

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Psalms of the Troubled Soul

Readings: *Psalm 88, 91, 95, 108, 109*

Reflections:

- Psalm 88: This is a good reminder that we all have times when we are really discouraged. Every prayer we pray doesn't have to end on a happy note or confident note. Sometimes we just have to express our hearts and just let it all hang out there. Look how David ends this Psalm "the darkness is my closest friend." Now the other thing to remember is that this is the exception. This should not be viewed as permission to cave into despair. Remember God is a God that is worthy of our praise and faith and confidence even when everything is at its worst. And so we see a wonderful balance of authenticity and commitment to truly honoring God. You don't have to be legalistically perfect or complete with every prayer. At the same time David models a true commitment to seek and honor God at all times as well.
- Psalm 91: David seems very comfortable with humble feminine images to describe his relationship with God. Here we see him use the image of a little bird finding refuge under the wings of her momma bird. This is not the typical image a warrior type guy uses to describe what he needs. It is interesting how his thoughts unfold. He goes from being a little bird to saying that God will command his angels concerning you to provide protection and then he gets all the way to saying that "you will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent." It is fascinating that David uses two images used of Satan, the roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) and the serpent (Genesis 3). I wonder if David had Satan in mind when he refers to the Great Lion or the Serpent. David concludes with great confidence in God's heart towards him, "'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him.'" May we carry this same confidence in God, that as we pour out our love for him, he will pour out his power and love into our lives.
- Psalm 95: This is awesome to consider God's ownership of creation and how God holds it all in his hands. David reminds his singers of God's awesome power and calls us to worship him alone. He does this and then reminds us to be careful not to harden our hearts towards God as the Israelites did in the desert. So when things are dry and look

terrible, we must remember to never harden our hearts toward God. Remember he is good and loving and powerful at all times and in all ways!

- Psalm 109: Here is a Psalm that contrasts David and the heart of Jesus. Here David prays for his enemy but he prays all kinds of horrible judgments down on him. So although David gets a lot right, he doesn't understand what it means to love your enemies. This reminds us that only in Jesus do we truly see God's heart perfectly revealed. David sets the stage but he can only take us part way. David gets us ready for the teaching and truth of Jesus but even in some key points, even David is way off base. Again, praise God for Jesus!