

Let Us Come Before His Presence

365 days to learn, meditate and pray
from the Psalms and the Sermon on
the Mount

Yann Opsitch

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LET US COME BEFORE HIS PRESENCE: 365 DAYS TO LEARN,
MEDITATE AND PRAY FROM THE PSALMS AND THE SER-
MON ON THE MOUNT

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*To my dear and lovely wife Rita,
who encouraged me greatly in writing this book.*

Let us Come Before His Presence in
the Psalms

Week 1: The God of Blessing

Day 1

*1 "Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
2 Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;"*
(Psalm 1.1,2)

The Hebrew word used here for “blessed” (*ashrei*) begins and sets the tone for the entire book of Psalms. Sometimes translated as “happy” (as in Deuteronomy 33.29, KJV) the word *ashrei* concludes the second Psalm about the coming Messiah (God’s anointed Son): “Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

Blessings from God are the result or fruit of something else. This is illustrated in the first Psalm by the picture of the tree planted by the waters and bringing its fruit in its season. Blessings and happiness are offered to the forgiven (Psalms 32.1); to a nation under God (Psalms 33.12); to the one who trusts in God (34.8). The same can be said of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus also introduced his teachings with the word “blessed” (Matthew 5.1-12). The blessed are those who meditate — “moan” or “lament” (*bagah*) in their hearts — over the Word. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” Matthew 5.4 (see James 4.9).

In Jewish literature, to bless is often connected to the bringing down of divine abundance (*aisb*). As in Psalm 34.8 the blessed enjoy the goodness of God; they are partakers of His promises: “Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!”

The blessed are known by their actions; by their difference of behavior as opposed to the ungodly, sinners or scornful who mock the things of God and deride biblical wisdom in order to involve others in their folly.

The scornful (*leit-z*) mock out of pride and arrogance. They are among the incorrigible fools of the book of Proverbs. The mockers or scornful

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of the Bible are unteachable and refuse to listen (Proverbs 9.8; 13.1). To be seated with them is a waste of time (Proverbs 15.12). Unbelievers and Pharisees often mocked Jesus' teachings (Luke 8.53; Mark 5.40; Matthew 9.24; Luke 16.14). Both the Gentiles and chief priests, along with elders and scribes, mocked Jesus at his trial and crucifixion (Matthew 27.31, 41; Mark 10.34; 15.20; Luke 22.63). The apostle Paul was mocked for his preaching of the resurrection (Acts 17.32).

The "blessed" can also be a group of people, a family or even an entire nation: "Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance." (Psalms 33.12)

The words of Psalms 1 are echoed by the prophet Jeremiah:

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit." (Jeremiah 17.17,18)

The blessed are like trees planted or rather "replanted" (*ke'etz sbatul*) in the divine soil watered by God's Word. In its season or at the proper time, these trees bring fruit. The leaves of these trees don't wither or "dry up" because they are "replanted" in eternity (see Isaiah 41.19.20; 44.4; Proverbs 11.30; Matthew 7.17-19; Galatians 5.22-26).

The blessed are fruitful throughout their lives in everything they do: "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 2.10).

The counsel of the ungodly or wicked lead to death and destruction. They are like chaff, not good or useful for anything. Their end is opposite to the end of the blessed. They shall not be able to stand on the day of judgment. The way or path of the wicked leads to destruction, ruin.

Prayer

Lord, we want to delight every day in your Word. We thank you for speaking to us through the prophets and your Son. Give us today a heart to avoid evil and do what is good. We pray that we can produce good fruits to your glory through your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 2

- 1 “Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the Lord!
2 Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
3 They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.
4 You have commanded *us*
To keep Your precepts diligently.
5 Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
6 Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
8 I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!”
(Psalms 119.1-3)

Psalm 119 is written as an acrostic poem. The Psalm has twenty-two strophes (paragraphs), corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the strophes has eight lines (verses). Each line in each strophe begins with the appropriate Hebrew letter marking that stanza. The first eight lines begin with *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The first word of Psalm 119 is “blessed” from the Hebrew word *asrei*. The word and its cognates are used 45 times in the OT. This word translated “blessed” is close to the idea of “happiness”. The word is very close to the Hebrew *ashar* meaning “to go straight, to go on, to advance, to go forward” used for example in Genesis 30.13; Psalms 41.2. The word connects the idea of “blessing” to the concept of one being guided and walking in a straight way. The word “blessed” used in Psalm 1 also connects God’s blessings to how one walks in life.

The word “blessed” describes those who walk undefiled in the way of God, who walk in the law of the Lord (an idea repeated in verses 3 and 5). Happiness is the fruit or result of how we walk, how we direct our steps in life. Happiness is not the goal or the purpose, but the result of those who walk in the ways of the Lord.

In order to walk in the ways of the Lord, one needs to trust and obey the “law” of the Lord. The Psalm uses ten different words that refer to

the law (law, word, saying, commandment, statute, precept, ordinance, testimony, way, path).

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus connects “blessings” from God to how one lives and walks. He teaches that “broad is the way” that leads to destruction, and “there are many who go in by it”. Difficult is the way that leads to life, and “there are few who find it” (Matthew 7.13,14).

Prayer

Lord, our God and Savior, we want to serve you today. We pray that you will keep our hearts close to your will. Lord, we thank you for your constant help and support. Give us renewed strength today, so we will know how to walk in your ways, in your will. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 3

7 “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;

Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!

There is no want to those who fear Him.

10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;

But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.”

(Psalm 34.8-10)

To taste that the Lord is good, one needs to trust, and trust is foremost trust in God’s Word. Those who have received salvation and have been reconciled to God through Jesus the Christ have tasted “the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6.5); they have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2.3). Happiness and the joy one can find in the Lord, is the result of tasting that the Lord is good, tasting that He is gracious. The “good news” is a message that brings joy and goodness to our lives.

At the time of the writing of this Psalm, David was being persecuted by Saul and his life was in danger. David was “tasting” trials and obstacles, but he did not cease from trusting the Lord and “tasting” his goodness. Trials and obstacles are temporary, are connected to the world of sin and rebellion we live in. But the Lord remains good, whatever happens on this earth.

David did not fear his enemies. He did not fear those who wanted to destroy him. But he “feared” the Lord. The fear of men leads to death and disappointment. But the fear of the Lord leads to wisdom and satisfaction in life:

“How great is Your goodness
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!” (Psalm 31.19)

“Praise the Lord!
How blessed is the man who fears the Lord
Who greatly delights in His commandments.” (Psalms 112.1)

“The fear of the Lord leads to life,
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.” (Psalms
19.23)

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope for His lovingkindness,
To deliver their soul from death
And to keep them alive in famine.” (Psalms 33.18,19)

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for giving us a new day. We thank you for all the opportunities you will show us to serve you and do good in this world. Help us to open our eyes and hearts to all that you want to show us. With the trials and the difficulties of the day, help us to remain steadfast in our love and trust for you. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 4

1 “The Lord *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

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5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.”

(Psalms 23)

Throughout the Old Testament, we find the theme of God as the shepherd (or pastor) of his people. For example, Genesis 49.24; Psalms 78.70-72; 80.1; 95.7; 79.13; 100.3; Jeremiah 50.7; Isaiah 40.11; Micah 5.4; 7.14; Jeremiah 31.10; Isaiah 53.6; Zechariah 11.16.

The image of the “shepherd” illustrates perfectly the idea of God as one who blesses His people. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied of the time when God himself would come among his people to be their shepherd, “**11** For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. **12** As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.” (Ezekiel 34).

Jesus proclaimed himself as the “good shepherd” of God’s people. Jesus the good shepherd would lay down his life for his sheep, “**14** I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep* and am known by My own. **15** As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. **16** And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd. **17** “Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again. **18** No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” (John 10.14-18)

The Hebrew word for pasture is from the root word *naah*, which has the broad meaning of habitation, pasture, pleasant place. In such a place, the sheep lie at ease and can rest. It can refer to a dwelling place one finds as he or she travels, in particular an oasis or verdant spot in the desert (Psalms 65.12; 74.20; 83.12; Jeremiah 9.10; Amos 1.2). Those who respond to the voice of Jesus find “pasture” in him, where they receive life abundantly (John 10.9,10). In this abundance of life, one does not lack or need anything (compare Deuteronomy 2.7; 8.9; Colossians 2.6-23).

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for giving us a new day. We know you are the good shepherd and came to us in this world of lack and sin. We thank you for your forgiveness through the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross. We thank you for his resurrection and all of his teachings. We pray that today we will live with the promise of his return rooted in our hearts. Bless us through Jesus today! In His name, we pray. Amen.

Day 5

- 18** “Their soul abhorred all manner of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
19 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
And He saved them out of their distresses.
20 He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.
21 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the Lord *for* His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!
22 Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare His works with rejoicing.”
(Psalms 107.18-22)

This Psalm describes God’s deliverance and blessings by using several metaphors: protection through the perils of traveling (vs.4-9); release from prison (vs.10-16); recovering from sickness (vs.17-22); deliverance from a perilous voyage on the sea (vs.23-32).

God’s deliverance or healing should be followed by thankfulness, gratefulness and produce praise towards God. This is the theme of this Psalm. It reminds us of the ten lepers healed by Jesus and who did not return with thankfulness and to glorify God:

- 15** And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, **16** and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.**17** So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? **18** Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” **19** And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17.15-19)

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Psalm 107 begins with praise (other translations have “thankfulness” to God), “I will praise you with my whole heart”. There is no valid praise of God without thankfulness. As the apostles write to the early Christians, they encourage them to be grateful, to express thankfulness to God:

17 “Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*. **18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **20** giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5.17-20)

6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **7** and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4.6,7)

6 “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, **7** rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2.6,7)

“And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3.17)

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 4.2)

16 “Rejoice always, **17** pray without ceasing, **18** in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5.16-18)

Prayer

Our Father, give us the strength and wisdom to be thankful to you this day. Preserve our souls from discouragement or hopelessness when we go through trials and pains. May we be a source of encouragement and hope to our brothers and sisters

who deal with suffering. May our words reflect gratefulness to you. We pray this in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Day 6

7 “Though I walk in the midst of trouble You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.

8 The Lord will perfect *that which* concerns me;
Your mercy, O Lord, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.”
(Psalms 138.7,8)

Verse 7 of this Psalm reminds us of Psalm 23.4, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Even though the faithful walk “in the midst of trouble” they still praise the Lord with their whole heart (verse 1); they still praise God for his lovingkindness (verse 2). The faithful do not forget the goodness of God in the past (verse 3). The Lord watches the lowly and “the proud he knows from afar” (verse 6).

As with David, the faithful must exhibit a profound trust in God and full confidence in his promises. Ungratefulness and complaining against God exhibit pride and mistrust rather than humility and faith.

The sin of David is often preached about. But the story is there as a contrast to his repentance. The important thing in David’s life is not his sin, but his turning back to God and his change of heart. Our sins are forgiven in Christ. We are now to live a new resurrected life and seek holiness through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8). The important thing is our new relationship with God through Jesus, our High priest.

The Lord is watching and aware of what the faithful are going through. He is also the Lord of our enemies. Wrath against them belongs to him (Romans 12.19). There is not the thought of personal revenge in the words of David, but simply trust that God will deal with those who wish him harm, will protect him from their evil intents. Verses 7 and 8 of this Psalm remind us of Jesus, who walked in the midst of trouble and was threatened by enemies. He went to the cross, but God delivered him,

7 “who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to

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Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, **8** though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. **9** And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, **10** called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek,” (Hebrews 5.7-10)

Prayer

Father in heaven, we thank you for a new day. We want to hear your word today and ask that it will transform our hearts. We pray for true repentance when we have sinned. Change our hearts by the power of your Gospel and the power of your Holy Spirit. Father, we know you will protect us from those who wish us harm. We also pray for them, that they might open their hearts to your word and received your salvation through faith. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 7

4 “I sought the Lord, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear
Him,
And delivers them.”
(Psalms 34.4-7)

One of the greatest blessings from God — from trust in Him — is to be delivered from all fears. This trust which helps us face all our fears and find assurance and hope is expressed in numerous ways in the Bible and especially in the Psalms:

3 “Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
4 In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?” (Psalms 56.3,4)

1 “Truly my soul silently *waits* for God;
From Him *comes* my salvation.
2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
He is my defense;
I shall not be greatly moved.
“Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
8 They have bowed down and fallen;
But we have risen and stand upright.” (Psalms 62.6,7)

20 “Our soul waits for the Lord;
He *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.
22 Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us,
Just as we hope in You.” (Psalms 33.20-22)

But what about those who have trusted the Lord and have had to face death or rejection? Can it be said that God has delivered them? Jesus teaches us that it is not what happens to the body that is to be feared, but what happens to our soul,

24 “A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master. **25** It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household! **26** Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. **27** Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. **28** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
(Matthew 10.24-28)

Prayer

Father in heaven, we thank you for a new day. We pray that today we can be strengthened in our trust in you. That we can know in our hearts that you love us and will always take care of us. We believe in your Word, and we believe in your promises. We come to you today with a desire to grow in our faith, hope and love. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.