*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 18 - 23

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Monday, June 18 Psalm 35 - 36**

*“O Lord, oppose those who oppose me”*

Psalm 35 prays for vindication and thereby the reestablishment of honor for oneself. God brings justice, so we can let go and get on with our lives rather than having to be constantly trying to even things up between us and other people. In the Gospels Jesus confirms the psalm’s instinct that it is not our business to act against our attackers. Instead, it is appropriate for God to see to their downfall in a way that confirms the moral structure of the universe, for people get caught by the evil devices they have used against others.

Psalm 36 juxtaposes two realities: those who rebel against God and God himself. The rebellious schemers are people whose feet and hands are directed against those who are faithful toward God, stamping them down and throwing them out. The psalm urges God to ensure that he will win out, and with him those who remain faithful to him.

*Righteous God. It can be discouraging to live in a society that increasingly harasses those who honor you. Strengthen us to love and not seek vengeance. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 19 Psalm 37**

*“Don’t envy those who do wrong”*

The psalm urges people not to let themselves be dragged down by those who do evil. If we are not too directly affected, it’s useful not to have to take responsibility for everything in the world. Our attitude toward our situation is our choice, not something thrust on us from outside by the circumstances. We can decide to stop worrying about other people’s sins and focus on our own relationship with God, and on doing good works. It could be a relief.

To put it positively, the opposite of envying others is trusting in God or being appreciative of God. There’s a calm about trust, but there’s a calm and also a passion about appreciation, which makes being appreciative of God more closely the opposite of envy. It honors your energy and offers to direct it confidently. If you are trusting and appreciating God, and refuse to be dragged down by envy of the people who are doing wrong, then you will begin to experience the benefit of doing so.

*Faithful God. You have promised that those who do wrong will not go scot-free. Help me to wait patiently for you to address their evil and not envy them. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 20 Psalm 38 - 39**

*“My guilt overwhelms me”*

Psalm 38 is an unusual example of a psalm that combines an awareness of one’s own sin with an awareness of being in trouble. While many psalms are designed for people experiencing suffering, most declare or imply that this trouble is not related to the sufferer’s wrongdoing. This psalm, however, is for people who know that their trouble is related to their sin. It expresses an understanding that God is behind the troubles that have come, troubles which are not an expression of punishment but a discipline designed to stop one from sinning.

Psalm 39 points out that the person in control of when we die is God. Like Psalm 38, this psalm doesn’t assume that our responsibility for the messes we get into means that we can’t talk to God about them. The only person who can do anything about the affliction that comes to us is God; the appeal in the psalm is for God to “look away” in the sense of not looking at us with hostility.

*Disciplining God. You accomplish your purpose in my life by using discipline to bring me to my senses. Thank you for loving me like a parent loves their child. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

June 18 - 23

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Thursday, June 21 Psalm 40 - 41**

*“O Lord, my God, you have done many wonderful things for us”*

Psalm 40 draws attention to the link between thanksgiving and prayer. While prayer needs to lead into thanksgiving, prayer also issues from thanksgiving; the awareness that God has previously answered your prayer encourages you to believe that you can come to God again with your plea for help, and it gives you a basis for leaning on God like a child (“You did it before; you could do it again”).

While Psalm 40 speaks of God’s acts on our behalf when we’re in trouble, Psalm 41 lifts up the individual who acts on behalf of someone else who is struggling. If a person is stressed in some area of their life and wishes someone would give them a helping hand, to be told that God cares for them without anything actually being done to help them will probably cause them to roll their eyes. But if the speaker is someone who actually reaches out and does something tangible to help them, the recipient will be blessed and so will the giver. Who knows? The receiver may even give thanks to God!

*Helper God. You come to us in our times of need and we are grateful. May we reach out to others in their time of need with words and actions of comfort. Amen.*

**Friday, June 22 Psalm 42 - 43**

*“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”*

The refrain at the end of Psalm 43 is the same as the one that recurs in Psalm 42, so evidently the two psalms belong closely together. Maybe one psalm with three stanzas was separated into two so that they could more easily be used separately, or maybe Psalm 43 was written separately to take further the point in Psalm 42. We will here consider the two psalms as one.

The psalmist is pleading for God to give water to his thirsty soul. Something is keeping that from happening and the psalmist is finding the situation intolerable. While waiting for God to answer, the psalmist is having a conversation with himself, exhorting his soul to remain hopeful in the Lord. God will answer his prayer, he tells himself, and he will yet praise God for doing so. The psalm lives for the future, but it also lives in the present, and while there is a sense that hope transforms the present, there is another sense in which it leaves the present unchanged. When life continues to be darkness, you aren’t expected to pretend that things are otherwise.

*Thirst-Quenching God. When I am dry I ask that you fill me with living water. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 23 Psalm 44 - 45**

*“Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep?”*

Like us, the Israelites could look to the past, reflect on how much better things were then, and wonder what happened. Psalm 44 infers that God has abandoned them and asks why he has done so. After all, the people have not turned to other gods, so why does it seem as if God has fallen asleep on the job. If God is going to get the credit when things go well, God gets asked “why?” when they go badly. What, then, is God’s answer? It is not given - the “why?” is left unanswered. As with many of our prayers, we wait with trust in our hearts for God to answer in his time and according to his ways.

While Psalm 45 does not answer the “why?” question of Psalm 44, it does lift up God as the faithful king who loves his people, like a husband who loves his wife. He has made promises to her, promises to love her and protect her, and he will always act according to those promises. There is nothing that can take his bride from him.

*Loving God. The Apostle Paul said that there is nothing that can separate us from your love (Romans 8:38). When I feel like you have stopped loving me and are not paying attention to me, help me to remember that biblical truth. Amen.*