



SUMMERTIME PSALMS

*Bible Reading Plan
July 2023*

July 3 – Psalm 1

1. Psalm 1 is like Jesus' saying in Matthew 7:13-14. There are two ways of living and those two ways of living lead to different ends. The way of the LORD leads to blessing; the way of the wicked leads to judgment. Clearly, we want to take the road of blessing. What does that road look like according to this psalm? What does that look like in your everyday life?

2. One aspect of 'the blessed way' is to 'not walk in the counsel of the wicked,' etc. So we know to avoid it, what is 'the counsel of the wicked,' or 'the way of sinners,' or 'the seat of mockers' in our culture? Can you think of some examples?

3. You'll notice as we read here that "LORD" in all caps often appears in the text. That's not just stylistic; that means that every time "LORD" appears in your Bible, the name of God – YHWH – appears in the original language. In your head, read the LORD and think: 'Author of all existence, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Redeemer, Sustainer and Lord' – that's who God is.

July 5 – Psalm 2

1. I had a seminary prof call Psalms 1 & 2 the twin pillars that form the doorway into the Psalms. Psalm 1 calls us look at ourselves individually, Psalm 2 calls us to look at our culture corporately.

2. Why do human leaders think they know better than God?

3. Psalm 2 is a Messianic Psalm – it looks forward to the Saviour that God would send to redeem Israel. Can you guess who that is? What does this tell you about Jesus' identity and rule?

July 7 – Psalm 3

1. Psalm 3 tells us that David wrote this psalm during the 'Absalom saga' in 2 Samuel 13-19. Long story short, David's son, Absalom, attempted to overthrow him (2 Samuel 15:6, 10) and David fled for his life (15:14). This backstory adds emotional weight to the prayer!

2. How does David pray when he fears for his life? What confidence does he have in the LORD?

3. Have you ever been in a crisis situation like this? How did you pray? What does David's experience here teach us about coming to God in the midst of crisis?

July 10 – Psalm 4

1. It's a bit of a surprise to see the psalmist say 'be angry' (v. 4). What's the difference between sinful anger and the anger that the psalmist is talking about? I suspect that the next line is the psalmist's way of saying 'sleep on it. Don't act in anger today but sleep on it and see how it looks in the morning.'

2. I think that this psalm invites us to ask 'Do you judge God in light of your circumstances or do you judge your circumstances in light of God?' The psalmist seems to have in mind people who have taken their circumstances to mean that God is not sovereign ('How long will you love delusions?' 'Who can show us any good?' ie. something's wrong and the fact that God hasn't fixed it *yet* causes these people to think that God is incapable of fixing it). The psalmist though is looking at his circumstances in light of who God is – merciful, the source of joy, the only source of safety. How do we cultivate that same attitude?

July 12 – Psalm 5

1. Our culture likes to think that we are all essentially 'good' people. How does this psalm undercut that idea?

2. In the context of the Old Covenant, this psalm made sense. Does it still make sense in light of the Cross? Can Jesus' followers pray this? After all, we were all just as guilty as the people the psalmist prays against.

July 14 – Psalm 6

1. Based on verse 1, David seems to be suffering under the weight of his sin. Should we be more extravagant in our confession of sin at church?

2. David's enemies seem to be kicking him when he is down. How might spiritual powers oppress and accuse us when we feel the weight of our sin?

July 17 – Psalm 7

1. David wrote this psalm in light of an incident involving 'Cush, a Benjamite.' The Bible doesn't record this event, but it's possible that Cush was a supporter of Saul, as they were both from the tribe of Benjamin.

2. What I appreciate about this psalm is that David is willing to look at his own life. He's pretty sure that he's been wronged, but he opens his heart to the Lord to say 'if I'm in the wrong here, tell me.' Think about a conflict you've been in (or are in); how would the situation change if you took the time to consider your own part in it?

3. The NIV diverges from most Bible translations at 7:11. The NIV reads: “God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.” By contrast, reflecting most other translations, the NLT reads “God is an honest judge. He is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11 NLT). What’s the difference and what does it say about God’s long-term plan for justice?

July 19 – Psalm 8

1. During the Apollo 11 moon landing flight, Buzz Aldrin read verses 3-4 of this passage. Consider the vastness and majesty of all Creation and just think: God delights in you, personally! And we as people and as image-bearers are the stewards of His Creation!

2. Having been given ‘dominion’ over all the works of God’s hands (v. 6), what responsibility do we have to the environment/wildlife/creation generally? In what practical ways can we steward Creation?

July 21 – Psalm 9

1. How do you think this psalm sounds to marginalized or oppressed people (eg. 9, 12)? How can we partner with God to be ‘a refuge for the oppressed’?

2. Oftentimes, the psalmist will say something like ‘deliver me Lord, that I may sing your praises and rejoice in your salvation.’ Are we as quick to thank God for His help as we are to ask Him for it?

July 24 – Psalm 10

1. Psalms 9 & 10 actually form an acrostic in Hebrew, with 10 picking up where 9 leaves off. Along with many other psalms, they share the theme of God’s care for the oppressed.

2. If God is the defender of the weak, how can wicked people so often trample over them? How does this psalm help us to answer that question?

July 26 – Psalm 11

1. Verse 4 is the hinge between the two parts of this psalm. We’ll call verses 1-3 ‘the earthly perspective’ and 4-7 ‘the heavenly perspective.’ Why is it so important to have a heavenly perspective?

2. Why do you think God allows wicked people to get away with so much in this life?

July 28 – Psalm 12

1. Have you ever felt like the psalmist? That ‘the faithful have vanished from the earth’? (I suspect that this is how Elijah felt in 1 Kings 19:8-10. Come to think of it, David wrote this psalm before Elijah lived so Elijah probably knew it). What can we do when we feel like we’re alone in following God faithfully?
2. ‘Everyone lies to his neighbour...’ but ‘the words of the LORD are flawless.’ What does this say about who we can trust?

July 31 – Psalm 13

1. This is a classic ‘lament psalm’ where the psalmist pours out his heart to the LORD in the midst of trial, then renews his confidence in the LORD’s power to deliver. How can we learn from this psalm in terms of honesty, confidence and perseverance in prayer?
2. Why have churches struggled to incorporate ‘lament’ in worship? Lament psalms are a huge part of the Old Testament so they are clearly legitimate prayers and yet our songwriters have tended to paint a rosier picture of the life of faith. Why?