturally cultivated, and the seeds are thus warmed by the spring sun and breezes that cause the seeds to germinate and new life to spring forth!

Good storms are a part of God's plan to water and care for the earth, and when God is pleased with a nation he is inclined to send them with the greatest discretion. When God is angry with people, he has been known to allow storms to go unabated running out of control against the

objects of his wrath. Natural disasters are called “acts of God” for a reason. Many people fail to see the hand of God in the storms that rage against them, however. Their hardened hearts have rejected the idea that there is a God who judges sin. Some would argue that when storms come the righteous and the unrighteous suffer together, and so it is, however, the righteous pray and find refuge in the knowledge of God’s unfailing love.

## Chapter One Hundred Forty-Nine

### Let Everything Praise the Lord!

#### Psalm 148

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. <sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. <sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. <sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. <sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. <sup>6</sup> He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

<sup>7</sup> Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, <sup>8</sup> lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, <sup>9</sup> you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, <sup>10</sup> wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, <sup>11</sup> kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, <sup>12</sup> young men and maidens, old men and children.

<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. <sup>14</sup> He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the LORD.

Over and over again, we are admonished to praise the Lord! Now the Psalmist looks heavenward and admonishes the angels and the heavenly host to praise the Lord. Afterward he calls for the sun and moon and stars to praise the Lord. Still not content he calls for the highest heavens and the waters above the skies to also praise the Lord. The reason he calls for them to praise the Lord is that they were created by God’s command and were put in their place by decree to remain forever and ever, and the decree will never pass away.

The attention of the Psalmist was not restricted to that which is above; he also is attentive to the creatures of the sea and all the ocean depths! They too must declare the praises of the Lord. Then he looks to the lightning and the hail, the snow and the clouds, the winds also do his bidding, and yes, mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars; wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings, nations, princes and all rulers of the earth. Did he leave anything out? No, he also mentioned young men and maidens and even the children are to praise the Lord.

In all the rush of life and the many influences that come to bear upon us, we must never forget what is absolutely paramount; it is that God is above all, and that his name and his splendor are exalted above the heavens. He raised up a horn for his people who we know to be Jesus. (A horn is a symbol of strength.) The strength of God is the plan of salvation. It takes moral strength courage and faith to extend forgiveness and restoration to a fallen creature. God has a reason for faith; the object of the faith of God is the power of the cross! Our faith must always

have an object as well and that object is Jesus. Jesus is the mighty power of God manifest to a lost world; God's love gift to all humankind that will accept him! Praise the Lord!

## Chapter One Hundred Fifty

### Sing Praises to the Lord

#### Psalm 149

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

<sup>3</sup> Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. <sup>4</sup> For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. <sup>5</sup> Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.

<sup>6</sup> May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, <sup>7</sup> to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, <sup>8</sup> to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, <sup>9</sup> to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints.

Praise the LORD.

It is good to be happy and full of joy. The Lord delights in people having a good time, so long as they remember that he is the reason celebrate! It is only when God is cursed and forgotten in revelry and dissipation that God becomes angry with human celebrations. It is good to sing to the Lord songs of praise and worship. Musical accompaniment adds to the festive occasion as people sing and move to the music of praises to God. There was a time when people thought that God only wanted anthem like music, played in hand clasped reverence that sounded more like a funeral dirge than a celebration of the love of God. Thankfully, today people are able to praise God freely and sing beautiful music that glorifies God and edifies those who sing and also those who hear it sung.

One day I was attending a special gathering of the churches in our district and while sitting in the choir I was watching the people attending the meeting. The music was upbeat and there was a very joyful attitude while singing praises to the Lord. It was so upbeat that it caused me to ask the question of the Lord, "What do you think of this?" Almost instantly a mental picture formed in my mind that I recognized to be from the Lord. In my mind I saw the congregation with upraised hands praising the Lord Jesus and where their fingers ended was the shape of the shoulders of the Lord! The words formed in my mind, "This is my body the church!" I realized that it is when we are in the posture of praise that we are most perfectly the body of Christ on earth! I think I expected the Lord to be somewhat less pleased; that is why it made such an impression on me.

I do not believe that God is pleased when activities go outside the boundaries of decency and order, however, we must be a little careful in making harsh judgments because God sees the hearts. It is better to praise the Lord with a little too much enthusiasm than not to praise him at all! It seems that the greatest problem in Christendom is to little praise, rather than too much praise.

The Psalmist penned the words, “May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.” When Israel went out to battle, they were to go singing praises to the Lord. The battles always went best when the people praised the Lord.

Life always goes better when we praise the Lord! Work places that are filled with the praises of the Lord are much more productive and pleasant than places filled with cursing, complaining, and bickering. When our hearts are at peace with God, it’s much easier to be at peace with those around us.

My son-in-law Jeff and I were in business together working as carpenters on a project where other contractors were also working. We went to these other workmen on occasions and asked them what we could do that would make their work easier. So many jobsites are full of anger and bickering that it came as a surprise to them. The result was that our jobsite became their favorite place to work. Several men were ministered to in their lives in ways that changed them forever. A relationship was established with the superintendent that is still blessed to this day.

Praising the Lord refreshes the soul and brings us into a frame of mind where love and peace flow from us. Bitterness, unbelief, anger, unforgiveness are foreign to the kingdom of God and therefore must be foreign to us as well. Cursing is the language of hell, but praises are the language of the saints.

Praise the Lord.

## Chapter One Hundred Fifty-one

### Let the Orchestra Praise the Lord!

#### Psalm 150

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

<sup>3</sup> Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

<sup>4</sup> praise him with tambourine and dancing,

praise him with the strings and flute,

<sup>5</sup> praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

<sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD.

The concluding Psalm is a Psalm of Praise from the first stanza to the last. It begins with the words “Praise the LORD,” and it ends with the same words, “Praise the LORD.”

Four questions are answered in this psalm, who, where, why and how.

The first question is answered in the introductory line to this Psalm with the simple command, praise the LORD. It is the LORD to whom all praise is due! This form of the name of God is called the tetragramation that comes from the Hebrew letters YHWH. These English



letters are not direct equivalents but they are close. This name of God is considered to be the most holy name of God and therefore generally no attempt is made to pronounce it. The word LORD is therefore used to communicate this name to us. Moses is the only one who actually heard this name correctly pronounced and that was by God himself on the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments. It is this God of all gods who is worthy of our praise. There are various names and compound names used to describe God, but for any name to be proper to apply to the God of the Bible it must carry this same concept of absolute sovereignty and superiority along with absolute moral purity and flawless character. Who is worthy of praise? The LORD Almighty, the LORD Mighty in battle, the LORD who rules in righteousness and justice. The LORD is his name!

Secondly where, in his sanctuary, and in his mighty heavens! Where is his sanctuary? That was the question in principle put to Jesus by the woman of Samaria. She asked the Lord where the proper place of worship was located, in Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem. Where is the sanctuary? Isn't it wherever there is a worshipping heart? Jesus told her that the day was coming when those who worship will worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Many people are wondering the same thing today, where is the proper place of worship? By what name do we call him? We who understand the scriptures and know our God intimately, know that no man comes to the Father except the Spirit draws him and that there is no other way to the Father except through Jesus. Many people are grappling with some unanswerable questions regarding, what about those who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel message?

First of all, shame on us for allowing anyone to live on this planet without knowing the truth about Jesus. Secondly, shame on those who have mistakenly taught something other than the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we come to the fact that not everyone knows the truth for whatever reason. What about them? It is at this point where there are divergent views.

I come back to this point, God is love, God is just and because he is love and he is just, no one will be in hell that doesn't belong there. The rules are clear for all who hear the gospel, we must believe on him if we are to receive eternal life. Our job is to proclaim the gospel and let God handle this matter of salvation. Salvation is an action of the Holy Spirit and not an action by man. We are permitted to be involved in the process of bringing the message and assisting in the new birth experience, but it is the Holy Spirit who gives the Spirit of Eternal Life.

Isn't it enough to go forward in some arena or church and repeat the sinner's prayer? Yes, of course it is, if indeed it is the Holy Spirit that has drawn us, and we answered that call in faith believing that Jesus came in the flesh, died for our sins and was raised to life for us. I am equally convinced that this can happen in our backyard, kitchen, bathroom or bedroom; it can be in our car on the way to work, standing on the ocean shore or looking at a sunrise or sunset. The when is not important, the where is not important, but the how is important, because the how is the action of the heart toward God. Some believe that you must go through a special class at a special church, or you must shake a preachers hand, be baptized and join the church, others believe it is necessary to repeat the sinners prayer, and I say, all of the above can be helpful! But once more, it is an action by the Holy Spirit that is the vital ingredient. I am equally convinced that some people have done all I just mentioned and still not received eternal life because it was not done by the call of the Spirit, nor was it an action of the heart of receiving the gift of eternal life by believing on Jesus the Son of God the Savior of the world.

Where is the sanctuary? In my judgment it is wherever a heart is in communication with God whether somewhere on this planet or above the planet or in the heaven of heavens. It's, therefore, not a place, it is a condition of heart toward God.

The third question answered in this Psalm is why. Why praise him? Praise him for his acts of power. How is the power of God revealed? We see Jesus in the Book of Revelations coming into the scene of the story riding on a white horse with the words written on his thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords. In his mouth is a double-edged sword, a symbol of the word of God! A

sword is also a symbol of the power of a warrior. The power of this mighty warrior is the sword that is in his mouth that has the power to slay the flesh of man.

The flesh of man is the enemy of righteousness in the heart of man. It is the fallen nature that is often called the flesh nature or the sin nature. There is no greater manifestation of the power of God than is manifest when a human heart is brought to genuine repentance by the revelation of truth by the word of God. The power that Satan has wielded over the affairs of man has been the power of deception. Look, if you will, at what that has caused in human pain and suffering!

God's power is seen in his mighty works of creation, but greater far is the love story of his dealings with this fallen race. Some people look at the acts of God in judgment as manifestations of his mighty power, and they are, but judging sin is easy compared to forgiving sinners who have cursed his name and committed every imaginable evil.

Today our headlines in the news media are filled with names we westerners struggle to pronounce who are committing atrocities seldom seen in the history of man. It is true however, that not one of these individuals is beyond the reach of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of God is equal to the challenge of changing the heart of the wickedest person if they will but repent and come to him.

Why don't people come to Jesus? Isn't it because they have been deceived into believing lies about God and who he is? People all over the world have been deceived into believing the lie that Jesus is the white man's God. The Jews have been deceived into believing this, never mind that he was born a Jew, a descendant of King David just as the scriptures said.

How are we to praise the Lord? Should it be with folded hands and stoic expressions as one would look at the funeral of a dear friend? The Psalmist didn't think so; he said to praise him with the sound of the trumpet. The sounding of the trumpet in the life of the Israelis was a call to either war or some special event. It generally meant that it was time to assemble either at the tabernacle for a special event or to begin a march or to assemble for war. I suppose the circumstances surrounding the blast of the trumpet indicated to those who heard it just what was meant by it.

It may be that the Psalmist was using this call for the trumpet to be the signal to the nation to assemble to praise the Lord, the theme of the Psalm. It may have also been that it was for the effect of highlighting some parts of the Psalms being sung to the tunes played by the entire orchestra.

To the sound of the trumpet was added the harp and the lyre, the instruments that were capable of adding the beauty of melody and harmony to what was being presented to the Lord.

Rhythm was also a part of the musical production as the tambourines were added so the people could dance while praising the Lord. This dancing was not the seductive dancing of the world designed to excite the passions of the flesh, it was a dance of beauty and gracefulness before the Lord in the Spirit of holiness to the Lord. The music while having movement and joyfulness was organized to bring glory to the Lord. There were stringed instruments and flutes and cymbals along with resounding cymbals all blending together to make a joyful sound to the Lord. To round out the sound voices of all who had breath were added, so that in every possible way the sound of praise was being expressed.

Each individual has a special way to give praise to the Lord. My way is likely not your way, but whatever way it is, it should be the means of pouring out our heart of love to the Lord.

In our study of the Psalms, we have encountered many human emotions, trials and hopes. The vision of a better day was constantly before us as we saw David and the Psalmists struggling with the reality of wicked men, sinful hearts and the knowledge of God Almighty and his unfailing love. The revelation of the coming Messiah was before them giving them hope and their knowledge of God's power to save them in their day of distress motivated them to call upon him. They knew that God could save them from their enemies, but why did he wait so long?

The question is the source of challenge to faith that requires an eternal perspective to fully come to terms with and have peace concerning. We human beings often become so fixated with

this present life and the circumstances of it, that we loose sight of the fact that the real hope of the gospel is not so much that God will fix our present circumstances, but rather that he will fix us so that we can enter into eternal life with him and live eternally in a place where all things are ours and there is no evil, pain or suffering, ever. This is the blessed hope that keeps us going on. Because God loves us in the now, he also intervenes in our now experiences, but never to the extent that we loose sight of the eternal hope.

It is the eternal hope that is the source of joy to all who know the Lord. Every experience in this present world is preparatory to the life that is before us. Every sinful endeavor, every selfish moment, every lustful encounter, are all enemies of the pursuit of eternal life. The challenge to stay free from all of that is the catalyst that drives us into a deeper relationship with God and his Son Jesus Christ.

If you haven't yet received him, won't you pause a moment and invite him to come into your heart and cleanse you from all sin? The opportunity that is before us to receive forgiveness of sins and cleansing of heart and soul is enormous. The value of this opportunity is beyond human calculation and no price tag can be attached to it, yet is free of monetary considerations. You cannot buy eternal life, but you can accept it because it is God's love gift secured for you by the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. Believing in him is the means by which we reach for God's gift, and having received it, we then commit our lives out of gratitude to living acceptably before him. That is why we want to turn from sinful ways, because sin separates us from God's love.