

Psalms - Today in the Word 3

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Moody Bible Institute

Psalms 1-31

Psalms 32-100

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[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 102:1-12

[The Lord] will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. - Psalm 102:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Patrick, the fifth-century missionary who is credited with bringing the gospel to Ireland, once came under severe attack from critics of his ministry. Patrick wrote in his Confession that he drew strength from God during the attacks. 'Indeed He bore me up, though I was trampled underfoot in such a way. For although I was put down and shamed, not too much harm came to me.'

If you've ever felt trampled on by life, maybe you can identify with Patrick's feelings. The writer of today's psalm was even more eloquent. He cried out for God to answer him in his deep distress, pleading with the Lord not to turn His face or ear away from the psalmist's prayer.

We're not told what led to this wintry period of turmoil in the psalmist's life. But the symptoms sound familiar. He felt the effects in his body (v. 3). He couldn't eat or sleep (vv. 4, 7). And he felt completely isolated, like a bird sitting among ruins (v. 6).

But in this case there was more. For whatever reason, the writer says God had allowed his deep distress to come on him. This introduces an element of the hard times that we need to face. There is no definite indication in the psalm that this believer's sin was the reason God had 'taken [him] up and thrown [him] aside' (v. 10).

But this figure of speech is too graphic simply to throw aside the idea that God permits hard circumstances to crash against His people. The psalmist was being harassed by his enemies, but clearly God was sovereign over his problems.

As we read on, though, we begin to discover why the Psalms have been called 'the medicine chest of the soul.' Today's reading ends with the confident statement of verse 12, but the following verses address the day when God will establish His kingdom and all the people of the earth will worship Him (v. 22). In other words, the psalm brings us back to the reassuring theme that no matter what season of life or faith we may be in, God is constant in His righteous person and purpose. Later on this month, we will consider the reaffirming truths that close this psalm.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Chances are you're home today enjoying the Labor Day holiday.

This might be a good opportunity to spend some extra time praying for a request or need that is especially important to you right now. Today's verse reminds us that God's ear is always open to the heartfelt prayers of His children. Why not take a walk sometime today and pray as you go? You can begin by praying from God's Word, reminding yourself of the promise in verse 17 and thanking Him for the open access you have to heaven.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 102:23-28

You remain the same, and your years will never end. - Psalm 102:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

Dr. Kenneth Cooper, whose development of the program called aerobics won him worldwide fame, says life expectancy has grown dramatically over the past six decades. Cooper notes that although a child born in 1935 had a life expectancy of just 61.7 years, that figure has risen to almost 77 years today.

This increase in life span could cause some people to expect that someday, a 'miracle cure' for aging will be found and a lot of research is being dedicated to this. But God's Word never encourages His people to hang their ultimate hopes on the best the world can come up with. There is no denying the reality that life is short in comparison to eternity.

That's why we included today's passage in our seasons of faith study. It's a way of affirming that merely adding years to our lives is not really the point of it all. What matters is our relationship to the God whose years will never end.

For those of us who know the Lord as Savior, the assurance of the Bible is that we live every day in the presence and power of our eternal, unchangeable Father. Let's celebrate His promise and His strength together today.

It's interesting that the psalmist began this section with an honest admission that life is short, and sometimes painful. He even recognized that God had permitted the unnamed problem that made the writer feel as if his life were being cut short.

Despite his complaint, however, this anonymous believer knew where to go for help. He prayed for added days, a perfectly legitimate request. And to strengthen his prayer, the writer acknowledged that he was addressing the God whose eternal nature was in complete contrast to His creation.

This is a prayer of confidence, in spite of the writer's immediate circumstances. He is expressing his assurance that God is able to deal with his need. The length of our lives is not as important as their focus. In God's hands, we are safe forever.

Because the psalmist knew God would never change, he could look ahead and praise Him for His care of generations still to be born. An older believer who lives in this daily awareness of God's presence, and who can look at the future confidently, doesn't have to worry about a miracle cure for aging!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As Christians we should be living with a deep sense of daily expectancy because with God, there are no wasted days.

You can have this attitude no matter what your age or season of faith. We're not talking about 'a miracle a day to keep the devil away,' but a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's direction and a willingness to let God use us in any way He chooses. Would God have to compete for your time and attention today if He wanted to use you? It's a question worth thinking about.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 103:1-5

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. - Psalm 103:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

A medical study published earlier this year suggests that the reason people tend to awaken earlier as they get older is not because, as popularly thought, their natural sleep-wake cycle has changed with age. Instead, these researchers say healthy people, young and old, share the same daily cycle of about 24 hours, 11 minutes. In other words, what the human body considers a day basically doesn't change with age. Other factors are to blame for the sleep disorders older people often experience.

Most seniors would welcome news about a physical trait they share in common with healthy young people. Well, here's good news about a spiritual trait young and old can share alike: renewed strength in the inner person as a gift from God.

That's the bottom line of today's study, and a theme we'll encounter often over the next few days as we consider this season of faith. The road that leads to renewed strength begins at a familiar point: heartfelt praise of God.

David's praise in this psalm had a definite target. He wanted to review God's endless benefits to those who trust Him. In fact, we're only scratching the surface of Psalm 103 today. It's packed with reasons for praise.

The blessings begin with God's forgiveness that erases our sins and diseases parallel terms for the spiritual ailments that drag us down. He not only rescues us from the pit of sin, but adds the crown of His love (v. 4), that great Old Testament term referring to His loyal, never-ending love. And God adds to these His compassion, or 'tender mercies.'

David also says the Lord satisfies our desires with good things (v. 5), a reference to the kind of satisfaction we can enjoy when our deepest desires are for the things of God. There's a maturity to this kind of 'wanting' that takes a person far beyond the level of a childlike wish list full of things.

Notice the connection between the right kind of desires and the promise of renewed spiritual strength. We need to synchronize our desires with God 'so that' (v. 5) we will be satisfied with His fulfillment and learn to find our joy in Him. The picture of a soaring eagle said it all for David. You can soar spiritually no matter what your age is!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We know that seniors are well represented among our Today in the Word readers, and we thank God for every one of them.

For those of you in this age category, why not ask God for renewed strength today to share your much-needed wisdom and perspective with family, friends, and fellow believers at your church? And if you know an older believer who holds a special place in your life, make it a point to show your appreciation before the week is over.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 103:1-5, 13-18

From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him. - Psalm 103:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

In April 1513 the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon became the first European to reach and explore Florida. Ponce de Leon was searching for a mythical spring called "the Fountain of Youth," which supposedly restored youth to whomever drank or bathed in its waters. Ponce de Leon never found the object of his search, and eventually died in Cuba in 1521 after being wounded by an Indian arrow during another trip to Florida to establish a colony.

No "Fountain of Youth" exists, but who needs it "when we enjoy the blessings of a heavenly Father whose unfailing love renews our youth (v. 5)? Today's reading is another psalm of praise that helps us appreciate and celebrate God's faithfulness.

This psalm is attributed to David, and who better to write of the benefits of knowing God? David knew the forgiveness of sin--his affair with Bathsheba was legally punishable with the death penalty. Earlier, David's life was at stake while he was being pursued by Saul, and he was forced to spend years hiding in caves and the desert. Throughout these trials, David had tasted the goodness of God.

David also knew that God was fully aware of human frailty--he understood and marveled at the way God formed life in the womb (Ps. 139:13-16). Finally, David knew as well as any believer who has ever lived the constant faithfulness of the Lord. All of this

qualified David to lead God's people in praise.

We need the same kind of mercy and love that David enjoyed. And it is ours because God's love is the same ""from everlasting to everlasting."" The word translated love is the same word we have encountered several times this month--the unfailing, loyal love of God that is unique to Him alone.

No matter what our need may be, God has infinite resources to meet it. He is the perfect Father who graciously gives us just what we need, and answers the desires of our hearts.

God places a demand on us too, but it is a delightful demand. His fatherly love is shown to those who obey His Word and show Him the reverence due His name. No ""Fountain of Youth"" can begin to match the benefits of being the child of a faithful God!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

""Your youth is renewed like the eagle's"" (v. 5).

Sounds great, doesn't it? There are no magic waters or formulas for this kind of refreshment. We do have a suggestion, though. Pray through each verse of today's reading, inserting your name in place of all the pronouns such as you, yours, and those. Verses 1-2 get you started, since David wrote those in the first person. As you pray, thank the Lord for each benefit of His grace--and when you're done, see if your spirit isn't feeling refreshed and renewed.

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[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 103:7-18

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. - Psalm 103:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

When God forgives our sins, how far away are they? At the equator, the Earth's circumference is nearly 25,000 miles. Is that far enough? No! Our Milky Way galaxy is about 30,000 light years across at the center, with an overall diameter of 100,000 light years. Is that far enough? No! At present, scientists estimate the size of the entire universe at about 10 billion light years in diameter. Is that far enough? No!

When God forgives our sins, they're gone, utterly gone. "As far as the east is from the west" is not a measure of distance but a hyperbolic, dramatic picture of how thoroughly and completely He forgives (v. 12). God also said, "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist" (Isa. 44:22).

As we've seen, God's forgiving love is central to His nature (v. 8; cf. Ex. 34:6-7). His love is as boundless as the earth and the heavens; similarly, His forgiveness is as wide as the east and the west (v. 11; cf. Ps. 57:10-11). That is to say, the height, depth, and breadth of God's mercy cannot be measured (cf. Eph. 3:18-19). It's infinite.

In His mercy, God "does not treat us as our sins deserve" (v. 10). He has compassion on those who fear Him and understands our weaknesses. In His love, He removes our sins far away, blots them out, hurls them into the sea, and treads them underfoot. Forgiven sins are gone from memory and gone from experience. No divine grudge list is kept in a secret drawer somewhere. Instead, the guilty are made innocent, and sins as red as scarlet are transformed to be as white as snow (Isa. 1:18).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Sometime in the near future, give yourself an object lesson in the perfection or completeness of God's forgiveness. Go stargazing. Find a good place, removed from city lights or human noises, and look far out into the night sky. Consider the huge distance between you and the nearest star, or try to imagine the vast reaches between galaxies. In all the universe, your sin is nowhere to be found (cf. Jer. 50:20). God has removed it. It's been forgiven, literally "lost" within His love.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 103:13-18; Matthew 6:9-13

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. - Psalm 103:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

After a devastating 1989 earthquake in Armenia, a father rushed to his son's school, only to find the building destroyed. Going to the area where his son's classroom was, the man began digging through the rubble with his hands. Other parents tried to convince him it was no use. Officials tried to make him leave, fearing fires and explosions. But the father kept digging alone, and after forty hours found his son and thirteen other children still alive. "I told the other kids not to worry," the boy told his father. "If you were alive, you'd save me."

That's a great example of a father's love for his child. God has revealed Himself to us as our Father, a name that suggests protection, love, provision, and discipline (see Heb. 12:4-6). The psalmist says that God knows us intimately. He does not scold us for our humanness, but at the same time He requires obedience from us--just like the wise, loving fathers many of us knew as children.

And for those of us whose human fathers were not what they should have been, the fact that God invites us to call Him "Abba," or "Daddy" (Rom. 8:16), holds special meaning. No child of God will ever be rejected, abandoned, or orphaned.

That Armenian father's hands were surely bloodied after forty hours of digging. His sacrificial love reminds us of the cost God paid to bring us to Himself. He had to turn away from His Son's agony on the cross in order to save us and make us His children.

Jesus, as the eternal Son in perfect fellowship with His Father, taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). This prayer reminds us of the awesome majesty of our heavenly Father, who is worthy of our adoration and praise.

God is the Giver of every good thing (James 1:17), including our daily bread. And just as disobedient children need to have fellowship with their father restored, we need to come to our Father in confession and repentance, and receive His forgiveness. Our Father is also our Protector and Deliverer from "the evil one." You can rest in your strong Father's care today!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Let's declare today an unofficial father's day by reaching out to a dad who deserves a word of blessing and encouragement.

We'd like to suggest that you write a note to a father you know. Your own father, or another dad in your family circle, would certainly be a good place to start. But don't forget about your spiritual father, if you have one, or a dad in your church, neighborhood, or workplace. You could also share a note with an unsaved dad you know.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 103:19-21

Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. - Psalm 103:21

TODAY IN THE WORD

Whoever said that being a Christian isn't a spectator sport was right on target. Sports fans may sit back and watch while a few well-trained participants lead them in an experience called a game, but in the body of Christ every member is a part of the action. When it comes to things like Christian service and worship, we are not the audience. God is.

There aren't any box seats or bleachers held for us in heaven, either. We'll be active for eternity, and one of the things we will participate in is praise. The Bible teaches that heaven is characterized by an endless flow of blessing offered up to God who "has established his throne in heaven" (v. 19).

Praise begins in heaven and flows from there outward to all creation. The psalmist David knew this and structured his praise in this psalm accordingly, like an inverted pyramid which moves from highest heaven to earth's inhabitants. God inhabits the top of the praise structure. From there David calls on God's "mighty ones" (v. 20), probably referring to the higher orders of angels, to praise Him.

Then the pyramid narrows a little more as the psalmist moves to God's "heavenly hosts," His servants, a possible reference to other angels who occupy a lower rank in heaven. They, too, are called to a ministry of praise.

Next comes the praise that God's creation owes to Him. Verse 23 brings praise out of heaven to earth, since we are part of God's works. The object of praise is the same, the Lord of heaven and earth, but now the participants include every being in creation.

At the bottom of this "praise pyramid" is David himself. After working his way inward and downward from God's throne to the angels in heaven to the created world, David arrives at the individual level when he says, "Praise the LORD, O my soul" (v. 22). He knew what his response should be to the outpouring of praise rising up to God from creation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

One encouraging fact about heaven is that we don't have to wait until we get there to begin enjoying its blessings. We can have a sense of heaven in our lives today through our union with Christ and the daily presence of the Holy Spirit.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 104

The trees of the Lord are full of sap. - Psalm 104:16, KJV

TODAY IN THE WORD

Isle Royale has no human inhabitants, yet the remote Lake Superior island teems with life. Ferns and wild orchids cluster on the moist shores of inlets. Ground flowers of all shapes and colors tapestry the forest floor. Birch and red pine tower above rocky paths, providing welcome shade. Moose bathe in the shelter of evening fog, while morning glimpses fox and wolf tracks on the trail. They all find sufficient food and shelter on this island.

Psalm 104 celebrates the variety of living creatures God has made and His loving provision for them. All creatures, from man to goats to birds to pine trees, wait on the Lord for their food and life. All creatures, humans included, intimately depend on God's spirit for their very existence (vv. 27–30). Jesus showed that God cares for sparrows, rebukes fig trees, and commands wind and water.

What kind of existence does dependence on God create? Verse 16 says, "The trees of the Lord are well-watered ..." or as the King James Version says more forcefully, "full of sap." God desires abundant life for all His creatures. God's trees are not dried-up, dead sticks. No, the trees of the Lord are pulsating with life, full of juice, creative, and reproductive.

We are the trees of God. As Psalm 1 says, we are to be like trees planted by streams of water. Who is this living water? The Spirit. Jesus said, "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" (John 7:37). John added, "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive" (John 7:38–39).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Are you full of sap? Or do you say with the eunuch, "I am only a dry tree" (Isa. 56:3)? Perhaps you need the refreshment that only the Holy Spirit can provide.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 104:1-23

He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. - Psalm 104:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Several world weather records show us the extremes of nature. The hottest temperature ever recorded is 136.4 degrees in Libya, only nine years ago. The coldest, minus 128.6 degrees, in Antarctica. The widest range is found in northeast Siberia, where temperatures can fall as low as minus 90 degrees in winter and get as high as 98 degrees in summer.

Mount Wai'ale'ale in Hawaii holds the record for the most rainy days, 350 in one year. The driest place in the world, on the other hand, is the Atacama Desert in Chile, which receives less than 1/250th of an inch of rain in a year.

Then there are hurricanes, tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail, snow, waterspouts, and other phenomena. How remarkable that these powerful, often frightening, forces of nature are actually the "messengers" and "servants" of God (v. 4)!

Psalm 104 focuses on God's rulership and providence in creation. The first verse sets the tone, exhorting us to praise God, who is "clothed with splendor and majesty." Clothing points to the wearer, revealing something about identity or character. Similarly, the metaphor here points to the fact that the created world of the following verses is a kind of "clothing" which reveals more about who God is.

Throughout the rest of today's reading, this psalm poetically develops this idea. "He wraps Himself in light" (v. 2; cf. Gen. 1:3; John 8:12) reinforces the clothing metaphor, but there are other images as well: building, chariot-driving, and kingship.

Creation's orderliness is a theme here. God built the earth well; "it can never be moved" (v. 5). He created the waters and assigned them their places (v. 8; cf. Gen. 1:9-10; Jer. 5:22). The sun and moon mark off seasons and divide nights from days (vv. 19-23; cf. Gen. 1:14-19).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This psalm presents a visual feast for the imagination. As we did on the 22nd, we'd like to suggest several creative, worshipful responses to today's devotion.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 104:24-35

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all. - Psalm 104:24

TODAY IN THE WORD

These days, Velcro fabric is used to fasten everything from sneakers to coats to duffel bags. The word “Velcro” (which is a registered trademark) was coined by combining the French words “velour” (velvet) and “crochet” (hook) to describe how it works.

A Swiss mountaineer named George de Mestral invented Velcro by trying to imitate something he'd seen in nature. He'd noticed that burrs would stick tenaciously to his dog, using tiny hooked ends to cling to the dog's softer hairs. After much effort, he was able to duplicate this ability in his design and patented Velcro in 1955.

A tiny burr taught Mestral the secret of a clever, useful product. God's creation is full of such examples of practical design! He made and controls the whole system, every part of the entire created world.

We're continuing with Psalm 104 and the theme of God's rulership and providence. After all the poetic pictures we saw yesterday (cf. Job 38-41), the psalmist catches his breath to exclaim at the creation panorama as a whole: “How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all” (v. 24; cf. Prov. 3:19).

Then he can't resist one more burst of description--about the sea, home to creatures large and small (cf. Gen. 1:20-22), as well as things familiar (ships) and unfamiliar (sea monsters). All creatures depend on God for food, happiness, and life itself (cf. Acts 17:25). Unlike capricious pagan idols, God is dependable, giving food at the proper time (vv. 27-28) and holding the cycle of birth and death in His hands (vv. 29-30).

What's our response? The poet said: “I will sing to the Lord all my life” (v. 33). Based on this resolve to worship, he offered two prayers. First, he asked that the meditations of his heart be pleasing to God (v. 34; cf. Ps. 19:14 and 139:23-24). And then he prayed that wickedness will vanish and (implicitly) that righteousness will triumph (v.35).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Have you found a favorite creation verse this month? Why not share it in a note to a friend?

A word from Scripture may encourage your friend just when they need it most. You could also tell them some of the truths and principles you've been learning while studying creation this month in Today in the Word. Also ask what your friend has been learning lately in their Bible study and personal devotions.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 106:6-12 ; Exodus 12:31-42

He saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. - Psalm 106:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

In March, 1849, Henry "Box" Brown mailed himself to freedom.

Born into slavery in Virginia, Brown was brought to Richmond to work in a tobacco factory. After his wife and children were sold to another owner and sent south, he vowed to escape. A friendly white shoemaker helped devise a plan to put him in a packing crate and mail him to a free state.

Brown entered the box with a little food and water, and a tool for boring air holes. Twenty-seven hours later, the "shipment" arrived at the Philadelphia office of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and was unpacked by abolitionists. Brown is said to have emerged from the crate singing! Free at last!

As they left behind slavery in Egypt, the Israelites no doubt were also singing, "Free at last!" Their journey from slavery to freedom is one of the great journeys in all of Scripture, as well as a thematic parallel to salvation and the background of the Christian journey. After all, Christ came to set the captives free (cf. Isa. 42:6-7; 61:1; Rom. 8:21; Gal. 5:1).

God exercised His power against a mighty nation to liberate His people. Against all odds, they walked away from bondage, their arms filled with Egyptian plunder. God personally guided them with a pillar of cloud and fire. But don't mistake

an epic beginning for a finished journey. The Israelites had a long way to go—even further spiritually than physically. Despite the miraculous start, they fell into idolatry, complaining, and faithlessness on many occasions. We can relate.

Psalm 106 surveys Jewish history, confessing national rebelliousness and praying for God's mercy (v. 47). Liberating them from slavery and opening the Red Sea, God had shown His power and goodness. Israel's mistake was to forget or ignore what they'd seen and known. Nonetheless, God had a plan for His name to be glorified and made known among the nations, so He'd faithfully rescued and guided them.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

To augment both today's topic and our month's theme, we suggest that you read and meditate on Psalm 78 or 105, or the entirety of Psalm 106. These psalms praise God by reviewing the history of Israel. The writers looked back and saw the gracious, powerful hand of God working through past events. The nation was on an extended journey, and God was guiding their national destiny as surely and lovingly as He guides our own journeys down our individual roads.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 108:1-5

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth. - Psalm 108:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal, best known for her hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be," once told how she received the inspiration for her work. "I believe my King suggests a thought and whispers me a musical line or two, and then I look up and thank Him delightedly, and go on with it. [He] gives it to me piece by piece, just when He will and as much as He will."

One of the blessings of music is the way it can draw our minds and hearts to God, and fix them there. In the process, the fears and concerns around us tend to fade in importance. Sounds like something we need to discover this month as worshipers seeking God during a time of uncertainty, and even anxiety.

David knew the incredible, soul-lifting power of music that praises God. In today's verses Israel's "singer of songs" (2 Sam. 23:1) expressed his determination to praise God with the instruments in his hands and the joy in his soul.

It's easy to imagine David singing praise to God the same way he did everything else--with all that he had. This is the idea behind his statement, "My heart is steadfast" (v. 1). He gave his full attention to glorifying God through his music. That's the kind of energy and commitment we need to have in our praise.

David wanted his songs of praise and thanksgiving to wake up the dawn, which is likened to a person asleep (v. 2). In other words, David was determined to start his day on a right note before the day started him on a wrong note.

Additionally, the psalmist vowed to make his praise heard "among the nations" (v. 3). This is only fitting--look at the subject David had to sing about: God's soaring love and faithfulness that reached farther than David could see. The only response he could make was to pray that God's glory would fill the earth.

Interestingly, today's verses are identical to Ps. 57:7-11. Turn back there, and you'll see that these words were written at a time when David was being pursued by his enemies (vv. 1-6). His music came out of a real-life need!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We often suggest that you fill your home or apartment with God-honoring music. What better time than Christmas?

If you don't have a collection of Christmas hymns and carols, this is the time to give yourself and your family the gift of inspiring music. If praise-filled music lifts us above the things that make us anxious and fearful, then December 1999 ought to be a month filled with music. Why not start now by singing your favorite Christmas hymn to the Lord?

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 110:1-2; Revelation 22:12-17

I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. - Revelation 22:16

TODAY IN THE WORD

Near the beginning of the book of Revelation, the apostle John saw an awe-inspiring vision of the glorified Christ (Rev. 1:13–18).

“Among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet and with a golden sash around His chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance ... He placed His right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!' ”

Let's conclude our month's study by looking ahead to the ultimate completion of 2 Samuel 7:16: Christ is the perfect fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, and among His names are both Branch of David and Root of David (Jer. 33:15; Rev. 22:16).

Jesus Himself and the apostles used a psalm of David to show that He fulfilled the Davidic covenant (Matt. 22:41–46; Acts 2:32–36 referring to Ps. 110:1–2). The son of David was also the Lord of David! After His resurrection victory over sin, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father.

In John's vision, Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all there is (Rev. 22:12–17). He is the Judge who hands down rewards or condemnation. He is the “Root and Offspring of David,” a paradoxical image. Humanly speaking, Jesus descended from David, but from an eternal perspective, He is the great I Am.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Jesus, the Root and Branch of David, and our glorious Hope and Salvation, is coming soon (Rev. 22:12). Meditate on and rejoice in this fact

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 110:1-7

The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. - Psalm 110:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

There aren't any humans that perfectly illustrate the person and ministry of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But the relationship between God the Father and His Son the Messiah in Psalm 110, reminds us of Philip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great.

Philip was a great ruler in his own right. He led his Macedonian armies against the Greek cities and conquered most of them. He also had great plans and dreams of conquest for Alexander. Philip hired Aristotle to tutor Alexander, and taught his son that he was descended from the great hero Hercules. Alexander became one of the greatest generals and conquerors in history, defeating the mighty Persian empire.

God the Father has great plans of conquest and rule for His Son, and nothing will prevent them from being carried out in Christ's millennial kingdom. This psalm tells us of the Father (LORD or Yahweh) installing David's Lord, the Messiah, at the Father's right hand in the place of authority until the moment comes for His glorious return.

At that time the Father will bring His enemies into total subjection and place the scepter of absolute rule in the Son's hand. We've seen this picture of Messiah holding His scepter several times this month. It was a common image in the Old Testament.

Once again, we are dealing with a Messianic psalm that describes Messiah's all-conquering reign over the earth. Verses 2-3 refer to the troops who will gladly follow the Lord into battle, as fresh as the dawn and under the direction of their divine leader, who will also experience constant refreshing from God (v. 6).

There is no doubt that David's images can be applied to Messiah. Jesus used Psalm 110:1 to teach that He was not only David's descendant (son), but also his Lord (Mk. 12:35-37). And unlike any king before or since, Messiah has also been designated by God the Father as an eternal priest.

What a portrait of Messiah! He is our King, our merciful high priest, and the warrior who defeats His enemies, and ours.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Jesus is seated at His Father's right hand, until the kingdoms of this world come under His judgment.

But the writer of Hebrews says Jesus is exercising His ministry as a priest right now (Heb. 4:14-16). He identified with us by taking human flesh in His first coming. He understands firsthand our temptations and weaknesses. Your perfect and compassionate high priest is listening to you today. Bring to Him your deepest need

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 111:1-10

The works of [God's] hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. - Psalm 111:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

With Thanksgiving just two days away, we hope you are anticipating a joyful time of praise and fellowship as we celebrate God's great faithfulness to His people.

In fact, it could be argued that one way we know we are growing spiritually is when we look forward to Thanksgiving as much as most children look forward to Christmas. It isn't hard to get enthusiastic about all the good things you expect to receive. It takes more spiritual maturity to look at the good things you have already received and say ""thank you"" with the same enthusiasm.

This has been our goal for the Today in the Word family this month. If you need a good place to start your praise and gratitude today, we recommend Psalm 111. The psalm invites us to ""ponder"" and ""delight in"" (v. 2) the great works of God. God wants us to remember His works (v. 4).

The list of God's faithful blessings is impressive. He feeds and provides ""for those who fear Him"" (v. 5)--and His provision does not stop with our physical needs. The writer mentions God's faithfulness to His covenant, the specific promises He has made to all those who put their trust in Him.

In the case of Israel, God remembered and fulfilled His covenant by giving them the land He had sworn to give them in Canaan (v. 6). As we learned earlier this month, Joshua could come to the end of his life and say, ""You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed"" (Josh. 23:14, see the September 5 study).

But the land was just one evidence of God's faithfulness. Every ""precept"" from Him can be trusted because everything God does is marked by ""faithfulness and uprightness"" (v. 8).

That is very good news for us this Thanksgiving week because God's redemption will never fail. We know this because His covenant will stand forever (v. 9). How else can we respond but to say, ""Holy and awesome is His name""? This is the fear of the Lord, and it's the place where wisdom is found.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Another trait of God is that ""He remembers His covenant forever"" (v. 5).

The only thing God forgets is our sin (Isa. 43:25), when we bring them to Christ and trust Him for forgiveness and salvation. If you have done this, you have much to celebrate today. But if you have never acknowledged your sin and put your faith in Christ, this would be a great time to experience God's faithfulness in a new way. Ask your pastor or a Christian friend to show you the way of salvation if you have any doubt about your relationship with God.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 115:1-3; Job 42: 1-3

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. - Daniel 4:35

TODAY IN THE WORD

O Lord of Hosts, you are Lord alone. You have made the heavens and the earth and all living things that dwell there. Your hand is the soul of every living thing. I would come before you with worship and honor this day. In the name of Christ I pray. Amen.—Bob Benson Sr. and Michael Benson, *Disciplines for the Inner Life*

In his book, *The God Who Hears*, Bingham Hunter writes, “At its root, prayer grows from the certainty of God’s omnipotence and sovereignty.” If we didn’t believe that the Lord was in charge, we probably wouldn’t waste our time praying.

Yet many Christians struggle with God’s sovereignty and the question, “Why don’t I get what I pray for?” Sometimes unanswered prayer is the result of wrong motives, but some unanswered prayer simply defies our comprehension. For this reason, it’s important to consider God’s sovereignty along with His goodness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God’s sovereignty and the mystery of unanswered prayer leads some Christians to ask, “Why bother to pray at all?” God’s power could make prayer seem pointless, if the purpose of prayer were simply to get things done. Although popular sayings such as, “prayer changes things,” are certainly well-intentioned, it might be better to say “God changes things” and “prayer changes us.” This shifts the focus of prayer from results to relationship. Understanding God’s sovereignty in this light enables us to pray with confidence, because we know that God is both sovereign and committed to our good.

“Prayer problems are usually not intellectual, but volitional,” writes Bingham Hunter. Not surprisingly then, one of the ways prayer changes us is to align our will increasingly with the Father’s will, which eventually brings us to a deeper level of submission to Him.

Take time today to ponder and reflect on God’s sovereignty and prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any misunderstandings you may have. Then pray along with the following prayer:

Lord, I am yours; I do yield myself up entirely to you, and I believe that you do take me. I leave myself with you. Work in me all the good pleasure of your will, and I will only lie still in your hands and trust you. Amen.

—Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 116:5-9; Proverbs 3:21-26

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. - Psalm 116:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

Long gone are the days when people didn't lock their doors at night. Now we not only lock them, we deadbolt them. Home security companies install cameras, motion detectors, and alarms programmed to your personal code or password. We buy dogs, join neighborhood watch programs, and install safes in our bedroom closets. We want safety and security--to go to sleep at night with peace of mind.

As today's readings point out, though, a truly peaceful night's sleep can come only through faith. Rest flows from trust in the Lord, and this rest includes physical rest.

As we see in today's first reading, we can find rest in the character of God. He is gracious, righteous, and compassionate. He protects, saves, and delivers those who look to Him in "simplehearted" faith. What are the results of His actions in our lives? We can walk righteously, we can rejoice in Him, and our souls can rest in untroubled confidence in His love and power. We need not be afraid of anything or anybody, for our Father is watching out for us! Think of an impenetrable shield, a sheep lying down in green pastures, and the peace of Christ standing guard over our hearts (Ps. 3:3-5; 23:2; Phil. 4:7). No wonder David exclaimed, "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Ps. 62:1).

Furthermore, rest is one of the fruits or rewards of wisdom, as we see in our second reading. "Sound judgment and discernment" are the path of life, leading to righteousness, peace, and security, much as we saw in Psalm 116. And again we have the idea that God's way is the way of rest, so much so that the wise person's sleep will be "sweet"--refreshing, pleasurable, and even delicious (Prov. 3:24). This is one of the many blessings of wisdom, which is also said to watch over us when we're sleeping (Prov. 6:22).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Have you been guilty of modern gnosticism? Gnosticism is an ancient heresy that devalues material reality and tries to divide soul from body. The truth is that God created material reality and gave us bodies as a gift--in fact, we'll have bodies for all eternity!

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 118:22-24; 1 Peter 2:4-8

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation. - Isaiah 28:16

TODAY IN THE WORD Perhaps your church has a cornerstone inscribed with the date your church was built and maybe a Scripture verse. You may have been present when this cornerstone was laid and the building dedicated.

Although cornerstones today are largely ceremonial--sometimes even hollowed out for a time capsule--ancient buildings had massive cornerstones to support their weight. Because cornerstones were essential, they became a metaphor for a foundation. Psalm 118 describes the nation Israel as a cornerstone, but one that had been rejected by other nations yet chosen by God (v. 22). God's vindication of the nation produced great joy (vv. 23--24).

Centuries later Jesus used the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt. 21; Mark 12; Luke 20) to apply this psalm to Himself, likening Himself to Israel--rejected by humans but vindicated and exalted by God.

Perhaps while reflecting on this very parable, Peter also wrote about Jesus, the Cornerstone. But since a cornerstone is used in a building, we may wonder what type of building would have Jesus as its cornerstone? Notice how today's passage from Peter begins by calling Jesus the Living Stone (v. 4). What's more, all believers are described as living stones who are precious to God and who are being built into a spiritual house of worship (v. 5).

In addition to Psalm 118, Peter also quoted Isaiah 28:16--today's verse. This beautiful passage probably first had the massive stonework of the temple in mind, alluding to the abiding, unshakable presence of the Lord. The one who trusts in this chosen, precious Cornerstone will never be put to shame (1 Peter 2:6).

Knowing that Jesus is our Cornerstone is a marvelous source of comfort. He is our stability, our firm foundation, the solid rock of our strength.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Psalms and hymns are filled with metaphors for Jesus' foundational nature. For example, in Psalms 18:2 and 31:2, the Lord is a rock and a fortress. In Psalm 61:3, the Lord is a strong tower.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 119:89-104; Joshua 1:8-9

I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. - Psalm 77:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

Lord, you have promised to meet those who seek your face. Come now and reveal your presence to me as I make myself present to you... Amen.—A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants

Sometimes Christians feel uncomfortable with meditation, perhaps due to New Age forms of meditation. But meditation simply means to reflect deeply on something. The Bible is filled with exhortations to meditate on God's Word and works, and the history of the church records numerous examples of men and women who heeded this call to contemplate God's Word. There is much we can learn from this approach to prayer that includes sustained reflection on our Lord and His Word.

For one thing, meditation is not a mindless repetition of certain phrases, but an intense concentration on God and His ways. Scriptural exhortations to meditate are always directed toward God's deeds, laws, or promises. For another thing, true meditation is not a flight from the world. Thomas Merton wrote, "Meditation has no point unless it is firmly rooted in life."

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The psalmist exclaimed, "I meditate on [your law] all day long" (Ps. 119:97). Let's consider several approaches to meditation.

Sometime today if possible, set aside fifteen to twenty minutes for solitude and meditation. Choose a short section of Scripture, perhaps from today's Psalm, and read it slowly several times. If distractions come up, ask the Lord for focus as you reread your chosen passage. As you silently dwell on the passage, ask the Lord to speak to you from this passage. Try to keep focused on His Word and His presence. At the end of your time of meditation, consider writing down things the Lord may have revealed to you.

Another way to meditate on Scripture is to use your imagination to consider the feelings and thoughts of people in the passage. For example, as you read today's passage from Joshua, imagine how it would feel to face a formidable opponent following the death of an incredible leader like Moses. How might the Lord's promises have particularly encouraged Joshua? Why was it important for Joshua to meditate on the Book of the Law? What did the promised land look like?

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 121:1-8

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. - Psalm 121:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Author and seminar speaker Gary Rossberg tells of the time he was in a hotel lobby in Atlanta. Suddenly, there was a small commotion as a group of men moved quickly through the lobby. As the entourage passed Rossberg he saw that Nelson Mandela, the president of South Africa, was being escorted by a contingent of security people. Rossberg also noticed that as the group stepped onto the elevator, one of Mandela's guards turned around and entered backwards, guarding against trouble even at the last second before the elevator's doors closed. Rossberg says that act of vigilance defined for him what it means to be a protector.

That's a good picture of the way our God and Father surrounds us with His care. He watches us whether we are coming or going, and His protection is so complete that He is on watch for dangers coming at us from all sides.

This famous psalm is called a psalm of ascent, or a pilgrim psalm that worshipers recited as they headed up to Jerusalem to worship God at His temple. As a traveler, the psalmist may have seen the hills either as a source of comfort, or a source of danger because of potential robbers.

But either way, the pilgrim's confidence was in the Lord who made the hills and everything else to protect him along the journey. God would not allow the psalmist's foot to slip on the path, nor would He become indifferent to the traveler, indifference symbolized by sleeping.

In fact, the psalmist was assured that God would protect him from all dangers both during the day and at night. And in case there was any room left for concern, the psalm ends with two verses that declare the completeness of God's protection. He is the Protector over all of life, and His watchful care will last forever (vv. 7-8).

One tendency is to think that God protects us only in a 'spiritual' sense. Of course He protects us spiritually, but there's more to it than that. We're also on God's 'radar screen' wherever we go, and we probably won't know until heaven how many times He kept us from harm. The change of the calendar, or of the millennium, won't change His care. We can face anything with His help.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Earlier generations of Christians used to sing on Sunday, 'Safely through another week, God has brought us on our way.'

That song probably had a lot more meaning to people who had to walk to church in hostile territory or ride a creaking wagon across the prairie. We may not see the same dangers around us that they saw, but God's protection is just as real. Why not gather family or friends, read Psalm 121 together, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God's protecting care?

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 122:1–9

I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” - Psalm 122:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Fanny Crosby had a heart for worship. In her lifetime, she wrote thousands of hymn lyrics, including “To God Be the Glory,” “Rescue the Perishing,” and “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.” Widely published, and used extensively in Moody-Sankey evangelistic meetings, her hymns made her a household name among Protestants in England and North America.

Blind since she was a baby, Crosby had spiritual eyes to see truth and a gift for proclaiming it through music. Thanks to her, our worship times even today are richer!

Worship, and the desire to worship, are among the deepest joys of our spiritual journey. In the Old Testament, the themes of worship and pilgrimage are often linked in passages about the journey to Jerusalem for religious festivals. Adult males were required to go three times every year (Deut. 16:16–17). The journey was filled with longing and anticipation to reach this special city; as they went, travellers sang “songs of ascent” (see Psalms 120–134). The road to Zion was said to be in the heart of every true pilgrim (Ps. 84:5).

In Psalm 122, the psalmist rejoiced to be in Jerusalem and at the Temple, visible reminders of God’s presence and covenant. The streets were crowded with people who felt the same way.

The poet instructed these worshipers: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (v. 6). The city was strongly associated with God’s protection, and those who loved God would find security there (v. 7; cf. Ps. 125:2).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Since the city of Jerusalem is so closely linked in Scripture with the idea of worship, pictures of Jerusalem would add a vivid, visual dimension to today’s devotion. Seek out maps or drawings of ancient Jerusalem, perhaps in a study Bible or commentary, or look for photographs of modern Jerusalem. These might be found in magazines, tour guidebooks, or on Internet sites. Can you find pictures of places connected with specific biblical narratives, and especially with the life of Christ? How can these pictures add to your understanding of Jerusalem’s role in history?

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 127:1-2; Mark 2:23-28

In vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat--for he grants sleep to those he loves. - Psalm 127:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Adults have been defined as ""people who want to sleep."" You can probably identify with that to some degree. Some people insist sleep is one of the rights guaranteed in the Constitution.

Our desire for rest is actually built into our bodies by the God who gave us a day to come apart from the work week so we won't come apart at the seams. God even set the example when He rested from His creative work on the seventh day and ""made it holy,"" setting it aside as special (Gen. 2:2-3).

Later, the Sabbath was incorporated into the law (Ex. 20:8-11), forbidding Israelites to do any work on that day. It allowed them to give their attention to worshipping God while refreshing their bodies and spirits.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish leaders had turned the Sabbath from a blessing into a bondage. There were so many rules that this day fit like a straitjacket. And the Pharisees were greatly appalled when they saw anyone breaking the rules.

The principle that one day of the week is to be devoted to rest and worship is important for us to learn. If we ignore our responsibility to be good stewards of our time, we misuse God's gift and pay the price of stress on our bodies, minds, and spirits. And God may withhold His blessing if we are stealing from His worship and from the time He has given us for rest, to try to get ahead.

Many of the arguments about what violates God's standard of a day of rest revolve around specific activities, such as professional sports or various forms of recreation. The Bible gives us principles the Holy Spirit uses to guide us in any situation if we are seeking God's will.

For instance, Psalm 127 teaches the futility of work to the point of exhaustion. It's not only tiring, it also deflects God's blessing.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' disciples were picking grain to eat, which was allowed under the law (Deut. 23:25) but not under the Pharisees' rules. Jesus' defense of His men teaches us that God created a day of rest for our benefit--not to put us under bondage. What we do on this day, in addition to worship, is something we need to determine in our hearts before God (see Rom. 14:5).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When we as believers violate God's principles for stewardship in some way, it's usually because we have stopped believing something.

Whether we formulate it in our minds, spending our Sabbath rest on work or other self-interests is an admission that we no longer believe that God can bless us more in six days than we can accomplish without His blessing in seven. This principle applies to our money or any other gift from God. If your desire is to give God His portion of your time, tell Him that today.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 127:1-2; Exodus 20:8-11

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. - Exodus 20:9-10

TODAY IN THE WORD

A skilled potter once told a friend that he decided which kind of project to work on based on how tired or rested he was. The potter said that when he was tired and overworked, he didn't have the focus or the patience to make something beautiful, so he tended to make very ordinary pots. But when he was rested, he was ready to tackle a project that required much attention to detail.

Most people do their best work when they're rested. None of us can work indefinitely without feeling the harmful effects or making costly mistakes. Rest is not a luxury. God created in us a necessity for rest and recuperation.

God not only designed people to rest one day a week, He commanded it. And He gave us the best example of all when He rested from His work of creating the universe (Gen. 2:2-3). For Israel, the importance of the Sabbath was determined when God made it the fourth of His Ten Commandments. The Sabbath wasn't just a day to relax in the lawn chair--it was a holy day of service and worship.

Some people disagree about whether we should keep the seventh day. But the church's day of worship is the first day, the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). Many believers also practice God's principle of rest on this day.

So the precaution for today is, don't forget to rest. There are many good reasons to take a day off from work, including the mental and physical recharge a day of rest gives us. We also need to give the people who work for and with us their opportunity for rest.

But resting involves more than the benefits to body and mind. First, it's an issue of honoring and obeying God. When we rest from our work we imitate God's example, and take Him at His word that He knows what we need better than we do.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

A store in a large metropolitan area recently put a sign on the door, explaining that the store would be closed on Sundays so its employees could worship and be with their families.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Read: Psalm 128:1-6

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. - Psalm 128:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Newspaper columnist and minister George Crane tells about an irate woman who came to his office. She was determined to get a divorce, but told Crane that first she wanted to hurt her husband as much as he had hurt her. Crane advised her to go home and start acting like she really loved her husband--praising him for his good traits, being kind and courteous, going out of her way to please him. "After you've done that," Crane said, "then drop the divorce bomb. That will really hurt him."

The woman did this, and came back two months later. "Get a divorce? Never! I discovered I really do love him."

Obviously, not every troubled marriage can be healed with two months of attentive, sacrificial love. But who would deny that two months, or even two weeks, of loving care could make a real impact on an ailing marriage? Because marriage is such an intense, intimate relationship, anything done for the benefit of the marriage can bring a huge payoff.

Psalm 128 is an example of this principle. The premise of the psalm is that if we will fear God and obey Him by living according to His Word, we will enjoy God's blessing. The writer could have stopped at verse 1, and we would have a valuable piece of biblical insight. But the rest of the psalm contains "for instances," examples of the ways this blessing will be realized. The center of the psalm, the pivot around which all of it turns, is the blessing of a marriage and home in which God is honored and obeyed.

The psalm is written from the perspective of the husband and father who is responsible for setting the pace spiritually and even emotionally in the home. The picture of this man's wife as "a fruitful vine" (v. 3) suggests a woman growing and flourishing as her husband provides the kind of nurturing love that Christ pours out on His church (Eph. 5:25).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Premarital counselors often remind engaged couples that their marriage will impact many people besides themselves

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 130; Matthew 7:9-11

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. - Hebrews 13:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Jesus, Love of all loving, your compassion is without limit. We are thirsting for you, the one who tells us: "Why be afraid? Have no fear; I am here."—Taizé, Prayer for Each Day

Several years ago a popular book addressed a difficult topic: why bad things happen to good people. This haunting question can thwart prayer because we can't understand why God lets people, including ourselves, suffer. This question of suffering is profound and can only be briefly touched upon in today's lesson.

We can start by acknowledging that we live in a fallen world filled with evil and sin. Because we live in the world, we are impacted by evil, even when there's no direct connection between this evil and sin in our own lives. Yet evil in the world is a constant reminder of the overwhelming need for the cross.

And the cross is where we acknowledge the redemptive hand of God, which brings forth His good purposes from circumstances intended for evil. God doesn't make evil good, but He can redeem evil for His good.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

How then do we pray in the face of suffering? First, we humbly confess that we may never know why certain events happen.

Then, we begin focusing on God's goodness and mercy. This is not to glibly praise God for the evil at hand or to deny our pain, but to look beyond the difficulty to our loving Heavenly Father. Today's reading from Matthew teaches about our Father's goodness.

Instead of focusing on why, consider asking what?—"what might God be doing here?"—or where?—"where is God in the midst of this?" Ultimately this last question will lead us to the cross and our gracious Savior who was willing to pay the price for all sin.

Finally, we need to feel freedom to come before the Lord honestly in our pain. Sometimes tears are the only prayer we can offer up, and our Lord understands those times of hurt and pain. He will hear our prayer of tears. Look at the following prayer or the reading from Psalm 130 as the basis of your own prayer before God.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 130:1-8

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. - Psalm 130:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Last summer, a nondenominational British Christian radio station started a Web site at which visitors confess their sins. First, people read Scriptures about what sin is, its consequences, and how to repent. Next, they type in their confession, or they may choose a pre-prepared confessional statement. Personal confessions are confidential and are completely erased from memory as soon as visitors proceed to the next step. At the end, there are more Bible readings, an opportunity for reflection, and a final prayer. The site has had millions of visitors since its launch. Still, one wonders why people choose to talk to a computer rather than to God. Clicking on a forward arrow seems to skip entirely the intensity of waiting for forgiveness that's seen in today's psalm.

Psalm 130 is a "song of ascents"--a worship song intended for use on pilgrimages to Jerusalem. It can be divided into four couplets. The first is a cry for God's mercy. The second conveys that though we stand justly condemned, we can rely upon His forgiveness and love. The third couplet describes an intense period of waiting for forgiveness, and the fourth admonishes all Israel to trust in God in this same way.

By "waiting," we don't imply that God is toying with our emotions. "Waiting" in this case means waiting with eagerness and hope--not wishful hope but sure hope. God will answer, His mercy and forgiveness will arrive, and the joy of fellowship will return. The psalmist is like a watchman waiting for a certain sunrise (cf. Isa. 52:8; Lam. 3:25-26).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today or sometime soon, make room in your schedule for an extended time of confession before the Lord. Make sure you choose a time and place where you won't be disturbed. Take your Bible and perhaps some notes with you, and resolve to "do business with God."

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 136; Luke 17:11-19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs ... always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. - Ephesians 5:19–20

TODAY IN THE WORD

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us ... and we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful ... through Jesus Christ our Lord ... Amen.—The Book of Common Prayer

It seems that one of the hardest things to teach children—and adults—is to say “thank you.” Modern advertising doesn’t help. Have you ever considered how ads usually prompt dissatisfaction with what we have and direct our focus on what we don’t have?

Ingratitude characterizes the fallen human condition. Consider the account of the ten lepers whom Jesus healed in Luke 17:11–19. Although Jesus healed ten men, only one returned to thank Him—a fact that Jesus found quite remarkable (vv. 12–18). Even though the other nine were healed physically, they missed the spiritual blessing that came to the one with a grateful heart.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Someone once said, “The key to life is to be thankful.” There’s much truth in these simple words!

Thankfulness can correct bad attitudes and redirect our focus to God. Yet, like many other disciplines, gratitude must be cultivated. Ole Hallesby suggests that believers begin with tangible things, such as food and clothing. “Begin with these things and you will notice that it will become easier for you to see and to give thanks for the spiritual gifts.”

With this in mind, thank the Lord for at least ten things in your life today, including things that you might take for granted, such as good health or a steady job. As you consider His material blessings, also thank the Lord for all that is in your life because of His gift of salvation, such as forgiveness of sins and assurance of eternal life.

Gratitude often has the effect of increasing our faith. As we thank the Lord for answered prayer, we are strengthened to bring more things to His throne of grace. Why not start a prayer “log” today, if you don’t already keep one. As you list specific prayer requests, leave room for future answers to these prayers.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:1-12

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. - Hebrews 4:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

God unto whom all hearts are open and unto whom every will speaks, and from whom no secret thing is hidden, I pray You to cleanse the intent of my heart with the ineffable gift of Your grace, that I may perfectly love You, and worthily praise You. Amen.—

The Cloud of Unknowing, Author unknown

It's hard to comprehend the fact that God knows everything—every thought or deed, past, present, or future, is fully known by Him. A faulty understanding of God's knowledge—His omniscience—can undermine prayer.

God's omniscience seems to beg the question, "What can we tell God if He knows everything already?" In his book, *The God Who Hears*, Bingham Hunter points out that although Western logic says that there is nothing we can tell God, Jesus' life clearly suggests another answer. Because the Lord already knows all about our lives, we are free to tell Him anything and everything. Think about that! The freedom to share openly every thought and feeling, from seemingly insignificant details to ungodly anger to our deepest desires--this is the freedom we have before our Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Within every person is the desire to know and to be known. God's omniscience, beautifully described in Psalm 139, powerfully attests that we are indeed known. God's omniscience also gives us the freedom to know ourselves better. Without the assurance that God knows and loves us, self-examination can spiral into morbid introspection. In God's loving presence, however, such examination can lead to liberation.

In his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Richard Foster writes, "It is actually possible today for people to go to church services ... for years without having a single experience of spiritual examen [examination]. What a tragedy!" He then describes the two aspects of the "prayer of the examen": "The first is an examen of consciousness through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence. The second is an examen of conscience in which we uncover those areas that need cleansing, purifying, and healing."

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:1-18

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. - Psalm 139:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

According to the Christian magazine Home Life, 'Scientists are discovering that there's a guard protecting [a] preborn baby. It's in the form of a naturally occurring antibiotic found in the female urinary and reproductive systems... It acts as a guard, protecting the fetus from any offending infection.'

The writer of the article offered this item as further evidence that God's care for us begins even in the womb. David would agree. Psalm 139 is among the strongest biblical affirmations of the divine origin and sanctity of human life.

Given the abortion tragedy that has engulfed our nation, and the horror of the growing planned suicide movement, it goes without saying that our theology of human origins matters. It makes a life-or-death difference.

But this psalm does not just make a matter-of-fact, clinical statement about God's creative work in the forming of a life. David did not get to God's work in the womb until verse 13. It's the context in which this teaching occurs that makes the psalm such a rich tapestry of truth.

We can divide the verses of today's reading into a three-part outline of God's attributes. Since we're talking about theology this month, let's use the theological terms for these attributes. Psalm 139 teaches God's omniscience (vv. 1-6), His omnipresence (vv. 7-12), and His omnipotence (vv. 13-18) in relation to our lives.

God's omniscience, His full knowledge, means there is not a detail of our existence that escapes His attention. David felt enveloped within God's concern, and it was 'wonderful' to him.

David also realized he could not go outside of God's omnipresence. God's all-encompassing presence is just as real in the darkness as in the light. Knowing there is no escape from God's presence can be comforting when we are in need, and sobering when we feel the need to hide. But either way, the theme of God's total concern for us is carried through.

And what can we say about God's omnipotent power in the fearful and wonderful creation of a new life? The all-knowing, all-present God is the Creator and protector of human life. No human decision can change that.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Psalm 139 teaches plainly that God is the giver of life. The psalm also speaks to God's sovereignty over the end of human life. He has set the number of our days on earth (v. 16).

Today, we are seeing the moral and spiritual damage that comes on a society which devalues human life. Even though it seems that the violators of life's sanctity have the upper hand, we must not stop praying that God will bring an end to the holocaust. Let's bring this request to the Lord today.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:1-24

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. - Psalm 139:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

After Jacob had deceived his father Isaac and stolen the birthright from his twin brother Esau, he had to flee for his life. Esau harbored murderous thoughts, so their mother Rebekah concocted a scheme in which Jacob was supposedly sent to look for a wife. But the fact was that he was on the run, lonely and probably frightened.

One night, on the road and sleeping out in the open, Jacob had a dream. He saw a stairway reaching from heaven to earth, with angels going up and down, and God above all. The Lord promised him: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go" (Gen. 28:10-22).

At Bethel, Jacob discovered an encouraging truth of pilgrimage: God is always there. Wherever we go, whether on or off the path of godliness, He is there and He is sovereign!

What does God know about us? Everything—our thoughts, words, and actions. Where can we hide? Nowhere. As Psalm 139 opens, this complete, intimate knowledge of us may seem a little overwhelming, even a little threatening. David couldn't comprehend it either. But he warmed to the idea of God's omnipresence as he went along, for it guaranteed constant guidance and protection (v. 10).

Omnipresence is a truth as vast as the universe, but also as private as a mother's womb. Just as God is everywhere in space, so He's everywhere in time (cf. Jer. 23:24). He was personally involved in David's creation, and had written the story of his life before one day of it had come to be (v. 16). He's done the same for each one of us! No wonder David finally called this attribute of God "precious."

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

You can create a greeting card using verses 9–10 in today's Scripture reading: "If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:7-12, 23-24

TODAY IN THE WORD

For those of us who do not keep up on all the developments in computer technology, the concept is still a bit mind-boggling. For example, cars are now available that have onboard computers to utilize satellites for directions. These computers can not only pinpoint the vehicle's current location, but can also give directions to any destination.

For computer professionals, this is probably old stuff. But it's still amazing to think that a satellite system can verify our location with such accuracy. Imagine how infinitely the God of the universe knows us! We must take this truth into account as we prepare to worship Him.

David was enthralled by the greatness of the thought that God knew and cared for him intimately. The psalmist was ""fearfully and wonderfully made"" by God (Ps. 139:14), with painstaking attention to detail.

Psalm 139 begins with the affirmation that God already knows us to an infinite degree. In comparison to our majestic God, we are merely specks in the universe. The fact that He would take thought of us is truly staggering (see Ps. 8:4).

That God is all-seeing and all-knowing concerning us has tremendous implications for our worship. We cannot escape His presence, whether we go to the depths of the sea or hide beneath the deepest darkness. Therefore, rather than trying to run from God and conceal our thoughts from Him, we need to believe and embrace the wonder of His ever-present care for us (Ps. 139:17-18).

Worship that does not include wonder--the awe inspired by God's majesty and holiness--is less than biblical worship. As we come into God's presence to worship Him, we need to cultivate the sense of the godly awe that inspired and humbled David.

But there is more to this matter of preparing to ""worship God acceptably with reverence and awe"" (Heb. 12:28). David's closing prayer in today's passage is an invitation for God to search and test his heart, revealing his deepest thoughts and motives (Ps. 139:23-24).

This searching was not for God's benefit, of course. It was so that David could come clean before God and get rid of any ""offensive way"" that might stifle God's work in his life.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When we open our lives to the God who knows us perfectly, we are bound to learn valuable insights about Him--and about ourselves.

Have you ever had an insight from Scripture or a prompting from the Holy Spirit that you didn't write down and then eventually forgot? Then you'll appreciate the value of keeping your pen and paper close by as you study with Today in the Word.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. - Psalm 139:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

A remarkable photograph was taken in the fall of 1999 at a hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. In it, a fetus's tiny hand reaches out from its mother's womb to grip a surgeon's finger.

The baby was only 21 weeks old and could have been legally aborted. Diagnosed with spina bifida, he needed an operation to be saved from serious brain damage. The operation wouldn't cure him, but it could limit the damage caused by his condition.

The baby remained in the womb throughout the pioneering surgery, and the doctors reached in with miniature surgical tools through a slit in the side. He is believed to be the youngest fetus ever to undergo this type of operation, and may be the youngest patient ever in medical history.

To God, every human life, born or unborn, is uniquely valuable. His hand is on the origins of every one of us, as described in today's verse. From Psalm 139, today we want to develop the idea of humanity's uniqueness. God created not only the first man and woman--He is involved in the making of every one of us!

David has just described God's omnipresence and omniscience, truths which both challenge and comfort him (vv. 7-12). There is nowhere he can hide from God, and God sees clearly everything he is doing. How can God know him so intimately and completely? Because He made David.

God sovereignly shapes conception and fetal development. He is described as knitting or weaving us in the womb (vv. 13, 15). ("Secret place" and "depths of the earth" are metaphors for the womb.) He oversees not only our physical development, but our whole person, our "inmost being" (v. 13)--our identity, personality, and character.

God makes us who we are and knows what we will become. Another metaphor, of a book, shows that God has ordained every day of our lives (v. 16; cf. Jer. 1:5). God knows us utterly and completely. If we want to come to grips with who He is, we must realize that He is not only the Creator of ancient times, but the Creator and Lord of us personally (cf. Ps. 119:73).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Given the uniqueness and value of human life, which we've looked at both today and yesterday, we suggest that you find a way to participate in the anti-abortion movement. You could research statistics or legal issues, make a financial contribution to a crisis pregnancy center, volunteer to answer phones on a hotline, write a letter to your local newspaper, or pray for people in your community who are currently facing an abortion decision.

Whatever you choose to do, you'll demonstrate a commitment to the value of human life!

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 139:23-24; James 5:16

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. - 1 John 1:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

Authors Harold and Bette Gillogly say that keeping a clear conscience is vital to a healthy marriage. "You need to start by clearing your conscience before God... Then you need to clear your conscience before others. This may mean humbly seeking someone's forgiveness. And the 'someone' on the top of your list should be your mate. We have learned as a couple that to keep our consciences clear before each other, we need to pray together regularly. When we are sharing together honestly with God, we are, at the same time, sharing honestly with each other... When we share our failures with each other, we unmask them and defeat their power over us."

That's a powerful argument for the importance of spiritual openness and honesty in marriage. In Psalm 139, David expressed his desire to be transparent before God. Honesty has to start here because "he who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13). This is the Old Testament equivalent of the promise in today's verse.

The apostle James added the importance of including others in our confession and repentance when it's appropriate and necessary for spiritual healing. This commitment to spiritual honesty is one of the elements that can help a marriage thrive. Besides being deceptive, trying to hide our faults and failures from our mates is often useless.

As the Gilloglys suggest, this quality of spiritual honesty includes more than just owning up to our sins. Being open before our mates also involves letting them into our world by sharing our feelings, concerns, and even "anxious thoughts" with them. Even as David prayed that God would search him, he acknowledged that God had already searched him and knew him thoroughly (v. 1).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

By its very nature, marriage demands openness. Marriage also rewards us when we open our hearts to our partners. We encourage you to have a "confession session" with your spouse.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 140:1-13

He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and deliverer. - Psalm 144:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Maybe you've heard the well-known Civil War story about the person who asked Abraham Lincoln whether he thought God was on the side of the Union or the Confederacy. Lincoln is said to have replied that he wasn't concerned about whose side God was on; he was far more concerned that he was on God's side.

David was on God's side--so much so the king could pray that God would defeat the plans of David's enemies and bring these evil people down to judgment. David turned to God as his strong Deliverer to protect him in battle, vindicate his trust in God, and deal with violent, evil, and proud men who were out to destroy David.

This is the theme of Psalm 140, a psalm of imprecations--a big word for curses--against the psalmist's enemies. But let's not misunderstand. This was not simply an angry person lashing out at people who were giving him a hard time and trying to trip him up. David's enemies were God's enemies, because to attack God's anointed king was an attack on God Himself.

God's people are always persecuted by those who are hostile to the faith. Our enemies are probably not as numerous or as dangerous as David's, but we may also encounter plenty of jealousy, anger, or opposition.

But, no matter what our circumstances are, like David, we have a strong Deliverer in the Lord. He ""shields [our] head in the day of battle"" (v. 7), a picture of protection for a soldier.

Therefore, we don't have to go out and fight our battles in our own strength when we are under attack for our faith. Unlike David, we are not God's appointed rulers over His chosen nation. There was more at stake for David than just his well-being. The well-being of Israel would be affected if the king's enemies were allowed to bring him down.

What about us? We're told to leave our vindication in God's hands and repay evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21). God our Deliverer is more than capable of shielding us when attacks come and bringing us safely through the battle.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Christians who never run into any opposition or never experience any resistance because of their faith may want to take a spiritual pulse check. We're not supposed to pray for trouble. We don't have to; Jesus said it was a fact of life for His disciples (John 16:33). But we also have a strong Deliverer who has overcome the world. Let's thank God today for this reassuring aspect of His character.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 145

For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face. - Psalm 11:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

For many in the Western world, a discussion of justice quickly conjures up the image of a well-known statue. A blindfolded woman holding scales adorns courthouses across the United States and embodies the American ideals of fairness and equality. The objective nature of justice is symbolized by her blindfold, and the scales speak about every person getting their due reward or punishment. These intentions are honorable, but they stand apart from the concept of justice revealed in the Bible.

Today's Scripture reading is a psalm of praise for what God is and what He does--and one of these attributes is justice. But as noted theologian A. W. Tozer told his Chicago congregation in 1958, "When you talk about God, language staggers." And this predicament can be seen clearly when discussing God's justice. It's easy to think and talk of justice as though it is a standard of conduct that is apart from God and to which He must ascribe. For example, many Christians would agree that "God must be just." But this phrase is misleading. Justice is not something outside of God, it's an essential attribute of God. His very character defines justice. In our day, courts strive to attain justice, but in Scripture, God Himself is justice.

Psalm 145 is an acrostic, meaning that in the original Hebrew, the first letter of each stanza begins with the next letter of the alphabet--fitting for a poem that offers such a comprehensive list of God's attributes. The words "righteousness" and "justice" had virtually the same meaning for the biblical authors. And so we learn in verse 7 that God's justice is closely linked to His goodness, and this is a cause of joyful song.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today we begin a month-long survey of justice in the Bible--from the Old to the New Testament, to the manifestation of God's justice in Jesus Christ. As you go through today's reading, meditate on this additional verse, Micah 6:8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Pray that in the coming weeks God would reveal to you some specific ways that you can live out this verse in your home, church, and community.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 145

Your kingdom come, your will be done. - Matthew 6:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

An amusing story is told of a three-year-old, kneeling beside her bed, who was overhead praying, "Our Father, Who does art in heaven, Harold is His name. Amen." She had sat in the church pew Sunday after Sunday, reciting words of pure nonsense! Her childish ignorance may not be completely unlike our own misunderstandings of the Lord's Prayer. Take as an example the text of today's key verse. If we pray for the dawning of God's kingdom, do we know enough to partner with God in this great endeavor and then recognize its arrival?

This month's study of the book of Esther helps us to understand essential principles about the kingdom of God. Today's reading of Psalm 145 provides the perfect framework for what we can anticipate learning from Esther. Psalm 145 exalts the praiseworthy qualities of God that make Him the King over all. First, His "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (v. 13). In Esther's story, we discover God's great power displayed centuries before Christ was ever born. Our King ruled then, and He still rules today!

Not only is this King eternally powerful, He is also loving. The story of Esther allows us to see God's action to deliver His people, the Jews, from genocide. "[He] is near to all who call on him ... He hears their cry and saves them" (vv. 18-19). When God's people suffer and then pray for His mercy, He shows Himself faithful to save them. He is the King of compassion.

Finally, the book of Esther reveals that our God and King is righteous. "The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy" (v. 20). He rules justly, delivering the innocent and punishing the wicked.

In the presence of such a King, the response is celebration. In Esther's time, in the time of the psalmist, and even today, we have great cause to praise Him (vv. 1-2), to testify of His greatness (vv. 4-7), to trust His goodness and compassion (vv. 8-9), to be comforted by His presence and care (vv. 14-16), and to hope in His righteousness (v. 20).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Make a list of the attributes of God that are praised in Psalm 145: His power, love, goodness, compassion, and righteousness. Under each heading, write specific ways you've recently seen this aspect of God's character displayed in your own life or in your church. As you recall the times when God has revealed Himself, praise Him! And if you're having trouble seeing God at work in your life, ask for the faith to believe that He is powerful, loving, and good.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 145:1-21

The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. - Psalm 145:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

In her book *Love Has a Price Tag*, author Elisabeth Elliott said,

""For one who has made thanksgiving a way of life, the morning prayer will be, 'Lord, what will you give me today to offer back to you?' ""

Learning to make thanksgiving a way of life is what this month's studies are all about. And what better day to celebrate God's faithfulness? We pray that your Thanksgiving Day is truly a day given over to thanks, praise, and joyful celebration of God's goodness.

If you need a good start, or perhaps a good ending, to your day, you'll find it in Psalm 145. Verses 15-16 are especially appropriate today as we enjoy the good things God has provided. Actually, the entire psalm is perfect for this season because it contains so many of the themes we have been studying.

First and foremost is the theme of praise, which is the framework for the entire psalm. God is ""most worthy of praise"" (v. 3) because His greatness--indeed we could say His faithfulness--is beyond our comprehension.

Notice also the themes of passing on the truth of God's greatness from generation to generation (vv. 4-7), and the importance of telling the world about our faithful God (vv. 10-12).

It just keeps getting better the more deeply we study the psalm. David sang of God's faithfulness to His promises and His kindness toward His creation (vv. 13, 17).

We can also praise God today for His righteousness, which marks everything He does (v. 17). His standard is unchanging truth, and we must approach Him on that basis (v. 18).

Those who come to God in truth enjoy His nearness, the kind of presence that a loving father shows to his children. God's readiness to hear the prayers of His children (vv. 18-20) is also a theme that should cause us to rejoice on this special day.

David's conclusion is very appropriate--God deserves our praise forever. Since we will, in fact, be praising Him for all eternity, let's offer God our praise today.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This psalm not only makes a good beginning or ending to your Thanksgiving Day. It also provides a number of reasons to give thanks, all of them grounded in God's character.

We mentioned some of those reasons in today's study, but there are more in the psalm itself. Was there a verse or a phrase that spoke to you in a special way? We suggest you turn back to that place and make those words your closing prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God. You may also want to share your praise with family or guests as a parting benediction.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 146

Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. - Jeremiah 20:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

Thomas Carlyle once said, "Foolish men imagine that because judgment for an evil thing is delayed, there is no justice, but only accident here below. Judgment for an evil thing is many times delayed some day or two, some century or two, but it is sure as life and death!" In short, God is a God who keeps His promises.

The author of today's psalm would agree with this statement. Psalm 146 is a song of praise that appears to be prompted by the failings of mortal men (vv. 3–4). In contrast, God is both willing and able to restore righteousness. The psalmist praises God for who He is, based on what He does: He upholds the cause of the oppressed, He gives food to the hungry, sets prisoners free, gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down, watches over the alien, and sustains the fatherless and the widows (vv. 7–9). While mortal men have a moral responsibility laid on them by God, justice ultimately comes from God.

The psalmist drew attention to the three categories of people that were most likely to be mistreated in Israel: the resident alien who had no civil rights and the widow and orphan who could be easily taken advantage of. But as one commentator said, "God is their champion. And if He can and does meet such needs as these, no kind of need is beyond His help--He is king, powerful and unlike human leaders."

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Psalm 105:2 commands the nation of Israel to "Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts." Today, sharpen your pencils and warm up the singing voice and spend some time writing your own hymn of praise to the God of the universe. Start with the tune of "Amazing Grace" or a favorite chorus or hymn and make up your own lyrics thanking God for His justice, faithfulness, and provision in your life. When you've finished with the words, sing your new song to the Lord.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 147:1-20

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. - Psalm 147:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

One day, Jesus surprised a tax collector named Levi by calling him to be His disciple. Tax collectors were despised as Roman collaborators and dishonest men, so why would Jesus call this man?

Levi left his tax booth behind and followed the Lord. He even threw a party for Jesus, and invited all his friends to celebrate. Of course, his friends were equally disreputable, and the Pharisees criticized Jesus for going into the house and eating with them. Christ's answer is classic: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-32).

Spiritually and physically, Jesus ministered healing. In this, He imitated His Father, shown as a Healer or Comforter in today's reading. Psalm 147 was probably written to commemorate the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls after Israel's return from exile (vv. 2, 13-14).

It had broken the nation's heart to leave the Promised Land and to see the Temple burned. But God had not forgotten His people! With compassion, He had promised that He would one day bring Israel back and restore her (Isa. 51:3).

God's healing and comforting qualities are found in this psalm in context with many of His other attributes. He is the Creator, all-knowing, all-powerful, and just. He sustains, commands, reveals His Word, and takes pleasure in our faith and in our worship.

For today's metaphor, the key is verse 3: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (cf. Ps. 34:18). God is like the Good Samaritan in that well-known parable, bandaging the victim and showing him kindness (Luke 10:30-37). He is a shepherd, caring for the needs of His flock (Ezek. 34:16). He's the "God of all comfort" who enables us to minister healing and comfort to others (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Have you accepted the remedy offered by God, our Great Physician?

God cares for every one of us and has offered us the gift of eternal life in His Son (Isa. 53:5; 61:1). We are terminally ill with the cancer of sin, but He stands ready with the cure.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 146:1-10

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob... the Lord, who remains faithful forever. - Psalm 146:5-6

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Chamorros people of Guam are reviving interest in their native language and culture. The Pacific island, which is a U.S. territory, was ruled by Spain for more than 300 years and was briefly under Japanese control. In an effort to help their children be successful, many Chamorros parents banned their native language in their homes and raised their children speaking English. But as one Chamorros woman said, "I lost my language." Consequently, a number of people are showing a new interest in learning the Chamorro language and teaching it to their children.

Over the past few years the church has also been witnessing a renewal of interest in a "lost language"--the language of praise. And like a group of people who have a full cultural heritage to draw upon in relearning their native language, the church has an incredibly rich heritage of praise to guide us, much of it deposited in the Psalms.

Psalm 146 is a prime example of this heritage. We could spend a week in these verses exploring all the reasons we have to praise the Lord. Our focus today is on verse 6, in which the psalmist extols God for His eternal faithfulness.

This verse forms part of a very important contrast in the psalm: putting our trust in human institutions rather than in God. The problem with trusting in earthbound people and organizations is that they don't last. As soon as a "prince" dies, his administration basically comes to an end. The power he once had goes to someone else; the plans he once had are replaced by new ones.

How much wiser it is to hope in God, "who remains faithful forever." He alone can do perfectly what the best people and institutions on earth can do only very imperfectly and temporarily. God can defend and uphold the helpless and defenseless, give sight to those who are spiritually blind, keep His righteous ones safe in His love, and frustrate the plans of evil people.

No other language but the language of praise can express our delight in a God who can do all of this, because He reigns in righteousness and justice forever. Blessings like these call for another day of celebrating God's faithfulness!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Viewing our jobs, our families, and our problems through the lens of biblical praise puts them in a far different light.

That's why the psalmist calls on God's people to make praise a way of life (vv. 1-2). One way to include praise in your worship each day is to add a psalm to your daily Bible reading schedule. We suggest you try this for the next few days, using Psalms 144-145 and 147-150.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 147:1-20

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. - Psalm 147:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

One day, Jesus surprised a tax collector named Levi by calling him to be His disciple. Tax collectors were despised as Roman collaborators and dishonest men, so why would Jesus call this man?

Levi left his tax booth behind and followed the Lord. He even threw a party for Jesus, and invited all his friends to celebrate. Of course, his friends were equally disreputable, and the Pharisees criticized Jesus for going into the house and eating with them. Christ's answer is classic: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-32).

Spiritually and physically, Jesus ministered healing. In this, He imitated His Father, shown as a Healer or Comforter in today's reading. Psalm 147 was probably written to commemorate the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls after Israel's return from exile (vv. 2, 13-14).

It had broken the nation's heart to leave the Promised Land and to see the Temple burned. But God had not forgotten His people! With compassion, He had promised that He would one day bring Israel back and restore her (Isa. 51:3).

God's healing and comforting qualities are found in this psalm in context with many of His other attributes. He is the Creator, all-knowing, all-powerful, and just. He sustains, commands, reveals His Word, and takes pleasure in our faith and in our worship.

For today's metaphor, the key is verse 3: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (cf. Ps. 34:18). God is like the Good Samaritan in that well-known parable, bandaging the victim and showing him kindness (Luke 10:30-37). He is a shepherd, caring for the needs of His flock (Ezek. 34:16). He's the "God of all comfort" who enables us to minister healing and comfort to others (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Have you accepted the remedy offered by God, our Great Physician?

God cares for every one of us and has offered us the gift of eternal life in His Son (Isa. 53:5; 61:1). We are terminally ill with the cancer of sin, but He stands ready with the cure.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalm 148:1-14

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted. - Psalm 148:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

Nephila, also called golden or white orb-web spiders, are among the largest spiders in the world and spin some remarkable webs.

Nephila build very large webs about five or six feet off the ground, usually across wide, human-sized gaps between trees. Their silk is golden in color, and the webs are slightly angled to trap large insects more efficiently. Small birds are even known to have been caught. Sometimes trapped prey is strung in a line down the center of the web. Nephila are shy, not aggressive, and while their bite is painful, it is not life-threatening.

Perhaps the most striking fact about the Nephila's webs is the extreme strength of their silk. Natives in New Guinea even use it for fishing nets!

This unique spider is included in the call to praise God in Psalm 148. All of creation (spiders, too!) is urged to praise the Creator.

Today begins our fourth major section of this month's study on the doctrine of creation. We'll be using selected psalms to focus on the theme of creation and worship. After what we've already learned this month, we should be able to worship in both spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

Psalm 148 is a call to praise the Lord and a catalog of who should do the praising: all created things (cf. Rev. 5:13). The first six verses cover the heavens, or things above the ground, such as angels, the sun, moon, and so on. Why should they praise God? Because "He commanded and they were created" (v. 5). Their origins display His power and sovereignty.

The next six verses focus on the earth, or things at ground level, such as the ocean, weather, mountains, birds, and people of every age and social status. While neither this list nor the previous one is exhaustive, they do represent in a poetic form every dimension of the created world.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

"All Creatures of Our God and King" by Francis of Assisi was penned in the same spirit as Psalm 148. This would be a great hymn to learn! You might sing it as a family, or meditate on it as you commute to work. To get you started, here's the first verse:

All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing, Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam, thou silver moon with softer gleam,

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Read: Psalms 148-150

All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you. - Psalm 145:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

Anyone who has traveled to a country where English is not spoken understands the value of a common language. People who are otherwise quite articulate are reduced to pointing and basic sign language. Fortunately, some signs are universally understood!

Worship can be like a foreign language. For fallen humans, praising God doesn't come naturally, so as Christians, we need to learn the language of worship. Fortunately, we have a great textbook—the book of Psalms, and a great teacher—the Holy Spirit. John Calvin once wrote that “Christ is the great choirmaster who tunes our hearts to sing God's praise.” And this is exactly what we find in the Psalms.

In Psalm 148, the psalmist commands “things above” like angels and the sun and moon to praise the Lord because He created them with an everlasting decree (vv. 1–6). Then the psalmist considers “things down here”: the sea, the weather, the mountains, the animal realm, and humanity (vv. 7–12). We are to praise the Lord because His name alone is exalted and His splendor is above all. The reference to a horn (v. 14) indicates the king, whom God raised to deliver His people. Note the repetition of the word all—no one is excluded from this command!

Psalm 149 picks up where Psalm 148 ends, and commands Israel, His people, to praise the Lord. In the Bible, saints are those who are set apart for God and devoted to Him. The new song (v. 1) always refers to God's work among His people, such as the Exodus or the new heavens and earth. The people are so excited that they dance, sing, and can't even sleep (v. 5). Their king is the Lord God, the creator of universe, and He delights in them. He is also the Lord who avenges all evil and injustice (vv. 6–9).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

After reading these psalms, you may feel like singing. So, go ahead. Use a hymnal if you have one, or a chorus book, and let your soul rejoice before the Lord.

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