

VCEFC Daily Devotional

May 8 Thrill to God's Word

Psalm 1

*"...you thrill to God's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night." Psalm 1:2*

The first psalm is an excellent introduction of the Book of Psalms. It pronounces blessings upon those who respond faithfully to the covenant of the Lord, and encourages God's people to live godly lives. As a wisdom psalm, it shares many features common to the Book of Proverbs. By contrasting God's rewards for the righteous and his judgment for the wicked, it encourages the pursuit of the way of God over against the way of the world.

Do you find fulfillment and joy in reading God's words? May the promises of this psalm encourage you to start chewing on His words day and night.

May 9 Use your heads, learn your lesson..

Psalm 2

*"So, rebel-kings, use your heads;*

*Upstart judges, learn your lesson: Worship God in adoring embrace,*

*Celebrate in trembling awe. Kiss Messiah!"*

This psalm is a royal psalm, which concerns the anointing and coronation of a Davidic King. It begins with the turmoil of the nations who do not submit themselves to God and his anointed king, and ends with the call for wisdom to trust in the Lord. It provides a theological perspective for interpreting world events, and encourages the people of God to trust in Him and to anticipate the era that would see the removal of all evils, the enthronement of the anointed king, the universal rule of God, and peace for God's people. This psalm is one of the most quoted in the New Testament. The apostles used it as scriptural confirmation of Jesus' messianic office and His future glorious return with power and authority. Jesus is the fulfillment of the psalm.

May 10 Quietness Amid Troubles

Psalm 3

*"Real help comes from God. Your blessing clothes your people." Psalm 3: 8*

Psalm 3 is an individual lament psalm in which the psalmist expresses confidence in deliverance by God. The historical situation reflected in the psalm finds David at a low moment in his life. Because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12), his life was torn apart by family troubles (2 Sam 12:15-14:33), and his kingdom was wrenched from his grasp by Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 15:1-19:43). The hearts of Israel were with Absalom (2 Sam 15:13). The anointed of the Lord was forced to flee Jerusalem and wait out the crisis at an encampment across the Jordan (2 Sam 17:24). Thus the psalm reflects the national situation as well as the personal feelings of David. There were many who mocked David and exclaimed that his God would not take care of him! But when he looks over the multitude of enemies, his eyes of faith are focused on the Lord who grants his beloved sleep. In his prayer he expresses confidence that the Lord will deliver him and, through this, will restore his blessing to his people.

Are you also facing a multitude of enemies? Pray to the Lord, He has the power to deliver you from them.

May 11 An evening Prayer

Psalm 4

*“At day’s end I’m ready for sound sleep, for you, God, have put my life back together.”*

*Psalm 4:8*

When we pray to the Lord in the evening and meditate on His fatherly love, we can leave all our troubles and anxieties in His hands, and sleep without fear. As Eugene Peterson puts it, “Daily we give up consciousness, submitting ourselves to that which is deeper than consciousness in order to grow and be healed, be created and saved. Going to sleep is biological necessity; it can also be an act of faith. People who live by faith have always welcomed the evening prayer, disengaging themselves from the discordant, arhythmic confusion of tongues, and sinking into the quiet rhythms of God’s creating and covenanting words.” (Eugene Peterson, “Living the Message.”, 160) By trusting that the Lord will not abandon His beloved in distress but will restore his blessings and joy to them, the psalmist can rest with inward peace.

Pray this prayer before you sleep, and be filled with the inward peace that no one can take away from you.

May 12 Sacrifice

Psalm 5

*“Every morning I lay out the pieces of my life on your altar and watch for fire to descend.” Psalm 5:3b*

Psalm 5 is the Hebrew morning prayer.

The work of God begins while we are asleep and without our help. He continues to work through the day in our worship and obedience. A sacrifice is the material means of assembling a life before God in order to let God work with it. Sacrifice isn’t something we do for God, but simply setting out the stuff of life for him to do something with. On the altar the sacrificial offering is changed into what is pleasing and acceptable to God. In the act of offering we give up ownership and control, and watch to see what God will do with it. With a deep awareness that the God who speaks life into us also listens when we speak, we put into words the difficulties and delights that we foresee in the hours ahead. We assemble fears and hopes, apprehensions and anticipations, and place them on the altar as an offering: “I prepare a sacrifice, and watch.”

By Eugene Peterson, “Living the Message”, 161.

May 13 At odds with God

Psalm 6

*“I’m tired of all this- so tired. My bed has been floating forty days and nights on the flood of my tears. My mattress is soaked, soggy with tears.” Psalm 6:6.*

Sin is what is wrong with our minds; it is the catastrophic disorder in which we find ourselves at odds with God. This is the human condition. The facts of this disorder are all around and within us, but we would prefer to forget them. To remember them is also to remember God, and to remember God is to have to live strenuously, vigorously, in love. We have moments when we desire to do this, but the moments don’t last long. We would rather play golf. We would rather take another battery of tests at the hospital. We would rather take another course at the university. We keep looking for ways to improve our lives without dealing with God. But we can’t do it.

When we pray, we immerse ourselves in the living presence of God. When we pray the Psalms we pray through all the parts of our lives and our history and cover the ground of our intricate implication in sin. We acquire a colorful lexicon of words by which we recognize our detailed involvement in the race's catastrophic separation from God: rebel, wanderer, lawless, evil-doer, guilty, liar, fool, corrupt, wicked. The seven "penitential psalms"(6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) are the most famous for bringing us to this awareness but hardly a psalm goes by that does not bring another detail of our sin out of the shadows of our practiced forgetfulness.

By Eugene Peterson, *Living the Message*, 170

May 14 Give thanks to the Lord because of His righteousness

Psalm 7

*"I am thanking God, who makes things right."*

Have you ever been falsely accused by someone? Have you brought your case to the Lord, the righteous judge? In this psalm, the psalmist pours out his heart to the Lord in the face of the false accusations of his enemies, and calls on the Lord to act in judgment and wrath. By shifting his focus to the Lord, he is able to look beyond his current situation and sees the glorious reign of the righteous Judge over the nations. His lament turns into thanksgiving and praise.

"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge, I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 12:19-21