

PSALMS



The Prayers of
Ancient Israel
for Christians
Today

PRAYING ALONGSIDE ANCIENT ISRAEL TODAY

We can often struggle with what to say when we speak with God. Whether times are good or bad, we can have this insecurity that can often prevent us from praying at all. In good times, it is easy to forget God. In trying times, we can find ourselves asking challenging questions about God and prayer. “Who is God, really? What is he up to? What should I pray for? Is he really listening? Will he actually answer? What do I do if he seems deaf to my requests? Am I doing something wrong?”

The Psalms give us a solid place to drop our anchor so we can deal with these questions and draw near to our ever-present God in meaningful ways. The Psalms are thousands of years old. They were written by people who were anointed in ways we aren't; yet, they still walked through the same good times and challenging pressures we walk through today. Though they knew God, they still asked the same questions. Sickness, injustice, seemingly failed promises, sin, abundant blessing, and unbelievable rescue - these ancients have been through it all. Their prayers and songs have not only been approved by God, they have been prayed and sung by believers for thousands of years.

These ancient Psalms can guide us to have meaningful conversations with God today. So, for four weeks we are going to read the songs and prayers of ancient Israel so we can draw near to the heart of God and the hearts of brothers and sisters who walked through mountains of joy and valleys of death with our great God.

August 4th: “The Lord Will Not Forsake His People (Psalm 94)

August 11th: “God’s Glory: The Heavens and the Law” (Psalm 19)

August 18th: “The Joy of Forgiveness” (Psalm 32)

August 25th: “In the Shadow of Your Wings (Psalm 17)

All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

THE LORD WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE (PSALM 94)

- 1 O LORD, God of vengeance,
O God of vengeance, shine forth!
- 2 Rise up, O judge of the earth;
repay to the proud what they deserve!
- 3 O LORD, how long shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked exult?
- 4 They pour out their arrogant words;
all the evildoers boast.
- 5 They crush your people, O LORD,
and afflict your heritage.
- 6 They kill the widow and the sojourner,
and murder the fatherless;
- 7 and they say, "The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob does not perceive."
- 8 Understand, O dullest of the people!
Fools, when will you be wise?
- 9 He who planted the ear, does he not hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not see?
- 10 He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke?
He who teaches man knowledge—
- 11 the LORD—knows the thoughts of man,
that they are but a breath.
- 12 Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD,
and whom you teach out of your law,
- 13 to give him rest from days of trouble,
until a pit is dug for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not forsake his people;
he will not abandon his heritage;
- 15 for justice will return to the righteous,
and all the upright in heart will follow it.
- 16 Who rises up for me against the wicked?
Who stands up for me against evildoers?
- 17 If the LORD had not been my help,
my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.
- 18 When I thought, "My foot slips,"
your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.
- 19 When the cares of my heart are many,
your consolations cheer my soul.
- 20 Can wicked rulers be allied with you,
those who frame injustice by statute?
- 21 They band together against the life of the righteous
and condemn the innocent to death.
- 22 But the LORD has become my stronghold,
and my God the rock of my refuge.
- 23 He will bring back on them their iniquity
and wipe them out for their wickedness;
the LORD our God will wipe them out."

THE LORD WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE (PSALM 94)

1. (vs. 1-7) What is the plea and lament of the Psalmist here? What question does he ask?

2. (vs. 1-7) Considering who God is (vs. 1-2), why are times and trials like these so difficult for God's people to endure?

3. (vs. 8-15) What confidences does the Psalmist have? Do you find it challenging to speak with the same confidence (to others or to God) in similarly dark times? Why or why not?

4. (vs. 16-23) While the Psalmist prays, the condition of the wicked is still strong. Yet, he still calls God his "refuge." How - in awful times like these when God seems blind - can we, like the Psalmist, actually see God as our rock? Our help? The one who consoles us?

5. Understanding this Psalm, what would you like to pray about now before class concludes?

GOD'S GLORY: THE HEAVENS AND THE LAW (PSALM 19)

(ESV) TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
- 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
- 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
- 8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
- 9 the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

- 12 Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
- 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

GOD'S GLORY: THE HEAVENS AND THE LAW (PSALM 19)

1. **(vs. 1-6)** According to David, what is the significance of the sky and the sun to the world?

2. **(vs. 1-6)** How does this contrast with the world's perspectives on the wonders of the universe? What happens to those who don't think and pray like this? (*cf.* Romans 1:18-25)

3. **(vs. 1-6)** How can we pray, talk, and have conversations in our daily lives in ways that respect and imitate David's perspective in these verses? Why can this be challenging?

4. **(vs. 7-11)** What stands out to you from David's view of God's laws and revelations to us? How does this contrast with the way the world often views the decrees of our God? (*cf.* Psalm 2:1-3) How do these conflicting perspectives affect us day-to-day?

5. **(vs. 7-11)** When can it be challenging to view God's law in the way this psalm does? Why? What would you say to someone who was struggling to have this perspective?

6. **(vs. 12-14)** What are David's chief concerns about his relationship with God? What is the value in praying like this?

7. Understanding this Psalm, what would you like to pray about now before class concludes?

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS (PSALM 32)

(ESV) A MASKIL OF DAVID.

- 1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah
- 5 I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah
- 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
- 7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah
- 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- 9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.
- 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
- 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS (PSALM 32)

1. (vs. 1-2) What is the blessing David identifies here? Why is it indeed a blessing? Why does this make people so happy? (*cf.* Romans 4:1-8)

2. (vs. 3-4) What was David's experience before receiving the blessing of forgiveness? Why does this silence rob us of so much strength?

3. (vs. 5-11) Since David has experienced such a change due to confessing his sin, he wants the godly to learn some things about life, God, and confessing sin. What does he (and God) testify to us in the rest of this Psalm? Note particularly the warning in vs 6. Explain.

4. Do you ever tend to not acknowledge sin? Why? Why can we tend to keep quiet and be stubborn? What all should we remember to avoid this?

5. Understanding this Psalm, what would you like to pray about now before class concludes?

IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WINGS (PSALM 17)

(ESV) A PRAYER OF DAVID.

- 1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry!
Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!
- 2 From your presence let my vindication come!
Let your eyes behold the right!
- 3 **You** have tried my heart, you have visited me by night,
you have tested me, and you will find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
- 4 With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
- 5 My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.
- 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my words.
- 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O Savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.
- 8 Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
- 9 from the wicked who do me violence,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
- 10 They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
- 11 They have now surrounded our steps;
they set their eyes to cast us to the ground.
- 12 He is like a lion eager to tear,
as a young lion lurking in ambush.
- 13 Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him!
Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,
- 14 from men by your hand, O LORD,
from men of the world whose portion is in this life.
You fill their womb with treasure;
they are satisfied with children,
and they leave their abundance to their infants.
- 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WINGS (PSALM 17)

1. (vs. 1-7) What all does David have confidence in here? Knowing what we know about his life, how can he say what he does? How can he have this confidence?

2. (vs. 1-7) How can you have the confidence he had? What does this teach you about the relationship between our daily living with God and prayer? (*cf. James 1:5-9; 5:15-16*)

3. (vs. 9-12) Describe the nature of David's foes. Have you ever been treated like this? Explain.

4. (vs. 8-9, 13) What requests does David make? What pictures of God's action toward him give him comfort? How does this relate to you when others are sinning against you?

5. (vs. 14-15) What is the difference between David and the wicked? What do you think this difference looked like in David's life? What about in people's lives today? In your life?

6. Understanding this Psalm, what would you like to pray about now before class concludes?