*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 20 - 25

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Monday, August 20 Psalm 140 - 141**

*“Rescue me, O Lord”*

The rescue Psalm 140 appeals for is from evil people who use legal weapons to harm the life of the one praying. The psalm recalls God as the one who has the strength to defend, and it recalls occasions in the past when God has provided protection. It declares the conviction that God is on the side of the lowly and the needy when they are faithful and upright, and urges God to make the would-be evil-doers the victims of their own wicked plans.

The rescue Psalm 141 appeals for is not from an outside agent but from my own tongue. Metaphorically, it asks for God to put his hand over my mouth so it doesn’t cause hurt or trouble to someone else. Of course it is usually the case that behind what I say is what I think, and the psalm goes on to ask that God exercise some control over my mind, too. God does not do so by taking control of either my speech or my thoughts, but, like a parent seeking to influence an adult child, God points things out, sets an example, and seeks to persuade me.

*Dear God. Rescue me from the evil of others, and from committing evil with my mouth. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 21 Psalm 142 - 143**

*“Answer me according to your faithfulness”*

Psalm 142 suggests three insights on how to pray. First, talk directly to God about your needs or the needs of the people for whom you are concerned. Second, talk to God about having no one else to turn to. You have placed all your eggs, so to speak, in the basket of his faithfulness. Third, urge God to take the action you need, and point out how this will bring honor to God. While we must never assume that we can somehow control what God will do based on how we pray, it is clear from Scripture that some prayers are more effective than others.

The question of how God’s faithfulness and our faithfulness relate is the topic of Psalm 143. It argues that the relationship between God and us depends more fundamentally on God’s faithfulness than on ours. Paul, in the New Testament, points out that the supreme expression of God’s faithfulness is his sending Jesus to redeem us; the only contribution we make to our salvation is our willingness to trust in Jesus.

*Faithful Lord. You acted first, through Jesus Christ, to save me. In response, I place my trust in Him, as I lift up the desires of my heart to you in prayer. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 22 Psalm 144 - 145**

*“What is a human being?”*

A human being, Psalm 144 comments, is a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. Isn’t it marvelous, therefore, that God puts a particular human being, a king or a governor, in charge of Israel? And, isn’t it wonderful that God provides extraordinary support and protection for that person and the people he leads? The commitment God made to King David encourages every subsequent “David.”

Psalm 145 celebrates the truth that all us fragile human beings are invited to participate in the kingdom or rule of God. God is sovereign in the world; the world is under God’s control. God shows his kingly power in providing for the world and for his people, giving human beings and animals their food at their needed time. Our King, the psalm goes on to declare, is gracious and compassionate, long-tempered and big in commitment. When we turn to the New Testament and the ministry of Jesus, we see him picking up many of these themes in the prayer he teaches his disciples which we call The Lord’s Prayer.

*Creating and Sustaining God. You have made us and, weak as we are in our human nature, you provide all the strength, protection and daily bread that we need. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 20 - 25

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Thursday, August 23 Psalm 146 - 147**

*“Blessed are those whose help is the God of Israel”*

Psalm 146 warns the congregation not to put their trust in leaders. The psalm points to two reasons why this is an important exhortation. First, leaders can’t save their people. This is something that only God can do; trust in him alone to save. Second, leaders die. Or, at least they leave. That fact raises anxiety for if the leader is no longer in place, who will take care of us? There is One who will never die, who will never leave us; trust in him alone to take care of us.

Six centuries before Christ, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and many of its people were taken into exile in Babylon. Over time they became demoralized and found it hard to believe that God was ever going to help them return and rebuild Jerusalem. Psalm 147 mixes talk of God as creator and as the builder of Jerusalem. Three times the psalm urges the people and the city to praise God, and three times it goes on to show that the reasons they should do so is based on God’s power as witnessed in creation.

*O God, my Helper. I trust in you to save me, to care for me, and to use your power to accomplish all you have in mind for my life. Amen.*

**Friday, August 24 Psalm 148**

*“Praise the Lord from the heavens and the earth”*

The expression “Praise the Lord!” comes at either end of each psalm from 146 to 150. In Hebrew the expression is *halal Yah,* from which we transliterate “Hallelujah.” As Christians, we do not easily think of worship being offered by sun and moon, sea monsters, fruit trees, mountains or cattle. We think of worship as something that essentially involves human minds and hearts. The psalms certainly assume that mind and heart come into it but, as we see in Psalm 148, they allow for other truths about worship. If words are less essential to praise than we think, it ceases to be odd to think of trees as worshipping when their branches sway and of animals worshiping as they roar, low, or bark. If there is a “music of the spheres,” then it sounds the praise of God.

*Heavenly Father. Only human beings, out of all you have created, resist the invitation to praise you. Help me to overcome my resistance and to praise you with great joy. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 25 Psalm 149 - 150**

*“Praise the Lord”*

We have come a long way from Psalm 1, where we began with an exhortation to pay heed to God’s Law, and then with a promise to the king in Psalm 2. You could say that the second psalm from the end (Psalm 149) corresponds to the second psalm from the beginning in its assertions about nations being rebuked and kings being put down, but the very last psalm contrasts with the first psalm in that the first psalm speaks of obedience to God whereas the last psalm declares God’s praise. The book of psalms itself follows this general pattern. The first half of the book is dominated by prayers and protests and an emphasis on following God’s commands, but praise is more prominent in the second half of the book.

Thus, the book ends. The pain, abandonment, and disappointment of the earlier psalms have been addressed or, at least, set aside for now, and praise is the focus. This corresponds to where everything moves in our relationship with God. When all is said and done, when our life on this earth is over, all pain and sickness will have disappeared, and we will be left with praise. Praise the Lord!

*I praise you, Lord, for in you my eternal soul is safe. While in this world I face troubles of various kinds, I will never cease praising you for you have overcome this world in your Son, Christ Jesus, who is my Savior and my Lord. Amen.*