

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

August 28 – Psalm 136

Psalm 136 beautifully ties together the greatness of God with the love of God. God wouldn't be worth loving if it were not for His greatness, but if God wasn't loving His greatness would mean nothing to us. Rather than being a source of comfort, God's greatness would simply makes us feel small and very much afraid. Because of God's love, expressed to us in Jesus Christ, we no longer have to fear God's greatness, but we can embrace it and be drawn to it. This Psalm was written for a worship leader to read the first half of the verse, and the congregation responding to what was read by repeating the phrase "His love endures forever."

In the first three verses, the Psalm opens with the worship leader extolling the greatness of who God is. Next in verses 4 – 9 the Psalmist turns his attention to the greatness of God as it is revealed to us through creation. The remainder of the Psalm deals with God rescuing and delivering His people from their bondage in Egypt and bringing them safely to the Promised Land. God is not just a great God up in the sky somewhere, and He isn't just a great creator God, He is the God who loves and redeems His people. As we think about God's love expressed to us in Jesus, what verses could we add to this Psalm.

Think of God's love that has been expressed to us in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-7 *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. ⁶ 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.*

When we were dead in our sins, God has made alive in Christ.

His love endures forever.

God has seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

His love endures forever.

There is nothing and no one who can snatch us from His hand.

His love endures forever.

These are just a few, maybe you can come up with some more on your own. Our great God loves us, and His love endures forever.

August 29 – Psalm 139

Psalm 139 is perhaps my favorite Psalm. In this Psalm, we learn so much about God, and our relationship to Him. The first six verses focus on God's knowledge. We often talk about God knowing all things, but in this Psalm we are reminded that God knows even the smallest details of our lives. He knows when we sit or rise, he knows our thoughts, He knows what we are going to say before we even say it. God is omniscient—He knows all things. He knows everything there is to know about us, but in spite of that He still loves us enough to send His Son to die for our sins.

Next in verses 7 to 10, David speaks of God being present wherever David goes. If we are in the highest heights, God is there, if we are in the deepest depths, God is there, wherever we go God is with us. Do you remember what Jesus said as he ascended into heaven?

Matthew 28:20 *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Wherever we go, whatever we are doing, Jesus is right there with us. His presence is always with us.

In verses 11 and 12, David says that even if we try to hide from God in the darkness, God's light will shine into our lives and illuminate the darkness. Darkness is the absence of light, and where God is there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5 *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*

As the Son of God, Christ came to bring light to our dark world, and through Christ we become a light shining in the darkness.

John 1:4-5 *In him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

From here David moves on, in verses 13 – 16, to speak of God's ability to see all things. Today doctors use an ultrasound to look at the baby developing in its mother's womb, but before there were ultrasounds, God was able to see a life even as it began to develop from just a few cells. In these verses David also credits God with skillfully knitting him together to make David the person he would be. But God sees even into the future. Look at verse 16. David says, "all of the days ordained for him were written in God's book before even one of them came to be." God knows and see everything about us. He is a great God who is high above all, but also personally involved in each of our lives whether we realize it or not. Realizing that God already knows all there is to know

about him, David still invites God to come and search his heart and his mind (verses 23 – 24). Why would David invite God to do something that God can do perfectly well without his permission? Because David wants God to show him where he doesn't measure up. We each have a way of deceiving ourselves, but God is never deceived. By praying this prayer at the end of this Psalm, David is asking God to shine the light of truth into his life. Are you willing to do? Are you willing to ask God to shine the light of His truth into your life? As we invite Christ to come into our hearts, his light fills our lives, and we begin to change as we see ourselves for what we are, and as we see ourselves and see Christ our lives begin to change so we become more and more like Christ.

August 30 – Psalm 143

Psalm 143 is a combination of a cry for forgiveness and a cry for help. David opens this Psalm by highlighting three important attributes of God: mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness. David knows that God is a merciful God, who forgives sin, and a faithful God who is ready to come to the aid of those who love Him. God is also a righteous God who will always do what is right, but that immediately poses a problem for David and for us. God is righteous—we are not, so in verse two David acknowledges his sinfulness, and owns up to the fact that he is not righteous. Just as we are, David is sinful, and therefore David knows that he doesn't have a leg to stand on before God. In the Book of Acts, David is described as a man after God's own heart, and yet even David is incapable of standing before a righteous God. Paul picked up on the theme of verse 2 in his writings:

Romans 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Galatians 2:16 *know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

We can't be declared righteous in God's sight based on our performance under the law, because we aren't righteous. All the law does is make us conscious of the fact that we don't measure up to God's standard. That is why like David, we need to cry out to our merciful God to forgive our sin, and not bring us into the judgment we deserve. Through Christ we find that mercy.

But along with mercy, we also need to follow David's example and ask God to help us to walk in ways that are pleasing to Him and in accord

with His will. Look at verse 8, because David is assured of God's love for him, David knows that he can trust God, so David asks God to show him the way he should go. In verse 10, David goes on to ask God to teach him to do God's will, and for the Spirit of God to lead him on level ground. As Christians, we must also realize that we are loved and secure as we stand before God, because of what Christ has done for us, but like David we also must ask God to teach us to walk in His ways and send His Spirit to guide us.

John 16:7-15 *But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰ in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. ¹² "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.*

August 31 – Psalm 145

This Psalm of David focuses on who God is, and our need to testify to the world concerning the greatness of our God. In verses 1 and 2, David starts by making it clear that his whole goal in life is extol or praise the name of the Lord forever. After David establishes God's greatness in verse 3, look what David says in verses 4 - 6, "One generation will commend your works to another they will tell of your mighty acts....They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds." And that sets the pattern for this Psalm, throughout the remainder of this Psalm David goes back and forth between talking about God's greatness, and the need to proclaim that greatness to others. Once you experience the greatness of God, it is impossible to not want to proclaim to the world. I fear the reason we are often so silent is because we are not often experiencing God's awesome presence in our lives. We are so busy, and we think so little about what God is doing in our lives that even when God does great things we often don't notice them, or we quickly move on with life and forget what God has done. This Psalm reminds us of the places in our lives where God breaks in to show us his greatness.

In verses 8 and 9, David describes God as being gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love—a God who is good to all—much better than we deserve. How often do we think to tell others about God’s graciousness and compassion in our lives? To do that we have to be willing to admit that we need mercy and compassion, that we are sinners. If you are a Christian, you have experienced God’s mercy in real and powerful way through the cross. We too should be extolling the name of God to others as we think about the mercy we have been shown through Christ.

In verses 11 – 13, David speaks of the greatness and splendor of the Kingdom of God. As our great King, God provides for all of our needs (verses 13 – 16), and he fulfills the desires of our hearts (verse 19). God watches over those who love him (verse 20), and is near to all who call on him (verse 18). All of this makes God a God who is most worthy of our praise. When we think about all that God has done for us through Christ how can we remain silent?

September 1 – Psalm 150

The last Psalm in the Psalter is a call for everything (verse 6) to praise the Lord with all of their being. We were created to be worshippers of God, but we fail in that obligation that is why we need Jesus. We were saved so that we could once again worship God. To transform our hearts God sent Jesus to give his life for us.

Ephesians 1:11-14 *In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.*

The more we understand what Jesus has done for us the more we will desire to live for him, so that our lives become an offering of praise to him.

Philippians 1:9-11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-- to the glory and praise of God.*

It is through Jesus and because of Jesus that are able to once again praise God with all that we are.

Hebrews 13:15 *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

Is your life a continual sacrifice of praise to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Ask Christ to transform your heart so that the desire of your heart is to sing his praises.

September 2 – Proverbs 8: 10 – 16; 22 – 31

God gave Solomon such great wisdom that people traveled from all over the world to sit and talk with him. Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs as an instruction book to help those who would follow after him to be able to lead wise lives also. The problem is most of the time when we use the Book of Proverbs we don't use it in the way Solomon intended us to use it when he wrote it. Solomon intended for this book to be studied as a whole, not just little pieces. Most of the time when we use the book of Proverbs we tend to use it more like a fortune cookie taking just one sentence or one saying and lifting it from the rest of the verses that surround it.

And while the wise sayings are true and helpful we will miss a lot and we miss all of the ways things connect if we just look at the book of Proverbs like a bag of fortune cookies. So, as we study this book we are going to be looking for themes that run throughout the book, and we are going to try to see how those themes all connect to each other.

Often times we get confused about what wisdom is. Many times, in the world we live in, wisdom is equated with knowledge. Knowledge is certainly a part of wisdom, but wisdom is more than just knowledge. There are a lot of smart people that aren't very wise, a lot of times we refer to them as having no common sense. They know a lot but they don't know how to use what they know.

As Christians we can easily begin to equate wisdom with just simply following the rules and trying to live a good life. And there is certainly an element of truth to that. But do you know what? You can be trying to be a good person, trying to live a good life, maybe by trying to help someone who is poor, but if you are not wise in how you do that you can actually make things worse for the person you are trying to help. Even a right deed or word at the wrong time can make a mess of things.

So wisdom isn't just being good or possessing a lot of knowledge. The definition of real wisdom is found in verses 12-15 of Proverbs 8, but you have to put some clues together in order to find it.

To start to come up with a definition of wisdom let's look at verse 14. Wisdom talking about itself says this: "I *am* understanding, I have strength." The first part of having wisdom is to have understanding or insight into how things really work.

But wisdom is more than just understanding how things work. Wisdom is also an understanding of how things really are. Look at verse 12 of Proverbs 8. "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge *and* discretion."

Through prudence wisdom searches out knowledge. The dictionary defines prudence as the exercise of sound judgment, so what Proverbs is telling us is that wisdom is like a detective making sound judgments about what it sees. Searching out all of the little clues seeing how things really are so proper judgments can be made.

But to have true wisdom we also have to act on what we know and see. Look at verses 15 and 16. "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth."

Verses 10 and 11 tell us wisdom helps to know what to do even when it isn't obvious what the right thing to do really is. Why would anyone take wisdom over silver or gold or rubies? Because without wisdom those things are worthless.

There is only one way to truly be wise, and that is to allow Christ to be your wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:30 ^{NLT} *God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom.*

Do you understand what Paul is saying? Christ is our wisdom. Wisdom isn't some mysterious thing that we have to climb to some mountain top to find. Wisdom exists is a real living breathing person—God made flesh. Jesus our savior.

September 3 – Proverbs 8: 10 – 16; 22 – 31

Picking up where we left off yesterday, the only way you can know true wisdom is to know Jesus. Jesus is God's wisdom to us.

1 Corinthians 1: 18 – 25 *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Jesus is God’s wisdom for us, and Jesus is God’s wisdom with us. Through what Jesus taught and the way Jesus lived we can see and learn and know how to live wisely—if we study how he lived.

But Jesus is also God’s wisdom for us, because Jesus didn’t just tell us how to live like most wisdom teachers would do. Jesus not only says to us here is the wise way to live—Jesus lived it and then gave that life to us. Jesus actually lived what he taught and when he died on the cross his perfectly wise life, his perfectly righteous life becomes our life through faith in him.

Jesus is also God’s wisdom with us. When you see Jesus suffering on the cross and you start to wonder what on earth God is doing and then suddenly you see the resurrection that is the ultimate example of how even though you can’t always see it there is wisdom behind what God is doing it is there all along.

A lot of times we don’t understand the road that God is taking us down and we wonder why we are where we are. We get nervous because we can’t see what lies ahead, but when we see the cross and see the resurrection, we can be confident that where ever God is leading us he has a plan and a purpose.

Jesus is the wisdom of God made flesh. He is God’s wisdom to us, for us and with us. When you find Jesus you will find wisdom and you will find rest for your weary soul.