

Steve Watson

Daily Bible Guide – 40 Days of Faith, 2015

## Monday, March 30 – Psalm 36

For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD.

<sup>1</sup> Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts.

They have no fear of God at all.

<sup>2</sup> In their blind conceit,

they cannot see how wicked they really are.

<sup>3</sup> Everything they say is crooked and deceitful.

They refuse to act wisely or do good.

<sup>4</sup> They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots.

Their actions are never good.

They make no attempt to turn from evil.

<sup>5</sup> Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens;  
your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

<sup>6</sup> Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,  
your justice like the ocean depths.

You care for people and animals alike, O LORD.

<sup>7</sup> How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

All humanity finds shelter

in the shadow of your wings.

<sup>8</sup> You feed them from the abundance of your own house,  
letting them drink from your river of delights.

<sup>9</sup> **For you are the fountain of life,  
the light by which we see.**

<sup>10</sup> Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you;  
give justice to those with honest hearts.

<sup>11</sup> Don't let the proud trample me  
or the wicked push me around.

<sup>12</sup> Look! Those who do evil have fallen!

They are thrown down, never to rise again.

### Points of Interest:

**Evil Schemes of the Day** – *they lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots*

Can you imagine someone lying in bed at night, dreaming of ways to get ahead – financially, socially, professionally, you name it – at the expense of others? Have you known that person? Have you been that person? Today’s psalm opens with a vivid read on a moment like this. Our schemer isn’t interested in what God has to say, but listens to whispering sin and plans their next no good, crooked move.

**Contrast of the Day** – *your love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens*

God’s love and dependability and goodness are so deep and wide that they make those nighttime schemes someone might have seem petty and impotent.

**Image of the Day** – *the fountain of life*

Historically, this phrase has been used in strange and beautiful ways to talk about the waters in which a person is baptized. Here it captures God many good qualities and the supporting, nourishing impact they have on us. Day after day, God takes care of people and animals, providing shelter and food and drink. God is the source of life and light, both in the sense of scientific origins and in more mystical way, increasing the satisfaction and insight of those who listen to him.

**Quickly Answered Prayer of the Day** – *Look! Those who do evil have fallen!*

In the final stanza, our psalmist comes back to the schemers that had been forgotten for a minute. It’s as if the psalmist had been inside the temple – microcosm for all of creation and God’s presence with us in it. In the temple, there were abundant reminders of God’s goodness and beauty and provision. Our psalmist wants to see those in everyday life as well. “Love us, bring justice, protect us....”

And then suddenly, it’s happening! Those clever schemes hatched at night aren’t succeeding. How about that? More, God...

## Taking It Home:

*Pray this psalm* – Pray the first stanza, remembering one of the worst things you’ve seen someone do. Then pray the middle stanza, recalling the deepest or best spiritual experience you can recall in the moment. As you pray the last stanza, imagine that the goodness of God you tap into in the second stanza would pour into situations like what you remembered in the first stanza.

*For your six* – Pray that your friends will get an increasing taste of a God whose love and faithfulness and care and shelter are as rich as this psalm says they are.

## Tuesday, March 31 – Psalm 37

A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> Don’t worry about the wicked  
or envy those who do wrong.
- <sup>2</sup> For like grass, they soon fade away.  
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

- <sup>3</sup> **Trust in the LORD and do good.**  
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
- <sup>4</sup> **Take delight in the LORD,**  
and he will give you your heart's desires.
- <sup>5</sup> Commit everything you do to the LORD.  
Trust him, and he will help you.
- <sup>6</sup> He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,  
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.
- <sup>7</sup> Be still in the presence of the LORD,  
and wait patiently for him to act.  
Don't worry about evil people who prosper  
or fret about their wicked schemes.
- <sup>8</sup> Stop being angry!  
Turn from your rage!  
Do not lose your temper—  
it only leads to harm.
- <sup>9</sup> For the wicked will be destroyed,  
but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.
- <sup>10</sup> Soon the wicked will disappear.  
Though you look for them, they will be gone.
- <sup>11</sup> The lowly will possess the land  
and will live in peace and prosperity.
- <sup>12</sup> The wicked plot against the godly;  
they snarl at them in defiance.
- <sup>13</sup> But the Lord just laughs,  
for he sees their day of judgment coming.
- <sup>14</sup> The wicked draw their swords  
and string their bows  
to kill the poor and the oppressed,  
to slaughter those who do right.
- <sup>15</sup> But their swords will stab their own hearts,  
and their bows will be broken.

- <sup>16</sup> It is better to be godly and have little  
than to be evil and rich.
- <sup>17</sup> For the strength of the wicked will be shattered,  
but the LORD takes care of the godly.
- <sup>18</sup> Day by day the LORD takes care of the innocent,  
and they will receive an inheritance that lasts forever.
- <sup>19</sup> They will not be disgraced in hard times;  
even in famine they will have more than enough.
- <sup>20</sup> But the wicked will die.  
The LORD's enemies are like flowers in a field—  
they will disappear like smoke.
- <sup>21</sup> The wicked borrow and never repay,  
but the godly are generous givers.
- <sup>22</sup> Those the LORD blesses will possess the land,  
but those he curses will die.
- <sup>23</sup> The LORD directs the steps of the godly.  
He delights in every detail of their lives.
- <sup>24</sup> Though they stumble, they will never fall,  
for the LORD holds them by the hand.
- <sup>25</sup> Once I was young, and now I am old.  
Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned  
or their children begging for bread.
- <sup>26</sup> The godly always give generous loans to others,  
and their children are a blessing.
- <sup>27</sup> Turn from evil and do good,  
and you will live in the land forever.
- <sup>28</sup> For the LORD loves justice,  
and he will never abandon the godly.
- He will keep them safe forever,  
but the children of the wicked will die.
- <sup>29</sup> The godly will possess the land  
and will live there forever.

- <sup>30</sup> The godly offer good counsel;  
they teach right from wrong.
- <sup>31</sup> They have made God's law their own,  
so they will never slip from his path.
- <sup>32</sup> The wicked wait in ambush for the godly,  
looking for an excuse to kill them.
- <sup>33</sup> But the LORD will not let the wicked succeed  
or let the godly be condemned when they are put on trial.
- <sup>34</sup> Put your hope in the LORD.  
Travel steadily along his path.  
He will honor you by giving you the land.  
You will see the wicked destroyed.
- <sup>35</sup> I have seen wicked and ruthless people  
flourishing like a tree in its native soil.
- <sup>36</sup> But when I looked again, they were gone!  
Though I searched for them, I could not find them!
- <sup>37</sup> Look at those who are honest and good,  
for a wonderful future awaits those who love peace.
- <sup>38</sup> But the rebellious will be destroyed;  
they have no future.
- <sup>39</sup> The LORD rescues the godly;  
he is their fortress in times of trouble.
- <sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them,  
rescuing them from the wicked.  
He saves them,  
and they find shelter in him.

## Points of Interest:

### **Problem of the Day** – *envy and anger*

This is one of the occasional psalms that sound more like wisdom literature than prayer. Wisdom literature is meant to pitch general principles for how life works – kind of a rules of the road manual – and then to offer some timely and pointed advice from that perspective. The presenting problem in need of wisdom here seems to be a mix of envy and anger. Other people are doing better than they deserve, or maybe just better than we are, and that leaves us kind of jealous and pissed off

sometimes, if I can be blunt about it.

This psalm then develops quite a few reasons to move on from those difficult people and simply connect with God. I won't catch every insight in this long psalm, but I'll highlight just a few insights.

**Reason #1** – *like spring flowers, they soon wither* (2)

It's repeated again and again (vs. 2, 10, 20, 35-36) that undeserved success will fade.

**Reason #2** – *the justice of your cause will shine* (6)

God will hold onto you and help your cause, if it's innocent and just.

**Reason #3** – *Do not lose your temper – it only leads to harm.* (8)

Responding negatively and reactively to other folks isn't good for anybody, in any way.

**Reason #4** – *the Lord just laughs.... Their swords will stab their own hearts* (13, 15)

They're gonna be in trouble!

**Reason #5** – *the godly are generous givers* (21)

Good people take care of good people generously (21, 26), and their kids often turn out pretty well too.

**Reason #6** – *I have never seen the godly abandoned.... a wonderful future awaits those who love peace* (25, 37)

Good-hearted people are likely to have a good present, and if not, God will make sure they have a good future. (Side note: Many years ago, I had a public argument with a Bible teacher who taught this as an always-true rule rather than as a general principle. He insisted that justice for those in poverty wasn't a big deal because after all, "I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread." I argued that this was empirically not a fact in all circumstances. Good, Jesus-loving people die of hunger in destitute poverty. He didn't seem to want to admit this. I think the promise of the "wonderful future" in this psalm is 100% bankable, while the general principles for the present times are likely to be true, all other things being equal. But this world is a big, complicated place, of course, and sometimes – as we also see in the Psalms – we have to wait and wait and wait to see God's justice come.)

**Reason #7** – *they find shelter in him* (40)

In the end (of this psalm, these comments, and of all of life itself), God will be with those who look to God for help. There will be a form of shelter and saving.

## Taking It Home:

*Pray this psalm* – As you read this psalm, which statement seems most true or most comforting? Which seems most troublesome or difficult to read? Talk with God about that.

*For you* – Of the seven reasons I highlight to trust God and not worry about other people, choose one to pray about or ask to experience. Or share with another person or over social media how you have seen one of these seven things in your own experience.

## Wednesday, April 1 – Psalm 38

A psalm of David, asking God to remember him.

- <sup>1</sup> O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger  
or discipline me in your rage!
- <sup>2</sup> Your arrows have struck deep,  
and your blows are crushing me.
- <sup>3</sup> Because of your anger, my whole body is sick;  
my health is broken because of my sins.
- <sup>4</sup> My guilt overwhelms me—  
it is a burden too heavy to bear.
- <sup>5</sup> My wounds fester and stink  
because of my foolish sins.
- <sup>6</sup> I am bent over and racked with pain.  
All day long I walk around filled with grief.
- <sup>7</sup> A raging fever burns within me,  
and my health is broken.
- <sup>8</sup> I am exhausted and completely crushed.  
My groans come from an anguished heart.
- <sup>9</sup> You know what I long for, Lord;  
you hear my every sigh.
- <sup>10</sup> My heart beats wildly, my strength fails,  
and I am going blind.
- <sup>11</sup> My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease.  
Even my own family stands at a distance.
- <sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me.  
Those who wish me harm make plans to ruin me.  
All day long they plan their treachery.
- <sup>13</sup> But I am deaf to all their threats.  
I am silent before them as one who cannot speak.
- <sup>14</sup> I choose to hear nothing,  
and I make no reply.
- <sup>15</sup> For I am waiting for you, O LORD.  
You must answer for me, O Lord my God.
- <sup>16</sup> I prayed, "Don't let my enemies gloat over me  
or rejoice at my downfall."

- <sup>17</sup> I am on the verge of collapse,  
facing constant pain.
- <sup>18</sup> **But I confess my sins;  
I am deeply sorry for what I have done.**
- <sup>19</sup> I have many aggressive enemies;  
they hate me without reason.
- <sup>20</sup> They repay me evil for good  
and oppose me for pursuing good.
- <sup>21</sup> **Do not abandon me, O LORD.  
Do not stand at a distance, my God.**
- <sup>22</sup> **Come quickly to help me,  
O Lord my savior.**

**Points of Interest:**

**Fail of the Day** – *A psalm of David*

Last week a friend of mine who's been down on his luck talked about what a miserable experience it is to go on facebook and scroll through the accounts of his friends' happier, healthier, and wealthier lives. In response, I've been posting a string of "fails of the day" online – recounting my own moments of carelessness, foolishness, and overall bad form.

Attributing this psalm to David, along with the humble request that God simply remember him, feels like it fulfills a similar function. Even David, the greatest king in the history of Israel, can suffer the consequences of his own failures, as the historical record attests to, in significant ways. Even David can feel God's distance as well.

**Image of the Day** – *my wounds fester and stink because of my foolish sins*

Well, that's honest. In David's case, could this be his bad parenting and the civil war one of his sons eventually foments? Could it be his murderous cover-up of his adultery and abuse of power, and the problems that created? I've experienced this connection between sin and suffering in my life as well. Whether it be the fears and stresses that lead to procrastination and the problems that creates or moral failings in bad things I've done or good things undone, I know what it's like for bad consequences to follow bad character or bad choices.

The psalmist sees God's discipline at work in these consequences. Like an attentive parent, God loves us enough to sometimes taste short-term consequences for things that will only go worse if they go unchecked.

**Complication of the Day** – *they hate me without reason*

On the one hand, "aggressive enemies" are part of the bad consequences that the psalmist knows he's brought upon himself. And yet, those enemies aren't exactly on the attack to teach the psalmist a lesson. They're just aggressive opportunists. Just because we may see ties between our sin and our suffering doesn't mean we should always assume that's the story. Often people cause suffering for no

good reason, just as people suffer for no good reason themselves.

**Spiritual Practices When You're Down of the Day** – *I am deeply sorry.... Come quickly to help me.*

The psalmist ends in two postures that feel like model prayers in these circumstances. We see confession and yearning. The psalmist names the truth about herself, and yearns for God to come close and come quickly with help.

### Taking it home:

*Pray this psalm* – If any come to mind, name your own failings or sin and tough consequences you're experiencing specifically as you pray this psalm.

*For your city* – What if throughout your city, people felt free to name their failings and faults and sufferings to God, and to invite God for help? How would God be present? How would God come quickly to help? Pray that this would be so.

### Thursday, April 2 – Psalm 39

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> I said to myself, "I will watch what I do  
and not sin in what I say.

I will hold my tongue  
when the ungodly are around me."

<sup>2</sup> But as I stood there in silence—  
not even speaking of good things—  
the turmoil within me grew worse.

<sup>3</sup> The more I thought about it,  
the hotter I got,  
igniting a fire of words:

<sup>4</sup> "LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.  
Remind me that my days are numbered—  
how fleeting my life is.

<sup>5</sup> You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand.  
My entire lifetime is just a moment to you;  
at best, each of us is but a breath." *Interlude*

<sup>6</sup> We are merely moving shadows,  
and all our busy rushing ends in nothing.

We heap up wealth,  
not knowing who will spend it.

<sup>7</sup> **And so, Lord, where do I put my hope?  
My only hope is in you.**

<sup>8</sup> Rescue me from my rebellion.  
Do not let fools mock me.

<sup>9</sup> I am silent before you; I won't say a word,  
for my punishment is from you.

<sup>10</sup> But please stop striking me!  
I am exhausted by the blows from your hand.

<sup>11</sup> When you discipline us for our sins,  
you consume like a moth what is precious to us.  
Each of us is but a breath. *Interlude*

<sup>12</sup> Hear my prayer, O LORD!  
Listen to my cries for help!  
Don't ignore my tears.

For I am your guest—  
a traveler passing through,  
as my ancestors were before me.

<sup>13</sup> Leave me alone so I can smile again  
before I am gone and exist no more.

#### Points of Interest

##### **Situation of the Day** – *I stood there in silence*

Scholars have had a hard time imagining an original occasion for this psalm. So I'll anachronistically supply one that comes to mind for me. Recently in my men's group, we had a conversation about job reviews and other actions from supervisors that feel partly justified and true and partly slanderous and nasty. They can leave us feeling equal parts guilty and aggrieved, regretful and furious, but certainly insignificant and bitter.

Here the psalmist is aware of personal missteps ("rebellion" in vs. 8) and potential criticism and shame. And yet standing silently in the face of others, trying to hold his tongue, he's getting heated as well! His initial advice to himself seems useful: hold your tongue, and remember that life is short.

##### **Place to Turn of the Day** – *my only hope is in you*

Our psalmist turns to God, author of all of our short lives, and says that even if nothing in life circumstances is evoking hope, God can give cause for hope. God is the only living being whose life is "longer than the width of my hand," who isn't just a "moving shadow." Perhaps God can help.

##### **Image of the Day** – *you consume like a moth what is precious to us*

Or perhaps not. In an image that isn't the first thing that we expect the Bible to say about God, we have God as consuming moth. We open the drawer of our life, see that favorite sweater riddled with holes, and ask God why he can't stop eating away at our lives! Again, the psalms don't develop perfect theology, but they perfectly model freedom in our prayers. Sometimes, life is so

disappointing, that whether it be because of the turmoil caused by the “ungodly” or the exhaustion we feel from the consequences of our own problems, we can only see God as the power that is letting all this happen, or potentially even making it all happen.

**Despair of the Day** – *Leave me alone so I can smile again before I am gone and exist no more*

Things get worse before they get better in this psalm. The psalmist is praying to God for help – don’t ignore my tears! – but ends the prayer seeing no light at the end of the tunnel. Life is short, and the best he can hope for is one more smile before it ends in nothingness. It’s one of the bleaker moments in the psalms.

Several books and scholars have been useful to me in the writing of this guide. They’ve mainly gone unmentioned, in an effort to keep things personal, but here’s a line I found helpful.

“Psalms 39 articulates despair and hope *simultaneously*. In so doing, it portrays the way life really is: terrifyingly short, yet awesomely wonderful. And it represents the tension inevitably involved in our response to life – that is, both hopeful awe and nearly impossible despair that finally cannot be silenced.” (Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 194.)

## Taking it home:

*Pray this psalm* – Ask yourself is there’s some hard part of your reality, some truth in your current experience, that you’ve been hesitant to admit to yourself or say out loud to God. Take this psalm as permission to go there. Tell God how you really feel about your life and about God, and ask God to listen and help you smile again.

*For your six* – Ask God to meet any of your six who are in difficult professional circumstances or any form of despair. Pray that your friends would feel permission to pray in these circumstances and they’d sense God listening and responding to their prayers.

## Friday, April 3 – Psalm 40

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,  
and he turned to me and heard my cry.  
<sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the pit of despair,  
out of the mud and the mire.  
He set my feet on solid ground  
and steadied me as I walked along.  
<sup>3</sup> He has given me a new song to sing,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.  
They will put their trust in the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD,  
who have no confidence in the proud  
or in those who worship idols.

<sup>5</sup> O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us.  
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.  
You have no equal.

If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,  
I would never come to the end of them.

<sup>6</sup> You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.  
Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand—  
you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Look, I have come.  
As is written about me in the Scriptures:

<sup>8</sup> I take joy in doing your will, my God,  
for your instructions are written on my heart."

<sup>9</sup> I have told all your people about your justice.  
I have not been afraid to speak out,  
as you, O LORD, well know.

<sup>10</sup> I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart;  
I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.

I have told everyone in the great assembly  
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

<sup>11</sup> LORD, don't hold back your tender mercies from me.  
Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me.

<sup>12</sup> For troubles surround me—  
too many to count!

My sins pile up so high  
I can't see my way out.

They outnumber the hairs on my head.  
I have lost all courage.

<sup>13</sup> Please, LORD, rescue me!  
Come quickly, LORD, and help me.

<sup>14</sup> May those who try to destroy me  
be humiliated and put to shame.

May those who take delight in my trouble

be turned back in disgrace.

<sup>15</sup> Let them be horrified by their shame,  
for they said, “Aha! We’ve got him now!”

<sup>16</sup> But may all who search for you  
be filled with joy and gladness in you.

May those who love your salvation  
repeatedly shout, “The LORD is great!”

<sup>17</sup> **As for me, since I am poor and needy,  
let the Lord keep me in his thoughts.**

**You are my helper and my savior.**

**O my God, do not delay.**

#### Points of Interest:

##### **Order of the Day** – *a new song to sing*

I’ve tended to not pay too much attention to the ordering of the psalms. Over the years, I’ve mostly prayed the psalms in groups of two or three or five per day or by looking up a particular psalm and reading it in isolation. But in this 40 Days walk through the first book of psalms, the ordering of one psalm before or after another is sometimes really interesting. This psalm shares yesterday’s (and the day before as well, in fact) context of troubles and failing. Yet compared to the bleak tone and despairing experience of Psalm 39, Psalm 40 is ebullient. Maybe I fell in the mud in some tough times, the psalm sings, but I’m solid ground now, with a new, happy song to sing that people have got to hear!

##### **Religious Progress of the Day** – *your instructions written on my heart*

Early in the life of Israel, sacrifices and offerings are a central part of religious life, and their proper administration seems extremely important to God. Long chapters of the Bible laboriously spell out their significance. Yet as the centuries go by, the psalms and prophets and eventually Jesus himself develop a very different take on these religious acts. Ultimately, they don’t make God smile. They’re of lesser importance, if they are important at all.

Personal responsiveness to God and gratitude, saying yes to God, letting God write his lessons and joy all over our hearts as if our lives are part of the next great chapter in the story God’s writing – that’s where it’s at! That’s more central to love of God and a life of faith.

##### **Numerational Juxtaposition of the Day** – *your plans are too numerous... troubles – too many to count*

So I really like how my little subtitle sounds, even if I just invented an adjective there. On the one hand, the psalmist’s troubles are too many to count. Like Greater Boston’s snow banks this winter, sins have piled up so high that “I can’t see my way out.” (v. 12) On the other hand, God’s plans are also “too numerous to list.” (v. 5) The question is which of these gets to be the dominant story of our lives – our uncountable troubles and mistakes, or God’s uncountable plans and wonders. To the

extent the psalms get to choose, they're honest about it but they keep choosing God, and they look God to back up that choice and prove it wise.

### **Blessings of the Day** – *joy and gladness*

The psalm ends with two blessings, two pictures of desired outcomes or answers from God. There is the intercessory request for people who search for God to be filled with joy and gladness and to shout aloud how great God is. But there is also the much quieter request that God simply keep us in his thoughts, and that God hurry up and keep helping us out.

### **Taking it Home:**

*Pray this psalm* – I'm running out of ways to invite you to simply pray these words, making them your own however seems to suit you and God at the moment. But that. Go for that if you like.

*For you* – See if you can list your problems in one column, list God's blessings in another, and then ask God to make that second column grow higher and higher in whatever ways you yearn for.

## **Saturday, April 4 – Psalm 41**

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> Oh, the joys of those who are kind to the poor!  
The LORD rescues them when they are in trouble.
- <sup>2</sup> The LORD protects them  
and keeps them alive.  
He gives them prosperity in the land  
and rescues them from their enemies.
- <sup>3</sup> The LORD nurses them when they are sick  
and restores them to health.
- <sup>4</sup> "O LORD," I prayed, "have mercy on me.  
Heal me, for I have sinned against you."
- <sup>5</sup> But my enemies say nothing but evil about me.  
"How soon will he die and be forgotten?" they ask.
- <sup>6</sup> They visit me as if they were my friends,  
but all the while they gather gossip,  
and when they leave, they spread it everywhere.
- <sup>7</sup> All who hate me whisper about me,  
imagining the worst.
- <sup>8</sup> "He has some fatal disease," they say.  
"He will never get out of that bed!"
- <sup>9</sup> Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely,  
the one who shared my food, has turned against me.

- <sup>10</sup> LORD, have mercy on me.  
Make me well again, so I can pay them back!
- <sup>11</sup> I know you are pleased with me,  
for you have not let my enemies triumph over me.
- <sup>12</sup> You have preserved my life because I am innocent;  
you have brought me into your presence forever.
- <sup>13</sup> Praise the LORD, the God of Israel,  
who lives from everlasting to everlasting.  
Amen and amen!

### Points of Interest:

**Good Living of the Day** – *kind to the poor, well again so I can pay them back, in your presence forever*

This psalm gives us several pictures of the good life, all of which we see sprinkled throughout the psalms. There is the value of kindness and generosity to those who have less. There is the desire to be helped by God and in getting said help, to be socially and publically vindicated. And there is the desire to be present to and with God now and forever, and the experience of that presence.

**Familiar Situation of the Day** – *I have sinned... my enemies say nothing but evil about me*

As with so many of the psalms of lament or complaint, we see they are born from problems both without and within. One of the best things we can do, it appears, when we're frustrated with ourselves or other people is to take a break from attacking ourselves or our foes and get in God's face about it all.

**Awful Quotation of the Day** – *He has some fatal disease*

Today, when I read verse 8, it sounded so awful to me that I laughed nervously. To have anyone gossip that you are lying in bed dying has got to be an awful experience. To then find out that your best friend is in on it has got to be devastating. This section takes on a different poignancy in the New Testament, in light of Judas' betrayal of Jesus, just after sharing a meal with Jesus and having Jesus wash his feet.

**Name of God of the Day** – *the God of Israel*

This psalm ends in an outburst of praise that maybe gets expanded just a bit by the editors who place this psalm at the end of the first collection in the book. I'm not sure if the particular name chosen for God here – Yahweh, the God of Israel – is especially important to this psalm. But it seems to be a great place to end this Bible guide.

Israel in the Bible is a person before it's a country. Israel, meaning literally something like "he who struggles with God", is the new name that the patriarch Jacob is given after spending a night, and really spending a life, wrestling with God. To name a person "wrestles with God" and then to apply that name to a whole nation is a mighty legacy, one the psalms invite us to live into again and again as we wrestle with God ourselves – approaching God with absolute honesty and engaging with God in

an intimate battle where we hope in the end, to be one and to be healed and to call that a win.

**Taking it home:**

*Pray this psalm* – Wrestle with God yourself as you pray, naming your taste of death – literal or metaphorical – on this day before Easter, and inviting the power of resurrection.

*For your church* – Pray that our church will embody all the best of this psalm in particular, and of all the psalms—love for those in need, spiritual honesty and vitality, and deeply impassioned engagement with God.