

RELATE

**ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM**

**DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR**



first baptist
FORT WORTH

**NOVEMBER
2020**

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

We are living in a time with a stronger sense of uncertainty because of COVID-19, the election, and a myriad of other things going on in our nation. One begins to wonder where I can find a stable foundation in an unstable world. In this volatile situation, you ask who can be trusted in the midst of all this? How can one feel secure and good about the future? In this month's study, we will discover the kind of trust that sees you through these difficult times. Our trust rests not in the government, news media, social media platforms, or what men may say, but in what the Word of God says and how He is at work in our lives as His people.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Know that God cares for you and is interested in what is happening in your life. Remember Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Our trust is in Him!

–Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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*Trust the Lord
for Protection
Psalm 9:1-20*

Focal Verse:

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."

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Psalm 9:9

Introduce

When founding and constructing their village several centuries ago, the citizens used the most advanced technology and the latest innovations to provide them with the best security and afford them the most protection. After planning and laying out all the structures they would need while leaving plenty of room for growth, they began construction. Around the entire perimeter of the town, they dug a twelve-foot high by twenty-foot wide trench that they would allow to fill with rainwater for their moat. On the inner edge abutted next to the moat with no land or ledge on which to stand, they began assembling hewn stones into a forty-foot high wall. Within the wall, they constructed towers for guards which offered a 360-degree view, a platform along the entire perimeter of the wall at the top on which soldiers could stand in the event of an attack, and small, oblong windows at strategic locations where archers could stand in defense.

The village had only one way in and out through a massive drawbridge that would only be lowered to receive verified guests. Feeling confident in their plans, the villagers decided to build one last center of refuge in the middle of town on the highest point just in case the unthinkable would happen and someone could overcome their outer defenses. With the same stones from which they had built the wall, they constructed a cylindrical tower that could accommodate everyone in the entire town. To establish an



even more secure area in which they could take refuge, they decided not to add any windows even though it had multiple levels. And they only placed one door in the center of the structure for access.

After a few decades passed, not even one attack had occurred on this village. So, the citizens became more confident in their work and they became much more complacent. After a severe drought, the moat completely dried up. But even this didn't concern the villagers because they trusted in all their other defenses which they proudly thought were impenetrable. On a cloudy, but rainless, night that completely

Introduce

obscured the moonlight leaving the village in utter darkness, a dozen soldiers from a nearby town stealthily made their way down into the trench. Using something like grappling hooks with ropes, they slowly ascended over the middle of the wall—just out of sight of the guards stationed in the towers. Everyone else in the village was sound asleep as the soldiers made their way down the landing to the drawbridge undetected. With a tremendous thud, everyone in town was awakened by the drawbridge hitting violently upon the ground as hundreds of additional soldiers poured into the walled city.

Reacting quickly, the citizens escaped to the refuge they had designed in the middle of town. They had thought of everything! But once inside the tower, they discovered that they hadn't placed any weapons. Even if they had, they had no way of using them because they had no windows or access to the roof and only one door. To make things worse, they hadn't stored any food or water, so they couldn't wait indefinitely until the invaders simply decided to leave. Their so-called refuge had become their prison! It became their death sentence because they had misplaced their trust and misappropriated their confidence in a flawed plan from the beginning!

As followers of Christ, we must be careful in whom or what we place our trust and take as our refuge lest we find ourselves following such a flawed plan. The psalmist gives the right prescription for refuge that never fails! David writes, "The Lord will also be a refuge . . . and for those who know Your name and will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You" (Psalm 9:9-10). Rather than rely upon our own wisdom or abilities, let us trust in the Lord for our protection, for He never fails! Instead of turning to the Lord as a refuge of last resort, let us turn to Him first, so that we never find ourselves in a hopeless situation.

Key
Question

In what ways does God demonstrate His protection for us when we place our trust in Him?

Psalm 9:1-2

PRAISE GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY:

We can't tie Psalm 9 to a particular historical setting or a specific time in Israel's history where God had helped them to overcome their enemies and instituted justice on behalf of the righteous found in Him. In this way, the Psalm serves as a general reminder to **praise** the Lord in whatever circumstances in which we may find ourselves. Over the centuries, God had repeatedly rescued and restored a wayward people whether during the exodus, the wandering in the wilderness, and the period of the conquest of the Promised Land, during the time of the judges, during the united monarchy under David and Solomon, or even during the exile in Babylon and the return to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah. God orchestrated everything! When we find ourselves surrounded on all sides by our enemies and troubles coming from every direction, we are to **praise** Him! When we find ourselves facing injustice and oppression, we are to **praise** Him! When we find ourselves on the verge of victory and celebrating our triumphs, we are still to **praise** Him!

For this reason, David exclaims, "**I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart**" (v. 1)! David knew the agony of having an enemy, namely King Saul, constantly seek to kill him ([1 Sam 19](#)). He knew the heartache of having a dysfunctional family who engaged in sexual immorality, revenge, and violence ([2 Sam 13; 15-19](#)). David knew the jubilation of victory when he sank a stone into the giant Philistine's forehead ([1 Sam 17](#)) and was received by the people with a song of praise, lauding him for killing tens of thousands to Saul's thousands ([1 Sam 18:7](#)). David knew the pain and guilt of sinning against God by having an affair with Bathsheba and attempting to cover it up ([2 Sam 11](#)). Yet, he also

experienced the joy in receiving God's mercy, grace, forgiveness, and restoration when he confessed and repented of his sins ([Psalm 51](#)). Regardless of the circumstances,



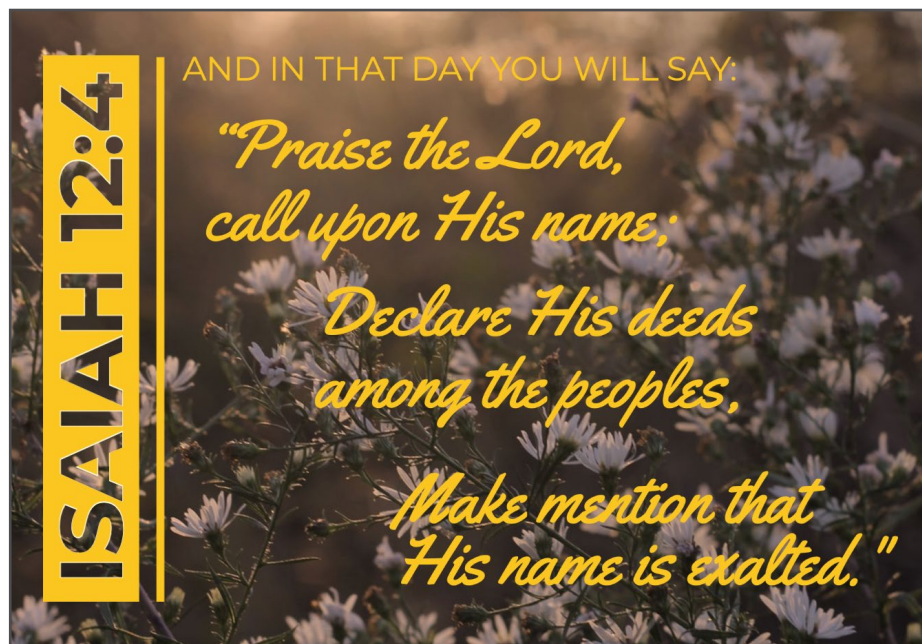
David praised God for who He is and what He has done. Likewise, we too ought to praise God regardless of the circumstances that we may face.

For what can you praise God right now?

Question
1

Not only should we direct our **praise** to the Lord, but we should also declare His **works** before other people so that they too might **praise** Him and know from where our victory comes. And if they don't have a relationship with Him, they might see His benevolent works of grace and restoration in our lives, so that they can come to have this same relationship with Him that we do. Hence, David proclaims, "**I will tell of all your marvelous works.**" As humans, we should do good things with pure motives and the right attitude—not to draw attention to ourselves and receive accolades, but to honor our heavenly Father who will in turn reward us. Jesus indeed has strong words for those who toot their own horns so to speak ([Matt 6:1-4](#)). On the contrary, we need to make God's **name** known among men and **sing praise to** Him as a testimony to who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

Today, many people participate in the challenge to pay it forward by performing a kind act which blesses someone. Often, the person who receives the blessing, such as having someone pay for his meal in the drive-thru, never knows who did that good deed. And, in human terms, the person who paid it forward did it with the



right motives, never seeking recognition. Yet, we cannot and should not take this same approach with the blessings God bestows on us. We need to **praise, tell, and sing** about what He has done! How will the world know the Source of our blessings if we don't tell them? They world doesn't naturally and automatically ascribe blessings to the Lord.

Instead, they most often blame Him when things don't go their way, things don't go right, or tragedies happen—that is even if they mention Him at all! Therefore, we must

let the world know that Christ is solely responsible for our blessings and He alone helps us to overcome our struggles and endure every trial.

What is the danger in remaining silent about who is the Source of our blessings?

Question
2

Psalm 9:3-10

PREVAIL IN GOD'S PRESENCE:

Having introduced the psalm on a note of **praise** and rejoicing, David now describes the occasion which has brought jubilation to his lips. The Lord will **turn back** his **enemies** and they will **fall** and **perish in** His **presence** (v. 3). Although David has many reasons to respond with gladness and **praise**, in this particular case, he can **rejoice** because God has enacted justice on his behalf. David acknowledges that the Lord **maintained** his **right** and **cause** by **judging in righteousness** from His **throne** (v. 4). In other words, he was vindicated and proved **right** not based upon his own righteousness, but God's. David didn't start something or do something on his own and then ask God to defend him and bless him. Rather, he followed God from the beginning and acted righteously according to His plan and **cause**. David was **right** because he acted in obedience toward the Lord! Because David followed Him wholeheartedly, God vindicated him and proved him in **right** standing in the end. Many times, however, we get this backwards! We act according to our own desires and then ask God to defend and bless us. When we don't seek His will first and find ourselves in trouble, only then do we appeal to Him for help and ask Him to vindicate us in the choices that we have errantly made! It doesn't work this way. God will always extend grace and forgiveness any time we ask. But we should never ask God to sanction or defend our poor choices and fleshly desires. David didn't. Although we won't lose our salvation, God will punish us and we will still face the consequences for our choices when we act outside of His will. On the other hand, when our **enemies** come against us for doing His will, God will defend us; He will deal justly with both us and them.

There is a big difference between these two different responses. We need to have the right perspective! The world often seeks what they call "justice" when they themselves have made poor decisions which have placed themselves in that predicament in the first place. God will sustain us through the trying times we will encounter and He will always deliver us just as His Word says. We can count on Him to act justly and judge

Instruct

righteously. This means He will punish and correct us when we do wrong or go against His will just like He will others who rebel and act defiantly against Him. But He will also deliver us when we have surrendered to Him and follow His will!

When we make poor decisions or follow our fleshly desires, what should we expect in terms of God's response? How should we pray?

Question
3

After explaining how God had defended and delivered him, David describes the fate of those who come against him and oppose the Lord. In His **righteousness**, God **rebuked the nations, destroyed the wicked, and blotted out their name forever** (v.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies,
bless them that curse you,
do good to them that hate you, and pray
for them which despitefully use you,
and persecute you;

5). David expresses joy that the **destructions** of the enemy have ceased **forever** because the Lord has **destroyed** their **cities** and **even their memory has perished** (v. 6). To understand the tenor or mood of the psalm correctly, we must realize that David isn't wishing ill will toward his **enemies** or praying for and celebrating their spiritual demise. Nor is he gloating

over their destruction and callously rubbing their defeat in their faces. He is merely describing how God has acted to bring judgment and ensure justice.

We should pray for deliverance and justice. But we should also pray for the salvation of the wicked rather than their destruction. No matter what someone has done to us personally and no matter how wicked, vile, or evil we may perceive them to be, we should pray for them! This attitude goes against everything that the world teaches and promotes about responding to one's enemy, but it is consistent with Jesus' teaching! Jesus commands us to "love [our] enemies" and "pray for those who spitefully use [us] and persecute [us]" ([Matt 5:44](#)). We should never rejoice or take delight in someone's downfall. We can and should, however, direct our **praise** toward God who has delivered us and acted in righteousness. The enemy's destruction is a by-product of their refusal to repent and turn to the Lord—not a response to David's prayer for their

destruction. Thus, David only describes what has happened to his **enemies**; he doesn't celebrate it. He does, however, celebrate God's justice and His work of deliverance! We too must maintain this same attitude about those who cause trouble or persecute us.

How should we pray for our enemies, those who act wickedly, or those with whom we disagree?

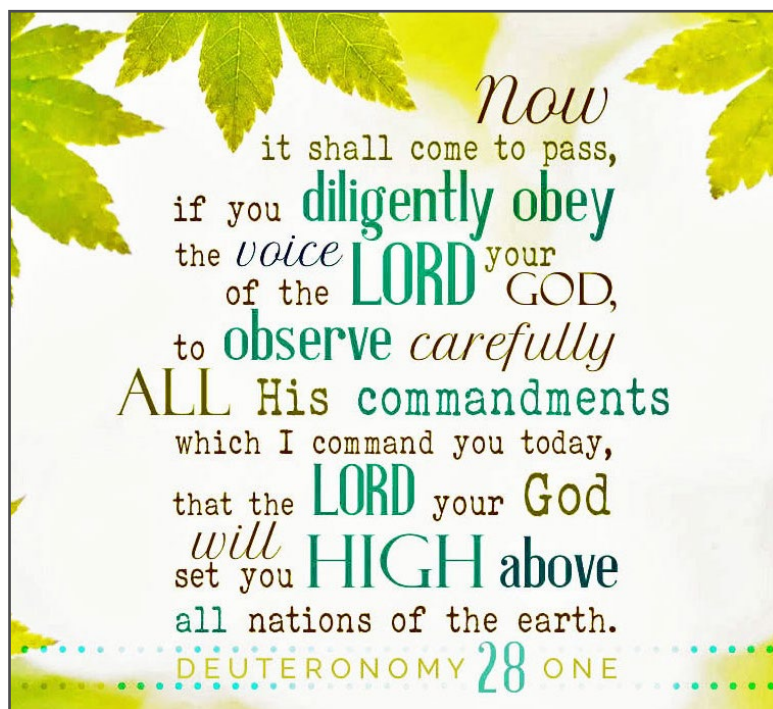
Question
4

Moreover, David can also rejoice because he recognizes that his trials and troubles are only temporary whereas God provides a permanent and lasting solution. In contrast to the **memory** of the wicked which **has perished** and long been forgotten, **the Lord** will **endure forever** (v. 7). David, therefore, looks beyond his current situation to see the ultimate victory which God guarantees for those who follow Him and walk in **uprightness** (v. 8). God alone can **judge the world** because only He is holy, righteous, and morally perfect. On one hand, He will pronounce a guilty verdict upon those who have rejected Him and attempted to subvert His holy plan. On the other hand, He will pronounce a favorable **judgment**—that is to declare one to be in **right** standing—for those who have a relationship with Him and live righteously in Him.

As a result, we have nothing to fear when we have a relationship with the Father through Christ. It may seem, from our finite and limited perspective,

that the troubles we face may never end. But they will one day! It may seem that people are lined up one after another to tell us bad news—just like they did Job. One day this will cease. It may seem as if the righteous suffer and the wicked get away with their sinful atrocities. One day God will judge and punish the wicked and vindicate the righteous found in Him. We need to look beyond the moment and the current circumstances in which we find ourselves and see the bigger picture in Christ when we surrender completely to Him and obediently follow Him. We need to look to Christ and place our trust squarely in Him.

David can declare his deliverance and the fate of his enemies with absolute confidence



Instruct

because he knows the One in whom he can find help. He has placed his **trust** in the only Source which can guarantee **refuge**. Therefore, he announces **the Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed in times of trouble** (v. 9). He continues to reveal that those who **know His name, put their trust in Him, and seek Him** will never be **forsaken** (v. 10). To **know** one's **name** means to have a personal, intimate relationship with people whereby we would know their background, their character, and their personality. Today, we can say that we **know** someone's **name**, but we don't know that much about them because we haven't had much interaction with them. This isn't the type of relationship of which David speaks. He knows the Lord and he can **trust** Him explicitly because he has seen Him work first-hand!

Even if we've never watched this television show, most of us would probably instantly recognize the theme song, especially the lyrics which suggest "sometimes you wanna go where everybody knows your name." The idea that people know "your name" implies you're not just a face in the crowd. People have a relationship with you; they know you intimately. They know who you are! Although set in a secular setting in Boston which we should not emulate, the same principle applies in knowing the Lord's **name**. He's not someone upon whom we merely call when we need a favor or help. He's not someone we seek to have fellowship with when we have time or when we think about it. We should know Him! We should know His character, His personality, His expectations, and the boundaries which He has set because He has clearly revealed them to us and we have seen Him work tangibly in the world around us!

How intimately do you know the Lord? What has He revealed to you about His character and His personality through Scripture and through His Holy Spirit?

Question
5

Psalm 9:11-20

PROCLAIM GOD'S WORKS:

David returns to where he began this psalm by leading us to **sing praises to the Lord** and **declare His deeds among the people** (v. 11). In the verses which follow, he proceeds to describe four areas in which we can see God at work and which we should **declare** unto the world. First, we should proclaim that God judges justly. He will punish the wicked and vindicate those who have put their faith in Him and have

obediently surrendered to Him. The rest of the psalm overwhelmingly emphasizes the importance of this theme. Most of the verses in this last section directly herald God's judgment whether His **mercy** upon the **humble** or His wrath upon **the wicked**.

For example, David points out that God **avenges blood** (v. 12). In other words, He will judge those who murder, act violently, and, according to the New Testament, those who are angry without cause or hate their brother which is comparable to murder! After the



first murder when Cain killed his brother Abel over an offering, God avenged his **blood** which cried “out to [Him] from the ground” by issuing a punishment or “curse” upon Cain ([Gen 4:10-12](#)). Only a few chapters later, we see God judge all mankind by sending a world-wide flood because the whole earth had become filled with violence ([Gen 6:11, 13](#)). Throughout Scripture, the murderous, violent, and wicked may seem to get away with evil for a while, but in the end they will face judgment for their deeds.

At the same time, God **does not forget the cry of the humble; He remembers them** (v. 12)! Later in this psalm, David also rejoices that **the needy shall not always be forgotten** and **the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever** (v. 18). God **does not forget** those who have a relationship with Him! He restores, rescues, and renews them—not because of their own righteousness, but because of His. God doesn't lump everyone into a single category by looking at one's outward deeds alone; He examines the heart, knows one's thoughts, and discerns his motives. Therefore, He can judge justly. For this reason, David announces that we can know God **by the judgement He executes** (v. 16). He is just and righteous in His judgment. God, in his holiness, must punish sin and wickedness on one hand. On the other hand, those who humbly and obediently follow His plan will be rewarded in the end. They will receive the crown of eternal life and praise for their good works done in Jesus' name through His power!

How has God corrected you in the past when you were disobedient? How has He rewarded you when you have lived according to His Word?

Question
6

Instruct

In contrast, **the wicked** will receive their just dues as well. As we have seen, their fate is destruction. God will sentence **the wicked** and **the nations that** reject (literally **forget**)



Him to eternity in **hell** (v. 17). In this text, David makes it clear that God does not *send* people to **hell**; they choose to spend eternity their based upon their own actions! They are responsible for their choices. As a result, their choices have ensnared them because they have refused to repent! In verse 15, this becomes evident: **the nations have sunk down in the pit which they have**

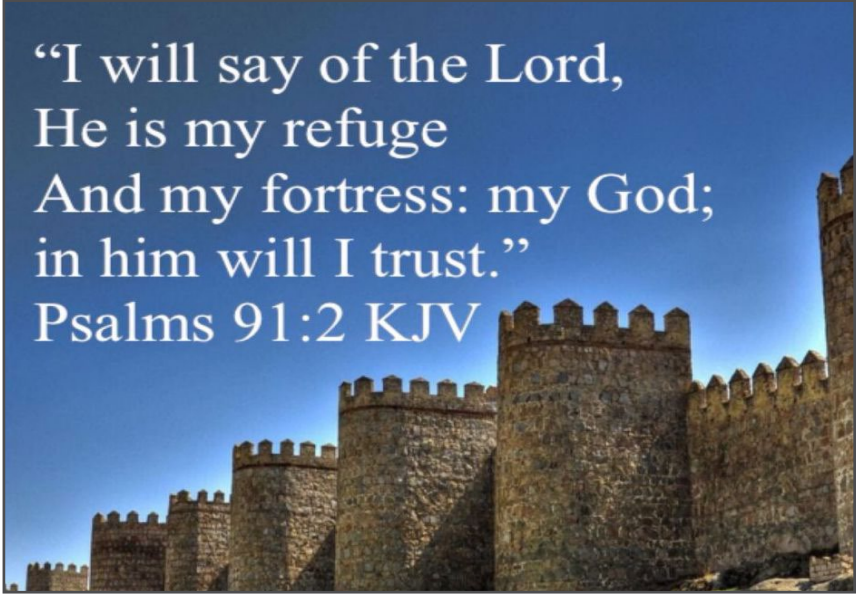
made; they got their **foot caught** in their own **net**. Again, David emphasizes personal responsibility when he points out that **the wicked** are ensnared by **the work of their own hands** (v. 16). They are the source of their own destruction! They brought all this upon themselves when they rejected the Lord and refused to repent.

God's justice seems like something foreign for us to **declare** to others. But it's an integral part of His character. We must tell others of His judgment for two primary reasons. First, we should desire to warn others about God's wrath and punishment against sin and call them to repentance in Christ. Destruction will inevitably come if they reject God and refuse to repent. We must **declare** the truth to them, point them to Christ, and implore them to turn from their wicked ways! Second, we also need to remind ourselves, and other believers, to do right regardless of the circumstances. We should always follow God's boundaries and act with integrity. Yet, sometimes, we must also remind ourselves to trust God and let Him deal with those who act unjustly toward us when we do what is right. We shouldn't take matters into our own hands without supervision from the Lord! We shouldn't retaliate, seek revenge, or harbor bitterness. Let God deal with it! David understood this and declared this principle in this psalm for us to practice as well!

How do you relate God's judgment to others?
How does the Bible instruct us to do that in the way God designed?

Question
7

The second area where we can see God at work and which we should proclaim to others is the **mercy** He extends to us (v. 13). In verse 13, David cries out to the Lord for **mercy** in the midst of **trouble from those who hate him**. He knows and has assurance that God will rescue (**lift him up**) **from the gates of death**. Neither David nor we deserve such help. We're not entitled to it despite the fact that we live in a world which regularly feels entitled! Still, God provides endurance and sees us through periods of **trouble** in our lives



“I will say of the Lord,
He is my refuge
And my fortress: my God;
in him will I trust.”
Psalms 91:2 KJV

because of His great **mercy** and love for us. To receive such **mercy**, we must have a relationship with Him and accept it. We must surrender completely to Him and call upon His name first. God should never be our last resort; He should always be our first Source of help!

Finally, we should **declare** our dependance upon the Lord and the majesty of His unrivaled and unequal position as Sovereign. In the last two verses of this psalm, David reminds us of the proper perspective we should entertain before God. We must remember that we are mere humans and He is our holy Creator and Lord. We cannot **prevail** against Him and He will serve as the only One who can judge **the nations**. Therefore, we should **fear** the Lord—that is have reverence and respect for Him. We must realize that we are **but men** and He is God.

We live in a culture that routinely forgets this. We were created in God's image; He should not be made into our image! In other words, we must recognize God for who He is—not who we want Him to be according to our own perspective. And we can only know who God is through Scripture which tells of His work in the world, particularly that of His Son who became flesh and revealed His exact nature to us. Largely, however, people treat God flippantly and irreverently with contempt because they have forgotten His sovereign position as Lord. Unfortunately, this attitude and perspective has influenced the way that some in the church see God as well! God is not “the big man upstairs”; He is our heavenly Father who alone deserves to be glorified and worshiped!

Although God is our Friend, we should never ever approach Him as we would one

Instruct

of our human companions. Still, people do. They demand things of God rather than seek His will. They demand He meet their needs according to their fleshly impulses rather than follow His perfect will. Moreover, they even tell God what should be done and how it should be done. In doing so, they question His motives and challenge His sovereignty. They arrogantly believe they know better than God!

Because they know better, they believe that they can speak for God and define what constitutes sin and what is acceptable. This way they can live in sin and still claim to be in right standing with God. God never endorses or approves of sin which He has clearly defined in His Word! Although His love for us will never fail or cease, He will punish sin and unrighteousness. This leads us back to where we began our discussion. We should not conform God to our image; we should conform ourselves to His! We can only do this when we remember that He is God and we are **but men**.

How has culture attempted to conform God into their image or ideas? How should we as believers correct this misunderstanding?

Question
8

In the introduction, we saw a village who thought they had planned for everything in terms of defending themselves against their enemies so much so that they became overconfident and complacent. In the end, however, the plans in which they pinned all their hopes, found solace, and took refuge became their death sentence. We only have one Source of refuge in life upon whom we can always confidently count—the Lord. When we don't turn to the Lord for refuge, our plans may seem to work for a while, but they will ultimately fail. If we reject God as our refuge in Christ, then our plans become our death sentence apart from Him just like the people discovered in their ill-fated tower errantly constructed in the middle of their walled village.

Thankfully, however, we have a merciful and gracious God who will give us refuge when we seek it in Him. The good news is that while we may face a multitude of troubles and trials throughout our lives God is still in control and victory will come! Our enemies will not prevail against us and God will act in righteousness and justice to punish wickedness. We only need to trust in Him. We don't need to take matters into our own hands, but trust that God will see us through and deliver us in the end no matter what may happen to us in this life! Therefore, we can continually rejoice because we have something greater, something better, something unparalleled to which we can look forward in Christ—a life spent with Him in glory forever. Let us trust the Lord and celebrate the protection that He has afforded us in Christ which we eagerly await to be fulfilled in full when He calls us home to be with Him forever!

Incorporate

In the midst of the trouble and uncertainty of 2020, how has God functioned as a refuge? In what ways have you relied upon Him for wisdom, strength, peace, and justice?

How can we as a church declare the work of the Lord? How are you involved in that declaration? If not, why are you not involved?

Based upon [Psalm 9:19-20](#), why is it dangerous to ask the question: "Who is God to you?" Rather, what does Scripture say about who God is?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 8, 2020



Trust the Lord for Power

Psalm 27:1-14

Focal Verse:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?”

Psalm 27:1

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Introduce

On an average Sunday, few of us probably think about the safety measures in place to protect us and lead us to safety in the event of an emergency. As required by law, above each door to the sanctuary, we will find an illuminated “exit” sign. Theoretically, in the event the building loses power or suffers a catastrophic fire or other emergency, these signs should remain lit with a battery back-up, so that that we can find our way to safety in utter darkness. Hopefully, we will never experience such an emergency or calamity. But it



should give us peace of mind to know that these things will lead us to safety and help rescue us from harm, if a need arises.

Light pierces the darkness. It helps us to see the dangers that lie before us and prevents us from stumbling over obstacles that would cause us to trip and fall.

Imagine, for example, sitting in worship on Sunday when the power begins to flicker and suddenly goes out. With the doors closed, the sanctuary would be pitch black. We can't see the pews, other people, or even our own hand! In a moment of panic, we fumble for our cell phone, which has a flashlight, but we can't find it. We know we need to leave the building. We look up and see the exit sign brightly shining. Although we can't see anything else, we can begin slowly walking from our pew making our way toward the light.

Now, imagine that same scenario. But, when we look up, we stare into the black abyss. No exit signs point us to the way of safety. Panic ensues. Instead of an orderly exit, chaos and confusion reign. No matter how many times we have been in the sanctuary, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to know the direction we ought to go. We may guess correctly, but we still take a great risk! We still risk becoming disoriented as well as falling over obstacles and colliding with other people. With the absence of light, the risk of death increases greatly in a life-threatening emergency.

Buildings have multiple exits and ways to seek safety. But, even then, they do not guarantee that we can escape danger or death. In life, we don't have many ways to

Introduce

escape a second, eternal death. We only have one! And when we take that way, it always leads to salvation and eternal life without fail! David acknowledges, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear” ([Psalm 27:1](#))? The light of which David speaks physically came to earth many centuries later to illuminate our path and show us the only way to have salvation. He became our salvation by dying on the cross for our sins. John, therefore, writes, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). We know this pronoun refers to Jesus—the Messiah who is God in the flesh who had been designated by the Father before the world began as the only way we can have life and be rescued from our sin! Have you followed the only Light that leads to life by confessing your sins and repenting? Do you have a relationship with the Light who can save and rescue us from our sins?

Key
Question

In what way does Jesus function as light that points us to salvation?

Psalm 27:1-3

SERVE THE LORD WITHOUT FEAR:

David commences Psalm 27 with a triumphal note of optimism and hope because he knows that **the Lord is his light and salvation** (v. 1). When we have a relationship with the Lord and place all our trust in Him, we have absolutely nothing to **fear**! **Fear** primarily results from the unknown in our lives. We tend to **fear** the things which we don't understand and cannot control. Without **light** to illuminate our way, reveal obstacles in our path, and bring about a clear understanding of our world, we face a hopeless future in which we will wander aimlessly without direction. In this way, darkness obscures the truth and hides the dangers around us, leaving us defenseless and vulnerable. But **light** overpowers and conquers the darkness ([John 1:5](#)). In one sense, darkness produces **fear** because we cannot see what lies before us and the outcome is highly uncertain. **Light**, on the other hand, produces clarity because it helps us to see and recognize the dangers in life.

To help us comprehend the source of our **fear**, consider camping in a tent. The fabric of which tents are made offer us very little protection in reality. They may protect us from some of the elements like rain if they function properly, but they provide very little resistance to storms, falling trees, and animals. Spending a night in a tent without electricity and artificial sources of **light** can be daunting for some when we can't see and don't know what danger could be lurking outside. As we lie inside in our sleeping bags, we may have a restless night hearing a plethora of noises with which we are unfamiliar outside the secure sanctuary of our homes. The cracking of twigs and the rustling of brush could be the wind or a wild animal. The dropping of pinecones may sound like the heavy paw of an approaching bear gripping the ground. We **fear** because we can't see and don't know!



Instruct

Although we may be able to overcome some of these elements on our own, the outcome of the dangers we may face with wild animals and storms when camping in a tent is much less than certain. Even though we may successfully defend ourselves against an attacking bear, there is a much greater probability that we will not escape unscathed if left on our own. Herein lies the crux of our problem and the source of our **fear**: we trust in our own abilities which can fail us at times and our hope depends solely upon fate and chance! Even though we may not know the outcome of specific situations we may encounter in life, we can know the final outcome because the true **Light** points us to the path which leads to life and victory. In camping, we have many sources that emit some type of **light**: the moon, campfire, flashlights, or lanterns. These lights only have a limited effect. They can only pierce the darkness a little way before their power fades. They can only illuminate what is right next to us. In life, we only have one source of **light**: Christ who can overpower darkness. In Him, we have nothing to **fear** because He will never fail and His power is limitless. He pierces the darkness and shows us the way the world truly is. He leads us to safety in the midst of the chaos and storms of life.

What do you fear in life? How has Christ helped you to overcome those fears?

Question
1

For this reason, David can exclaim that **the Lord is the strength of his life**. God equips and empowers us for success no matter in what situations we may find ourselves if only we would turn to Him and trust in Him. Apart from Christ, we cannot save ourselves nor can we have a truly abundant life! Although we may have attained wisdom and knowledge according to the world's standards, it amounts to foolishness before God. Although we may have wealth and abundant resources in the eyes of the world, we stand before God as paupers. Although we may have powerful positions as human leaders and business executives, we are helpless before Almighty God. Our **strength** comes from Him! He alone can ensure our deliverance and our victory.

In verses 2-3, David incorporates the language of warfare and battle to depict how God will sustain us through difficulty in life and ultimately deliver us from trouble. Because he does not identify the enemy or reference a specific historical setting in battle, David most likely uses this language figuratively to describe any battle that we may face in life—whether physical or spiritual. Certainly, God delivered Israel and David from

physical battles with the Philistines among other enemies, but He also delivered the people from spiritual battles when they dedicated themselves to Him. If we trust in His **strength** and power, God will deliver us from whatever we may experience in life! Consequently, David can boldly acknowledge that his **enemies and foes stumbled and fell when the wicked came against** him (v. 2). Even though troubles may surround him like an



army encamped on all sides and **wars may rise against** him, he can remain **confident** and his **heart** free from **fear** because he has trusted in the Lord.

David figuratively describes the wicked as coming **against** him **to eat his flesh**. Sometimes we describe a physical disease as eating up our bodies. We could say, for example, his body was eaten up with cancer or he even lost his battle with cancer. As believers, we don't have to **fear** death whether by disease or at the hands of our enemies because we know the One who gives eternal life. Jesus Himself even asserted, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28). Those who live in sin and darkness have everything to **fear** because only destruction awaits them at the end of life. We should not live like those with no hope who live in darkness by emulating their evil deeds or by trusting in ourselves rather than the Lord. We should live triumphantly in Christ whether or not He heals us from physical disease, saves us from persecution, or allows us to face hardships. We have hope and assurance because we know the outcome of the war when we dedicate ourselves to the Lord even though we may succumb to a particular battle in the eyes of the world. We know what awaits us after we finish this life and Christ calls us home!

In what ways has God offered you reassurance in life when you have faced hardships and trials?

Question
2

Psalm 27:4-10

SEEK THE LORD FIRST:

David now gives us the key to overcoming **fear**: we must **seek** the Lord first. Therefore, he writes, “**One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek**” (v. 4). That which he desires is to **dwell in the house of the Lord** forever and **behold His beauty** . Four times in these verses David uses different structures with which the people at that time would have been familiar to describe his relationship with the Lord and what he seeks: **house of the Lord, temple** (v. 4), **pavilion** , and **tabernacle** (v. 5). These four structures figuratively depict God’s presence among His people. In other words, David seeks God’s presence in His life not just during times of trouble but at all times! This seeking of God’s presence must be intentional; it doesn’t automatically happen without any effort. To **seek** something requires maximum effort on our part by the very definition of the word. Therefore, we must intentionally **seek** God’s presence in our lives, allowing Him to guide us, strengthen us, and transform us.

When we surrender our lives to Christ and have a relationship with Him, the Holy Spirit



comes to **dwell** within us. We have the very presence of God in our lives! He will keep us from sin if we allow Him, He will give us sound advice if we will listen, He will help us navigate life’s difficulties if we trust Him, and He will transform and empower us to live boldly for Him if we **seek** Him. As believers, the Holy Spirit indwells us fully from the moment of our salvation;

we don’t receive more of Him over time. The problem is that we sometimes fail to **seek** Him in the first place. We haven’t “plugged” our lives into Him so to speak and we don’t follow His guidance as the valuable resource He is.

If you have ever called a computer helpline, or one for any electronic device for that matter, the service agent may have asked some questions which seem absolutely stupid. They will probably start by asking if the computer is plugged in or if the device

is receiving power. Many people overlook this simple and obvious fix! If the computer is unplugged, it cannot operate in the way it should. Plugging it in doesn't give it "more" power; it uses the power and the potential that was already there. The same is true of the Holy Spirit for us as believers. Many may overlook the fact that they have left Him out of their lives; they have become self-reliant and disconnected from Him. We must ensure that we're connected to the Spirit and in tune with Him so He can guide us and we can utilize the full potential of His empowerment to do God's will. It's not that we get "more" power when we surrender to Him; we are simply using the power that was already there from the beginning. But this requires that we diligently and intentionally **seek** Him.

In what ways do you seek God in your life?
How are you intentional about seeking Him daily
and not just during times of trouble?

Question
3

David desires to **behold the beauty of** God and inquire **in His temple** daily so that when times **of trouble** come he will know where to turn for a place of refuge. To **behold the beauty of the Lord** means to know His character, to see His goodness, to recognize His righteousness, and to experience His justice. God is beautiful in the sense that He is morally perfect and never acts arbitrarily as humans do. For this reason, God's beauty stems from His faithfulness; God always fulfills His Word and we can always count upon Him in any situation! We can know God's character through prayer which David describes as inquiring **in His temple** (v. 4). Prayer is an integral part of seeking the Lord. Through prayer, He reveals Himself according to His Word, He imparts strength, He dispenses wisdom, and He details His will. We can know where God absolutely stands and how He will act, but to do so we must **seek** Him first in prayer!

When we **seek** God wholeheartedly every day, we will know where to turn **in a time of trouble** (v. 5). We should start seeking God before **trouble** ever comes. When **trouble** does come, we tend to react and panic rather than stop and think! Our natural reflex should be to turn to the Lord, but if that's not part of our daily routine, it becomes more difficult to remember to focus on



Instruct

Him in a time of turmoil. We will try everything else in our power first and often end up with a bigger mess! In a sense, we will run around with our arms waving in the air like Will Robinson's robot screaming, "Danger, Will Robinson, danger!" Such a reaction does absolutely nothing to resolve our situation except to make it worse! Only when we have exhausted every other option then will we turn to the Lord for help. This should never be the case!

Often, people who have successfully overcome an emergency will credit their training. When interviewed, they'll likely say, "My training kicked in." Such people have taken their training seriously and rehearsed different scenarios repeatedly so they would know what to do in the event something actually did occur! They didn't wait until it happened and then simply react. They planned beforehand! We must train ourselves to **seek** the Lord. It doesn't come naturally to us. [Romans 3:11](#) points out, "There is none who seeks after God." How will we know how to respond or where to turn if we don't daily spend time in God's presence? We must diligently **seek** God so that we know how to live according to His Word as well as to know where to find security and solace in times of **trouble**.

How must we train ourselves to seek the Lord daily?

Question
4

When **trouble** inevitably comes, God will offer us shelter and afford us protection. He will **hide** us in His tent (i.e. **pavilion**) and **the secret place of His tabernacle**—that is in His holy presence (v. 5). He will **set** us upon **a rock** which cannot be shaken. In God's presence, nothing can prevail against us! Jesus says this about those who follow Him: "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29). This security found only in Christ should give us reason to rejoice even in the midst of our problems. David knew this from experience! He had seen God work time and again to deliver him because he continually sought Him. Therefore, David can rejoice by offering **sacrifices of joy** in the tabernacle and singing **praises to the Lord** (v. 6).

In verse 7, David shifts gears somewhat from rejoicing to pleading that God will **hear** his **voice** and extend him **mercy**. David's confidence hasn't suddenly turned to doubt that God may somehow fail to listen and **answer** his **call**. Instead, he is reassuring himself that God will act and respond because he knows from first-hand experience

that God will always respond to those who **seek** His **face** with a sincere **heart** (v. 8). Thus, when David insists that God **not hide** His **face from** him or **turn** His **servant away in anger**, he is reminding himself that God has always been there for him; He has never abandoned him at all (v. 9)! He knows that God will **never leave** him or **forsake** him because He has always been faithful in the past as his source of **help** and **salvation**. Even if David could no longer count upon the people who loved him the most and whom he trusted implicitly—his parents—he could still count upon the Lord! The Lord will still take care of him even if his parents abandon and **forsake** him (v. 10).



In what ways has God manifested His presence to you in times of trouble in your life?

Question
5

If we could summarize the principles of this section into one word, it would be “faithfulness.” God has always been faithful to us. Other people will fail us; our resources will be insufficient at times; we will experience deficiencies in our knowledge and wisdom; human institutions and solutions will prove inadequate, but God always stands ready to **hear** us when we call and respond when we faithfully **seek** Him. We can always count and rely upon Him! Let us faithfully **seek** God each day in our lives whether things are going smoothly as we walk on the mountaintops or we’ve hit a turbulent patch as we descend into the valley.

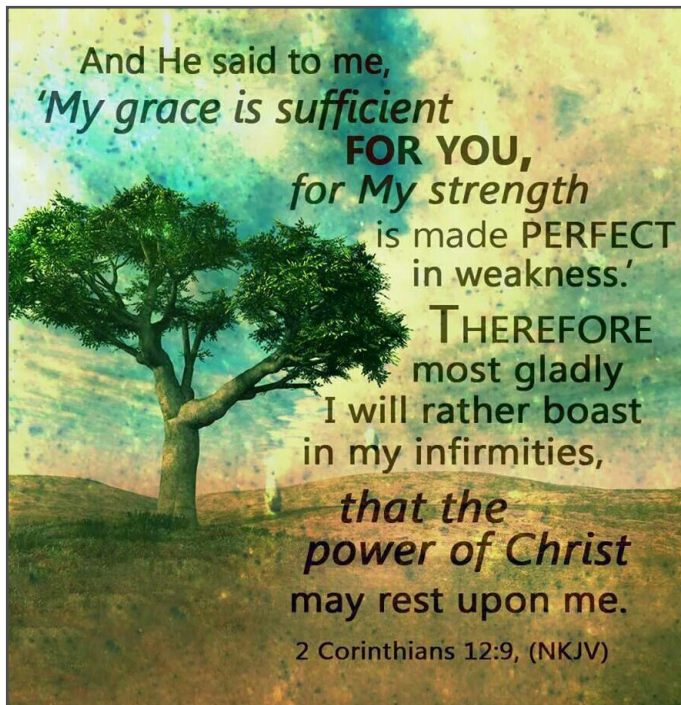
Psalm 27:11-14

STUDY THE LORD’S WAY:

Part of seeking the Lord is allowing Him to **teach** us His **way** (v. 11). In this context, David wants the Lord to **lead** him to **a smooth path** and **teach** him how to respond to his **enemies** and **adversaries**. Having taught several years in college, I can tell you that students often fail to read the directions fully and closely whether on a test or an assignment. Any teacher could probably tell you the same! By failing to read the directions, the students then don’t know how to respond appropriately! After failing

the assignment or missing the question on a test, some would come to ask why. To which I would respond, “That’s not what the directions said to do!” Unless we read God’s directions—that is the Bible—fully and carefully, we won’t know how to respond appropriately. We need the Lord to **teach** us how to respond to adversity and our **enemies**.

David states the prescription for dealing with trouble and adversity very plainly in verse



14. Twice he tells us to “**wait on the Lord.**” God will always direct us to the appropriate **way** to respond if we would only **seek** Him and listen. Therefore, our response to adversity, or any situation in life for that matter, should be consistent with God’s Word. God will never lead us to respond in a way that contradicts His Word! Consequently, revenge, retaliation, resentment, and wrath are never appropriate responses to our adversaries or any adversity that we may face in life. When we turn to the Lord, He will grant us **courage** and **strengthen** us to endure

whatever trials may come. Thus, God will lead us to love, forgive, act with integrity and speak the truth no matter what the cost may be. Sometimes He will enable us to resolve a matter here on earth whereas at other times we may face a lengthy and even life-long trial just as Paul did with his thorn in the flesh. Regardless, we need to **seek** the Lord and allow Him to guide our response!

If David would have dealt with his problems on his own as he saw fit, by his own admission he **would have lost** heart and given up (v. 13)! His **enemies** had falsely accused him and **breathed** threats of **violence against** him (v. 12). He had nowhere else to turn. He couldn’t have resolved these issues on his own even if he had tried. He realized that he needed the Lord to instruct him, so he trusted (**believed**) that he **would see the goodness of the Lord** act with mercy and righteousness to vindicate him.

What lessons in life have you learned from God about facing adversity? How would you use those lessons to encourage and mentor others?

Question
6

We need the Lord to **teach** us in every area of life so that we may follow His **way** rather than our own misguided path. This certainly applies to dealing with adversity, but it's true no matter in what season in life we may be. God hasn't left us to figure things out on our own, but He has given us Scripture which contains all the principles we need for having an abundant life which is Christ-centered. He has also sent us His Holy Spirit to teach us and remind us of all things ([John 14:26](#)). God has given us everything we need if only we would **seek** Him! To borrow from the computer helpline illustration in the previous section, let's ask ourselves this question: Am I plugged in and connected? If we are, God will give us the strength and **courage** to face life and live boldly without **fear** as we serve Him.

In the introduction, we were reminded about some of the modern safety features we have in our buildings to assist us during emergencies. Every time we enter the building, they're there working in the background. We have grown so accustomed to these inventions, such as emergency exit signs, that we pay little attention to them. We may not even think about them at all unless we happen to notice that one isn't working as it should. But even then, many people still don't take notice! They simply pass them by and take them for granted. When an emergency occurs, however, we would all expect them to function properly and point us to safety.

Sadly, many people treat God like an emergency exit sign who exists only in the background when they need Him. They don't spend any time with Him daily; they don't read His Word and pray regularly. They take Him for granted that they can always call upon Him when they need Him most. When trouble comes, however, they expect God to work! They demand Him to act swiftly and lead them to safety by delivering them from the problem. God is always there; He is always faithful. But we should never treat Him like He's just in the background until we need Him. We need to serve Him without fear; we need to seek Him diligently and faithfully every day; we need to allow Him to teach us as we study the way He would have us to live! Let us, therefore, trust the Lord to empower us daily as we face both the triumphs and tribulations of life. But let us not take Him for granted; let us put Him in the most prominent place in our lives so that we can daily gaze upon His light which brings us salvation and leads us to service in Him.

Incorporate

Why should we not allow fear to stop us from sharing the gospel? What fears do you have about sharing the gospel? How did or will Christ help you to overcome them?

How would you evaluate the effort you put forth in seeking the Lord? In what areas do you do well and in what areas do you need to improve?

When have you failed to wait upon the Lord in life? How do those times compare to when you waited upon Him? What lessons did God teach you that you could share with others?

November 15, 2020



EMMANUEL
God with us

*Trust in the
Lord's Presence*
Psalm 46:1-11

Focal Verse:

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

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Psalm 46:7

Introduce

As an inquisitive young boy, Johnny constantly asked questions in an almost stream-of-conscious fashion as they popped into his head. To some, Johnny's continuous barrage of questions may have seemed irritating and some may have even ignored him. But his parents took time to answer his questions and invest in him because they recognized it was their responsibility to build a good foundation for him in life whereby he could logically analyze things from a biblical point of view. He wouldn't get this teaching in school and the church should only reinforce what he is learning at home. One day, Johnny blurted out, "Dad, we can't see God anywhere. How do we know

He's there?" His father grabbed him by the hand and led him outside. Standing there for a few seconds, his father pointed to a nearby tree and asked, "What's causing the tree to move?" Johnny immediately replied, "The wind!" His father again inquired, "Can you see the wind?" "No," he said. Then, his father retorted, "How do you know it's the wind then?" Johnny



thought for a moment and chimed in, "I can see it moving other things too; I hear it blowing and I can feel it on my skin." "Good," his father responded.

Leading him back into the house, Johnny's father grabbed an egg from the refrigerator and went back to the patio so his wife wouldn't become upset with the mess. He held the egg in the air and let it drop, causing it to break and splatter upon the ground. He asked his son, "What caused the egg to fall?" Johnny couldn't answer. So, his father explained in simple terms the concept of gravity which pushed on the surface of the egg causing it to fall. "Could you visibly see gravity pushing on it," he inquired? "No," Johnny said. His father continued, "How do you know gravity is there?" Johnny answered, "The egg fell to the ground rather than float like in outer space."

While cleaning up the mess from the egg, Johnny's father pointed to some power lines in the distance. "Son," he prodded, "What are those?" Johnny stated emphatically, "Power lines Pop." He asked, "What do they do?" Johnny responded, "They bring electricity to our house so we can watch television, use the computer, and have lights."

Introduce

“Correct, son,” he said with praise, “But you can’t see the electricity running through the lines! Then how do you know it’s there?” Johnny thought for a moment and said, “Well, I remember when I was little that I stuck my fingers into a socket and it hurt. So, I know it’s there!” Johnny then added, “We can go to a light switch and turn it on and it will work. We can plug in our TV and video-game console and I can play.” His father smiled and said, “Right you are!”

While walking back into the house, his father explained, “There are many things in life we can’t physically see. But we still know that they are there and they exist because we can observe their effects—that is we can see what they do.” He then contended, “We know there is power because we can see evidence of it. We can turn things on and use them. If our house had no power, we wouldn’t be able to do that.” He continued, “It’s the same way with God. Other than those who physically saw Jesus when He lived on earth, no one at any time has seen God otherwise” ([John 1:18](#); [1 John 4:12](#)). His father then concluded, “We know God is there because we can see the evidence of His presence all around us.” In [Psalm 46](#), the psalmist proclaims that we can trust in God’s presence and find refuge in Him because we can see His works; we see evidence all around us of His presence even in the midst of turmoil and tribulation!

Key
Question

What evidence of His presence has God given us?

Psalm 46:1-3

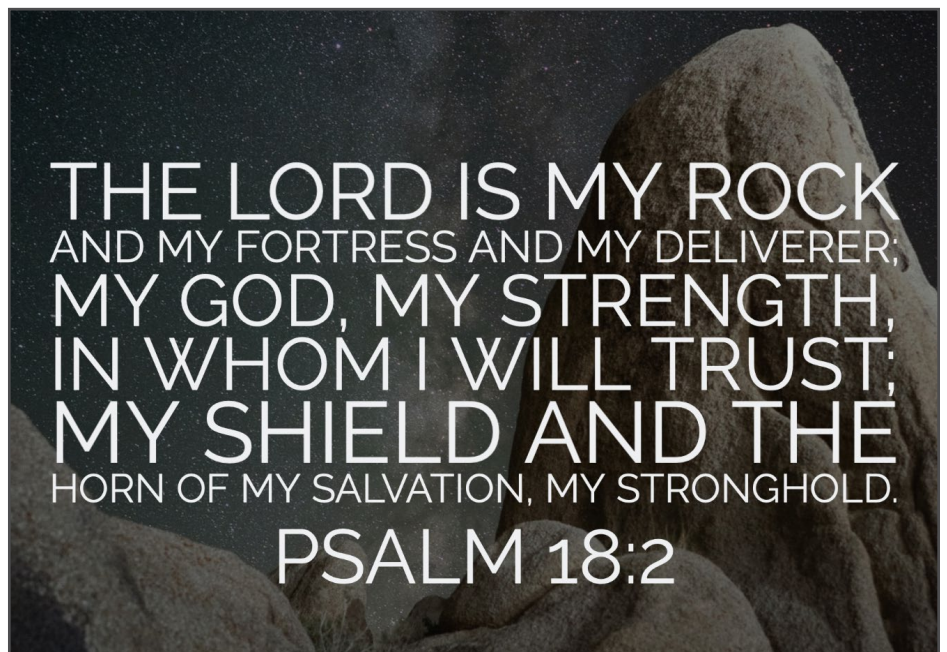
TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD:

As we've studied the book of Psalms for the past few weeks, you most likely have noticed the repetition of themes and even words or phrases. Psalm 9:9, for example, declares, "The Lord also will be a **refuge** for the oppressed; a **refuge** in times of **trouble**." Echoing a similar refrain, Psalm 46 opens by championing God as **our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble**" (v. 1). Within the context of Psalm 46, the word "**present**" also points to a theme which we studied last week—God's presence among us. God hasn't set the world in motion and then left us alone to figure things out ourselves, but He dwells in our midst constantly working among us to orchestrate His will. He is **present**! In [Psalm 27:4-5](#), David described God's presence as dwelling among us in terms of a "temple," "tabernacle," "house," and "pavilion." In the psalm on which we will focus this week, we see God dwelling in the midst of His people in the **tabernacle** located in the holy city (v. 4).

Hopefully, you find comfort and jubilation in these words and themes so oft repeated. God doesn't repeat things simply to hear the sound of His own voice. He repeats them because He knows we need them! In the world in which we live, it becomes easy to

feel isolated and lonely. At times, we may even believe our problems and troubles are unique to us. No one has experienced what we're going through and no one can relate to us! But God knows, cares, and can sustain us if we seek **refuge** in Him. Therefore, we need to be reminded of His **help** and His presence among us. We should never grow

weary even if it sounds like we've heard or studied these themes before. God has given us Scripture as well as a church family to walk with us on our journey to remind us of the **help** and provision He provides. Yet, He alone **is our refuge and strength** in whom



we can place all our trust and hope!

How can we as a church point people to Christ and help them overcome isolation while we walk with them during difficult times? What challenges in our modern world do we face in this endeavor?

Question
1

It takes a long time to plan and write this curriculum. It doesn't happen overnight. More than a year ago in October and November of 2019, I began seeking the Lord about the direction we should go—what books He would have us study and the themes He would have us learn. In my limited knowledge, I had no idea what challenges 2020 would bring. Even now as I write prior to the election, I don't know what challenges we may face as a deeply fractured and divided country which in large part has forgotten the Lord. Yet, even before I had an inkling of where God would have us go as a church, God knew what was in store for 2020. COVID-19 did not surprise Him. He foresaw the economic collapse and tremendous loss of jobs. Violence, riots, and bigotry on both sides of the divide did not catch Him off guard. God even already knows the outcome of the election although I do not as I type these words. We still may not even know the outcome of the election even two weeks later! So much uncertainty exists!

I say all this because there is one thing I know for sure: God knew we would need these lessons at this time for a specific purpose. The themes repeated in these psalms should not fall upon deaf ears as if we've heard them a hundred times before. We should take joy in them and take them to heart no matter what we may be facing as an individual or a nation. God led us to study these psalms at this time for a specific reason. We all need to hear God speak through them! The circumstances and challenges in your life may have even changed from last week—and probably most likely have! Take joy that we can find **refuge and strength** in the Lord who helps us not only in times of **trouble**, but in all things!

How have you found refuge in the Lord this week? How has this helped you to know God better and more intimately since we first studied [Psalm 9:9](#)?

Question
2

Again, as we learned last week, the psalmist asked, “Whom shall I **fear**” ([Psalm 27:1](#))? He then explained that he had nothing to **fear** because he trusted in the Lord! Likewise, this week the psalmist defiantly announces that **we will not fear**. Neither David who wrote [Psalm 27](#) nor the sons of Korah who composed this psalm had any reservation about serving the Lord. They feared nothing because they had rightly placed their hope and trust in Him! Even though last week we primarily focused on the **fear** which stems from the unknown as well as the things that we don’t understand, **fear** can also come from the things that we see and experience around us if we’re not grounded in God’s Word and faithfully seeking Him every day!

[Psalm 46](#) focuses on those things which we experience beyond our control and over which we have no comprehension how they may eventually turn out. Figuratively, the psalmist mentions three things that we as people experience, perhaps repeatedly, in our lives: natural disasters (vv. 2-3), chaos in society (v. 3), and wars (v. 9). This psalmist confidently asserts that **we will not fear even though the earth be removed and the mountains carried into the seas** (v. 2). Later, he describes **the mountains** as shaking **with its swelling** (v. 3). This language recalls that of an earthquake and tsunami.

For our purpose, we can broadly say that we should not **fear** any natural disaster or calamity: severe storms and tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, or blizzards as well as earthquakes and tsunamis. Now, we should act prudently with godly wisdom rather than foolishly putting ourselves into life-threatening predicaments. For example,

we shouldn’t run into the middle of the street with a tornado rapidly swirling through our neighborhood. Instead, we should wisely find cover, take shelter, and do our best to protect ourselves. In all, we still must trust that no matter what happens God has us in His hands! Even though we may be buried in a pile of debris



with destruction all around and live, we know that God will see us through. Even if God calls us home that day, we will receive victory and eternal life! We have nothing to **fear** either way because God is in control and orchestrating His plan for our benefit! We just

need to rely upon Him and trust Him!

How has God provided refuge and help during times of natural disaster or even personal tragedy for you?

Question
3

In verse 3, the psalmist refers to the seas (**waters**) as roaring and troubled. In Scripture, the turbulent sea often pictures the chaos and confusion of the world. In fact, before God brought order to creation, “the earth” was described as “without form” and “void” with “darkness” covering “the face of the deep” ([Gen 1:2](#)). The Hebrew words translated “without form” and “void” mean chaotic and confused! God brings order and life to everything He touches! When man banishes God and rejects Him, it brings chaos and confusion.

We don't have to look far today to see the result of a godless nation which has sidelined the Creator! Chaos and confusion reign. Although many in our nation may call themselves Christians, they do not truly have a relationship with Christ because they have never experienced His transformation and they have no conviction for their rampant sin and receive no correction for their errant ways ([Heb 12:5](#)). Still, a larger percentage of the populace no longer believes in the one true and living God who alone can give life through the Messiah—Jesus His Son. In fact, the very core of the socialist philosophy vying for a place in our society is the omission of God and the elevation of man! As believers, we need to wake up and be alert! We shouldn't **fear** the future; we must take a stand in the present.

The problem with ideas like socialism is the philosophy of humanism which espouses that man is innately good and he will choose good if left on his own course. This couldn't be further from the truth! Man is not good, but disobedient, vile, wicked, and sinful. He can only become righteous and good through Christ! Although many people may have never heard of the philosophy of humanism, we all have seen its principles taught and applied. Our nation generally teaches and practices that absolute truth does not exist. Because this philosophy attests that mankind is good and wise, he can effectively solve his own problems and can determine what is good and right for himself. Consequently, the Ten Commandments are no longer revered, but ridiculed and removed from most public venues. The denial of absolute truth leads to no single, universal standard which we can follow as a society. This, therefore, causes

the society to break down into chaos and confusion.

Let's illustrate with a conundrum facing the United States today: lawlessness. If I determine what is right and wrong, then two standards of justice will exist: one for me and one for you. In a society, this type of two-tiered justice system is untenable. Even more to the point, if I determine what is right and wrong or what is good for me, then I don't need law enforcement. In fact, anyone serving in that capacity is unnecessary and vilified. (Remember we are arguing from a humanistic perspective to show its flaws!) When we handicap the police, remove funding, and add community oversight, crime doesn't go away. It becomes worse! Thefts, robberies, assaults, violence, and murders all increase. In the end, man doesn't make the right choices; he isn't good; his heart is inclined to evil apart from Christ.

How has the philosophy of humanism greatly influenced our society today? How does it conflict with Scripture?

Question
4

We live in a chaotic society because we have all sinned and we have upended God's perfection creation through our disobedience. When we seek redemption in Christ, He will restore us to our original purpose and once again show us our part in God's perfect plan. Injustice, iniquity, and indiscretion will still exist because we live in a fallen world. We don't need to **fear** proclaiming that absolute truth exists and we can only have life through Christ. We don't need to **fear** standing up for and practicing the moral boundaries clearly set forth in God's Word. We don't need to **fear** speaking against immorality and injustice according to Scripture. We just need to do so in a loving and biblical way with a pure heart and right motives. When we don't **fear** and trust in the Lord, we can confidently abide by His will, practice truth, and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

How can we as a church take an even more bold biblical stand in the community concerning moral issues and ungodly "human" philosophies? How can we overcome our fears in taking that stand?

Question
5

Psalm 46:4-7

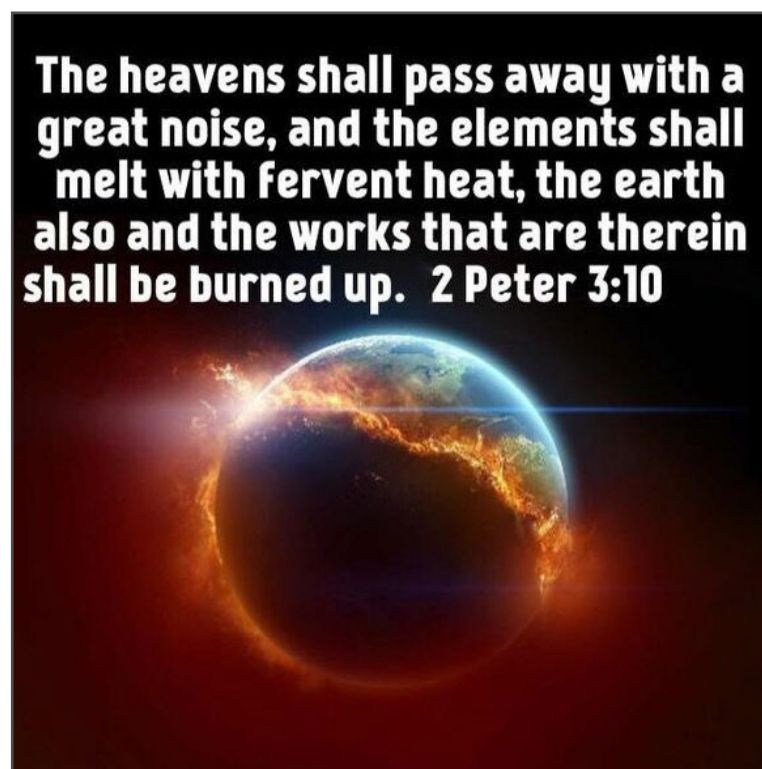
TRUST IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE:

With chaos and confusion raging around us, the psalmist tells us the one place we can

Instruct

find hope, comfort, and peace: in God's presence. Whereas the seas **roar** and rage in turmoil, a calm **river** will **make glad the city of God** (v. 4). We can find this solace and comfort because God's presence dwells there in the **tabernacle**. He **is in the midst** of the city and **shall not be moved**; indeed, God will provide **her** with **help** (v. 5). Just as young Johnny inquired in the introduction, we may not see the Lord visibly or hear His voice audibly, we still know He is there because we can see the results of His presence. In a situation in which the world may have an emotional breakdown, for example, we can find peace and comfort. This doesn't mean that we won't cry or experience sorrow or other emotions for a time. It means that we can look beyond our circumstances to see that God remains in control! We can have hope because God is in control!

The psalmist eloquently depicts God's sovereignty by showing His mastery and power



over **the nations!** **The nations raged**, but God **moved** and controlled **the kingdoms** just through the power and majesty of His voice (v. 6). When He spoke, **the earth melted**—perhaps a reference to the elements being burned up at the end of time ([2 Peter 3:10](#)). God has been in control since before He spoke the world into existence. He was in control when He executed His plan in Christ to bring salvation to the whole world. God will continue to be in control until the very end when He brings this age to a close and establishes

His kingdom and the new heavens and earth! We have something to which we can look forward! This perfect **city** is described here in these verses where we dwell in the presence of the Lord forever worshiping and serving Him.

The psalmist ends this section by identifying God as **the Lord of Hosts** who **is with us** and **the God of Jacob** who serves as **our refuge** (v. 7). We may read these verses quickly and not consider them much, but they paint a brilliant picture of God's character and His relationship to us when we take time to slow down and think. First, **the Lord of Hosts** identifies God as the Commander of a mighty army. God isn't just a

Commander who sends His troops into battle, but He accompanies them. He is present throughout the entire battle! He goes before us and leads us into battle, fighting on our behalf ([Exod 14:14](#)). He serves as our rear guard who protects us from the enemy flanking and coming from behind to catch us unaware and off guard ([Isa 52:12](#)). God even provides the armor which we should wear into battle ([Eph 6:11-17](#)). Scripture describes God as our shield who will alleviate all fear when we trust in Him ([Gen 15:1; Psalm 18:2; 28:7](#)). We serve a God who not only equips us for success but He will fight on our behalf!

Second, even though the psalmist doesn't elaborate on the phrase **God of Jacob**, I couldn't help but think. Back to the personal way the Lord revealed Himself to the patriarch. [Genesis 32:22-31](#) recounts an unusual wrestling match. This match shows us the very real presence of the Lord in the lives of His people. For Jacob named "the place Peniel: For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." We serve a God who wants to be personally involved in our lives!

In Christ, God subjected Himself to everything we experience in order to demonstrate His love and how He wants to relate to us. Jesus experienced the gamut of physical needs like we do: hunger, tiredness, and pain. He had emotions just like we do: sadness, joy, concern, and anger. He knew what it was like to face hardships, mockery, and confrontation with others. He even went beyond anything that we will ever experience by being crucified on the cross! God knows what we experience, how we feel, and what we must endure! When we have a relationship with Him, therefore, He is always present in our lives; we just need to make sure that we are walking with Him daily and always seeking Him in every situation!

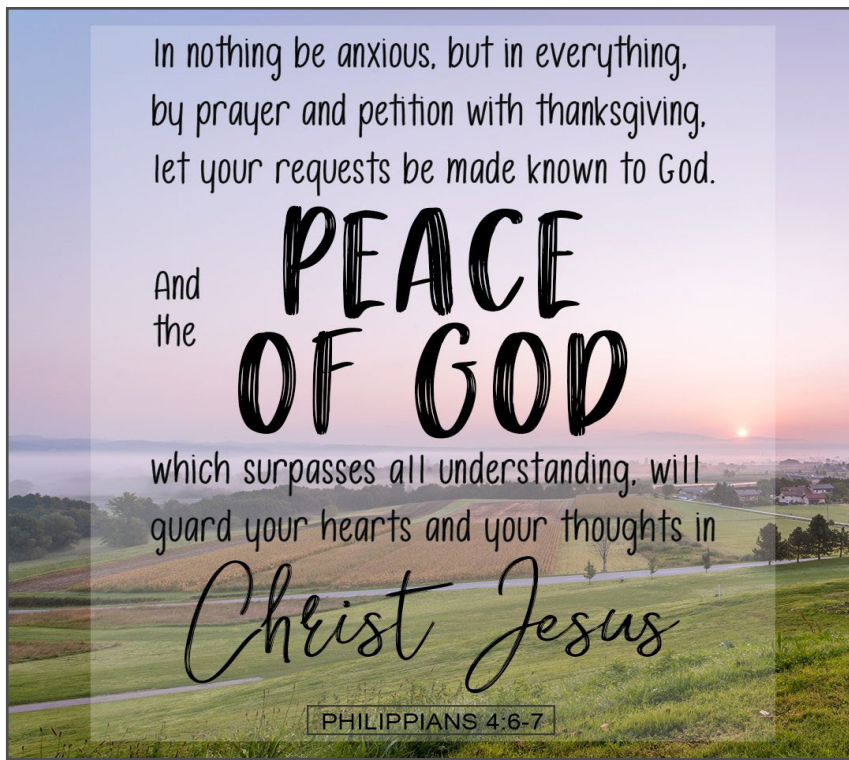
How has God made His presence known to you in times of hardship? How did that offer comfort and peace?

Question
6

Psalm 46:8-11

TUNE IN TO THE LORD GOD:

The psalmist concludes by citing evidence of God's presence by exhorting us to **come** and **behold His works** (v. 8). Just as Johnny's father in the introduction demonstrated how we can know God exists by the tangible evidence we see in our lives, the psalmist lists the evidence here: God **makes wars to cease, breaks the bow and cuts the spear,** and **burns the chariot with fire** (v. 9). In other words, God is in control; no one can



match His power and sovereignty. All must bow before Him and abide by His will. Humans, on the other hand, make a mess of things which lead to war and turmoil because of the dysfunction brought about by sin. But God brings peace and resolution to those who trust in Him. At times, we may not be able to explain such peace that God brings, but we can see evidence of it in our lives until the time at which He comes back to establish His kingdom in full which ushers in

eternal peace ([Phil 4:7](#)).

While we await Christ's return and the full establishment of His kingdom, we need to slow down, take stock, and look around us to see the evidence of God's presence. Verse 10 tells us to **be still and know that I am God**—the one who is **exalted among all the nations** and over the whole **earth**. We tend to take the word translated **be still** as stop talking and listen. It certainly involves this to a degree. But in this context, it means stop moving, stop waging war, and stand **still** to focus on the Lord! We live in a society that never stands **still**. People schedule everything and their calendars are booked solid with activities. To some extent, we've become so busy with sports, school, work, and other activities that we've scheduled the Lord out of our lives completely. We only make time for Him when we don't have a number of other pressing things to complete! This should never be the case.

To illustrate how we rarely sit **still**, think about the television broadcast of sporting events. Whether at the beginning or the end, the announcer will likely thank us for tuning in or joining today's broadcast. In a sense, we've tuned in because we've turned on the television or device, but we're not focused. We don't sit down and watch the program. Likely, if we are seated, we're on our phones texting or searching something online. But most likely, we are doing things around the house with the television as background noise. We're never **still** long enough to watch. In the end, we need to look

up the score or the winner because we didn't sit **still** and pay attention. Unfortunately, this happens all-too-frequently in our relationship with the Lord. We don't sit **still** long enough to hear Him speak; we don't sit **still** long enough to have meaningful and quality time with Him through which we truly get to know His character and His love for us. We take our children to multiple activities; we have business meetings and work-related projects that we need to finish; we have dinner and outings with friends; we have a gargantuan list of projects and chores waiting for us around the house; we have doctors' appointments; we have shopping and errands that must be run. The list could continue infinitely. We're busy people. But please, let's clear our schedule and stop; stand **still**. Stop doing things and learn how to relate to the Lord!

What activities distract you from spending quality time with the Lord?

Question
7

When we take time and are intentional about being **still**, we will get to **know God** in a real and tangible way. We will see Him at work. We will see His presence in our lives. We will see His character and reflect it in the transformed way that we live. When times of trouble and turmoil come, we will know where to run to find **refuge** and shelter; we will know from whence our source of **strength** comes. We will have nothing to fear because we will know God is right here with us, fighting for us, guiding us, and walking with us every step of the way.

We live in a world that has tried to abolish God and relegate Him to an inconsequential force for those who are weak and feeble minded. The world has tried to ignore and push out the very Creator who loves them more than anything! They think they have it all together; they are wise in their own eyes and they don't need the Lord. But if we would only stop and look around, we would see how much we need a Savior! The world is broken and headed to destruction. Only God can usher in peace, salvation, and life through Christ. We need Him every day!

Fortunately, God desires a personal relationship and fellowship with us. He is dwelling among us right here in the world He created; He is active and involved in the life of His Creation when we call upon His name. He isn't distant, but near. He isn't standoffish, but loving and personal. We can call upon Him at any time and we should always praise Him regardless of the circumstances. But all this takes time for us to stand still and know Him! Let us take time to seek God and get to know Him. Let's not fill our schedules with activities that have only a temporary value, but let's focus on our relationship with the Lord which lasts for eternity. Let's begin to know Him right now—not just as our refuge and help in times and trouble. But as the God who gave His one and only Son so that we could have life and have a relationship with Him. Let's get to know God as He dwells here among us by seeking Him daily!

Incorporate

In the chaos and confusion of our society, how has God given you peace?

What evidence can you cite for the existence of God? How can you use that evidence as a testimony to witness to others?

Why must we be intentional about spending time with the Lord? Why is being busy not an excuse for getting to know God and serving Him?

November 22, 2020



*Trust in the
Lord for Provision
Psalm 107:1-31*

Focal Verse:

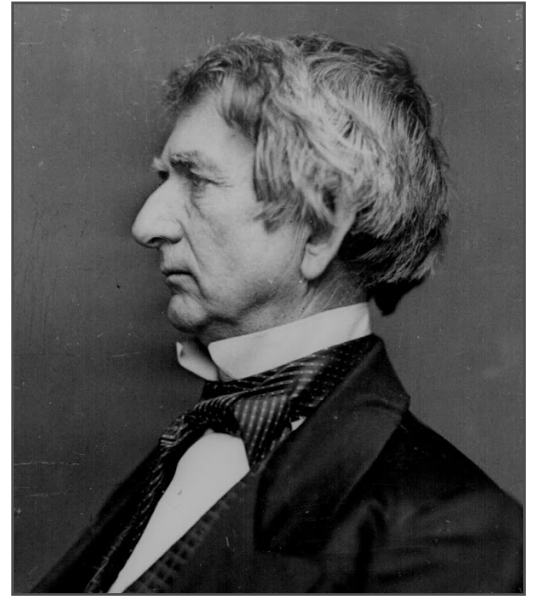
“Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.”

Psalm 107:22

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Introduce

In 1863, the citizens of the United States seemingly had very little for which they could be thankful as the Civil War raged and vitriol and animosity inflicted the country with unspeakable tragedy. Staggering loss of life occurred during every battle for both sides from Vicksburg to Gettysburg where over 50,000 soldiers perished on those hallowed Pennsylvania fields that July of 1863—the single greatest number of casualties in one battle throughout the entire Civil War. In the South, entire towns laid in ruin with infrastructure throughout the region destroyed. By October of 1863, no resolution to the conflict was seemingly in sight. And it would only intensify over the next year with General Sherman’s “march to the sea.” With so much suffering, tragedy, and loss, one could easily overlook anything for which to be grateful and thankful, focusing on one’s troubles and continually offering complaints.



On October 3, 1863, Secretary of State William H. Seward composed a proclamation that designated the last Thursday of November as a national day of thanksgiving. In the opening lines, Seward carefully reminds the nation, “The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.” Despite the Civil War, God continued to be gracious and merciful to the American people in ways even the most opposed to Him must acknowledge can come only from Him. We need to heed Seward’s words and remember from where our blessings come. Let us not harden our hearts, focus on our troubles, or even elevate mankind as the source of his own triumphs, blessings, and happiness. Let us praise and thank God as He alone deserves.

Moreover, Seward continues to point people to the Lord by affirming that “no human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.” Not only does God provide for us physically, but He also provides for us through the redemption that Jesus offered in His

Introduce

death upon the cross. While God hates sin and will punish those who refuse to repent, God loves mankind above all His creation! He loved mankind so much that He was willing to become flesh and offer the payment for our sins Himself by becoming the only sacrifice which can give us life! For that alone, we must remember and be grateful! Rather than downplaying and trivializing the war, the Secretary of State called for people to unite “with one heart” and offer praise to the Lord. A call which we need to hear and accept today! In response to God’s holiness, mercy, and benevolence, we not only should express our gratitude, but we also ought to confess and repent of any sin. For this reason, Seward concludes the proclamation by declaring, “I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States . . . to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience.”

Turning the calendar to 2020, it would be very easy to focus on the negative and everything that went wrong instead of praising the Lord. We may even want to forget 2020 even happened! As a nation, we have endured a pandemic, a pandemic-caused collapse of the economy, riots, lawlessness, natural disasters, and a contentious election. Today, people haven’t just forgotten God; they have essentially denied His existence! As a whole, our nation no longer seeks God, no longer asks Him for wisdom and guidance, and no longer abides by the morals outlined in His Word. We have both forgotten and denied the Source of our blessings is God Himself! Let us reorient our thinking. Let us repent of our sins, re-establish daily fellowship with our heavenly Father, and give Him the praise and glory for His mercy, goodness, and all that He has done.

In Reference



William H. Seward, “[Proclamation of Thanksgiving](#),” (October 3, 1863). Available from www.abrahamlincolnonline.org.

Key
Question

In what ways has God blessed during 2020?

Psalm 107:1-8

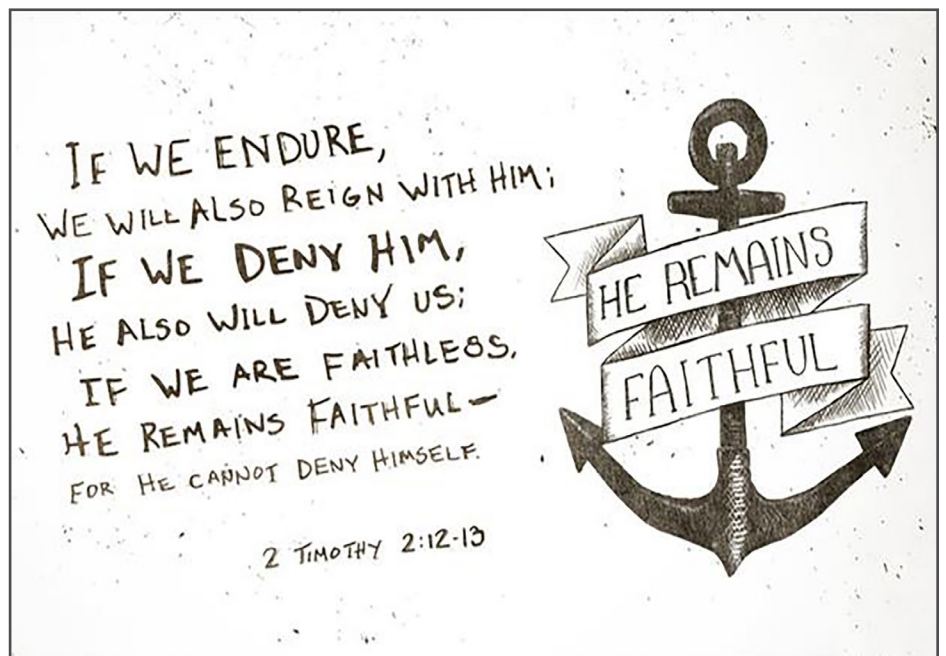
GIVE THANKS FOR OUR REDEMPTION:

As we celebrate Thanksgiving next Thursday, let us take our cue from the psalmist who penned this great hymn of thanksgiving and celebration. When we reflect upon all our physical and spiritual blessings, let us direct our praise to the Lord for His faithfulness. Psalm 107 bids us to **give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures forever** (v. 1). The declaration that God **is good** reminds us to praise Him for who He is—His nature and His character. The term **good** when used biblically refers to a moral and ethical quality. To be **good**, therefore, means one is holy, righteous, and morally pure. To help us remember this term, think about when someone asks: “How are you?” We should respond “well” or “fine” if that truly reflects our situation. Instead, many people answer, “I’m good.” In reality, they don’t mean “I’m morally perfect, holy, and righteous”; they’ve actually misused the word. Technically, no one is **good** by that definition apart from the Lord ([Luke 18:19](#))!

Because God is holy and righteous (i.e. **good**), He is always faithful to His word. The word translated **mercy** is difficult to capture with only one English word. Some translations will interpret the Hebrew term as “lovingkindness,” “faithful love,” or “steadfast love.” The idea behind the word is that God is faithful to His covenant and His promises. His faithfulness

stems from His goodness and righteousness as well as His great love for us. This Thanksgiving and holiday season let us not merely focus on the things we have received. Let us give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness even when we didn’t deserve it. Undoubtedly, God has blessed us with many tangible

and physical things. But the greatest thing for which we can be thankful is that we can always rely upon Him and trust in Him. He is always and will always be there for us



even when everything on earth is taken away and all else fails! God remains faithful!

How has God displayed His faithfulness to you?
Spend time in prayer thanking Him.

Question
1

The psalmist now calls upon the **redeemed** to offer a testimony of praise about the Lord's work in their lives (v. 2). In this context in [Psalm 107](#), the **redeemed** refer to the children of Israel rescued from the clutches of slavery at the hand of the Egyptians as well as all those in exile in foreign lands who would return to the Promised Land from the various points of the compass: **East, West, North, and South** (v. 3). Thus, they represent God's people, that is His children, whom He brought back and reconciled to Himself in fulfillment of His promise made to Abraham many centuries earlier ([Gen 15:13-14](#)).

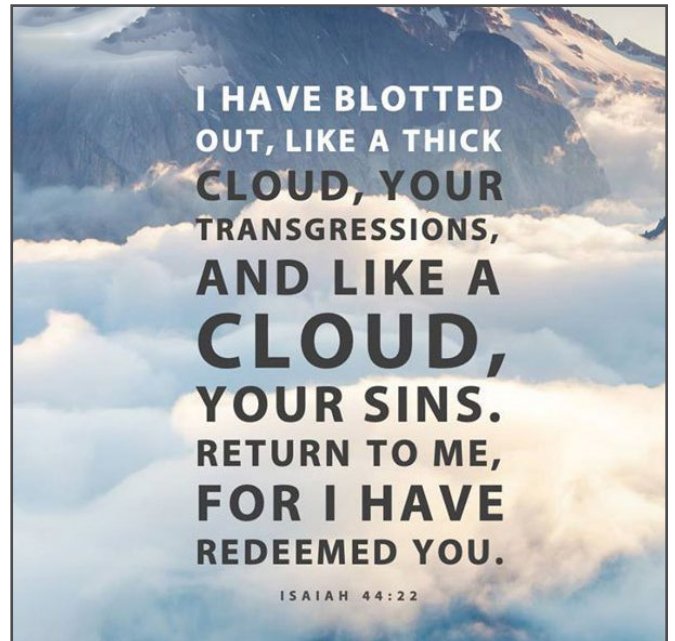
To His people, God demonstrated their redemption in a tangible way because He loved them and had compassion upon them. Not only did He rescue them from enslavement, but He also provided for them as they **wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way** having **no city in** which to **dwell** (v. 4). Through their time in the wilderness, God provided direction and guidance in the form of a pillar of fire and a cloud ([Exod 13:21-22](#)). He afforded them shelter and protection from their enemies whether the Egyptians or Amalekites ([Exod 17:8-16](#)). He enabled their clothes and supplies to last longer ([Deut 29:5](#)). He sent manna from heaven when they were **hungry** and provided water from rocks when they were **thirsty** and had become weary to the point of complaining (v. 5; see also [Exod 16:1-16; 17:1-7](#)).

When the people **cried out** for deliverance, in the midst of **their trouble**, God **delivered them from their distresses** (v. 6). We know the end of this story. Forty years after the unbelieving generation who hesitated entering the Promise Land and failed to trust the Lord had passed, God selected Joshua and Caleb to lead the people into the land. Although they faced daunting challenges along the way, God led them **the right way** and they eventually received a **city for a dwelling place** in the land which God had promised and now had given to them!

Fast forward several centuries later. God acts in an even more magnificent way to redeem the world. He has called every person from every corner of the globe—**East, West, North, and South**—to receive this redemption no matter one's language, race, or country of origin. This redemption doesn't bring us mere land; it brings life! By

definition, to be **redeemed** means to be bought back with a price. We ourselves could never pay this price. It is too expensive and we are too flawed. Without this price being paid, however, we would all face death and destruction rightly deserved because of our sin.

Like those who wandered in the wilderness, we are **hungry** and need bread which gives life ([John 6:36](#)). We are **thirsty** and need living water so that we may never thirst again ([John 4:13](#)). The good news is that we can have this redemption when we too cry out to the Lord. In fact, everyone who “calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” ([Rom 10:13](#)). This redemption is freely given to us, but it cost Jesus all He had; He gave His very life, dying in our place so that we might have life. Peter, who witnessed this very act of redemption first-hand, reminds us, “Knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” ([1 Peter 1:18-19](#))!



This Thanksgiving don't just get together with family and tell stories and reminisce about old times. Tell your redemption story in Christ if indeed you have one. Certainly, we ought to reminisce and laugh as a family, but our redemption story in Christ should receive central place. Without redemption in Christ, we have no hope and nothing to be thankful for other than we still have a chance to accept Him. We must be clear what redemption actually entails because so many claim to believe in Jesus but have no relationship with Him. Redemption is this: Christ died for our sins on the cross, He was buried, and rose again physically from the grave three days later. When we believe in Him by confessing our sins, asking for forgiveness, and turning from them, He will forgive us and give us eternal life. The psalmist ends this section with a chorus that leads us in celebrating that very redemption: **“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”**

How and where are you sharing your redemption story? Is it important enough to you that you must tell it every day?

Question
2

Psalm 107:9-15

GIVE THANKS FOR OUR RESCUE:

Although these verses do not refer explicitly to God's righteousness, we see that theme interwoven into them because God punishes the wicked for their transgressions. Man tries every type of pursuit to satisfy his **longing soul**, but only God can truly accomplish this. God **satisfies the soul** and fills it **with goodness** (v. 9). When man tries to placate his **soul**, he does so with sin and iniquity. The psalmist in turn describes the **soul** of the one without God as imprisoned. He explains that they sit **in darkness** under the sentence **of death** shackled in **afflictions and irons** (v. 10). They have brought this **death** sentence upon themselves because **they rebelled against the words of God** and rejected His **counsel** (v. 11). In essence, they denied that they needed the Lord! So, they found themselves in a miserable and hopeless place without anyone there **to help** (v. 12).

Despite their obstinance, these people soon realized the hopelessness of their situation apart from God. They then repented of their errant ways and **cried out to**



the Lord God in their trouble (v. 13). Just as God must punish sin because of His righteousness and holiness, these two character traits also compel Him to have mercy and forgive! When they called to the Lord, the psalmist notes that **He saved them out of their distresses!** God then **brought them out of darkness** and removed the penalty **of death**

(v. 14). He set them free from the bondage of sin by breaking **their chains in pieces**. Praise God we have a Savior who always stands ready to forgive when we call upon Him. Let us **praise** Him for **His goodness** and **wonderful works** (v. 15).

From what sin and darkness did Jesus rescue you? How can you share that with others as a testimony to the transforming work of Christ?

Question
3

Like the theme of redemption in the previous stanza, the idea of our rescue once again points to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The New Testament too describes the wickedness of sin and the rejection of the Lord as **darkness**. That **darkness** also enslaves in the figurative **chains** of sin and addiction. But we are never completely devoid of hope. God always stands ready to forgive no matter what we may have done, no matter how far we may have fallen, and no matter how dark of a place in which we may be! Paul, therefore, encourages us to give thanks to God “that though you were slaves of sin, yet, you obeyed from the heart that form a doctrine of which you were delivered” ([Rom 6:17](#)). We know that doctrine to be faith in Christ! Faith in Christ not only frees us from enslavement to sin, but it also transforms us and conforms us into God’s image! Therefore, Paul can also say, “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Rom 6:18).

As believers, we’re not immune to temptation and sin. We must fight a constant battle to seek the Lord and refrain from sin. At times, we may lose the battle and find ourselves engaging in sin. Although we won’t lose our salvation, it does strain our relationship and we must repent and be reconciled. We may struggle with certain sins for years and find ourselves succumbing to temptation repeatedly. But we need to turn Christ! Outside of Him we will find no **help**! Only Christ can break the **chains** of sin and addiction and transform us, giving us the power to overcome! Seek Him first! Seek Him daily. We must surrender everything in our lives to Him so that He can help us avoid being crippled by sin. Let us join the psalmist as we praise the Lord for rescuing us.

How has Christ transformed you? Although we are all works in progress, how did and does He help you overcome sin and addiction in your life, setting you free?

Question
4

Psalm 107:15-21

GIVE THANKS FOR OUR RESTORATION:

This next stanza continues the same theme as the previous to re-enforce the idea that God both rescues and restores us. Just as the Lord broke their **irons** and **chains in pieces**, He **has** also **broken the gates of bronze** and **cut the bars of iron in two** (v. 16). God has disabled the security measures of the prison to set those who call upon Him free. When we think about **bronze** and **iron**, we envision two of the strongest metals which cannot be easily penetrated and broken. On our own, we can never escape such a prison because we do not have the faculties to get around the defenses.

Instruct

If somehow we could break through **the iron bars** of the cell, we would need to break through multiple **bronze gates** as well! This prison is more secure than Alcatraz! No one can escape!

But both the psalmist and we have reason to **give thanks to the Lord** (v. 21). That which is impossible for us is possible with God ([Luke 18:27](#)). Once again, the psalmist reminds us about the spiritual condition that imprisoned both them and us. He plainly, and rightly, calls us **fools** at that point (v. 17). By definition, a fool rejects God and participates in wickedness and transgression. Psalm 14:1 captures this folly well: “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt. They have done abominable works. There is none who does good.” Thus, both their and our **iniquities** sentence us to this prison apart from the redemption of Christ.

Consequently, **their soul abhorred all manner of food** and their **death** sentence drew closer (v. 18). The reference to **food** doesn’t mean that they physically stopped eating or went on a “hunger strike.” It refers to [verse 9](#) where God **fills the hungry soul with**



goodness. In their condition, they tried everything to find satisfaction and contentment. But nothing worked. They desperately desired to find peace and comfort for their tormented **soul**. But none could be found. They had no fellowship with the One who could give these things and satisfy their **souls**.

Although we may have somewhat gotten away from this concept

because of electronic devices, television, and busy schedules, meals formerly served as a time of fellowship where one could connect with family and friends. Around the table, we could discuss the challenges of the day, laugh, cry, comfort, correct, and much more. The metaphor used here pictures that same time of fellowship we need with the Lord!

How would you evaluate your time of fellowship with the Lord? How often do you spend quality time with Him?

Question
5

Fortunately, these **fools** realized the folly of their ways and **cried out to the Lord** in repentance (v. 19). Again, God mercifully and graciously **saved them out of their distresses!** He did so by sending **His Word** to heal them and deliver them **from their destructions** (v. 20). God fully restored them, giving them life and spiritual health. Redemption, rescue, and restoration all come from God's **Word**—which in the New Testament is called the gospel. **His Word** saves, restores, and gives abundant life. It satisfies the **soul** by providing peace and comfort in times of distress. It delivers us from sin and keeps us from succumbing to temptation. We need this fellowship with God by reading and applying **His Word** which restores and renews. For this reason when tempted by the adversary in the wilderness, Jesus quotes [Deuteronomy 8:3](#): “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” ([Matt 4:4](#)). Therefore, we must let **His Word** guide our lives!

Once again, we see so much repetition and similarity with the previous stanza of this psalm. With this repetition, we must ask ourselves why do we need to be reminded about where we have come from, how God has rescued us, and from what has He restored us? We should never live in the past hindered by guilt for sins which we have confessed and the Lord has forgiven us. Neither do we need to get bogged down and miss what God is doing right here and now in our lives. Still, we need to remember the past and how God has rescued and restored us for three reasons: 1) so we don't repeat the same mistakes, 2) so that we don't become arrogant and haughty when others need to be pointed to grace because we will always remember that we too are **saved** by grace, and 3) so we can tell others of the **wonderful works of God!**

How does failing to remember the past sometimes hinder our ability to point others to grace and to witness for Christ?

Question
6

Psalm 107:22-31

GIVE THANKS WITH GREAT REJOICING:

Because of our salvation and redemption, the psalmist breaks into jubilant praise. He implores us to offer **sacrifices of thanksgiving** and **declare His works with rejoicing** (v. 22). As an example, he calls a specific group, merchants and businesspeople, to give thanks (v. 23). Our thanks shouldn't only be given at home gathered around the table in a private, family setting. And we should give thanks in that way daily. It should also be given in public as well. We need to **declare thanksgiving** so that they whole world

may hear it. We've gotten to a place in our society where every other viewpoint is accepted and tolerated in the office except for the name and work of Jesus. His name is deemed divisive, offensive, and intolerant. But Jesus is all-inclusive, accepting and saving everyone who follows His plan, calls upon His name, and seeks salvation in Him alone. We can no longer remain silent, however. We must declare what He has done and how He has saved us. We must find ways to make our voices heard in public!

In what ways have you and can you give thanksgiving to the Lord in public?

Question
7

In the next few verses, the psalmist lists examples of how and why these merchants can praise the Lord. They have seen God's **works** firsthand as they traversed the sea (v. 24). God has protected them and given them safe passage despite the **stormy wind** and the crashing **waves** (v. 25). He has heard their cries when they called out in distress, being tossed helplessly in the thunderous **waves** of the sea without anything they could do (vv. 26-28). In the end, God **calms the storm** and the turbulent **waves** cease (v. 29). He then **guides them** safely to their destination and their soul can **rejoice** (v. 30). These merchants have so much reason to thank the Lord and tell of His **wonderful works** (v. 31).

Like the merchants, we too have many things for which we can and should offer praise and **thanksgiving to the Lord**. Certainly, God helps us in the midst of storms and distress in life when we call upon Him. But let us not forget the little things that He has done for us as well! Let us **rejoice** and give thanks to God in everything, for He is the Source of all our blessings whether great or small. This Thanksgiving let us not get so busy with preparations for the meal, spending time with family, watching sports, or participating in family traditions that we forget to offer thanks. A single prayer before the meal is insufficient thanks for all that the Lord has done. Let us **rejoice** and declare His marvelous **works** the whole day and beyond in everything that we do.

What can you do as a family that makes Christ and the work of the Lord the center of your time together?

Question
8

As a nation, we need to turn back to the Lord and remember Him as the Source of our blessings. Men and women didn't make this country great. God did! We have a great and prosperous country because most of our early founders and those who continued to lead in subsequent years sought the Lord for wisdom and guidance. They depended upon Him for their moral compass and recognized that they needed a relationship with Him to receive eternal life and have an abundant life here on earth. Like Secretary of State William Seward, these early leaders realized our salvation and hopes are only pinned upon the Lord Jesus Christ who can redeem and restore. As in Mr. Seward's Thanksgiving proclamation, we need to call to the Lord in repentance and seek restoration and renewal and in Him alone!

If we have received that salvation, we have something for which we can be thankful. Because of our salvation, praise should always be on our lips rather than complaint. We should declare our praise at all times to all people in all places everywhere. We should rejoice as a family, having intimate fellowship with the Lord around our table. But we should also rejoice in public so that the world will know and see the transformative power of Christ in us. Let us join as individuals, as families, and as the church to give thanks this holiday season for what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. Let's not be silent; let us be vocal because we can't help but speak of the wonderful works of the Lord.

Incorporate

List all the ways you can be thankful to the Lord—whether you consider them big or small. Then spend time this week thanking Him!

What family traditions do you have that help you focus on giving thanks to the Lord? What can you do to refocus on the Lord if very little of the day involves thanksgiving?

From what storms has God rescued and delivered you? How can you declare these instances in public as a testimony of thanksgiving to Him?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 29, 2020



*Trust in the Lord
for Protection
Psalm 121:1-8*

Focal Verse:

"The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul."

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Psalm 121:7

Introduce

For several decades over the radio, a deep-bass voice with a staccato rhythmic style would sound a familiar refrain, “And, now, you know the rest of the story.”* On one such broadcast, Paul Harvey related the story of the West Side Baptist Church in Beatrice, Nebraska and their choir practice on March 1, 1950. Every Wednesday night, choir practice began promptly at 7:30 for the eighteen members of this small congregation. Typically, most arrived fifteen minutes early and all were in place before the designated start time. But on March 1, 1950 all eighteen had excuses for their tardiness—each of them valid.

Mrs. Paul, the choir director, excused her tardiness when her daughter Marilyn, who also served as the church pianist, overslept and scrambled to get ready. One by one, each member began rehearsing his or her excuse for being late. Ladona Vandergriff, a high school student, had a perplexing geometry problem in her homework that caused her to lose track of time. Royena Estes and her sister Sadie had gotten in their car to drive to the church, but it wouldn’t start. The excuses continued. Mrs. Schuster, normally ten minutes early every week, had to pass by her mother’s home to assist with a few things. Herb Kipf had delayed writing an important letter, so he had to stay home until he completed it. Harvey Ahl, with his wife out of town, was left in charge of his two young sons. So, a couple had invited them to dinner, but they lost track of time while engaged in a conversation.

Pastor Klempel and his wife never came late to rehearsal. But on the evening of March 1, 1950, the wristwatch which he had always claimed kept impeccable time was

five minutes late. That night all eighteen members of the choir were late; each one had an excuse. No one was at the church at 7:30 that night. As the clock struck precisely 7:30, a large explosion rocked the tiny town of Beatrice, Nebraska. Unbeknownst to everyone, a gas leak had filled the basement with noxious fumes where the furnace was located. On



a cold Spring night when the furnace kicked on, it ignited that gas which leveled the

Introduce

church. As Paul Harvey reported, “And the old furnace of the West Side Baptist Church was directly below the choir loft.”

Psalm 121 concludes with the pronouncement that “the Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.” On March 1, 1950, God physically protected and preserved members of the West Side Baptist Church choir from harm. Indeed, many of us may have similar testimonies as we look back over our lives about how God has spared us from some type of danger! Certainly, God protects us in ways that we can see, but at other times He may work behind the scenes in ways we may never know! Sometimes, however, we may face calamities, trials, and even physical harm in life. But that doesn’t mean God isn’t there preserving and protecting us. When we have a relationship with Christ, God preserves us. Consequently, we won’t share in the fate of the enemy for whom hell has been prepared and we’ll be spared a second death unlike those who have rejected Him! Regardless of what may happen in this life, God will grant us eternal life and promises to preserve us “from this time . . . and . . . forevermore.”

In Reference



Paul Harvey, “Westside Baptist Church,” available from www.paulharveyarchives.com.

Key
Question

In what ways have you seen God preserve and protect you throughout your life?

Psalm 121:1-2

THE LORD PROVIDES:

As worshipers traveled to Jerusalem for one of the many festivals like Passover which they would celebrate in the city, they would sing this psalm about the provision and protection which come from the Lord. Approaching the city, their eyes would naturally be drawn to the highest hill, Mount Zion, on which the temple sat. Lifting **up** their **eyes to** these **hills**, the people would then ask, “**From** where does **my help** come” (v. 1)? In antiphonal chorus fashion, others in the caravan would respond in unison by acknowledging their **help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth** (v. 2). They rightly recognized that that Lord was their sole source of provision!

Using the covenant name that God gives Moses at the burning bush where He tells him “I am that I am” ([Exod 3:14](#))—here translated **Lord**—as well as adding to it the phrase **who made the heavens and the earth**, they let the world know with exact specificity the name and identity of the God whom they serve. We may often overlook this crucial detail. But Israel lived at a time when the nations served many gods. Each country had

a national god along with many different local gods in their various cities and regions. Moreover, people even had household gods they served uniquely in their own families. Even in the New Testament, an “educated” city like Athens had a hillside littered with hundreds of idols to gods and goddesses, prompting Paul to say, “I perceive . . . you are



very religious” because you have an altar “to an unknown god” ([Acts 17:22-23](#)). He then begins to tell them about the one true and living God “who made the world and everything in it” ([Acts 17:24](#)).

Israel herself needed to be reminded of the name and identity of the God whom they should serve because at times she found herself abandoning **the Lord** and worshiping these other gods like Baal, Molech, and the pantheon of gods their neighbors served.

Instruct

As they drew closer and gazed upon the temple mount, the people recalled there is only one God and His name is Yahweh (**Lord**)—the great I am. They knew that He doesn't dwell in temples or structures made with hand ([Acts 7:48](#)) or even in one particular city; they understood that they don't serve a God made from stone who cannot hear, speak, or respond ([Psalm 115:4-5](#)). Instead, they serve the one true and living God who can restore and sustain His creation! The only God who can rescue and save in times of distress. He alone sees the needs of His people and responds with grace, mercy, love, and compassion to **help**.

We also live in a society which has many ideas and beliefs about who and what God is. In our church and among most other Christians, we know that when we speak about God we mean the one true Creator and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also know that Christ was, is, and always be God who created the **heavens and earth** and came in flesh to save us by dying on the cross and resurrecting three days later. We know these things! But the world doesn't! They may call what they serve "God," but it isn't. Jesus and Satan were not "brothers" as the Mormons purport! We cannot become "gods" or divine by overcoming the world as many religions suggest. "Allah" is not the name of the God who created the world as Muslims believe. Mohammed concocted him in the seventh century. Nature may reflect the handiwork of the Lord, but it is not "God" in and of itself!

What is the danger of broadly speaking about "God" today in our society without clearly defining who He is?

Question
1



We need to remind ourselves who God is and what He has done! We need to tell the world clearly there is only one God named Yahweh who sent His only Son to provide the only way we can have salvation and eternal life. We need to get in the habit of declaring the name of Jesus to the world instead of broadly referring to God. When

we speak Jesus' name, there is no mistake! His name causes controversy and offense because people know Scripture definitively identifies Him as God and the only way to salvation. His name requires that we recognize we're a sinner in the need of a Savior which means that we must repent and our lives must be transformed by Him. When we broadly speak of God in public, however, people can misunderstand and make Him into whatever concept or being they wish to serve rather than who the Bible says He is! Therefore, let us clarify and qualify the name and character of the God whom we serve according to Scripture so that the world may know exactly who He is!

To illustrate, many people will say that they will pray for you. When you ask, to whom do they pray? They simply declare "God." But how do we know which God? We can only assume they mean the God of the Bible. But, unless they specify, we simply don't know! They may mean "Allah" for that matter! In addition, many social media posts mention "God" in some form or fashion. Yet, unless we know their background and beliefs, their idea of "God" could conflict with Scripture. Even Jesus at the last supper in addressing His disciples puts this into perspective: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). Simply put, we cannot take for granted that we are praying to and talking about the same God today unless we are clear from a biblical perspective!

Having defined and designated the specific God from whom their blessings and help come, they can then worship him for what He has done and how He has provided. The Lord functions as our help in many different ways. Over the past few weeks, we have learned how He is "our very present help in time of trouble" ([Psalm 46:1](#)). But God helps us more than when we just experience trouble. He sustains us and gives us all our daily needs so that we don't have to worry. At times, He heals us physically and may even keep us from harm. He grants us wisdom to live an abundant life—Jesus' whole purpose in coming ([John 10:10](#))! He offers us fellowship with Him through His Son. He provides us with companionship here on earth through spouses, families, friends, and by leading us and calling us into a church family to serve. He equips us for the service for which He has called us. We could continue infinitely with this list, but we must understand that the Lord has given us everything we need! He is our **help** in everything!

How has the Lord helped and provided for you—
not just in times of distress, but daily?

Question
2

Psalm 121:3-5

THE LORD PROTECTS:

Continuing to sing of the Lord's **help**, the people now list specific ways He has protected and provided for them. One particular theme dominates the rest of this psalm. God guards or protects the people! Six times the same Hebrew word is employed in these verses. In English, we would miss this because it is translated two different ways: keep and preserve. The Hebrew behind these English words is actually better translated as guards or protects. To help us comprehend, every time you see the words keep or preserve, replace them with the word guard. The idea of guarding best captures God's presence in our lives as He stands sentinel watching over us all the time. He isn't merely standing by and waiting for something to happen so we can call on Him. He is actively involved in our lives guarding and protecting us. We'll see this theme develop as we go along. Thus, in verse 3, the people declare **He who guards you will not slumber.**

The Andy Griffith Show features an episode where Barney Fife goes undercover to figure out who has been stealing from Weaver's Department Store. His investigation leads



him to do a stake-out at night where he learns the elderly security guard is fast asleep. Several events lead Ben Weaver also to check out his store that night. Pandemonium, antics, and confusion ensue as a display is knocked over and the duo run frantically throughout the store to find the "criminals" there with them. As a result of their search, much noise is made, but the security guard never wakes. Only when Andy

arrives and turns on the light does the security guard roust. Fortunately, God is not such a guard. He vigilantly watches all the time; He never sleeps. We can call upon Him at anytime and anywhere! We can take comfort in knowing that nothing escapes His notice and, in His omniscience, He has a plan to deal with any circumstance and situation before we even experience it. Therefore, we can trust Him!

Because the Lord never sleeps, He **will not allow** our **foot to be moved**. In other words, He will keep us firmly grounded in Him and in His Word. This does require effort on our part to seek Him diligently, but when we do we will not be influenced by our fleshly desires and the worldly philosophies around us. Although this psalm doesn't detail specifically how God guards us, we can identify four primary ways He does so from the rest of Scripture. First, God guards our hearts against temptation and helps us to overcome it through His strength. Second, He guards us against heresy and false doctrine; He protects us from holding wrong beliefs and having the wrong perspective. He has given us His Spirit to help us discern the truth and rightly interpret and understand His Word. Third, He guards us from worldly influence and peer pressure that would desensitize us to His will and corrupt our thinking, causing us to compromise our values found in Him. Fourth, He guards us against idolatry and keeps our minds and hearts firmly rooted in worship and service of Him. As we saw in the first section, Israel often had a problem with this fourth area as they at times served foreign gods.

How does God guard us against heresy and wrong belief and keep us firmly grounded in truth?

Question
3

The idea that God actively guards His children is so important that the psalm repeats it. To call attention and emphasize this point, those singing would exclaim, "**Behold!**" We would say something like "look at this" or "hear this" to call it to someone's attention. In today's modern world of texting and social media, these words would be all caps with several exclamation points following so people wouldn't miss it! The Lord **who** guards **Israel** does not **sleep** or **slumber**. This repetitive chorus rounds out this section of the psalm by reminding us about God's constant protection. He protects us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually if only we would confide in Him. Sometimes these acts of protection are clearly evident and at other times we can easily overlook them if we're not paying attention. Sometimes we may not even be aware of them at all because God protects us in ways that we may never know. Let us, however, be keenly aware of how God guards and protects us so that we can give Him the praise He rightly deserves.

In what ways have you experienced the Lord's protection as He has guarded you and kept you firmly grounded?

Question
4

Psalm 121:5-8

THE LORD PRESERVES:

Once again, those headed to Jerusalem for celebration would declare **the Lord is** their



keeper—guard. To develop this metaphor, they use an illustration from the animal kingdom to describe the Lord as **a shade at their right hand** (v. 5). The word **shade** is elsewhere translated shadow and refers to a hen gathering her young under her wings for protection. For example, David rejoices, “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!

Therefore, the children of men put their trust under the **shadow** of Your wings” ([Psalm 36:7](#)). God protects and preserves His children from harm! For this reason, verse 6 can triumphantly declare, “**The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.**” The theme of God’s constant provision, protection, and preservation once again surfaces.

In the New Testament, Jesus uses a similar illustration of Himself, but to describe Israel’s obstinance and unfaithfulness. Because they have rejected Him, they have also rejected God’s protection and will suffer His wrath upon their sin. Thus, Jesus laments, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her children under her wings, but you were not willing!” In Christ, God offers us protection if only we would trust in Him and receive it. Jesus’ protection and preservation ultimately look forward to His second coming and the full establishment of His kingdom upon a new heaven and earth. One day, He will vanquish evil and punish sin, but those who have a relationship with Him will He preserve and save from a second death.

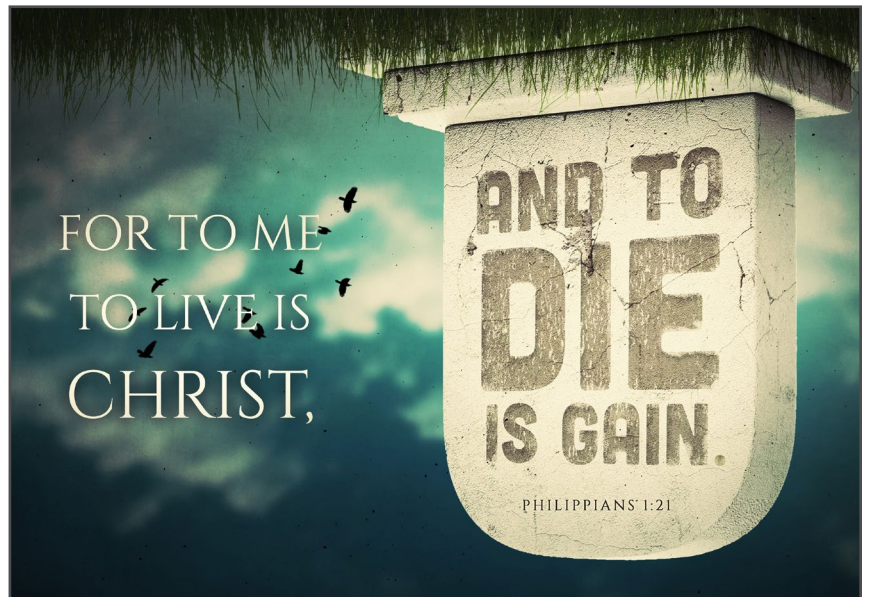
Jesus never makes any promise that we won’t face trials and tribulations here on earth. He never promises that we won’t suffer or have heartaches. Sometimes, we

will experience tragedies in our lives. But He always promises to preserve us! He will see us through! This psalm shares in looking forward to that day as well because the singers laud that **the Lord will preserve** them **from all evil** and He **shall preserve** their **soul** (v. 7). In this way, He **will preserve** their **going out** and **coming in from this time forth** and **forevermore** (v. 8). We need to look beyond our current situation whether things are going well or they're not. We need to focus on the ultimate, eternal preservation we have in Christ who gathers us under His wings, preserving us from God's wrath by instilling His righteousness in us when we accept Him as our Savior.

Why can we have hope that God will preserve us on that last day when He sends His Son to judge the earth?

Question
5

When we think of people like Job and Paul, we often focus on their suffering and hardships. Yet, their stories depict much more about the endurance that God gave them and the preservation He offered in the end. Before Paul began his relationship with Christ on the road to Damascus, he lived a fairly carefree life with few problems. After that day, he experienced tremendous persecution and hardship on all sides ([Acts 9:16](#)). He received physical trauma at the hands of his enemies from beatings, lashings,



and stonings. He was involved in multiple shipwrecks. He was imprisoned often for the sake of the gospel. He was ridiculed and rebuked by both Gentiles and Jews. Yet, Paul can exclaim, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). Paul knew that whatever happened God would preserve him—whether here on earth physically or in heaven with the reward of eternal life.

The preservation of the Lord is not entirely future, however. It begins now! The moment we begin a relationship with Christ we move from death to life. He **preserves** our **soul** the moment we confess our sin and turn to Him. God has given us everything we need to have a successful and abundant life. Isaiah 51:16 states, "And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the **shadow** (i.e. shade here in [Psalm](#)

Instruct

[121](#)) of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’” God has given us His Word—that is the Bible—for our protection! God will **preserve** us until the end and His protection will always be there for us, but we must seek it and utilize what He has given us.

Scripture protects us in many ways. For example, it protects us from making unwise, foolish decisions that could hurt us or others. Thus, it keeps us from sin, but it also helps us evaluate the world properly and gives us insight and discernment into people who may want to mislead and scam us. In a sense, the Bible can **preserve** us from both physical and emotional harm here on earth as well as that future preservation from God’s wrath against evil. For instance, if we follow God’s principles about marriage and abstaining from sexual relationships outside of marriage it can keep us from getting sexually transmitted diseases. We probably rarely read Leviticus, but all the food and hygienic laws were designed with the purpose of keeping Israel healthy—whether from the proper disposal of waste ([Deut 23:13](#)) or the washing of hands ([Lev 15:11](#)). When we follow biblical principles for proper relationships, it will also **preserve** us from mental and emotional harm. Faithfulness in marriage, for instance, will produce trust and security rather than suspicion, insecurity, and baggage. Recognizing our God-given roles whether as spouses, parents, children, family, or friends helps us to have the right perspective, live selflessly, and abide by the boundaries God has established. Although sin will cause dysfunction and we cannot control what others do, we can know how to resolve problems, forgive, and love from the biblical perspective. No relationship will be perfect, but when we pattern them upon the Bible God will **preserve** them and make them flourish and grow.

In what ways does God’s Word preserve and protect us?

Question
6

As we transition to December and conclude our studies in these psalms of thanksgiving, we will continue to see the preservation of God through the birth of the Messiah which was long-foretold by the prophets and the psalms. We’ll even use the psalms to help us understand the Christmas story even better. But for now, we can take comfort in knowing that God—the Father of our Lord Jesus—provides for all our needs as the sole source of our help. He protects us from harm and being led astray as our vigilant guard. And He preserves our soul for eternity through our relationship with

Jesus. But that preservation has already begun now as we study and apply His Word in our lives. Praise the Lord He is our provider, protector, and preserver.

In the introduction, Paul Harvey reminded us of a poignant story about God's protection of the choir members of a small Baptist church in Beatrice, Nebraska. Each member that week had an excuse as to why he or she was late as various circumstances had arisen in life. They could have focused on their situations and vociferously complained about these unfortunate events that made them late. They could have complained about their car that wouldn't start, too much homework, a broken wristwatch, a daughter who overslept, and much more. In doing so, they would have missed God's miraculous protection and provisions which spared their lives from a violent explosion.

God always stands guard over our lives. Yet, He doesn't promise that physical harm will *never* come to us. Sometimes He does mercifully preserve us from physical harm and at other times He allows it to occur. God is sovereign and in control; He alone knows why these things happen. In either case, however, it does not affect the ultimate preservation that we have in Christ who preserves our soul from now until forever more. As we journey through life, let us take comfort in knowing that God has us firmly in His hand and no one or nothing can remove us from His grasp. We serve a God who is bigger than our circumstances and more powerful than our problems. We can find help and preservation in Him at any time because He is always on guard and He never sleeps!

Incorporate

As a church, how have we seen God's provision throughout 2020? In what ways have you shown your gratitude and thankfulness?

As a church, how does God protect us from wrong beliefs and false doctrine?
According to the Bible, how should we deal with false doctrine and those who teach it?

Why should we live as a people who have hope in a future preservation? What does that look like? How should we demonstrate our future preservation by God in our lives right now?

Journal: Document God's Work

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