

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE) Psalms of the Troubled Soul

Readings: *Psalm 13, 17, 23, 26, 28, 31*

Reflections:

- When these psalms are read together as a group it is easy to see the common themes as mentioned in the previous day's notes. There is not much more to add. David is pretty consistent in how he approaches this prayer and worship on this one: I trust in you, the enemies are really bad, save me but take them out. Again, we must remember that for Christ-followers Jesus gave us a very different approach to our enemies: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45). "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic...But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-29, 35-36).
- Again, compare Paul now as a Christ-follower to what David wrote: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 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 12:14-21)
- God is still the King and Judge we trust completely. Yet the focus and response to our enemy is much different. Jesus has given a completely opposite approach to our enemies as the way we express our complete trust in God.

- In terms of expressing trust in God, these psalms give us lots of great insight and provide a wonderful example.
- Psalm 13: “But I trust in your unfailing love, my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me.” David models what it looks like to choose to trust God even when everything is going bad. He rehearses God’s faithfulness, love and unchanging character in his heart and mind. He doesn’t rehearse the difficulty of his situation. Our tendency is to turn over and over again in our heart and mind how bad we have it. David points us towards God!
- Psalm 17: “Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.” - What is this sin he is talking about? It is the sin of saying things that deny God’s character or faithfulness. David knows that we have the power to control what comes out of our mouths. Will it be honoring to God in times of trial and difficulty or will it deny God. He is committed to only speaking words of trust. Within the New Testament, “speaking the truth in love” is a key part of renewing our minds to think as God would have us think and to growing in maturity and strength. David learned this lesson hundreds of years before Jesus came.
- Psalm 23: Simply the most beautiful Psalm David wrote. What a perfect example of complete dependence and trust in God.
- Psalm 26: “I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Test me, O Lord, and try me; examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.” Again David gives us the keys to enduring very difficult times: 1) Keep God’s love ever before you; 2) Act (or walk) in complete alignment with the truth of God’s grace, love and faithfulness. This approach comes with a promise: “My feet stand on level ground.”
- Psalm 28: “Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” - A wonderful image of a helpless little sheep finding complete comfort and safety on the shoulders of its shepherd.
- Psalm 31: “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” - The verse Jesus will quote when he dies. The ultimate example of trusting God completely even when dying at the hands of your enemies.