

WEEK FIFTEEN INTRODUCTION

Week 15 utilizes the most diverse spread of Scripture texts of any week yet. The diversity arises from the parallel accounts of Israel's monarchy (and later the monarchies of the divided kingdom) found in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. Added to that, David's extensive collection of Psalms arises from within the story of his life and service. Reading from a variety of biblical books will mark future weeks.

David is often called "the Psalmist of Israel" due to the vast array of Psalms composed by him. These Psalms present an astounding and unique perspective within the God-breathed Scriptures. The Psalms consecrate human experience in the midst of the turmoil of this fallen world. The Psalms *simultaneously* are God-breathed, Holy Spirit inspired Scripture and a record of the full span of human experience and worship. They give us an honest invitation to be real before God. David's Psalms display his confusion, anger, suffering, victory, longing, praise and more. Our prayers and heart after God can and ought to showcase the same. We should not feel as though God cannot bear our neediness or that He does not want to hear from us.

The Psalms are Hebrew poetry, and Hebrew poetry is marked by *parallelism*. To get at what David (or any other Psalmist later on) means, we must remember this key piece to understanding Hebrew poetry. In Hebrew parallelism the two parallel phrases or ideas serve to give meaning and shape to each other to produce a fuller truth or idea. Take for example Psalm 34:13-14, *Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* In verse 13 the two parallel phrases serve to poetically showcase the admonition to use language for truth and goodness rather than deceit and evil. Verse 14 demonstrates that the flight from evil must necessarily mean the pursuit of the good, namely the good of peace or *shalom*.

KEY SCRIPTURE

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

– Psalm 27:4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What characteristics of God can you see in the Psalms in the day 1 reading? How does God relate to the righteous versus the wicked? What promises do you see about God that you can build your life on?

How does God confront the mighty oppressor in Psalm 52? How can Christians find hope even when the mighty “boast of evil” (v. 1)? What is the means of Christian growth and flourishing in difficult days (vv. 8-9)? What does that look like for followers of Jesus today?

Psalm 56:8 contains a warming promise to the weary Christian, *You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?* This parallels the promise in Psalm 34:18. Reflect on God’s nearness to you amid grief, sadness, and despair. How is this sweet attention magnified in Jesus? Read Hebrews 5:7-9.

How does Nabal sin in 1 Samuel 25:10? How have you seen “sins of the tongue” appear thus far in your reading of the Psalms? See Psalm 52 for an example. How do you see these same sins in our culture today? Take some time and prayerfully reflect on your use of speech.

In Psalm 35, David depicts the Lord as a warrior-king who defends against strong adversaries. How does God’s judgment provide hope and consolation for the Christian? How should future judgment lead us to a sober approach to life here and now? Read Romans 12:19-21.

What reasons does the Chronicler give for Saul’s demise in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14? How ought faith in Christ lead to concrete living? How should Christians “keep the faith”?

Day 6's reading focuses on some of the "Songs of Ascents." Willem A. VanGemeren notes, "It is...likely that the songs were sung in the three annual festival processions, as the pilgrims 'ascended' to Jerusalem, hence the designation 'songs of ascents.'" As you read these Psalms, how do they give shape to worship? How can we use these Psalms and the truths they present to prepare our hearts for worshiping with God's people each Sunday (Lord's Day)?

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."

-Psalm 73:28

Are you near God, do you have a personal relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ? If not, you're not yet *near* Him in relationship, but you could be today! Ask Him to bring you near by grace through faith in Jesus. Reach out to a pastor for help in this. If you are near to God, then you have a story to tell of all His works! Who can you tell this week?