

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 30.7%

Weekly Readings will cover: Psalms 27 – 32, 35 – 41, 53, 55, 58, 61 – 62 & 64 - 66

Sunday: Psalm 27, 28 & 29

Monday: Psalm 30, 31 & 32

Tuesday: Psalm 35, 36 & 37 (skip Psalms 33 (we'll read later) & 34 – we already read this)

Wednesday: Psalm 38, 39 & 40

Thursday: Psalm 41, 53 & 55 (skip several Psalms here)

Friday: Psalm 58, 61 & 62 (skip several Psalms here)

Saturday: Psalm 64, 65 & 66

Current # of email addresses in the group: 610

I hope everyone has both enjoyed going through the Psalms in such detail and enjoyed having an extra week to catch up. I'm deeply thankful to Tom Robinson and any others who contributed to the UCG Reading Program. The depth to which they cover the Psalms is greatly appreciated. In reviewing this next week's chapters and UCG reading program, I rarely had any additional comments. Even still, it's a lot of material to get through in a week and I hope it's an appropriate size week for each of you. I'm sending this out one day earlier than normal since this last week was a pause/catch-up week and some may wish to start sooner and break these chapters up over a few more days.

Website archive location for audio files & PDFs:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep-dive-reading-program-circa-2022-2025-903711>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 52**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 337 - SUNDAY: January 14<sup>th</sup>

Psalm 27, 28 & 29

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 27:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 27 is a psalm of confidence and trust. David uses the words "light" and "salvation" to describe his relationship with God. "Light indicates deliverance from darkness (Genesis 1:3), which is a biblical symbol of evil. The word *salvation* combined with the word *light* means 'saving light'"

(*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 27). Like a lighthouse beacon, God shines through the darkness and shows us the way to go. David won't fear when the wicked come against him, because the Almighty God is His guiding light and defending strength (verse 1). Though surrounded by an entire army of hostile forces, David says, "...even then will I be confident" (verse 3, NIV).

Come what may, David's chief desire is to dwell in God's house forever (verse 4; compare Psalm 23:6). David wrote this before the physical "house of the Lord," the Jerusalem temple, was built. The "temple" in the same verse likely refers to God's temple in heaven—into which David may come through prayer. However, the tabernacle of David's time may have been in view in part, as that was the manner through which God then dwelt among His people. There is a mention of God's "pavilion" and "tabernacle" in verse 5—of figuratively being hidden away in God's tent when trouble comes (compare Psalm 31:20). The wording would seem to imply seeking God in His tabernacle in the midst of adversity and finding divine protection there. (Some, it should be noted, relate this to God's people being protected during the Great Tribulation at the end of the age.) Verse 6 of Psalm 27 refers to offering sacrifices at the tabernacle.

Yet by dwelling in God's house David ultimately meant something more than the physical tabernacle and temple. As with Christians now, dwelling in the house of the Lord means being part of God's very family—and living forever in His Kingdom. Even in verse 6, offering sacrifices at the tabernacle seems to point, at least in an ultimate sense, to worshiping God for all eternity as part of His household.

David next pleads with God to respond to his prayers (verse 7)—to not hide Himself (verse 9)—because David is faithfully seeking Him as God has commanded (verse 8; see Deuteronomy 4:29-31). There is no indication that David's parents ever abandoned him. But in that unlikely event, David declares that God "will take care of me"

(verse 10). Certainly this applied not only to David but to all people who serve God, even today. Abandonment could mean complete absence or just emotional detachment—for various reasons. We should consider that Jesus warned there would be family splits, even from father and mother, for the sake of God's Kingdom—but gave encouragement that God would bless us with other spiritual relations in this life and greatly reward us in the age to come (compare Matthew 10:34-36; Matthew 19:29).

David's plea in Psalm 27:11 that God lead him in a smooth path because of his enemies recalls the imagery in Psalm 23 of the Shepherd leading His sheep down right paths so they may find peace and fulfillment despite enemies. And in verse 12, just as David faced false witnesses, so would Jesus Christ later face the same (Matthew 26:60-61). Indeed, many of the sufferings of God's people in the Old Testament foreshadowed to some degree what Jesus would have to go through—and what His followers today still must endure.

In verse 13, the NKJV has added to the beginning of verse 13 the italicized interpolation, "*I would have lost heart...*" The NIV translates the verse without this addition: "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." David waits on God's intervention with strong confidence, trusting that He will help and strengthen him now in this life (verses 13). If his hope in God were solely affixed to life after death, there would be no reason to have any hope in this life. But David does have hope in this life because God has encouraged him—and David passes this encouragement on to others (verse 14). This should give all of us hope for today—not just for tomorrow. Of course, our ultimate hope lies in eternity to come. For, as the apostle Paul later stated, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). What a blessing to know that we have hope in God both in this life and for eternal life to come." [END]

Verse 14 – “Wait on the Lord” is said a number of times in the Bible (compare Psalm 37:9 & 34, Isaiah 8:17, 30:18, 40:31 & Zep 3:8). Even when not stated, it’s a theme that is contained in many stories (Abraham and Sarah having to wait for a child, King Saul not waiting, David waiting to be made King while Saul tries to kill him, etc...). We all must learn to trust in God’s timing and God’s way of intervening. Too often man is tempted to take matters into their own hands, even inventing in their minds that it is the will of God when their actions go against God’s Word. David was a man who often did very well in waiting for God to act and not taking matters into his own hands.

Psalm 28:

The UCG reading program states: “David begins Psalm 28, a prayer for deliverance, with an intense supplication: “I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary” (verse 2; compare 1 Kings 8:6-8). In his prayer to God, David makes two requests: “Do not take me away with the wicked” (verse 3), that is, to the pit or grave (verse 1); and “Render to them [the wicked] what they deserve” (verse 4)—a just punishment.

Of course all have sinned and deserve the penalty of sin—death (see Romans 3:23; 6:23). But God has made provision for forgiving those who repent and devote their lives to him. David rightly states that the wicked have not met these conditions: “They show no regard for the works of the Lord and what his hands have done” (verse 5, NIV).

David then praises God for having heard his supplications (verse 6) and for being *his* strength (verse 7) as well as *their* strength (verse 8)—that is, the strength of His people (verse 9). Ultimately, Jesus Christ will save and bless His people. As King, He will *shepherd* them (returning to the imagery of Psalm 23) and will bear them up forever, lovingly carrying them (see Isaiah 9:6-9; Isaiah 40:11).” [END]

This Psalm, similar to Psalm 13 and Psalm 22, shows David pleading with God to hear him (“do not be silent”, “hear the voice of my supplications”), but similar to the pattern above in Psalms 13 & 22, David resolves his feelings with the truth that we can have confidence in. “Blessed be the Lord, Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!” (Verse 6). “I am helped” (verse 7).

Psalm 29:

The UCG reading program states: “Psalm 29 is a worship hymn composed by David "in praise of the King of creation, whose glory is trumpeted by the thunderclaps [constituting His "voice"] that rumble through the cloudy mass of winter's rainstorms as they rise above the Mediterranean ('the mighty waters,' v. 3 [NIV]), and move from east to west across the face of the sky" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 29). The thunderclouds cover the whole land of Israel, from the northern forests of Lebanon and Sirion, denoting Mount Hermon, to the southern Desert of Kadesh (verses 6, 8).

The booming thunder shakes the ground (verses 4, 6, 8) and terrifies wild deer into giving birth prematurely (verse 9). With the thunder come "flashes of lightning" (verse 7, NIV), these strikes splintering great trees in two (verse 5) and stripping the forests bare (verse 9).

David calls on the "mighty ones" to ascribe to God the glory due Him as the Almighty Creator (verses 1-2). The phrase translated "mighty ones" here literally reads "sons of God," this expression appearing to denote God's angels, which are referred to this way in the book of Job (Job 1:6; 38:7).

At God's great display of power in nature, everyone "in His temple" expresses awe (Psalm 29:9). As David wrote this before the building of the physical temple, it seems that the temple in heaven is intended—especially given David's urging to the angels in verse 1.

However, some suggest that David may be referring to all of creation as God's temple.

The NKJV translates verse 10 as saying that "the Lord sat enthroned at the Flood"—that is, the Flood of Noah's day. The NIV, however, renders this in the present tense: "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood." The latter seems likely, given that the great thunderstorm was accompanied by torrential flash flooding in the desert wadis. However, all of this could well have brought to mind the former Flood, a product of God's sovereign rule over the natural realm. Moreover, a great flood is also symbolic of chaotic, threatening circumstances (compare Psalm 32:6-7).

As a final thought in Psalm 29, David considers in verse 11 that it is this same great and powerful God who empowers His people—and blesses His people not with the destruction witnessed in nature but, as all forces are subject to Him, with peace." [END]

#### Day 338 - MONDAY: January 15<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 30, 31 & 32

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 30:

The UCG reading program states: "The translation of the superscription of Psalm 30 is disputed. The KJV and NKJV explain the psalm as a "song at the dedication of the house of David"—evidently referring to the king's royal palace. The NIV and others, though, think the translation should be "A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David." The Hebrew word here is *beyt*— "house" in a general sense. Yet the idea of the latter translation is that *le-David*, as in other psalms, should denote authorship rather than any connection with this house. And "the house" on its own can be a designation for the temple, the house of the Lord—though it could also refer to the palace.

Considering the very personal and specific nature of this psalm with regard to the life of the psalmist, it does not seem to fit very well

with the dedication of the temple, which took place several years after David's death. The most likely conclusion appears to be that this psalm was written by David to be sung at the dedication of his palace.

David reflects on the events that have led up to the joyful occasion of his now-firm establishment at Jerusalem. He praises God for lifting him up, healing him, keeping him alive (verses 1-3). He thanks God for not letting his enemies rejoice over him (verse 1). Indeed, David's enemies now have no cause to rejoice because God has overturned his prior circumstances: "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness" (verse 11).

This is to serve as an example to all of God's people—they are always to praise Him for He will ultimately turn hard and dark times to light and joy (verses 4-5). This is especially good to remember in the years before us as we approach the darkening end of the age.

In verse 6, David declares that he is now prosperous and firmly established. He further says to God, "By Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong" (verse 7). The reference here "may be to David's security in his mountain fortress, Zion; or that mountain fortress may here serve as a metaphor for David's state as a vigorous and victorious king, the 'mountain' on which he sat with such secure confidence in God" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on verse 7).

David ends the psalm with an important reason God has lifted him out of affliction. "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy *so that my heart may sing to you and not be silent*" (verse 12, NIV). All of God's people have been called out of spiritual darkness to do the same—to sing praise and give thanks (1 Peter 2:9-10).

God is intimately attuned to the fact that we can endure only so much. (Typically, He knows we can endure more than we would

choose to on our own!) The promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 remains a comfort to us when we are afflicted: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." [END]

#### Psalm 31:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 31 is a lament arising from affliction, yet one in which David places full trust and confidence in God, realizing, "My times are in Your hand" (verses 14-15). David suffers from a wasting illness (verse 10) that makes him, as he says, "repulsive to my acquaintances; those who see me outside flee from me" (verse 11). David's enemies take advantage of his weakened state and "scheme to take away my life" (verse 13). Unless God intervenes, David reckons himself a dead man (verse 12).

Come what may, David throws himself into God's keeping, declaring, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit" (verse 5). Jesus would later use these as His final words before His dying breath (Luke 23:46). That being so, the rest of this psalm likely also foreshadows the Messiah's suffering of bodily agony, anguish, ridicule, enemy conspiracy and abandonment by friends. The disciple Stephen uttered these words too, as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:59). All Christians should find Psalm 31 of tremendous help and encouragement when facing great difficulties.

The hating of idolaters in verse 6 of this inspired prayer should be understood in the sense of rejection of them and their ways and considering them as enemies of the "Lord God of truth" in verse 5. (Yet elsewhere in Scripture we learn that even they will ultimately receive the opportunity for redemption and salvation.) For Christians today, even if we are aware of no human enemies to speak of, we wrestle constantly with spiritual enemies who seek to destroy us (Ephesians 6:12).



Though the situation for David looks grim, he recalls that God has brought him safely through adversity in times past: "You have known my soul in adversities and have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place" (Psalm 31:7-8). The latter expression here speaks of freedom and ultimately of salvation--as the Hebrew word for salvation has the sense of having room to breathe.

Reflecting on God's prior faithfulness, David prays: "Make Your face shine upon Your servant" (verse 16). The expression here, like the prayer in Psalm 4:6 for God to lift up His countenance, is taken from the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:22-27: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." This is a request for God to show favor--to "smile." As in Psalm 25:3, rather than shame and disgrace falling on him, a faithful servant of God, David asks that it go to the wicked (Psalm 31:17-18)-and he knows that this is how things will work out in the end (verse 23).

The imagery of God laying up goodness prepared for those who trust in Him in the presence of the sons of men (verse 19) is similar to Psalm 23's picture of God preparing a table for His people in the midst of their enemies. And the metaphor of keeping His people secretly hidden in His pavilion away from threatening plots (Psalm 31:20) recalls Psalm 27:5.

David concludes with strong encouragement for all of God's people (verses 23-24)." [END]

Psalm 32:

The UCG reading program states: "The superscription of Psalm 32 refers to it as a *maskil*. The Greek Septuagint translation takes this obscure word to mean "instruction," from the root *s-k-l* ("be wise" or "instruct"). Appearing in the superscription of 13 psalms,

the term may designate a teaching song (compare verse 8). However, the NKJV translates the word as "Contemplation."

*The Nelson Study Bible* states in its introductory note on Psalm 32: "It is generally believed that this psalm--like Psalm 51--has its origin in David's response to God following his infamous affair with Bathsheba [and murder of Uriah] (2 Samuel 11)" This conclusion is based on the fact of David waiting for a long period before confessing the sin mentioned in the psalm--and the impression that his sin is public knowledge so that he is able to use it as an example.

David contrasts the joy of being forgiven with the misery of hiding a sin. "Happy" is the man who no longer deceives himself (verse 2). "Happy" is the man whose sin is taken away (verse 1). "Happy" is the man who is no longer guilty in God's eyes (verse 2).

It was not so while he tried to pretend that his sin hadn't happened. His "silence was a stubborn resistance to admitting guilt, a hope that in time the sin and its penalty would go away. The more David delayed his confession, the more he suffered. David realized it was not just his conscience or his feelings that were assaulting him, but the heavy hand of God (Psalm 38:1, Psalm 38:6-8)" (note on Psalm 32:3-5).

When David did at last confess in repentance, God forgave him (verse 5).

David declares, "For this cause [i.e., the blessing of forgiveness] everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found" (verse 6). Repentance and forgiveness are the starting points of a relationship with God--or of restoring a relationship with Him. A flood of trouble follows sin (verses 6, 10). But the grief that comes from hiding a sin will not come near those who repent and take refuge in God (verses 6-7).

Verse 8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye"--the latter part of this in the NIV being rendered, "I will counsel you and watch over you." Clearly God is no longer being addressed. Indeed, some believe that God Himself is directly speaking here and in verse 9. *The Nelson's Study Bible* states: "The speaker changes. The Lord 'comes into the psalm' to instruct the people. He exhorts the people not to be like a *horse* that will not go where its rider wants it to go; it has to be disciplined because it is stubborn" (note on verses 8-9).

However, it could well be that David is still speaking. As *The Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says, "Some believe that the psalmist himself here turns to others to warn them against the ways into which he had fallen (see Psalm 51:13)" (note on Psalm 32:8-10). Psalm 51:13, cited here, speaks of what David would do following God's forgiveness: "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You." See also Psalm 34:11. Either way, the instruction is of course from God, who inspired the psalm."  
[END]

Day 339 - TUESDAY: January 16<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 35, 36, 37 (skip 33 & 34)

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 35:

The UCG reading program states: "In Psalm 35 David proclaims his innocence and calls on God to destroy his enemies. "Some of the most troubling psalms are those that contain prayers asking God to curse the wicked. These imprecatory psalms are sometimes thought to conflict with the sentiment of the gospel, but in fact they accurately reflect God's abhorrence of evil" (*Nelson Study Bible*, introduction to Psalms).

David is not specific about his trouble, but he speaks of betrayal and injustice—"they hid their net for me without cause" (verse 7). David asks God to intervene: "Plead my cause!" "Fight for me!" "Rescue me!" (verses 1-3). David calls for God to pour out judgment on his

enemies: Bring on them "shame" (military defeat). Make them "chaff" (worthless and scattered thin). Lead them into "dark and slippery" paths (troubles and uncertainties). Orchestrate their "ruin" (sudden and complete desolation) (see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, notes on verses 4-8). After God has dealt with these enemies, "Then," David says, "my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in His salvation" (verses 9-10).

David is dumbfounded that people for whom he had shown concern (verses 13-14) have become enemies, detractors and false witnesses (verses 11-16). They gloat, "Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it" (verse 21, NIV). David's distress in the face of people who hated him without cause (verse 19) and "ruthless witnesses" (verse 11, NIV) foreshadowed the suffering of Jesus Christ (see John 15:24-25; Mark 14:57-59).

The closing section of the psalm states that those who rejoice at David's hurt will be "ashamed" (verse 26)—figuratively "*clothed* with shame" (same verse). This refers "not to simple embarrassment, but to the revelation of the complete emptiness of wickedness before the judgment seat of God" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 26-28).

This section also informs us that there are other people on David's side (verse 27), evidently from among those referred to in verse 20 as the "quiet ones in the land." David is confident that they will shout for joy and praise God with him when he is at last delivered."  
[END]

#### Psalm 36:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 35 concluded with reference to the prosperity of God's *servant*--i.e., David (verse 27). Now, the superscription of Psalm 36 refers to David as "the servant of the LORD." The psalm begins by addressing the nature of wickedness, but this is soon contrasted with God's faithfulness and righteousness and His rewarding of His servants such as David with an abundance of true prosperity.

The word "oracle" in verse 1 can simply mean "utterance." The actual order of the verse is "An oracle of transgression of the wicked within my heart." Some see "of the wicked" as actually meaning "to the wicked." However, the psalm's focus on God rewarding the righteous and the request for the righteous to be kept from wickedness goes against that being the aim of the psalm. Some translations give "within my heart" as "within *his* heart," thinking the wicked person is intended. However, the Hebrew *lebi* in the Masoretic Text does mean "my heart." Simply put, David is expressing his deep thoughts about the sinful way of the wicked.

David's consideration of the sinful course of the wicked (verses 2-4) is followed by contemplation of God's mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, justice and unfailing love (verses 5-7). "The contrast of these verses with the previous ones is extreme. Just as the revelation of the depravity in vv. 1-4 is awful, the revelation of the Lord's love is even more wonderful.... The contrasts continue with David ranging from the highest mountains to the depths of the sea to describe the perfect character of God. The height of the great mountains can be compared to how great God's righteousness is; the depths of the seas can be compared with how mysterious and inaccessible God's true judgments are" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 5-6).

Like nestlings seeking shelter and nourishment from a mother bird, so may people find protection and provision from God (verse 7). If the wicked would only cease from their headlong pursuit of fleeting self-gratification through sin and turn to God, they would find true and abundant satisfaction through the fullness of life in His family (verse 8). For the righteous "drink from the river of [God's] pleasures." What a beautiful word picture this is--of an endless, flowing supply of joyful experience forevermore! This river flows from the "fountain of life"--God's Holy Spirit bringing eternal salvation and all its rewards (see also Isaiah 12:3; Isaiah 55:1-2; Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:37-39).

It is only in God's "light" that we "see light" (Psalm 36:9). In context, this may mean that we don't even really know what it means to live and be happy until we experience life in the way God intended. Rather than groping in the blindness of human plotting to find our way, the truth of God reveals the path to ultimate and lasting bliss. On the other hand, the idea here could be that it is through God shining on us (favoring and guiding us) that we will live to see a bright outcome for our lives (compare Psalm 37:3-6; see also Isaiah 60:19-20).

In closing, David prays that God's loyal love will continue for those who "know" Him and are thereby "upright in heart" (Psalm 36:10). Indeed, truly knowing God implies more than knowing *about* Him. It means having a relationship with Him, which is based on obedience to His laws (see 1 John 2:3-4; John 15:14). To have a relationship, we have to spend quality time with God through prayer, Bible study and contemplative meditation. Even fellowship with likeminded believers is an important way to fellowship with the Father and Christ (1 John 1:3)--as the Father and Christ dwell in faithful believers through the Holy Spirit.

David further asks for protection from the wicked who refuse to submit to God's way (Psalm 36:11)--perhaps thinking of some who were scheming to overthrow him. And he concludes with a final consideration (or prophetic glimpse) of the doom of the wicked (verse 12), which we see more about in the next psalm." [END]

Psalm 37:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 37 ends an apparent grouping of four related psalms (34-37). Like Psalm 34, this one is an alphabetic acrostic, though in this case two verses are usually devoted to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Because the acrostic style makes it easier to memorize the songs that use it, some see these as "classroom" or "teaching" psalms. This is particularly the case with Psalm 37, as it is essentially a series of related proverbs or

wise sayings. (Observe that verse 1 is nearly identical to Proverbs 24:19.)

David's message in the proverbs of Psalm 37 is rather similar to what he said in Psalm 36. The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* notes in its introduction to Psalm 37: "This psalm's dominant theme is related to the contrast between the wicked and the righteous reflected in Psalm 36. The central issue addressed is: Who will 'inherit the land' (vv. 9, 11, 22, 29), i.e., live on to enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the promised land? Will the wicked, who plot (v. 12), scheme (vv. 7, 32), [intentionally] default on debts (v. 21), use raw power to gain advantage (v. 14) and seem thereby to flourish (vv. 7, 16, 35)? Or will the righteous, who trust in the Lord (vv. 3, 5, 7, 34) and are humble (v. 11), blameless (vv. 18, 37), generous (vv. 21, 26), upright (v. 37) and peaceable (v. 37), and from whose mouth is heard the moral wisdom that reflects meditation on God's law (vv. 30-31)?"

Where the NIV has the "land" as the inheritance (verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34), the KJV and NKJV have "earth" (except in verses 29 and 34, though the Hebrew is the same). Either is correct, especially when we realize that the Promised Land of God's Kingdom will encompass the entire earth, not just the land of Israel. Note that the inheritance will be dwelt in "forever" (verses 18, 29). Through these verses we see that the eternal inheritors will be "those who wait on the LORD" (hoping and trusting in Him), "the meek" (those who are humble and teachable), "those blessed by Him" (those who are faithful in their dealings, as implied by the previous verse) and "the righteous" (verse 29). These are of course all the same people--who with their inheritance will receive eternal life, deliverance from enemies, salvation and peace.

Jesus Christ quoted from verse 11 in His famous Sermon on the Mount. Giving what are referred to as the Beatitudes, Jesus in Matthew 5:5 said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Some may be surprised to learn that this is not an

exclusively New Testament teaching. Once again we see that, far from inventing a new religion as many now think, Jesus was building on the teachings of the Old Testament.

The phrase "the LORD knows the days of the upright" (Psalm 37:18) has "several meanings: (1) God knows our circumstances and provides for us; (2) God knows how long we will live and will sustain us to the end (Psalm 90:12); (3) God knows that our days on earth [in this age] are only the beginning of our days with Him in eternity" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 37:18).

Psalm 37 also sets forth what lies in store for those who do *not* serve God and live according to His teachings. An individual has only two choices when it comes to directing his life--the way of blessing and life or the way of cursing and death (see Deuteronomy 30:15-20). The way of righteousness, of obeying God through outflowing love to Him and others (summarized as the way of *give*), is the one that leads to blessings and life (Psalm 37:3-6). The other choice, the selfish way of disobedience or wickedness (summarized as the way of *get*), leads to misery and death (verses 10, 34-36). The wicked will be cut off--to perish and be forgotten. David uses the metaphor of grass to describe man's brief life on earth. Grass flourishes for a while, then is cut down and withers. So, too, will evil men perish as surely as mown grass withers (verse 2). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also spoke about "the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven" (Matthew 6:30).

Another idea David expresses here is that fretting about life is harmful (Psalm 37:1, Psalm 37:7-8). He warns against worry, being overly anxious or succumbing to envy and anger. A righteous person looks to God instead. The literal rendering of verse 5 instructs us to roll our lives over onto God. He will direct a righteous man's steps, picking him up when he falls (verses 23-24) and taking care of his needs (verses 25-26). We see, then, that the righteous at times will fall; they aren't guaranteed trouble-free lives. Yet, "though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His



hand" (verse 24). With wisdom and love, God shapes a person through trials. In that light, verse 25 should not be misunderstood to mean that God's people never suffer physical deficiency--but that God will always provide for them. Though they may at times have to ask others for help, as David himself did on occasion, they are not destitute beggars in a hopeless sense (and certainly not over the long haul of life). Trusting God, they "feed on His faithfulness" (verse 3). Indeed, even if they lack, the righteous are far better off than the wicked (verse 16)--and are even generous givers of whatever they do have (verse 26).

Jesus observed in the Sermon on the Mount that it is futile to worry. A man can't change his circumstances by worrying. God knows our needs and will take care of them if we remain committed to Him (Matthew 6:25-33). Indeed, Jesus said in this context that one's focus should be on God's Kingdom and righteousness (verse 33)- which is, not coincidentally, also the focus of Psalm 37.

Trusting God, as Psalm 37 instructs, requires one to wait on Him and to do good (verses 3-5, 7; compare 1 Peter 5:6-7). As we wait for resolution to problems, as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ, we have work to do: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). If we remain faithful to Him and continue to trust Him, God will remain faithful to us--to provide help for today and to save us in the end (Psalm 37:39-40)." [END]

Day 340 - WEDNESDAY: January 17<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 38, 39 & 40

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 38:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 38 begins a group of four related psalms that closes Book I (i.e., Psalms 38-41). These four psalms are linked by central themes. All are confessions of sin in the midst of troubles—the troubles in at least three of these being serious illness and enemies (while the other, Psalm 40, concerns

enemies rising during a time of distress, which could also be related to a time of illness).

As the sicknesses in these psalms are a result of sin on David's part, it is possible that they are all one and the same sickness resulting from the same sin. It could be, as suggested in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalm 6, that the plague David suffers is the one he prayed to come on him in place of the populace after he sinned in the numbering of Israel (see 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21). However, the Bible does not actually say whether or not David was then afflicted. The sicknesses in these psalms could well concern another time. The betrayal in Psalm 41 may hint at the time of national rebellion under Absalom with the assistance of David's friend and counselor Ahithophel (if deep depression contributed to David becoming physically ill at that time, though the Bible does not tell us).

The NIV translation of Psalm 38's superscription refers to the psalm as a "petition." The King James and New King James give the more literal rendering of this verbal phrase (which is also found in the superscription of Psalm 70) as "To bring to remembrance." Though God knows our needs, He nevertheless expects us to remind Him of them in prayer—perhaps to remind *ourselves* of our need for Him and His help.

David confesses his sin, which he labels foolishness, and asks for relief from God's heavy hand. God chastens him *because* of His sin (verses 3, 5). Sickness is not always due to a person's sins (see Job 1-2; John 9:1-3). But sometimes it is, as the numerous instances of God sending plague as punishment attests. Proverbs 3:11-12 explains that God's chastening is done out of love—just as a father disciplines his son. The book of Hebrews quotes these verses (Hebrews 12:5-6) and goes on to comment further, explaining how it all works toward a positive outcome (verses Hebrews 12:7-11).

The ordeal leaves David weak from festering sores (verse 5) and inflammation (verse 7). He is depressed by guilt (verse 4) and a lack of peace (verse 8). In verse 10, David speaks of his failing strength and the light having gone out of his eyes. We saw similar expressions in Psalm 6:7 and Psalm 13:3. In its note on 6:7, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says: "In the vivid language of the O[ld] T[estament] the eyes are dimmed by failing strength (see Psalm 38:10; 1 Samuel 14:27-29...Jeremiah 14:6), by grief (often associated with affliction: Psalm 31:9; Psalm 88:9; Job 17:7; Lamentations 2:11) and by longings unsatisfied or hope deferred (see Psalm 69:3; Psalm 119:82, Psalm 123; Deuteronomy 28:32; Isaiah 38:14)." This idiom has passed over into English. We sometimes speak of the light, spark or sparkle having left someone's eye—meaning the person has no further sense of joy in living.

Friends and family won't come near David in his illness (verse 11). Enemies conspire against him (verse 12). Isolated and absorbed in his suffering, he has no way to know what's going on and no one to talk to—like a deaf and mute person (verses 13-14). His silence may also be part of a conscious effort to avoid saying something rash or foolish to or before others and thereby sinning further, as he says in the next psalm (Psalm 39:1-2).

But David hopes in God to hear and answer His prayer (Psalm 38:15). His silence is only before other people. To God He pours out His heart, confessing his sin and pleading with God to deliver him soon (verses 15-22). Indeed, if the other sickness psalms concern this period, then David had much to say to God as He composed these prayerful hymns." [END]

While in this Psalm we don't see God's response or help for David, we confidently know that in His great faithfulness to those who humble and repent, that God will surely be there for David, hear His cries, and respond appropriately. What peace of mind it brings to know that God is always faithful and reliable when we do our part to repent, turn, and cry out to Him for help.

## Psalm 39:

The UCG reading program states: "The middle of the superscription of Psalm 39, which may be part of a postscript to the previous psalm, says "To Jeduthun," referring to "one of David's three choir leaders (1 Chronicles 16:41-41, 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1 Chronicles 25:6, 2 Chronicles 5:12; called his 'seer' in 2 Chronicles 35:15). Jeduthun is probably also Ethan of 1 Chronicles 6:44 [and] 1 Chronicles 15:19; if so, he represented the family of Merari, even as Asaph did the family of Gershon and Heman the family of Kohath, the three sons of Levi (see 1 Chronicles 6:16, 33, 39, 43-44)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 39 title). The end of the superscription, "A Psalm of David," no doubt goes with Psalm 39.

In this prayer David is "deeply troubled by the fragility of human life. He is reminded of this by the present illness through which God is rebuking him (vv. 10-11) for his 'transgression' (v. 8)" (note on Psalm 39).

As the psalm opens, we see that David has made a determination to not speak aloud, presumably of his anguish, lest this make its way to his or God's enemies. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes on verse 2 that he "fears that he may be misunderstood or that he may speak irreverently and give occasion to the enemy. For the sake of God, he vowed to be silent in his suffering." Yet verses 8-9 make it appear that David did not want to admit to detractors that his sickness was a result of God punishing him for sin. So the sin he was now guarding against could have been that of defending his reputation against criticism that might have been just (if not coming from hypocrites). Whatever the reasoning, it may help to explain his silence in the previous psalm, especially if it concerns the same illness (see Psalm 38:13-14).

At last, David says that he had to vent his anguish and frustration (verse 3). But it seems that he does the venting to God (verse 4). He begins by basically asking, "Okay, when am I going to die? How

much time do I have left?" (as it seemed this could be the end)—and complaining that human life is fleeting, like the few inches of a handbreadth in length and a wisp of vapor in substance (verses 4-6, 11). All that people did seemed so pointless (verse 6). This is the theme running through the book of Ecclesiastes.

Still, David hopes in and prays for God's healing (verses 7, 10, 12-13). He notes that he has lived not as one tied to this world but as a "stranger" or "alien" (a foreigner to this evil world) and a "sojourner" (a traveler or passing guest). And this has not been on his own but rather, as he says to God, "with You" (verse 12). The book of Hebrews says that God's saints "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland...a better, that is, a heavenly country" (Hebrew 11:13-16; compare 1 Peter 2:11-12). So in saying what he did, David was not only reminding God of his relationship with Him, but he was also expressing his hope in God's Kingdom. If it was time for him to die, he trusted in His future with God.

Yet David is not resigned to death. He still prays that God will remove His gaze so that he may regain strength and *not* die (Psalm 39:13). This does not mean, as some commentators suggest, that David is praying for God to leave him alone. For on his own David could never recover. Rather, we should understand the terminology in light of Psalm 80:16, which says that God's people perish at the rebuke of His countenance. The idea is that when He gazes on them in anger, they wither and are consumed. So Psalm 80 repeatedly asks that God would cause His face to shine—to smile favorably. David is likewise pleading for God to turn away His angry gaze of judgment—and, as stated in verse 7, he is hopeful that God will.”  
[END]

Psalm 40:

The UCG reading program states: "In its note on Psalms 40-41, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* states: "Book I of the Psalter closes with two psalms containing 'Blessed is the man who' statements (Psalm 40:4; Psalm 41:1), thus balancing the two psalms with which the book begins (Psalm 1:1; Psalm 2:12). In this way, the whole of Book I is framed by declarations of the blessedness of those who 'delight in the law of the LORD' (Psalm 1:2), who 'take refuge in him' (Psalm 2:12), who 'do not look to the proud' but make the Lord their 'trust' (Psalm 40:4) and who have 'regard for the weak' (Psalm 41:1)—a concise instruction in godliness."

Some Bible commentators have proposed that Psalm 40 itself is actually two separate psalms combined into one—a conclusion deriving from the fact that verses 1-10 praise and thank God for deliverance He has brought while verses 11-17 lament and plead with Him for deliverance that has not yet come. Moreover, most of this latter section (verses 13-17) is substantively identical to Psalm 70. Yet we may recall that Psalm 27 was also a combination of thanksgiving and lament. As in that psalm, the idea here may be recalling God's past deliverance to muster confidence that He will deliver David from his present circumstances. *Zondervan* states in its introductory note on Psalm 40: "The prayer begins with praise of God for his past mercies (vv. 1-5...) and a testimony to the king's own faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 6-10...). These form the grounds for his present appeal for help (vv. 11-17...)."

Psalm 70 is probably best explained as a borrowing of part of the lyrics of the appeal section of Psalm 40 to stand on their own as a different song—or at least a special rendition. (The tune was probably different since the words have been altered somewhat.)

As we will see, David's words in Psalm 40 foreshadowed the circumstances of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as the book of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:6-8 as referring to Him.

In verse 1, "the Hebrew translated *I waited patiently* is literally 'waiting I waited" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 1). Though time was moving on and no rescue seemed forthcoming, David still trusted. He would not give up hope in God's deliverance. And his confidence was well placed—for God *did* deliver him.

The "horrible pit" of verse 2 could represent death. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "The 'pit' is a frequent synonym of Sheol, the grave (Psalm 88:3; Proverbs 1:12; Isaiah 14:15). In the 'pit' people are powerless (Psalm 88:4), held down by the slime and mud (Psalm 40:2)" (note on Psalm 88). Yet here in Psalm 40 it may simply represent a seemingly inescapable situation into which he was sinking lower and lower (compare Psalm 69:2)—as contrasted with him then being lifted from the mud and set upon a rock (Psalm 40:2). Perhaps a double metaphor is intended. Jesus may have been alluding in part to this verse when He spoke of establishing His Church on a rock (i.e., Himself) so that the gates of Hades (the grave) would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). And given the messianic prophecy of this psalm, we may also see in all these verses Jesus thinking of times God the Father had previously delivered Him as He prayed to God while enduring His final trial.

David next states that God "has put a new song in my mouth" (Psalm 40:3a). God may have inspired him to compose an entirely new psalm. Or David may have meant that God gave him a sense of renewed wonder and appreciation accompanied with renewed energy and joy (see the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalm 33:3](#)). And from David's praise and rejoicing, many would realize what God had done and would be led to place *their* trust in Him (40:3b)—the key to blessing and happiness (verse 4).

David declares that no one can understand the enormity of God's works or of His thinking (verse 5). How many thoughts He has. How He organizes His thoughts. What He thinks about each of us. "The things You planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare" (verse 5, NIV;

compare 139:17-18). God does reveal some of His thoughts and intents concerning His people—and they are wonderful: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you...thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

David then mentions his understanding of what God is really looking for from people. It was not the physical sacrifices of the sacrificial system but a desire to follow His way—a desire David himself had (Psalm 40:6-8). The words here, describing various offerings in the sacrificial system generally, may have followed his presentation of a ritual offering. Verse 6 should not be understood to mean that there was no actual requirement for physical sacrifices. There certainly was at that time—but only as part of a desire to obey God. What God required was not the sacrifices and offerings in and of themselves—but a heart of obedience from which sacrifices and offerings would naturally flow as God so determined. David surely remembered the story of Samuel correcting Saul for failing to grasp what God thinks is important: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22; compare also Psalm 51:16-17; Jeremiah 7:22-23). We will see more about this in going through Psalms 50 and 51.

David recognizes in Psalm 40 that rather than just a token physical offering, what God really wants is the devotion of David's entire self. So David offers himself as an offering (compare Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 8:5). He says, "Behold I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me" (Psalm 40:7). What was David talking about? It concerned having God's law written in his heart (verse 8). Perhaps he realized that the Torah (the Law) and indeed all of Scripture was written for him personally, just as it is for all of us—to describe the character that he and all of us must have. But in David's case there may have been more to it. As the Lord's anointed king, David had to write out on a scroll his own personal copy of the Book of the Law, keeping it with him and reading it all his days, internalizing it and



living by it for the sake of himself, his kingdom and his family (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). So David expressed his continuing commitment to fulfill all of it.

Of course, the One who completely and absolutely fulfills all of Scripture's requirements, including the sacrifices and the ultimate role of Anointed King—who presented Himself before God as the very quintessence of all offerings—is Jesus Christ. And in the book of Hebrews we see Psalm 40:6-8 quoted as the words of Jesus (Hebrews 10:1-10)—as they in fact were, David having been inspired by Him—and are told that the entire sacrificial system pointed to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Jesus lived His life wholly dedicated to God and then offered Himself as the true atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Psalm 40 is thus a messianic psalm—making the rest of it likely applicable to Jesus as well.

It should be noted that the second line of verse 6 as translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, "My ears you have opened [or 'dug' or 'pierced']" (to hear and accept God's law, it would seem), is not quoted this way in the New Testament. Rather, the same translation found in the Greek Septuagint is given: "But a body You have prepared for me" (see Hebrews 10:5)—that is, to offer up to God. In a footnote on Psalm 40:6, *Expositor's* says that the Septuagint rendering "represents a paraphrastic interpretation of a difficult Hebrew phrase" (that is, it paraphrases what seems to be the point here based on surrounding clauses). Even if not technically accurate (though it could be), the Septuagint rendering used in the New Testament is true and is certainly implied in context—that God wanted not animal bodies but David's own body presented as an offering for serving God's purposes (and, in ultimate fulfillment, that the body of Jesus Christ was to be the consummation of sacrificial offering—in both life and death).

David goes on in Psalm 40 to remind God of what he has done since being saved from death. "O LORD, you Yourself know..." he says at the end of verse 9. And what had he done? Besides determining to

continue in obedience to God, as we saw in verses 6-8, we further read that he saw the need to spread the word about God and His deliverance. David was the king of Israel and a prophet. He had a great responsibility to teach His people. "I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly" (verse 9a). That is, he hadn't kept it to himself but had proclaimed it to the throngs at the temple gathered for worship.

Interestingly, the phrase "proclaimed the good news" is found in the New Testament as "preached the gospel"—and Jesus Christ, prophesied in this psalm, certainly did that (as did those He commissioned with the same task). Note that David uses the phrase "good news of righteousness." *Expositor's* notes on verses 9-10: "The Lord's righteousness (*sedeq*) is expressed in any act ordered on behalf of his people's welfare and the execution of his kingdom purposes. By his righteous acts they are delivered, prosper, and enjoy the benefits of the covenant relationship.... Righteousness in this sense is synonymous with 'salvation' in the broadest sense. The nature of God's righteous acts is explicated by the other perfections. He is faithful to his covenant people, in accordance with his promises (Psalm 33:4), resulting in the 'salvation' of his people."

David further stated how he declared God's faithfulness and salvation and hadn't concealed the truth from anyone (Psalm 40:10). We should realize that one important way David proclaimed all this is through these very psalms we are studying. He composed them to be performed publicly—so the people could learn from them, learn to sing them and join in. And again, we should further consider that the One who inspired not just Psalm 40 but all the psalms was the living Word of God, who later became Jesus Christ.

In the remaining verses (11-17), David makes his present appeal, seeing his troubles as the result of his sins (verse 12) and enemies who want to destroy him (verses 13-15). Though it is not specifically stated, it could be that his present crisis is serious illness, as in the other three psalms of Book I's concluding group of four—his

weakened state and isolation giving opportunity to his enemies to rise up.

Jesus Christ, we realize, committed no sins—but He took the sins of the whole world onto Himself when He was crucified. In that light, it is interesting in verse 12 that David does not ask for forgiveness (as Christ did not need to). David merely speaks of his iniquities overwhelming him. Perhaps David had already repented but still saw what was happening as the consequences of his sins. Yet when applied to Christ, this would mean that the sins of others (including David's)—now committed to Christ as the sin-bearer—were bringing on Him the horrible consequences He had to face at the end of His human life. And of course Jesus had to face taunting enemies just as David had to (verses 13-15).

In verse 16 David declares that even in the midst of troubles, those who love God and His salvation should "say continually, "The LORD be magnified!" This gives further explanation to the first part of the psalm and argues in favor of Psalm 40 being one psalm.

David closes in verse 17 with a final appeal. The reference to himself as "poor" is not meant materially (see also Psalm 34:6; Psalm 41:1). The sense here is of being lowly and oppressed—of being "weak" instead of powerful (see Psalm 41:1, NIV). David is speaking of his condition of humility and abasement (and perhaps poor health)—and, as he also says here, his grave need for help. The help he needs can come only from God, and he prays that God will intervene quickly—as Jesus must have prayed during His final ordeal (and as all of us should pray during our trials today)." [END]

Day 341 - THURSDAY: January 18<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 41, 53 & 55

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 41:

The UCG reading program states: "Like Psalms 38 and 39 (and perhaps 40), David composed Psalm 41 when he was severely ill.

And like Psalm 40, this song contains a prophetic foreshadowing of events in the life of the Messiah.

Before asking God to heal him in verse 4, David first lays a foundation for that request: "Blessed is he who considers the poor" (verse 1)—or "weak" (NIV). God will deliver, preserve, bless, protect, strengthen and—directly pertinent to David's situation—"sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness" (verse 3, NIV). David is a compassionate man. It is his practice to pray, fast and mourn for others when they are sick (Psalm 35:13-14). He trusts that God will intervene for him now in his own need (41:3).

Indeed, note that the final verse of the previous psalm reflected on God thinking on David himself in his poor and needy state (Psalm 40:17). Such concern for others in need is the heart of godly character, which God's people must emulate. David well understood this, being a "man after [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22). The qualities of mercy and compassion figure prominently in the New Testament. The apostle James declares that showing concern for others is an essential element in true religion: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Jesus taught, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). He gave His disciples a sobering parable on the subject of compassion (Matthew 18:21-35) and stated that mercy (the word here denoting compassion or pity) is one of the weightier matters of God's law (Matthew 23:23).

Yet as important as it is for all to have concern for the weak—for the lowly and downtrodden—it is especially so of a king such as David, whose duty is to emulate God's righteous rule in defending the powerless (compare Psalm 72:2, 4, 12-14; Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 29:14; Psalm 31:8-9; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 22:16). Again, David well knew this—and lived accordingly (as did and does Jesus Christ, who is prefigured in this psalm).

David then prays for mercy and healing, confessing his sin. When we consider parallels with Jesus in this psalm, we realize that He did not sin. Yet the great suffering and anguish that came upon Him at the end of His physical life was the result of bearing the penalty of sin—not His own but that of the rest of mankind (David's included).

David speaks of enemies relishing the thought of his imminent death (verses 5-8), which Christ also endured.

We then arrive at verse 9, which ties directly to the life of Jesus. David speaks of betrayal by a "familiar friend," a close companion, who dined with him. Some have suggested that the reference here and in Psalm 55:12-14 is to David's friend and counselor Ahithophel, who joined Absalom's rebellion against David. This seems a rather likely explanation—although the Bible does not mention David being severely ill at that time (though it would not be surprising for deep anguish and depression on that occasion to have made him physically sick). Since the companion is not named, and since the Bible does not record every detail of David's life, it's of course possible that this was a different friend on a different occasion—the illness, as previously mentioned, perhaps being the plague that struck after the numbering of Israel.

Whatever the case, the most significant meaning here is not actually David's personal situation at all—but the fact that this was a prophecy of what would happen in the life of Christ. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on Psalm 41:9: "The outrage of betrayal by one so close is nearly unbearable (Matt. 26:14-16). The fulfillment of this verse in the experience of Jesus and Judas is remarkable. Not only did the two eat a meal together (Matt. 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21), but Jesus also called Judas a 'friend' at the moment of betrayal (Matthew 26:50). Moreover Jesus quoted this verse, noting its fulfillment in Judas (John 13:18)."

In Psalm 41:10, "Raise me up" was again David's prayer for healing—to be brought up from his sickbed. Yet "in another sense

[given the clear messianic context of this psalm], these words look forward to Jesus' resurrection (Psalm 16:10, 11; Psalm 118:17, 18)" (note on Psalm 41:10-12). David expresses his belief in eternal life when He says confidently of God's salvation: "You...set me before Your face forever" (verse 12).

The psalm closes in verse 13 with the doxology (word of praise) that was most likely appended to the end of the psalm sometime later in compiling Book I of the Psalter or in even later arrangement."

[END]

Psalm 53:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 53 is another *maskil* of David. "To Mahalath" in the superscription, which may be part of a postscript to Psalm 52 (and also found in the superscription of Psalm 88 as part of a longer phrase), could represent the psalm being set to the tune of another song. Yet it might mean something else. The words have been variously interpreted as "On sickness," "On suffering," "To pipings" (on wind instruments) or "To dances" (or some sort of choreography).

Psalm 53 repeats much of Psalm 14 with some minor variation. The placement of nearly the same psalm here provides a further commentary on the sort of arrogant godless fool described in Psalms 49 and 52—and thus brings the cluster of psalms beginning with 49 to a close. It also helps to demonstrate that originally the various books of the Psalter were probably separate collections or hymnals.

One noticeable difference between the two psalms is that here the word *Elohim* ("God") is used throughout rather than *Yhwh* (the Eternal or "LORD").

The other significant difference occurs in verse 5. As the Zondervan NIV Study Bible notes on this verse, it "differs considerably from Psalm 14:5-6, though the basic thought remains the same: God overwhelms the godless who attack his people. Here the verbs are in

the past tense (perhaps to express the certainty of their downfall)." As to God scattering the bones of the enemy, it means "over the battlefield of their defeat, their bodies left unburied like something loathsome (see Isaiah 14:18-20; Jeremiah 8:2...)" (same note). However, it could also be that so many will be destroyed at the end that they will not be able to be buried for some time, such as when the godless army of Gog is destroyed (see Ezekiel 39:11-16).

The closing verse of Psalm 14 and of 53 are identical in expressing a great yearning for salvation, rejoicing and gladness when God restores His people to their land. This speaks prophetically of the future establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth." [END]

Psalm 55:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 55 is the last *maskil* of David in a sequence of four. As before, the word *Neginoth* in the superscription, perhaps part of a postscript to Psalm 54, is probably correctly translated in the NKJV as "stringed instruments."

David cries out to God in this song about many enemies acting against him, though his focus is on one in particular. The psalm addresses the pain of being betrayed by a friend--one David knew well who even worshiped God at the tabernacle alongside him (verses 12-14). Besides being painful on its own, a betraying friend is an enemy with vital knowledge--an adversary particularly adept at causing harm and inflicting pain. David addresses both elements here when he says, "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him" (verse 12, NIV).

The friend having "broken his covenant" (verse 20) could mean an informal one of friendship or a formal oath of loyalty to David as king--perhaps part of an oath of office. The man's loyalty and slick speech, David says, were a pretense--all part of a calculated plan to stab him in the back (verse 21).

David doesn't name the friend, but many believe the person meant here was his counselor and prime minister Ahithophel, who betrayed him in joining and essentially directing Absalom's rebellion (see 2 Samuel 15-17). Further, many see a connection between Psalm 55 and Psalm 41:9: "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." However, Psalm 41 also concerns an illness that befell David--and there is no record of him being ill when Absalom rebelled (though, as pointed out previously, it is not hard to imagine that his deep depression could have made him physically sick). It could be that Psalm 41 and Psalm 55 concern two different friends at different times--or that both concern the same friend but not Ahithophel. In any case, these two psalms are certainly linked by theme if not by occasion. That being so, we should recall that Psalm 41:9 is quoted in the New Testament as a prophecy of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. The betrayal in Psalm 55 would seem to prefigure this as well, as many have recognized.

The NKJV translates David's prayer in verse 15 as: "Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell"--that is, not just the one treacherous friend but others who were set against him also. In no way does this refer to people descending into a burning hellfire and remaining conscious. Rather, the word translated "hell" here simply means, as the NIV renders it, "grave." In using the word "alive," David could conceivably be calling for what happened to Korah and the other rebels against Moses in the wilderness when the earth opened up and swallowed them--whereupon they were instantly killed. Yet it seems likely that he simply means for their deaths to come while they are in full vigor and not after they have lain on their sickbeds in old age. David later expresses his belief that this will happen when he says near the end of the psalm, "Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (verse 23).

How are we to understand David's call for death on his enemies, as it may seem very unchristian in light of Jesus' instruction to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors? One book explains regarding



such imprecations (callings for curse or judgment on others) in the psalms: "These invocations are not mere outbursts of a vengeful spirit; they are, instead, prayers addressed to God. These earnest pleadings to God ask that he step in and right some matters so grossly distorted that if his help does not come, all hope for justice is lost.

"These hard sayings are legitimate expressions of the longings of Old Testament saints for the vindication that only God's righteousness can bring. They are not statements of personal vendetta, but utterances of zeal for the kingdom of God and his glory. The attacks that provoked these prayers were not just from personal enemies; rather, they were rightly seen as attacks against God and especially his representatives in the promised line of the Messiah. Thus, David and his office bore the brunt of most of these attacks, and this was tantamount to an attack on God and his kingdom!

"It is frightening to realize that a righteous person may, from time to time, be in the presence of evil and have little or no reaction to it. But in these psalms we have the reverse of the situation. These prayers express a fierce abhorrence of sin and a desire to see God's name and cause triumph. Therefore, those whom the saints opposed in these prayers were the fearful embodiments of wickedness.

"Since David was the author of far more imprecatory psalms than anyone else, let it also be noted that David exhibited just the opposite of a vindictive or vengeful spirit in his own life. He was personally assaulted time and time again by people like Shimei, Doeg, Saul and his own son Absalom. Never once did he attempt to effect his own vindication or lift his hand to exercise what many may have regarded as his royal prerogative....

"Finally, these imprecations only repeat in prayer what God had already stated elsewhere would be the fate of those who were impenitent and who were persistently opposing God and his

kingdom. In almost every instance, each expression used in one of these prayers of malediction may be found in plain prose statements of what will happen to those sinners who persist in opposing God" (Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce and Manfred Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 1996, comments on Psalm 137:8-9).

David, we should also remember, was a prophet expressing God's judgment. Furthermore, here in Psalm 55 he even seems to make allowance for repentance when he says that it is such people's *lack* of repentance that is the basis for their punishment: "God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them [i.e., the evil they say and do] and afflict them...men who never change their ways and have no fear of God" (verse 19, NIV).

Conversely, David has confidence that God will sustain His faithful people. He tells the righteous to "cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you" (verse 22). The apostle Peter later says the same in 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." [END]

Day 342 - FRIDAY: January 19<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 58, 61 & 62

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 58:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 58, the third *miktam* of David out of five in a row, addresses human misrule and injustice. He may have written this before he was king-while on the run from Saul, as in the preceding psalm and the one that follows. However, even while king, David could not completely control every judge under his authority and certainly not the rulers of enemy lands outside his empire.

In verse 1, the NKJV calls the offenders "silent ones," a valid translation, because they remain silent when it comes to saying

what needs to be said and rendering appropriate judgment. Verse 2 appears to say that those being addressed commit evil and violence themselves. Yet it may mean that by failing in justice, they promote these things in society.

The beginning of verse 3 says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb..." This is an odd turn of phrase in English but is clearly explained by the next line, an example of Hebrew poetry's repetition: "...they go astray as soon as they are born"-that is, they are drawn away from God early in life.

In positions of judgment and leadership, the wicked are dangerous--compared to a cobra that can't be mesmerized by a snake charmer (verses 4-5). David further compares them to ravenous lions and urgently calls on God to break their fangs--that is, their power to hurt people (verse 6). He also asks that they be swept away as running water and that their "arrows," or means of dealing out destruction, be rendered useless (verse 7). In verse 8, when David asks that *they* melt away like a snail and that *they* are not brought to term like a stillborn child, it is not clear if he means the wicked themselves or their arrows of verse 8. Either way, the point is to neutralize the grave threat they pose.

In verse 9, the added italicized words "*the burning*" before "thorns" gives the correct sense here, as is made clear by other verses: "Twigs from wild thornbushes were used as fuel for quick heat (see Psalm 118:12; Ecclesiastes 7:6)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 58:9). The meaning of the verse is that God's judgment will come suddenly on the wicked.

In its note on verse 10, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "The joy of the righteous comes to full expression when they see evidences of God's justice. It is not so much the case that they are bloodthirsty [as might appear here at first glance] but rather that they delight in justice. The reign of terror must come to an end! Isaiah portrays the Lord as the Divine Warrior coming with red

garments, stained by the blood of his enemies (Isaiah 63:1-6). Here the godly join in the victory march, as they too have been granted victory. The imagery of feet in blood portrays the victory (cf. Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 14:19-20; Revelation 19:13-14), rather than the gruesome picture of people relishing the death of the wicked. The godly share together with the Lord in his triumph over evil."

The injustice of human misrule will at last be overturned and righted when God brings His true and righteous judgment (Psalm 58:11). The message will be clear: righteousness pays; wickedness doesn't." [END]

Psalm 61:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalms 61-64, all psalms of David according to their superscriptions, form a cluster of four royal prayers linked together by interweaving themes, especially "the common theme of strong reliance on God for deliverance in the face of great--perhaps mortal--danger" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, Psalms introduction, "Significant Arrangement of the Psalter"; and note on Psalms 61-64).

*Neginah* in the superscription of Psalm 61, which may be part of a postscript to Psalm 60, is probably correctly translated in the NKJV as "stringed instrument."

Overwhelmed at his circumstances (verse 2), the details of which we are not given except that it involves some enemy (verse 3), David feels cut off from God: "From the ends of the earth I call to You" (verse 2, NIV). He seeks to be led to the "rock that is higher than I" (verse 1). By "rock" he means God Himself, as he did earlier in Psalm 18 (verses 2, 31, 46). The imagery of God as a Rock of protection occurs early in Scripture in the Song of Moses (see Deuteronomy 32:4). David uses it again in the next Psalm (Psalm 62:2, Psalm 62:6-7) and in other psalms (Psalm 71:3; Psalm 144:1). "This is a particularly apt image [of God] for David, who many times

had to hide in the mountains for security (see 1 Samuel 26:1, 1 Samuel 26:20)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 18:2).

Indeed, it seems that David is now led to the Rock as he has asked--for the rest of his psalm exudes confidence in God's protection and blessing.

David likens the shelter of God's tabernacle to the shelter of a mother bird's wings (verse 4). David will repeat this imagery of finding refuge under God's wings in Psalm 63:7 (see also Psalm 17:8; Psalm 36:7; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 91:4). There is probably also a figurative tie--in here to the wings or hem of a garment--symbolism employed in the book of Ruth for taking in marriage (as Christ takes His people in marriage). God's people thus become part of His household and family--the primary idea behind abiding in His tabernacle (His dwelling) forever.

The vows David had made to God (verse 5)--his promises to remain devoted and faithful to God, to obey and serve Him--were genuine. And for that God would reward him with the heritage of all who fear and honor God's name (same verse)--not just long life (verse 6) but eternal life in God's presence (verse 7). The King of Israel living forever here is understood in Jewish interpretation as a prophecy of the Messiah, as it likely is, but it also applies to David himself. God's "mercy and truth" would preserve King David as well as the future messianic King (verse 7; see also Psalm 25:10; Psalm 85:10, Psalm 85:15; Psalm 89:14; Proverbs 20:28; Isaiah 16:5). Consider that Jesus Christ came "*full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14; see also verse 17)--fulfilling the messianic expectation of these passages.

David closes his prayer by saying that he will use the eternity God is giving him to forever extol and obey God (Psalm 61:8). What remarkable devotion!" [END]

Psalm 62:

The UCG reading program states: "Jeduthun, in the superscription of Psalm 62, was, as noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalm 39, one of David's three choir leaders (1 Chronicles 15:41-42; 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 5:12) who was also known as a seer or prophet (2 Chronicles 35:15)--often thought to be synonymous with Ethan (1 Chronicles 6:44; 1 Chronicles 15:19), representing the Levitical family of Merari. The name Jeduthun also appears in the superscription of Psalm 77.

Psalm 62 has three stanzas (verses Psalm 62:1-4, Psalm 62:5-8, Psalm 62:9-12)--the first two of which begin almost the same (verses 1-2, 5-6). David here says that he will silently wait for God's deliverance and refers to God, as in the previous psalm, as his rock of protection and source of salvation. As the end of verses 2 and 6 declare, he will "not be greatly moved"--that is, "shaken" (NIV).

David's need here is urgent. Arrogant foes conspire to "cast him down from his high position" (verse 4)--to topple him from the throne--through deceit and intrigue. He asks them how long they will attack him (verse 3a). The meaning of the second part of verse 3 is not clear however. Either he is announcing to the conspirators what will befall them as in the NKJV: "You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence." Or he is further lamenting their attack on him, referring to himself as the vulnerable one: "Would all of you throw him down--this leaning wall, this tottering fence?" (NIV; see also NRSV; Tanakh).

In any case, David is confident of God's protection and ultimate deliverance. He gives others the advice he himself follows: to trust God at all times and pour out one's heart to Him (verse 8)--for God is an unfailing refuge. Men, no matter what their position, are inconstant and unreliable--and not the place to put one's trust (verse 9). It is futile to hope in their evil way of doing things or to trust in the wealth they pursue as a source of help in all of life's circumstances (verse 10). Real power belongs to God (verse 11)--along with mercy to those who serve Him and the means to

compensate each person according to the choices they make in life (verse 12; compare Matthew 16:27).

That God has spoken *once* and David heard it *twice* (Psalm 62:11) is explained as a form of expression in Old Testament times. As *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verse 11: "It is a convention of wisdom literature to use a number and then raise it by one (Proverbs 30:11-33). The point here is that David has heard the message with certainty." [END]

### Day 343 - SATURDAY: January 20<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 64, 65 & 66

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 64:

The UCG reading program states: "In Psalm 64, last in the group of four psalms here, David prays for protection from those plotting against him and meditates on the sudden judgment that awaits the wicked.

The rebels "encourage themselves" by scheming and coming up with the "perfect plan" (compare verses 5-6). By saying that the inward thought and heart of man are "deep" (verse 6), David seems to be saying that they are hidden deep down where no one would see, following the question in verse 5. But Someone does see. *The Nelson Study Bible* states: "The arrogance of the wicked in their plots against the righteous is a continuing theme in the Psalms (Psalm 9; 10; 12). *Who will see* [they think to themselves]: The wicked do not know, or do not care, that there is One who sees (Psalm 73:11), and who will repay (Psalm 75:7)" (note on Psalm 64:5-6). Jeremiah quoted God as saying: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? *I, the Lord*, search the heart, *I* test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Indeed, David believes that God will punish the wicked based on the principle of just retribution. Their "arrows" or "bitter words" (verses

3-4) God will shoot back at them (verse 7). "He will make them stumble over their own tongue" (verse 8) is not a reference to stuttering but that their own words will ultimately trip them up and bring them down. In essence, what they plan to do to others will "come back to bite them" and bring about their own downfall (compare Galatians 6:7).

This will be a lesson to all (Psalm 64:9). In addition to *fearing* God, they will "declare the work of God," passing on to others what they have witnessed, and "wisely consider" what He has done (same verse). In light of God's faithfulness, David in verse 10 encourages the godly to trust and rely on Him." [END]

Psalm 65:

The UCG reading program states: "The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says in its introductory note to Psalms 65-68 that these are "four psalms dominated by the theme of praise and linked by the shared recognition that God's 'awesome' deeds evoke the wonder of 'all the earth' to join Israel in singing the praise of her God.... In these four psalms, the occasions--and reasons--for this universal praise include (1) God's mighty acts in maintaining the creation order and making it fruitful so that humans are richly blessed, and (2) God's saving acts in behalf of his people. These are significantly brought together here by alternating the focus; Psalm 65 and Psalm 67 speak of the former, and Psalm 66 and Psalm 68 speak of the latter. Thus, in this short series all of God's benevolent acts are brought into purview, and the whole human race is encompassed in the community of praise."

The framing psalms of this section, Psalm 65 and Psalm 68, are attributed to David. The interior psalms, Psalm 66 and Psalm 67 are anonymous. These are two of only four anonymous psalms in Book II. Yet since the first, Psalm 43 (attributed to David in the Septuagint), was most likely part of Psalm 42, there are probably only three anonymous psalms in Book II--66, 67 and 71. However, given their placement and the fact that Book II ends a few chapters



later by referring to previous psalms as "prayers of David" (Psalm 72:20), it seems likely that these are all Davidic psalms--or at least ones he collected and used. The Septuagint attributes Psalm 71 to David.

Psalm 65, as *The Nelson Study Bible* says, "is a wisdom psalm and more particularly a creation psalm (as Psalm 19). It celebrates rainfall, sharing the mood of Psalm 104 in this regard. But this is also a prophetic psalm, although it is not always regarded as such. The prophetic element is signaled in the first verse, the vow of praise yet to be paid--that is, all creation is waiting to praise the Lord when He finally appears in glory (see Romans 14:10-11; Revelation 19:5). [See also the next psalm, 66:1-4.]....

"In the background of this psalm [65] is an idea not far from that of Paul in Romans 8:22, the groaning of creation for its release from the curse brought on it by humanity's [sin in the Garden of Eden] (Genesis 3:17). The point of the psalm is twofold: (1) Every good rain and every full harvest is a blessing from God, showing His delight in His creation. (2) A day of God's goodness is coming in which good rains and harvests will be greater than ever before" (introductory note on Psalm 65 and note on verse 1).

Yet there is more to it still. For in juxtaposing atonement for sin (verse 3), entry into God's temple courts (verse 4) and the abundance of rain and harvest to crown the year (verses 9-13), David seems to picture here the observance of the fall festival season in thanksgiving for the late summer and fall harvest as figurative of the future coming of God's Kingdom and the great spiritual harvest of humanity at that time. In Jewish interpretation, the crowning of the year (verse 11) refers to the civil new year, Rosh Hashanah or the Feast of Trumpets. As ancient Israelite coronations were accompanied by the blowing of the shofar or ram's horn, the blowing of the ram's horn at the Feast of Trumpets was seen as the crowning the year--and indeed this festival begins the sacred year's

seventh month, which celebrates the fall harvest and pictures the culmination of God's plan for humanity's redemption and salvation.

Verses 2-3 refer to God providing atonement for all flesh--all people. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on these verses: "David speaks of a coming day when sin will be dealt with fully, when redemption will be completely paid. This took place in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 1:7)." However, Christ's sacrifice will not be generally applied to all mankind until the world at large repents, commencing after Jesus' return as symbolized in the Day of Atonement, which comes just nine days after the Feast of Trumpets. And Atonement itself serves as a prelude to the Feast of Tabernacles beginning five days later--also known as the Feast of Ingathering to emphasize its harvest theme (and to prefigure the ingathering of all humanity into a relationship with God, into His temple courts to dwell with Him forever).

When Jesus Christ returns, God will truly be "the confidence of all the ends of the earth" (verse 5). All mankind will understand His plan and His awesome and righteous deeds to save all people.

Even now God's power as displayed through nature elicits awe: "Those living far away fear your wonders" (verse 8, NIV). Yet this may also foretell the humbling of mankind at Christ's return through a series of global natural catastrophes He will bring. But even these will be to produce a harvest--a harvest of repentant people.

In verses 9-13 David cites God's comprehensive care for the earth--the rain (verses 9-10), the blessings on the pastures, hills, meadows and valleys. "Your paths drip with abundance" (verse 11b). The NIV translation replaces "paths" here with "carts." Green's Literal Translation says "tracks." *The Nelson Study Bible* says, "The picture is of wagon tracks across the heavens, where the 'cart' of God's mercies sloshes abundance on the earth below" (note on verses 11-13).

God's marvelous outpouring of material and spiritual blessings through the year were celebrated with great rejoicing during His annual festivals-particularly during the fall festivals. But those blessings and celebration are only a small foretaste of what awaits in the wonderful Kingdom of God to come." [END]

Psalm 66:

The UCG reading program states: "As already mentioned, the author of Psalm 66 is not given in the title, though David seems rather likely. The perspective in the first part of the song (verses 1-12) is from the plurality of God's people (using the pronouns "us" and "we"), while the latter part (verses 13-20) is from a singular perspective (using "I" and "me").

In the spirit of the previous psalm, the psalmist calls on the whole earth to praise God and acknowledge His awesome works (verses 1-3a) and then, to God, prophetically says that in the future "all the earth shall worship You" and "submit themselves to You" (verses 3b-4).

The psalm calls on all to come and *see* the great things God has done and is doing for people (verse 5)--to witness and experience it firsthand or to look into what is recorded in Scripture. God delivered Israel from Egypt by parting the Red Sea and making a dry-land passage to freedom (verse 6). God also dried up the Jordan River so that "all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan" (Joshua 3:17). Yet in declaring this message to the world at the time of Christ's return, the wording here could also refer to the parallel crossings over water on dry land that will occur at that time-when "the Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt...[and] shake His fist over the River [Euphrates]...and make men cross over dryshod" (Isaiah 11:15).

God's people are able to declare that He "has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping" (verse 9, NIV) even though He has

tested them (verse 10). The tests are likened to the refining of silver, to being captured (perhaps imprisoned), to being afflicted on the back (perhaps through the lash or in bearing burdens) and to suffering oppression--in summary, "We went through fire and water, but You brought us out to a place [or state] of abundance" (verse 12, NIV). As God says through Isaiah of His intention to preserve His people: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:2-3).

On the occasions of personal deliverance, the psalmist promises to bring thank offerings (verses 13-15). And he will talk about the wonderful things God "has done for me" (verse 16, NIV). Whereas verse 5 called on all to "come and see" God's works toward humanity, the psalmist now directs those who have been stirred to fear and honor God to "come and *hear*" his individual witness (verse 16)--what God has done for one, for him, and will also do, it is implied, for each of them.

Then notice the realization of verse 18, which is an implicit warning to others hearing this witness: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This is in a present or continuing sense. The NIV renders this verse in the past tense, as expressive of what had occurred in this episode: "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Either way, we are told here that the harboring of sin, failing to confess it and forsake it, and the nurturing of sinful thoughts will thwart effective prayer. We find this important message in other passages of Scripture as well (see Proverbs 15:29; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 1:15; Isaiah 59:1-2).

Conversely, the apostle John tells us: "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22). Psalm

66 expresses this very confidence, the psalmist stating in verses 19-20 that God on this occasion has *certainly* listened to his prayer and has not rejected it nor withheld His *hesed*--His steadfast love and mercy." [END]