

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

August 21 - Psalm 116

Psalm 116 shows the spiritual pattern of our lives. In verse 3, the Psalmist describes his plight. He is overcome by trouble and sorrow, and wrapped in the cords of death. That describes our plight as well.

Ephesians 2:1-3 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Because of our sin the cords of death have entangled each one of us. But what does the Psalmist do in the midst of his trouble? He cries out to God for salvation (verses 4 – 7). Like the Psalmist we too can cry out for God to come and save us.

Romans 10:13 *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

What follows in the rest of Psalm 116 is very interesting. Look how the Psalmist responds to God's salvation in verses 12 – 19. He becomes a servant of the Lord who lives to please the one who saved him. In verses 14 and 18, the Psalmist promises to fulfill the promises he has made to God. In verse 17, the Psalmist also promises to always be thankful for the salvation that God has granted to him. The same should be true of us. How do we respond to the salvation we have in Christ?

Romans 6:16-22 *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But*

now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

To be a slave to righteousness means that we now live for the one who saved us. Jesus changes everything for us. He has freed us from the power sin and death, and brought us to new life in him. In view of all Christ has done for us, how can we do anything other than live for him every day of our lives?

One last note, look again at the first verse of this Psalm. "I love the Lord because...He heard my cry for mercy." That should be the expression of our hearts as well, as we consider all that Christ has done for us.

August 22 – Psalm 118

Psalm 118 was the Psalm that the Israelites would sing at the end of the Passover celebration. So it would have been the last Psalm Jesus sang in the upper room with his disciples following the Last Supper. As this Psalm opens we are reminded to give thanks to God for His great love for us. We do nothing to earn that love, so it is truly a gift.

Ephesians 2:6-9 *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*

It is God's love that also sustains us in the midst of troubles. Notice verses 5 – 7. Because the Psalmist knows that God loves him, he cries out to God for help in a time of great distress, and because of God's great love, he is completely confident that God will save him and deliver him from his distress and his enemies. Jesus went to the cross in that same confidence.

Acts 2:22-27 *"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him: "'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶*

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope,²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

When Jesus went to the cross it certainly seemed as if all was lost—that the hope of the world had been snuffed out. But as verse 22 of this Psalm says, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” The capstone was the most important stone in a structure. In the days before cement and mortar, it was the stone that held everything together. Verse 22 of Psalm 118 is quoted by Peter in Acts 4:11, and Peter quotes from it again in 1 Peter 2: 7, and both times Peter uses it to refer to Jesus. Jesus also quoted this verse in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, and Luke 20:17.

Matthew 21:42-46 *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"⁴³ "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."⁴⁴ He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.⁴⁶ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

Jesus is the stone the builders (the Jews) rejected. He was crucified and he died and was buried, but God did not abandon him to the grave. The third God raised Jesus up to new life, and Jesus is now exalted as Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords. The stone that was rejected has become the capstone.

August 23 – Psalm 119: 89 – 112

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible, and it is a Psalm that focuses on God’s law. Often times as Christians we think, “Why should we care about God’s law—we have Jesus isn’t that all that matters?” But the law has meaning for us today. Without the law we would not know that we even need Jesus.

Galatians 3:22-26 *But the Scriptures have declared that we are all prisoners of sin, so the only way to receive God's promise is to believe in Jesus Christ.²³ Until faith in Christ was shown to us as the way of becoming right with God, we were guarded by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until we could put our faith in the coming Savior.²⁴ Let me put it another way. The*

law was our guardian and teacher to lead us until Christ came. So now, through faith in Christ, we are made right with God. ²⁵ But now that faith in Christ has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. ²⁶ So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Be very sure that you understand what Paul is saying in those verses. It is the law that leads us to Christ, but once we have Christ we are no longer kept by the law, because now we are kept by Christ. But the law still has meaning and purpose for our lives. God's law provides the structure in which our society operates. The reason we have laws against murder and stealing is because of God's law.

But for a Christian the law has an even deeper meaning for our lives, because the law shows the very character of God, and how God desires for us to live. Now think about this, when you love someone shouldn't you want to do the things that please that person? Doesn't it stand to reason then, that if we love God we should desire to please Him too? The law tells us how we can live a life that is pleases God. Just as the Psalmist rejoiced in God's law so should we. God's law is eternal just as God is eternal (verses 89 – 96), and it still applies to our lives today.

Isaiah 40:7-8 *The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."*

God's law is the only way we know for sure how to live the wise life that God desires for us to live.

Psalms 119:98-100 *Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. ¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.*

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

As you read the Gospels it becomes clear that Jesus knew God's word and God's law inside and out. As verse 97 of Psalm 119 says Jesus loved the law and meditated on it day and night. May God impress His law in the same way on our hearts.

August 24 – Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is known as one of the Psalms of Ascents, because it was a Psalm that pilgrims would sing on their way to the tabernacle to worship the Lord. It is primarily a song of faith. Notice how it begins with the words, “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?” It is almost like the Psalmist is having a conversation with himself, and asking himself who will help him along the way as he travels to worship the Lord? The answer is found in verse 2. The one who will help him is the same one he is going to worship—the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Do you see a connection in our relationship to Jesus? The one we worship is also the one who is our help in times of trouble.

Hebrews 4:15 - 5:1 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

In the remainder of this Psalm the Psalmist reminds himself that not only is the Lord his help, the Lord also watches over him and protects him through the heat of the day and the dark of the night. In the same way, Jesus is the one who protects us and defends us as he holds us safely for all eternity in his nail scarred hands.

1 John 5:18-20 *We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true-- even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

August 25 – Psalm 127

Psalm 127 starts off by talking about the futility of trying to live your life without God in the center of it all. God is the master builder and we must allow Him to be the one who is building our lives. A good question that we should always be asking ourselves is this: What is it that we are building with our lives?

1 Corinthians 3:9-15 ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Is what you are building with your life going to survive into eternity? It is never just about us, and it is not even about just us and God. What God is doing is much bigger than that. God is at work, through Jesus Christ building something magnificent and each one of us is part of it.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The way we are built into this magnificent dwelling is through Christ, as we learn to live in Christ, we are built up in Christ, and we become more and more like Christ.

Colossians 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

August 26 – Psalm 130

Psalm 130 is short but very powerful. It breaks down very nicely into 4 parts and each part points us to what Jesus does for us. Let's start with verses 1 and 2. In these first two verses the Psalmist is crying out for mercy in his time of need. The analogy the Psalmist gives us is a familiar one; we have seen before in Psalm 42. The Psalmist feels like he is drowning. What do we always do when we feel like we are about to drown? We cry out for help.

Matthew 14:29-31 Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and,

beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

Jesus is always there with an outstretched hand if we will just humble ourselves and cry out to him for mercy.

Hebrews 4:15 - 5:1 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

If we feel like we are sinking we must be willing to stop trying to save ourselves and cry out to Jesus. So often we don't want to do that because in our pride we don't want to admit that we need help—that we are sinners who need a savior. We are afraid to admit we have sinned, we hide from God just as Adam and Eve did, rather than coming and crying out for mercy. How foolish we are. Look at verses 3 and 4. God is a God of mercy, ready to forgive, that is why he sent His Son to die in our place.

Ephesians 2:3-5 *we were by nature objects of wrath.⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*

But asking Jesus to help us in our time of need isn't like rubbing on a magic lamp and having a genie pop out and solve all of your problems. In fact, Jesus promised that in this life, even after we have invited him into our lives, we will have trouble, and so we have to wait on him to finally deliver us (verses 5 and 6).

John 16:33 *In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Pay attention to the last few words that Jesus says in John 16: 33. We can take heart because he has overcome the world. On the cross Jesus overcame the power of sin and through his resurrection he has overcome the power of death and the power of Satan. He has overcome the world, and everything that fights against us. The world we live in will still have trouble but we can be confident that Jesus will always be there to help us because he has overcome the world.

Verses 7 and 8 are verses about hope and because Jesus has overcome the world we can live confidently in hope. As we wait for Jesus to come again we live in hope.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 *May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

August 27 – Psalm 133

Psalm 133 is a Psalm that describes the beauty of brotherhood, as brothers learn to live together as one. But as you read this Psalm notice that the brotherhood and unity come through worship. You might miss this at first, but notice the reference to Aaron in verse 2 and Mount Zion in verse 3. These are references to worship. Aaron was the first High Priest of Israel, and Mount Zion was the location of the temple. The only thing that can truly bind us together in unity as brothers is the proper worship of God. That's because unity only comes as we rally around something that is greater than we are. The only way lasting unity can come is as we rally around the throne of God, it is the only thing that will always be greater than we are. Listen to what Paul says in:

Ephesians 4:2-7 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

These verses sum up the things that all Christians share in common, and it is these things that allow us to live together as brothers. The unity of the body of Christ is the most powerful message we can give to the world around us. That's why Jesus prayed that unity (brotherhood) must be the distinguishing mark of his church.

John 17:11 *I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one....***John 17:20-21** *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*