



Good News
Bible Reading Program

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

— June 2005 —

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1-12 June	BREAK ENDING WITH PENTECOST	Personal study
13 June	18) Royal praise for great deliverance	Psalms 18
14-16 June	19) God's glory in His creation and perfect law; 20) Plea for God's defense and assurance of salvation; 21) Rejoicing in God's victory	Psalms 19–21
17-19 June	22) The Messiah cries out to God in suffering and the ultimate outcome; 23) The blessings of following the Lord, the Shepherd; 24) Those who may stand with God in His Kingdom	Psalms 22–24
20-22 June	25) Prayer for deliverance and forgiveness; 26) Appeal for vindication, examination, redemption and mercy; 27) A confident prayer for God's ongoing mercy and care	Psalms 25–27
23-25 June	28) Confident prayer for justice; 29) The majesty of God in nature; 30) Praise to God for deliverance	Psalms 28–30
26-28 June	31) A trusting prayer for deliverance from persecution and false accusation; 32) Joy in forgiveness; 33) God's sovereignty in creation and human affairs	Psalms 31–33
29-30 June	34) Blessed is the man who trusts in God; 35) Prayer for justice and vindication	Psalms 34–35

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Highlights to Think About From This Month's Reading

Break Ending With Pentecost (Personal study)

June 1-12

The annual biblical festival of Pentecost is observed this year from sunset Saturday, June 11, to sunset Sunday, June 12. The pause in the program allows more time for personal study, including relevant study in preparation for and observation of the Holy Day as it approaches. To learn more about this and other biblical festivals, send for, download or read online our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

"The LORD Is My Rock and My Fortress and My Deliverer" (Psalms 18)

June 13

We previously read **Psalm 18** in conjunction with the other passage in Scripture where this lengthy psalm is found, 2 Samuel 22, which contains nearly identical text. Here David expresses thanks to God for delivering him from trials with all his enemies, including Saul.

In the opening three verses, David compares his strength in God to a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold. Confident in this security, David states, "So shall I be saved from my enemies"—even impending death (verses 3-5). In verses 7-15 David poetically describes the power of God in word pictures recalling God's description of Himself to Job (Job 38-39). *The Nelson Study Bible* states: "Underlying these poetic words is the understanding that the Almighty will turn the universe inside out, if necessary, to deliver His servant.... All of the Lord's fearsome power is used to save the one who worships Him" (notes on Psalm 18:7-9, 15).

This is not to imply that believers will be spared—"saved from"—every painful trial in life, although God undoubtedly holds up His hand against many things that would otherwise batter us. But we can have every confidence that He is working toward our ultimate salvation in the spiritual sense, saving us from perishing forever to instead live in eternal spirit existence.

Verse 10 gives us the imagery of God riding a cherub. In one sense, this recalls the imagery of Ezekiel 1 and 10, where the throne-chariot of God is shown being transported by four cherubim. Yet the riding of a single cherub seems more akin to Revelation 19, where Jesus is shown returning on a white horse. While white horses are symbolic of victory, this may also represent a literal cherub.

When stating that God intervened "according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands" (verses 20, 24), David isn't boasting about any inherent goodness. His righteousness—meaning his pursuit of the right way, God's way, and his efforts to please God—he contrasts with the goals and activities of the wicked. They turn from godliness to practice evil.

David observes that God deals with people on the terms they themselves set: with the merciful, God is merciful; with the blameless, God shows Himself blameless; with the pure, God shows Himself pure; with the devious, God shows Himself *shrewd* (as God is never devious Himself). The humble He will save, and the haughty He will bring down (verses 25-27).

David sets up the highest praise: "As for God, His way is perfect.... For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?" (verses 28-31). In the remainder of the psalm, David recounts the battle victories that allow him to lead without opposition. He was now king over the most powerful nation of his day (verse 43). Yet, as *The Nelson Study Bible* notes regarding verses 49-50, "David's victories are prototypes of the victories of the great King to come. The use of the word *anointed* is appropriate for David, but it points forward to the Savior who is *the Anointed One* (2:2). The words *to David and his descendants forevermore* connect the previous promises to the only Son of David who inherited an eternal kingdom, the Savior Jesus (2 Sam.7)."

As noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Samuel 22, verse 3 of that chapter (also Psalm 18:2) is quoted in Hebrews 2:13, and 2 Samuel 22:50 (Psalm 18:49) is quoted in Romans 15:9 as applying directly to Jesus.

God's Perfect Revelation; His Deliverance in Time of Trouble (Psalms 19-21) June 14-16

Psalm 19 is a wisdom psalm in which David praises God's creation and instruction. David calls attention to the heavens because the sun, the moon, and the stars declare the Creator's glorious activity. The radiance of the sun and the orderly appearance of the moon and stars bear witness to the existence of a Master Designer (see also Romans 1:20).

Verse 4 of Psalm 19 reads variously, “their *line* has gone out” (perhaps meaning *orbit*) and “their *voice* goes out” (NRSV). Even in English, the word “line” can denote a geometric line, a line of text or the text an actor is given to speak aloud. David mentions that the *voice* of the celestial bodies can be heard everywhere (verse 3). “The poem talks of *hearing* the glory of God. It declares that behind the whole majesty of nature there is *sound*, the sound of the Word of God. The whole creation, even without the use of *words*, sounds forth the divine Word; when put into Greek, this is the word Logos that we meet in John 1:1” (George Knight, *Psalms*, The Daily Study Bible Series, comments on Psalm 19:1-6).

Some see in these verses the idea that, prior to His written revelation in Scripture, God formed the constellations to communicate the story of His plan for humanity—imagery that was corrupted in pagan mythology (see, for instance, E.W. Bullinger’s book *The Witness of the Stars* and E. Raymond Capt’s book *The Glory of the Stars*). Yet even apart from that, the heavens certainly have a powerful message to communicate. As verse 1 shows, they demonstrate the sublime majesty, creativity, genius and power of God.

David compares the sun to a bridegroom, cheerfully leaving his chamber, and to the strength of a champion prepared for his race. “Nothing,” he adds, “is hidden from the sun’s radiance and strength,” just as nothing is hidden from the glory of God. It is interesting to consider that in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, God the Word made flesh, is referred to as both the “bridegroom” (Matthew 25:1-10) and the “light of the world” (John 8:12)—His followers also have this latter distinction through reflecting the “light” of His character (Matthew 5:14).

Just as God (both Father and Son) is brilliant in glory and illuminating, so also is God’s law. Indeed, the psalm now moves from the heavenly revelation to the written revelation of God. The word “law” is translated from the Hebrew *torah* and means instruction (verses 7-10). “This portion of the psalm “presents six words for the law of God—law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments; six evaluations of the law—perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true; and six results—converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, enduring forever, and righteous altogether” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on vv. 7-10). Curiously, the terms here are thoroughly elaborated on exactly 100 psalms later—in Psalm 119.

Consideration of God’s majesty as revealed in the heavens and the stark perfection of His law, David is reminded of his own inadequacies. He asks a searching question, “Who can understand his [own] errors?” (verse 12). God says that a man’s heart is desperately wicked and that only He really understands it (Jeremiah 17:9). Since a man can’t get to the bottom of his nature and rid himself of his faults, God must intervene to forgive him of his shortcomings and help him to obey (Psalm 19:12). God’s power can enable us to stay away from deliberate sins and reveal the secret faults over the course of our years of seeking to follow His way of life (verse 13; 139:23-24).

David prays that his words and thoughts will be pleasing in God’s sight, similar to the request he makes in Psalm 141:3: “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” Such a “guard” is the Holy Spirit reminding us of right and wrong, which we learn from our study of God’s Word. The Spirit helps us to do what we should. But the choice to do the right and the effort to control the lips remains up to us.

Psalm 20 appears to be a prayer for God to bless an upcoming military battle, yet “day of trouble” can have a wide application throughout the lives of God’s people, as we engage in spiritual battles.

David states that those who “trust in chariots, and some in horses,” have fallen on the battlefield, but his forces will triumph in the name of the Lord (verses 7-8). David cites the custom of soldiers presenting offerings and sacrifices before going into battle. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* note on verse 3 states, “The Israelite practice of presenting sacrifices and offerings before a military campaign was an act of devotion and submission to the Lord (1 Sam.7:9-10; 13:9-12).”

The word “salvation” (verse 5) is also translated “deliverance.” On this occasion the psalmist speaks of being delivered from a physical enemy. He is not referring to ultimate spiritual salvation. The New International Version translates this verse, “We will shout for joy when you are victorious.” For us today, this can mean God giving us daily victories over sin and difficult circumstances.

The phrase “lift up our banners” (same verse, NIV) conveys a sense of confidence that those who trust in God will experience His blessings. The word *banner* comes from the root word “to flaunt,” “to be conspicuous.” David’s armies will fly their victory flags so all will know that “the LORD saves His

anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand” (verse 6). David himself was God’s anointed. Jesus Christ is of course the ultimate anointed—and all believers are part of His spiritual army. Yet all of God’s spiritual children are also His anointed individually—anointed with the Holy Spirit.

David concludes with, “May the King answer us when we call.” *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verses 7-9 that “above King David was God the Great King; moreover, one day King Jesus would rule from sea to sea.”

Psalm 21, as *The Nelson Study Bible* notes, “is another of the royal psalms of David. Psalm 20 is a prayer of the king for God’s blessing on his army. Psalm 21 is an assurance of God’s blessing on the king [himself]. Both psalms, as is the case with all the royal psalms, speak ultimately of the great King to come, the Lord Jesus.” Some see this psalm as one of thanksgiving after the victory in the battle referred to in the previous psalm.

David praises God for the blessings given to him as king. The king depended on God’s strength: “How great is his joy in the victories You give!” (verse 1b, NIV). Here the NKJV has, “And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” “One meaning of the Hebrew word *salvation* is ‘room to breathe.’ God had given King David a release from the pressures and constraints that bound him” (note on verse 1). Besides the joy of temporary deliverance from physical conditions, the verse also looks forward to ultimate spiritual salvation.

David enumerates the good acts of God on his behalf: kingship (a crown of pure gold), victory, desire of his heart, long life (forever and ever through salvation), deliverance, honor and majesty, blessings, God’s presence and unfailing love (verses 2-7).

David asserts that his enemies are also God’s enemies because “they intended evil against You,” (verse 11) and they “hate You” (verse 8). David trusts God to deal with them (verse 9) “in the time of Your anger.” Looking beyond David’s own lifetime, God’s anger will be evidenced to all during the Day of the Lord, a time of punishment prophesied throughout the Scriptures.

The Suffering Servant, Good Shepherd and Triumphant King (Psalms 22–24) June 17-19

In **Psalm 22**, David laments his life-threatening circumstances—danger from enemies (see verses 20-21), perhaps in the midst of severe illness (see verse 17) wherein his enemies are jostling around him in anticipation of his death, possibly to be equated with other psalms where David languishes in bodily affliction. Yet here he uses words that directly foreshadow the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. “The language David uses to describe his own predicament is prompted by the Holy Spirit. Thus it could span a thousand years to describe precisely the experiences of the Savior Jesus—both His excruciating death and victorious resurrection” (*Nelson Study Bible*, introductory note on Psalm 22).

During His crucifixion ordeal, Jesus cried out with the words that begin this psalm, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (verse 1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)—as at this point, Jesus bore the sins of all humanity and God sternly rejects sin. It does not seem that Jesus just said these words only to fulfill prophecy. No doubt He really felt them for the moment. And remarkably, He and the Father foresaw a thousand years beforehand that He would feel this way—and inspired David to record these words and thoughts accordingly.

David suffers intensely through his dire circumstances, but he still trusts in God to deliver him (verses 3-5). At present, he is humiliated: “I am a worm, and no man” (verse 6). The phrase “they shoot out the lip” (verse 7) is also translated “they hurl insults” (NIV) and “they make mouths at me” (NRSV). Christ’s tormentors mocked and taunted just as David’s words portend, even in the specific manner of verse 8 (Matthew 27:27-31, 39-44).

David describes his encroaching enemies as “strong bulls of Bashan” (Psalm 22:12)—Bashan being the northeastern region of Israel “noted for its fine breed of cattle” (Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 39:18)” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, “Ba’shan”). Yet they are not only strong and powerful, but are fierce and raging like lions (Psalm 22:13). Jesus faced the hatred of the Jewish religious leadership and the brutality of the Romans.

Where David says, “My tongue clings to My jaws” (verse 15), we should recall Jesus’ anguished words on the cross, “I thirst” (John 19:28).

In a surprising statement in the next verse, “They pierced My hands and My feet,” David “explicitly predicts the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The words are merely a figure of speech for the

terrifying experiences of David; but as a prophet (Acts 2:30), David spoke accurately of the sufferings of Jesus” (*Nelson Study Bible* note on verse 16). It should be noted, however, that instead of “They pierced,” the Masoretic vowel pointing gives this as “Like a lion,” which is the preferred Jewish translation. Yet this rendering leaves out a verb. The Jewish Publication Society Tanakh fills in with the word *maul*: “like lions {they maul} my hands and feet.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* says: “*ka’ari* (...lit[erally], ‘like the lion’) has occasioned much discussion. The [Greek Septuagint translation] reads a verb—‘they pierced,’ as does the NIV, from *karah*...or from... *k-w-r* ‘pierce’.... Some suggest a homonym of the root *k-r-h* (‘bind’) and read ‘they have bound my hands and my feet’.... The text remains an exegetical problem” (footnote on verse 16).

Yet even apart from knowingly or unknowingly prophesying Christ’s form of execution, it should not be hard to imagine David thinking of his own body being figuratively nailed up in a shaming display. For penal suspension was known to that era. As an example, the Philistines literally fastened the dead bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall of Beth Shan as a public disgrace (1 Samuel 31:8-10).

“I can count all my bones” in verse 17 would seem to refer to David being able to see his bones through his skin, being gaunt from lack of nourishment because of illness or being on the run. Yet in Jesus’ case it may refer to the actual exposure of His bones from the severe, flaying scourging He endures.

David’s statement at the end of verse 17, “They look and stare at Me,” finds its New Testament counterpart in Luke 23:35, “And the people stood looking on.” Indeed, this follows right after the end of Luke 23:34, “And they divided His garments and cast lots.” This was specifically prophesied in the next verse of Psalm 22, verse 18. Matthew 27:35 actually quotes from this verse and notes its fulfillment.

Of course, we should recognize that all of Christ’s followers become partakers of His sufferings (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 1:29; 3:10; 1 Peter 4:3). Therefore, just as David prayed this prayer for himself, so can all of us pray in the words of this prayer when we are faced with severe circumstances.

We should note that the psalm does not end with a focus on suffering. Rather, verses 19-21 call on God to intervene and the end of verse 21 assures us that He has (for David and for Christ), just as He will for us. The verses to follow speak of the ultimate deliverance and triumph that is found in God.

In response to his deliverance, David speaks of declaring the name of God in the congregation of the faithful—publicly to his “brethren...in the midst of the assembly” (verse 22), “in the great assembly” at the temple (verse 25). The book of Hebrews notes this as the confession of Christ, who is not ashamed to call us His followers His “brethren” (2:12). The assembly of brethren represents the called-out assembly of God today—His Church. And the great assembly would seem to denote what we find in Hebrews 12:22: “Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...an innumerable company of angels...the general assembly and church of the firstborn.”

Verses 27-28 of Psalm 22 picture the worship of God in the Kingdom. “All the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the Kingdom is the LORD’s, and He rules over the nations.” Then, everyone will declare the wonderful works of God and teach the good news from one generation to the next. As *Expositor’s* notes on verses 30-31, “The praise of God will extend from generation to generation. The story of redemption will not only include the nations but also generations yet unborn...each generation will join in with the telling of the story of redemption and of His kingship (cf. vv.3-5) and will, in the process of transmitting it, add what God has done for them.”

Psalm 23 is the “Shepherd Psalm”—the most famous, beloved, quoted and memorized psalm of all. It is short and simple but packed with great meaning. “One of the most common descriptions of kingship in the ancient world was that of shepherd” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 23)—wherein the king metaphorically serves as the shepherd of his “flock,” that is, of his people. Consider, for example, the crook or shepherd staff as one of the symbols of the Egyptian pharaoh. The rod was another important symbol of ancient kingship. Yet unlike the other national rulers of his day, David came to the job of king from the background of first actually having served as a literal shepherd of sheep. (It is interesting to recall that Moses too, though having previously been trained in the pharaonic court, tended flocks for 40 years before God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness.)

Besides political leaders, the “shepherd” metaphor in the Bible is also used for religious leaders, with some ministers in the New Testament being referred to as shepherds. (The word “pastor” means

shepherd.) Yet we should recognize that *all* of God's people are called to be humble, dedicated servants—leading by example today and preparing to rule with Christ in His Kingdom tomorrow.

The ultimate Leader, King and therefore Shepherd is, of course, God (see also Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:11-31; Micah 5:4). God in the person of Jesus Christ is later referred to as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-30). In Psalm 23, David considers God in His role of Shepherd from the perspective of one who had taken care of his own literal flock. Yet the perspective within the psalm is not of a human shepherd but of a sheep within the flock of God, at least in the first four verses. From his own shepherding work, David well understood the needs, wants and concerns of sheep and drew parallels with his personal needs, wants and concerns. Likewise, a leader should always be trying to understand everything from the point of view of those being led, and try to do what is best for them, not what is beneficial for himself.

With God as his shepherd, David said his life would never be characterized by lack (verse 1). He trusted that all his needs would be met. He would not be left alone to struggle for the necessities of physical and spiritual life because God would provide them—He knows what and where is best for us (verse 2). God would always refresh and revive him, leading Him down *the right paths* (verse 3)—the literal concept here meaning the right paths for sheep to travel (e.g., so that they don't fall off cliff edges and kill themselves or wander into other danger) but, metaphorically, denoting the proper paths of life (that is, people walking in God's moral laws of *righteousness*).

Under the care of a competent shepherd, sheep proceed to good pastures without fear. "The valley of the shadow of death" in verse 4 is literally "the valley of death-darkness." It gets very dark in the Judean ravines in late afternoon when the sun sinks below the hilltops. For us, the presence of the Shepherd's rod and staff through any dark valley in life, when it is hard to see where we are going and can be rather frightening, is a reminder that "God's comfort and strength are 'with' us in all kinds of darkness, in times of depression, serious illness, rejection by one's friends, horror at discovering the disloyalty of one's own heart, and so on, as well as the experience of death itself" (Knight, *Psalms*, comments on Psalm 23:1-6).

Why would the shepherd's rod and staff provide comfort? A rod or club was used to defend against wild predators—just as God defends His people against natural or spiritual forces that seek their harm. It was also used as a disciplinary tool, perhaps even thrown at or near sheep to startle them away from danger (which was ultimately for its welfare and, thus, long-term comfort). A shepherd's staff was used to guide the sheep and to rescue them, lifting them up out of dangerous situations when necessary. Even so does God lead and deliver His people.

With the rod and staff imagery, the metaphor appears to shift in focus from that of a shepherd of sheep to that of a Middle Eastern king or sheik—as ancient rulers of that region used both emblems. The next verse speaks of preparing a table in the presence of enemies (verse 5), as in the tent of a great patriarch or sheik in the midst of roving bands of pursuers. Sheep being protected from animal predators has become people being protected from human aggressors. And this security is found through the hospitality of a gracious host—accompanied by a banquet meal, perfumed oil and an overflowing cup of drink or blessings (same verse). Hospitality was and remains a major focus for such patriarchs and sheiks—as it is even more so for God.

It should be noted, however, that some view the imagery of verse 5 as still consistent with caring for sheep. The "table" is viewed as the highland plateaus, where pasturage is good in the summer. And anointment with oil is seen as a remedy against flies, insects and parasitic infection.

David describes his manifold blessings as goodness and mercy (*hesed*, "unfailing love") following him—or, as he seems to mean, *pursuing* him (verse 6). That is, in God's tent or God's green pastures he is safe from enemies and totally secure in every way. The only thing pursuing him is goodness and mercy all the days of his life. The fact that blessings follow obedient people rather than precede them is significant. We must step out on faith and obey God even when we don't see any rewards for a long time. They will come eventually. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," we are told (James 4:8). Once God calls us, He wants to see us take initiative.

David anticipates eternal life as he speaks of "dwelling in the house of the LORD forever" (verse 6). *The Nelson's Study Bible* comments on verse 6, "God's promise for the Israelites was not just for the enjoyment of life in the land of promise...it was also for the full enjoyment of the life to come in His

blessed presence (16:9-11; 17:15; 49:15).” What an awesome privilege it is to be a sheep in God’s fold—to have the lavish invitation to dwell forever in the house of the omnipotent Shepherd-King.

To learn more about being a “good shepherd, read John 10:1-30.

A classic work on Psalm 23 well worth reading is *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by Phillip Keller, who examines the psalm from the perspective of one who has actually raised and tended sheep. The full version (1970) is now out of print, but lengthy excerpts from each chapter can be found on the Web at www.west.net/~antipas/magazine/articles/shepherd_psa23/main.html.

Psalm 24 is considered a royal psalm. It speaks of God as the Creator and returning King. The psalmist draws on the Genesis account of creation when he states that God “founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters” (verses 1-2)

David asks who is worthy to worship such a great Creator God (verse 3). Who could ascend to the tabernacle—or later temple—in Jerusalem? This recalls the theme of Psalm 15. “Together with Ps 15 it frames the intervening collection of psalms and with that psalm sharply delineates those who may approach God in prayer and ‘dwell in the house of the LORD’ (23:6...)” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 24).

“It may be that the instructions on moral purity were originally part of a ceremony before completing the last leg of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem [for the annual festivals].... However....the hymn instructs God’s people *wherever* they may be to live in the presence of the Creator King in order to receive His blessing” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, note on verse 3).

Some commentators believe this psalm was composed by David to be sung by a procession of Israelites when the Ark of the Covenant was at last brought to Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 6). The mercy seat atop the ark was a physical representation of the throne of God on earth—so that the King of glory in verses 7-10 was represented by the ark. The King of glory here, the one the Israelites knew as God in the Old Testament who descended to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, was the preincarnate Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:4 and our booklet *Who Is God?*).

This would mean that the first part of the psalm concerns the preparation of those permitted to accompany the King of glory up His holy hill.

Continuing with a processional interpretation, many propose two choirs singing verses 7-10 as the ark reaches the gates of Jerusalem or the tabernacle. The first choir accompanying the ark says, “Lift up your heads, O you gates!” (verse 7). This addresses either the gates themselves in a personified sense or the gatekeepers—commanding the gates to be roused and at attention, to rejoice (being no more downcast apart from God’s presence), or to be lifted out of their locked position and opened. In any case, the gates opening up to receive the King of glory is implicit.

The second choir, stationed at the gates, intones, “Who is this King of Glory?” (verse 8)—to which choir one responds, “The LORD strong and...mighty in battle” (same verse). The sequence is then repeated (verses 9-10). Yet regarding the closing words of Psalm 24:10, George Knight in his *Psalms* commentary suggests: “Probably the whole concourse of priests and people now joyously shout these last two lines in one voice. ‘The Lord of hosts’ (meaning the armies both of Israel and of the heavenly beings) ‘that God is the King of glory!’”

This song has long been used in Christendom as celebratory “of Christ’s ascension into the heavenly Jerusalem—and into the sanctuary on high” (*Zondervan*, note on Psalm 24). Yet the image of His returning from battle to enter His sanctuary probably better fits, in an ultimate sense, the time of the end—when Jesus Christ will enter the millennial Jerusalem temple following His triumph over His enemies in the Day of the Lord.

“Let No One Who Waits on You Be Ashamed” (Psalms 25–27)

June 20-22

Psalm 25 begins “a group of nine psalms [ending with Psalm 33] containing an unusual (even for the Psalter) concentration of pleas for ‘mercy’ (25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 28:2; 30:8, 10; 31:9) accompanied by professions of ‘trust’ (25:2; 26:1; 27:3; 28:7; 31:6, 14; 32:10; 33:21) and appeals to or celebrations of Yahweh’s ‘(unfailing) love’ (25:6-7, 10; 26:3; 31:7, 16, 21; 32:10; 33:5, 18, 22). The series begins with an alphabetic acrostic prayer for God’s saving help (Ps 25) and culminates in a 22-verse (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) hymn of praise for Yahweh’s sovereign rule and saving help (Ps 33)” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalms 25–33).

Structurally, Psalm 25 itself “is an alphabetic acrostic (somewhat irregular, with an additional, concluding verse that extends the lines beyond the alphabet). It is composed of four unequal stanzas (of three, four, eight and six verses). The first and fourth stanzas are thematically related, as are the second and third (an *a-b/b-a* pattern)” (note on Psalm 25).

“David prays for God’s covenant mercies when suffering affliction for sins [verses 11, 18] and when enemies seize the occasion to attack [verses 2, 19], perhaps by trying to discredit the king through false accusations” (same note). This is a theme we have seen before. The prospect of experiencing shame from an enemy triumph concerns David greatly—he mentions “shame” four times in the psalm. Shame should not befall those who hope and trust in God but should fall instead on people who decide to “deal treacherously without a cause” (verse 3). “Shame is the intended end of the enemies of God (35:26)...not of the faithful” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 1-2).

David declares that because God is good and upright, He teaches sinners in His way (verse 8). But this is not so they can continue to live in sinful defiance of Him. Rather, He works with those who are humble and obedient (verses 9, 12). He will teach them a way of life characterized by justice, mercy, truth and prosperity (verses 8-10, 13). As Ezra 8:22 tells us, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.”

In summarizing his afflictions and troubles, David reminds God that his foes are cruel and he needs deliverance (verses 17-20). He concludes the psalm with a respectful declaration of hope, the same hope with which he began: “I wait for you” (verse 21; compare verse 3).

Even in this prayer for mercy and help for himself personally, David is not forgetful of others. In verse 22, which is outside the acrostic pattern of the psalm, he concludes with an intercessory prayer for his people. “David petitions the Lord to be compassionate with the nation Israel just as he has been with David. The Lord was not only the personal Savior of David, but also the Savior of all the Israelites” (*Nelson*, note on verse 22). Here, as in other references to Israel in the Psalms, we may look beyond the physical nation to the chosen people of God—ultimately all those who constitute spiritual Israel even if physically from other nations (see Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:16).

Psalm 26 is a protest of innocence (verses 1, 6, 11) in which David asks God to thoroughly investigate him: “Examine my heart and my mind” (verse 2, NIV). It could be that he was facing some false accusations from others at this point as in the next psalm, though it is possible that he simply saw his life in jeopardy due to illness or enemies and was pleading with God to not allow him to be destroyed with the punishment due the wicked. He explains the pattern of his life—not sinless, but consistent: “I walk continually in your truth” (verse 3) and “I lead a blameless life” (verse 11). *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* notes that David “is not thinking about [only] two aspects of his life: spiritual and intellectual or emotional and rational. Rather, he offers himself *completely* for a total examination.”

David aligns his life with two purposes: to worship God—“so I will go about your altar, O LORD,” (verse 6)—and to tell about God’s wonderful works (verse 7). David speaks of his integrity in the sense of pursuing the expectations God has for him. He strives to do things that please God and avoid the things God hates (verses 3-8). The apostle Peter states that God has similar expectations for Christians today. Just as David proclaimed God’s wondrous works with thanksgiving, we are to show forth God’s praises now (1 Peter 2:9-10; compare Psalm 26:7).

Because David walks with integrity and trusts God, he stands on level ground (verse 12). David’s appreciation of an even place calls to mind Christ’s teaching on the importance of laying a foundation on good, solid ground (Matthew 7:24-25).

Psalm 27 is a psalm of confidence and trust. David uses the words “light” and “salvation” to describe his relationship with God. “Light indicates deliverance from darkness (Gen. 1:3), which is a biblical symbol of evil. The word *salvation* combined with the word *light* means ‘saving light’” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 27). Like a lighthouse beacon, God shines through the darkness and shows us the way to go. David won’t fear when the wicked come against him, because the Almighty God is His guiding light and defending strength (verse 1). Though surrounded by an entire army of hostile forces, David says, “...even then will I be confident” (verse 3, NIV).

Come what may, David’s chief desire is to dwell in God’s house forever (verse 4; compare 23:6). David wrote this before the physical “house of the LORD,” the Jerusalem temple, was built. The “temple” in the same verse likely refers to God’s temple in heaven—into which David may come through prayer.

However, the tabernacle of David's time may have been in view in part, as that was the manner through which God then dwelt among His people. There is a mention of God's "pavilion" and "tabernacle" in verse 5—of figuratively being hidden away in God's tent when trouble comes (compare 31:20). The wording would seem to imply seeking God in His tabernacle in the midst of adversity and finding divine protection there. (Some, it should be noted, relate this to God's people being protected during the Great Tribulation at the end of the age.) Verse 6 of Psalm 27 refers to offering sacrifices at the tabernacle.

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

David next pleads with God to respond to his prayers (verse 7)—to not hide Himself (verse 9)—because David is faithfully seeking Him as God has commanded (verse 8; see Deuteronomy 4:29-31). There is no indication that David's parents ever abandoned him. But in that unlikely event, David declares that God "will take care of me" (verse 10). Certainly this applied not only to David but to all people who serve God, even today. Abandonment could mean complete absence or just emotional detachment—for various reasons. We should consider that Jesus warned there would be family splits, even from father and mother, for the sake of God's Kingdom—but gave encouragement that God would bless us with other spiritual relations in this life and greatly reward us in the age to come (compare Matthew 10:34-36; 19:29).

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

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

"Ascribe to the LORD Glory and Strength" (Psalms 28–30)

June 23-25

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

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

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

Psalm 29 is a worship hymn composed by David "in praise of the King of creation, whose glory is trumpeted by the thunderclaps [constituting His "voice"] that rumble through the cloudy mass of winter's rainstorms as they rise above the Mediterranean ('the mighty waters,' v. 3 [NIV]), and move from east to west across the face of the sky" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 29). The thunderclouds cover

the whole land of Israel, from the northern forests of Lebanon and Sirion, denoting Mount Hermon, to the southern Desert of Kadesh (verses 6, 8).

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

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

At God’s great display of power in nature, everyone “in His temple” expresses awe (Psalm 29:9). As David wrote this before the building of the physical temple, it seems that the temple in heaven is intended—especially given David’s urging to the angels in verse 1. However, some suggest that David may be referring to all of creation as God’s temple.

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

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

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

Considering the very personal and specific nature of this psalm with regard to the life of the psalmist, it does not seem to fit very well with the dedication of the temple, which took place several years after David’s death. The most likely conclusion appears to be that this psalm was written by David to be sung at the dedication of his palace. For this reason, we earlier read Psalm 30 in the Bible Reading Program in conjunction with other passages concerning that period (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Chronicles 14; 2 Samuel 5:11-25; 1 Chronicles 3:5-9; Psalm 30).

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

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

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

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

God is intimately attuned to the fact that we can endure only so much. (Typically, He knows we can endure more than we would choose to on our own!) The promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 remains a

comfort to us when we are afflicted: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

“He Shall Strengthen Your Heart” (Psalms 31–33)

June 26-28

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

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

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

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

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

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

David concludes with strong encouragement for all of God’s people (verses 23-24).

The superscription of **Psalm 32** refers to it as a *maskil*. The Greek Septuagint translation takes this obscure word to mean “instruction,” from the root *s-k-l* (“be wise” or “instruct”). Appearing in the superscription of 13 psalms, the term may designate a teaching song (compare verse 8). However, the NKJV translates the word as “Contemplation.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Psalm 33 is one of the few anonymous psalms in Book I of the Psalter. However, its placement here makes it likely one of David’s (see 72:20). It is interesting to note that the last verse of Psalm 32 seems to lead right into the first verse of Psalm 33. Yet Psalm 33 is clearly independent, ending the section of psalms beginning with the alphabetic acrostic of Psalm 25. Though not itself an alphabetic acrostic like the psalm that follows it, Psalm 33 is arranged in 22 Hebrew verses—22 being the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. (Perhaps there was a thought of making this into an alphabetic acrostic.)

The psalmist states that God finds pleasure and beauty in the rejoicing of the righteous (verse 1). He encourages others to praise God with various instruments (verse 2) and to “sing to Him a new song” (verse 3). Note here that worshipful music is directed “to Him”—He is the audience. And the singing of a new song, besides implying finding new ways to praise God in music (especially as we constantly discover new things to praise Him for), probably also means always singing with renewed appreciation and love—always thinking anew about hymns we are singing and not just droning out stanzas by rote. Capable musicians are told to “play skillfully” (verse 3), as we must offer only our best to God. And our attitude in musical praise is to be expressed in joy (same verse).

Indeed, there is so much to be joyful for, as the psalm goes on to detail. God’s Word is right and all His actions are done in truth, righteousness and justice, which He loves (verses 4-5). And despite the evil that Satan’s present rule has wrought, “the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD” (verse 5)—“the goodness that manifests itself every time the sun rises, a bird sings, and a mother lovingly embraces her child. Out of His goodness, God holds together the earth and provides for the sustenance of all people. One day God’s goodness will prevail over all evil (98:2)” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 4-5).

There is joy and praise to be found in God’s awesome work of creation (verses 6-9) and the fact that His plans and purpose will never be thwarted (verses 10-11). The people of God are so wonderfully blessed (verse 12).

God is to be praised as Sovereign above all nations. He watches from heaven over everyone on earth and is aware of everything they do—understanding them better than they do themselves as He is the one who fashioned their hearts (verses 13-15). And in His watchfulness, He is lovingly attentive to “those who fear Him...who hope in His unfailing love” (verse 18, NIV). For them He is a shield, a deliverer, a helper, so that they may truly rejoice (verses 19-21).

The psalm closes in verse 22 by addressing God Himself, praying for and affirming hope in the blessings of God’s covenant love.

The Righteous Redeemed, the Wicked Removed (Psalms 34–35)

June 29-30

Psalms 34–37 form a “small grouping of four psalms...framed by two alphabetic acrostics that contain wisdom-like instruction...in godliness and related warnings concerning the fate of the wicked—instruction and warnings that reinforce key themes in the two enclosed prayers (Ps 35; 36)” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalms 34–37).

In introducing **Psalm 34**, *The Nelson Study Bible* says it's "an acrostic, with one verse for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet...[except that] one verse appears to have dropped out at some point; there is no verse for the Hebrew letter *waw*, that would otherwise appear after v. 5." However, this "missing" letter is found at the beginning of the second line of verse 5.

We read this psalm earlier in the Bible Reading Program in conjunction with the events described in the superscription (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Samuel 21:13-15; Psalm 34). David had fled from Saul to the Philistine city of Gath and the protection of King Achish (*Abimelech* here, meaning "My Father King," being the title of Philistine rulers rather than a personal name). Yet in this situation David might have been set to work against Israel or tortured for information. To render himself worthless to the Philistines and to keep himself out of the king's court, he feigned madness. The superscription here tells us how the episode ended—with David being driven away, which spared his life.

David composed this psalm in thanksgiving for God's deliverance (verse 4). He welcomes others to experience God and His blessings (verse 8). Verses 9-10 assure us that God will meet all of our needs.

As in 33:18, the instruction in 34:9 to "fear the LORD" does not mean one is to be terrified of God. These words "gradually became a standard phrase for a good relationship with God. A good relationship begins with a reverent sense that God is so powerful and righteous that we dare not take Him lightly. But it goes on from awe to a sense of deep security, as this psalm fully demonstrates" (*Zondervan The New Student Bible*, note on verse 9).

David advises those who want to have long life to not speak evil or lies, to turn from wrong ways to right ways and to seek and pursue peace (verses 12-14)—counsel found in many other verses. God blesses those who follow Him. He *sees* the righteous (verse 15). He *hears* the righteous (verses 15, 17). He is *close* to the righteous (verse 18). They can rely on Him for help in time of physical and spiritual trouble (verses 18-22).

In contrast, God sets His face *against* those who live in opposition to Him (verse 16). They ultimately bring on themselves death and condemnation (verses 16, 21)—"evil" in verse 21 denoting calamity.

But God redeems His servants from condemnation (verse 22). And although the righteous will experience many difficulties, God will in time deliver them out of all of them (verse 19). Guarding the bones of the righteous, with not one broken (verse 20), is figurative of God's special care to protect the person's whole being in all its aspects (compare 35:9-10). Yet this may also entail ensuring that His servants are perfectly presentable to Him—deriving from the fact that the Passover lamb was to have no broken bones (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12). These words from Psalm 34:20 are applied literally in John 19:33-36 as prophetic of Jesus Christ's bones not being broken when He was executed, the death of this perfectly righteous Man—the sinless Lamb of God—being the actual fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice.

Psalm 34:22, the psalm's concluding verse, is outside the acrostic pattern of the psalm—just as the final verse of Psalm 25 lies outside of *its* acrostic pattern. Curiously, both psalm endings begin with the letter *pe* and both deal with the subject of redemption.

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

David is not specific about his trouble, but he speaks of betrayal and injustice—"they hid their net for me without cause" (verse 7). David asks God to intervene: "Plead my cause!" "Fight for me!" "Rescue me!" (verses 1-3). David calls for God to pour out judgment on his enemies: Bring on them "shame" (military defeat). Make them "chaff" (worthless and scattered thin). Lead them into "dark and slippery" paths (troubles and uncertainties). Orchestrate their "ruin" (sudden and complete desolation) (see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, notes on verses 4-8). After God has dealt with these enemies, "Then," David says, "my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in His salvation" (verses 9-10).

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

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

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

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