

THE PSALMS



BOOK I (Psalms 1-41)

PSALM 1

The Two Ways

- 1 Happy are those
 who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
 or take the path that sinners tread,
 or sit in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law they meditate day and night.
- 3 They are like trees
 planted by streams of water,
 which yield their fruit in its season,
 and their leaves do not wither.
 In all that they do, they prosper.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
 judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the
 righteous;
- 6 for the LORD watches over the way of the
 righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.

PSALM 2

God's Promise to His Anointed

- 1 Why do the nations conspire,
 and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,

Read Psalm 1

Happiness is not just a reward but a consequence of staying in union with God and of continually pondering his instruction (Torah).

Reflect: The images are very rich: the tree representing life-giving firmness of purpose, and the chaff signifying the confusion of being tossed about by clashing goals for lack of any guiding purpose in life.

Pray: I ask God to form my will so that his power and goodness will fill me as the life-giving water that runs through a tree from its roots.

Act: These words are meaningful even when I may have sinned. After stepping into the path of sin, I need not walk in it; after seeking the company of the arrogant, I do not have to sit there! Every day and night—every moment that passes—is a new chance to fix my will and my delight on God. I will choose him!

Read Psalm 2

The Psalmist derides the absurdity of the powerful of this world who consider God's influence and his demands to be a threat to their freedom and wish to be rid of them. Yet the king established by God on Zion will easily triumph over this world's powers.

Reflect: How does God exert his power? Against this power, do I sometimes set my own will?

Pray: I acknowledge the King established by God, to whom the nations are given as an inheritance. For Christians he bears the name of Jesus. To him, I surrender my will, bowing down with reverence but also with the joy of knowing that his victory is for my good.

Act: I will dismiss enticements that tempt me to forsake God, and I refuse to be conquered by anxiety, because God's plan, carried out by his anointed King, cannot be thwarted by any obstacle.

- and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and his anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the LORD has them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your
heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter's
vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
with trembling ¹² kiss his feet,^a
or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Happy are all who take refuge in him.

PSALM 3**Trust in God under Adversity**

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

- 1 O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
2 many are saying to me,
"There is no help for you^b in God." *Selah*
3 But you, O LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.
4 I cry aloud to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy hill. *Selah*
5 I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.
6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.
7 Rise up, O LORD!
Deliver me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

^a Cn: Meaning of Heb of verses 11b and 12a is uncertain

^b Syr: Heb *him*

Read Psalms 3, 4

These psalms, as a morning and an evening prayer, frame a day lived with confidence in God, even in the face of a grave crisis. Psalm 4 expresses the confidence that God will always hear the one who is faithful to him.

Reflect: Is my confidence in God shaken by any of the things that worry me? Do I trust him even when I cannot yet discern a favorable outcome?

Pray: Lord, there is no amount of adversity in my life that you have not already foreseen and conquered. I trust in you completely.

Act: In any moment when I find myself afraid or alone in the face of difficulty, I will remember that God alone is “my glory,” who “lifts up my head.” And at night, I will calmly entrust everything to God’s loving care.

- 8 Deliverance belongs to the LORD;
may your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

PSALM 4

Confident Plea for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long, you people, shall my honor suffer
shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek
after lies? *Selah*
- 3 But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful
for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
- 4 When you are disturbed,^a do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*
- 5 Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.
- 6 There are many who say, “O that we might see
some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!”
- 7 You have put gladness in my heart
more than when their grain and wine abound.
- 8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in
safety.

PSALM 5

Trust in God for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.
- 2 Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
- 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and
watch.
- 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.
- 5 The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
- 6 You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

^a Or are angry

Read Psalm 5

In this morning prayer, the psalmist expresses confidence in God despite the threats of those who are sinful. The temple is seen as a symbol of God's protection, a place where no evildoer can enter.

Reflect: God's goodness surrounds me like the walls of his sanctuary, where I am allowed to take refuge because of his great love for me.

Pray: Wherever you are, Lord, there is peace and protection, because no one who lives for violence will come into your presence, and no one who lives by lies can stand against your truth. Keep me on the right path so that I will be the kind of person who stays in your presence.

Act: I will place this day under God's protection and then, with his help, try to live as one who deserves it.

- 7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe of you.
- 8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.
- 9 For there is no truth in their mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.
- 10 Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of their many transgressions cast them
out,
for they have rebelled against you.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult
in you.
- 12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.

PSALM 6**Prayer for Recovery from Grave Illness**

*To the leader: with stringed instruments; according to
The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
- 2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking
with terror.
- 3 My soul also is struck with terror,
while you, O LORD—how long?
- 4 Turn, O LORD, save my life;
deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who can give you praise?
- 6 I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
- 7 My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.
- 8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.

Read Psalm 6

This psalm, one of the seven "Penitential Psalms," graphically depicts the effect of evil even on the body—trembling bones, tears, and eyes deprived of sleep—and asks God to send his saving help.

Reflect: Where are my enemies, from whom I long to be freed? Are any of them within me?

Pray: Lord, I am helpless without you, but when you take up my cause, my adversaries—including those that are within me—take flight. Please come to my rescue without delay!

Act: Knowing that God's faithfulness to his covenant is my own pledge of protection, I will take courage to renew my own adherence to that covenant by confessing my sins and confidently seeking his mercy.

Read Psalm 7

This is a prayer for God's justice to be done, expressing the conviction that even if one may suffer unjustly for a time, justice will certainly be obtained ultimately. On the other hand, those whose conduct is unjust or oppressive will suffer the consequences of their own evil.

Reflect: What matter of uncertainty causes me the most anxiety at present? What do I need most urgently to submit to God's just decree?

Pray: Lord my God, I entrust to you all that I suffer, even unjustly. My just judge, when I am innocent, save me by your help, and when I am guilty, save me by your forgiveness.

Act: I will catch myself when I begin to complain before having asked God to resolve the situation, and I will entrust to him the matter that worries me.

- 9 The LORD has heard my supplication;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
10 All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck
with terror;
they shall turn back, and in a moment be put
to shame.

PSALM 7

Plea for Help against Persecutors

*A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD
concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.*

- 1 O LORD my God, in you I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,
2 or like a lion they will tear me apart;
they will drag me away, with no one to rescue.
3 O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,
4 if I have repaid my ally with harm
or plundered my foe without cause,
5 then let the enemy pursue and overtake me,
trample my life to the ground,
and lay my soul in the dust. *Selah*
6 Rise up, O LORD, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake, O my God;^a you have appointed a
judgment.
7 Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered
around you,
and over it take your seat^b on high.
8 The LORD judges the peoples;
judge me, O LORD, according to my
righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.
9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
but establish the righteous,
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God.
10 God is my shield,
who saves the upright in heart.
11 God is a righteous judge,
and a God who has indignation every day.
12 If one does not repent, God^c will whet his sword;
he has bent and strung his bow;
13 he has prepared his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.
14 See how they conceive evil,
and are pregnant with mischief,
and bring forth lies.

^a Or awake for me

^b Cn: Heb return

^c Heb he

Read Psalm 8

The psalmist praises the creator as he acknowledges the greatness and splendor of creation, which throws into relief the amazing fact that we, who are such a small part of this universe, have nevertheless been given dominion over all other created things.

Reflect: I marvel at the wisdom and order found within and among created things. Is my own use of created things respectful of this wisdom and order?

Pray: O Lord, rather than trying to find the words to praise you, I will listen to the praise that rises to you from the goodness of all that you have created. To this chorus of praise, I say "Amen."

Act: In the course of the day, I will offer God not only petitions, but also praise.

- 15 They make a pit, digging it out,
and fall into the hole that they have made.
- 16 Their mischief returns upon their own heads,
and on their own heads their violence
descends.
- 17 I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his
righteousness,
and sing praise to the name of the LORD, the
Most High.

PSALM 8**Divine Majesty and Human Dignity**

To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
- You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have
established;
- 4 what are human beings that you are mindful of
them,
mortals^a that you care for them?
- 5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God,^b
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- 6 You have given them dominion over the works of
your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- 9 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

PSALM 9**God's Power and Justice**

To the leader: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

- 1 I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole
heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
- 2 I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

^a Heb *ben adam*, lit. *son of man*

^b Or *than the divine beings or angels*: Heb *elohim*

Read Psalms 9, 10

In these two psalms that seem in the Hebrew text to be a single unit, the recurring themes are the consequences of practical unbelief in God (living as if he did not exist), and a prayer that God will show his justice and mercy to those who trust in him, overturning the plans of the unjust.

Reflect: The double psalm begins and ends with praise for God's justice but also includes a complaint that he seems to be absent. Does this pattern perhaps reflect the rhythm of my own prayer?

Pray: I trust, Lord, that your justice will prevail. When my faith falters, restore my confidence in you.

Act: When I am surrounded by forces that threaten to shake my confidence, my invincible weapon will be the praise of God's greatness and power.

- 3 When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished before you.
- 4 For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne giving righteous
judgment.
- 5 You have rebuked the nations, you have
destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name forever and ever.
- 6 The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins;
their cities you have rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.
- 7 But the LORD sits enthroned forever,
he has established his throne for judgment.
- 8 He judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with equity.
- 9 The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
- 10 And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who
seek you.
- 11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.
- 12 For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- 13 Be gracious to me, O LORD.
See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from the
gates of death,
- 14 so that I may recount all your praises,
and, in the gates of daughter Zion,
rejoice in your deliverance.
- 15 The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been
caught.
- 16 The LORD has made himself known, he has
executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own
hands. *Higgaion. Selah*
- 17 The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.
- 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.
- 19 Rise up, O LORD! Do not let mortals prevail;
let the nations be judged before you.
- 20 Put them in fear, O LORD;
let the nations know that they are only
human. *Selah*

PSALM 10**Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies**

- 1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times
of trouble?
- 2 In arrogance the wicked persecute
the poor—
let them be caught in the schemes
they have devised.
- 3 For the wicked boast of the desires
of their heart,
those greedy for gain curse and
renounce the LORD.
- 4 In the pride of their countenance the
wicked say, “God will not seek
it out”;
all their thoughts are, “There is no
God.”
- 5 Their ways prosper at all times;
your judgments are on high, out
of their sight;
as for their foes, they scoff at them.
- 6 They think in their heart, “We shall
not be moved;
throughout all generations we
shall not meet adversity.”
- 7 Their mouths are filled with cursing
and deceit and oppression;
under their tongues are mischief
and iniquity.
- 8 They sit in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places they murder the
innocent.
- Their eyes stealthily watch for the
helpless;
- 9 they lurk in secret like a lion in its
covert;
they lurk that they may seize the poor;

they seize the poor and drag them
off in their net.

- 10 They stoop, they crouch,
and the helpless fall by their
might.
- 11 They think in their heart, “God has
forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will
never see it.”
- 12 Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up your
hand;
do not forget the oppressed.
- 13 Why do the wicked renounce God,
and say in their hearts, “You will
not call us to account”?
- 14 But you do see! Indeed you note
trouble and grief,
that you may take it into your
hands;
the helpless commit themselves to
you;
you have been the helper of the
orphan.
- 15 Break the arm of the wicked and
evildoers;
seek out their wickedness until
you find none.
- 16 The LORD is king forever and ever;
the nations shall perish from his
land.
- 17 O LORD, you will hear the desire of
the meek;
you will strengthen their heart,
you will incline your ear
- 18 to do justice for the orphan and the
oppressed,
so that those from earth may
strike terror no more.^a

PSALM 11**Song of Trust in God**

To the leader. Of David.

- 1 In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me,
“Flee like a bird to the mountains;^b
- 2 for look, the wicked bend the bow,
they have fitted their arrow to the string,
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *flee to your mountain, O bird*

Read Psalms 11, 12

Here, both the power and the pervasiveness of evil are eloquently described, as also our utter helplessness without God's aid. Still, evil is no match for God who keeps ceaseless watch from his inaccessible temple and then purges evil as thoroughly as one who is refining silver in a crucible.

Reflect: Life sometimes actually turns out to be more dangerous than I have realized it to be. But the Lord, who is never surprised by this fact, is more powerful and more constant than any difficulty.

Pray: "You, O LORD, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever." (12:7).

Act: I will be aware of my greatest fears today and face them, whether they are within me or around me, because God has already foreseen them and provided me with the grace to deal with them.

- 3 If the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"
- 4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind.
- 5 The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,
and his soul hates the lover of violence.
- 6 On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur;
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.

PSALM 12

Plea for Help in Evil Times

To the leader: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Help, O LORD, for there is no longer anyone who
is godly;
the faithful have disappeared from humankind.
- 2 They utter lies to each other;
with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.
- 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great boasts,
- 4 those who say, "With our tongues we will prevail;
our lips are our own—who is our master?"
- 5 "Because the poor are despoiled, because the
needy groan,
I will now rise up," says the LORD;
"I will place them in the safety for which they
long."
- 6 The promises of the LORD are promises that are
pure,
silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
purified seven times.
- 7 You, O LORD, will protect us;
you will guard us from this generation forever.
- 8 On every side the wicked prowl,
as vileness is exalted among humankind.

PSALM 13

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I bear pain^a in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

^a Syr: Heb *hold counsels*

Read Psalms 13, 14

These two psalms focus on the variety of things that can and do go wrong in this world—anxiety, animosity, victories of the unjust, moral depravity and forgetfulness of God—but express a tenacious clinging to hope in God’s saving power.

Reflect: Is there a separation between my prayer life, on the one hand, and my frustrations, on the other, or do I turn to God with my concerns?

Pray: Lord, even before you answer my prayer, I will thank you for your goodness in hearing me, and trust in the salvation that you bring me.

Act: Whenever I begin to experience frustration or disgust, instead of useless complaining, I will recognize in my experience an invitation to come to God in prayer.

- 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep
of death,
- 4 and my enemy will say, “I have prevailed”;
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
- 5 But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

PSALM 14**Denunciation of Godlessness**

To the leader. Of David.

- 1 Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.”
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is no one who does good.
- 2 The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.
- 3 They have all gone astray, they are all alike
perverse;
there is no one who does good,
no, not one.
- 4 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon the LORD?
- 5 There they shall be in great terror,
for God is with the company of the righteous.
- 6 You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.
- 7 O that deliverance for Israel would come from
Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his
people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

PSALM 15**Who Shall Abide in God’s Sanctuary?**

A Psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?
- 2 Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;
- 3 who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,

Read Psalms 15, 16

These psalms reflect upon the life of those who are truly virtuous. The virtue of holy men and women unites them to God's holiness, so that in seeing and praising them I am seeing and praising God. From these thoughts, then, the psalmist rises to the choice of God as the true and only good.

Reflect: Am I worthy to live in God's presence? Is God the ultimate end of my existence, the constant object of my thoughts, or am I easily distracted by attachments to "false gods"?

Pray: O God, cleanse me of all blame; teach me to act justly and to speak truthfully so that I will be able to spend all my days and nights with you.

Act: I renounce all "false gods"—all those attachments that hinder my total dedication to God and tempt me to act unjustly with my neighbor.

nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;

- 4 in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honor those who fear the LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
5 who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be moved.

PSALM 16

Song of Trust and Security in God

A Miktam of David.

- 1 Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."^a
3 As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.
4 Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;^b
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in
pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
8 I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be
moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
10 For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

PSALM 17

Prayer for Deliverance from Persecutors

A Prayer of David.

- 1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

^a Jerome Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Psalm 17

This psalm suggests the security of one who is certain of not having fallen into sin, confidently asking the Lord to provide his own protection in the face of evil. Verse 5 is translated “My steps have held fast to your paths,” but another possible translation is the prayer “Keep my steps in your paths.”

Reflect: What a blessing it is to have a clear conscience! How clear is mine? When I pray for God’s will to be done, is my prayer spoken with sincerity?

Pray: Lord, please make me just in your sight, and save me in your justice.

Act: I want to be sure that God is with me in adversity, so I will stay with him in good times as well.

- 2 From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.
- 3 If you try my heart, if you visit me by night,
if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.
- 4 As for what others do, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
- 5 My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.
- 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my words.
- 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.
- 8 Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
9 from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
- 10 They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
- 11 They track me down;^a now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.
- 12 They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.
- 13 Rise up, O LORD, confront them, overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,
14 from mortals—by your hand, O LORD—
from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.
May their bellies be filled with what you have
stored up for them;
may their children have more than enough;
may they leave something over to their little
ones.
- 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding
your likeness.

PSALM 18**Royal Thanksgiving for Victory**

To the leader. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

- 1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.
- 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,

^a One Ms Compare Syr: MT *Our steps*

Read Psalm 18

This psalm is attributed to David, not only in its “title,” but also in 2 Samuel 22. It recalls the Lord’s saving help to David in the face of the most dramatic dangers from his enemies and from the perils of the wilderness where he sometimes had been forced to seek refuge. While majestic in its imagery, the psalm begins movingly with the intimate and tender words, “I love you...”

Reflect: The same power that shakes the earth to its foundations and sends light to pierce through even the darkest clouds is at my disposal because of the invincible love of God.

Pray: I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock and my redeemer.

Act: I will remember the times when the Lord has been with me in difficulty. Then I will praise him and renew my confidence in his continuing help.

- my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from my enemies.
- 4 The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me;
- 5 the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.
- 7 Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry.
- 8 Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him.
- 9 He bowed the heavens, and came down; thick darkness was under his feet.
- 10 He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
- 11 He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water.
- 12 Out of the brightness before him there broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire.
- 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice.^a
- 14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.
- 15 Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.
- 16 He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters.
- 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.
- 18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity; but the LORD was my support.
- 19 He brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.

^a Gk See 2 Sam 22.14: Heb adds *hailstones and coals of fire*

- 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed
from my God.
- 22 For all his ordinances were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away
from me.
- 23 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
- 24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed
me according to my
righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my
hands in his sight.
- 25 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show
yourself blameless;
- 26 with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show
yourself perverse.
- 27 For you deliver a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring
down.
- 28 It is you who light my lamp;
the LORD, my God, lights up my
darkness.
- 29 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a
wall.
- 30 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the LORD proves
true;
he is a shield for all who take
refuge in him.
- 31 For who is God except the LORD?
And who is a rock besides our
God?—
- 32 the God who girded me with strength,
and made my way safe.
- 33 He made my feet like the feet of a
deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
- 34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow
of bronze.
- 35 You have given me the shield of your
salvation,
- and your right hand has supported
me;
your help^a has made me great.
- 36 You gave me a wide place for my
steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.
- 37 I pursued my enemies and overtook
them;
and did not turn back until they
were consumed.
- 38 I struck them down, so that they
were not able to rise;
they fell under my feet.
- 39 For you girded me with strength for
the battle;
you made my assailants sink under
me.
- 40 You made my enemies turn their
backs to me,
and those who hated me I
destroyed.
- 41 They cried for help, but there was no
one to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he did
not answer them.
- 42 I beat them fine, like dust before the
wind;
I cast them out like the mire of the
streets.
- 43 You delivered me from strife with the
peoples;^b
you made me head of the nations;
people whom I had not known
served me.
- 44 As soon as they heard of me they
obeyed me;
foreigners came cringing to me.
- 45 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their
strongholds.
- 46 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock,
and exalted be the God of my
salvation,
- 47 the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples under me;
- 48 who delivered me from my enemies;

^a Or gentleness^b Gk Tg: Heb people

Read Psalm 19

This psalm has two very different parts: a melodious hymn to the splendor of God's creation, and another in praise of his law. The combination of these two themes is reasonable, however. In the law was revealed the same divine principle of order, applied to life, as could also be admired in creation.

Reflect: I admire the breathtaking beauty and order of creation. My life can be that beautiful and ordered if I allow it to be conformed to God's will.

Pray: O God, I see that everything in nature is ordered according to your holy will. Please put the same order into my will, my relationships, and all of my affairs.

Act: Instead of thinking everything would be so wonderful if it were arranged according to my own desires, I will take notice of how beautiful are those things that are ordered according to God's command.

indeed, you exalted me above my adversaries;
you delivered me from the violent.

- 49 For this I will extol you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
50 Great triumphs he gives to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

PSALM 19

God's Glory in Creation and the Law

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament^a proclaims his handiwork.
2 Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
4 yet their voice^b goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

- In the heavens^c he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his
wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.

^a Or *dome*

^b Gk Jerome Compare Syr: Heb *line*

^c Heb *In them*

13 Keep back your servant also from
the insolent;^a
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my
redeemer.

Read Psalms 20, 21

These are two prayers invoking God's blessings upon the king and expressing confidence in God's care for the king. Christians in praying these psalms think particularly of Jesus Christ as the king, the anointed of the Lord, who offers himself as the perfect sacrifice and wins for his people victory and eternal life, "length of days forever and ever."

Reflect: God has set up his King to protect me and to fight my battles for me. I will be confident and unafraid.

Pray: Lord, I have no offering of my own to make; remember the offering that the King has made for me, and let me share in his victory.

Act: I will acknowledge that my destiny is not something that I can win on my own. It is tied to my King and to all those who serve him.

PSALM 20

Prayer for Victory

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!
- 2 May he send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.
- 3 May he remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. *Selah*
- 4 May he grant you your heart's desire,
and fulfill all your plans.
- 5 May we shout for joy over your victory,
and in the name of our God set up our banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.
- 6 Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed;
he will answer him from his holy heaven
with mighty victories by his right hand.
- 7 Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses,
but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God.
- 8 They will collapse and fall,
but we shall rise and stand upright.
- 9 Give victory to the king, O LORD;
answer us when we call.^b

PSALM 21

Thanksgiving for Victory

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 In your strength the king rejoices, O LORD,
and in your help how greatly he exults!
- 2 You have given him his heart's desire,
and have not withheld the request of his lips. *Selah*
- 3 For you meet him with rich blessings;
you set a crown of fine gold on his head.
- 4 He asked you for life; you gave it to him—
length of days forever and ever.
- 5 His glory is great through your help;
splendor and majesty you bestow on him.
- 6 You bestow on him blessings forever;
you make him glad with the joy of your presence.

^a Or from proud thoughts

^b Gk: Heb give victory, O LORD; let the King answer us when we call

- 7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
and through the steadfast love of
the Most High he shall not be
moved.
- 8 Your hand will find out all your
enemies;
your right hand will find out those
who hate you.
- 9 You will make them like a fiery furnace
when you appear.
The LORD will swallow them up in his
wrath,
and fire will consume them.
- 10 You will destroy their offspring from
the earth,
and their children from among
humankind.
- 11 If they plan evil against you,
if they devise mischief, they will
not succeed.
- 12 For you will put them to flight;
you will aim at their faces with
your bows.
- 13 Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength!
We will sing and praise your
power.

Read Psalm 22

Here is the prayer of one whose relentless suffering is expressed in graphic terms. Still, the speaker anticipates God's answer in a remarkable act of thanksgiving, not being content to offer thanksgiving privately but inviting the whole community to join in praise. He calls upon "all the ends of the earth" and "all who sleep in the earth," and even those yet unborn to join in adoration. Jesus recites the opening words from the cross, and there is much in the psalm to reflect upon in the light of Christ's passion.

Reflect: Am I afraid to pray all of this psalm, including, at times, the opening words?

Pray: My God, I place all my fears and temptations before you. Please hear me so that I may proclaim to others your goodness.

Act: I will not fail to share with others what God has done for me.

PSALM 22

Plea for Deliverance from Suffering and Hostility

*To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn.
A Psalm of David.*

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the
words of my groaning?
- 2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.
- 3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- 4 In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- 5 To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
- 6 But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
- 7 All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
- 8 "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"
- 9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
- 10 On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been
my God.
- 11 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
- 12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- 13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

- 14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- 15 my mouth^a is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;^b
- 17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
- 18 they divide my clothes among
themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- 19 But you, O LORD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life^c from the power of the dog!
- 21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!
- From the horns of the wild oxen you
have rescued^d me.
- 22 I will tell of your name to my brothers
and sisters;^e
in the midst of the congregation I
will praise you:
- 23 You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you
offspring of Israel!

- 24 For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,^f
but heard when I^g cried to him.
- 25 From you comes my praise in the
great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those
who fear him.
- 26 The poor^h shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise
the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!
- 27 All the ends of the earth shall
remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.ⁱ
- 28 For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
- 29 To him,^j indeed, shall all who sleep
in^k the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go
down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.^l
- 30 Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told
about the Lord,
- 31 and^m proclaim his deliverance to a
people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

PSALM 23

The Divine Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;ⁿ
- 3 he restores my soul.^o
He leads me in right paths^p
for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^q
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;

^a Cn: Heb *strength*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb *my only one*

^d Heb *answered*

^e Or *kindred*

^f Heb *him*

^g Heb *he*

^h Or *afflicted*

ⁱ Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *you*

^j Cn: Heb *They have eaten and*

^k Cn: Heb *all the fat ones*

^l Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb *and he who cannot keep himself alive*

^m Compare Gk: Heb *it will be told about the Lord to the generation, ³¹ they will come and*

ⁿ Heb *waters of rest*

^o Or *life*

^p Or *paths of righteousness*

^q Or *the valley of the shadow of death*

Read Psalm 23

This beloved psalm draws upon the familiar imagery of shepherding in biblical times but is especially vivid for the fact of having been written from the perspective of the sheep that looks to God as shepherd. Its need for water, guidance, safety, green grass, food, and healing can clearly be interpreted not just in terms of material realities but also in a spiritual sense.

Reflect: When I see the image of a shepherd caring for a sheep, I know I can have the same confidence in God's care for me.

Pray: Like the sheep, Lord, I sometimes do not even know what I really need. Lead me even against my will of the moment, and protect me from harm.

Act: I will not act always on my own, without guidance, but will wait to be led by the Good Shepherd.

Read Psalm 24

All three parts of this psalm focus on the Lord's kingship. His role as creator is acknowledged as the ground of his kingship over all that exists. This is followed by a meditation on the qualities necessary in one who would approach this king. The Lord is then praised as a warrior returning victorious from battle.

Reflect: How amazing it is that the creator of all things has called me into a relationship with himself! He purifies me and makes me victorious over all that would harm me.

Pray: Open wide the gates of my heart, Lord, and prepare me to meet you. Be victorious over everything in my life that keeps me from living continually in your presence.

Act: Coming before God, and surveying all those tendencies within myself to act contrary to the Lord's will or apart from it, I choose to surrender to him.

you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

- 6 Surely^a goodness and mercy^b shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.^c

PSALM 24

Entrance into the Temple

Of David. A Psalm.

- 1 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
2 for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.
3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
5 They will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
6 Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.^d *Selah*
7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory. *Selah*

PSALM 25

Prayer for Guidance and for Deliverance

Of David.

- 1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly
treacherous.

^a Or Only

^b Or kindness

^c Heb for length of days

^d Gk Syr: Heb your face, O Jacob

Read Psalm 25

In this alphabetical psalm, as successive verses begin with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, we find many of the themes that appear in Psalm 1. However, the placid contemplation of the way of wisdom found in Psalm 1 has now given way to a series of heartfelt petitions to God for the strength to walk along this way, which is not always easy.

Reflect: Even though I may be able to see what is right, it is still a constant struggle both to see and to follow the right path, so that I must continually turn to the Lord and ask for the strength that only he can give.

Pray: Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.

Act: I will choose and repeat several of the invocations found in this psalm, the ones that correspond most clearly to my needs of the present moment.

- 4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
- 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
- 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your
steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
- 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my
transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!
- 8 Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
- 9 He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
- 10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and
faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
- 11 For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
- 12 Who are they that fear the LORD?
He will teach them the way that they should
choose.
- 13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
- 14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear
him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
- 15 My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.
- 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
- 17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me^a out of my distress.
- 18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.
- 19 Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
- 20 O guard my life, and deliver me;
do not let me be put to shame, for I take
refuge in you.
- 21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.
- 22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.

^a Or *The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me*

Read Psalm 26

This is the prayer of one who protests innocence before entering the temple to offer worship. For Christians it has sometimes called to mind the innocence of Jesus before his false accusers, and also the story of all those who are persecuted for their faith and who rely on God for their vindication.

Reflect: In preparing to worship God, I reflect on the beauty of innocence before God, whether it is, on the one hand, innocence preserved, or on the other, innocence restored through forgiveness.

Pray: Keep me free from guilt, O Lord, so that I may praise you in the house where you dwell.

Act: I will examine my conscience, ask for forgiveness, and avoid everything that leads me to sin, so as to worship God with a pure conscience.

PSALM 26**Plea for Justice and Declaration of Righteousness**

Of David.

- 1 Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD without
wavering.
- 2 Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and mind.
- 3 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.^a
- 4 I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
- 5 I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.
- 6 I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O LORD,
- 7 singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.
- 8 O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.
- 9 Do not sweep me away with sinners,
nor my life with the bloodthirsty,
10 those in whose hands are evil devices,
and whose right hands are full of bribes.
- 11 But as for me, I walk in my integrity;
redeem me, and be gracious to me.
- 12 My foot stands on level ground;
in the great congregation I will bless the LORD.

PSALM 27**Triumphant Song of Confidence**

Of David.

- 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold^b of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
- 2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
- 3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

^a Or in your faithfulness

^b Or refuge

Read Psalm 27

This psalm joins together in a remarkable way both contemplation and the active following of God. The contemplation of the Lord's beauty within his temple provides the courage that the believer needs to strive for good and against evil. Conversely, the one who is successful in life's struggles wishes to return to the peace of God's temple, there to praise him all the more.

Reflect: How well do I keep together the active and contemplative dimensions of my life of faith, my life of service, and my life of worship?

Pray: Lord, whenever I struggle, let me never feel that you have abandoned me. And whenever I am successful, let me never abandon you.

Act: Amid the day's activity, I will pause and focus on God, not to turn away from life's responsibilities but to be renewed in order to fulfill them.

Read Psalm 28

This prayer of an individual for deliverance from injustice ends with an act of thanksgiving for the fact that the Lord has indeed heard, and with confidence that he will bestow his blessing.

Reflect: Do I have the confidence in God that will allow me to pray in the manner of the psalmist, thanking God for having heard me even in the very act of praying for his help?

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, for you have heard my prayer!

Act: I will refuse to allow any external events or conditions to shake my doubt that God has already heard my prayer, and that he is already preparing to answer in the way that is best.

- 4 One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.
- 5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.
- 6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.
- 7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
- 8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, do I seek.
- 9 Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
- 10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.
- 11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
- 12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.
- 13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
- 14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

PSALM 28

Prayer for Help and Thanksgiving for It

Of David.

- 1 To you, O LORD, I call;
my rock, do not refuse to hear me,
for if you are silent to me,
I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
- 2 Hear the voice of my supplication,
as I cry to you for help,

Read Psalm 29

As in other places, such as Exodus 9:23–25, Isaiah 29:6, and Revelation 11:19, etc., the phenomena of a storm are seen as symbolic of God's presence and power: shattering trees, thundering his "voice" from heaven, and flashing flames of fire, but leaving an atmosphere of peace where he has passed. The psalm praises the revelation of God's power, even while it does not dare to address him directly except in the people's cry of "Glory!"

Reflect: Even as the Lord reveals his terrifying power, I am blessed to be the recipient of his protection and blessing.

Pray: The Lord has revealed his power! Peace on all God's people!

Act: I will allow myself to experience awe at God's revelation of his power, and my silence before his majesty will be more eloquent than any words I might speak.

as I lift up my hands
toward your most holy sanctuary.^a

- 3 Do not drag me away with the wicked,
with those who are workers of evil,
who speak peace with their neighbors,
while mischief is in their hearts.
- 4 Repay them according to their work,
and according to the evil of their deeds;
repay them according to the work of their hands;
render them their due reward.
- 5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
or the work of his hands,
he will break them down and build them up no more.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has heard the sound of my pleadings.
- 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.
- 8 The LORD is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
- 9 O save your people, and bless your heritage;
be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

PSALM 29

The Voice of God in a Great Storm

A Psalm of David.

- 1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,^b
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendor.
- 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,^c
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

^a Heb your innermost sanctuary

^b Heb sons of gods

^c Or causes the deer to calve

10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

11 May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Read Psalm 30

The psalm praises the Lord's deliverance from the danger of death, which might have been posed by a disease, or by destructive enemies, or by both. The danger is described as a "pit," and God's deliverance has pulled the psalmist up out of that pit. The words of the psalm also speak of the profound lesson learned from such an experience.

Reflect: My pride has been wounded whenever I have realized that I was far more vulnerable than I thought, and I was not truly the master of my own fate. Far more important, I have learned that God's deliverance is my hope.

Pray: O Lord my God, as you have saved me from past dangers, remind me in the future of your healing and saving presence.

Act: I will relinquish my arrogant self-confidence. It is confidence in God that I need instead.

PSALM 30

Thanksgiving for Recovery from Grave Illness

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the temple. Of David.

- 1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
- 3 O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.^a
- 4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
- 6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
"I shall never be moved."
- 7 By your favor, O LORD,
you had established me as a strong mountain;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.
- 8 To you, O LORD, I cried,
and to the LORD I made supplication:
- 9 "What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?"
- 10 Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!
O LORD, be my helper!"
- 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
- 12 so that my soul^b may praise you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

^a Or that I should not go down to the Pit

^b Heb that glory

Read Psalm 31

In this psalm, the remembrance of God's past mercies and faithfulness give confidence in presenting petitions, yet these latter remain quite real and impassioned. The psalm thus mirrors realistically the prayer of believers. Christians recognize in verse 5 Jesus' last words spoken from the cross, and in all of the psalm's words they recognize the attitude of an acceptance of life's struggles while remaining unshaken in faith.

Reflect: How many times and in how many ways has God saved me in the past? I will rely on him now, knowing that he will be true to himself.

Pray: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Act: The dying St. Stephen expressed similar words in Acts 7:59. I will make the attitude of the psalm my own in facing today's challenges.

PSALM 31

Prayer and Praise for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
- 2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
- 3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
- 4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
- 5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.
- 6 You hate^a those who pay regard to worthless
idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,
- 8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the
enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.
- 9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
- 10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,^b
and my bones waste away.
- 11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror^c to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
- 12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.
- 14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
- 15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and
persecutors.

^a One Heb Ms Gk Syr Jerome: MT I hate

^b Gk Syr: Heb my iniquity

^c Cn: Heb exceedingly

- 16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
- 17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.
- 18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the
righteous
with pride and contempt.
- 19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those
who fear you,
and accomplished for those who
take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!
- 20 In the shelter of your presence you
hide them
from human plots;

you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

- 21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his
steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under
siege.
- 22 I had said in my alarm,
“I am driven far^a from your sight.”
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.
- 23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one
who acts haughtily.
- 24 Be strong, and let your heart take
courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

Read Psalm 32

While there are many psalms that express a confidence in God grounded in one's own righteousness, this one relies instead on the certainty of the Lord's forgiveness for one who humbly confesses guilt. It counsels all to come to the fullness of human life that lies in such trust, to forsake the unreality of self-righteousness, and to derive the benefits that come from confessing sin and asking for forgiveness.

Reflect: What sins of mine do I find myself afraid to face? In such fear, is there not a lack of trust in God?

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for showing me your mercy. I come before you unafraid, and I rely on your forgiveness.

Act: I will abandon the need to defend all of my actions and will place my trust in God's reliable goodness rather than in my fragile righteousness.

PSALM 32

The Joy of Forgiveness

Of David. A Maskil.

- 1 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up^b as by the heat of
summer. *Selah*
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*
- 6 Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress,^c the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
- 7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of
deliverance. *Selah*
- 8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you
should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

^a Another reading is *cut off*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Cn: Heb at a time of finding only

Read Psalm 33

This hymn of praise to the creator of all recognizes his majestic sovereignty over all that he has made and grounds his creatures' trust in his ever-present providence and assistance. Accordingly, it also acknowledges the folly of placing one's trust in anything other than God.

Reflect: If the Lord constantly holds in his hands everything that he has made, directing its orderly unfolding before my very eyes, certainly I can trust that my own life is also within his power and care.

Pray: Speak, O Lord, your word that creates me anew! I trust you.

Act: Before going ahead with my plans today, I will remember that God has already made a plan for me today, and I will seek to know and follow it.

- 9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and
bridle,
else it will not stay near you.
- 10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in
the LORD.
- 11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

PSALM 33

The Greatness and Goodness of God

- 1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
- 2 Praise the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten
strings.
- 3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.
- 4 For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
- 5 He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.
- 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
he put the deeps in storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe
of him.
- 9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.
- 10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to
nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
- 12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his
heritage.
- 13 The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.
- 14 From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.

- 16 A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his
great strength.
- 17 The war horse is a vain hope for
victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.
- 18 Truly the eye of the LORD is on those
who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast
love,
- 19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.
- 21 Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy
name.
- 22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be
upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Read Psalm 34

Although this is an alphabetic psalm, each of its verses beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it has a striking unity and beauty. The psalmist praises God, speaking as one who has experienced his goodness and witnessed it also in the lives of others. He savors God's sweetness and invites his hearers to do the same.

Reflect: To the extent that I really know God, it is not sufficient simply to think about his attributes and goodness. I must savor his presence and share with others his generosity to me.

Pray: Lord, let me always savor your goodness. Remind me of your presence and protection so that I will never go hungry for you.

Act: I will act and speak in a way that allows and invites others to taste and savor the presence of God.

PSALM 34

Praise for Deliverance from Trouble

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

- 1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- 3 O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Look to him, and be radiant;
so your^a faces shall never be ashamed.
- 6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
- 9 O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
- 10 The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
- 11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- 12 Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- 14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the
earth.

^a Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *their*

Read Psalm 35

Here is the prayer of one falsely accused and mistreated not only by enemies but also by those who have been the beneficiaries of his goodness. For the Christian, the psalm is striking in its evocation of the sufferings of Christ. Even in a situation of perplexity and complete helplessness, the psalmist expresses complete confidence in God's justice and anticipates the prayer of thanksgiving that will arise in response to God's answer to this prayer.

Reflect: Has any difficulty of mine even approached the dire situation described in this psalm? The psalmist's confidence gives me strength to trust God completely.

Pray: O Lord, you are my salvation!

Act: Whenever I ask God for something, I will thank him already for his answer. Even if I do not know how he will answer, I know he will answer in the way that is best for me.

- 17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
- 20 He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
- 21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be
condemned.
- 22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be
condemned.

PSALM 35

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

Of David.

- 1 Contend, O LORD, with those who contend
with me;
fight against those who fight against me!
- 2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
and rise up to help me!
- 3 Draw the spear and javelin
against my pursuers;
say to my soul,
"I am your salvation."
- 4 Let them be put to shame and dishonor
who seek after my life.
Let them be turned back and confounded
who devise evil against me.
- 5 Let them be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the LORD driving them on.
- 6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
- 7 For without cause they hid their net^a for me;
without cause they dug a pit^b for my life.
- 8 Let ruin come on them unawares.
And let the net that they hid ensnare them;
let them fall in it—to their ruin.
- 9 Then my soul shall rejoice in the LORD,
exulting in his deliverance.
- 10 All my bones shall say,
"O LORD, who is like you?
You deliver the weak
from those too strong for them,
the weak and needy from those who despoil
them."

^a Heb a *pit*, their net

^b The word *pit* is transposed from the preceding line

- 11 Malicious witnesses rise up;
they ask me about things I do not
know.
- 12 They repay me evil for good;
my soul is forlorn.
- 13 But as for me, when they were sick,
I wore sackcloth;
I afflicted myself with fasting.
I prayed with head bowed^a on my
bosom,
- 14 as though I grieved for a friend or
a brother;
I went about as one who laments for
a mother,
bowed down and in mourning.
- 15 But at my stumbling they gathered
in glee,
they gathered together against me;
ruffians whom I did not know
tore at me without ceasing;
- 16 they impiously mocked more and
more,^b
gnashing at me with their teeth.
- 17 How long, O LORD, will you look on?
Rescue me from their ravages,
my life from the lions!
- 18 Then I will thank you in the great
congregation;
in the mighty throng I will praise
you.
- 19 Do not let my treacherous enemies
rejoice over me,
or those who hate me without
cause wink the eye.
- 20 For they do not speak peace,
but they conceive deceitful words
against those who are quiet in the
land.
- 21 They open wide their mouths against
me;
they say, "Aha, Aha,
our eyes have seen it."
- 22 You have seen, O LORD; do not be
silent!
O Lord, do not be far from me!
- 23 Wake up! Bestir yourself for my
defense,
for my cause, my God and my
Lord!
- 24 Vindicate me, O LORD, my God,
according to your righteousness,
and do not let them rejoice over me.
- 25 Do not let them say to themselves,
"Aha, we have our heart's desire."
Do not let them say, "We have
swallowed you^c up."
- 26 Let all those who rejoice at my
calamity
be put to shame and confusion;
let those who exalt themselves
against me
be clothed with shame and
dishonor.
- 27 Let those who desire my vindication
shout for joy and be glad,
and say evermore,
"Great is the LORD,
who delights in the welfare of his
servant."
- 28 Then my tongue shall tell of your
righteousness
and of your praise all day long.

PSALM 36

Human Wickedness and Divine Goodness

To the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD.

- 1 Transgression speaks to the wicked
deep in their hearts;
there is no fear of God
before their eyes.
- 2 For they flatter themselves in their own eyes
that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated.
- 3 The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit;
they have ceased to act wisely and do good.

^a Or *My prayer turned back*

^b Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the profanest of mockers of a cake*

^c Heb *him*

Read Psalms 36, 37

Psalm 36 is a reflection on the great contrast between the mystery of human iniquity on the one hand and the utterly dependable love of God on the other. Then, within an alphabetic structure, Psalm 37 translates such a reflection into counsels for good living.

Reflect: If I take the time to reflect on God's goodness against the backdrop of human sinfulness, then the choice for God is clear. If I fail to reflect thus, then I am in danger of falling into sinfulness myself.

Pray: Lord, your love reaches to heaven, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Act: I will refrain from looking for my ultimate satisfaction anywhere else than in the Lord, knowing that he is the one who will give me everything that truly satisfies me.

- 4 They plot mischief while on their beds;
they are set on a way that is not good;
they do not reject evil.
- 5 Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the
heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
- 6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O LORD.
- 7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of
your wings.
- 8 They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your
delights.
- 9 For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.
- 10 O continue your steadfast love to those who
know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!
- 11 Do not let the foot of the arrogant tread on me,
or the hand of the wicked drive me away.
- 12 There the evildoers lie prostrate;
they are thrust down, unable to rise.

PSALM 37

Exhortation to Patience and Trust

Of David.

- 1 Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
- 2 for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
- 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
- 4 Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- 5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
- 6 He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.
- 7 Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.
- 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
- 9 For the wicked shall be cut off,

- but those who wait for the LORD
shall inherit the land.
- 10 Yet a little while, and the wicked will
be no more;
though you look diligently for their
place, they will not be there.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the land,
and delight themselves in
abundant prosperity.
- 12 The wicked plot against the
righteous,
and gnash their teeth at them;
13 but the LORD laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that their day is coming.
- 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend
their bows
to bring down the poor and needy,
to kill those who walk uprightly;
15 their sword shall enter their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better is a little that the righteous
person has
than the abundance of many
wicked.
- 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be
broken,
but the LORD upholds the
righteous.
- 18 The LORD knows the days of the
blameless,
and their heritage will abide
forever;
19 they are not put to shame in evil
times,
in the days of famine they have
abundance.
- 20 But the wicked perish,
and the enemies of the LORD are
like the glory of the pastures;
they vanish—like smoke they
vanish away.
- 21 The wicked borrow, and do not pay
back,
- but the righteous are generous
and keep giving;
- 22 for those blessed by the LORD shall
inherit the land,
but those cursed by him shall be
cut off.
- 23 Our steps^a are made firm by the
LORD,
when he delights in our^b way;
24 though we stumble,^c we^d shall not
fall headlong,
for the LORD holds us^e by the hand.
- 25 I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous
forsaken
or their children begging bread.
- 26 They are ever giving liberally and
lending,
and their children become a blessing.
- 27 Depart from evil, and do good;
so you shall abide forever.
- 28 For the LORD loves justice;
he will not forsake his faithful ones.
- The righteous shall be kept safe
forever,
but the children of the wicked
shall be cut off.
- 29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
and live in it forever.
- 30 The mouths of the righteous utter
wisdom,
and their tongues speak justice.
- 31 The law of their God is in their hearts;
their steps do not slip.
- 32 The wicked watch for the righteous,
and seek to kill them.
- 33 The LORD will not abandon them to
their power,
or let them be condemned when
they are brought to trial.
- 34 Wait for the LORD, and keep to his way,
and he will exalt you to inherit the
land;

^a Heb *A man's steps*

^b Heb *his*

^c Heb *he stumbles*

^d Heb *he*

^e Heb *him*

- you will look on the destruction of the wicked.
- 35 I have seen the wicked oppressing, and towering like a cedar of Lebanon.^a
- 36 Again ^b passed by, and they were no more; though I sought them, they could not be found.
- 37 Mark the blameless, and behold the upright, for there is posterity for the peaceable.
- 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their refuge in the time of trouble.
- 40 The LORD helps them and rescues them; he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Read Psalm 38

One of the traditional seven “Penitential Psalms,” this psalm speaks of some unnamed defect within the self in vividly physical terms: bodily wounds and aches, a racing heartbeat, the sagging posture of one weighted down by a heavy burden. It becomes clear that these ailments in some way have a moral dimension, bound up with “my sin” and “my iniquities.” The psalm asks God for restoration to wholeness and protection from enemies.

Reflect: Whether or not I have any of the physical ailments described here, they are a vivid metaphor for interior concerns such as worries, preoccupations, and, at times, a guilty conscience.

Pray: Against all enemies, O Lord, both within me and outside me, you are my trustworthy defense.

Act: Armed with the confidence in God’s healing and forgiveness expressed in this psalm, I will overcome my fear of examining my conscience honestly.

PSALM 38

A Penitent Sufferer’s Plea for Healing

A Psalm of David, for the memorial offering.

- 1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath.
- 2 For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.
- 4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me.
- 5 My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness;
- 6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning.
- 7 For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.
- 8 I am utterly spent and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.
- 9 O Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.
- 10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.
- 11 My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction, and my neighbors stand far off.
- 12 Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek to hurt me speak of ruin, and meditate treachery all day long.

^a Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *he*

- 13 But I am like the deaf, I do not hear;
like the mute, who cannot speak.
- 14 Truly, I am like one who does not hear,
and in whose mouth is no retort.
- 15 But it is for you, O LORD, that I wait;
it is you, O Lord my God, who will
answer.
- 16 For I pray, “Only do not let them
rejoice over me,
those who boast against me when
my foot slips.”
- 17 For I am ready to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.
- 18 I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin.
- 19 Those who are my foes without
cause^a are mighty,
and many are those who hate me
wrongfully.
- 20 Those who render me evil for good
are my adversaries because I
follow after good.
- 21 Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me;
- 22 make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation.

Read Psalms 39, 40

Psalm 39 begins with a reflection on human frailty, but gives way to the acknowledgement of God as the one in whom hope is truly warranted. The exultant praise of Psalm 40 continues such sentiments, expressing such hope in God’s powerful intervention that others too will be inspired to put their trust in his power.

Reflect: Every experience of my limitations is an occasion to acknowledge more confidently the power of God who is able to raise me above them.

Pray: In the challenges that I will face today, Lord, give me strength so that I will not only gain confidence in you, but also inspire others to trust in you.

Act: I will adopt a new attitude toward my limitations. They are good, because they lead me to find the one in whom I can find the power that I now lack.

PSALM 39

Prayer for Wisdom and Forgiveness

To the leader: to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

- 1 I said, “I will guard my ways
that I may not sin with my tongue;
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked are in my presence.”
- 2 I was silent and still;
I held my peace to no avail;
my distress grew worse,
- 3 my heart became hot within me.
While I mused, the fire burned;
then I spoke with my tongue:
- 4 “LORD, let me know my end,
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
- 5 You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath. *Selah*
- 6 Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up, and do not know who will gather.
- 7 “And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.
- 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool.
- 9 I am silent; I do not open my mouth,
for it is you who have done it.
- 10 Remove your stroke from me;
I am worn down by the blows^b of your hand.
- 11 “You chastise mortals
in punishment for sin,

^a Q Ms: MT *my living foes*

^b Heb *hostility*

consuming like a moth what is dear
to them;
surely everyone is a mere
breath. *Selah*

- 12 “Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
an alien, like all my forebears.
13 Turn your gaze away from me, that I
may smile again,
before I depart and am no more.”

PSALM 40

Thanksgiving for Deliverance and Prayer for Help

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

- 1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He drew me up from the desolate pit,^a
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.
4 Happy are those who make
the LORD their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false
gods.
5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your
thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be
counted.
6 Sacrifice and offering you do not
desire,
but you have given me an open ear.^b
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
7 Then I said, “Here I am;
in the scroll of the book it is
written of me.^c
8 I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart.”
9 I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
10 I have not hidden your saving help
within my heart,
I have spoken of your faithfulness
and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast
love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.
11 Do not, O LORD, withhold
your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your
faithfulness
keep me safe forever.
12 For evils have encompassed me
without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me,
until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.
13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to help me.
14 Let all those be put to shame and
confusion
who seek to snatch away my life;
let those be turned back and
brought to dishonor
who desire my hurt.
15 Let those be appalled because of
their shame
who say to me, “Aha, Aha!”
16 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation
say continually, “Great is the LORD!”
17 As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
do not delay, O my God.

^a Cn: Heb *pit of tumult*

^b Heb *ears you have dug for me*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Psalm 41

This psalm is the prayer of one who is not only sick but also tormented by false friends who pretend to care about him while placing their hopes in his downfall. Verse 9 of the psalm is thus cited in John 13:18, where the same false friendship to Jesus is seen in the person of Judas Iscariot.

Reflect: Sometimes human betrayal can tempt one to turn against God in anger. Here a better way is proposed, namely, to hope in God even if all others seem at the moment to fail me.

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, who do not abandon your servants in their time of need.

Act: When I see human treachery, I will not give in to the temptation to imitate it; rather, I will follow the example of God, who remains faithful to his servants even when he has been offended.

PSALM 41**Assurance of God's Help and a Plea for Healing**

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Happy are those who consider the poor;^a
the LORD delivers them in the day of trouble.
- 2 The LORD protects them and keeps them alive;
they are called happy in the land.
You do not give them up to the will of their enemies.
- 3 The LORD sustains them on their sickbed;
in their illness you heal all their infirmities.^b
- 4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have sinned against you."
- 5 My enemies wonder in malice
when I will die, and my name perish.
- 6 And when they come to see me, they utter
empty words,
while their hearts gather mischief;
when they go out, they tell it abroad.
- 7 All who hate me whisper together about me;
they imagine the worst for me.
- 8 They think that a deadly thing has fastened
on me,
that I will not rise again from where I lie.
- 9 Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted,
who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel
against me.
- 10 But you, O LORD, be gracious to me,
and raise me up, that I may repay them.
- 11 By this I know that you are pleased with me;
because my enemy has not triumphed over me.
- 12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity,
and set me in your presence forever.
- 13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.

^a Or weak

^b Heb you change all his bed

BOOK II
(Psalms 42-72)

PSALM 42

Longing for God and His Help in Distress

To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.

- 1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
- 3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
- 4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,^a
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
- 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help ⁶ and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
- 7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.
- 8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
- 9 I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”
- 10 As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
- 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Read Psalms 42, 43

These two psalms, which seem originally to have formed a single psalm, express the longing for the holy place of one who is far from Jerusalem (42:6 suggests extreme northern Israel, where the Jordan’s source flows from the base of Mt. Hermon).

Reflect: The geographical distance from Jerusalem is emblematic of the spiritual distance at which we can find ourselves from God, while longing to enter his presence.

Pray: My soul hungers and thirsts for you, my God. Only you can satisfy the deepest longings of my heart.

Act: I will call to mind a holy place where I have experienced God’s closeness and let my longing for God find expression in my desire to visit that place again.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

PSALM 43

Prayer to God in Time of Trouble

- 1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause
against an ungodly people;
from those who are deceitful and unjust
deliver me!
- 2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge;
why have you cast me off?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because of the oppression of the enemy?

- 3 O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.
- 4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.
- 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Read Psalm 44

The psalm begins as a hymn of praise to God for his great deeds in history, but the tone suddenly changes when the calamities of the present are mentioned: where are God's glorious deeds now? The psalm ends with a bold and impassioned plea for God to "awaken" and intervene.

Reflect: Do I have the confidence that God's greatness will be shown in my own life and in today's world as clearly as in the events recorded in the sacred scriptures?

Pray: Rise up, Lord, and show your power! Let us know that you are still present to your people with your saving power.

Act: I will rid myself of the fear of doing right in a world that may not comprehend or appreciate it. Being certain that God will intervene on behalf of those who belong to him, I will act accordingly.

PSALM 44

National Lament and Prayer for Help

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Maskil.

- 1 We have heard with our ears, O God,
our ancestors have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
- 2 you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
- 3 for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm give them victory;
but your right hand, and your arm,
and the light of your countenance,
for you delighted in them.
- 4 You are my King and my God;
you command^a victories for Jacob.
- 5 Through you we push down our foes;
through your name we tread down our assailants.
- 6 For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
- 7 But you have saved us from our foes,
and have put to confusion those who hate us.
- 8 In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to your name
forever. Selah
- 9 Yet you have rejected us and abased us,
and have not gone out with our armies.
- 10 You made us turn back from the foe,
and our enemies have gotten spoil.
- 11 You have made us like sheep for slaughter,
and have scattered us among the nations.

^a Gk Syr: Heb *You are my King, O God; command*

- 12 You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.
- 13 You have made us the taunt of our
neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those
around us.
- 14 You have made us a byword among
the nations,
a laughingstock^a among the
peoples.
- 15 All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
- 16 at the words of the taunters and
revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and the
avenger.
- 17 All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant.
- 18 Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from
your way,
- 19 yet you have broken us in the haunt
of jackals,
and covered us with deep
darkness.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our
God,
or spread out our hands to a
strange god,
21 would not God discover this?
For he knows the secrets of the
heart.
- 22 Because of you we are being killed
all day long,
and accounted as sheep for the
slaughter.
- 23 Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep,
O Lord?
Awake, do not cast us off forever!
- 24 Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our affliction
and oppression?
- 25 For we sink down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.
- 26 Rise up, come to our help.
Redeem us for the sake of your
steadfast love.

PSALM 45

Ode for a Royal Wedding

*To the leader: according to Lilies. Of the Korahites.
A Maskil. A love song.*

- 1 My heart overflows with a goodly theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.
- 2 You are the most handsome of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.
- 3 Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your glory and majesty.
- 4 In your majesty ride on victoriously
for the cause of truth and to defend^b the right;
let your right hand teach you dread deeds.
- 5 Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.
- 6 Your throne, O God,^c endures forever and ever.
Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity;
7 you love righteousness and hate wickedness.

^a Heb a shaking of the head

^b Cn: Heb and the meekness of

^c Or Your throne is a throne of God, it

Read Psalm 45

This is evidently a psalm written in the court of a king for his wedding. The king himself is praised, and then the psalmist's attention turns to the new queen. The psalm's continuing significance in prayer rests on its applicability to the nuptial relationship between God and his people. In this king, Christians have often seen Christ, and in the queen, they have been reminded of the Virgin Mary.

Reflect: I will dwell upon the joy and intimacy of the relationship between the bridegroom and bride expressed here as a particularly inviting image of my relationship with God.

Pray: Lord, help me to forget everything that would hinder my love of you, so as to live in perfect union with you.

Act: I will reflect on how radically my life is affected by truly belonging to God and examine my life in the light of this standard.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your
companions;

8 your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and
aloes and cassia.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make
you glad;

9 daughters of kings are among your ladies of
honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of
Ophir.

10 Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear;
forget your people and your father's house,
11 and the king will desire your beauty.

Since he is your lord, bow to him;

12 the people^a of Tyre will seek your favor with
gifts,
the richest of the people¹³ with all kinds of wealth.

The princess is decked in her chamber with
gold-woven robes;^b

14 in many-colored robes she is led to the king;
behind her the virgins, her companions, follow.

15 With joy and gladness they are led along
as they enter the palace of the king.

16 In the place of ancestors you, O king,^c shall
have sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.

17 I will cause your name to be celebrated in all
generations;
therefore the peoples will praise you forever
and ever.

PSALM 46

God's Defense of His City and People

*To the leader. Of the Korahites.
According to Alamothe. A Song.*

1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present^d help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth
should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of
the sea;

3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its
tumult.

Selah

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the
city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

^a Heb daughter

^b Or people. ¹³All glorious is the princess
within, gold embroidery is her clothing

^c Heb lacks O king

^d Or well proved

Read Psalms 46, 47

Both of these psalms praise the might of Jacob's God, by virtue of which the children of Jacob enjoy the confident repose of those who know that they are protected. While other psalms extol God's power as a source of strength in battle, these find in that power a bulwark that allows God's people to live in peace.

Reflect: Because of God's protection, even exterior upheaval does not have to trouble me. Under his reign, my life and my concerns are secure.

Pray: Sing praise to the Lord of hosts; our stronghold is the God of Jacob!

Act: In response to the words of this psalm, my action will be to refrain from the fretful action of one who fails to trust and to move ahead securely confident of God's protection.

- 5 God is in the midst of the city;^a it shall not be moved;
 God will help it when the morning dawns.
- 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
 he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our refuge.^b *Selah*
- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD;
 see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
 he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
 he burns the shields with fire.
- 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
 I am exalted among the nations,
 I am exalted in the earth."
- 11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our refuge.^b *Selah*

PSALM 47

God's Rule over the Nations

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

- 1 Clap your hands, all you peoples;
 shout to God with loud songs of joy.
- 2 For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome,
 a great king over all the earth.
- 3 He subdued peoples under us,
 and nations under our feet.
- 4 He chose our heritage for us,
 the pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Selah*
- 5 God has gone up with a shout,
 the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
 sing praises to our King, sing praises.
- 7 For God is the king of all the earth;
 sing praises with a psalm.^c
- 8 God is king over the nations;
 God sits on his holy throne.
- 9 The princes of the peoples gather
 as the people of the God of Abraham.
 For the shields of the earth belong to God;
 he is highly exalted.

^a Heb *of it*

^b Or *fortress*

^c Heb *Maskil*

Read Psalm 48

The holy city of Zion is depicted here as having miraculously survived an enemy attack by land and by sea, thus constituting a sign of God's powerful protection of his people who are sheltered there.

Reflect: The psalm's way of combining images of beauty and strength, victory and peace, speak powerfully of God's attributes and his way of living with his people.

Pray: In the tranquility of your holy protection, Lord, I rest secure. Build within me a holy place where you may be worshiped securely and without fear.

Act: I will relinquish the desire to fight unnecessary fights, not out of cowardice but out of the certainty that God is the one who has already won my battles.

Read Psalm 49

This so-called "wisdom psalm" emphasizes the foolishness of a disordered trust in wealth, as if it were possible to use such wealth to avoid the death that inevitably faces each person. Ironically, this trust in wealth, far from making a person immortal, will make that person even more like animals that lack any spiritual dimension.

Reflect: How much of my life is staked on illusions of self-sufficiency? Do I place more emphasis on things that I cannot take with me from this world, or on spiritual treasure that endures forever?

Pray: Lord, you are my lasting treasure, and it is you that I want to possess even now.

Act: I will practice a healthy detachment from the things that belong exclusively to this present world, and still more from those things that are sinful or that lead me into sin.

PSALM 48**The Glory and Strength of Zion**

A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites.

- 1 Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain, ² beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
- 3 Within its citadels God
has shown himself a sure defense.
- 4 Then the kings assembled,
they came on together.
- 5 As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
they were in panic, they took to flight;
6 trembling took hold of them there,
pains as of a woman in labor,
- 7 as when an east wind shatters
the ships of Tarshish.
- 8 As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever.

Selah

- 9 We ponder your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.
- 10 Your name, O God, like your praise,
reaches to the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is filled with victory.
- 11 Let Mount Zion be glad,
let the towns^a of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments.
- 12 Walk about Zion, go all around it,
count its towers,
- 13 consider well its ramparts;
go through its citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
that this is God,
- 14 our God forever and ever.
He will be our guide forever.

PSALM 49**The Folly of Trust in Riches**

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

- 1 Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
- 2 both low and high,
rich and poor together.

^a Heb daughters

- 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;
the meditation of my heart shall
be understanding.
- 4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will solve my riddle to the music
of the harp.
- 5 Why should I fear in times of trouble,
when the iniquity of my
persecutors surrounds me,
6 those who trust in their wealth
and boast of the abundance of
their riches?
- 7 Truly, no ransom avails for one's life,^a
there is no price one can give to
God for it.
- 8 For the ransom of life is costly,
and can never suffice,
9 that one should live on forever
and never see the grave.^b
- 10 When we look at the wise, they die;
fool and dolt perish together
and leave their wealth to others.
- 11 Their graves^c are their homes
forever,
their dwelling places to all
generations,
though they named lands their own.
- 12 Mortals cannot abide in their pomp;
they are like the animals that
perish.
- 13 Such is the fate of the foolhardy,
the end of those^d who are
pleased with their lot. *Selah*
- 14 Like sheep they are appointed for
Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
straight to the grave they descend,^e
and their form shall waste away;
Sheol shall be their home.^f
- 15 But God will ransom my soul from
the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me. *Selah*
- 16 Do not be afraid when some become
rich,
when the wealth of their houses
increases.
- 17 For when they die they will carry
nothing away;
their wealth will not go down after
them.
- 18 Though in their lifetime they count
themselves happy
—for you are praised when you do
well for yourself—
- 19 they^g will go to the company of
their ancestors,
who will never again see the light.
- 20 Mortals cannot abide in their pomp;
they are like the animals that
perish.

PSALM 50

The Acceptable Sacrifice

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.
- 3 Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.
- 4 He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
- 5 "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
- 6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge. *Selah*

^a Another reading is *no one can ransom a brother*

^b Heb *the pit*

^c Gk Syr Compare Tg: Heb *their inward* (thought)

^d Tg: Heb *after them*

^e Cn: Heb *the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*

^f Meaning of Heb uncertain

^g Cn: Heb *you*

Read Psalm 50

Here, cloaked in the form of a majestic judge's decree, is a solemn condemnation of ritual observance that is not only empty but contradicted outright by one's manner of life. Harmful company, deceitful and slanderous speech, and the betrayal of trust: these things defile one's worship, while sincere praise and obedience constitute true worship.

Reflect: How many different "selves" do I have? Would those who see me in prayer recognize me when they see me in conversation? When they meet me in public? When they see me in my circle of friends? God's word calls me to a consistency of life and worship.

Pray: My just judge, forgive me for my past insincerity, and make me sincere in living according to your law, so that I may worship you in purity of heart.

Act: I will readily and regularly question and examine the consistency of my life and worship.

- 7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.
- 8 Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.
- 9 I will not accept a bull from your house,
or goats from your folds.
- 10 For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
- 11 I know all the birds of the air,^a
and all that moves in the field is mine.
- 12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and all that is in it is mine.
- 13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?
- 14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,^b
and pay your vows to the Most High.
- 15 Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."
- 16 But to the wicked God says:
"What right have you to recite my statutes,
or take my covenant on your lips?
- 17 For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words behind you.
- 18 You make friends with a thief when you see one,
and you keep company with adulterers.
- 19 "You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.
- 20 You sit and speak against your kin;
you slander your own mother's child.
- 21 These things you have done and I have been
silent;
you thought that I was one just like yourself.
But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before
you.
- 22 "Mark this, then, you who forget God,
or I will tear you apart, and there will be no
one to deliver.
- 23 Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice
honor me;
to those who go the right way^c
I will show the salvation of God."

^a Gk Syr Tg: Heb *mountains*

^b Or *make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

^c Heb *who set a way*

Read Psalm 51

In this most beloved of the “Penitential Psalms,” the psalmist captures all of the dimensions of the sinner’s true repentance: a thorough acknowledgement of one’s guilt, the reasonableness of the punishment deserved, but at the same time a heartfelt hope in the mercy of God, a concrete vision of a new life of grace in communion with others, and the firm desire to embrace that life as an undeserved but welcome gift.

Reflect: It is better to be a saved sinner than an insecure defender of my own righteousness.

Pray: Lord, with a clear vision of my broken self, I rely on your mercy and accept the gift of the new life that you offer me.

Act: I will acknowledge the ways in which I am still struggling with God, and I will surrender to him with trust.

PSALM 51

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- 5 Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 6 You desire truth in the inward being;^a
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right^b spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing^c spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your
deliverance.
- 15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would
not be pleased.
- 17 The sacrifice acceptable to God^d is a broken
spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will
not despise.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or *steadfast*

^c Or *generous*

^d Or *My sacrifice, O God,*

- 18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in right
sacrifices,

in burnt offerings and whole burnt
offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your
altar.

Read Psalms 52, 53

Both of these psalms ridicule the folly of godless living. Since atheism as an intellectual denial of God was virtually non-existent at the time, the psalms must be referring instead to the practical atheism of those who live as if God did not exist. Psalm 53 is really a slightly different version of Psalm 14.

Reflect: It is sometimes necessary to be honestly and brutally critical of godless ways of thinking because of the deceptive allure that such thinking can have, today more than ever before.

Pray: Strengthen me, Lord, against the deceptions of a godless culture, and teach me to defend your truth before others.

Act: While loving my neighbors who do not share my faith, I will study and reflect on the content of my faith so as to be able to defend it whenever it is unjustly attacked or belittled.

PSALM 52

Judgment on the Deceitful

To the leader. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came to Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

- 1 Why do you boast, O mighty one,
of mischief done against the godly?^a
All day long ² you are plotting destruction.
Your tongue is like a sharp razor,
you worker of treachery.
- 3 You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking the truth. *Selah*
- 4 You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.
- 5 But God will break you down forever;
he will snatch and tear you from your tent;
he will uproot you from the land of the
living. *Selah*
- 6 The righteous will see, and fear,
and will laugh at the evildoer,^b saying,
- 7 "See the one who would not take
refuge in God,
but trusted in abundant riches,
and sought refuge in wealth!"^c
- 8 But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.
- 9 I will thank you forever,
because of what you have done.
In the presence of the faithful
I will proclaim^d your name, for it is good.

PSALM 53

Denunciation of Godlessness

To the leader: according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

- 1 Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts;
there is no one who does good.
- 2 God looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

^a Cn Compare Syr: Heb *the kindness of God*

^b Heb *him*

^c Syr Tg: Heb *in his destruction*

^d Cn: Heb *wait for*

- 3 They have all fallen away, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one.
- 4 Have they no knowledge, those evildoers, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God?
- 5 There they shall be in great terror, in terror such as has not been.

For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly;^a they will be put to shame,^b for God has rejected them.

- 6 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Read Psalms 54, 55

These psalms raise a confident prayer to God from the midst of struggles. In Psalm 54, this confidence is in words of thanksgiving for the saving power of God's name. In Psalm 55, the struggles include even betrayal by a trusted friend and the upheaval in a city where evil is rampant. Despite this, the psalmist's trust in God remains unshaken.

Reflect: One who truly trusts in God does not have to fear a hostile environment. With trust in God, it is possible to find freedom and peace.

Pray: Lord, although I would prefer to escape from any difficulties I encounter, I will trust in you, and then face them instead.

Act: I will cultivate a reverence for God's name, and be confident in the saving power of that name.

PSALM 54

Prayer for Vindication

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "David is in hiding among us."

- 1 Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.
- 3 For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them. *Selah*
- 4 But surely, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of^c my life.
- 5 He will repay my enemies for their evil. In your faithfulness, put an end to them.
- 6 With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good.
- 7 For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

PSALM 55

Complaint about a Friend's Treachery

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

- 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my supplication.
- 2 Attend to me, and answer me; I am troubled in my complaint. I am distraught³ by the noise of the enemy, because of the clamor of the wicked. For they bring^d trouble upon me, and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

^a Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *him who encamps against you*

^b Gk: Heb *you have put (them) to shame*

^c Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *is of those who uphold or is with those who uphold*

^d Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they cause to totter*

- 4 My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen
upon me.
- 5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.
- 6 And I say, "O that I had wings like a
dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;
7 truly, I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the
wilderness; *Selah*
- 8 I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."
- 9 Confuse, O Lord, confound their speech;
for I see violence and strife in the city.
- 10 Day and night they go around it
on its walls,
and iniquity and trouble are within it;
11 ruin is in its midst;
oppression and fraud
do not depart from its marketplace.
- 12 It is not enemies who taunt me—
I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal
insolently with me—
I could hide from them.
- 13 But it is you, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend,
14 with whom I kept pleasant company;
we walked in the house of God
with the throng.
- 15 Let death come upon them;
let them go down alive to Sheol;
for evil is in their homes and in
their hearts.
- 16 But I call upon God,
and the LORD will save me.
- 17 Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he will hear my voice.
- 18 He will redeem me unharmed
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
- 19 God, who is enthroned from of
old, *Selah*
will hear, and will humble them—
because they do not change,
and do not fear God.
- 20 My companion laid hands on a friend
and violated a covenant with me^a
- 21 with speech smoother than butter,
but with a heart set on war;
with words that were softer than oil,
but in fact were drawn swords.
- 22 Cast your burden^b on the LORD,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.
- 23 But you, O God, will cast them down
into the lowest pit;
the bloodthirsty and treacherous
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in you.

PSALM 56

Trust in God under Persecution

*To the leader: according to The Dove on Far-off
Terebinths. Of David. A Miktam, when the Philistines
seized him in Gath.*

- 1 Be gracious to me, O God, for people trample
on me;
all day long foes oppress me;
- 2 my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many fight against me.
O Most High,³ when I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
- 4 In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I am not afraid;
what can flesh do to me?

^a Heb lacks *with me*

^b Or *Cast what he has given you*

Read Psalms 56, 57

These psalms reverberate with trust in God's power to bring relief from one's enemies. The first ends with a vow to be fulfilled in thanksgiving for salvation. The second, like so many other psalms of this kind, ends with an anticipated expression of praise for God's power that is to be revealed.

Reflect: The images here invite reflection: God's careful collection of my tears in a vial; the shadow of his wings where I take refuge; the malice of enemies as the teeth of hungry lions; and the clouds of heaven, above which towers the Lord with his faithfulness and love.

Pray: O God, do not leave me exposed to anything that could harm me, but hide me under the shadow of your wings.

Act: If I am experiencing anxiety about anything, I will anticipate God's help and begin now to thank him for taking care of my concerns.

- 5 All day long they seek to injure my cause;
all their thoughts are against me for evil.
- 6 They stir up strife, they lurk,
they watch my steps.
As they hoped to have my life,
- 7 so repay^a them for their crime;
in wrath cast down the peoples, O God!
- 8 You have kept count of my tossings;
put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your record?
- 9 Then my enemies will retreat
in the day when I call.
This I know, that^b God is for me.
- 10 In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise,
- 11 in God I trust; I am not afraid.
What can a mere mortal do to me?
- 12 My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
- 13 For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

PSALM 57

Praise and Assurance under Persecution

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

- 1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.
- 2 I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
- 3 He will send from heaven and save me,
he will put to shame those who trample
on me. *Selah*
God will send forth his steadfast love and his
faithfulness.
- 4 I lie down among lions
that greedily devour^c human prey;
their teeth are spears and arrows,
their tongues sharp swords.
- 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.
- 6 They set a net for my steps;
my soul was bowed down.

^a Cn: Heb *rescue*

^b Or *because*

^c Cn: Heb *are aflame for*

They dug a pit in my path,
but they have fallen into it
themselves.

7 My heart is steadfast, O God,
my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and make
melody.

8 Awake, my soul!
Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.

Selah

9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among
the nations.

10 For your steadfast love is as high as
the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.

Read Psalms 58, 59

Here is the familiar theme of oppression at the hands of the wicked. In Psalm 58, an individual begs God to strike down those “gods” (i.e., oppressors) whose ingrained injustice makes them like deaf snakes unable even to be charmed. In Psalm 59, it may be a king who speaks. Evil threatens even him, but God is forever his stronghold, his fortress.

Reflect: I may fear to express these sentiments to God. The psalms assure me that I should bring even such bitter feelings to him in hope of justice.

Pray: I trust in your protection, O God. When the night is over, your sun will rise to find me safe, with my enemies no longer in sight.

Act: Rather than using my resentments as weapons to intimidate my enemies or trouble my friends, I will take them to God, with trust in his power to work justice for me.

PSALM 58

Prayer for Vengeance

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam.

- 1 Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods?^a
Do you judge people fairly?
- 2 No, in your hearts you devise wrongs;
your hands deal out violence on earth.
- 3 The wicked go astray from the womb;
they err from their birth, speaking lies.
- 4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent,
like the deaf adder that stops its ear,
5 so that it does not hear the voice of charmers
or of the cunning enchanter.
- 6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths;
tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!
- 7 Let them vanish like water that runs away;
like grass let them be trodden down^b and
wither.
- 8 Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime;
like the untimely birth that never sees the sun.
- 9 Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns,
whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them
away!
- 10 The righteous will rejoice when they see
vengeance done;
they will bathe their feet in the blood of the
wicked.
- 11 People will say, “Surely there is a reward for the
righteous;
surely there is a God who judges on earth.”

^a Or mighty lords

^b Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

PSALM 59

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

*To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David.
A Miktam, when Saul ordered his house
to be watched in order to kill him.*

- 1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up
against me.
- 2 Deliver me from those who work evil;
from the bloodthirsty save me.
- 3 Even now they lie in wait for my life;
the mighty stir up strife against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine,
O LORD,
- 4 for no fault of mine, they run and
make ready.

Rouse yourself, come to my help
and see!
- 5 You, LORD God of hosts, are God
of Israel.
Awake to punish all the nations;
spare none of those who
treacherously plot evil. *Selah*
- 6 Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
- 7 There they are, bellowing with their
mouths,
with sharp words^a on their lips—
for “Who,” they think,^b “will hear us?”
- 8 But you laugh at them, O LORD;
you hold all the nations in derision.

- 9 O my strength, I will watch for you;
for you, O God, are my fortress.
- 10 My God in his steadfast love will
meet me;
my God will let me look in
triumph on my enemies.
- 11 Do not kill them, or my people may
forget;
make them totter by your power,
and bring them down,
O Lord, our shield.
- 12 For the sin of their mouths, the
words of their lips,
let them be trapped in their pride.
For the cursing and lies that they utter,
- 13 consume them in wrath;
consume them until they are no
more.
Then it will be known to the ends of
the earth
that God rules over Jacob. *Selah*
- 14 Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
- 15 They roam about for food,
and growl if they do not get their fill.
- 16 But I will sing of your might;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast
love in the morning.
For you have been a fortress for me
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
- 17 O my strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast
love.

PSALM 60

Prayer for National Victory after Defeat

*To the leader: according to the Lily of the Covenant.
A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he
struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-
zobah, and when Joab on his return killed twelve
thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*

- 1 O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses;
you have been angry; now restore us!
- 2 You have caused the land to quake; you have
torn it open;
repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering.

^a Heb with swords

^b Heb lacks they think

Read Psalms 60, 61

In a time of national distress—such as occurred more than once in Israel’s history—these two psalms boldly remind God of his promises: in the first, the claim that God has placed on the land and, in the second, his promise of an everlasting dynasty for David. In both psalms, the hope of victory is invincible because God can be relied upon to fulfill his promises.

Reflect: What are the promises of God upon which I rely? Is my faith in these promises ever shaken?

Pray: Lord, when I have reached the end of my own strength, I count on you to lift me up.

Act: I will act courageously today for what is right, because I am relying on a power that is not my own.

- 3 You have made your people suffer hard things;
you have given us wine to drink that made us reel.
- 4 You have set up a banner for those who fear you,
to rally to it out of bowshot.^a *Selah*
- 5 Give victory with your right hand, and answer us,^b
so that those whom you love may be rescued.
- 6 God has promised in his sanctuary:^c
“With exultation I will divide up Shechem,
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.
- 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
- 8 Moab is my washbasin;
on Edom I hurl my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph.”
- 9 Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
- 10 Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God, with our armies.
- 11 O grant us help against the foe,
for human help is worthless.
- 12 With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.

PSALM 61

Assurance of God’s Protection

To the leader: with stringed instruments. Of David.

- 1 Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.
- 2 From the end of the earth I call to you,
when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I;
- 3 for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.
- 4 Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings. *Selah*
- 5 For you, O God, have heard my vows;
you have given me the heritage of those who
fear your name.
- 6 Prolong the life of the king;
may his years endure to all generations!
- 7 May he be enthroned forever before God;
appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to
watch over him!
- 8 So I will always sing praises to your name,
as I pay my vows day after day.

^a Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *because of the truth*

^b Another reading is *me*

^c Or *by his holiness*

Read Psalm 62

The beginning phrase, "For God alone my soul waits in silence," recurs halfway through the psalm and constitutes a refrain expressing its central message. In contrast to this are the illusions in which one can sometimes be tempted to trust: human power and esteem, wealth accumulated and protected by extortion and plunder. The knowledge that God will repay us for our deeds underscores the deception in these things. It is truly better to trust in God alone.

Reflect: How much of my energy do I spend on resources that will fail me, when God will not fail me?

Pray: Lord, my soul rests in you alone. Teach me to refrain from all that does not please you, and to relinquish the things I do not need.

Act: I will examine my priorities and change them if necessary, because of the knowledge that my security lies in God alone.

Read Psalm 63

This psalm expresses eloquently, in vivid physical imagery, the soul's longing for God, and the delight that comes from living in real union with him. As the body hungers and thirsts and then enjoys a banquet, the soul hungers and thirsts for God, and is filled by him.

Reflect: If my life is not cluttered with distractions, then I will be able to experience the kind of longing for God expressed here, and also the satisfaction that is to be found in him alone.

Pray: Lord, increase my hunger and thirst for you, and then satisfy the longing that you have created in me.

Act: I will attempt to live with fewer distractions so as to experience more acutely the desire for God's presence and to live in greater intimacy with him.

PSALM 62

Song of Trust in God Alone

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

- 1 For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
- 2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.
- 3 How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
- 4 Their only plan is to bring down a person of
prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. *Selah*
- 5 For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
- 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- 7 On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
- 8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. *Selah*
- 9 Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
- 10 Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
- 11 Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

PSALM 63

Comfort and Assurance in God's Presence

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no
water.

- 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
- 3 Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
- 4 So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
- 5 My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,^a
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
- 6 when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- 7 for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.
- 9 But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
- 10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.
- 11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Read Psalm 64

In the face of glaring injustice, when evildoers oppress the innocent with frightening self-assuredness and impunity, the psalm retains confidence in the justice of God who watches everything and whose justice will be victorious in the end.

Reflect: Injustice in the world is real and persistent, but its apparent victory is an illusion. Though I am rightly troubled when I see injustice, I will not lose heart because of it, because God will bring about justice, and any who are obstinately unjust will ultimately destroy themselves.

Pray: Lord, keep me zealous in following your will and pursuing justice, but make me patient too, so that I will not become unjust as I wait for your justice to be victorious.

Act: Whenever I hear news that causes me to lament some injustice, I will allow that lamentation to become a prayer, so that it will not be wasted.

PSALM 64

Prayer for Protection from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
preserve my life from the dread enemy.
- 2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
from the scheming of evildoers,
- 3 who whet their tongues like swords,
who aim bitter words like arrows,
- 4 shooting from ambush at the blameless;
they shoot suddenly and without fear.
- 5 They hold fast to their evil purpose;
they talk of laying snares secretly,
thinking, "Who can see us?"^b
- 6 Who can search out our crimes?^c
We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot."
For the human heart and mind are deep.
- 7 But God will shoot his arrow at them;
they will be wounded suddenly.
- 8 Because of their tongue he will bring them to ruin;^d
all who see them will shake with horror.
- 9 Then everyone will fear;
they will tell what God has brought about,
and ponder what he has done.
- 10 Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD
and take refuge in him.
Let all the upright in heart glory.

^a Heb with fat and fatness

^b Syr: Heb them

^c Cn: Heb They search out crimes

^d Cn: Heb They will bring him to ruin, their tongue being against them

Read Psalm 65

A prayer for the forgiveness of sins is joined to the praise of God's creation. The two themes are in fact related. Personal sin is an attack on the order of creation. Conversely, God's will for order and beauty as seen in creation will be exercised also in favor of anyone who wishes to leave sin behind.

Reflect: Does my life reflect the order that I see in creation? Do I rely on God for what I need, or do I pursue my desires as if God did not exist?

Pray: Lord, you are greater than the whole of creation, and certainly you are greater than everything I could want. Teach me to place my hope in you.

Act: My vocation is a promise that I have made to God, reflecting the order of his will in my life. I will fulfill the promises I have made.

PSALM 65

Thanksgiving for Earth's Bounty

To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.

- 1 Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
and to you shall vows be performed,
- 2 O you who answer prayer!
To you all flesh shall come.
- 3 When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.
- 4 Happy are those whom you choose and bring
near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your
house,
your holy temple.
- 5 By awesome deeds you answer us with
deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
- 6 By your^a strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.
- 7 You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
- 8 Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are
awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the
evening shout for joy.
- 9 You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
- 10 You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
- 11 You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
- 12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

^a Gk Jerome: Heb *his*

Read Psalm 66

God's mighty deeds of the exodus are recalled, not as the events of a distant past, but as God's saving deeds for us who remember them now. This remembrance inspires awe, obedience, confidence in trials, grateful worship, a proclamation of God's goodness, and total confidence in prayer.

Reflect: The story of God's people in the Bible is intended by him to be read as my own story. His powerful protection of his people has not come to an end, and he has numbered me as one of his own.

Pray: Lord, you have led me from slavery into freedom! Do not allow me to lose that freedom.

Act: As the Israelites looked ahead to the land of promise, I envision the freedom that the Lord wants to give me.

PSALM 66**Praise for God's Goodness to Israel**

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

- 1 Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
- 2 sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise.
- 3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Because of your great power, your enemies
cringe before you.
- 4 All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name." *Selah*
- 5 Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.
- 6 He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in him,
- 7 who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves. *Selah*
- 8 Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard,
- 9 who has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
- 10 For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
- 11 You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
- 12 you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.^a
- 13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
14 those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
- 15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*
- 16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
- 17 I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
- 18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
- 19 But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the words of my prayer.
- 20 Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

^a Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb to a saturation

Read Psalm 67

This prayer for God's blessing rises from a generous heart. Not content to pray for blessings for oneself, the psalm includes the whole community: "May God be gracious to us and bless us." Even this is not enough, as the psalm then prays also for all nations: that they may know God's ways, that they may praise him, and that they too may be governed by him.

Reflect: One way to express confidence in prayer is to pray not only for myself but also for others, and even for all people. If I believe in God's power over all, then I certainly can have confidence in his ability to tend to my own needs.

Pray: Lord, let your saving power be known among all nations!

Act: I will take care to include others in my prayer, and remember especially those who have no one to pray for them.

PSALM 67

The Nations Called to Praise God

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

- 1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
- 2 that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- 6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
- 7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

PSALM 68

Praise and Thanksgiving

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

- 1 Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.
- 2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.
- 3 But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.
- 4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds^a—
his name is the LORD—
be exultant before him.
- 5 Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
- 6 God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.
- 7 O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*
- 8 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
- 9 Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;

^a Or cast up a highway for him who rides through the deserts

Read Psalm 68

This is a triumphant hymn of God's victory over all enemies on behalf of his people. It begins with the words that Moses spoke in Numbers 10:35 as the ark of the covenant went forth before the people, and describes a triumphal procession in which even the lowliest of the people participate, celebrating God's victory and expressing invincible hope in his future protection.

Reflect: If I am on God's side in every struggle, then there is no doubt of victory.

Pray: God, open our eyes to show us the power by which you have always protected your people.

Act: I will call to mind my greatest worries at the present time, and let the joyful certainty expressed in this psalm express my own confidence in God's power to bring to the best conclusion those things that cause me worry.

- 10 your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the
needy.
- 11 The Lord gives the command;
great is the company of those^a who bore the
tidings:
- 12 "The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!"
The women at home divide the spoil,
- 13 though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
- 14 When the Almighty^b scattered kings there,
snow fell on Zalmon.
- 15 O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of
Bashan!
- 16 Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked
mountain,
at the mount that God desired for his abode,
where the LORD will reside forever?
- 17 With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.^c
- 18 You ascended the high mount,
leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against the LORD
God's abiding there.
- 19 Blessed be the Lord,
who daily bears us up;
God is our salvation. *Selah*
- 20 Our God is a God of salvation,
and to GOD, the Lord, belongs escape from
death.
- 21 But God will shatter the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their
guilty ways.
- 22 The Lord said,
"I will bring them back from Bashan,
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
- 23 so that you may bathe^d your feet in blood,
so that the tongues of your dogs may have
their share from the foe."
- 24 Your solemn processions are seen,^e O God,
the processions of my God, my King, into the
sanctuary—
- 25 the singers in front, the musicians last,
between them girls playing tambourines:

^a Or company of the women

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^c Cn: Heb *The Lord among them Sinai in the holy (place)*

^d Gk Syr Tg: Heb *shatter*

^e Or have been seen

- 26 “Bless God in the great congregation,
the LORD, O you who are of
Israel’s fountain!”
- 27 There is Benjamin, the least of them,
in the lead,
the princes of Judah in a body,
the princes of Zebulun, the
princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Summon your might, O God;
show your strength, O God, as
you have done for us before.
- 29 Because of your temple at
Jerusalem
kings bear gifts to you.
- 30 Rebuke the wild animals that live
among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of
the peoples.
Trample^a under foot those who lust
after tribute;
- scatter the peoples who delight in
war.^b
- 31 Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia^c hasten to stretch out
its hands to God.
- 32 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the
earth;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*
- 33 O rider in the heavens, the ancient
heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his
mighty voice.
- 34 Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.
- 35 Awesome is God in his^d sanctuary,
the God of Israel;
he gives power and strength to his
people.
Blessed be God!

PSALM 69

Prayer for Deliverance from Persecution

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of David.

- 1 Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
- 2 I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
- 3 I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God.
- 4 More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause;
many are those who would destroy me,
my enemies who accuse me falsely.
What I did not steal
must I now restore?
- 5 O God, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.
- 6 Do not let those who hope in you be put to
shame because of me,
O Lord GOD of hosts;
do not let those who seek you be dishonored
because of me,
O God of Israel.

^a Cn: Heb *Trampling*

^b Meaning of Heb of verse 30 is uncertain

^c Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

^d Gk: Heb *from your*

Read Psalm 69

This is the prayer of one who suffers unjustly despite having served God faithfully. In fact, the injustice seems to have been suffered precisely as a result of standing up zealously for the holiness of God and his temple. It contains several phrases that Christians find vividly evocative of the suffering of Christ.

Reflect: It is remarkable that a prayer containing such graphic images of hopelessness nevertheless ends with an expression of hope and praise. There is a powerful message in this.

Pray: Lord, do not hide from your servants, but teach us to sing your praise in every situation.

Act: I will pray this psalm again, specifically for those who are currently being persecuted for their faith or suffer for following their consciences.

- 7 It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that shame has covered my face.
- 8 I have become a stranger to my kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.
- 9 It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;
the insults of those who insult you have fallen
on me.
- 10 When I humbled my soul with fasting,^a
they insulted me for doing so.
- 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.
- 12 I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the
gate,
and the drunkards make songs about me.
- 13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the abundance of your steadfast love,
answer me.
- With your faithful help ¹⁴rescue me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
- 15 Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the Pit close its mouth over me.
- 16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
- 17 Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.
- 18 Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.
- 19 You know the insults I receive,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.
- 20 Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
- 22 Let their table be a trap for them,
a snare for their allies.
- 23 Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.
- 24 Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.
- 25 May their camp be a desolation;
let no one live in their tents.

^a Gk Syr: Heb I wept, with fasting my soul,
or I made my soul mourn with fasting

- 26 For they persecute those whom you have struck down,
and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more.^a
- 27 Add guilt to their guilt;
may they have no acquittal from you.
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.
- 29 But I am lowly and in pain;
let your salvation, O God, protect me.
- 30 I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
- 31 This will please the LORD more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
- 32 Let the oppressed see it and be glad;
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.
- 33 For the LORD hears the needy,
and does not despise his own that are in bonds.
- 34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
- 35 For God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and his servants shall live^b there and possess it;
- 36 the children of his servants shall inherit it,
and those who love his name shall live in it.

Read Psalms 70, 71

Psalm 70 is a short prayer for deliverance, followed by a longer psalm placed on the lips of one who is now old, and who is inspired by past divine acts of deliverance to pray for the defeat of today's enemies. In order to express confidence in God's deliverance, the psalmist describes graphically both the defeat of the enemies and the act of thanksgiving that will follow, proclaimed publicly and even to future generations.

Reflect: I have been rescued from difficulties by God's goodness before, and I will be again when I call on him.

Pray: Lord, I will tell others always of your goodness to me. Continue to show me your goodness in ways that I can proclaim to others.

Act: I will let someone else know of the gratitude I have for all that God has done for me.

PSALM 70

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

- 1 Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.
O LORD, make haste to help me!
- 2 Let those be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life.
Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who desire to hurt me.
- 3 Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!"
turn back because of their shame.
- 4 Let all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
Let those who love your salvation
say evermore, "God is great!"
- 5 But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!

PSALM 71

Prayer for Lifelong Protection and Help

- 1 In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
- 2 In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
- 3 Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress,^c to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.

^a Gk Syr: Heb *recount the pain of*

^b Syr: Heb *and they shall live*

^c Gk Compare 31.3: Heb *to come continually you have commanded*

- 4 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
- 5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
- 6 Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.
- 7 I have been like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.
- 8 My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day long.
- 9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.
- 10 For my enemies speak concerning me, and those who watch for my life consult together.
- 11 They say, "Pursue and seize that person whom God has forsaken, for there is no one to deliver."
- 12 O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!
- 13 Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed; let those who seek to hurt me be covered with scorn and disgrace.
- 14 But I will hope continually, and will praise you yet more and more.
- 15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long,
- though their number is past my knowledge.
- 16 I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD, I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.
- 17 O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
- 18 So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.^a Your power¹⁹ and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens.
- You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?
- 20 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.
- 21 You will increase my honor, and comfort me once again.
- 22 I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.
- 23 My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have rescued.
- 24 All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help, for those who tried to do me harm have been put to shame, and disgraced.

PSALM 72

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King

Of Solomon.

- 1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
- 2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
- 3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

^a Gk Compare Syr: Heb *to a generation, to all that come*

Read Psalm 72

This prayer for the king contains language that is rather exaggerated in reference to an earthly king of Israel or Judah, expressing the hope that all nations will bow to his rule, and that his kingdom will be eternal. Thus, the words of the psalm came to express a higher, messianic hope as they continued to be prayed even after the monarchy had come to an end.

Reflect: The image of kingship is one that is expressive of the desire to live under God's rule, in the freedom of his servants, protected by his power and guided by his love.

Pray: My Lord and King, may your name be praised forever and by all nations! Rule over us and protect us!

Act: I will be conscious of the gestures of reverence to God that derive originally from honor given to earthly kings, gestures such as kneeling, bowing, and reverential language used in prayer.

- 4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he live^a while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all
generations.
- 6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- 8 May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- 9 May his foes^b bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
- 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
- 11 May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.
- 12 For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- 13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- 14 From oppression and violence he redeems their
life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.
- 15 Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.
- 16 May there be abundance of grain in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.
- 17 May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun.
May all nations be blessed in him;^c
may they pronounce him happy.
- 18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
- 19 Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.

- 20 The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

^a Gk: Heb *may they fear you*

^b Cn: Heb *those who live in the wilderness*

^c Or *bless themselves by him*

BOOK III
(Psalms 73-89)

PSALM 73

Plea for Relief from Oppressors

A Psalm of Asaph.

Read Psalm 73

This remarkable psalm traces the path of one who struggles with mysteries encountered in life's apparent injustices, but who comes to the conclusion that God is indeed wise, and that the one who doubts God's justice has really fallen into folly.

Reflect: The Psalmist says that the puzzlement encountered was too difficult until he "went into the sanctuary of God." I must take my questions to God, and not just to be troubled and angry about them, but to be open to his response.

Pray: Lord, my heart, my flesh, and my mind fail me when I do not understand. Even so, you are still there for me, and I thank you.

Act: I will take inventory: How many questions do I have about God and his ways that I have not taken to God, questioning him directly? God's answer may surprise me.

- 1 Truly God is good to the upright,^a
to those who are pure in heart.
- 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
my steps had nearly slipped.
- 3 For I was envious of the arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- 4 For they have no pain;
their bodies are sound and sleek.
- 5 They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not plagued like other people.
- 6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them like a garment.
- 7 Their eyes swell out with fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.
- 8 They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
- 9 They set their mouths against heaven,
and their tongues range over the earth.
- 10 Therefore the people turn and praise them,^b
and find no fault in them.^c
- 11 And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"
- 12 Such are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
- 13 All in vain I have kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
- 14 For all day long I have been plagued,
and am punished every morning.
- 15 If I had said, "I will talk on in this way,"
I would have been untrue to the circle of your
children.
- 16 But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
- 17 until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I perceived their end.
- 18 Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.
- 19 How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!
- 20 They are^d like a dream when one awakes;
on awaking you despise their phantoms.
- 21 When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,

^a Or good to Israel

^b Cn: Heb his people return here

^c Cn: Heb abundant waters are drained
by them

^d Cn: Heb Lord

- 22 I was stupid and ignorant;
I was like a brute beast toward you.
- 23 Nevertheless I am continually with
you;
you hold my right hand.
- 24 You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me
with honor.^a
- 25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that
I desire other than you.
- 26 My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength^b of my
heart and my portion forever.
- 27 Indeed, those who are far from you
will perish;
you put an end to those who are
false to you.
- 28 But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
to tell of all your works.

Read Psalms 74, 75

While there seems to be no connection between these two psalms other than their placement in the Psalter, they are fruitfully read together. The first is an outcry of perplexed and almost accusatory questions to God because of the enemies' destruction of the temple, and the second is an acknowledgment of the Lord's sovereignty as the judge who ultimately vindicates the innocent.

Reflect: The sentiments in these two psalms are so different, yet they all appear in God's inspired word. Both anguished questions and exultant praise can be appropriate and good.

Pray: Remember your covenant, Lord, and do not let me lose confidence in your intervention when evil seems to be ahead.

Act: Whether I am the victim of unfair judgment or perhaps guilty of it myself, I will remember that God is the just judge and leave the matter to him.

PSALM 74

Plea for Help in Time of National Humiliation

A Maskil of Asaph.

- 1 O God, why do you cast us off forever?
Why does your anger smoke against the
sheep of your pasture?
- 2 Remember your congregation, which you
acquired long ago,
which you redeemed to be the tribe of your
heritage.
Remember Mount Zion, where you came to
dwell.
- 3 Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;
the enemy has destroyed everything in the
sanctuary.
- 4 Your foes have roared within your holy place;
they set up their emblems there.
- 5 At the upper entrance they hacked
the wooden trellis with axes.^c
- 6 And then, with hatchets and hammers,
they smashed all its carved work.
- 7 They set your sanctuary on fire;
they desecrated the dwelling place of your name,
bringing it to the ground.
- 8 They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue
them";
they burned all the meeting places of God in
the land.
- 9 We do not see our emblems;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is no one among us who knows how
long.
- 10 How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?
- 11 Why do you hold back your hand;
why do you keep your hand in^d your bosom?

^a Or to glory

^b Heb rock

^c Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Cn: Heb do you consume your right hand from

- 12 Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
- 13 You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the
dragons in the waters.
- 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food^a for the
creatures of the wilderness.
- 15 You cut openings for springs and
torrents;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
- 16 Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the luminaries^b
and the sun.
- 17 You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
you made summer and winter.
- 18 Remember this, O LORD, how the
enemy scoffs,
and an impious people reviles
your name.
- 19 Do not deliver the soul of your dove
to the wild animals;
do not forget the life of your poor
forever.
- 20 Have regard for your^c covenant,
for the dark places of the land are
full of the haunts of violence.
- 21 Do not let the downtrodden be put to
shame;
let the poor and needy praise your
name.
- 22 Rise up, O God, plead your cause;
remember how the impious scoff
at you all day long.
- 23 Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the uproar of your adversaries that
goes up continually.

PSALM 75

Thanksgiving for God's Wondrous Deeds

*To the leader: Do Not Destroy. A Psalm of
Asaph. A Song.*

- 1 We give thanks to you, O God;
we give thanks; your name is near.
People tell of your wondrous deeds.
- 2 At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.
- 3 When the earth totters, with all its
inhabitants,
it is I who keep its pillars
steady. *Selah*
- 4 I say to the boastful, "Do not boast,"
and to the wicked, "Do not lift up
your horn;
- 5 do not lift up your horn on high,
or speak with insolent neck."
- 6 For not from the east or from the west
and not from the wilderness
comes lifting up;
- 7 but it is God who executes judgment,
putting down one and lifting up
another.
- 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is
a cup
with foaming wine, well mixed;
he will pour a draught from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs.
- 9 But I will rejoice^d forever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
- 10 All the horns of the wicked I will cut off,
but the horns of the righteous
shall be exalted.

PSALM 76

Israel's God—Judge of All the Earth

*To the leader: with stringed instruments.
A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.*

- 1 In Judah God is known,
his name is great in Israel.
- 2 His abode has been established in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.
- 3 There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shield, the sword, and the weapons of
war. *Selah*

^a Heb food for the people

^b Or moon; Heb light

^c Gk Syr: Heb the

^d Gk: Heb declare

Read Psalm 76

God's majesty is described by comparison to scenes and earthly things that inspire awe, reverence and fear: destructive weapons, majestic mountains, powerful armies and nations, kings and princes. God is more powerful still, and this realization instills a reverent way of acting in relation to him.

Reflect: God is not only powerful, but he has shown many times that he is willing to use that power on our behalf. He is worthy of our confidence.

Pray: Lord, I trust in your power, and am confident that you will exercise it for my sake.

Act: From my own experience, I will call to mind images that signify power and instill awe. I know that these can be only a faint image of the power that God wields for our sake.

Read Psalm 77

The prayer in this psalm exhibits a fascinating pattern, from the lament of one who seems to feel abandoned by God, to the recollection of God's past mercies on behalf of his people, to a crescendo of praise for his past deeds. In the end, God's past deeds become a present reality, and lament is supplanted by praise.

Reflect: Do I read the story of God's salvation of his people in the past as an ever-present promise of his intervention for my own sake?

Pray: Confident that God does not change, I will approach him as the God who always saves.

Act: I will think of the biblical stories of God's powerful deeds as a reservoir where I can turn to renew my confidence in his saving power now.

- 4 Glorious are you, more majestic
than the everlasting mountains.^a
- 5 The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil;
they sank into sleep;
none of the troops
was able to lift a hand.
- 6 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.
- 7 But you indeed are awesome!
Who can stand before you
when once your anger is roused?
- 8 From the heavens you uttered judgment;
the earth feared and was still
- 9 when God rose up to establish judgment,
to save all the oppressed of the earth. *Selah*
- 10 Human wrath serves only to praise you,
when you bind the last bit of your^b wrath
around you.
- 11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and perform
them;
let all who are around him bring gifts
to the one who is awesome,
- 12 who cuts off the spirit of princes,
who inspires fear in the kings of the earth.

PSALM 77

God's Mighty Deeds Recalled

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

- 1 I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
- 2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without
wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.
- 3 I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints. *Selah*
- 4 You keep my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
- 5 I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of long ago.
- 6 I commune^c with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:^d
- 7 "Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?
- 8 Has his steadfast love ceased forever?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
- 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" *Selah*

^a Gk: Heb *the mountains of prey*

^b Heb lacks *your*

^c Gk Syr: Heb *My music*

^d Syr Jerome: Heb *my spirit searches*

10 And I say, "It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most
High has changed."

11 I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;
I will remember your wonders of old.

12 I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.

13 Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as our God?

14 You are the God who works wonders;
you have displayed your might
among the peoples.

15 With your strong arm you redeemed
your people,
the descendants of Jacob and
Joseph. *Selah*

16 When the waters saw you, O God,
when the waters saw you, they
were afraid;
the very deep trembled.

17 The clouds poured out water;
the skies thundered;
your arrows flashed on every side.

18 The crash of your thunder was in the
whirlwind;
your lightnings lit up the world;
the earth trembled and shook.

19 Your way was through the sea,
your path, through the mighty
waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.

20 You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PSALM 78

God's Goodness and Israel's Ingratitude

A Maskil of Asaph.

- 1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
- 3 things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.
- 4 We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.
- 5 He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children;
- 6 that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
- 8 and that they should not be like their ancestors,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.
- 9 The Ephraimites, armed with^a the bow,
turned back on the day of battle.
- 10 They did not keep God's covenant,
but refused to walk according to his law.

Read Psalm 78

Here is an extended recollection of the events of the exodus and the conquest of the land, in which the people repeatedly forgot all that God had done and sinned against him. Even more remarkable is that after punishing them for their sin, God repeatedly turned back to his people and was merciful time and time again.

Reflect: Have I forgotten what God has done for me? Have I paid him at least my debt of gratitude?

Pray: Lord, how could I have forgotten your goodness to me? Even so, show your goodness to me again so that I have the chance once more to praise you and tell others of your goodness.

Act: I will pass on in some way the story of God's goodness to me and to those close to me.

^a Heb *armed with shooting*

- 11 They forgot what he had done,
and the miracles that he had
shown them.
- 12 In the sight of their ancestors he
worked marvels
in the land of Egypt, in the fields
of Zoan.
- 13 He divided the sea and let them
pass through it,
and made the waters stand like a
heap.
- 14 In the daytime he led them with a
cloud,
and all night long with a fiery light.
- 15 He split rocks open in the wilderness,
and gave them drink abundantly
as from the deep.
- 16 He made streams come out of the rock,
and caused waters to flow down
like rivers.
- 17 Yet they sinned still more against him,
rebellng against the Most High in
the desert.
- 18 They tested God in their heart
by demanding the food they
craved.
- 19 They spoke against God, saying,
"Can God spread a table in the
wilderness?"
- 20 Even though he struck the rock so
that water gushed out
and torrents overflowed,
can he also give bread,
or provide meat for his people?"
- 21 Therefore, when the LORD heard, he
was full of rage;
a fire was kindled against Jacob,
his anger mounted against Israel,
22 because they had no faith in God,
and did not trust his saving power.
- 23 Yet he commanded the skies above,
and opened the doors of heaven;
24 he rained down on them manna to eat,
and gave them the grain of heaven.
- 25 Mortals ate of the bread of angels;
he sent them food in abundance.
- 26 He caused the east wind to blow in
the heavens,
and by his power he led out the
south wind;
- 27 he rained flesh upon them like dust,
winged birds like the sand of the
seas;
- 28 he let them fall within their camp,
all around their dwellings.
- 29 And they ate and were well filled,
for he gave them what they craved.
- 30 But before they had satisfied their
craving,
while the food was still in their
mouths,
- 31 the anger of God rose against them
and he killed the strongest of them,
and laid low the flower of Israel.
- 32 In spite of all this they still sinned;
they did not believe in his wonders.
- 33 So he made their days vanish like a
breath,
and their years in terror.
- 34 When he killed them, they sought
for him;
they repented and sought God
earnestly.
- 35 They remembered that God was
their rock,
the Most High God their redeemer.
- 36 But they flattered him with their
mouths;
they lied to him with their tongues.
- 37 Their heart was not steadfast toward
him;
they were not true to his covenant.
- 38 Yet he, being compassionate,
forgave their iniquity,
and did not destroy them;
often he restrained his anger,
and did not stir up all his wrath.
- 39 He remembered that they were but
flesh,
a wind that passes and does not
come again.
- 40 How often they rebelled against him
in the wilderness
and grieved him in the desert!
- 41 They tested God again and again,
and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
- 42 They did not keep in mind his power,
or the day when he redeemed
them from the foe;
- 43 when he displayed his signs in Egypt,

- and his miracles in the fields of
Zoan.
- 44 He turned their rivers to blood,
so that they could not drink of
their streams.
- 45 He sent among them swarms of
flies, which devoured them,
and frogs, which destroyed them.
- 46 He gave their crops to the caterpillar,
and the fruit of their labor to the
locust.
- 47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
and their sycamores with frost.
- 48 He gave over their cattle to the hail,
and their flocks to thunderbolts.
- 49 He let loose on them his fierce anger,
wrath, indignation, and distress,
a company of destroying angels.
- 50 He made a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death,
but gave their lives over to the
plague.
- 51 He struck all the firstborn in Egypt,
the first issue of their strength in
the tents of Ham.
- 52 Then he led out his people like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness
like a flock.
- 53 He led them in safety, so that they
were not afraid;
but the sea overwhelmed their
enemies.
- 54 And he brought them to his holy hill,
to the mountain that his right
hand had won.
- 55 He drove out nations before them;
he apportioned them for a possession
and settled the tribes of Israel in
their tents.
- 56 Yet they tested the Most High God,
and rebelled against him.
They did not observe his decrees,
57 but turned away and were faithless
like their ancestors;
they twisted like a treacherous bow.
- 58 For they provoked him to anger with
their high places;
they moved him to jealousy with
their idols.
- 59 When God heard, he was full of
wrath,
and he utterly rejected Israel.
- 60 He abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh,
the tent where he dwelt among
mortals,
- 61 and delivered his power to captivity,
his glory to the hand of the foe.
- 62 He gave his people to the sword,
and vented his wrath on his
heritage.
- 63 Fire devoured their young men,
and their girls had no marriage
song.
- 64 Their priests fell by the sword,
and their widows made no
lamentation.
- 65 Then the Lord awoke as from sleep,
like a warrior shouting because of
wine.
- 66 He put his adversaries to rout;
he put them to everlasting
disgrace.
- 67 He rejected the tent of Joseph,
he did not choose the tribe of
Ephraim;
- 68 but he chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion, which he loves.
- 69 He built his sanctuary like the high
heavens,
like the earth, which he has
founded forever.
- 70 He chose his servant David,
and took him from the sheepfolds;
71 from tending the nursing ewes he
brought him
to be the shepherd of his people
Jacob,
of Israel, his inheritance.
- 72 With upright heart he tended them,
and guided them with skillful hand.

Read Psalms 79, 80

The humiliation of God's people by their enemies almost seems to make the exodus and the building of the temple seem to have been for nothing. Present afflictions are so grave that the memory of God's saving deeds seems to be a mockery. We ask God to restore us so that we may praise him once again.

Reflect: What problems of God's people today are reminiscent of the defiled temple and the broken walls of Jerusalem?

Pray: "Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Act: Guided by these psalms, I will turn my list of complaints into a list of intercessions, confident that God's past deeds and his continual guidance cannot have been in vain.

PSALM 79

Plea for Mercy for Jerusalem

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
- 2 They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.
- 3 They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.
- 4 We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.
- 5 How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?
Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out your anger on the nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name.
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.
- 8 Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and forgive our sins,
for your name's sake.
- 10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants
be known among the nations before our eyes.
- 11 Let the groans of the prisoners come before you;
according to your great power preserve those
doomed to die.
- 12 Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors
the taunts with which they taunted you, O Lord!
- 13 Then we your people, the flock of your pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will recount
your praise.

PSALM 80**Prayer for Israel's Restoration**

*To the leader: on Lilies, a
Covenant. Of Asaph. A Psalm.*

- 1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the
cherubim, shine forth
- 2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and
Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!
- 3 Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.
- 4 O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with
your people's prayers?
- 5 You have fed them with the bread of
tears,
and given them tears to drink in
full measure.
- 6 You make us the scorn^a of our
neighbors;
our enemies laugh among
themselves.
- 7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.
- 8 You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and
planted it.

- 9 You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.
- 10 The mountains were covered with its
shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches;
- 11 it sent out its branches to the sea,
and its shoots to the River.
- 12 Why then have you broken down its
walls,
so that all who pass along the way
pluck its fruit?
- 13 The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed
on it.
- 14 Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,
15 the stock that your right hand
planted.^b
- 16 They have burned it with fire, they
have cut it down;^c
may they perish at the rebuke of
your countenance.
- 17 But let your hand be upon the one at
your right hand,
the one whom you made strong
for yourself.
- 18 Then we will never turn back from
you;
give us life, and we will call on
your name.
- 19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.

PSALM 81**God's Appeal to Stubborn Israel**

To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

- 1 Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
- 2 Raise a song, sound the tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.
- 3 Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon, on our festal day.
- 4 For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob.
- 5 He made it a decree in Joseph,
when he went out over^d the land of Egypt.

^a Syr: Heb *strife*

^b Heb adds from verse 17 *and upon the
one whom you made strong for yourself*

^c Cn: Heb *it is cut down*

^d Or *against*

Read Psalm 81

God is continually reminding his people of his presence and his past intervention for their sake. Often they do not listen, but God does not want to punish them. Instead, he longs for their response so that his intervention on their behalf may bear even greater fruit.

Reflect: If the Lord were to begin a new conversation with me now, would he need to introduce himself? Have I been aware of what he was doing for me even just now?

Pray: Lord, do not let me forget that you are the one who has been leading me and keeping me safe. I thank you.

Act: I will acknowledge the Lord's role in what I thought were my own greatest accomplishments.

Read Psalms 82, 83

God is acknowledged as the Lord of all the earth, supreme over the "gods" of other nations, defending his people against all aggressors. Nothing lies outside of his power. He uses this power to establish justice.

Reflect: Do I worry as if there were some problems that God could not handle? Do I act with justice, as one whose every action falls under God's judgment?

Pray: Lord, come to judge the earth. Also make my actions just, so that your judgment can be in my favor.

Act: I will consider what it means for me concretely to "maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute," and act accordingly.

- I hear a voice I had not known:
 6 "I relieved your^a shoulder of the burden;
 your^a hands were freed from the basket.
 7 In distress you called, and I rescued you;
 I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
 I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*
 8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
 O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
 9 There shall be no strange god among you;
 you shall not bow down to a foreign god.
 10 I am the LORD your God,
 who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
 Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.
 11 "But my people did not listen to my voice;
 Israel would not submit to me.
 12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
 to follow their own counsels.
 13 O that my people would listen to me,
 that Israel would walk in my ways!
 14 Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
 and turn my hand against their foes.
 15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,
 and their doom would last forever.
 16 I would feed you^b with the finest of the wheat,
 and with honey from the rock I would satisfy
 you."

PSALM 82

A Plea for Justice

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
 in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
 2 "How long will you judge unjustly
 and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*
 3 Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
 maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
 4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
 deliver them from the hand of the wicked."
 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
 they walk around in darkness;
 all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
 6 I say, "You are gods,
 children of the Most High, all of you;
 7 nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
 and fall like any prince."^c
 8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth;
 for all the nations belong to you!

^a Heb *his*

^b Cn Compare verse 16b: Heb *he would feed him*

^c Or *fall as one man, O princes*

PSALM 83**Prayer for Judgment on Israel's Foes***A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.*

- 1 O God, do not keep silence;
do not hold your peace or be still,
O God!
- 2 Even now your enemies are in
tumult;
those who hate you have raised
their heads.
- 3 They lay crafty plans against your
people;
they consult together against
those you protect.
- 4 They say, "Come, let us wipe them
out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be
remembered no more."
- 5 They conspire with one accord;
against you they make a
covenant—
- 6 the tents of Edom and the
Ishmaelites,
Moab and the Hagrites,
- 7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia with the inhabitants of
Tyre;
- 8 Assyria also has joined them;
they are the strong arm of the
children of Lot.

Selah

- 9 Do to them as you did to Midian,
as to Sisera and Jabin at the Wadi
Kishon,
- 10 who were destroyed at En-dor,
who became dung for the ground.
- 11 Make their nobles like Oreb and
Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and
Zalmunna,
- 12 who said, "Let us take the pastures
of God
for our own possession."
- 13 O my God, make them like whirling
dust,^a
like chaff before the wind.
- 14 As fire consumes the forest,
as the flame sets the mountains
ablaze,
- 15 so pursue them with your tempest
and terrify them with your
hurricane.
- 16 Fill their faces with shame,
so that they may seek your name,
O LORD.
- 17 Let them be put to shame and
dismayed forever;
let them perish in disgrace.
- 18 Let them know that you alone,
whose name is the LORD,
are the Most High over all the
earth.

PSALM 84**The Joy of Worship in the Temple***To the leader: according to The Gittith.
Of the Korahites. A Psalm.*

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
- 2 My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
- 4 Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

Selah^a Or a tumbleweed

Read Psalm 84

This psalm reflects joyfully on the Lord's earthly presence in his temple and on the happiness of making a pilgrimage there, expressing even a very physical longing for God's presence and envying the birds that make their constant home in the temple.

Reflect: How much do I allow myself to experience the longing for God's presence and the joy of being before him? What distractions do I need to clear away?

Pray: Guide me, Lord, on the pilgrimage to the holy destination that you have prepared for me even in this world.

Act: I will seek out a place that signifies God's presence for me.

Read Psalm 85

The homecoming of God's people to their own land provides the imagery of this psalm, where their restoration embodies the turning away from our past and the return to a time of favor, joy, and salvation.

Reflect: As I consider the captivity of God's people in the exile, I ask myself: What form of captivity holds me bound? What word of God do I need to hear?

Pray: Restore me, Lord, to the fervor that I had when I listened to your word with eagerness. Free me from captivity to distractions and attachments.

Act: I will take a concrete step of conversion today, renewing my readiness to follow the Lord with an undivided heart.

- 5 Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.^a
- 6 As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
- 7 They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
- 8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
- 9 Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed.
- 10 For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
- 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the LORD withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
- 12 O LORD of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

PSALM 85

Prayer for the Restoration of God's Favor

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

- 1 LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin. *Selah*
- 3 You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.
- 4 Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us.
- 5 Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
- 6 Will you not revive us again,
so that your people may rejoice in you?
- 7 Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.
- 8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their
hearts.^b
- 9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

^a Heb lacks to Zion

^b Gk: Heb but let them not turn back to folly

11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down
from the sky.

12 The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
13 Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

Read Psalm 86

This psalm, essentially the prayer of one in distress, also exhibits much of the ebb-and-flow characteristic of the life of the believer: acknowledgement of God's transcendence and uniqueness, prayer for guidance, praise in the remembrance of past benefits, thankfulness for God's mercy, and the desire for some sign that will strengthen faith.

Reflect: What is it that I really need from the Lord? Have I approached him about it?

Pray: Have a prayerful, heart-to-heart conversation with God about your insights into the present state of your relationship with him, your thanks for his past benefits, and your needs at the moment.

Act: Continue to take inventory of those insights, those benefits, and those needs.

PSALM 86

Supplication for Help against Enemies

A Prayer of David.

- 1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
- 2 Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;
save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; ³be gracious to me, O Lord,
for to you do I cry all day long.
- 4 Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on
you.
- 6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.
- 7 In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.
- 8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.
- 9 All the nations you have made shall come
and bow down before you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.
- 10 For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.
- 11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
- 12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my
whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
- 13 For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of
Sheol.
- 14 O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
- 15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love
and faithfulness.
- 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving girl.
- 17 Show me a sign of your favor,

so that those who hate me may
see it and be put to shame,

because you, LORD, have helped
me and comforted me.

Read Psalm 87

When God's people have been scattered among the various nations, Zion still remains the focal point to which they come, acknowledging God's unique choice of her among all places on earth. Even though they come from different nations, they are considered as having been born in Jerusalem.

Reflect: What is the meaning of God's preferential love for Zion? What does this have to do with me?

Pray: Lord, whatever "Zion" means, teach me the way to go there spiritually and to make my home there.

Act: Read Ephesians 2:19–22 and consider how this psalm may be understood by Christians in light of those verses.

PSALM 87

The Joy of Living in Zion

Of the Korahites. A Psalm. A Song.

- 1 On the holy mount stands the city he founded;
- 2 the LORD loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God. Selah
- 4 Among those who know me I mention Rahab and
Babylon;
Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia^a—
"This one was born there," they say.
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said,
"This one and that one were born in it";
for the Most High himself will establish it.
- 6 The LORD records, as he registers the peoples,
"This one was born there." Selah
- 7 Singers and dancers alike say,
"All my springs are in you."

PSALM 88

Prayer for Help in Despondency

*A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites. To the leader:
according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of
Heman the Ezrahite.*

- 1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,
- 2 let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.
- 3 For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.
- 4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;
I am like those who have no help,
- 5 like those forsaken among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
- 6 You have put me in the depths of the Pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
- 7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your
waves. Selah
- 8 You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a thing of horror to them.

^a Or Nubia; Heb Cush

Read Psalm 88

This is a prayer of one threatened with the possibility of an imminent and apparently meaningless death. The sentiment expressed is so bleak that someone in the most desperate situation can find his or her fears and apprehensions reflected here.

Reflect: How fragile life is! Even when I feel strong, I am one heartbeat away from death, and I am challenged to find meaning in such a precarious existence.

Pray: Lord, if and when I find myself spontaneously uttering words similar to these, I am thankful for your presence in this inspired text, and in this fact I have a reason for hope.

Act: If the words of this psalm do not reflect my own present sentiments in any way, I will pray them on behalf of someone—whether known personally to me or not—who does experience such darkness today.

Read Psalm 89

This psalm solemnly recounts the promises made by God to David, and then ends with a perplexed cry—evidently uttered after the fall of the Monarchy—that is little short of an accusation against God: What has happened to his promises?

Reflect: Did God forsake his promise of an eternal dynasty for David? What promises has God made to me? Do I trust that he will fulfill them?

Pray: Lord, especially when it seems to me that you are absent, give me the grace to trust you.

Act: For a time of doubt such as that described by the psalmist, memorize the words of verse 52: "Blessed be the LORD forever. Amen and Amen."

- I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
 9 my eye grows dim through sorrow.
 Every day I call on you, O LORD;
 I spread out my hands to you.
 10 Do you work wonders for the dead?
 Do the shades rise up to praise you? *Selah*
 11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
 or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
 12 Are your wonders known in the darkness,
 or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?
 13 But I, O LORD, cry out to you;
 in the morning my prayer comes before you.
 14 O LORD, why do you cast me off?
 Why do you hide your face from me?
 15 Wretched and close to death from my youth up,
 I suffer your terrors; I am desperate.^a
 16 Your wrath has swept over me;
 your dread assaults destroy me.
 17 They surround me like a flood all day long;
 from all sides they close in on me.
 18 You have caused friend and neighbor to shun me;
 my companions are in darkness.

PSALM 89**God's Covenant with David**

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD,^b
 forever;
 with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness
 to all generations.
 2 I declare that your steadfast love is established
 forever;
 your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
 3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my
 chosen one,
 I have sworn to my servant David:
 4 'I will establish your descendants forever,
 and build your throne for all generations.'" *Selah*
 5 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
 your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy
 ones.
 6 For who in the skies can be compared to the
 LORD?
 Who among the heavenly beings is like the
 LORD,
 7 a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
 great and awesome^c above all that are around
 him?

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk: Heb *the steadfast love of the LORD*

^c Gk Syr: Heb *greatly awesome*

- 8 O LORD God of hosts,
 who is as mighty as you, O LORD?
 Your faithfulness surrounds you.
- 9 You rule the raging of the sea;
 when its waves rise, you still them.
- 10 You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
 you scattered your enemies with
 your mighty arm.
- 11 The heavens are yours, the earth
 also is yours;
 the world and all that is in it—you
 have founded them.
- 12 The north and the south^a—you
 created them;
 Tabor and Hermon joyously praise
 your name.
- 13 You have a mighty arm;
 strong is your hand, high your
 right hand.
- 14 Righteousness and justice are the
 foundation of your throne;
 steadfast love and faithfulness go
 before you.
- 15 Happy are the people who know the
 festal shout,
 who walk, O LORD, in the light of
 your countenance;
- 16 they exult in your name all day long,
 and extol^b your righteousness.
- 17 For you are the glory of their strength;
 by your favor our horn is exalted.
- 18 For our shield belongs to the LORD,
 our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- 19 Then you spoke in a vision to your
 faithful one, and said:
 “I have set the crown^c on one
 who is mighty,
 I have exalted one chosen from
 the people.
- 20 I have found my servant David;
 with my holy oil I have anointed him;
- 21 my hand shall always remain with
 him;
 my arm also shall strengthen him.
- 22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
 the wicked shall not humble him.
- 23 I will crush his foes before him
 and strike down those who hate
 him.
- 24 My faithfulness and steadfast love
 shall be with him;
 and in my name his horn shall be
 exalted.
- 25 I will set his hand on the sea
 and his right hand on the rivers.
- 26 He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father,
 my God, and the Rock of my
 salvation!’
- 27 I will make him the firstborn,
 the highest of the kings of the
 earth.
- 28 Forever I will keep my steadfast love
 for him,
 and my covenant with him will
 stand firm.
- 29 I will establish his line forever,
 and his throne as long as the
 heavens endure.
- 30 If his children forsake my law
 and do not walk according to my
 ordinances,
- 31 if they violate my statutes
 and do not keep my
 commandments,
- 32 then I will punish their transgression
 with the rod
 and their iniquity with scourges;
- 33 but I will not remove from him my
 steadfast love,
 or be false to my faithfulness.
- 34 I will not violate my covenant,
 or alter the word that went forth
 from my lips.
- 35 Once and for all I have sworn by my
 holiness;
 I will not lie to David.
- 36 His line shall continue forever,
 and his throne endure before me
 like the sun.
- 37 It shall be established forever like
 the moon,
 an enduring witness in the
 skies.”

Selah

^a Or Zaphon and Yamin^b Cn: Heb are exalted in^c Cn: Heb help

- 38 But now you have spurned and
rejected him;
you are full of wrath against your
anointed.
- 39 You have renounced the covenant
with your servant;
you have defiled his crown in the
dust.
- 40 You have broken through all his walls;
you have laid his strongholds in
ruins.
- 41 All who pass by plunder him;
he has become the scorn of his
neighbors.
- 42 You have exalted the right hand of
his foes;
you have made all his enemies
rejoice.
- 43 Moreover, you have turned back the
edge of his sword,
and you have not supported him
in battle.
- 44 You have removed the scepter from
his hand,^a
and hurled his throne to the
ground.
- 45 You have cut short the days of his
youth;

you have covered him with
shame. *Selah*

- 46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide
yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like
fire?
- 47 Remember how short my time is—^b
for what vanity you have created
all mortals!
- 48 Who can live and never see death?
Who can escape the power of
Sheol? *Selah*
- 49 Lord, where is your steadfast love of
old,
which by your faithfulness you
swore to David?
- 50 Remember, O Lord, how your
servant is taunted;
how I bear in my bosom the
insults of the peoples,^c
- 51 with which your enemies taunt,
O LORD,
with which they taunted the
footsteps of your anointed.
- 52 Blessed be the LORD forever.
Amen and Amen.

^a Cn: Heb *removed his cleanness*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Cn: Heb *bosom all of many peoples*

BOOK IV
(Psalms 90-106)

PSALM 90

God's Eternity and Human Frailty

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

Read Psalm 90

This prayer artfully contrasts the immortal majesty of God with all that is changeable in human life and in nature. Even so, that very mutability of human existence becomes a reason for hope as the psalm asks God for the renewal of human life, for growth in wisdom, and for prosperity.

Reflect: Can I recognize my own limitations as an invitation to rely on God?

Pray: Lord, give me wisdom of heart, and renew my strength.

Act: I will be attentive to the psalm's imagery when I find myself tired or out of strength, and I will ponder the fact that God is never tired, never grows old, and is never lacking in strength. His power is far more dependable than mine.

- 1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place^a
in all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- 3 You turn us^b back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
- 4 For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.
- 5 You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
- 6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
- 7 For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
- 8 You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
- 9 For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end^c like a sigh.
- 10 The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span^d is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- 11 Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due
you.
- 12 So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.
- 13 Turn, O LORD! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!
- 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- 15 Make us glad as many days as you have
afflicted us,
and as many years as we have seen evil.
- 16 Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
- 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!

^a Another reading is *our refuge*

^b Heb *humankind*

^c Syr: Heb *we bring our years to an end*

^d Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *pride*

Read Psalm 91

This psalm expresses tranquil confidence in God's protection, using vivid imagery, including that of a small bird threatened by a hunter's trap but protected in the nest by the wings of its mother. Other threats mentioned are some of humanity's greatest fears, such as war and pestilence. Amid them all, God's protection keeps one safe.

Reflect: What fears keep me awake at night? What "arrows" do I fear by day?

Pray: I express complete confidence in God's protection, and I thank him for sending his angels to guard me.

Act: When I have done all that is reasonable, I will attempt to do no more! There comes a time to place all in God's hands.

Read Psalm 92

This psalm reflects the outcome of much pondering on the tension between good and evil, with the ultimate conviction that despite any momentary appearances, God's justice always wins out in the end. The strength of the evil may seem ferocious, but the strength of the just, like that of a tall tree or a rock, will be unshaken.

Reflect: When was the last time that my pondering of God's goodness and justice made me want to sing? Have I been paying attention?

Pray: How great are your works, Lord! How profound are your thoughts.

Act: I will take the time to ponder and praise God's goodness and justice.

PSALM 91**Assurance of God's Protection**

- 1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,^a
- 2 will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
- 3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
- 4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
- 5 You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
- 8 You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- 9 Because you have made the LORD your refuge,^b
the Most High your dwelling place,
10 no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
- 11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
- 12 On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a
stone.
- 13 You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will
trample under foot.
- 14 Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
- 15 When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
- 16 With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

PSALM 92**Thanksgiving for Vindication**

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day.

- 1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
- 2 to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Cn: Heb *Because you, LORD, are my refuge; you have made*

- 3 to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
- 4 For you, O LORD, have made me
glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing
for joy.
- 5 How great are your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep!
- 6 The dullard cannot know,
the stupid cannot understand this:
- 7 though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction
forever,
- 8 but you, O LORD, are on high forever.
- 9 For your enemies, O LORD,
for your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered.
- 10 But you have exalted my horn like
that of the wild ox;
you have poured over me^a fresh oil.
- 11 My eyes have seen the downfall of
my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom of
my evil assailants.
- 12 The righteous flourish like the palm
tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
- 13 They are planted in the house of the
LORD;
they flourish in the courts of our God.
- 14 In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,
15 showing that the LORD is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no
unrighteousness in him.

Read Psalms 93, 94

In the first of these psalms, God is depicted as king and as supreme judge over all created things. In the second, there is an appeal to his justice against the injustice so often found in human affairs, even among those who pretend to administer justice.

Reflect: What injustices remain before my eyes, injustices that can be corrected only by appeal to the judge of all?

Pray: Do not abandon your people, Lord. We are yours, and we count on your justice.

Act: I will not fight injustice with injustice, or dishonesty with dishonesty. I will do what I can and then appeal to the judge of all.

PSALM 93

The Majesty of God's Rule

- 1 The LORD is king, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength.
He has established the world; it shall never be
moved;
- 2 your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.
- 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.
- 4 More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves^b of the sea,
majestic on high is the LORD!
- 5 Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.

PSALM 94

God the Avenger of the Righteous

- 1 O LORD, you God of vengeance,
you God of vengeance, shine forth!
- 2 Rise up, O judge of the earth;
give to the proud what they deserve!
- 3 O LORD, how long shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked exult?
- 4 They pour out their arrogant words;
all the evildoers boast.

^a Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Cn: Heb *majestic are the waves*

- 5 They crush your people, O LORD,
and afflict your heritage.
- 6 They kill the widow and the stranger,
they murder the orphan,
- 7 and they say, "The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob does not perceive."
- 8 Understand, O dullest of the people;
fools, when will you be wise?
- 9 He who planted the ear, does he not
hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not
see?
- 10 He who disciplines the nations,
he who teaches knowledge to
humankind,
does he not chastise?
- 11 The LORD knows our thoughts,^a
that they are but an empty breath.
- 12 Happy are those whom you
discipline, O LORD,
and whom you teach out of your
law,
- 13 giving them respite from days of
trouble,
until a pit is dug for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not forsake his
people;
he will not abandon his heritage;
- 15 for justice will return to the
righteous,
and all the upright in heart will
follow it.
- 16 Who rises up for me against the
wicked?
Who stands up for me against
evildoers?
- 17 If the LORD had not been my help,
my soul would soon have lived in
the land of silence.
- 18 When I thought, "My foot is slipping,"
your steadfast love, O LORD, held
me up.
- 19 When the cares of my heart are many,
your consolations cheer my soul.
- 20 Can wicked rulers be allied with you,
those who contrive mischief by
statute?
- 21 They band together against the life
of the righteous,
and condemn the innocent to death.
- 22 But the LORD has become my
stronghold,
and my God the rock of my refuge.
- 23 He will repay them for their iniquity
and wipe them out for their
wickedness;
the LORD our God will wipe them out.

PSALM 95

A Call to Worship and Obedience

- 1 O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our
salvation!
- 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of
praise!
- 3 For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
- 6 O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
- 7 For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

^a Heb *the thoughts of humankind*

Read Psalm 95

This psalm, which has traditionally been used as a fitting beginning of the whole day's prayer, invites us to come into the Lord's presence, acknowledging not only his sovereignty over the whole of creation but also the intimacy of our own relationship with him. We are counseled not to make the mistake of our ancestors who likewise knew him well, but abandoned him.

Reflect: Who is God, really? And who am I before him? Is it not amazing that I can even speak to him? Yet here he invites me to do so.

Pray: Lord, let me hear your voice throughout the day today, and teach me the way to respond.

Act: I will begin my prayer with an acknowledgement of how amazing is even the very fact that I am able to pray to my creator, to be a part of the flock that he shepherds.

Read Psalms 96, 97

These psalms are among those that express praise of God that cannot be contained. Beyond an individual's praise, the words invite the participation of the whole community, of the nation, then of all nations, and then even the very elements of nature. God's greatness assures us also that his justice will be victorious.

Reflect: Before God's greatness, no one—in fact, not even any inanimate object!—can be silent. The whole created world praises God by its order and beauty.

Pray: Lord, the heavens proclaim your justice and all peoples see your glory, and I say "Amen."

Act: I will look upon all that is most beautiful, whether in human culture or in the wonders of nature, as an act of pure praise of God.

- O that today you would listen to his voice!
- 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
- 9 when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof, though they had seen
my work.
- 10 For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people whose hearts go
astray,
and they do not regard my ways."
- 11 Therefore in my anger I swore,
"They shall not enter my rest."

PSALM 96

Praise to God Who Comes in Judgment

- 1 O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
- 4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
- 6 Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- 9 Worship the LORD in holy splendor;
tremble before him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never
be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity."
- 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
- 12 let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
- 13 before the LORD; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

PSALM 97

The Glory of God's Reign

- 1 The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
- 2 Clouds and thick darkness are all
around him;
righteousness and justice are the
foundation of his throne.
- 3 Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries on
every side.
- 4 His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
- 5 The mountains melt like wax before
the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.
- 6 The heavens proclaim his
righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.

- 7 All worshipers of images are put to
shame,
those who make their boast in
worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.
- 8 Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns^a of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O God.
- 9 For you, O LORD, are most high over
all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
- 10 The LORD loves those who hate^b evil;
he guards the lives of his faithful;
he rescues them from the hand of
the wicked.
- 11 Light dawns^c for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.
- 12 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Read Psalms 98, 99

God is welcomed as the great victor because of his intervention for the sake of his people. While it is specifically his deeds on behalf of Israel that are mentioned, these deeds reveal his lordship over all peoples. From Zion, he rules over all the earth as the king of all creation.

Reflect: How many times and in how many ways has God revealed his power even over those events that escape our control?

Pray: Sing a new song to the Lord!

Act: If I am truly in the service of the King who rules over all of creation, what does this service require of me today? I will be his good servant.

PSALM 98

Praise the Judge of the World

A Psalm.

- 1 O sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
- 2 The LORD has made known his victory;
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of
the nations.
- 3 He has remembered his steadfast love and
faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.
- 4 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
- 5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
- 6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.
- 7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
- 8 Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy
- 9 at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

^a Heb daughters

^b Cn: Heb You who love the LORD hate

^c Gk Syr Jerome: Heb is sown

PSALM 99

Praise to God for His Holiness

- 1 The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
- 2 The LORD is great in Zion;
he is exalted over all the peoples.
- 3 Let them praise your great and awesome name.
Holy is he!
- 4 Mighty King,^a lover of justice,
you have established equity;
you have executed justice
and righteousness in Jacob.
- 5 Extol the LORD our God;
worship at his footstool.
Holy is he!

- 6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those
who called on his name.
They cried to the LORD, and he
answered them.
- 7 He spoke to them in the pillar of
cloud;
they kept his decrees,
and the statutes that he gave
them.
- 8 O LORD our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them,
but an avenger of their
wrongdoings.
- 9 Extol the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy.

Read Psalm 100

This is the hymn of people who are about to enter God's temple to begin their public worship. The whole community is addressed in a series of verbs: Make a joyful noise! Worship! Come into his presence! Know! Enter! Give thanks! Bless!

Reflect: Have I been aware that both public and private prayer have so many different aspects? Perhaps my prayer could be much richer than it has been.

Pray: Lord, I often come before you with requests. Now, I want to come before you in a spirit of worship, to thank you for your goodness to me and to bless your name.

Act: I will keep in mind and put into practice the lesson this psalm teaches, that good prayer is made by good preparation and an awareness of whom I am addressing.

PSALM 100

All Lands Summoned to Praise God

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

- 1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
- 2 Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.
- 3 Know that the LORD is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;^b
we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture.
- 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.
- 5 For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

^a Cn: Heb *And a king's strength*

^b Another reading is *and not we ourselves*

Read Psalm 101

Acknowledging the effect that others have on us in our relationship to God, the psalmist resolves to avoid the company of those who are sinful, dishonest, slanderous, or arrogant, and to associate with those who are faithful to God, who act with integrity, and who speak truthfully.

Reflect: What effect do I have on others? What effect do others have on me? How does this effect fit into God's plan for us?

Pray: Among those I meet, Lord, please introduce me to your friends!

Act: I will examine and, if necessary, adjust my social priorities in light of their impact on my relationship with God.

Read Psalm 102

In this, another of the "Penitential Psalms," the psalmist seems at first to pray about personal afflictions probably due to sins, and then to pray for mercy to be given to Zion, before returning to a prayer that is personal and communal in its intent at the same time. There is probably an acknowledgment here that personal and social sin, like personal and communal forgiveness, cannot be completely separated.

Reflect: Have my "personal" sins—sins that I thought were private—perhaps harmed others? What role does the community of faith play in the forgiveness that I need?

Pray: Lord, you are the same forever, and our sinfulness has not changed your love for us. Forgive us.

Act: I will value the necessity of penitential discipline as a constant element of the life of God's people.

PSALM 101**A Sovereign's Pledge of Integrity and Justice**

Of David. A Psalm.

- 1 I will sing of loyalty and of justice;
to you, O LORD, I will sing.
- 2 I will study the way that is blameless.
When shall I attain it?

I will walk with integrity of heart
within my house;
- 3 I will not set before my eyes
anything that is base.

I hate the work of those who fall away;
it shall not cling to me.
- 4 Perverseness of heart shall be far from me;
I will know nothing of evil.
- 5 One who secretly slanders a neighbor
I will destroy.
A haughty look and an arrogant heart
I will not tolerate.
- 6 I will look with favor on the faithful in the land,
so that they may live with me;
whoever walks in the way that is blameless
shall minister to me.
- 7 No one who practices deceit
shall remain in my house;
no one who utters lies
shall continue in my presence.
- 8 Morning by morning I will destroy
all the wicked in the land,
cutting off all evildoers
from the city of the LORD.

PSALM 102**Prayer to the Eternal King for Help**

A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the LORD.

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
let my cry come to you.
- 2 Do not hide your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day when I call.
- 3 For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
- 4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass;

- I am too wasted to eat my bread.
 5 Because of my loud groaning
 my bones cling to my skin.
 6 I am like an owl of the wilderness,
 like a little owl of the waste places.
 7 I lie awake;
 I am like a lonely bird on the
 housetop.
 8 All day long my enemies taunt me;
 those who deride me use my
 name for a curse.
 9 For I eat ashes like bread,
 and mingle tears with my drink,
 10 because of your indignation and
 anger;
 for you have lifted me up and
 thrown me aside.
 11 My days are like an evening shadow;
 I wither away like grass.
 12 But you, O LORD, are enthroned
 forever;
 your name endures to all
 generations.
 13 You will rise up and have
 compassion on Zion,
 for it is time to favor it;
 the appointed time has come.
 14 For your servants hold its stones dear,
 and have pity on its dust.
 15 The nations will fear the name of the
 LORD,
 and all the kings of the earth your
 glory.
 16 For the LORD will build up Zion;
 he will appear in his glory.
 17 He will regard the prayer of the
 destitute,
 and will not despise their prayer.
- 18 Let this be recorded for a generation
 to come,
 so that a people yet unborn may
 praise the LORD:
 19 that he looked down from his holy
 height,
 from heaven the LORD looked at
 the earth,
 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
 to set free those who were
 doomed to die;
 21 so that the name of the LORD may
 be declared in Zion,
 and his praise in Jerusalem,
 22 when peoples gather together,
 and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.
 23 He has broken my strength in
 midcourse;
 he has shortened my days.
 24 “O my God,” I say, “do not take me
 away
 at the midpoint of my life,
 you whose years endure
 throughout all generations.”
 25 Long ago you laid the foundation of
 the earth,
 and the heavens are the work of
 your hands.
 26 They will perish, but you endure;
 they will all wear out like a garment.
 You change them like clothing, and
 they pass away;
 27 but you are the same, and your
 years have no end.
 28 The children of your servants shall
 live secure;
 their offspring shall be established
 in your presence.

PSALM 103

Thanksgiving for God's Goodness

Of David.

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
 and all that is within me,
 bless his holy name.
 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
 and do not forget all his benefits—
 3 who forgives all your iniquity,
 who heals all your diseases,

Read Psalm 103

This psalm gives eloquent praise for the completeness of God's forgiveness. So marvelous is this forgiveness, in fact, that it ranks as one of the foremost manifestations of God's creative and kingly power.

Reflect: After having sought God's forgiveness, do I seem to suspect that there is any reservation in his mercy? Or do I acknowledge that my sin has now been removed from me "as far as the east is from the west"?

Pray: Lord, I do not doubt the power that you have shown in creation, so neither will I doubt the power that you show in mercy.

Act: After having asked God for mercy, I will live in the total newness of his complete forgiveness.

- 4 who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- 5 who satisfies you with good as long as you live^a
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6 The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
- 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- 9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
- 10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who
fear him;
- 12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
- 13 As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who
fear him.
- 14 For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.
- 15 As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
- 17 But the steadfast love of the LORD is from
everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
18 to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.
- 19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
- 20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.
- 21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers that do his will.
- 22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Psalm 104

This magnificent hymn of praise for the creator passes meditatively from one element of creation to another, marveling upon each as a reflection of the goodness and power of the one who made them all. The need for food and breath that all creatures have in common shows their constant dependence on their creator, and his constant sustenance of them as well. He continues the work of creation by purifying the world of sin.

Reflect: Before my eyes at this very moment are still more things flowing directly from the loving hand of God. Am I attentive like the psalmist in seeing God's work behind them?

Pray: The universe itself is the greatest work of art, and its creator is still at work. Bless the Lord, my soul!

Act: As the psalmist has focused on creatures one by one, praising God's goodness revealed in them, I will continue the list and renew the praise.

PSALM 104

God the Creator and Provider

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
- 2 wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
- 3 you set the beams of your^a chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your^a chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
- 4 you make the winds your^a messengers,
fire and flame your^a ministers.
- 5 You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
- 6 You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
- 7 At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
- 8 They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
- 9 You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.
- 10 You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
- 11 giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
- 12 By the streams^b the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
- 13 From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.
- 14 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,^c
to bring forth food from the earth,
- 15 and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
- 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.

^a Heb *his*

^b Heb *By them*

^c Or *to cultivate*

- 19 You have made the moon to mark
the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
- 20 You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest
come creeping out.
- 21 The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
- 22 When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.
- 23 People go out to their work
and to their labor until the evening.
- 24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are
there,
living things both small and great.
- 26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to
sport in it.
- 27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
- 28 when you give to them, they gather
it up;
when you open your hand, they
are filled with good things.
- 29 When you hide your face, they are
dismayed;
when you take away their breath,
they die
and return to their dust.
- 30 When you send forth your spirit,^a
they are created;
and you renew the face of the
ground.
- 31 May the glory of the LORD endure
forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his
works—
- 32 who looks on the earth and it
trembles,
who touches the mountains and
they smoke.
- 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I
live;
I will sing praise to my God while I
have being.
- 34 May my meditation be pleasing to
him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.
- 35 Let sinners be consumed from the
earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!

PSALM 105

God's Faithfulness to Israel

- 1 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
- 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.
- 3 Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD
rejoice.
- 4 Seek the LORD and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
- 5 Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he has
uttered,
- 6 O offspring of his servant Abraham,^b
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
- 7 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.

^a Or *your breath*

^b Another reading is *Israel* (compare
1 Chr 16.13)

Read Psalm 105

This hymn of praise is structured as a resumé of God's faithful fulfillment of his promises to Abraham, extending throughout the time of the sojourn in Egypt and the exodus. We are invited to give thanks to him and glorify his name, because his faithfulness continues even today.

Reflect: In the story of God's people in the Pentateuch, how many times is their situation far more precarious than mine even in those moments when I am tempted most strongly to doubt?

Pray: Teach me, Lord, to read the biblical account of salvation history as a participant rather than an observer.

Act: Read a passage from the book of Genesis or Exodus, and prayerfully consider its relevance to the present moment.

- 8 He is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that he commanded, for a
thousand generations,
9 the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
10 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
11 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance."
12 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers in it,
13 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
14 he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
15 saying, "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."
16 When he summoned famine against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the LORD kept testing him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler of all his possessions,
22 to instruct^a his officials at his pleasure,
and to teach his elders wisdom.
23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
24 And the LORD made his people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their foes,
25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.
26 He sent his servant Moses,
and Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They performed his signs among them,
and miracles in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled^b against his words.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.

^a Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *to bind*

^b Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *they did not rebel*

- 32 He gave them hail for rain,
and lightning that flashed through
their land.
- 33 He struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their
country.
- 34 He spoke, and the locusts came,
and young locusts without number;
- 35 they devoured all the vegetation in
their land,
and ate up the fruit of their ground.
- 36 He struck down all the firstborn in
their land,
the first issue of all their strength.
- 37 Then he brought Israel^a out with
silver and gold,
and there was no one among their
tribes who stumbled.
- 38 Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
- 39 He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
- 40 They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven
in abundance.
- 41 He opened the rock, and water
gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a
river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.
- 43 So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.
- 44 He gave them the lands of the
nations,
and they took possession of the
wealth of the peoples,
- 45 that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.
Praise the LORD!

PSALM 106

A Confession of Israel's Sins

- 1 Praise the LORD!
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
- 2 Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?
- 3 Happy are those who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times.
- 4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to
your people;
help me when you deliver them;
- 5 that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory in your heritage.
- 6 Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done
wickedly.
- 7 Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your
steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High^b at the Red
Sea.^c
- 8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
so that he might make known his mighty
power.

^a Heb *them*

^b Cn Compare 78.17, 56: Heb *rebelled at the sea*

^c Or *Sea of Reeds*

Read Psalm 106

We read of the hard-heartedness of God's people in the wilderness and their lapse into idolatry not with the critical eye of righteous observers, but with the sobering realization that we have similarly forgotten the Lord's goodness and betrayed him. Our afflictions are therefore deserved, but we pray for deliverance and thank the Lord in advance for hearing us.

Reflect: It is unique that the literature of a people would include such self-criticism, confession of guilt, and acceptance of responsibility. Is this not a sign of that people's greatness? How does my attitude compare?

Pray: Lord, we cannot pretend to be free of guilt for the same sins that our ancestors committed. Forgive us.

Act: Before criticizing others, I will ask whether I might not myself be guilty of the same or greater faults. I will seek forgiveness for others as well as for myself.

- 9 He rebuked the Red Sea,^a and it became dry;
he led them through the deep as through a
desert.
- 10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the
enemy.
- 11 The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.
- 12 Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.
- 13 But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his counsel.
- 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;
- 15 he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.
- 16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD.
- 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the faction of Abiram.
- 18 Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.
- 19 They made a calf at Horeb
and worshiped a cast image.
- 20 They exchanged the glory of God^b
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
- 21 They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.^a
- 23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.
- 24 Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.
- 25 They grumbled in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of the LORD.
- 26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them
that he would make them fall in the wilderness,
and would disperse^c their descendants among
the nations,
scattering them over the lands.
- 28 Then they attached themselves to the Baal of
Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
- 29 they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.

^a Or Sea of Reeds

^b Compare Gk Mss: Heb *exchanged their glory*

^c Syr Compare Ezek 20.23: Heb *cause to fall*

- 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interceded,
and the plague was stopped.
- 31 And that has been reckoned to him as
righteousness
from generation to generation
forever.
- 32 They angered the LORD^a at the waters
of Meribah,
and it went ill with Moses on their
account;
- 33 for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke words that were rash.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,
as the LORD commanded them,
35 but they mingled with the nations
and learned to do as they did.
- 36 They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.
- 37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
- 38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and
daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of
Canaan;
and the land was polluted with blood.
- 39 Thus they became unclean by their
acts,
and prostituted themselves in their
doings.
- 40 Then the anger of the LORD was
kindled against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
- 41 he gave them into the hand of the
nations,
so that those who hated them
ruled over them.
- 42 Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into
subjection under their power.
- 43 Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their
purposes,
and were brought low through
their iniquity.
- 44 Nevertheless he regarded their
distress
when he heard their cry.
- 45 For their sake he remembered his
covenant,
and showed compassion
according to the abundance of
his steadfast love.
- 46 He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.
- 47 Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the
nations,
that we may give thanks to your
holy name
and glory in your praise.
- 48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of
Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise the LORD!

^a Heb *him*