

**Adult**

# **Sabbath School Lessons**

**Singing  
With the Psalmist**



**July, August, September 1990**

# Our Little Friend



## Kyle's Vacation—3

By Lois Anne Williams

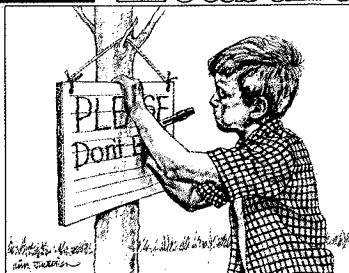
“Show me there last week everybody and found the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, so I’ll be going there after breakfast. We’ll study God’s Word in Sabbath School and worship God with the people of this area who attend that church.”

From Grandpa had made scrambled eggs and soup for the two of them to eat while Mother and Grandma dined at the church. Grandpa poured orange juice for them both and said to Kyle as Kyle said, “That’s right,” he said.

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 2      DISTRIBUTE: JULY 15, 1982

# Primary Treasure

Primary



The sun beat down so fiercely this eight-year-old Andy could no longer go barefoot without burning his feet. He missed the cool, damp touch of the grass in the morning. He wanted to feel mud squishing between his toes when he played with the team.

Now, she was had to be used carefully. Not a drop was to be wasted. It had been a long time since it had rained!

His feet were so hot in his starchy shoes! All winter long Andy had looked forward to not having to wear shoes! Now it was too hot to go barefoot.

He no longer had shoes along the ground near the car where his dad was

## Don't Bruise the Grass

By Sylvia Forcier

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 20      DISTRIBUTE: JULY 15, 1982

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## The Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



Elder G. Arthur Keough fits the appellation, “a gentleman and a scholar.” He holds degrees or certificates from five colleges and universities. After completing requirements for his ministerial diploma from Newbold College and a diploma in education from Borough Road College in England, Elder Keough came to America to complete his bachelor’s degree from Washington Missionary College (Columbia Union College) and his master’s degree from the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He then studied Arabic language and Islamics and graduated with an academic diploma in education from the University of London.

Elder Keough founded and served as president of Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon. He served as educational department secretary for the Middle East Union, and was professor and chairman of the department of religion at Columbia Union College.

Elder Keough has written seven other Sabbath School standard quarterlies or teacher’s editions. He has contributed to the *Collegiate Quarterly* and has written for the *Adventist Review*. He has written four books to accompany the Sabbath School lessons.

Elder Keough was born in Egypt to pioneer missionary parents. He was ordained in Jerusalem. Currently he resides with his wife in Takoma Park, Maryland. The Keoughs have four grown children.

# Introduction to the Psalms

## Singing With The Psalmist

The book of Psalms is one of the most popular books of the Old Testament. For one thing, the psalms are poetry, and the language of poetry has widespread appeal. For another thing, the psalms reflect the wisdom, praise, and prayers of men of God, chief among them being King David. Our personal expressions of sorrow, suffering, despair, confidence, victory, and praise are a distant echo of those so eloquently expressed by the psalmist. What he says is important to us who would like to follow in his footsteps of dedication and service.

Because there are so many psalms, our Bible book curriculum assigns two quarters to study a representative selection. This quarter, after an introductory lesson, we will study one psalm each week, focusing on the major topic dealt with in that psalm. The psalms that have been selected from the first half of the book will be studied from the standpoint of practical application to our lives. The important question considered each week will be, What is the psalmist saying, and how does his experience apply to us?

On what basis have we chosen the psalms for individual study? In some cases, we have bowed to popular appeal, as in the case of the Shepherd's Psalm. In other cases, we have been influenced by the recommendation of Ellen G. White that the psalm should be studied by those who live near the end of time. In all cases, we have felt that the psalmist has something important to say to us, something we ought to note, and something to sing about!

"Eight names of persons occurring in the superscriptions to the psalms appear to be the names of authors, contributors, compilers, musicians, or others associated with the composition, compilation, and use of the sacred lyrics. The names are David, Asaph, Korah, Moses, Heman, Ethan, Solomon, and Jeduthun."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 616. Seventy-three psalms, scattered throughout the five parts of the book, are said to be "of David." This does not necessarily mean that David wrote all seventy-three, but it does suggest that David was the most frequent author. Because there were other authors in addition to David, we will refer to each author as the "psalmist."

It is widely accepted that the psalms were written over a period of a thousand years from the time of Moses to the period following the Exile. The general theme can be summarized: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

The Greek word for "psalms" means "sacred songs sung to musical accompaniment." The standard Hebrew title means "praises." "The Psalms are poems and are to be enjoyed as such. The *form* is music (in poetry), and the *substance* is praise. A Psalm is a poem that is sung as an expression of praise to God."—R. B. Allen, *Praise! A Matter of Life and Breath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), p. 27.

### OVERVIEW—Psalms

Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	Book V
Psalms 1—41	Psalms 42—72	Psalms 73—89	Psalms 90—106	Psalms 107—150

# Lesson 1

July 1-7

## Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** An Introduction to the Book of Psalms.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with psaltery and harp" (Psalm 150:2, 3).

**WHAT DO THE PSALMS HAVE TO OFFER?** The recurring theme of the psalms is: God has relief for man's trouble. The psalms are inspired prayer-hymns spoken or sung by God's servants of old, expressing praise and thanksgiving to an exalted God and bearing reassuring testimony to His grace and power in judgment and salvation.

### OUTLINE:

- I. The Authors and the Author of the Psalms.
- II. The Circumstances and Dates of the Psalms.
- III. The Message of the Psalms.

**PRAISE FOR THE ONE WHO DELIVERS.** For believers throughout the centuries, from Old Testament times to the present, the psalms of the Bible belong to the center of life and worship. The biblical psalms are part of the believer's personal pilgrimage, letting us know that we are under the shadow of the Almighty regardless of the hardships experienced on life's path. The psalms are a plea for salvation in times of trial, a joyful response to divine deliverance from trouble, and a proclamation of divine majesty and power in real-life situations. There are also lamentations and cries for justice, calls for deliverance from sickness or misery.

The power of the psalms rests in the encouragement they provide for the one who calls upon God in lamentation and supplication. God promises healing, restoration, and deliverance. The hope for this experience can safely be cherished because it is based on the fact of God's intervention in human affairs. The Lord sees and controls human anguish and despair.

The psalms express human experience. "The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self-condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God. His life record declares that sin can bring only shame and woe, but that God's love and mercy can reach to the deepest depths, that faith will lift up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God. Of all the assurances which His word contains, it is one of the strongest testimonies to the faithfulness, the justice, and the covenant

mercy of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 754.

SUN

## I. THE AUTHORS AND THE AUTHOR OF THE PSALMS.

### 1. What do the *introductory words* of the following psalms tell us about their human authors?

Psalm 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 42 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 50 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 72 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 90 \_\_\_\_\_

Among the titles of the psalms, 73 have the phrase “of David.” Twelve psalms are ascribed to Asaph (compare 1 Chron. 15:16, 17; 16:4, 5). Eleven psalms are said to come from the “sons of Korah” (compare Num. 26:11; 1 Chron. 9:19). Three psalms derive from Jeduthun (Psalms 39, 62, 77). Two come from Solomon (Psalms 72, 127). One is ascribed to Heman (Psalm 88), one to Ethan (Psalm 89), and one to Moses (Psalm 90).

### 2. What do the following New Testament passages tell us about the human authorship of the psalms?

Acts 4:25 (for Psalm 2) \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:25-28 (for Psalm 16) \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 11:9, 10 (for Psalm 69) \_\_\_\_\_

There is manifold evidence that New Testament writers and Jesus Christ Himself regarded David as the author of various psalms. (See also Acts 1:16-19; 2:25-28, 34; Heb. 4:7; Mark 12:36; Matt. 22:43, 44; Luke 20:42-44). This fact indicates that the phrase “of David” at the beginning of many psalms refers to David as the author. We can conclude that when others are named at the beginning of the psalms (Moses, Solomon, Asaph, the sons of Korah, etc.) these are the inspired authors of the psalms ascribed to them.

Unfortunately some modern translations (such as the New English Bible) omit the introductory words of the psalms with the names of the authors. But all ancient Masoretic Hebrew Bible manuscripts have these introductions and thus they should be kept as part of the translation of the Bible. Based on the internal evidence of the Bible, David was the author of more than half the psalms. The claim of critics who deny or question that David wrote psalms cannot be supported.

### 3. According to the following passages who is the ultimate Author of the psalms?

Heb. 3:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 12:36 \_\_\_\_\_

The human author is but the agent through which God speaks by means of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 4:24-26, where God is said to speak by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David. The psalms are productions of the Holy Spirit using David and others, and are, as all other Scripture, the Word of God in the language and language forms (poetry) of humans.

MON

## II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND DATES OF THE PSALMS.

4. What circumstances are mentioned as the background of some psalms? See introductions to Psalms 3 and 18.

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There is historical information in the superscriptions of no less than fourteen psalms of David (3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142). They provide the context for the circumstances out of which these psalms arose. These biographical notes show that the psalms originate from the "cave" (Psalm 57), the threat of Abimelech (Psalm 34), the confrontation with the prophet Nathan (Psalm 51), and so on. Many of the psalms arose in the context of a life of persecution and not from Temple liturgy, where they were later used. "What matters is their truth [of the episodes], which there is no valid reason to doubt, and which finds incidental confirmation in the light which they throw on the psalms they introduce."—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 46.

The dates of the psalms can be derived from the identification of their authors. They were written at various times—the time of Moses, the time of David and Solomon, and the periods during which the other authors lived. The anonymous psalms have to be dated on the basis of the internal information provided in the respective psalms and by related information in other biblical passages.

## III. THE MESSAGE OF THE PSALMS.

The 150 psalms contained in the Psalter are very rich in content. The assessment of the great Reformer Martin Luther made in 1528 is still appropriate. "The Psalter 'might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible. . . . Anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book.'"—Martin Luther, "Preface to the Psalter." In *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960 [1528]), vol. 35, p. 254; cited by H. J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986), p. 12.

TUE

5. How do the psalmists refer to God and in what ways do they depict Him?



Ps. 18:46 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 84:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 121:2 \_\_\_\_\_

In contrast to life's experience that leads through hardship and sickness to death, the God and Lord in the Psalter is the One who lives and never tires. He "saves," "helps," and "lifts up" (Ps. 3:7; 7:6; 12:1; 44:23-26) and does "not keep silence" (Ps. 50:3). He is close to the brokenhearted (Ps. 34:18; 85:9) and is near to all those who call upon Him (Ps. 145:18). He sees (Ps. 10:14; 11:4; 33:13, 14; 139:3) and hears (Ps. 4:3; 6:8, 9; 78:21), and acts to rescue and deliver. Thus the God of the psalms is ever living and constantly acting, altogether compassionate and kind. He is neither a careless abstract idea nor a soulless fixed principle incapable of aiding the petitioner in the plight of life. He is God "Most High" (Ps. 82:6), a personal Being, and as such He is "my Refuge" and "Habitation" who gives "his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:9-11).

**The promises fulfilled to the faithful.** "There are troublous times before us; the judgments of God are coming upon our world. The nations of the earth are to tremble. There will be trials and perplexities on every hand; men's hearts will fail them for fear. And what shall we do in that day? Though the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and be removed like a cottage, if we have made God our trust, He will deliver us. 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' 'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee. . . . For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'"—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 354.

6. What do the psalms reveal when they refer to God as "king"? Ps. 24:8; 47:2-4; 103:19.

God is called "King of glory" (Ps. 24:7-10), "King for ever" (Ps. 29:10), and "great King" (Ps. 47:2; 48:2). His kingship extends over "all the earth" (Ps. 47:2, 7) and He "reigns over the nations" (Ps. 47:8, RSV). God's rulership is universal. As King, the Lord has established His throne in the heavens (Ps. 103:19) where He sits enthroned upon or between the cherubim (Ps. 99:1). The divine rulership of the heavenly King extends over both heaven and earth. He rules His people and the nations of the world.

7. What do the following passages indicate about the location of God's throne and His activity as King?

Ps. 11:4, 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 14:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 89:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 103:19 \_\_\_\_\_


God is enthroned in the heavenly sanctuary (see Ps. 60:6, RSV; 63:2; 68:35; 96:6; 102:19; 150:1). He is judging "the children of men" (Ps. 11:4; 14:2) by testing the righteous, judging them favorably, but condemning the wicked (Ps. 11:6; 14:5, 6). The righteous will be saved "in righteousness" to see God's face (Ps. 17:15). "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed" (Ps. 103:6, NIV). "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him" (Ps. 103:13, NKJV).

The earthly sanctuary and ministry represented God's ministry from His heavenly temple. "In the sanctuary and the temple, that were the earthly symbols of God's dwelling place, one apartment was sacred to His presence. The veil inwrought with cherubim at its entrance was not to be lifted by any hand save one. To lift that veil and intrude unbidden into the sacred mystery of the most holy place was death. For above the mercy seat and the bowed, worshiping angels dwelt the glory of the Holiest, glory upon which no man might look and live. On the one day of the year appointed for ministry in the most holy place, the high priest with trembling entered God's presence, while clouds of incense veiled the glory from his sight. Throughout the courts of the temple every sound was hushed. No priests ministered at the altars. The hosts of worshipers, bowed in silent awe, sent up their petitions for God's mercy.

"These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." 1 Corinthians 10:11, A. R. V. [Quotes Hab. 2:20; Ps. 99:1-3; 11:4; 102:19; 33:14, 15, 8.].—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 284, 285.

**8. What are the "foundations" of the judgments issuing from God's throne in the heavenly sanctuary? Ps. 89:14.**

God's judgment activity is based upon the two "foundations" of "righteousness and justice." His judgments are not vindictive. They are founded on the principles of "righteousness," the perfection of the manner in which God sees through everything, evaluates and judges everything and everyone. Thus we can plead with the psalmist, "Deliver me in your righteousness" (Ps. 31:1; 71:2, NIV) and "vindicate me" (Ps. 35:24, NKJV) or "judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness" (KJV). Those who are saved by the Lord's work of judgment experience His graciousness and compassion (Ps. 116:5; compare Ps. 7:10; 145:17).

 **9. What do the following passages reveal about the kind of judgment that God provides for humanity?**

Ps. 7:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 9:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 58:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 82:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 94:2 \_\_\_\_\_

The second aspect of God's throne activity of judgment is justice (Hebrew *mishpat*). God is the greatest champion of justice. The world knows little or no justice, but God knows in His judgment nothing but justice. He judges the nations and the earth with justice and equity (Ps. 98:9). (See also Ps. 96:10, 13.) He will vindicate all those who are victims of injustice, persecution, and false accusations. He judges from His sanctuary throne in "justice" because in Him resides "righteousness" and "justice." He has made these perfections the foundation of the throne from which He judges His people and the world. This judgment is conducted in the heavenly sanctuary.

**Divine love and justice inseparable.** "God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Ps. 85:10.

"By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.

"Another deception was now to be brought forward. Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

#### 10. How does the book of Psalms proclaim Jesus Christ?

Heb. 5:5 (Acts 13:33) quoting Ps. 2:7 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 1:8 quoting Ps. 45:6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 1:10-12 quoting Ps. 102:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 22:44 and Mark 12:36 quoting Ps. 110:1 \_\_\_\_\_

The psalms are quoted in the New Testament more often than most parts of the Old Testament. Many parts of the life and work of Christ are foretold in the psalms. The psalmist foretold the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. (Compare Psalm 22 with Matt. 27:35-46.) The resurrection of Christ was also spoken of by the psalmist. (See Acts 2:29-33, which quotes Ps. 16:8-11.)

**Prophecy fulfilled.** "In the sufferings of Christ upon the cross prophecy was fulfilled. Centuries before the crucifixion, the Saviour had foretold the treatment He was to receive. He said, 'Dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.' Ps. 22:16-18."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 746. (Compare the fulfillment of Ps. 69:20, 21.)

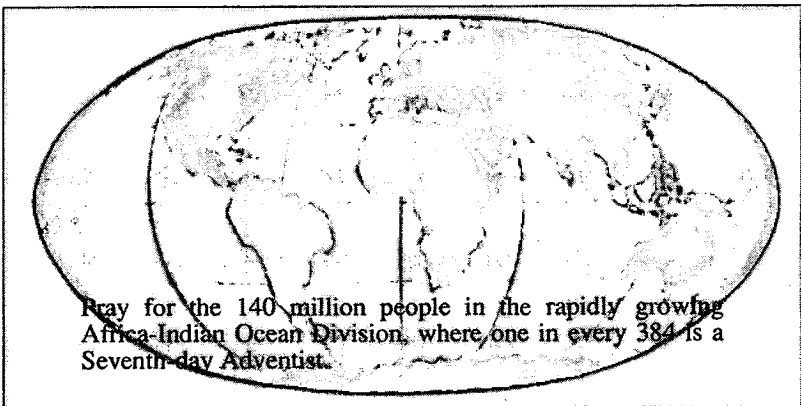
#### WHAT DO THE PSALMS MEAN TO ME?

- How do I gain a sense of acceptance with God through the psalms?
- How can the psalms lead me to a closer relationship with Jesus?
- Why will the psalms be especially valuable to me as the end of time approaches?

(FR)

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** How do the experiences of David's life illuminate for us the significance of the psalms he wrote? Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 413, 642, 658, 711, 716, 724, 725, 754.

**SUMMARY:** In the form of song and verse the Psalms express God's infinite love and justice in His dealings with humanity. They express also mankind's longing for divine intervention and control over the affairs of life. The Psalms contain much praise for the Lord's manifold blessings and much pleading for His shelter in times of stress.



# Victory for the Righteous

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 1.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:6).

**RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNGODLINESS CONTRASTED.** The Lord's blessings now and for eternity are given to those who live by His instruction. Those who do not are called "wicked ones." Their temporary existence will end in eternal extinction.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Secret of Happiness (Ps. 1:1, 2).
- II. The Fruitage of a Righteous Life (Ps. 1:3).
- III. The Fruitage of a Wicked Life (Ps. 1:4).
- IV. Ultimate Unhappiness for the Wicked (Ps. 1:5).
- V. Only One Way (Ps. 1:6).

**PROGRESSIVE DEFEAT OR CONTINUAL GROWTH.** How tragic that sometimes Christians lose their desire for God and goodness, slipping into unholy habits and practices and into the company of those who enjoy them! What an inspiration it is to observe the opposite trend in a person's life! When a confirmed sinner turns to the Lord, rejects ungodliness, and through the power of Christ begins to live a new life of victory, all heaven rejoices.

The first psalm sets the tone for all the psalms. It outlines the means of happiness and salvation that comprises the major emphasis of the Psalms and of Scripture as a whole. Psalm 1 may be translated as follows:

- IA. "Oh the happiness of the man who  
Did not walk in the counsel of the wicked ones,  
Nor stand in the way of sinners,  
Nor sit in the company of scorners.  
But his delight is in the instruction of Yahweh (the Lord),  
And he meditates on His instruction daily and nightly.
- IB. He will be like a tree  
Transplanted by canals of water  
Which yields its fruit at the proper time,  
And whose foliage does not wither.  
And he makes all he does to prosper.
- IIB. Not so the wicked.

But they are like the chaff which the wind drives.

- IIA. Therefore, the wicked ones will not stand up in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of righteous ones

Conclusion

- I. For Yahweh (the Lord) knows the way of righteous ones,  
II. But the way of wicked ones will perish.”

Notice the thought pattern of the psalm. Section IA outlines the basis of true happiness. Section IB emphasizes the fruitage of a life that is lived God's way. Section IIB provides the contrast to IB, stressing the results of living contrary to God's instruction. Section IIA is the contrast to IA: the wicked are as unhappy and unblessed as the righteous are happy and blessed. The conclusion summarizes the reason for the Lord's acceptance of the righteous and His rejection of the wicked.

SUN

## I. THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS (Ps. 1:1, 2).

1. How is happiness defined in the Bible? Ps. 1:1; compare 119:1; 32:1, 2.

The Hebrew word translated “blessed” (Ps. 1:1) means also “happy.” The first psalm identifies the happy person as righteous. (Compare verses 1 and 6.) The psalm does not tell us how a person becomes righteous initially. It explains that the happy, righteous person does not do certain things that are designed to destroy righteousness, and he engages in activities that will inevitably strengthen his relationship with the Lord.

**How does this life of happiness and righteousness begin?** The use of the word “blessed” or “happy” in other scriptures provides a beautiful answer. “Blessed [happy] is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed [happy] is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Ps. 32:1, 2, NIV). The person who is living in sin, who does not know the blessedness of God's forgiveness is not experiencing happiness. Happiness begins when Christ's righteousness is bestowed upon the believing, repenting sinner.

The apostle Paul used Psalm 32:1, 2 when he was explaining the gift of Christ's righteousness. Romans chapter 4 explains that blessedness or happiness is for all those who, like Abraham, are forgiven for sin and receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are counted righteous because the righteous Christ has begun to reign in their hearts. (Compare Rom. 8:9, 10; 6:17, 18). “Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

Psalm 1 describes the means by which we can maintain the happiness we experienced when we found Jesus as our indwelling righteousness.

2. What three steps does the psalmist identify as part of a progressive fall from grace? Ps. 1:1.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

First, we follow certain counsel that is contrary to God's will. Then we find pleasure in the company of people who are out of harmony with the Lord. Then we find ourselves sitting in judgment on those who do not go our way.

**Examine your experience.** Have you ever found yourself following the steps that the psalmist outlines?



3. **Under what circumstances does meditation on the Lord's instruction bring a person happiness?** Ps. 1:2; compare Ps. 37:31; 119:47; Eph. 3:16-20.

**The law is God's instruction.** "The usual Hebrew term translated 'law' is *torah*, a term signifying all the revealed will of God, or any part of it. Unless the context indicates otherwise, 'law' in the OT usually denotes the divine 'instruction' God had given His people (Gen 26:5; Ex 16:4, 28; Ps 1:2; 19:7; 119:1, 165; Is 1:10; 8:16, 20; etc.). This 'law,' or written revelation of God's will, made known the divine purpose for the Hebrew people in OT times. To the devout Jew, God's 'law' was equivalent to His plan for the salvation of the world. It is in this sense that Isaiah says 'the isles shall wait for his law' (Is. 42:4)." —*SDA Bible Dictionary*, vol. 8, p. 641.

In the New Testament also the word *law* sometimes means God's instruction, or revelation of His will. (See John 12:34; Rom. 2:12-15.)

We can interpret the psalmist to mean that the person who delights in God's instruction, who meditates on the revealed will of God, will be blessed and happy.

"It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 478.

**Meditation and study without surrender do not bring happiness.** As the psalmist indicates, the law must be in the heart (Ps. 37:31). The attempt to earn blessedness and salvation by one's own effort in study and meditation will never be successful. Paul stressed that righteousness by faith involves the writing of the law on the heart of the one who believes and surrenders (Rom. 10:6-10). Centuries earlier Moses emphasized the same point (Deut 6:4-6).

**Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your study and meditation.** "When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.

"There are many things apparently difficult or obscure, which God will make plain and simple to those who thus seek an understanding of them.

But without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 110.

TUE

## II. THE FRUITAGE OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE (Ps. 1:3).

4. What does the Lord do for the one who delights in His instruction? Ps. 1:3; compare Jer. 17:7, 8.

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**God does the transplanting.** The Hebrew word translated “planted” (Ps. 1:3) means “transplanted.” This is purposeful agriculture, and the Agriculturist is God. The Lord has taken the believing, repenting sinner from the evil environment in which Satan had enveloped him and has surrounded him with heavenly influences and sources of spiritual nourishment.

Various imagery is used in Scripture to explain the same point. The person who turns to Christ for righteousness and happiness is given a new heart (Eze. 36:26). Jesus taught that true happiness begins with the new birth (John 3:5). Such an experience maintained daily (2 Cor. 4:16) is the source of blessedness that the psalmist recognizes as available to the “transplanted” person.

**The likening of the child of God to a tree is common in Scripture.** (See Num. 24:5, 6; Ps. 52:8; 92:12; Hosea 14:5, 6.) The tree flourishes because the Lord plants it (Isa. 61:3). Isaiah foresaw the healing, saving work of the Messiah. The spiritual and emotional wounds of the brokenhearted would be bound up (Isa. 61:1). Captives of the evil one would be set free, and the sorrowing would be given comfort and hope (verses 1-3). Those who formerly had been in bondage to sin and misery would “be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (verse 3). The righteousness of these “trees” results from the work of the Lord in their behalf. They bear His righteousness because He has become the life-principle in their hearts. (See Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; 1 John 3:24.)

5. What is represented by the “rivers of water” beside which the tree is planted? Ps. 1:3; Isa. 12:3; John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39; compare Eze. 47:9.

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As the tree sends down its roots and draws refreshment and nourishment from the nearby stream, so the Christian draws spiritual life from Christ. Jesus clarified the figure for us: “If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,



streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive" (John 7:37-39, NIV).

The Holy Spirit plants the new spiritual "tree" by giving the born-again experience. The Holy Spirit provides nourishment for the "tree" by dwelling in the heart of the believer as the presence of Christ and the Father (John 14:17, 18, 23). The water of the river beside which the tree is planted represents the righteousness of Christ, which the Holy Spirit's presence provides for the trusting Christian (Rom. 8:9, 10).

- 6. What imagery used by Jesus amplifies further the significance of the fruit-bearing tree by the river (Ps. 1:3)? John 15:4-11.**

WED

**Christ's life becomes our life.** "The connection of the branch with the vine, He said, represents the relation you are to sustain to Me. The scion is grafted into the living vine, and fiber by fiber, vein by vein, it grows into the vine stock. The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. So the soul dead in trespasses and sins receives life through connection with Christ. By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

- 7. How would you explain the promise "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"? Ps. 1:3; compare Deut. 29:9; compare Job 23:10; Acts 14:22; Rev. 7:14.**

The Lord does not promise that the righteous person will always enjoy earthly prosperity and freedom from suffering. The devil and his subjects are always ready to torment those who trust in Christ. Nevertheless, the assurance is unshakable that, for those who love Him, the Lord will overrule the schemes of the enemy, and will bring blessing out of evil and tragedy (Rom. 8:28). The flourishing spiritual prosperity of God's people will never be limited by suffering as long as their union with Christ is sustained (Isa. 43:1-3).

### **III. THE FRUITAGE OF A WICKED LIFE (Ps. 1:4).**

- 8. What is the significance of the ungodly being likened to chaff? Ps. 1:4; compare Job 21:17, 18; Isa. 5:24; Hosea 13:3.**

"A review of the threshing methods of biblical times is helpful here.

The sheaves of harvested grain were laid out on the threshing floor and a wooden sled was drawn back and forth over them, crushing the stalks and breaking open the ears of grain.

“The grain then needed to be separated from the empty husks and crushed stalks or straw. This was done by tossing the lot into the air. The wind would catch the chaff (the empty husks and straw) and blow it away. The grain would fall to the ground and be gathered into bins, later to be ground into flour.

“The chaff became a picturesque way of referring to those who did not know or trust God. Like the chaff, they were worthless, without fruit or value. As chaff was impermanent and unstable, so those who knew not God were light and easily blown by the shifting ways of opinion or adversity.”—Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Falling Into Greatness* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984), pp. 24, 25.

**9. What imagery did Jesus use to describe the unhappy lot of those who reject His instruction? Matt. 7:24-28; compare Matt. 3:12.**

Like the psalmist, Jesus emphasized the importance of doing His will. The wicked are those who do not “delight . . . in the law of the Lord” (Ps. 1:2). They do not bring forth fruit in season (Ps. 1:3). They do not follow the instruction of Jesus. Because they have withdrawn themselves from divine guidance and protection, they are swept away by the forces of evil and destruction.

**IV. ULTIMATE UNHAPPINESS FOR THE WICKED (Ps. 1:5).**

**10. What judgments exclude the ungodly from “the congregation of the righteous”? Ps. 1:5; Dan. 7:9-14; 12:1; Matt. 22:11-14; Rev. 20:4, 11-15.**

The phases in God’s work of judgment are outlined in Scripture:

a. Throughout history the ungodly have been subject to divine rejection and retribution. “The wrath of God *is being revealed* from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18, NIV; italics supplied).

b. In the pre-Advent, investigative judgment those who are not vindicated are reserved for eternal rejection by God (Dan. 9:9-14; 12:1; Matt. 22:11-14).

c. At the second advent of Jesus, the living ungodly will be destroyed (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

d. During the millennium, after the Advent, the righteous in heaven will judge the wicked dead (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

e. At the end of the millennium the ungodly will be gathered before the throne of God for the pronouncement and execution of the verdict (Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 25:31-46).

**V. ONLY ONE WAY (Ps. 1:6).**

**11. What is “the way” of the righteous that the Lord accepts and blesses? Ps. 1:6.**

Mitchell Dahood points out that the Hebrew word translated “knoweth” (KJV) or “knows” (RSV) means “to care for, protect” (*The Anchor Bible: Psalms I* [New York: Doubleday, 1965], p. 5).

The New International Version translates verse 6: “For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.” (Compare Ps. 31:7; 37:17, 18; Hosea 13:5.)

The Lord accepts the way of the righteous because it is His way. He protects from evil those who walk in His way because their trust is in Him. The wicked perish because they repudiate this divine protection.

Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). *He is the only way.*

**HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?** Listed below are some of the incentives offered in Psalm 1 for choosing God’s way of life. Check the three that are most meaningful to you.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness (blessedness).   | <input type="checkbox"/> A positive focus in life (law).           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A productive life (fruit). | <input type="checkbox"/> Prosperity.                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Permanence.                | <input type="checkbox"/> The ability to realize my full potential. |

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Compare the following New Testament passages with Psalm 1: Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 6:12-17; 7:13-17; 20:4-9.

**SUMMARY:** The book of Psalms is beautifully introduced by Psalm 1. The way of life is contrasted with the way of death. The ungodly, who turn from the Lord, will ultimately perish. But the righteous, who receive Christ into their hearts by faith and constantly draw life from Him, will flourish spiritually in this life and enjoy an eternity of blessedness.

# Lesson 3

July 15-21

## Rejoicing With Trembling

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 2.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:10, 11).

**THE LORD'S COUNSEL TO THE REBELLIOUS.** The Lord has two answers to peoples and nations that turn against Him and the Messiah whom He has sent: 1. The world and its inhabitants are the heritage of the anointed King, and 2. The only hope for rebellious peoples is to serve the Lord and take refuge in Him.

### OUTLINE:

- I. **Opposing God: A Mark of Foolishness (Ps. 2:1-3).**
- II. **God's Response: Derision and Anger (Ps. 2:4, 5).**
- III. **God Announces His Plan (Ps. 2:6-9).**
- IV. **Some Good Advice (Ps. 2:10, 11).**
- V. **The Blessedness of Trust (Ps. 2:12).**

**THE WORLD'S STRANGE INFATUATION WITH EVIL.** It is amazing how foolish some people can be. God has given them eyes to see, but they cannot see; ears to hear, but they apparently are deaf; minds to think, but they cannot think straight. Why is this?

In the psalm that we study this week, the psalmist points to nations that do not take God into their consideration. They have some knowledge of God, but they choose to ignore Him. They know that God has given moral principles to direct the lives of His created beings, but they do not want to be bound by them. In fact, they plan ways of opposing God. The psalmist asks, Why is this?

**God's answer to human foolishness.** Have you been frustrated when people you are trying to teach the truth reject it? Have you wondered how people could ignore God and reject His teachings? Martin Luther had the same questions as he sought to bring about reforms and found opposition from the established church. Psalm 2 was one of his favorite psalms. As we study this psalm we shall see God's answer to human foolishness.

**Psalm 2 has been called a "royal psalm" or a "coronation psalm."** In the face of international opposition a new king is anointed and crowned. In the context of David's day, Israel's king is presented as the Lord's anointed, to whom the surrounding nations are invited to give homage. This Israelite king is a type or analogy of the Messiah King, before whom earth's nations are to bow in adoration. As the first of the Messiah psalms,

Psalm 2 has three major applications: to the earthly situation facing Israel and its surrounding nations; to the circumstances facing Christ during His earthly mission; and to the nations of the end-time as they are confronted by history's climax.

SUN

## I. OPPOSING GOD: A MARK OF FOOLISHNESS (Ps. 2:1-3).

The Lord and His anointed king are being opposed by the nations. This was true at various stages in the history of Israel. Moreover, the anointed Messiah was opposed and attacked in His day. In the time of the end, the nations gather against the Lord and His anointed. (See Rev. 11:18; 17:12-14.) From the perspective of the psalmist, it is amazing that people should try to circumvent God's laws.

1. How does the psalmist express his amazement at what the nations around him are doing? What are the nations doing that arouses his concern? Ps. 2:1.

The psalmist's question is a natural one. Our children frequently ask Why? They want to know the reason for things that they see happening. We ourselves ask the question again and again, as we face situations we cannot understand.

The nations are angry and upset. They rebel against divine restraint and the exaltation of His Anointed. They plot ways and means of escaping their lot. But their plotting is in vain. They seek to control their own national destiny without loyalty to God. Such control is outside their power or prerogative. Herein is foolishness. Human beings must always recognize their limitations; to do otherwise is to court disaster. It is strange how we sometimes want to play the part of God. That was the first sin in the universe, as recorded in Isaiah 14:12-14, the desire to be like God in power, but not in character.

2. Against whom were the nations really plotting? Ps. 2:2.

In the *King James Version* and some other English versions of the Bible, the word *LORD* is written in capital letters. This means that the Hebrew word on which the translation is based is *Yahweh*. Thus the nations are in rebellion against the God of the universe. Unbelievers in the Lord may have so-called gods that they worship, but they are not true gods. They change their gods any time they please. But to rebel against the Lord is a serious matter. It denies the authority of the Creator and Ruler of all.

To rebel against the Lord (*Yahweh*) also is to rebel against "His Anointed." It is to rebel against all God's order. Kings, like David, who were chosen and set on the throne by God, were anointed for this office. (See 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 23:1.)

In a special sense, the Anointed One is the Son of God. Kings and rulers who plot against God and His Anointed do not think only in terms of political change; they are engaged in a religious controversy. They resist God's ordained means of saving the world from sin. It is amazing when persons of authority like kings and rulers, who by nature and education should know better, take a stand against what obviously is the truth.

### 3. From what do kings and rulers want to be freed? Verse 3.

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They want to be freed from the spiritual restraints of God's law; from bands and cords, chains and fetters, anything that would limit their activity. It is interesting to note that they want to be free, but they have forgotten that it is truth that makes people free. (See John 8:32.) There is no greater bondage than that of sin. James calls the law the law of liberty, or freedom. (See James 1:25.) When we accept Christ's freedom (John 8:36) and live in accordance with His law, we are free of the guilt of sin and the fear of a judgment to come. (See Rom. 8:1.)

The nations wrongly assume that freedom is to be found in release from God's requirements.

MON

### 4. How did the apostle Peter interpret verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 2? Acts 4:25-28.

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Clearly the psalmist is not referring merely to the events occurring in the life of King David, although these may have been uppermost in his mind. Under inspiration he is describing events that take place at other times in history, certainly at the time of Jesus when Jewish leaders met to plan how they might trap Jesus and bring Him to trial. We miss an important element in the psalm if we fail to see its messianic message.

## II. GOD'S RESPONSE: DERISION AND ANGER (Ps. 2:4, 5).

### 5. How does God react to His opponents? Ps. 2:4.

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The opposition of puny man to Almighty God is so foolish that it is laughable. Can a fly resist an elephant? The psalmist is here using human language in an attempt to describe God's response. God is depicted as laughing very much as you or I might laugh at a ridiculous situation. This laughter is not the laughter of joy. Instead it is the laughter of scorn. Any opposition to God, coming from human beings, is ridiculous. Furthermore, it is scorn that is earned, a scorn that is just, because it comes from a God who is just and righteous in all His ways.

### 6. In what other way does God react to those who oppose Him? Ps. 2:5.

There are some Christians who so over-emphasize God's love that they find any reference to His wrath or anger difficult to understand. The apostle Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel, because the power of God unto salvation is revealed in it. He goes on to say that "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Rom. 1:18, NIV).

God's anger may be considered a measure of His love. In proportion to God's love for His creatures, is His anger against those who cause His children to stumble or fall. God's rebuke to the wicked does not stem from any desire to cause undue harm or destruction, but arises out of His sense of justice and His hatred of everything that does harm to or opposes the truth.

**Consider.** Can you think of instances in which God either allowed or caused trouble for a nation or individual with the express purpose of bringing them to Himself and His will for them?

TUE

### III. GOD ANNOUNCES HIS PLAN (Ps. 2:6-9).

#### 7. What does God say that He has done? Verse 6.

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God has chosen and set up a king, His king. He has set him up on His hill. There is a strong hint here that God takes an active part in the affairs of the world. Nebuchadnezzar came to this understanding after he had passed through some difficult experiences. (See Dan. 4:25, 34, 35.)

This reference to a king does not apply only to the kings of Israel. It applies in a special sense to Jesus, who admitted before Pilate that He is a King—albeit not an earthly king, but the King of God's people. (See Matt. 27:11; John 18:36.)

**God's guiding hand in history.** "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. . . . But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and powers and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—*Education*, p. 173.

#### 8. How did Paul apply the declaration of Ps. 2:7? Acts 13:32, 33; compare Rom. 1:4.

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In his pentecostal sermon, Peter declared that he and the other disciples were witnesses that God had raised Jesus, and that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

It is clear that the New Testament gives Psalm 2 a messianic interpretation. The writer to the Hebrews points out that the term *Son* applies to Jesus, and places Him in a position of honor (Heb. 1:5). At His baptism

Jesus was addressed as "Son" (Matthew 3:17). Peter tells us that Jesus also was addressed as Son at the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:17).

**9. What phrases of this messianic psalm await complete fulfillment? Ps. 2:8, 9.**

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Jesus is now King over the kingdom of grace. The time will come when He will reign as KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS, and the kingdom of glory will be established. John the revelator saw the time when heaven was opened, and one called Faithful and True rode forth on a white horse. His name was The Word of God. "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 19:11-16).

Seventh-day Adventists are among those Christians who look forward eagerly to the second advent of Jesus, to the time when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. (See Rev. 11:15.)



**IV. SOME GOOD ADVICE (Ps. 2:10, 11).**

**10. What advice does the psalmist give to kings and judges? Ps. 2:10.**

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The psalmist turns his attention to those who foolishly oppose God's activity among men, and advises them to be wise and instructed. In view of the circumstances, what does the psalmist mean by being wise? Analyze the suggestions that follow:

- Give up the foolishness of thinking that God can be ignored. As Creator He is the object of worship.
- Give up opposing God. He is on your side, and is working for your best interests.
- Stop denying reality. Does knocking your head against a wall accomplish anything desirable?
- Is it right to oppose God's Anointed, when God is working through Him to achieve His purposes on your behalf?

**11. What positive advice does the psalmist give that is good for all of us? Ps. 2:11.**

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It is interesting that in this context those who rebel against God are given another chance to conform. Whether they accept this opportunity is up to them. If they turn it down they have no one to blame but themselves when it comes to the day of reckoning. Here is God's grace made manifest. Should anyone of us abuse such grace? (See Rom. 2:4-11.)

The concept of serving the Lord with fear is a familiar one in Scripture. (See Joshua 24:14.) To serve the Lord is to submit to His laws, accepting



His power in order to do whatever He requires. The word *fear* means reverence and awe. We must always be aware of the majesty of God and conduct ourselves appropriately in His presence. Unfortunately some of us are not always conscious of the awesomeness of God's presence, and we act irreverently, to the dishonor of His name.

- 12. Besides serving the Lord with fear, how are we to rejoice? Ps. 2:11.**
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Ask yourself what this phrase means. The concept of trembling is frequently used in Scripture, although it usually is connected with fear. (Compare Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12.) Can you rejoice and tremble at the same time? Perhaps the injunction means that even in our moments of rejoicing, we should recognize that it is God who has provided us with such occasions. In other words, whatever good we accomplish is always by the grace of God.



**V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUST (Ps. 2:12).**

- 13. What is the meaning of the suggestion the psalmist makes as he concludes this psalm? Ps. 2:12.**
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Various translations are suggested for the Hebrew translated by the King James Version as "kiss the Son." Kissing as between kings and subjects denotes fealty or loyalty. Loyalty is a proper thing to give to a ruler. It is no problem for us to express our loyalty to God as the ruler of the universe. But the word *Son* is not out of place here, since we have already met this term in verse 7. Christians not only follow Christ but recognize His deity. They show their allegiance to Christ as readily as to God the Father.

To be at peace with the God of the universe by having fellowship with the Son of God is to enter into a state of blessedness.

- 14. What expression in Psalm 2:12 sounds like a threat?**
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Having read of despots who lose control and display anger, this phrase sounds ominous. But God is slow to anger. (See Nahum 1:3.) Furthermore, God's righteous anger is much different from human anger. Jesus had moments of righteous anger as he noted the hardness of people's hearts. (See Mark 3:5.) Paul permitted anger with strict reservations. (See Eph. 4:26.) We need to be wise, and avoid doing those things that arouse God's displeasure, because we may be sure that God's anger is righteous. (Compare Heb. 10:26, 27.) Positively, it is the Christian's delight to please God.

- 15. How would you describe the blessedness of trust? Ps. 2:12, last part.**

Have you been in a situation when you felt you could not trust anyone? All of us need someone in whom we can place our trust. What a blessing it is to know that we can trust the Lord and His Anointed! If you feel this way, why not offer a prayer of thanks?

**HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?** How does this psalm make you feel? (Underline the correct word): trustful, apprehensive, confident, at peace, unsure?

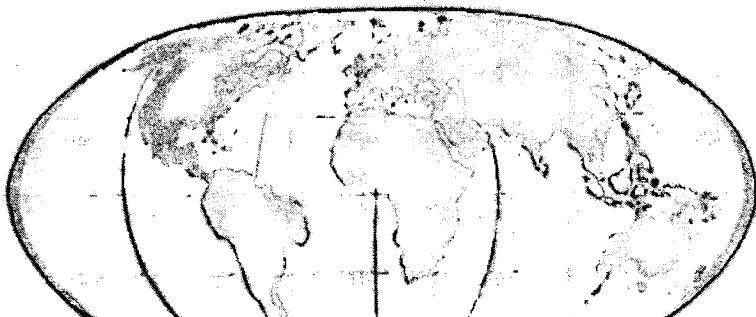
(Rank the statements below in order of their importance to you.) I feel comfortable in placing myself in the hands of God because of:

- \_\_\_\_\_ His past dealing with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The way He has dealt with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ His actions in history.
- \_\_\_\_\_ His love shown on Calvary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The fact that His law makes sense.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study in context the allusions to Psalm 2 in the book of Revelation. For example: Revelation 1:5; 2:27; 4:2; 6:17; 11:15-18; 12:5; 17:12-14; 19:15.

**SUMMARY:** We live in a world in which people and nations ignore God, and are unwilling to be guided by His moral principles. Many by nurture and training know better. This does not turn God aside from His primary purpose of saving lost humanity. Through His Son He will establish the kingdom of truth and righteousness. Through His grace He gives everyone extended opportunities to do what is right. Blessed are those who know their God and trust in Him.



Pray for Adventist Missionary College in Ghana, depended on to produce an increase in trained workers to meet the phenomenal growth needs of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division in spite of having no permanent buildings.

July 22-28

# A Hymn of Praise: How Great Thou Art!

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Psalm 8.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4).

**HUMAN WEAKNESS; DIVINE STRENGTH.** By comparison with their all-powerful, majestic Creator, human beings are insignificant, weak, dependent creatures. Even so, the Lord originally invested humankind with dominion over the earth, and this dominion will be restored for those who trust Him.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Excellence of God's Name (Ps. 8:1).
- II. Children in God's Kingdom (Ps. 8:2).
- III. The Value of the Human Race (Ps. 8:3, 4).
- IV. God's Assignment of Authority (Ps. 8:5-8).
- V. A Glad Refrain in Jesus' Name (Ps. 8:9).

**DO WE REMEMBER GOD?** In the rush of everyday existence, do we find time to pause and ask ourselves: Where are we going? Why are we going there? How shall we get there?

Most people are bound up with the mundane activities involved in earning a living, going to school, or caring for a family. All of these are worthy endeavors, but do we pause to give glory to God, to whom we are indebted for everything that we have?

**Do we praise God even for the trials and difficulties of life?** George Matheson, the blind Scottish preacher who wrote the magnificent hymn "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go," once prayed: "My God, I have never thanked Thee for my 'thorn'! I have thanked Thee a thousand times for my roses, but never once for my 'thorn'; I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my 'thorn.' Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow."—*Moody Monthly*.

**In our study this week** we note how the psalmist responds to the God of the universe. He claims Him as a personal God, calling Him "our Lord." Then he extols the excellency of our God, and demonstrates how this is true. As we study and learn about God, we can join in this hymn of

praise. As we rejoice with the psalmist, we can give our testimony to the wonderful God of heaven, singing: "How great Thou art!"

SUN

## I. THE EXCELLENCE OF GOD'S NAME (Ps. 8:1).

The terms *excellence* and *majesty* are interchangeable. Excellence suggests the peak of perfection; majesty reminds us that God is our ruler, active on our behalf.

### 1. What is the significance of the way the psalmist refers to God? Ps. 8:1.

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If you are using the King James Version, you will observe that the psalmist addresses God as LORD. Every letter is a capital. This tells us that the Hebrew word is God's name, *Yahweh*, a name that represents the I AM. Read Exodus 3:13-15 to see how God revealed this name to Moses. The name is held so sacred that no devout Jew will use it; he will say *Adonai* (Lord) instead.

The psalmist addresses God by His name, and then adds the description of a beautiful relationship: "our Lord." The second "Lord" is not printed in all capital letters, but it indicates one who is superior, one who exercises sovereignty, one who has the right to rule. The psalmist is saying that the God of the universe is your Lord and mine, the One who has the ultimate control over everything that has to do with us. If we are wise we will recognize our absolute dependence upon Him.

**Personal application.** Do we recognize God's sovereignty over our lives? Are we grateful to Him for all the things He has done for us? How do we show our gratitude?

### 2. What does the psalmist mean by referring to the majesty or excellence of God's "name"? Ps. 8:1.

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A name in Hebrew is not merely a means of identification. It is a clear link with the character and position of the bearer of that name. The New International Version sometimes translates the Greek "your name" as "you." This emphasizes the significance of the word *name*. God's name is a symbol of who He is. Hence, the command not to take the name of the Lord in vain (Ex. 20:7) condemns not only cursing but also demeaning God by ignoring Him, not giving Him His due, or by violating His instructions while claiming to be His follower. The majesty of God's name is also the majesty of His character, and the excellence of all His activity on behalf of the human race.

### 3. Note the comprehensiveness of the meaning of the "name" in the following texts:

Deut. 12:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 5:11 \_\_\_\_\_

John 17:6 \_\_\_\_\_

John 14:13, 14 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Where has God set His glory? Ps. 8:1.**

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The word *glory* is one that we need to study if we are to understand all that is involved in its use in the Bible. Generally, we associate glory with light, and it is true that God lives in light unapproachable. (See 1 Tim. 6:16.) But glory can come through doing something very important, very difficult of achievement. When Jesus asked His Father to glorify Him (John 17:1), He was thinking of His death on the cross (John 12:23, 28). Jesus glorified the Father by revealing Him to the world, by doing His will, and by finishing the task that had been assigned to Him (John 17:4). Jesus showed His glory by the miracles He performed (John 2:11). God's glory is His character demonstrated by deeds. To the righteous He is a friend, a source of hope and love, but to the wicked He is a consuming fire, a frightening presence. (See Deut. 4:24; Rev. 6:16.)

God has set His glory "above the heavens." This indicates that human beings cannot fully understand it. His glory extends its influence to every part of the universe. Do you begin to see why the psalmist must sing praises to God? God's name stands for all that He is and all that He has done for us. Are you ready to sing with the psalmist: "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Sing, alone if you are alone, or with others who might be with you.

**II. CHILDREN IN GOD'S KINGDOM (Ps. 8:2).**

After the psalmist has extolled the sovereignty and majesty of God "in all the earth," it comes as a surprise, and is somewhat shocking, to hear of enemies and the avenger. Does the God of the universe indeed have enemies? Who could they be? How long will this situation last?

Equally surprising is the reference to "babes and sucklings" through whom God works to silence opposition.

**5. What agency does God use in the controversy with sin and sinners? Ps. 8:2.**

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We tend to look down on children as not being able to accomplish much in matters of witnessing for truth. Compare the attitude of the disciples toward the children that were brought to Jesus (Luke 18:15.) But note the response of Jesus (verse 16). "Of such is the kingdom of

heaven"—what an important phrase! Now read Matthew 18:1-6. Children have characteristics that we do well to emulate. Only as we are converted and become as little children in trust and wholehearted confidence can we hope to enter the kingdom.

**6. What did Paul have to say about God's use of weak instruments? 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Cor. 1:26-29.**

Sometimes we make the mistake of despising the weak as useless in the battle against God's enemies. We tend to admire the great, the apparent spiritual and intellectual giants.

God knows how to confound the mighty, how to overthrow the enemy. Are you not glad that God can use you and me, even though our talents may not be outstanding and the record of our past life may not be inspiring?

**The praises of children.** Note the circumstances in which Jesus quoted this second verse of Psalm 8, as recounted by Ellen White. After referring to the second cleansing of the Temple, when "divinity flashed through humanity," she writes: "Again the temple court was filled by the sick and the dying, and once more Jesus ministered to them. . . .

"After a season the priests and rulers ventured back to the temple. . . . Quietly returning to the temple, they heard the voices of men, women, and children praising God. . . . The children were foremost in the rejoicing. . . . Now with glad voices the children sounded His praise. . . .

"The sound of these happy, unrestrained voices was an offense to the rulers of the temple. . . . They represented to the people that the house of God was desecrated by the feet of the children and the shouts of rejoicing."

They came to Jesus to complain. But Jesus said: "'Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?' Prophecy had foretold that Christ should be proclaimed as king, and that word must be fulfilled. . . . God moved upon the children to be His witnesses."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 592, 593.

**What does this tell us about God?** He establishes truth, not by force, but by persuasion; not by strength, but by apparent weakness. What kind of God must He be? Are you ready to sing His praises?



**III. THE VALUE OF THE HUMAN RACE (Ps. 8:3, 4).**

The value of a human being is so great that God has said: "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). Yet down through the ages and even in our own time the killing of men, women, and children is an everyday occurrence. Why do you think this is so?

**7. How does the psalmist picture the apparent puniness of man? Ps. 8:3, 4.**

When the psalmist looks at the heavens with their planets and stars, and considers the wide open spaces, he is impressed with how small human beings are in comparison. Modern astronomy has increased the contrast.

**Human insignificance, God's greatness.** One evening a man decided to walk out of a Middle Eastern town into the desert. All around him was sand. For some time he could hear the barking of dogs, the hum of activity in the village he had left. He was aware of human life. But soon it became very dark, the sounds were lost, and he found himself looking up at a vast sky with millions of twinkling stars. He suddenly realized how tiny he was, how vulnerable. Later he testified that he had felt the presence of God as he had never felt it before. It is when we recognize our smallness, that we can sense God's greatness.

**8. How vividly does the psalmist picture God's creative power? Ps. 8:3.**

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**"The work of thy fingers."** We are constantly amazed at the concept of Creation. Elsewhere the psalmist says that God spoke, and "it was done" (Ps. 33:9). Here God uses only the tips of His fingers. This is symbolic language, of course, but it emphasizes the effortlessness of God's activity in creating what to us is gigantic. We can hardly begin to conceive the greatness of our God.

It is this Creator-God who concerns Himself with us. He is "mindful" of us, that is, He thinks about us and cares for us. How do we respond? How does our response reflect upon God?

How do you react to the following propositions?

- a. Importance is not necessarily related to physical proportions. A small gem can be more precious than a huge stone.
- b. It is not the size of the body that determines value, but intellectual and moral worth.
- c. Our importance rests, not on the work that we do, but upon the value that Christ has placed upon us.
- d. Having been created in the image of God, it is the reflection of that image that is the measure of our greatness.
- e. God is great, not so much because of His power, although He is all-powerful, but because of His infinite love.



**IV. GOD'S ASSIGNMENT OF AUTHORITY (Ps. 8:5-8).**

**9. What rank has God given to human beings? Ps. 8:5.**

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"A little lower than the angels." "A little less than God" (RSV). "A little less than a god" (NEB). The Hebrew word is *Elohim*, which means God, and is found in Genesis 1:1. Thus we are taken back to the Creation story, where we are told that humans were made in the image of God, male and female.

It is obvious that human beings are made less powerful than the angels, who are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14). Angels are an order of creation that can fly swiftly from one place to another according to God's command. They have tremendous power to destroy (2 Kings 19:35). They released Peter from prison in a supernatural way (Acts 12:7-10). They ministered to Jesus (Matt. 4:11), and continue to minister to God's people today.

In a physical sense human beings were made lower than angels. They were certainly created lower than God. Yet they are given a high destiny, which is connected with a high calling, to reflect God's image.

**“Crowned him with glory and honour.”** A crown is a symbol of kingly rank. It denotes authority to govern and rule, to make decisions affecting subjects. Ideally, just as God is ruler of all, so human beings are in charge of Planet Earth. Sin has marred the kingdom, but humanity is still in charge of the environment.



**10. To what extent has God given dominion to mankind? Ps. 8:6-8.**

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It is obvious that we do not have complete control over our environment. It is also true that unless humanity exercises wisdom in handling the environment, disaster will result.

**Give examples of how we can improve or destroy our environment.**

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**11. How does the letter to the Hebrews interpret these verses that we have been studying? Heb. 2:6-9.**

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“Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, Christ still remained the rightful King.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

God's original purpose for our first parents was that they should have perfect and free control of the environment in which they were placed. Under Christ there would be no problem. But Adam and Eve lost their sovereignty when they yielded to the temptation of the serpent. That loss of sovereignty is evident when we see that many situations are beyond our control. But we also see Jesus, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). We see Jesus, who suffered and died that we might live. We see Jesus, who gained the victory over sin in order to “bring many sons to glory.” We know that through Him humanity can achieve



that destiny which God originally designed.

It is doubtful that the psalmist could see all this in detail. Yet he had confidence that God would overcome evil and restore us to the position for which we were created. His eye of faith helped him see humanity once again in perfect control of sheep and cattle, birds and fish, and everything on the surface of the earth or in the sea.

### **V. A GLAD REFRAIN IN JESUS' NAME (Ps. 8:9).**

As we come to the end of this psalm, we find the psalmist singing God's praises as he did in the first verse.

Are we prepared to join him in the song? Are we grateful for God's plans for us? Are we thankful to God, who in Christ Jesus has rescued us from despair and prepared for us a glorious future? Let us repeat the refrain: "O LORD our Lord; how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

### **HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?**

- How shall we express our gratitude to God for all that He is and has done for us? Here is a topic you can discuss with the family, a friend, and with the Sabbath School class.
- Do you see how you may be able to contribute to stemming the tide of evil, despite your human weakness?
- Do you recognize your weakness as a person, but your great worth to God through Jesus Christ?
- Do you ask for God's help daily to enable you to carry efficiently the responsibilities that God has placed on your shoulders as a witness for Him?



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 20-27.

**SUMMARY:** The psalmist addresses the God of the universe as his God. There is a close relationship between himself and God. He is impressed with God's majesty as Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is amazed that God cares for humanity and makes use of the weakest of His saints in order to accomplish His purposes. He is grateful for the creation and destiny of man, and wants to enjoy the fulfillment of this vision. He begins his psalm with praise and ends with the same language, indicating that his uppermost thought is praise.

# Lesson 5

July 29—August 4

## Standards of Righteousness

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 15.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart" (Psalm 15:1, 2).

**WHO SHALL ABIDE?** The individual acceptable to God is the one whose righteousness of heart is the source of righteous behavior. The only kind of behavior that God accepts is that which is morally and ethically pure.

### OUTLINE:

- I. The Question of Questions (Ps. 15:1).
- II. Walking Blamelessly (Ps. 15:2).
- III. Controlling the Tongue (Ps. 15:3).
- IV. Honesty to God and Others (Ps. 15:4).
- V. Using Our Money Aright (Ps. 15:5).

**PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING.** Books of instruction on how to do things are very popular. All of us need to know how to do many things in life, such as how to care for our means of transportation, how to make small repairs in the home. Without the advice of the expert we may lose many of the things we hold valuable in life, and the loss may be irreparable.

But more important than the material things around us is our relationship with God. How can we serve Him best, how can we qualify to be in His kingdom?

In the psalm that we study this week, the psalmist asks a question that all of us would like to have answered: "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" (Ps. 15:1).

The psalmist's answer was repeated in other words by Anselm who became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. He said, "If I should see the shame of sin on the one hand, and the pain of hell on the other, and must of necessity choose one, I would rather be thrust into hell without sin than go into heaven with sin."



### I. THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS (Ps. 15:1).

1. Why is the psalmist's question so important? Ps. 15:1.

At first glance, this verse seems to give us two questions. But really the questions are one and the same. The psalmist uses a mode of Hebrew poetry that involves parallelism of thought. In Psalm 15:1 the first question is followed by another that asks the same question in other words. Abiding in the sanctuary and dwelling in God's holy hill both mean living close to God.

To dwell in the sanctuary meant for the psalmist that he would always be living in the holy presence of God. Not only would he always be conscious of God's requirements in the law, but he would also be aware of God's mercy available through the shed blood of the Sacrifice.

**2. What question asked by John in the book of Revelation is similar to that asked by the psalmist? What answer does he give? Rev. 6:17; 7:1-3, 13-17.**

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Those who receive God's end-time seal will abide in His tabernacle. They will dwell in His "holy hill" enjoying the companionship of Christ and the heavenly angels.

**The humble in heart will dwell with God.** " 'Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.' Ps. 138:6. Those who reveal the meek and lowly spirit of Christ are tenderly regarded by God. They may be looked upon with scorn by the world, but they are of great value in His sight. Not only the wise, the great, the beneficent, will gain a passport to the heavenly courts; not only the busy worker, full of zeal and restless activity. No; the poor in spirit, who crave the presence of an abiding Christ, the humble in heart, whose highest ambition is to do God's will—these will gain an abundant entrance. They will be among that number who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 'Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.' Rev. 7:15."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 301, 302.

**Living in God's presence.** Indicate whether the following statements are true (T), or false (F), and give a reason for your judgment.

To live in the presence of God is:

a. to live in constant fear T    F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

b. to share in God's love T    F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

c. to feel superior to others T    F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

d. to enjoy witnessing to others T F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

e. to be a hermit T F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

f. to escape the chores of living T F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

g. to live a fuller, more exciting life T F

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

MON

## II. WALKING BLAMELESSLY (Ps. 15:2).

### 3. What is the first answer the psalmist gives to the question he has asked in Psalm 15:1? Psalm 15:2, first part?

\_\_\_\_\_

The kind of people who delight to dwell in the presence of God are those who delight to do His will. They do not falter at any standard, however high. Not that they think they can reach such a standard in their own strength, and by their own effort. Their confidence is in God that He will give them grace and power to live such a life. They have sincerely placed their wills in God's hands, and they know that God will do for them abundantly above all that they can think or imagine. (See Eph. 3:20, 21; compare Jude 24; 1 Cor. 10:13.)

**What does it mean to walk "uprightly"?** The Hebrew word (*tamim*) translated "uprightly" (KJV), "blameless" (NIV), and "with integrity" (Anchor Bible), suggests completeness and soundness. It refers to a life that is ethically sound in desire and direction. The word means "complete," "incontestable," "blameless," "whole," "perfect," "innocent," "upright," "honest." It is the word used often to refer to the animal sacrifices that were to be "without blemish." (See Ex. 12:5; 29:1; Lev. 1:3, 10; 22:21.) The same word is used to refer to God as "perfect." (See Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 22:31; Job 36:4.) It is used in Ezekiel's description of Lucifer before sin was found in his heart. (See Ezekiel 28:15.) The "undefiled" spoken of in Psalm 119:1, "who walk in the law of the Lord," are "the perfect." The same word is used in God's command to Abraham: "walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). God was asking Abraham to turn away from all sin, to be right with Him in heart, and to obey His law perfectly.

**God's standard.** "Human beings, by uniting their weakness to the divine nature of Christ, may become partakers of His character.

"Christ came to give an example of the perfect conformity to the law of

God required of Adam, the first man, down to the last man that shall live on the earth. He declares that His mission is not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in perfect and entire obedience.

“In this way He magnified the law and made it honorable. . . . He came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all God’s commandments.”—Ellen G. White, *Untitled Manuscript 145*, December 30, 1897.

**4. What second answer to his question is given by the psalmist? Ps. 15:2, second part.**

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Right-doing and right-thinking are equally important. (See Rom. 2:13.) We must be righteous, as well as right.

A large number of passages in the Old Testament speak of human righteousness. Isaiah spoke of human righteousness as worthless in the sight of a holy God. (See Isa. 57:12; 64:6.)

**The question repeated.** The same question asked in Psalm 15:1 is raised again in Psalm 24:3. The answer given there is: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (verse 4). What is the source of this purity of heart and life? “He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (verse 5). Who are the ones upon whom this blessing of righteousness is bestowed? “This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face” (verse 6). How remarkably similar to Jesus’ admonition: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find” (Luke 11:9).

**Righteousness defined.** Isaiah clearly explains what he means by righteousness. “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law” (Isa. 51:7). Such people are “called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord” (Isa. 61:3). The means by which they are made righteous is beautifully spelled out by Isaiah: “*until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high. . . . Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace*” (Isa. 32:15-17, RSV).

**5. What third answer does the psalmist find to his question? Ps. 15:2, third part.**

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The third admonition of the psalmist is that those who would like to be guests of the Lord must always speak the truth from their hearts. What they say is in harmony with what they think and feel. They are not one thing outwardly and another thing inwardly, as were some of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus. Hypocrisy is a hateful thing. The person who has permanent existence in the presence of God must be thoroughly honest.

**Personal application.** Do you know of anyone just like that? Are you

such a person? If not, why not? Why is it difficult in everyday life to be absolutely honest?

TUE

### III. CONTROLLING THE TONGUE (Ps. 15:3).

6. Having referred to three positive things that the true worshiper of God should do, what three negative aspects need to be considered? Ps. 15:3; compare James 3:2.

● **Backbiting.** The word used in the King James Version is “backbite,” a very vivid term. To bite is bad enough, but to bite behind one’s back is a form of treachery.

● **Backbiting as a form of cannibalism.** “We think with horror of the cannibal who feasts on the still warm and trembling flesh of his victim; but are the results of even this practice more terrible than are the agony and ruin caused by misrepresenting motive, blackening reputation, dissecting character?”—*Education*, p. 235.

● **Doing evil.** The second negative thrust is that of doing evil. Words that leap from the tongue can hurt badly, but deeds that bring evil consequences to someone else are the acme of enmity. What is the antidote of doing evil? It is doing good; it is following in the footsteps of Jesus, “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

● **Taking up a reproach.** The third negative reaction is that of taking up a reproach against one’s neighbor. The psalmist says that the one who would be an acceptable worshiper in God’s house must hold no grudge, must accept no slur against a neighbor. If he has anything against his neighbor, or even a brother, he should make things right before his offering will be acceptable in the eyes of God. What did Jesus say in Matt. 5:23, 24?

WED

### IV. HONESTY TO GOD AND OTHERS (Ps. 15:4).

We have noted three positive exhortations, and three negative propositions. Now we look at four more propositions: two in verse 4 and two in verse 5.

7. What does the psalmist mean by saying that “a vile person” (KJV) or “a reprobate” is despised (Ps. 15:4, RSV)? Compare 1 Cor. 15:33.

The Hebrew word translated “contemned” (“despised,” RSV) means also “to think lightly of.” The servant of God never hates anyone, even though he thinks poorly of the character of the confirmed sinner. The sinner is loved because of his or her potential, but the sin is hated. (See 1 John

4:20, 21.) If Christ could love vile sinners so much that He could lay down His life for them (see 1 John 2:2; Rom. 5:8), surely His people can love sinners, even though they have no respect for their manner of life. (See Lev. 19:18.)

**8. What second piece of advice does the psalmist give in Psalm 15:4?**

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There is a contrast here; the vile person is now replaced by a person who fears the Lord. Such a person is to be honored and accepted into one's company. In proportion as the servant of God disrespects the habits of the vile person, so he honors those whose hearts are right with God. The vile person needs to know that he is loved and accepted despite his way of life, but not because of it.

**9. What is the third characteristic of the true worshiper of God? Psalm 15:4.**

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The injunction is to do what is right even though it hurts. We must be prepared to do right "though the heavens fall." The psalmist is saying that true worshipers of God, once they have entered into a solemn obligation, can be trusted to perform whatever they have undertaken, even though the performance may entail hardship.

**Personal meditation.** Am I one who has earned the reputation of being faithful in all my relationships? Are there some who doubt my word at times, and have I given them the occasion to doubt? Does taking an oath make the obligation any stronger?



**V. USING OUR MONEY ARIGHT (Ps. 15:5).**

**10. How should God's people relate to lending money? Ps. 15:5.**

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In the parable of the talents, Jesus did not condemn the practice of lending money and getting a return for it. (See Matt. 25:27.) The money would go to "exchangers," or "bankers" (NIV), who would presumably profit from the money loaned. In this case it would be proper for the exchanger or banker to give a return on the money that had been loaned for this purpose.

In the days of the psalmist, however, the economy was largely agricultural. The one in need might be the peasant farmer trying to survive between one crop and another. In such a case, demanding interest was imposing a further hardship on the farmer, and would not be a neighborly or friendly act. The law condemned it. (See Deut. 23:19.) However, if the stranger borrowed money as part of a mercantile deal, he could be charged interest. (See verse 20.)

The creditor should always consider the situation of the debtor. Compassion must be shown. (See Ex. 22:25-27.) The creditor who seeks profit by overcharging even a poor man, as suggested by the word "usury," cannot consider himself a friend of God. God's concern for the poor is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 15:8-11.

**11. What other type of financial gain is prohibited by the psalmist? Ps. 15:5.**

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When Samuel was old he challenged the people to tell him whether he had taken any bribes "to make me shut my eyes" (1 Sam. 12:3, NIV). His sons, on the other hand, "accepted bribes and perverted justice," because they were concerned only with making profits. (See 1 Sam. 8:3, NIV.) The psalmist elsewhere describes sinners as those whose "right hand is full of bribes" (Ps. 26:10). The righteous person, on the other hand, is one who "snaps his finger at a bribe" (Isa. 33:15, NEB).

**The need for honest people.** "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall."—*Education*, p. 57.

**HOW DOES THE PSALM APPLY TO ME?** (Check the statements below which most express your feelings.) As a result of the study of this lesson I:

- See a closer relationship between worship and life.
- Feel that God's standards are right and reasonable, that through His grace and the growth process I can achieve them.
- Know that God is patient with me and that His righteousness covers me.
- Recognize the importance of having my sins forgiven, and that I turn away from all sin.
- Pray for grace to practice the Golden Rule.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Compare 2 Peter 2:9-22 and Jude 8-25 with the counsel given in Psalm 15.

**SUMMARY:** The psalmist asks a question that expresses our concern: how can we qualify to approach God in worship, and be able to live in His presence? He then proceeds to answer the question, by pointing out ten principles of adequate conduct. The first three are positive, indicating what we should do. The second three are negative, showing what we should avoid. Then we have two additional positive principles and two negative, a total of ten. If we are guided by these principles we shall never be moved, never be shaken in our confidence in God and our loyalty to Him.



August 5-11

# Nature, Law, and a Personal Prayer

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Psalm 19.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:7, 8).

**LIVES CHANGED BY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.** The revelation of Himself that God gives through nature and through His inspired Word creates in the human heart a longing for deliverance from everything that is unlike Him.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Witness of Nature (Ps. 19:1).
- II. Evidences of God's Control (Ps. 19:2-6).
- III. The Law and Its Value (Ps. 19:7-10).
- IV. Admonitions and Warnings (Ps. 19:10-13).
- V. The Psalmist's Response (Ps. 19:14).

**CREATOR AND CREATED.** The pagan looks at the world around him and sees the sun and moon and stars. Because he cannot reach or touch them, he turns them into objects of worship, gods that he hopes he can influence in his favor.

The psalmist looks up at the same sky and sees the same phenomena, but he knows that the heavenly bodies have been placed there by the Creator-God, and he is impressed with His glory.

When you and I look at the wonders of creation, do our minds go from visible things to the invisible One? Does our vision take us beyond the immediate to the ultimate? And in that case, what do we see?

The psalm we study this week has been characterized by C. S. Lewis as the "greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world."—*Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), p. 63. It will challenge our thinking and perception.

Some commentators have noted a difference in metrical structure between verses 1-6 and 7-14, and a difference in subject matter between the first part, with its emphasis on the witness of nature, and the second part that is concerned with God's teachings in the Torah. Some would suggest that here we have two differing strains of thought, but a careful study of

the psalm shows an inner unity: God's revelation in nature, and His verbal revelation in the Torah. Both are important to us, and both call forth a statement of dedication on the part of the psalmist. Do we respond in the same way?

SUN

## I. THE WITNESS OF NATURE (Ps. 19:1).

When we look up at the sky and see the stars, the sun, and moon, we may receive the same conviction that came to the psalmist.

### 1. What do the heavens declare, according to the psalmist? Ps. 19:1.

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Writers have commented on the brilliance of the heavenly luminaries in the clear atmosphere of the Middle East—a phenomenon that moved the psalmist. His mind goes from the created to the Creator, and he marvels, not so much at the object he sees, as at the glory of the One who placed it there.

As the psalmist refers to the glory of God, he uses the Hebrew word *El* for God. This name is related to the name for God used in Genesis 1:1 that refers to the Creator of the heavens and the earth. No doubt the psalmist's mind went back to the account that Moses had given of the Creation, as he remembered that God had placed the sun and the moon "to give light upon the earth" (Gen. 1:17). The sun and moon are not gods to be worshiped, but objects placed in the heavens by God for a particular service.

### 2. According to the apostle Paul, what two aspects of God should be clear to everyone from a study of nature? What are the results in the lives of people who refuse to recognize the creatorship of God? Rom. 1:19-25.

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Unfortunately, fallen human beings are not always aware of the witness of nature. Nor do they want to be. There are some who are willingly ignorant of the divine truths taught by the natural world. Without God in their lives, they are tragically vulnerable to creature worship.

### 3. What constitutes the glory of God? Ex. 33:18; 34:5-8.

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"Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

"By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom's home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.

4. What lessons did Jesus draw from natural objects around him?  
Matt. 6:26-34:
- 

“The Great Teacher brought His hearers in contact with nature, that they might listen to the voice which speaks in all created things; and as their hearts became tender and their minds receptive, He helped them to interpret the spiritual teaching of the scenes upon which their eyes rested. . . .

“All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service. . . . The same law of service is written upon all things in nature. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of light—all have their ministry.”—*Education*, pp. 102, 103.

**MON**

## II. EVIDENCES OF GOD'S CONTROL (Ps. 19:2-6).

Not only did God in the beginning provide a suitable environment for humanity; but also day after day, night after night, God's blessings are repeated.

5. How does the psalmist portray the ongoing provision that God has made for us? Ps. 19:2, 3.
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At the creation of this planet God was pleased with what He had done. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). But He went further and provided for continuing life. Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and have dominion; their diet was provided (verses 28-30). And every seventh day was a weekly day of rest (Gen. 2:1-3). The sun was to mark off the days and the years. The cycle of the moon would indicate the months. Life was to continue as perfectly as it had begun.

We know the tragedy of the entrance of sin into the Garden of Eden. Nature was marred.

**Nature depicts evil and goodness.** “Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright. . . . In brier and thorn, in thistle and tare, is represented the evil that blights and mars. In singing bird and opening blossom, in rain and sunshine, in summer breeze and gentle dew, in ten thousand objects in nature, from the oak of the forest to the violet that blossoms at its root, is seen the love that restores. And nature still speaks to us of God's goodness.”—*Education*, p. 101.

6. How widespread is the knowledge of nature and its laws? Ps. 19:4.
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It does not matter what language is spoken, what race is affected, what

part of the earth is concerned, the laws of nature are understood. Not perfectly, perhaps, but sufficiently for them to be a reliable measure of time. The revolving and orbiting earth is an accurate timepiece. Nations and people may vary as to the names of the months, or the number of the years, or when the years begin and end; but all can count from one to seven, and all may know when the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, comes around. It is important to know that the weekly cycle has never been changed. Efforts to do so in Russia and in France after their political upheavals in this century and the eighteenth century respectively, have utterly failed. We can be sure that the seventh day in the twentieth century is the same seventh day that Jesus observed as the Sabbath.

### 7. What interesting personification is made of the sun? Ps. 19:5, 6.

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The sun is a dependable timepiece in the heavens. From our standpoint it moves obediently, regularly, strongly, and effectively. It always sets at a time that can be predetermined, and rises at a time that can be well established.

The sun is not moving in the way the psalmist describes. In our sophistication, we may smile at him. The fact is that in spite of modern astronomy, in spite of all the diagrams we have seen about the orbit of the earth around the sun, we still talk about the sun setting in the west and rising in the east! If we do this in the twentieth century with all our learning and advancement in science, we can surely let the psalmist draw his picture, and understand what he means. He is telling us that God is the God of order, and He is in control. We can still use our sundials, and know the time of day. We can still navigate by the stars and know the direction we are taking. God's order is not only fixed; it is unshakable, unchangeable, until God Himself decides to make some changes.

## **TUE** III. THE LAW AND ITS VALUE (Ps. 19:7-10).

We now enter into the second part of the psalm. We have been looking at the God of Creation (Hebrew, *El*). Now we look at the Lord of the covenant (Hebrew, *Yahweh*).

### 8. How does the psalmist describe the law of the Lord? Ps. 19:7.

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The Hebrew word for law used by the psalmist is *torah*. This word means more than "law" as we understand the term in English. It refers to God's teaching, His revelation given and recorded in His Word. Can you imagine what it would be like if we had no revelation from God, no instruction as we have it from the Bible? What important truths can you identify, of which we would be ignorant if we did not have the book of Genesis?

The Hebrew word translated "perfect" means complete, blameless, incontestable. The Lord has revealed Himself, His plans, and what He

desires His people to do, in a complete way. We do not have to be in doubt as to what the Lord plans to do, or how we are to fit into His program.

9. Read Psalm 19:7-10, noting five terms that present five aspects of God's law (*torah*). Write them down here:
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Study the following definitions:

1. *Testimony*—the witness that God gives to what He knows to be true. For example, the story of Creation. The Hebrew word for "testimony" is often used of the Ten Commandments. (See Ex. 25:16, 21, 22.)

2. *Statutes, or precepts*—the responsibilities that God places on His people to perform. The same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 103:18; 111:7; 119:128. God's requirements are not grievous. (See 1 John 5:3.)

3. *The commandment*—God's commandments are not restrictive. They are for our good. (See Deut. 10:13.)

4. *Fear of the Lord*—The Hebrew word refers to "reverence," or "holy fear." (See Ps. 2:11; 5:7.) Those who fear the Lord recognize His greatness and power. God's power is available to us, if we will accept it. (See Prov. 1:7.)

5. *Judgments*—The Hebrew word refers to God's decision in regard to a person being tried, and the basis of His decision. (See Ps. 9:7, 16.) There are times when God judges, but His judgments are mingled with mercy. Consider God's treatment of Adam and Eve after the Fall.

Now go back over these verses and notice how the psalmist relates to every one of these aspects of God's revealed will. How do you feel about God's revelations in the Old and New Testament? List some of the things that call forth your gratitude.

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WED

#### IV. ADMONITIONS AND WARNINGS (Ps. 19:10-13).

We appreciate the advice of someone who is experienced and interested in our welfare. We look to that person to tell us what to do in view of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

10. How does the psalmist sum up the value of God's teaching and law? Ps. 19:10.
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The psalmist says that there is nothing better than a right relationship with God. Now read the advice of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 16:24-26. There are values in life that last throughout eternity; we should grasp them. There are also glittering baubles dangled before us; we should ignore them.

11. How does God warn or caution His people? Ps. 19:11.

God gives us a choice, but He wants us to choose life. (Compare Deut. 11:26-28; 30:19, 20.) Why would a person be so foolish as to choose death? How would you show a friend that following in the footsteps of the Master and keeping His law gives us joy in this life as well as in the life to come? (See Psalm 16.)

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12. What kind of reward awaits the one who decides to be obedient? Ps. 19:11; compare Ps. 119:165; 2 Thess. 2:10; Phil. 3:20, 21.
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The psalmist must have experienced a part of this "great reward" since he has spoken so highly of God's revelation in the Torah. The psalmist has found that in keeping God's law there is freedom from guilt, and joy in living that is inexpressible. The reward is experienced here and now, as well as in the future.

13. Note how humbly the psalmist approaches God and seeks cleansing from secret faults. Ps. 19:12; compare Ps. 139:23, 24.
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The more we study God's revealed will, the more we are aware of our weaknesses and failings. We cannot depend on self-evaluation. We tend to excuse our mistakes. The psalmist wants to be cleared of all guilt. He asks to be cleansed even of those sins of which he may not be aware. Complete safety is possible only when God takes over our lives and has complete control.

**Grace for victory over sin.** "Through the measure of His grace furnished to the human agent, not one need miss heaven. Perfection of character is attainable by every one who strives for it. This is made the very foundation of the new covenant of the gospel. The law of Jehovah is the tree; the gospel is the fragrant blossoms and fruit which it bears.

"When the Spirit of God reveals to man the full measure of the law, a change takes place in his heart. The faithful portrayal of his true state by the prophet Nathan made David acquainted with his own sins, and aided him in putting them away. He accepted the counsel meekly, and humbled himself before God. [Quotes Ps. 19:7-14]."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 211, 212.

14. From what other kind of sin does the psalmist want to be free? Ps. 19:13; Num 15:30, 31; Heb. 10:26-31.
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Presumptuous sins are sins of arrogance. They are committed when we fail to seek counsel of God, when we think we know best what to do. The first sin of the universe was the sin of pride. Satan wanted to be like God,

not in character and love, but in power. We need always to be careful lest we think we can do things on our own, that our plans are the right plans. We do well to pause for prayer, and to consult with godly friends and those who are in a position to advise us.

#### V. THE PSALMIST'S RESPONSE (Ps. 19:14).

15. What does the psalmist humbly ask for himself? Ps. 19:14; compare Isa. 50:4; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5.
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James points out in his letter that the tongue is an unruly member. It needs to be held in check. (See James 3:2-18.) We know that words, once spoken, may never be drawn back. We need to have a watch set on our lips. Only God can give us the power to control the tongue.

Jesus pointed out that it is possible for us to sin in the area of our thoughts. (See Matt. 5:28.) Only as God has control of our thinking, only as, through His power, we banish every evil thought, can we be sure that our lives are acceptable to God.

**APPLICATION EXERCISE:** Complete the following open-ended sentences:

1. The one aspect of nature that fills me with the greatest awe is
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2. I love God's law because \_\_\_\_\_

3. The rewards that I have experienced in seeking to keep God's commandments are \_\_\_\_\_

**FRD** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Education*, pp. 99-101.

**SUMMARY:** God has provided a revelation of Himself in nature and in His written Word. He has outlined what we have to do in order to live with Him. Our response should be similar to that of the psalmist: Let us read and understand this revelation. Let us live at peace with Him.

# Lesson 7

August 12—18

## The Pain of Abandonment; The Triumph of Faith

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 22.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever” (Psalm 22:25, 26).

**DOES GOD ABANDON?** Perhaps some of us have felt abandoned at one time or another. The question we ask this week is: Does God really abandon anyone? If so, under what circumstances, and for what reasons?

### **OUTLINE:**

- I. The Pain of Feeling Abandoned (Ps. 22:1, 2).
- II. The Antidote to Feelings of Despair (Ps. 22:3-11).
- III. The Cruelty of Our Environment (Ps. 22:12-18).
- IV. The Prayer of Faith (Ps. 22:19-21).
- V. The Road of Complete Trust (Ps. 22:22-31).

**TRUST TRIUMPHS OVER DESPAIR.** In the psalm for our study this week we find the psalmist asking God a very important question: Why, my God, he asks, have you abandoned me?

Jesus used the question of the psalmist as He was suffering intense pain on the cross. He experienced the situations described by the psalmist.

**Triumphant Trust.** Jesus plumbed the depths of human anguish, but He did not yield to human frailty. He ever maintained His faith and trust in God. When the moment of death came He said: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Likewise the psalmist finds his way from despair to faith and trust. Faith triumphs in the end. May that be our experience.

### **I. THE PAIN OF FEELING ABANDONED (Ps. 22:1, 2).**

We all have feelings, and we cannot deny them. But we need to know what the truth is, so that we are guided, not by what our feelings tell us about the truth, but by the truth itself.

1. How did the psalmist feel, as expressed in the first two verses of Psalm 22?



Commentators have not been able to pinpoint any experience of David, the psalmist, that would be the basis of this psalm. Christians can see in the psalm a prophecy of Jesus and His experience on the cross. We will keep Jesus in mind as we read the psalm. We should also keep in mind that the psalmist may very well be describing your experience or mine. There are lessons we may learn from the psalmist's conclusions.

**SUN**

- 2. Read the following texts, and note how individuals felt rejected, and how painful the circumstances must have been:**

Job 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

John 1:11 \_\_\_\_\_

John 6:66, 67 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 4:10, 16 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

- 3. The psalmist no doubt felt abandoned, and there were those around him who rejected him. What reason did he have to believe that God had not forsaken him? Deut. 4:31; 31:6; Joshua 1:5.**

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There may be occasions when God will have to forsake those who forsake Him. (See 2 Chron. 15:2.) In the case of the psalmist he was not aware that he had forsaken God. On the contrary, he was pleading with God day and night. Is it right for us to suppose that, because there are delays in the answers to our prayers, we are being neglected or unheard?

- 4. How was Psalm 22:1 fulfilled in the experience of Jesus? Matt. 27:46, 50; compare Isa. 53:12; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24.**

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“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. . . . But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face...The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. . . .

“And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. . . . He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath

of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 753-756.

## II. THE ANTIDOTE TO FEELINGS OF DESPAIR (Ps. 22:3-11).

5. What statement of faith did the psalmist make as he drew away from feelings of despair? Ps. 22:3; compare Ps. 9:11; Heb. 13:15.
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The psalmist looks up, and he sees God as the Holy One, the One who rightly receives the praise of the people of Israel. It is when the psalmist is looking at himself and his circumstances that he becomes discouraged. He needs to look away from himself, if he is to maintain that stance of living trust. Feelings can tear us down, but faith can lift us up.

The psalmist sees God as the Holy One. The concept of the holiness of God causes him to reconsider whether he has any special claim on God. He now sees God as the One who deserves his worship and praise, not his complaint.

6. After looking up, in what direction does the psalmist turn his attention? Ps. 22:4, 5.
- 

The psalmist looks back at the history of his people. He sees them having trust in God, and being delivered. He knows that they prayed and received answers to their prayers.

7. Give examples of how God has guided and provided for His people:

Ex. 3:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_

Ex. 14:13, 14 \_\_\_\_\_

Joshua 24:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Looking at the positive aspects of history, the psalmist is comforted. He sees that God is thoroughly approachable. God has taken the initiative to help His people. They have not been abandoned or forsaken.

8. Looking at himself again, how does the psalmist view himself? Ps. 22:6-8.
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What makes these words especially poignant is that they apply to Jesus in a very specific way. (See Mark 15:29, 30; Matt. 27:39-43.) As we read the psalmist's words, we are seeing what happened to Jesus. Although He was the Son of God, He was despised and rejected.

Read another prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus in Isaiah 53. Note the following phrases:

“We esteemed him not” (verse 3). “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (verse 4). “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (verse 5). “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (verse 6). “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (verse 9).

The concept of the suffering Messiah was foreign to the thinking of the Jews, even of the disciples, but Jesus set the record straight. (See Luke 24:25-27.)

**9. How does the psalmist describe his dependence upon God? Ps. 22:9-11.**

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Our dependence on God is like the dependence of a child upon its parents. Happy is the child who knows God and His characteristics through association with parents. The psalmist recognizes that our dependence on God does not begin with our mature years, but from the very time that life begins. God’s love is all around us, even though the existence of sin has rendered many situations far from ideal.

Just as children need their parents close by to protect and provide, so every one of us needs God to provide all our needs.

**Can you say that God has been good to you through the years? How have you observed His providences in your experience?**

**TUE** **III. THE CRUELTY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT (Ps. 22:12-18).**

**10. How has the psalmist described the experience of many who have had to suffer hardships? Ps. 22:12-18.**

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Once again we see clear references to Jesus. Note particularly verses 16 and 18. “They pierced my hands and my feet” obviously refers to the nails used in the crucifixion. “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” was definitely fulfilled at the time of the cross. (Read John 19:23, 24.)

The action of the soldiers in gambling for a garment that could not be divided and remain useful, indicates their utter callousness. They had no idea of the sacrifice that was being made on their behalf by the One they had nailed to the cross.

By contrast is the concern that Jesus showed for His mother and the provision He made for her through John. (See John 19:25-27.)

The way that we relate to one another in love or unconcern determines whether we are disciples of Jesus or followers of the way of the world.

**11. What animals are mentioned by the psalmist as describing his enemies? Ps. 22:12, 13, 16.**

The reference to animals makes the picture of a threatening situation very vivid. The strong bulls of Bashan are certainly formidable. The ravening and roaring lion is scary, not only because of the strength of his jaws but because of the frightening roar. Dogs surrounding the psalmist are pictured with their sharp teeth and threatening gesture. Dogs in the Middle East are not famous for gentleness.

The psalmist is not thinking merely of animals. He is thinking of enemies who have the characteristics of wild beasts. Note the reference to Satan as a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8. Paul warned the Philippians against destructive dogs (Phil. 3:2). He had people in mind. John the revelator sees dogs outside the New Jerusalem, an allusion to evil men (Rev. 22:15). Bulls are not in bull rings because they are mild.

- 12. What vivid pictures does the psalmist draw to indicate his fears? Ps. 22:14, 15, 17.**
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In a special sense this scene applies to Christ upon the cross.

If you have not had these physical experiences you may not have suffered real fear. Note how Belshazzar acted when he saw the handwriting on the wall (Dan. 5:6). It is no wonder that he "cried aloud to bring in the astrologers" (verse 7).

**Can you recall an instance in which God rescued you from a critical situation?**



#### **IV. THE PRAYER OF FAITH (Ps. 22:19-21).**

- 13. What does the psalmist request that the Lord do for him? Ps. 22:20, 21.**
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The psalmist pleads for life. Do we not all want life more than anything else? He is facing a moment of death, and the moment is fearsome. He sees "beasts" around him, and he feels helpless. There seems to be no hope. So he turns to God again. Deliver my soul, he pleads.

Our thoughts turn to Jesus, who has hallowed this psalm by quoting the first verse. He has placed His seal on it as a messianic psalm, projecting what would happen to the Messiah. On the cross the scenes are reenacted, and we can imagine the awful agony that our Saviour went through, although we can never plumb its depths. Our Saviour does not shrink from death. It is a vital part of the plan of salvation. But beyond death is the resurrection. And because He rose, we may rise. Death no longer has a sting, the grave no victory. In the most difficult of circumstances we can look beyond the tomb, knowing that the grave cannot hold back the righteous person (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

- 14. Can you think of those who faced death with equanimity because of their confidence in God?**

Acts 7:59, 60 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 4:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_

15. On what basis may we say that death is not necessarily the greatest of tragedies? Rev. 14:13.
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**THU** V. THE ROAD OF COMPLETE TRUST (Ps. 22:22-31).

Psalm 22 is significant for its complete reversal, from an expression of distress and pain in a feeling of abandonment, to an expression of unbounded trust and confidence in God. In fact, it is this reversal, so clear in Scripture, that makes Jesus' use of verse 1, so important. We see that Jesus, while expressing the pain of humanity on the cross, was expressing distress, but not despair. In the midst of distress He had confidence and hope. Anyone who heard the cry of Jesus and knew the psalm would recognize, not only the pain, but His faith in God's plan. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.)

16. Where does the psalmist say that he will declare God's name and praise Him? Ps. 22:22.
- 

In writing to the Hebrews, the author-apostle brings the sentiments of this verse up to date when he substitutes the word "church" for "congregation" (Heb. 2:12). We are all familiar with the concept of the church as the place where Christians congregate for worship. However the use of Psalm 22:22 in the epistle to the Hebrews is in the context of Christ having been made perfect through suffering. (Compare verse 10.)

Jesus became flesh, and came to dwell among us (John 1:14). Although He was the Son of God, He was also the Son of man, and has become a member of the human family. He is not ashamed to call us brothers, members of the same family (Heb. 2:11). He came to taste death for everyone (verse 9). He knows the fear and loneliness of death. There is nothing that we could experience that He did not experience with greater intensity (Heb. 5:7-9). And it is because He has been touched with our infirmities that He is now a perfect High Priest (verse 10). Since He Himself was tempted, He understands how we feel in the hour of temptation (Heb. 2:18).

17. On what basis does the psalmist urge the people of God to praise the Lord? Ps. 22:23, 24.
- 

The psalmist now testifies that God never turns away from the one who expresses a real need. He is too gracious, too understanding, to do that. In

our human weakness we may feel lonely at times, we may be conscious of our enemies and those who would cause us ill. But the eye of faith that sees how God has led us and His people through difficult times, can buoy our spirits up, and prevent us from entering the realm of despair.

**18. How widespread is the consciousness of the goodness of God and the need to praise Him? Ps. 22:25-31.**

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The time will come, perhaps sooner than we think, when the population will be divided into two groups: those who honor God and serve Him, and those who turn their backs on Him and suffer the consequences. Today we are deciding in which group we want to find ourselves.

**HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?**

- Am I looking at myself and becoming discouraged, or am I looking to God and asking Him for guidance and help?

- Am I looking at my circumstances and feeling sorry for myself, or do I see in my circumstances opportunities to trust in God and follow His instructions?

- Do I see in Jesus an older brother who understands my predicaments, and is willing to help?

- Can I look beyond the present pain to the future glory? If not, why not?

(FRI)

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "Calvary" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 741-757.

**SUMMARY:** The psalmist feels abandoned by God, and very lonely. But he recognizes that God is deserving of trust and praise because of what He has done for His people through the ages. He feels surrounded by those who would tear him apart, and he is afraid of losing his life. Unbeknown to himself the psalmist is prophesying of One who came to His own creation, expecting a welcome, but His own people did not recognize Him as the Messiah.

# The Lord My Shepherd

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 23.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:1-3).

**THE DIVINE SHEPHERD.** The Lord gently leads and sustains His faithful followers through the experiences of life, gives them courage as they face death, and reserves for them an eternity of peace and joy.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Shepherd and His Care (Ps. 23:1).
- II. A Life of Comparative Peace and Contentment (Ps. 23:2, 3).
- III. The Comfort of Rod and Staff (Ps. 23:4).
- IV. The Life of Superabundance (Ps. 23:5).
- V. The Response of Faith (Ps. 23:6).

**SHEPHERD AND SHEEP.** David, who had been a shepherd boy, never forgot the close relationship between shepherd and sheep. The shepherd cared and protected; the sheep relaxed and enjoyed every provision. Sometimes they were silly enough to become lost, and then they were glad to be found. As David grew older, he saw more clearly that the relationship between God and His people is that of a Shepherd and His sheep. In our study this week we look at the implications of this relationship.

Psalm 23 is a favorite of all Bible lovers. It has inspired poets and painters, musicians and hymn writers, rich and poor, country folk and city dwellers, young and old. Why is it so popular?

Somehow the image of the Lord as a Shepherd reveals Him as kindly and real. We all feel the need of a caring God, One who not only knows our needs but is willing and able to supply them. Do you look upon the Lord as your Shepherd? What is He doing for you now?

## I. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS CARE (Ps. 23:1).

Not all shepherds truly care for their sheep. Jesus pointed out the fact that some shepherds are merely hirelings.

1. How is the good shepherd differentiated from the hireling? John 10:11-14.

The hireling is more interested in the pay than in the job or the sheep. The sheep to him are only the means to an end. There is no personal relationship between the shepherd and the sheep.

The good shepherd, on the other hand, so loves and cares for the sheep that he will die rather than permit a single sheep to come to harm. Sheep who have such a shepherd have nothing to fear and everything to gain. Furthermore, there is a personal relationship between the sheep and shepherd, that not only is pleasant and desirable but also is essential for a complete satisfaction of needs.

As human beings we must have loving relationships if we are to lead meaningful lives. A baby who is never hugged and loved will not develop normally, and may soon die.

Jesus refers to this personal relationship when He says that He knows His sheep, and the sheep know Him, and recognize His voice (John 10:14).



**Jesus' care for us.** "Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 479.

**Think it through.** What are the joys of a happy family? What are we saying when we use a person's first name? How would you describe the feeling of belonging? How do you express your relationship to Jesus Christ as your Shepherd?

**2. What does the psalmist say results from having God as His Shepherd? Ps. 23:1.**

**All his needs were supplied!** If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, everything else will fit into its necessary position. (See Matt. 6:31-33.) Note the testimony of the psalmist in Psalm 37:25. Can you testify that God has been good and gracious to you and supplied all your needs?

Note that there is a difference between needs and desires. Our needs can be simple, but our desires may be blown up out of all proportion.

Our desires may be a form of covetousness. Paul gave good advice to Timothy along these lines. (See 1 Tim. 6:6-10.) One translation puts verse 6 this way: "Well, religion does make a person very rich, if he is satisfied with what he has" (TEV).

**Slaves to fear and want.** "In all ages, philosophers and teachers have been presenting to the world theories by which to satisfy the soul's need. . . . The trend of their work is to rob God of that which is His own, both by creation and by redemption. And these false teachers rob man as well. Millions of human beings are bound down under false religions, in the bondage of slavish fear, of stolid indifference, toiling like beasts of burden, bereft of hope or joy or aspiration here, and with only a dull fear of the hereafter."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.



3. In what special ways does the Lord do the work of a shepherd for His people? Isa. 40:11; John 10:2-4, 11.
- 

**Think it through.** Is being content with what we have the same as not trying to better our financial position?

Think of the things that God has given you for which you are truly thankful. List some of them:

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**MON**

## II. A LIFE OF COMPARATIVE PEACE AND CONTENTMENT (Ps. 23:2, 3).

The term "comparative" in the above title is used intentionally, because some Christians go through considerable hardship at times. Yet, do we recognize that the way of transgressors can be even harder? (See Prov. 13:15.)

4. What experiences does the Shepherd provide for His sheep? Ps. 23:2.
- 

How often have you felt like sitting down and resting for a change? How often have you felt the burden of your responsibilities so heavy that you would like to put them down for a while? Jesus recognized the importance of rest (Mark 6:30, 31). He did not always get physical rest (verses 32-34). He was deeply concerned about people who were like sheep without a shepherd.

Sometimes the pressures of duties are heavy upon us, and we cannot get all the rest we desire. Yet we can thank God for the grace that enables us to have a restful, peaceful spirit amidst the stressful demands of our busy existence.

5. What opportunities does God provide for our rest? Matt. 11:28-30.
- 

**The rest that we need is not merely physical.** "The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. . . . He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329.

**There is also the weekly Sabbath rest.** Here is the opportunity to lay aside our daily cares, and be refreshed by the Word of God. Do we take advantage of these opportunities as we ought?

6. What is implied by the statement that the divine Shepherd “leadeth me beside the still waters” (Ps. 23:2)? Compare Isa. 55:1; 41:17; 44:3, 4.

Those who have lived in dry and arid parts of the world know what it is like to quench their thirst, to feel the coolness of water poured over a heated brow. There is nothing more refreshing.

Jesus knows what it is like to be thirsty. (See John 4:5-26.) We have learned that there is a kind of water that only God can give, and He gives it freely to those who will accept it.

**Living water.** “The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 412. (Compare John 7:37-39.)

**Think it through.** Are you conscious of the fact that you are a source of blessing to others? How do you think you and others can be a blessing to friends and neighbors? (See Matt. 10:42.) Great talent is not the greatest need, but great thoughtfulness, a recognition of the needs of others and an attempt to fill those needs, so far as it is possible within our means.

### **TUE** III. THE COMFORT OF ROD AND STAFF (Ps. 23:4).

A rod is often thought of as a symbol of discipline. (See Prov. 10:13; 13:24.) Eli talked to his sons, but failed to restrain them by discipline. (See 1 Sam. 2:22-25; 3:11-13.) In Hebrews the apostle points out the blessings of proper discipline. (See Heb. 12:11.) Are we faithful in our responsibilities as parents or teachers?

7. What is the main purpose of the rod referred to in Psalm 23:4?

**The Shepherd’s protection.** The rod protects the sheep. The psalmist knew what it meant to protect sheep. (See 1 Sam. 17:34-37.) The sheep knew what it was like to be saved from the jaws of a lion or a bear. We face a roaring lion, who would like to devour us, but need not fear when God is on our side. (See 1 Peter 5:8-11.)

**The Shepherd’s guidance.** The staff or crook is the means by which the shepherd can reach out and guide the sheep. It can urge the sheep forward, or it can slip around the neck of a sheep that is going too fast or the wrong way, and thus needs to be pulled into line.

Sometimes a sheep gets lost, and the loss is not noticed until the sheep are counted as they go into the fold. Will the one sheep be neglected be-

cause there are ninety-nine in the fold? Jesus answers the question in terms of His coming to save the lost. The Father wishes that no one will perish. (See Matt. 18:11-14.)

**The Shepherd's comfort.** The protecting, guiding rod is a symbol of the comfort that the Good Shepherd brings to the one who is facing "the valley of the shadow of death." How reassuring that Christ is with us! Because He has been through that valley and lives again, we have the glorious certainty of living with Him for eternity. (See Rev. 1:18; John 11:25.)

**Think it through.** What causes the sheep to stray? Is it willfulness? Is it the ruggedness of the road? What needs to be done for a sheep that seems to be lost and does not know its way home?

**WED** **IV. THE LIFE OF SUPERABUNDANCE (Ps. 23:5).**

**8. What kind of treatment does the psalmist see himself receiving from the Lord as his host? Ps. 23:5.**

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**The table prepared.** God Himself prepares the table. Here is condescension of the highest order. Here is the Lord serving the servant, rather than the servant serving the Lord. Jesus shocked His disciples when He pointed to a little child and suggested that they should be humble, and not self-seeking, if they were ever to enter the kingdom of heaven. (See Matt. 18:1-4.)

Jesus set the example at the time of the Last Supper, when he "took a towel, and girded himself. . . . And began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:4, 5). Can you imagine the consternation of everyone present? "Each of the disciples, yielding to wounded pride, determined not to act the part of a servant. All manifested a stoical unconcern, seeming unconscious that there was anything for them to do. By their silence they refused to humble themselves."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 644.

**"In the presence of mine enemies."** Just as the Shepherd provides a safe feeding ground for his sheep, so God has done the psalmist a special favor by acting as his host even before his enemies. The enemies are in the background. They have been accusing the psalmist of not being worthy of any of God's favors. Yet God is favoring him! God does not always agree with our enemies. He judges independently and righteously. We may be sure that those who hold a grudge against us, or who seek to demean us, will not necessarily gain the victory over us. (See 2 Cor. 2:14.)

**9. How does the psalmist describe the treatment his head receives, and the cup that is placed in his hand? Ps. 23:5.**

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The placing of oil on the head when a guest arrives or any time during the meal is not a Western custom, but was a custom in the time of Christ and before. (See Luke 7:46.) To anoint a person was to indicate that such a person was an honored person, set apart for a particular service, and held in high esteem. The psalmist feels that God is honoring him in a special way, and although he may not feel worthy of the honor, he is deeply appreciative.

The cup running over is a symbol of abounding generosity. God does not hold back in the blessings that He bestows on us. A good measure was one in which the grain was pressed down and ran over the side of the container (Luke 6:38).

Have you found that God treats you better than you deserve? How do you show your appreciation?



## V. THE RESPONSE OF FAITH (Ps. 23:6).

10. What does the psalmist say will follow him all his life? Verse 6.

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Goodness is an attribute of God which He has in a supreme sense. All that He creates is good. (See Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 21, 25.) In fact, the whole of Creation was "very good" (verse 31).

Philosophers have long sought the *summum bonum*, the highest good. But the Bible tells us that God is the only One who is good, and He is the source of all goodness. (See Matt. 19:17.) We know that Jesus went about doing good. (See Acts 10:38.) Because His character is perfect and good, His life was a blessing to others.

The prophet Micah has defined what is good in God's eyes, and the kind of life that God would have us lead. Three elements are outlined in Micah 6:8: to do justly; to love mercy; and to walk humbly with God.

11. Where does the psalmist expect to dwell? Ps. 23:6; Rev. 21:3, 4.

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The psalmist expects to be a member of God's household, not only in this life but in the future life. Home for him is not just where he and his family live, but where God is.

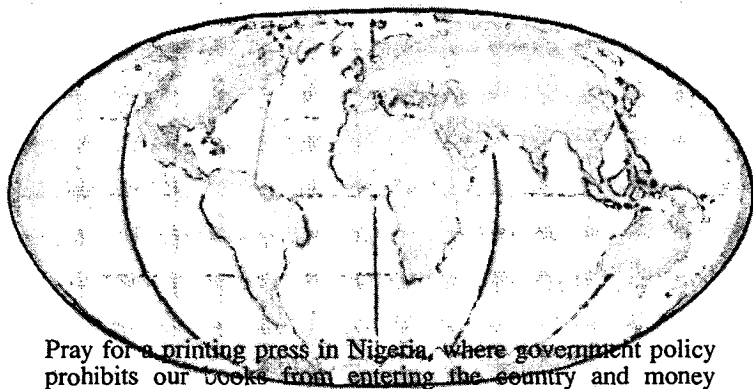
Because God is everywhere, the psalmist wants to live in such a manner that God and the angels delight to be with him. It is indeed a blessing when we can say that God is the head of our home, when we live ever in His presence. God's relationship with us is not only that of a Shepherd with His sheep, but also of a heavenly Father to whom we can go in every hour of need, knowing that we shall receive sympathy and understanding and the means of victory over sin.

**APPLICATION EXERCISE:** Do you really believe that the Lord is your Shepherd? If you do, list evidences from your experience on the lines on the next page:



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476-479; *Education*, p. 164; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 190-192.

**SUMMARY:** So often God is thought of as “up there.” In this psalm the poet expresses the view that God is “down here,” active in providing our every need. We may have our enemies, but if God is for us, who can be effectively against us? Why should we fret and be afraid, when God is near and eager to help us in all our difficulties?



Pray for a printing press in Nigeria, where government policy prohibits our books from entering the country and money from being exchanged out, making it imperative that our literature be printed within Nigeria.

# Lesson 9

August 26—September 1

## The Secret of Success

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 27.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock" (Psalm 27:5).

**A DIVINE DEFENDER.** Because of our dedication to God we are sometimes opposed by spiritual enemies. At such times, we may be sure that, as we depend upon the Lord, He will shelter, provide for, and vindicate us.

### OUTLINE:

- I. The Source of Courage (Ps. 27:1-3).
- II. A Worthy Goal (Ps. 27:4).
- III. A Place of Refuge and Vindication (Ps. 27:5, 6).
- IV. The Cry of a Saint (Ps. 27:7-10).
- V. The Secret of Success (Ps. 27:11-14).

**WAITING ON THE LORD.** The expression "waiting on the Lord" is found in Psalm 27:14. The English language has changed in the three and a half centuries since the King James Version was prepared. Today "to wait on" means "to act as a servant to" (Webster's New World Dictionary). This is not what the psalmist meant. He meant, "Look to the Lord." What the psalmist would have us do is to look to the Lord for guidance, and not take a step forward unless we are sure we are doing the right thing. That is excellent advice. It is the basis for true success in life.

The psalmist felt he needed guidance, but he also knew where to find it. As we study his psalm, may we also learn where we can find guidance, so that our lives will meet with God's approval and lead to our satisfaction.

**A note of confidence.** Psalm 27 has been a favorite psalm with many people. It provides a note of confidence that nothing should discourage us in any circumstance of life. It also gives assurance that God will care for us in the face of opposition and rejection. Finally, there is the courage that comes from looking to the Lord and receiving His instruction as we confront life's challenges.



### I. THE SOURCE OF COURAGE (Ps. 27:1-3).

1. What three things cause the psalmist to be fearless in times of danger? Ps. 27:1.

**The LORD.** The use of all capital letters in this appellation indicates that God's personal name is being used. This name is written in four letters in Hebrew and is transliterated in English as YAHWEH. (Compare Ex. 3:13-15.) This name is derived from a form of the verb "to be." It means "He who causes to be." Thus God's name refers to Him as the Creator whose own existence is without beginning or end.

**Light.** The psalmist asserts that the LORD is his light. In other words, without the LORD the psalmist is in darkness. He cannot see where he is, where he is going, or who the enemy might be. But when he is in the light he can take the necessary precautions.

God is light, and dwells in light unapproachable. (See 1 Tim. 6:16.) Light is not only physical. Jesus is the light of the world. (See John 8:12; 9:5.) He has given us a revelation of God and His plans. (See John 1:4.) We are to walk in the light. (See 1 John 1:7.) We are to reflect the light of God's goodness. (See Matt. 5:14-16.)

**Salvation.** The psalmist viewed the Lord as the One who pulled him out of distress. God is all-powerful, and He can save to the uttermost. (Compare Heb. 7:25.) It is this close relationship between God and the psalmist that makes the psalmist fearless, in whatever the circumstances he finds himself. He fears no evil.

**The strength of his life.** We have to admit that we are weak, and there are many things we cannot do. God is strong and all-powerful. How did the psalmist know that God is powerful? He had read about it in the history of his people. (See Deut. 4:32-37.) He had seen that power at work in his own life. Furthermore, he had God's promises.

**2. What experience of the psalmist gave him confidence in God? Ps. 27:2.**

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The emphasis in this verse is on "they." It was they, the enemy, that stumbled and fell. The psalmist was able to stand his ground.

**3. To what extent was the psalmist confident in God's salvation? Ps. 27:3.**

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The psalmist could find himself alone, or with a small group, facing a large army, with the odds definitely against him. But he was not afraid, because, with God on his side, he was in the majority. God could overcome any force, however large.

**II. A WORTHY GOAL (Ps. 27:4).**

Although the psalmist appreciated the privilege of having a God of light, salvation, and victory over his enemies, he wanted something more.

4. What did the psalmist say is his heart's desire? Ps. 27:4.

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We have already noted that the psalmist looks forward to being a member of God's household. (See Ps. 23:6.) He feels that nothing will please him better than to be in God's house, to have immediate access to God, to associate with others of the same household, to know that God is his Father, and that he is God's son.

5. Assuming that you, like the psalmist, would like to "dwell in the house of the Lord," what do you think are some of the prerequisites of such an experience?

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The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-10), repentance is God's gift (Rom. 2:4), and that no one can come to the Lord unless he is drawn by the Father (John 6:44). Read the following characteristics, and number them 1-10, in the order of priority you would give them as prerequisites for being a member of God's household:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repent of sin                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Be converted         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have sins forgiven                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Know the law of God  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy communion with God               | <input type="checkbox"/> Be perfect           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Scriptures daily              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pray without ceasing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have fellowship with the people of God |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please God in everything one does      |   |

6. Name two things the psalmist says he wants to do as he dwells in the house of the Lord. Ps. 27:4.

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**"To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord"** (NIV). The Hebrew word for "beauty" in this text goes beyond the concept of appearance. It has to do with character. God is gracious and kind, sympathetic and loving, understanding and helpful. All these characteristics were manifested in Jesus as He walked the streets of Palestine. The psalmist wanted to contemplate the goodness of God, and to experience His influence over his life.

**"To enquire in his temple."** The psalmist doubtless had experiences that he could not understand. He wanted to ask questions, and to understand the whys and the wherefores. Perhaps he wanted to know what to do next. He wanted God to guide him. (Compare Rev. 7:15-17.)

**Think it through.** Do you have questions you would like to ask? Are there matters that you do not understand? Where do you think you would find the best answers to your inquiries? Be prepared to discuss your convictions with the members of your Sabbath School class.



### III. A PLACE OF REFUGE AND VINDICATION (Ps. 27:5, 6).

The psalmist recognizes that the place where God dwells is not only a place of enjoyment and profit, but also a place of safety.

#### 7. Where did the psalmist expect to find refuge in time of trouble? Ps. 27:5.

In the Middle Ages the churches were always kept open, and if people felt that their lives were endangered, they could run into the church and seek refuge at the altar. This privilege was usually recognized, although not always maintained.

This practice had a biblical basis. (See 1 Kings 1:50-53.) It was a means of protecting those who had committed a crime unintentionally. However, one who was guilty of premeditated violence could not escape justice by this means. (Compare 1 Kings 2:28-31.) In ancient Israel there were cities of refuge set apart to protect people who felt that they might be targets of retaliation (Num. 35:9-34). How efficient they were in practice is not known, but the Lord designed them to be a means of protection.

The psalmist felt safe only when God made provision for his safety, when God hid him in His pavilion. History has shown that all the means taken to preserve life by human planning and arrangement can be painful and unavailing. Our safety is in God's hands alone.

#### 8. What did the psalmist say that God would do for him besides hiding him and protecting his life? Ps. 27:5.

To set a person on a rock means to place him or her on a solid foundation so that he or she cannot be moved. It means providing a basis for him or her to stand without being overthrown. In this phraseology we see that God not only protects but also provides a sound basis for protection. God not only protects but also vindicates.

Those of us who live in the end time know that there is a time of trouble coming that will be greater than anything that has gone before. (See Dan. 12:1.) But we have nothing to fear if our names are written and retained "in the book." (See Rev. 3:5; compare Luke 10:20.)

"Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose names are written in the book of life."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 634.

#### 9. Because God is so good to him, what did the psalmist say he would do? Ps. 27:6.

The psalmist was exuberant with joy as he considered what God had done for him. He was no longer at the mercy of enemies who attacked

without having any basis for doing so. The enemies were, and still are, Satan and his cohorts, and all those who have decided to be on the side of evil against goodness and truth. The psalmist had no evil intent, but he was certainly happy that those who did were restrained from accomplishing their purposes.



#### IV. THE CRY OF A SAINT (Ps. 27:7-10).

There are times when we feel we must plead with God. Our cry goes up to Him because of a great need or strong desire.

#### 10. What urgent request does the psalmist make that shows that he has strong feelings of need? Ps. 27:7.

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There are times when we pray with a loud voice, even though we are alone and there is no human ear to hear us. The urge is so strong in us, we want so much for God to hear us, that, involuntarily, we raise our voices. This is a very human reaction. It is interesting that a devout man like the psalmist would have a similar reaction. We may be sure that God accepts us as we are, and although we may do things that are unnecessary, God accepts them because of our sense of urgency.

“Have mercy.” The psalmist recognizes that he has no claim on God. If God answers, it is because of His mercy. How thankful we are that, because God is merciful and gracious, He hears our prayers and answers them, even though we may be totally unworthy!

#### 11. How did the psalmist respond to God’s request? Ps. 27:8; compare Luke 11:9-13.

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To seek God’s face is to turn to Him in repentance and obedience. God wants us all to be saved, and therefore He wants us all to turn to Him, since He is the only source of salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

#### 12. What one dread did the psalmist have? Ps. 27:9.

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There is nothing more frightening than the feeling of being lost and forsaken. Some have had nightmares of such a thing happening and have awakened feeling devastated by it. We never become so mature that we do not sense a need of support. The psalmist knows that God is the only dependable source of support.

Note that the psalmist addressed God as the “God of my salvation.” He enjoyed a personal relationship with his God. Do we feel that same personal tie with God? If not, why not? How can we develop this personal relationship?

- 13. What understanding did the psalmist have which buoyed up his spirits? Ps. 27:10.**
- 

Have you noticed how the psalmist expressed a deeply felt need and then immediately expressed a strong faith and trust in God? He knew that even if mother or father should forsake him, God would give support. We need to develop the habit of countering doubt with faith, fear with trust, uncertainty with confidence. We need not deny our human reactions, but neither should we give in to them. There is no need that God cannot supply. (See Phil. 4:19.)



**V. THE SECRET OF SUCCESS (Ps. 27:11-14).**

- 14. What did the psalmist ask the Lord to do for him? Ps. 27:11.**
- 

The psalmist had an unusual but enviable attitude to life. He recognized his need to be taught and led. So many of us are self-confident. We feel we know what we want, and we know how to go about reaching our goals. We feel it is a lack of maturity to be dependent on a higher power for guidance. Actually it is a greater measure of our maturity to recognize our weaknesses, and to make allowances for them.

The psalmist wanted guidance and help because of his enemies. The Jewish Publication Society of America's version translates this thought: "because of my watchful foes." This reminds us of the experience of Daniel recorded in Daniel chapter 6. Daniel had an excellent spirit, and was being promoted for his skills. But some individuals were jealous of him, and they set traps and watched him closely. In the end Daniel came out triumphant.

- 15. What did the psalmist see in the world that contrasted with the goodness of God? Ps. 27:12, 13.**
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Have you sometimes felt that there are few in this world whom you can really trust? You have many acquaintances, but very few friends. You feel you must always be on your guard, lest a look or a word be misconstrued and result in a false accusation. You feel cautious even in a church community. Take courage from the psalmist. He knew that he was not in the hands of enemies; he was in the hands of a Deliverer, One who would not let the enemy have his way. That is the reason for optimism.

- 16. With what excellent advice did the psalmist close his psalm? Ps. 27:14.**
-

See the introduction to this lesson for a comment on the expression "wait on." It is translated "wait for" (NEB) and "trust in" (TEV). The concept is of putting our hope and trust in God. We need always to look to God for guidance and help. (See Hosea 12:6.) The element of waiting is that of letting God take the initiative. We look to Him for an indication of the way we should take. Waiting can take a considerable amount of self-control, but depending on the Lord and allowing Him to control events is the secret of success. (Compare Acts 1:4, 5, 7.)

**AM I ALLOWING THE LORD TO CONTROL MY LIFE?** List below two circumstances where you find it particularly difficult to wait on the Lord:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Complete the following): I find it difficult to wait because \_\_\_\_\_

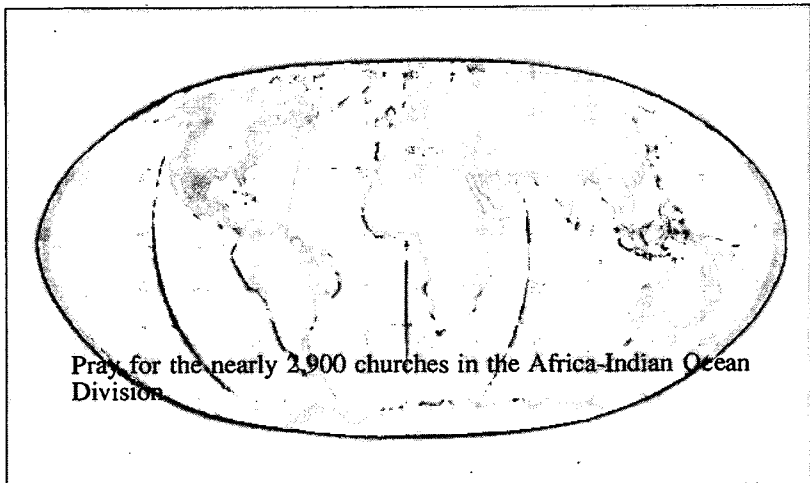
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I will pray for grace and more faith to wait on the Lord. / /



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Compare Jesus' instruction in Matthew 10:16-42 with the counsel given in Psalm 27.

**SUMMARY:** Psalm 27 is a psalm of David, a psalm that expresses his fear of his enemies, but also his trust in God. His recognition of having enemies was not weakness on his part, but an element of strength. He shows us how to oppose doubt with confidence, fear with trust.



# The Joy of Forgiveness

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 32.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1, 2).

**WHY SHOULD WE CONFESS OUR SINS?** Because God's forgiveness involves the blessings of deliverance and cleansing, the most reasonable approach to our spiritual dilemma is to confess our sins. Then we can claim the promise of divine love and guidance.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Blessing of Forgiveness (Ps. 32:1, 2).
- II. The Pain and Power of Sin (Ps. 32:3, 4).
- III. The Reasonableness of Confession (Ps. 32:5-7).
- IV. God's Promises, the Solution to Our Quandaries (Ps. 32:8, 9).
- V. The Joy of a Restored Relationship (Ps. 32:10, 11).

**SIN AND FORGIVENESS.** David, the psalmist, knew what sin is. Some of his sins were what we would call "gross" sins—adultery and premeditated murder. (See 2 Sam. 11:2-5, 14, 15.) If he were a member of the church today, would we allow him to retain his membership?

David also knew the joy of sins forgiven. He knew that God had restored a relationship that he himself had broken, and he rejoiced in the new relationship that God had provided. God has a way of forgiving and forgetting. Can we do the same for those who have sinned against us?

**In our lesson today we note what sin is.** We note also what sin does to us. We also see how God has provided a cure for a broken relationship. We can learn from the psalmist the pain of sin, the need to turn away from it, and the joy and rejoicing involved in forgiveness.

The psalm we look at this week is often referred to as a penitential psalm, but it is also a psalm of thanksgiving. The first word, "Blessed," suggests a happy experience, a joyous appreciation for what has happened. But behind that experience is a situation that was far from joyful. We cannot look at one without the other.

## I. THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS (Ps. 32:1, 2).

1. On what basis did the psalmist feel that he and others could be blessed? Ps. 32:1, 2.
- 

Behind this beatitude is the implication that all have sinned, and all are in need of forgiveness. Paul makes the position clear: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Whether we recognize it or not we are sinners. (See 1 John 1:8.)

2. What three words does the psalmist use to describe sin? Ps. 32:1, 2.
- 

The King James Version uses the words *transgression* and *sin* in verse 1, and *iniquity* in verse 2. Although the three words used in the Hebrew text represent different nuances of meaning, they basically overlap in their connotations, thus presenting the same picture.

*Transgression* means a willful breaking of the law, a flouting of the law, which is tantamount to rebellion. (Compare 1 John 3:4.)

*Sin* means "to miss the mark." It is a decision to follow a path different from that outlined by God. It is saying to God, "I would rather go my own way."

*Iniquity* involves an attitude of ignoring God, of denying that there is a God, and therefore living as if there were no God.

All of these terms describe a lost condition, an attempt to be independent of God, but a recognition, too, of guilt for wrong-doing. Unrepentant sinners are uncomfortable in their position, but do not know what to do about it. They know what is right, but either refuse or neglect to do it. They dread a future day of judgment, but try to forget it.

**Think it through.** Where can we find our only help in dealing with sin? How did Paul describe his conflict with sin? What solution did he find? Read Romans 7:19-25; 8:1, 2.

3. What three words does the psalmist use to indicate release from the burden of sin? Ps. 32:1, 2.
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**When sin is not imputed, righteousness is imputed.** If iniquity were imputed (counted, reckoned) it was because the sinner was not forgiven, because "guile" remained in his spirit. When iniquity was not imputed, not only was sin forgiven, but also the sinner was cleansed, because in his spirit there was no "guilt" or "deceit." Paul quoted this passage, concluding that when iniquity is not imputed, righteousness is imputed—for the forgiven person is free from deceit, slackness, or guilt. (See Rom. 4:5-8.) The nonimputation of sin and the imputation of

righteousness are God's recognition of the transformation that is simultaneously provided for the confessing sinner.

**God wants to forgive everyone.** It is clear that God is the source of this action. He is the one who has been sinned against, and He is the one who, by His grace, removes the sin, and frees us from its consequences. God is a forgiving God. (See Ex. 34:7.) This does not mean that He will forgive everyone. God does not forgive those who cling to their sins because they put themselves outside the pale of forgiveness.

**Think it through.** What is the unpardonable sin? Which is harder for God to do, to forgive sins, or to heal the sick? Luke 5:17-26.

**MON**

## II. THE PAIN AND POWER OF SIN (Ps. 32:3, 4).

We are often deceived into thinking that doing the wrong thing is pleasant, like drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, attending dancing parties, committing immorality, conducting dishonest business dealings, lying, swearing, and doing what everyone else is doing. Sooner or later we come to a realization that transgressing God's commandments can only result in pain and sorrow.

### 4. How does the psalmist express the pain he experienced when he was silent about his sin? Ps. 32:3.

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There are a number of reasons why the psalmist would be silent about his sins. Among the following suggestions check those that you think are reasonable:

- He was not entirely sure that he was responsible for his sins.
- He had what he thought were some good excuses.
- He thought that God might overlook his fault, just this once.
- He had a reputation for being religious, and he did not want people to know that he had let down the standards.
- He thought he would lose his influence if people knew he had sinned.
- He was too proud to admit his guilt.
- Everyone else did it, even some "good" people.

### 5. Why do you think the psalmist was roaring or groaning all day long and suffering at night? Ps. 32:3, 4.

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Have you ever tried to be comfortable, and could not find rest no matter which way you turned? Worry and concern can keep you awake all night. You do not get the rest you need, and you become more and more nervous, more and more upset.

In the light of your experience, what advice would you give the psalmist? Is it any use to say, Stop worrying! What does he need to do?

**Think it through.** Do you think the psalmist overdrew the pain of living with unconfessed sin? Have you had some of these troubles yourself? Can you imagine the horror of being found out before you are able to do what you know you ought to do about the sin?

TUE

### III. THE REASONABLENESS OF CONFESSION (Ps. 32:5-7).

The trouble with sin is that it grips us with an iron fist. Jesus put it clearly in John 8:34. Only God can save us from our sinful selves. (See Rom. 7:24—8:4.)

#### 6. How did the psalmist break the silence that caused him so much pain? Ps. 32:5.

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The psalmist decided to come before his God in penitence and confession. It was not an easy decision to make. It cost him his pride, because he had to admit that he was not as strong as he thought he was. He had to bow in humility. Perhaps he thought that humility was weakness, just as many do today. "The only greatness is the greatness of humility. The only distinction is found in devotion to the service of others."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 650.

**Note that the psalmist made his confession to God.** He came to God in full contrition of heart, and held nothing back. There are some who suggest that sins should be confessed to one another, or to members of the clergy. It is true that if we have wronged anyone, we should go to that person and offer to make amends. (See Matt. 18:15-17.) But no good purpose is served by displaying one's soiled linen, so to speak. When we sin we sin against God, and it is to God that we should go and ask for forgiveness.

#### 7. What was the result of the psalmist's confession? Ps. 32:5.

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The promise of Scripture is clear: 1 John 1:9. It is because of God's faithfulness and justice that our sins are forgiven when they are confessed. It is also satisfying to note that God does not limit His grace. The divine act of forgiveness or pardon includes cleansing from all unrighteousness. "To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. . . . The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Aug. 19, 1890.

If we are not aware of all our failings we cannot confess them. But because God sees that we have faith and trust in Him, and that our desire is for total cleansing, He goes ahead and makes us right with Himself. We will be eternally grateful for such amazing grace.

Furthermore, we have the assurance of the Saviour, as recorded in John 6:37. No wonder the poet has said:

"Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."



Peter C. Craigie in his commentary on Psalm 32 says: "Confession is like opening the floodgate of a dam. When there is no confession, the waters pile up behind the dam, creating immense pressures on the wall, but as soon as the floodgate is opened, the waters subside and the pressures diminish."—*Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 19 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 267.

**8. As a result of his experience, what does the psalmist urge godly people to do? Ps. 32:6.**

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In the light of the fact that God is so good and gracious, why should any of us be slow to go to Him for that which we need more than anything else in life? We need salvation, the restoration of a right relationship with Him. We need to go immediately, while He may be found, lest by postponing the time we may find ourselves too late for mercy. The parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) makes this point clear.



**9. What assurance is the privilege of the godly? Ps. 32:6.**

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Rivers often overflow their banks after a heavy rainfall. The river Jordan was such a river. (See Joshua 3:15; 4:18.) The Nile was a source of fertility to the land of Egypt because of the flood season. But uncontrolled water can be a symbol of destruction because of the damage it can cause. Consider, for example, the Flood in Noah's time. The psalmist suggests that godly persons will always remain under the protection of God.

**10. How does the psalmist express his trust in God? Ps. 32:7.**

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**Think it through.** Is obedience to God a guarantee that no calamity will fall on the righteous? Consider Job's experience. In what sense is God a hiding place? Give an example that supports your interpretation.

**IV. GOD'S PROMISES, THE SOLUTION TO OUR QUANDARIES  
(Ps. 32:8, 9).**

**11. What does God promise He will do for us? Ps. 32:8.**

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It is one thing to be a member of a class, and another to receive individual instruction. The Lord promises the repentant sinner specific direction in the affairs of life. So long as we remain close to God we may be sure that we will be told what we need to know. The danger is not that God will leave us, but that we should leave Him. (Compare Ps. 48:14; 73:24; Isa. 30:21; 42:16.)

12. What warning is given? Ps. 32:9.

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Human beings, who have been made in the image of God, must not descend to the level of the beast that must be controlled by force. Can you imagine having a counseling session with a mule? Some creatures are useful and lovable, but we treat them according to the level of their capacity. It is perfectly proper to expect more of human beings. Because they have the capacity to reason, they can be persuaded and influenced to do the right thing. If God treats us this way, should we not treat our fellow human beings in the same way? Furthermore, if God treats us with dignity, should we not respond as people who can be trusted?

**V. THE JOY OF A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP (Ps. 32:10, 11).**

13. What contrast does the psalmist make between the wicked and the godly? Ps. 32:10.

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The wicked not only have sorrows; they have many sorrows. Sometimes we think the wicked have a good time, but we see only the outward appearance. We are not aware of the conflicts that go on in the heart and the mind. Perhaps the greatest sorrow is that of knowing that they are lost, lost for no other reason than their own foolishness. We need not ever envy the wicked, because their way leads only to destruction.

The godly have received God's unmerited favor. Now they trust in God fully, and enjoy a blessed relationship with Him that brings satisfaction and happiness.

**Think it through.** Why do some people follow their own inclinations rather than seek the counsel of God? How would you seek to persuade someone to follow God's way rather than the way of the world?

14. What is the psalmist's final exhortation? Ps. 32:11.

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The psalm begins on a note of blessedness, and ends on a note of joy. Not everyone has reason to rejoice; only the upright and righteous. There were times when they failed to do the right thing. But they found in God the solution to their sin. They are forgiven sinners.

15. Note the characteristics of the upright and the privileges they enjoy:

Ps. 119:127, 128 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 6:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 7:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 11:7 \_\_\_\_\_

The psalmist begins with three aspects of blessedness. He closes with three reasons to rejoice. He begins with those who have no guile, and ends with the upright in heart. Throughout all, God is the source of grace that leads to repentance, confession, and blessedness. Are we taking advantage of these mercies? Pause a moment to give thanks to God for all His favors.

**APPLICATION TO MY LIFE:** Why do I find it so difficult to confess my sins in detail to God? Listed below are some common hindrances. Check those that may have blocked your way to the cross:

1. Sometimes my sins are too painful to face.
2. I tend to blame others who may have contributed to my mistakes.
3. My self-worth seems to be threatened.
4. My pride gets in the way.
5. "Good people" do it. Society tends to overlook it.
6. My sin has not hurt anyone else.
7. Sometimes I am tempted to feel that God is stern and unsympathetic.
8. I put it off.
9. I love some sins.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read "David's Sin and Repentance," chapter 71 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 717-726.

**SUMMARY:** God is the source of all blessing. When He blesses us, we are truly blessed. The greatest blessing that comes to human beings is the blessing of sins forgiven. Sin causes a broken relationship. Forgiveness restores that relationship. The way to forgiveness involves repentance and confession on man's part, and amazing grace on God's. When we recognize this and act upon it, there is superabounding joy. Praise God for His love and caring.

# Lesson 11

September 9-15

## Living in a Wicked World

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Psalm 37.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Psalm 37:7).

**WHY SHOULD WE CHOOSE GOD'S WAY?** Despite their apparent power and prosperity, the wicked will come to nothing. Despite their apparent weakness and poverty, the righteous will be established by the Lord forever.

### OUTLINE:

- I. Relating to the Evil We See (Ps. 37:1, 12, 13, 21, 32).
- II. Putting Our Trust in God (Ps. 37:3-7, 11).
- III. The End Result of Doing Evil (Ps. 37:2, 9, 10, 14, 15, 35, 36).
- IV. The Joys of Doing Good (Ps. 37:4, 11, 16, 23, 24).
- V. Keeping the Good Before Our Eyes (Ps. 37:25, 26, 30, 31, 39, 40).

**THE GOOD AND THE WICKED.** Psalm 37 is one of the psalms that Ellen White recommends for our study. It is described as a wisdom psalm, providing good advice for everyday living. In the Hebrew it is an alphabet acrostic, with each section beginning with the next letter of the alphabet, perhaps to make it easier to learn by heart. Thus the first verse begins with the letter *aleph*, the third verse with *beth*, the fifth with *gimmel*, and so on, through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This psalm brings us special encouragement as we face the final events of this world's history. You will soon notice that the general theme of the psalm is the difference between the good and the wicked, and why we should be among the good.

### I. RELATING TO THE EVIL WE SEE (Ps. 37:1, 12, 13, 21, 32).

Should we feel upset when the evil around us seems to prosper, or should we ignore it?

1. What advice does the psalmist give us regarding evildoers? Ps. 37:1.

The King James Version says, "Fret not." Other versions say, "Don't be worried" (TEV), "Do not be vexed" (JPS), "Do not strive to outdo" (NEB). The Hebrew word is richer in meaning than any single translation suggests. The lexicon defines the Hebrew verb in the text as: "Heat oneself in vexation" (Brown, Driver, Briggs). The psalmist is saying, "Do not let yourself be inflamed," or, using an English idiomatic expression, "Don't get all hot and bothered about the wicked." We should not allow ourselves to become distressed by the apparent predominance of the wicked in their attempts to destroy that which is good.

## 2. What are some examples of wicked deeds? Ps. 37:21, 32.

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Some people cannot be entrusted with a loan. They accept money, but do not plan to repay. This presumably is not because they cannot pay back the loan, but simply because in their wickedness they do not accept the moral responsibilities that go with the loan.

The wicked watch the righteous, not to learn lessons from them, but to take advantage of them; even to plot against their lives.

**Do you agree** with the psalmist's characterization of the wicked? Why would the wicked want to get rid of the righteous?

SUN

## 3. How do the wicked look upon the righteous? How does God respond to them? Ps. 37:12, 13.

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The imagery of the Lord laughing at the wicked is a human way of describing God's unconcern for their supposed power and His disrespect for their pitiful human attempts to destroy His people. God sees, as no one else can, the improbability of the wicked succeeding in their plans.

**How do you explain** the attitude of the wicked towards the righteous? Have you ever seen this attitude displayed? How do you explain God's laughter in this instance?

## II. PUTTING OUR TRUST IN GOD (Ps. 37:3-7, 11).

### 4. What are the things we ought to do to be among God's special people? Ps. 37:3-7. Let us consider them verse by verse:

- **Verse 3: Trust.** The Hebrew word has the connotation of enjoying the release that comes from surrender. There is no greater relief than that of knowing that we have made the best choice in giving our all to God. Our past, present, and future are in safe hands.

- **Do good.** We are not saved by our good works, nor are we able, of ourselves, to do anything good. It is Christ in us who enables us to do works that are good in the sight of God. (See John 15:5; compare Phil.

4:13.) It is a joy to know that our works are acceptable in the sight of God because they have been wrought by faith. (See 1 John 2:29; Eph. 2:10.)

● **Dwell in the land.** All of us need a home, even a temporary one. God ensures that we can have a place that we call home, as well as our daily bread.

● **Verse 4: Delight thyself in the Lord.** “Seek your happiness in the Lord” (TEV), “Depend upon the Lord” (NEB), “Seek the favor of the Lord” (JPS). These versions indicate that there is a wealth of meaning in the Scripture that will always repay our study.

When we love a person our thoughts are continually with that person. We love to associate with him or her and find happiness in such association. We seek to please and depend upon the one we love for joy and security. That is the kind of relationship we need to cultivate with our Lord.

● **Verses 5 and 6: Commit thy way unto the Lord.** When we commit our lives to the Lord, and seek only to do His will, we may be sure that happiness and fulfillment will come our way. Read verse 6. Can you think of any greater fulfillment?

● **Verse 7: Rest in the Lord.** The word *rest* connotes something that we all need, since life is usually a rush. There is often a hassle to get things done. With God in charge of our lives we can pause again and again, and let Him manage things that are beyond our control. It is true that we want a perfect work done. But if we wait on the Lord, if we are patient in our waiting, God will make sure that nothing essential is missing. Is that not a wonderful aspect of our relationship for which we can be truly thankful?

5. Unfortunately, many fail to put their trust in God. As you read the following texts, indicate the areas of false trust brought out in each:

Jer. 17:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 55:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 49:6, 7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 44:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Hosea 10:13 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who are the “meek”? Why will they inherit the earth? Ps. 37:9, 11.

\_\_\_\_\_

The meek are the humble and the lowly. Like Moses, they are not proud of worldly education. They choose to be with the people of God, however despised they may be. They would rather suffer with Christ for a season

than revel in the pleasures that the world can offer, and end up as museum pieces. (See Heb. 11:24-26.)

MON

### III. THE END RESULTS OF DOING EVIL (Ps. 37:2, 9, 10, 14, 15, 35, 36).

There are good reasons why the righteous should continue to put their faith and trust in God and should not follow the ways of the wicked.

#### 7. What will be the fate of evildoers? Ps. 37:2, 9.

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We are familiar with the metaphor of a tree to represent a human being (Psalm 1), a flourishing tree to represent a good person, and a tree that has been cut down to represent a person who needed to be humbled (Daniel 4). The wicked are like grass that today flourishes, but tomorrow is cut down. There is no place in the universe for the wicked because they are out of harmony with God. Nor do they desire a place in His future universe. Because heaven had no place for Satan and the rebellious angels, they were driven out. (See Rev. 12:7, 8.) The prospect for Satan during the millennium is not a pleasant one. (See Rev. 20:1, 2.) The final destruction of the wicked is a foregone conclusion. (See Rev. 20:14, 15.)

#### 8. How complete will be the destruction of the wicked? Ps. 37:10.

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This concept is repeated several times in the psalm. (Compare verses 20, 28, 34, 38.) That is one reason the righteous should have nothing to do with the ways of the wicked. Who wants to have a hard time in this life, and then face annihilation?

#### 9. What striking metaphor is used by the psalmist to indicate how even the most renowned of the wicked will come to a tragic end? Ps. 37:35, 36.

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One day the wicked are there in splendor; the next day they are gone. Search for them and you cannot find them. What purpose did their greatness serve them? Why should we fret because of the evil things they may have done to us when the outcome of the controversy is assured by the Lord?

TUE

#### 10. How do the evil designs of the wicked react upon themselves? Ps. 37:14, 15.

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It is always sad to see how one who plans a stratagem can become the victim of it. Consider Haman in the story of Esther 7:9, 10.

**IV. THE JOYS OF DOING GOOD (Ps. 37:4, 11, 16, 23, 24).**

In contrast with the fate of the wicked is the joy of the person dedicated to the Creator. Such a person has the Creator's support in this life and the promise of inheriting the new earth in the life to come.

**11. What promise is given to the one who finds happiness in doing God's will? Ps. 37:4.**


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This is quite an open promise, but it is safe, since it will not be expected that the one who is dedicated to God's will would have any desires but those that are fit and proper. (Compare John 15:7; 1 John 5:14.)

**If you were to make a wish for yourself, what would it be? Can you share that wish with others? If not, why not?**

**12. In what will the meek delight? Ps. 37:11.**


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God will provide what humanity really wants and needs. Everyone will have enough, and more than enough. Children and grandchildren will be well cared for. Because there will be no dissension that will lead to war, the stability of society will bring joy and satisfaction. The service of God is not only profitable; it is good sense.

**13. What does the psalmist say is better than the riches of many wicked? Ps. 37:16.**


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A little with God is better than much without God. Of course, the little goes a long way! When we are not satisfied with what we have it may be because we are greedy. Greed is not a characteristic of one who has decided to serve God whatever the circumstances. At the same time we have seen how the rich are not always happy, because contentment goes with godliness. The apostle Paul tells Timothy that the combination of contentment and godliness is great gain. (See 1 Tim. 6:6.)

**14. What part does God play in the life of the good person? Ps. 37:23, 24.**


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We do not always have the wisdom to know what we should do and how we should do it. But if we are determined to do what is right, God will step into our lives and give us sound directions. We journey through this life but once. The decisions we make as we come to one crisis and then another are crucial to our destiny. How important it is to



make the right decisions! How fortunate we are if we have learned to trust God and to seek His will in every turn of life. We may not always know exactly how we should respond to our circumstances. If we have allowed God to open and close doors of apparent opportunity as He sees fit, then we may be sure that when we come to the age of looking back over our experiences we will see how He has led and provided for us marvelously.

**Has God been good to you through the years?** In what ways are His providences apparent to you, even though events may not have been what you would have chosen? Give a testimony to God's goodness in guiding and blessing your life.



**V. KEEPING THE GOOD BEFORE OUR EYES (Ps. 37:25, 26, 30, 31, 39, 40).**

**15. What beautiful testimony does the psalmist give regarding God's care for His people? Ps. 37:25.**

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The story is frequently told of two prisoners who looked out of their cell window. One saw mud, and the other saw stars. One looked down while the other looked up. It makes a tremendous difference which way we look. Life for any of us is not without trial. There are good and bad experiences. It is a blessing when we can get over the bad and remember the good experiences. Read Philipians 4:8.

**16. How do the righteous respond to God's goodness as He provides for their needs? Ps. 37:26.**

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Although the righteous are often poor in this world's goods, they are always sympathetic with those in trouble. They are more than willing to give assistance according to their means when it is needed. Their children are a blessing to them because they have chosen to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Families that stay together pray together, study the Word of God together, and follow God's guidance together.

**17. What major characteristic does the psalmist note in the righteous? Ps. 37:30, 31.**

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The righteous can be depended on to give good advice. They are fair-minded in considering every case. They speak the truth without fear or favor. Thus their judgments are appreciated. What is it that makes them so wise and understanding? They meditate on the law of God and are able to make practical applications that are helpful, true, and wise.

18. What makes the righteous so stable in their relationships? Ps. 37:39, 40.

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The Lord is the source of their salvation, and a present help in time of trouble. Their characters result from what the Lord has made them and what the Lord is doing for them. The truly righteous never claim any goodness in themselves. They attribute to God any good thing that they might do.

**APPLICATION EXERCISE:** Can you think of examples that would illustrate the teaching of this lesson:

The righteous \_\_\_\_\_

The wicked \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the study of this lesson, my advice to a young person starting out in life would be:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**FSD** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 65-67; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 682; *The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

**SUMMARY:** Since the fall of our first parents, the world has come under the domination of Satan. Many follow his principles of selfishness and rejection of God's law. But many others appreciate the goodness of God and the provision He has made for their salvation. They will not allow the apparent prosperity of the wicked to upset them. The time will come when the wicked will be no more, but the righteous will enjoy eternal life.

# God—Our Refuge and Strength

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Psalm 46.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalm 46:1, 2).

**PEACE IN TIME OF STORM.** Whether the storm is inward or outward, God brings peace to the one who trusts in Him. He overcomes our inward and outward enemies and gives spiritual victory and ultimate redemption to His faithful people.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Our Refuge and Strength (Ps. 46:1-3).
- II. The River and City of God (Ps. 46:4, 5).
- III. Safety in Times of Trouble (Ps. 46:6, 7).
- IV. Come, See What God Has Done (Ps. 46:8, 9).
- V. Be Still, and Know (Ps. 46:10, 11).

**A WORTHY CONCEPT.** We look this week at a psalm in which is expressed absolute confidence in God.

We have seen God as the one who "knows the way of the righteous," and therefore that way is the only safe way for us to take. We have learned that His name is the LORD, or Yahweh, the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. We have learned to sing: "How great thou art!" We rejoice in Him as our Creator, Redeemer, and King. As the One who has set the standards of right and wrong, He will never leave us nor forsake us. In fact, He is your shepherd and mine. In union with Him, we shall never lack any good thing. And now the psalmist tells us that God is our refuge and strength. Here is something more to sing about.

Psalm 46 has been called the battle hymn of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Martin Luther composed a hymn based on this psalm, which has been translated into English as "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (*SDA Hymnal*, p. 506). It has become a part of the Christian heritage. It is now sung in some Roman Catholic churches. You will want to note how Martin Luther has interpreted the psalm for us.

## I. OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH (Ps. 46:1-3).

When Martin Luther felt discouraged he would say to his good friend Melancthon: "Let us sing the forty-sixth psalm." He would then feel strong in the strength of the Lord to pursue his goal of emphasizing the truths of the gospel. Can you see why?

1. In the midst of trials and difficulties, what did the psalmist say was his source of confidence? Ps. 46:1.

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A refuge is usually a *place* to which one flees for safety in times of trouble. But the psalmist says his refuge is a *Person*, God. What does this tell you of the surety of the refuge?

God is referred to as a refuge in a number of places in Scripture.

SUN

2. Look up the following texts and note what else God does, as well as providing us refuge:

Deut. 33:27 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Sam. 22:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 9:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 48:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 6:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

We must not misunderstand the word *refuge*. God is our refuge, not because we are afraid, but because we are trusting. We take shelter from a rainstorm, not because we are afraid of rain, but because it is wise to remain dry. God is not the last resort, but the first. We go to God because He is the Lord of nature, the Lord of the universe, and He controls what comes to us and what does not. We are not the victims of circumstances, but the servants of God. It is right that we should go to Him in times of difficulty.

3. What kind of help does the psalmist say God is? Ps. 46:1.

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Help "very near" (Ps. 46:1, JPS), "always ready" (TEV), "timely" (NEB). These translations point out the immediacy of God's help. We do not have to run to a city of refuge, useful as those places must have been in ancient times. Wherever we are, whatever the time, when we need it, God's help is there. Can you think of any arrangement more efficient? Are you willing to say: "Thank God for His ever-present help"? Say it now. Say it to a member of the family or a friend. Say it to the members of your Sabbath School class.

4. What terrible commotion is not going to upset the psalmist? Ps. 46:2; compare 2 Peter 3:10-14; Isa. 54:10; Rev. 16:20, 21.
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We think of the land as terra firma, and we do not expect it to move. We think of mountains as immovable. Can they be carried into the midst of the sea? It sounds impossible. Yet we must not be too sure of that. (See Isa. 64:1-3; Jer. 4:24.) We know of earthquakes and the terrible destruction that comes from them. When volcanoes “boil,” the red-hot molten lava flows down without being checked. Only God is “immovable,” and He is on our side. Nothing is too great for Him to control.

5. What kind of storms are likely to come from the sea? Ps. 46:3.
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Do you remember how the disciples, weathered seamen though they were, called out for help? Then Jesus rose and said to the sea: “Peace, be still.” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Read about it in Mark 4:35-41. It was a new experience for the disciples, but not for us, who have read the Scriptures and know how God can and does control the seas.

## II. THE RIVER AND CITY OF GOD (Ps. 46:4, 5).

The imagery changes rather unexpectedly in this psalm. From scenes of commotion we come to a river and a city; from tempestuous sea we move to the banks of a calm and gently flowing stream; from shaking earth and mountains we move to a peacefully inhabited city.

6. What does a stream flowing through a city do to it? Ps. 46:4.
- 

Jerusalem does not have a river running through it, though it does have the pool of Siloam and the remains of the pool of Bethesda. The New Jerusalem, however, does have such a river. It is that Jerusalem we will enjoy if we are faithful. If God is our refuge here on earth, then He will be our God in the earth made new. Read Revelation 21 and 22.



7. Who is in the midst of the city? Ps. 46:5.
- 

God dwells in the city. He is always eager to dwell with His people. The Tabernacle was set up for that purpose. (See Ex. 25:8.)

Cities do not need to be centers of wickedness. They can be centers of worship. Jerusalem was chosen as the place where the Temple would be. It was to Jerusalem that Jesus came, hoping to gather the people together as a hen gathers her chickens. (See Matt. 23:37.) But the people refused, and God does not force anyone to accept Him. The people who inhabit the

earth made new will know their God, and God will be with them. The New Jerusalem will be a center of worship. (See Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21:24-27.)

8. What is the characteristic of the city in which God dwells? Ps. 46:5.
- 

### III. SAFETY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE (Ps. 46:6, 7).

Although we look forward to the future with anticipation, it is often the present that concerns us. How can we so live now that the future will be assured?

9. What seems to be a dominant characteristic of the heathen? Ps. 46:6.
- 

What causes the heathen to rage? If they are angry with God, they have no reason to be angry. For God is good, long-suffering, and forgiving. If they are angry because of what is happening to them, they have only themselves to blame, since they are reaping what they themselves have sown. In fact, they will soon learn that it is impossible to fight against God.

10. What happens to the earth when God utters His voice? Ps. 46:6.
- 

This verse illustrates the tremendous power that God has. The heathen may be many. They may be able to set up kingdom after kingdom. They may seem impregnable. But when God speaks all nature is at His beck and call. All opposition is like chaff blown by the wind.

11. What is the significance of the statement in Psalm 46:7 that "the God of Jacob" is the "refuge" of the righteous? Ps. 46:7.
- 

Herbert Lockyer, in his book *God's Book of Poetry: Meditations From the Psalms* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p. 105, calls the psalm we are studying "The Psalm of the Trinity." He would divide the psalm into three parts:

1. The Power of God the Father (verses 1-3).
2. The Presence of God the Spirit (verses 4-7).
3. The Peace of God the Son (verses 8-11).

God is known as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Abraham is the father of the faithful. We can understand that God would be his God. Isaac is the Son of Promise, the miracle son. We can understand that God would be His God. But Jacob? The one who tricked his

brother and deceived his father? Yes. God is the father of us all, even Jacob, even you and me. We may not be worthy of anything; we may have been guilty of heinous crimes. Yet God is our God, and has entered into a covenant relationship whereby we may enjoy all the goodness of God for no other reason than His grace. (Compare Jer. 30:7-11; Rev. 14:1-5; 7:13-17.)

#### **IV. COME, SEE WHAT GOD HAS DONE (Ps. 46:8, 9).**

##### **12. What does the psalmist want us to see? Ps. 46:8.**

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Do you expect God to be the author of desolations? We need to read the following verse before we jump to any conclusions. There is a principle of Bible study here. We must not look at any verse in isolation, but must study it in its context. Only in this way can we arrive at a knowledge of the truth as a consistent whole.

##### **13. What does God accomplish that humanity has failed to accomplish through history? Ps. 46:9; compare Rev. 17:14; 21:1-5.**

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God is bringing a triumphant end to all opposition. All weapons of warfare are to be destroyed. The weapons here are those that would be familiar to the psalmist. But the weapons of modern warfare must also be included. There are no half-measures with God. Desolation is not to be interpreted as the destruction of anything that is useful or valuable or worthy of being preserved. It is a positive action of putting out of commission anything that can be used against truth and righteousness.

There are some who would say that a psalm that expresses finality in judgment, that predicts the destruction of the wicked with all their arts, is hardly "Christian." They say that it is contrary to the thought of God's mercy. What they forget is that mercy never prevents justice. Justice, in the hands of God, is always exercised with mercy. In fact, God's justice is a manifestation of His mercy.

In this psalm we catch a glimpse, not only of the greatness of God as our refuge, but of the greatness of God in putting an end to sin and its consequences.



#### **V. BE STILL, AND KNOW (Ps. 46:10, 11).**

This last part of the psalm that we are studying is a favorite with many. But do we understand what it means?

##### **14. What does God ask us to do, according to the psalmist? Ps. 46:10.**

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The NIV retains the expression, "Be still." One version translates the

Hebrew as “desist” (JPS). Today’s English Version seems to follow the Jewish version by translating it, “Stop fighting.” The New English Bible uses an English idiom and says, “Let be then.” The Hebrew dictionary suggests “let alone” as the meaning for this word in the psalm.

There are matters that we do well to “let alone,” matters that may well be beyond our understanding, matters that may confuse and disturb, matters that may come between us and God. We need to recognize our limitations, and desist when we find ourselves questioning the wisdom of God, stop fighting when we are stubbornly holding on to our own ideas, and let be when the matter does not affect our eternal salvation. One thing is certain; “be still” does not mean doing nothing, but it does mean taking action to learn more about God. He is, or should be, the supreme object of our investigation. The result is that we experience abiding trust when things are beyond our understanding, recognizing that God is ultimately in control.

### 15. What does it mean to know that God is God (Ps. 46:10)?

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A clear illustration of what it means to know God is given us in the story of Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. When Moses asked for the release of the children of Israel to hold a feast to the Lord, Pharaoh responded with the question: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?” (Ex. 5:2). The answer came in the plagues that revealed God’s power. But it was not until the crossing of the Red Sea that the Egyptians really came to know the Lord. (See Ex. 14:18.)

We learn about God when we read about Him in the Bible. But we come to know Him in verity when we experience Him in our lives. We come to know that He is our God and that we are His people who, by His grace, can live according to His precepts and revelation. When God is supreme in our lives, when we have unquestioning confidence that He is in charge of the universe and our lives, when we seek to please Him and to follow His plans for us, we may say that we know Him. (See John 17:3.)



### 16. What does God mean when He says that He will be exalted (Ps. 46:10)? Compare Rev. 15:4.

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God is supreme; He is the ultimate. Unfortunately, He has not always been recognized as such. When Lucifer announced that he would be “like the most High” (Isa. 14:14), he was expressing an ambition to exalt his throne above the stars of God (verse 13). How an exalted being could ever think in these terms is a mystery. He was motivated by pride and the result was the first sin. (Compare Eze. 28:15.)

**All will worship Christ.** “As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in His hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the



city, all with one voice exclaim, 'Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints' (Revelation 15:3); and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life.'—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 668, 669.

**17. What is interesting about the way the psalmist closes this psalm? Ps. 46:11.**

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Note the titles the psalmist gives to God. Whether you think of God as a Conquering King, or as the God of a bungling saint who became a prince with God (Israel), it matters not. As in every age, He is our refuge, a very present help in trouble.

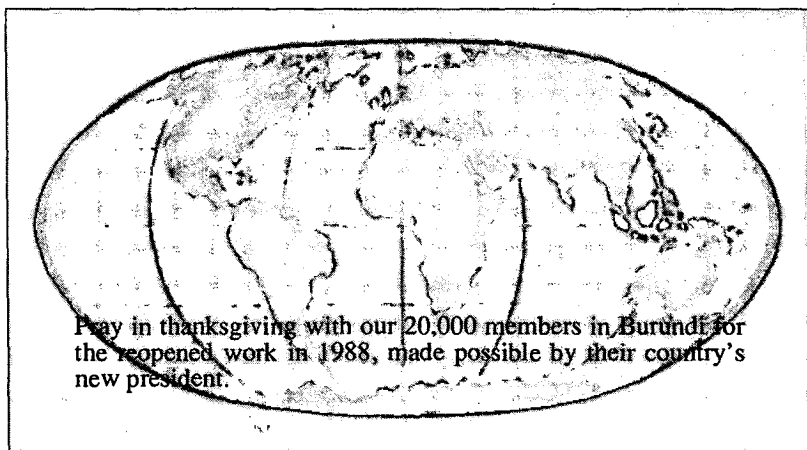
**WHERE DO I STAND?**

- What evidences of God's protection and guidance in my life can I recall?
- How can I be confident of God's presence with me through the trying experiences of the end-time?
- What can I do to awaken others to their need of God's presence in their lives?



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read "The Controversy Ended" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662-678.

**SUMMARY:** Psalm 46 assures the Christian of God's help in time of trouble. It assures the Christian of the final victory of truth, the annihilation of sin and sinners, and the exaltation of God to His acknowledged position of primacy in the universe.



# Lesson 13

September 23-29

## Rejoicing in God's World

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 66.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Psalm 66:8, 9).

**IS THERE PRAISE IN YOUR HEART?** There is so much for which to praise our Creator. His hand has been over His people throughout history. He has tested and tried the faithful, has delivered them from apostasy and captivity, and has answered their prayers for restoration to loving fellowship with Himself.

### **OUTLINE:**

- I. Shouting to God for Joy (Ps. 66:1-4).
- II. Grateful to the God of History (Ps. 66:5-7).
- III. The Blessing of God in Our Lives (Ps. 66:8-12).
- IV. The Human Response in Worship (Ps. 66:13-15).
- V. The Psalmist's Personal Testimony (Ps. 66:16-20).

**GOD'S WORLD.** Although we know that we live in a wicked world where there is so much sin and alienation from God, we must never forget that this is God's world. It contains much that is glorious and beautiful.

The psalm that we study this week is another that Ellen White has recommended for our consideration. As we get closer to the end of time, we must not be discouraged by our circumstances, but rejoice that God is in control. The psalmist is so impressed with the greatness and goodness of God that he calls upon all the inhabitants of the earth to raise their voices in praise to Him.

Individual praise is always acceptable to God. It is an expression of delight in what God has done. The psalmist has expressed this thought many times. But this time he wants the entire world to join him. He wants the praise to ring from a multitude of voices, because God is worthy of universal applause.

As we study this psalm discover for yourself what the psalmist's basis is for believing that God is worthy of universal praise.

### **I. SHOUTING TO GOD FOR JOY (Ps. 66:1-4).**

1. What does the psalmist ask the inhabitants of the earth to do? Ps. 66:1.

The King James Version says, "Make a joyful noise." Some of us are happy because, although we have not been gifted with musical voices, we know that we can make a joyful noise. Some sounds are not musical, but when they express joy they are music to our ears and to God's.

The Jewish version says, "Raise a shout for God" (JPS). We get a picture of a large group of people, perhaps in a stadium, suddenly raising their voices in appreciation of what they see. Everyone is caught up in the shout.

**2. What else does the psalmist expect the people to do and why? Ps. 66:2.**

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Singing to the honor or glory of God's name is to sing about His character. We have already learned that God's name is *Yahweh*, usually written LORD in English versions. In this psalm the Hebrew word for God is *Elohim*. This designation is interesting because it is plural in form, although it is used with a singular sense. It also is used in the account of Creation in Genesis 1. But apart from names, God's character and greatness are revealed in His acts. One cannot look at God's creation without being impressed with His infinite power and goodness.

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**3. Why did the angels praise God when our world's history began? Job 38:4-7.**

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"The melody of praise is the atmosphere of heaven; and when heaven comes in touch with the earth, there is music and song. . . . So human hearts, in sympathy with heaven, have responded to God's goodness in notes of praise."—*Education*, p. 161.

How can you encourage others to praise God? What prevents people from singing God's praises when they think of the wonders of creation? Is it a theory of origins that replaces God with natural processes? List three things you could do to reach the secular mind with what you consider to be the truth:

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**4. What does the psalmist suggest that we say to God? Ps. 66:3, 4.**

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"How terrible art thou" (KJV), "How awesome are your deeds!" (NIV), "How fearful are thy works!" (NEB).

In his commentary on the book of Psalms, A. A. Anderson points out

that God inspires fear and terror in His enemies, but worshipful awe and a spirit of praise in the righteous. (See Ps. 47:2, 3 for the Lord's approach to His enemies, and Ps. 68:35 for the effect on God's people.) This should not be surprising, since God opposes sin and sinners, and supports those who accept His salvation. [A. A. Anderson, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), vol. 1, p. 468.]

The psalmist recognizes that God's enemies may seem to "submit" (Ps. 66:3, KJV), "cringe" (NIV), "cower" (JPS), and "bow down in fear" (TEV), but they do not surrender their hearts or their wills. They still oppose God, and the time will come when they will be no more.

On the other hand, God's people recognize that God's power and majesty are revealed to provide them support.

Do you see how we can fear God, and yet love Him with a love that casts out fear? (See Ex. 20:20.)

## II. GRATEFUL TO THE GOD OF HISTORY (Ps. 66:5-7).

### 5. What does the psalmist suggest that we "come and see"? Ps. 66:5.

---

God is to be praised, not only because He made all things, but because He keeps in close touch with people.

### 6. Read the following passages. Indicate in the blanks how God is active in human history:

Gen. 26:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 8:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 105:8-45 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Sam. 17:45 \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. What incident in the history of the children of Israel does the psalmist bring to mind? Ps. 66:6.

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Read the story in Exodus 14:13—15:22. Note the following points:

14:13: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

14:15: "Speak . . . that they go forward."

14:20: How God protected His people.

14:21: The dividing of the waters.

14:27: The Egyptians overthrown.

15:1: The song of victory.

15:20: The rejoicing of Miriam and the women.

8. According to the psalmist, what is God doing all the time? Ps. 66:7.
- 

**The true philosophy of history.** "The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. . . . To understand these things—to understand that 'righteousness exalteth a nation'; that 'the throne is established by righteousness,' and 'upholden by mercy'; to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who 'removeth kings, and setteth up kings'—this is to understand the philosophy of history. Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; 20:28; Daniel 2:21."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 502.

9. What warning is given to those who might contemplate rebellion against God? Ps. 66:7.
- 

The rebels mentioned here are stubborn people who refuse to accept the evidence of their eyes. They should not think that they can get away with their resistance to God. Truth will triumph in the end, for God is merciful and very patient, but the time will come when all rebellion will be overcome.

TUE

### III. THE BLESSING OF GOD IN OUR LIVES (Ps. 66:8-12).

The psalmist turns our attention from events outside of ourselves to those events that are close to us, our individual experiences.

10. How does the psalmist say God cares for us individually? Ps. 66:8, 9.
- 

In the first place, God gives us life, and life is very precious. In the second place, God keeps us from falling. We have a tendency to slip and slide. We are not always as careful as we should be. God is by our side to give us a steadying hand. He knows the temptations that come our way. He knows our weaknesses. We do not always realize how often He has come to our aid, and helped us over difficult circumstances. We need to be sure to praise God for all that He has done for us. (See Eph. 5:19, 20; Phil. 4:4-7.)

11. What kinds of trying experiences are likely to come our way? Ps. 66:10-12; compare 1 Peter 4:12-16.
- 

God has permitted circumstances to come our way that have tried us. We have lost relatives and friends by sickness or accident. We have wondered why the Lord has allowed these things to happen in spite of our

fervent prayers and supplications. We have been tempted to doubt His promises to provide for our needs when we have suffered losses again and again.

Precious metals like silver and gold are purified by fire; muscles are strengthened by strenuous use; character is formed by making hard decisions; patience is a quality possessed by saints who have had to endure.

The psalmist claims that he has been through all these experiences. They were not pleasant at the time. But he still praises God for them.

**What has been the most difficult experience for you to pass through? Do you praise God for it now? If not, why not?**

**12. To whom does the psalmist give the glory for having successfully overcome the trials that came his way? Ps. 66:12.**

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The psalmist had the same attitude toward victory as Paul did. (Compare 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:8-18.) There is a sense of overcoming, and a certainty of the future goal (2 Tim. 4:7, 8) because of God's power in the present.

There are decisions that you and I must make, decisions such as those Daniel and his three friends in Babylon had to make. But it is God who performs miracles and causes us to triumph. We can take no credit to ourselves. It is all God's doing.



#### IV. THE HUMAN RESPONSE IN WORSHIP (Ps. 66:13-15).

**13. In what way is the psalmist determined to express his gratitude to God? Ps. 66:13.**

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The psalmist uses terms in harmony with worship practices in Old Testament times. The burnt offering is described in the first chapter of Leviticus. It could be a bullock, or a ram, or, if the worshiper were poor, a dove or a pigeon. By placing his hand on the animal the worshiper indicated that the animal was a substitute for him, and by the sacrifice and sprinkling of blood atonement was made for him. (See Lev. 1:4, 5.)

The psalmist doubtless recognized that the blood of an animal could not atone for man, but the sacrifice pointed forward to a Redeemer who would provide what was necessary. (Compare Heb. 9:11-14.) We who live in the Christian era know that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The story of Cain and Abel shows that there is a right and a wrong way to approach God. (See Gen. 4:3-5.) Because Jesus is our High Priest we can come boldly before the throne of grace. (See Heb. 4:16; 7:22-25.)

**14. What does the psalmist say he will do besides offer burnt offerings? Ps. 66:13, 14.**

Vows are purely voluntary, but when made they are binding. They are often made in time of trouble—promises to do something for God if He will do something for the petitioner. Vows are not a way of bargaining with God, or “twisting His arm,” but an honest way of expressing deep interest in having something done, and being willing to make a gift when the petition is granted. Vows have their place in worship. They indicate that the worshiper has not forgotten the favor done to him in answered prayer. (See Ps. 76:11.) Even so, vows are not a substitute for consistent and persistent relationships with the Lord in sacrificial living and giving. Crisis promises are not enough.

- 15. How does the psalmist show that he is indeed grateful for everything that God has done for him? Ps. 66:15.**
- 

We are not living in Old Testament times. How would you translate into Christian terms what the psalmist is saying he will do in terms of sacrifice? Would you be more generous in your offerings? Would you engage more in community projects sponsored by the church? Would you be active in prayer meetings and evangelistic endeavors?

**V. THE PSALMIST'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY (Ps. 66:16-20).**

- 16. What invitation does the psalmist extend to everyone, his readers included? Ps. 66:16.**
- 

Those who do not recognize God are not likely to appreciate the psalmist's testimony. (Read Matt. 7:6.) How far do you think the words of Jesus are applicable in our relations with unbelievers? The wise man assures us that there is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1-8); there is a time to speak, and a time to be silent. What we need is wisdom to know when to speak and when not to. (Compare 1 Peter 3:15.)

- 17. What effectively prevents God from hearing our prayers? Ps. 66:18.**
- 

**The condition on which Christ will abide with us.** “Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 114.

Read Matthew 5:23, 24 to see what Jesus said about worship and per-

sonal integrity in our relationships with our fellow human beings.

Why is it so important to God that we keep His commandments?

18. What gives the psalmist so much joy in his relationship with God? Ps. 66:19, 20.

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“When we come to Him we should pray that we may enter into and accomplish His purpose, and that our desires and interests may be lost in His. We should acknowledge our acceptance of His will, not praying Him to concede to ours. It is better for us that God does not always answer our prayers just when we desire, and in just the manner we wish. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes, for our wisdom is folly.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 148.

#### DO I HAVE A REASON FOR PRAISE?

- Which is more common to me, praise or faultfinding?
- Why is the history of God’s people so important for me to know?
- Why is it important that I take every opportunity to tell people how grateful I am for what God has done for me?

**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 315-319.

**SUMMARY:** The psalmist urges us to raise our voices in thanksgiving to God. Ellen White wrote, “As Christians we ought to praise God more than we do. We ought to bring more of the brightness of His love into our lives.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, p. 1148. The psalmist testifies to God’s goodness in answering prayers. What holds us back from praising God in every situation of life?



# Lessons For Fourth Quarter, 1990

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult lessons for the fourth quarter of 1990 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "The Letter to the Romans." This quarter's lessons study Paul's epistle to the Romans.

## First Lesson: "POWER IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD"

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Romans 1:1-17.

**MEMORY TEXT:** Romans 1:16.

**FREE SALVATION FOR ALL.** Righteousness, which is the qualification for eternal salvation, is freely available to all who believe in Jesus Christ.

### OUTLINE:

- I. Paul, the Apostle (Rom. 1:1, 2).
- II. The Humanity and Deity of Christ (Rom. 1:3-6).
- III. Address to the Romans (Rom. 1:7).
- IV. The Apostle's Gratitude (Rom. 1:8-10).
- V. Under Obligation (Rom. 1:11-15).
- VI. Unashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17).

## Second Lesson: "THE GUILTY MAY KNOW HIM"

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Romans 1:18 —2:29.

**MEMORY TEXT:** Romans 1:20.

**ALL ARE SINNERS IN NEED OF A SAVIOUR.** Whatever your nationality, race, social standing, or level of education you are in need of a Saviour from sin.

### OUTLINE:

- I. God Revealed to Corrupt Humanity (Rom. 1:18-23).
- II. God's Inevitable Judgment (Rom. 1:24-32).
- III. Do Not Judge Others (Rom. 2:1-4).
- IV. God's Principles of Judgment (Rom. 2:5-11).
- V. Judgment Through Christ (Rom. 2:12-29).

## Lessons in Braille:

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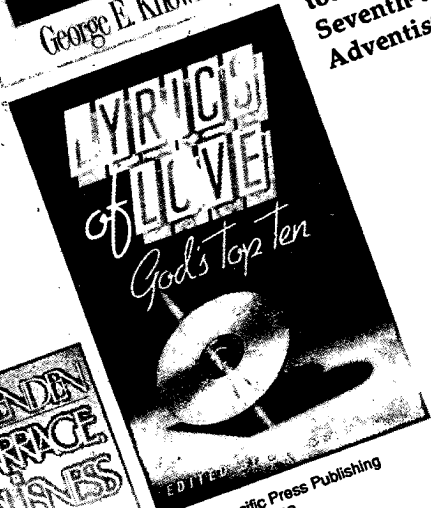
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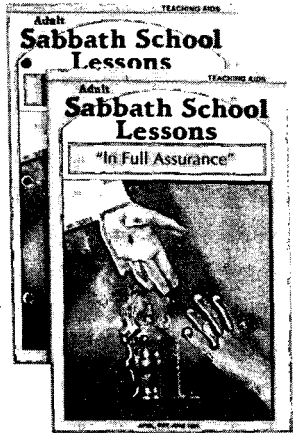
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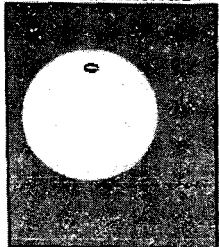
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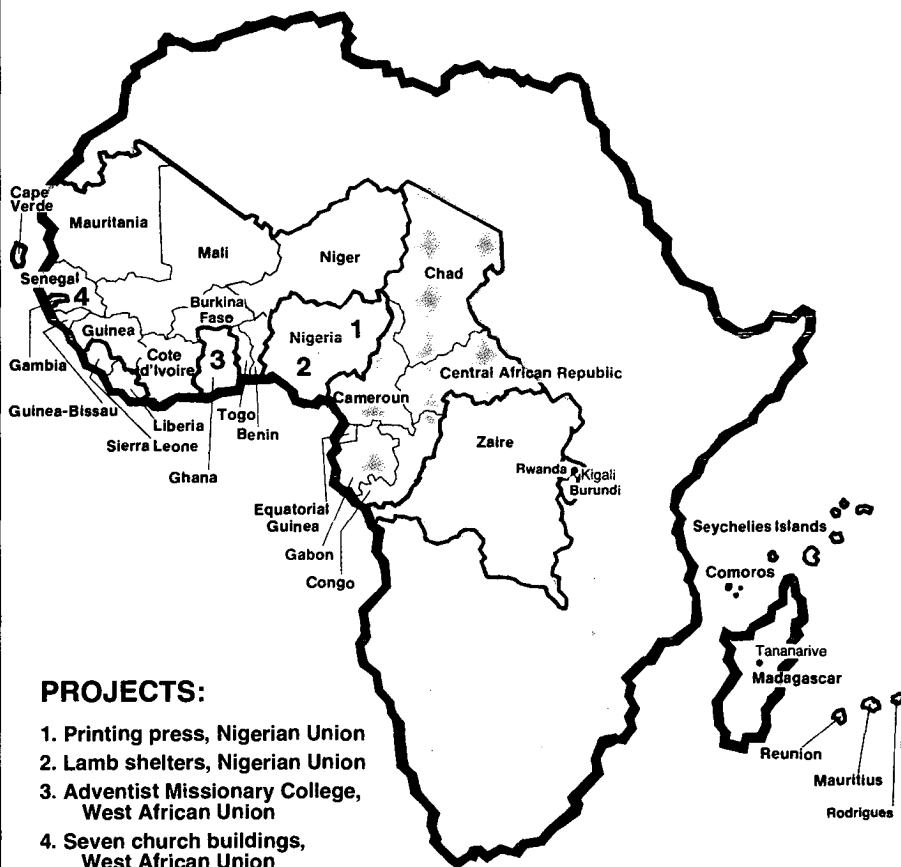
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COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS



# AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION



## PROJECTS:

1. Printing press, Nigerian Union
2. Lamb shelters, Nigerian Union
3. Adventist Missionary College, West African Union
4. Seven church buildings, West African Union

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
Central African	24,201,000	524	40,341
Indian Ocean	13,024,116	165	25,280
Nigerian	97,805,350	429	77,835
Rwanda	6,724,273	666	182,266
Sahel	39,726,769	38	4,786
West African	23,290,000	417	134,083
Zaire	38,526,616	831	190,435
Burundi Mission	<u>5,120,000</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>21,547</u>
Totals June 30, 1988	248,418,114	3,151	676,573