

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

August 7 – Psalm 83

Psalm 83 is a Psalm of vengeance that may seem to offend our modern sensibilities. In our modern concept of God we tend to over emphasize his lovingkindness, at the expense of His holiness and justice, so we get a God who we expect will pretty much put up with anything, even those who rebel against Him. We read Psalms like this and we have a hard time processing them. We think they just express an Old Testament mindset, and that Jesus came everything changed. But if we really honestly read the Bible and seek to understand it; nothing has changed, because God doesn't change.

Malachi 3:6 *"I the LORD do not change.*

God is still holy and hates evil, and as His people we are still called to fight against evil. In the Old Testament that holy war against evil was fought with physical weapons of war. In the New Testament we are still called to fight but now it is with spiritual weapons.

Ephesians 6:10-18 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*

When Jesus comes again the battle with evil will be done, and the Book of Revelation describes the second coming of Jesus very much in an "Old Testament" mindset of violent warfare.

Revelation 19:11 - 20:1 *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with*

which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." ¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰ But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹ The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

These verses are clearly describing Jesus and his triumphal return to earth. But his return is a return that will once and for all smash evil, and those who stand opposed to his kingdom. In the meantime we too are called to fight, not with weapons of war, but with the armor of God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.

August 8 – Psalm 84

In Psalm 84, the Psalmist expresses a deep desire to be in God's presence. Look at the powerful language he uses in verse 2 to express this desire; "My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord." How does that compare to our desire to be in the presence of God? So often we take God's presence for granted in our lives. It is all seemingly so easy for us. In the Psalmist's day there was only one place to go and enjoy the presence of God. It was the temple in Jerusalem. That was the place where God chose to make His dwelling place, and so if you were far from Jerusalem you felt far from the presence of God. But then Jesus came and changed everything.

John 4:23-24 *a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

The time Jesus was referring to is now. As Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent his Spirit to come and dwell in the lives of his believers.

1 John 3:24 *And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

We don't have to go to a temple to find God, because we are the temple and His Spirit lives in us.

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

But just because God has chosen to bless us by making His Spirit live in us, we should never take His Presence for granted. Like the Psalmist, we too should thirst for God's presence in our lives, and do all that we can do to make the presence of God in our lives a larger and larger reality in our lives.

2 Timothy 1:6-7 *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

August 9 – Psalm 88

Psalm 88 is perhaps the most depressing Psalm in the Psalter. It is one of the Psalms of lament where the Psalmist pours out his soul in a lament (sorrowful complaint) to God. All of the other Psalms of lament end with the Psalmist expressing a deep trust and confidence in God, but not this one. This Psalm is sorrowful from start to finish, because the Psalmist's life has been filled with never ending pain and suffering from his youth (verse 15). The only hope that is expressed in the Psalm at all is found in its first line, as he calls God the God who saves him. Sometimes as Christians that is all we have to hold onto as well. The Bible tells us that as Christians we should not be surprised by suffering.

1 Peter 4:12-14 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

As Christians we are called to suffer with Christ—to be willing to give up our comfortable lives to serve him and suffer with him. If you stop and think about it that is exactly what Jesus did for us. He gave up the riches of heaven to come and save us from our sins through his suffering.

Luke 9:51 *Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,*

Stop and think about that. Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem. He knew the cross awaited him there, but “he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” so that we could be saved. His call on each of our lives is that we would be willing to do the

same for his sake to offer his salvation to those who are lost like we were. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:

Hebrews 13:12-16 *And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

August 10 – Psalm 91

This Psalm was likely written by a soldier who was waiting to go into battle, and the words of this Psalm express the benefit of living in the presence of God.

Sometimes when we read Psalms like this we are tempted to think that if we are just good enough and love God enough then nothing bad will ever happen to us. But the reality of life is that there are many times when good people suffer. The ultimate example of this is Jesus. No one lived a better life, and yet no one suffered more than he did.

But even if living in the presence of God doesn't necessarily mean a trouble free life, it is still the place we want to be. Look at the benefits the Psalmist gives us that come from living in the presence of God.

Verse 1 tells us that as we live in the presence of God we find rest in his shadow. Verse 2 tells us that living in the presence of God means that we are living under His protective care, which is like being in a refuge or fortress. Living in the presence of God means that nothing can come into our lives without His permission. From a spiritual standpoint we will never fall, and we never have to fear the punishment of the wicked (verse 8).

No matter what may happen to us in this life—no matter how fierce the battles may be, the presence of God will always be with us through Jesus Christ, and one day, because of Christ, we will be in His presence forever.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14 *It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

August 11 – Psalm 93

This Psalm recognizes God's sovereign reign over all of creation. The Psalmist starts in verse 1 by proclaiming the power and might of God to do whatever He wants or needs to do. God put this might on display as He brought the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt.

Exodus 6:1-6 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country." ² God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.*

Next in verse 2 the Psalmist tells his readers that the Lord's reign is eternal—it has no beginning and will have no end.

Revelation 1:8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Finally, in verse 5 the Psalmist reminds us that God is a holy God. Because God is holy His laws are eternal and unchanging.

Hebrews 6:17-20 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever*

Jesus is the embodiment of all of these attributes of God. He too is the eternal king who reigns with power. Listen to what Jesus said about himself in:

Revelation 1:17-18 *"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

One final thought as we meditate on this Psalm and the greatness of our God. Verses 3 and 4 don't seem to make sense, as you read this Psalm, until you understand that in the ancient world of the Bible the sea represented chaos. It is easy to understand why they would think that

way as you think about the waves and breakers that go here and there as they are tossed about by the wind. Look who the Psalmist says is mightier than the chaos. It is God. God brings order to our chaotic world through Jesus.

Colossians 1:13-20 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

August 12 – Psalm 95

Psalm 95 is a hymn of praise to God. In the first half of this Psalm the Psalmist calls on the congregation to bow and worship the Lord. But then something very interesting happens in the second half of the Psalm. After they worship, the Psalmist calls on the congregation to obey. The only way we can obey God with a sincere heart is to start by worshipping him. In order to really obey God we have first see God for all that He is. Whenever we lose sight of the greatness of God, sin and disobedience will follow right behind, if God seems like no big deal to us, or sin will also seem like no big deal to us, as well. That is what happened to the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. Think of all of the great things they saw God do: the 10 plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, to name just a few. Those things should have caused the Israelites to worship God and obey God, but it didn't take long before Israel forgot about the great things God had done for them. As soon as they forgot the greatness of God, they stopped trusting God, and they disobeyed God.

Exodus 17:1-7 *The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" ³ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" ⁴ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these*

people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵ The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

In this Psalm the writer of the Psalm uses this illustration from Israel's history to show what happens when people forget the greatness of God and as a result refuse to obey Him. The writer of Hebrews quotes from this Psalm to remind his readers to continually look to the greatness of Jesus and to trust Jesus no matter is going in their lives. If we turn away from Jesus we have nowhere else to turn.

Hebrews 3:6-14 *But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. ⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, ⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. ¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" ¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

August 13 – Psalm 96

In this Psalm the Psalmist calls on the nations of the world to recognize God as their king. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were rebelling against God's rule in their lives. Satan enticed them to take the fruit by telling them that if they ate it they could become like God. In other words, if they ate the fruit, they could be their own God. They would no longer have to obey God, because they would now have their own knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:4-5 *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

And ever since Adam and Eve ate that fruit we too, as their offspring have been in rebellion against God and his rule over our lives.

Why do we worship the gods of money, approval, fame, success, materialism, power? Because we think if we have those things we can be our own gods. But all of those things are going to die with us when we die. None of them can save us eternally.

In verses 4 – 6, the Psalmist compares God to the idols that the world worships. It is a striking comparison. The idols we worship all are made by man from the materials of the earth. But who created those materials. It was God. I think that explains a lot of the reason why people desire to believe that our world just evolved without an Intelligent Designer (God). If we really have just evolved somehow from nothing then we owe no obedience and no allegiance to anything but ourselves. We can be our own gods. There is no other god like our God. It was our God who created everything. It is our God alone who is worthy to be praised. He is the everlasting God who rules over all.

Isaiah 45:5-18 *I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things. ⁸ "You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the LORD, have created it. ⁹ "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'? ¹⁰ Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' ¹¹ "This is what the LORD says-- the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? ¹² It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts....'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.'" ¹⁵ Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel. ¹⁶ All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together. ¹⁷ But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting. ¹⁸ For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.*