*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 2 - 7

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Monday, July 2 Psalm 58 - 59**

*“Deliver me from evildoers”*

  Psalm 58 is a prayer for powerless people threatened by powerful people who are as dangerous as deadly snakes. They will not listen to anyone who tries to stop them from using their poisonous venom. They are as threatening as lions, whose potential victims need them simply to disappear. The victims do not aim to exact justice by their own actions, but they know that God exacts justice, and they look forward to the relief that will come when God does so. Then the powerless will rejoice.

 There is a lot of anger in Psalm 59 against the “murderous people” who lie in wait in order to fulfill their intent to kill. They are like dogs that howl and bellow. They have swords in their mouths; they fulfill their murderous desire by false accusations that have the potential to result in death for the people they attack. They might do so directly, by causing them to be found guilty for some wrongdoing to which a death penalty attaches. Or they might do so indirectly by swindling them out of their livelihoods and thus ultimately out of their lives.

*Rescuing God. Protect me from those who would do me harm. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 3 Psalm 60 - 61**

*“With God we will gain the victory”*

 Psalm 60 starts from the experience of God’s promises not being fulfilled according to people’s expectations. The promise itself goes back to the time when God told the Israelites that they would be victorious over the people living in the Promised Land. But, they are finding it hard to defeat those people. The psalm challenges God to act in accordance with his promise. It acknowledges that the fact that God has not yet fulfilled his promise today should not keep people from believing that God will fulfill it tomorrow.

 Some of the psalms are for the king of Israel to pray. Psalm 61 is such a psalm, where the king refers to himself. The king cries out to God for help as he goes out to fulfill the military responsibility that comes to him because he is the leader of the people. He relies on God and believes that God has listened to his prayers for his people to possess the Promised Land.

*Faithful God. I know that in my own strength I can accomplish little for you. But, with your help I will be able to do all that you desire for me to do. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 4 Psalm 62 - 63**

 *“Earnestly I seek you”*

 Psalm 62 presents the principle of resting in God as an expression of trust in God. It contrasts with many of the prayers of the psalms where people are consistently noisy and protesting in their praying. The psalm, thereby, adds to the range of ways in which we are invited to pray. Start where you are emotionally and spiritually, and be open to a new freedom in which you are invited to vary the ways in which you pray.

 The experience of being in God’s temple is the focus of Psalm 63. The psalmist looks back to times when he has seen God there and beheld God’s power and honor. Maybe he is referring to what he has seen with the eyes of faith as the story of God’s acts was recounted through the worship of the people. He also looks forward to being involved in such worship again, and he looks forward with the conviction that God’s commitment does not change; he will experience deliverance, protection, and support once more.

*O God, you are my God. In prayer I come to you: at times just to rest in you, at times to present my requests to you, at times to tell you of my troubles. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 2 - 7

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Thursday, July 5 Psalm 64 - 65**

*“Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord”*

 The U.S. State Department posts travel warnings, a list of places where “long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable lead the State Department to recommend that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country.” In any of these countries there are millions of ordinary, honorable people who live their lives in danger of factions, militias or criminals, or even of the police or the army. Psalm 64 is for such people, and is for those of us who live in a safe and free country to pray on their behalf.

 Moral wrongdoing, acts of rebellion against God, brings a stain. It marks us as people whose being is incompatible with God, but we can’t remove the stain of moral wrongdoing by making an offering. All we can do is cast ourselves on God’s mercy. This is why Psalm 65 tells us that our only hope is to trust in God’s forgiveness. Isn’t it amazing, asks the psalm, that not only does God decline to take our life in payment for our sin, but his act of forgiveness leaves us squeaky clean so that God can welcome us into his home to enjoy its fullness.

*Loving God. We pray for those who live in dangerous or unstable lands. Amen.*

**Friday, July 6 Psalm 66 - 67**

*“May the nations praise you”*

 Psalm 66 invites the world to come and worship the God of Israel. But, there was no way for Israel to effectively share the invitation with the world. In due course that would become possible as the Old Testament was translated into the languages of many nations. The pattern of God’s acts with Israel as presented in the psalm can be a pattern that benefits other peoples, such as the United States, who can turn to God and claim the pattern for herself.

 “God bless America.” Psalm 67 is a prayer for God to bless the nation of Israel. The pattern of God’s dealing with Israel is, as was the case in Psalm 66, designed to be the pattern of God’s dealing with the world. We can pray for God’s blessing on America with greater conviction when we make it clear that we are not seeking merely to benefit ourselves but desiring that America brings honor to God.

*“God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her and guide her, through the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home. God bless America, my home sweet home.”*

**Saturday, July 7 Psalm 68**

 *“Our God is a God who saves!”*

 This praise psalm reassures us that there is a basis for relying on God. It moves between talking about what God has done and what God consistently does, with the implication that the former is the basis for believing in the latter even when it doesn’t look true. Much of the psalm is a recounting of the way God brought the people to the Promised Land. It’s pictured not as a journey that they took, with God guiding from heaven. It’s a journey that God took, with Israel coming along. God won great victories in taking control of the land and in taking control of Jerusalem as the earthly place for his dwelling.

 But the psalm also speaks in the present, with a declaration that God’s aggressive activity does not merely belong to the past. God still acts against the faithless and on behalf of vulnerable people like the orphan and the widow. God’s aggressive power is good news for the fatherless and the widow because they need protection, the kind usually exercised by a father/husband, but now being brought to bear by God himself.

*O Lord. You are with me on my journey. Bring me safely to your home. Amen.*