

VCEFC Daily Devotional July 10 – July 16, 2006

July 10 God's judgment on the wicked.

Psalm 64

*"But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be struck down. He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done." 64:7-9*

This psalm is a plea for a deliverance from the threat of the enemies. By trusting that the Lord has the power to keep and preserve him, the psalmist's faith gradually overcomes his fear. Even if his enemies shoot arrows against him, God will shower arrows upon them and wound them, because by words they seek to entrap him, so shall their own tongue trip them up. In seeing God's judgment on the wicked, all men shall recognize the work of God and reverence Him. The godly shall rejoice in the Lord's watchfulness and solicitude for those who are upright in heart, and shall take refuge in Him.

July 11 Praise and vows go hand in hand.

Psalm 65

*"Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled." 65:1*

The vows of Old Testament religion were not techniques of putting pressure on God or of driving a bargain with Him. They were a recognition that prayer for His blessings must go hand in hand with consecration, and that thanksgiving can never be merely verbal and must receive concrete expression in lives and goods. Thus praise and vows are due to a bountiful God, whose grace of forgiveness enables us to approach Him in praise, and to receive the blessings of fellowship with Him and full spiritual and material satisfaction. Have you made vows to the Lord in response to His goodness? Have you fulfilled your vows to the Lord? Let's live a life worthy of the calling we have received from the Lord. (Ephesians 4:1)

July 12 The basis of effectual prayer

Psalm 66

*"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me."*

Prayer mingled with praise which springs from a pure heart and a good conscience will always be heard by God. This basis of effectual prayer, i.e. a blameless heart, is a constant element in scriptural teaching. For example, John 9:31, "We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will."; 1 John 3:21, "If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him." Other examples include Job 27:2-9; Is. 1:15-17; 59:1-3. However, beyond all human conditions which lead to answered prayer, there is that without which no words or works of men would avail: the steadfast love of God, His unchanging goodwill for His people, for "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

July 13 God's rule over the world

Psalm 67

*"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations." 67:1-2*

The feast of Tabernacles, binding together thanksgiving for God's saving and providing mercies to Israel (cf. Deut. 26:1-11) with the universal hope of His bountiful rule over the world (cf. Ze. 14:16), provides a good setting for this psalm. What God has done for Israel is symbolic of what He will do for the world; national blessings typify universal blessings. The people of God should act as the mirror of God reflecting God's glory, that all nations may behold Him, rejoice in His righteous judgment, and find security in His rule and guidance. The continuance of God's favor towards His chosen people will give confidence to the prayer for world-wide reverence. This psalm is for the church a very apt expression of its missionary aspirations.

July 14 The Incomparable One.

Psalm 68

*"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death." 68: 19-20*

This is one of the most magnificent songs of triumph in the whole of the Old Testament. Its dramatic commentary upon a memorable event, its wide perspective of thought and speech, its spirit of invincible faith in God, and its presentation of the historic past and the envisaged future, combine to make it an outstanding portion of the Psalter. It was certainly written to celebrate the transference of the ark of the Lord from the house of Obed-edom to the new Tabernacle which David had prepared for it on Mt. Zion (1 Samuel 6:2-18). The actual journey of the ark from its temporary resting-place to its final abode in Jerusalem is regarded as a dramatic reminiscence of the nation's journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land. Also, the actual completion of this great historical act provides a unique opportunity to present a fundamental theological truth concerning God. He does not only carry our burdens day by day, He also cares for us, and continually leads us out of death. He is the incomparable One!

July 15 Transforming despair to praise

Psalm 69

*"I am in pain and distress; may your salvation, O God, protect me. I will praise God's name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs. The poor will see and be glad- you who seek God, may your hearts live! The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people" 69: 29-33*

This psalm echoes Psalm 22, which deals with the theme of undeserved suffering due to a steadfast loyalty to God. The psalmist's thoughts move from describing his affliction to calling for divine help, and from praying for retribution upon his enemies to expressing hope of deliverance for himself and all others like him. His full reliance upon God brings about the prophetic realization of the Lord's transforming intervention, which stirs him to utmost praise and dedication. This is a form of worship which is more pleasing to God than any material sacrifice. The psalmist feels that the most amazing fact of experience is

not distress, frustration, conflict, misunderstanding, retribution, or even death, but it is that the Lord hears the needy.

July 16 O Lord, do not delay.

Psalm 70

*“ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, “Let God be exalted.” Yet I am poor and needy, come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer. O Lord, do not delay” 70: 4-5*

This psalm is the end portion of Psalm 40 (13-17), which has been detached for separate use in the Temple service. It opens with a note of urgency, to invoke judgment on the opponents of righteousness, and to appeal to God on the ground of personal necessity. The experience which this psalm depicts is all too common, even in Christian experience. Thus when we are tested we may know that our situation is by no means unique, and that “no temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) Our resource and our hope is in the living Lord.