

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

July 24 – Psalm 40

There is much we could talk about as we read Psalm 40. For instance, we could focus on verses 1 – 5, and how David praises God for lifting him out of a slimy pit and placing his feet on firm ground. Isn't that exactly what God has done for us through Jesus? He has literally lifted us from the pit of hell and placed us in the heights of heaven.

But as we think about Psalm 40, I want us to look at verses 6 – 8, because these verses are quoted by the writer of Hebrews in the New Testament as he talks about Jesus our Great High Priest.

Hebrews 10:1-14 *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" ⁸ First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). ⁹ Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

Notice how the writer of Hebrews explains what David meant in Psalm 40. The law required that those living in Old Testament times offer animal sacrifices. But even though those sacrifices were offered over and over again by the priests, they could never truly take

away sin, because they were just a picture of what was to come in Jesus. Jesus as the spotless Lamb of God is the only sacrifice that can truly take away our sins. We can offer all kinds of other sacrifices to God. We can offer our time, our money, our talent, but none of those things can take away our sins, and none of those things will please God. It is only the blood of Christ that satisfies the wrath of God and takes away our sin. All of the other sacrifices mean nothing without that sacrifice.

Romans 5:7-11 *Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. ¹⁰ For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. ¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God-- all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.*

July 25 – Psalm 41

In verse 9 of this Psalm, David speaks of a friend who has lifted up his heel against David. It is hard to know exactly what this expression means (imagine someone 2000 years from now reading something that written in the 60's and trying to understand what the word groovy means), but it seems like based on how the word heel is used in a few places in the Bible (Genesis 25: 26) that this expression somehow involves the betrayal and deceit of a friend. Notice David even tells us it is a close friend who has deceived him, a friend he thought he could trust.

Jesus quoted from this Psalm in the upper room when he was gathered together with his disciples for the Last Supper.

John 13:18-31 *"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' ¹⁹ "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. ²⁰ I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." ²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." ²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.*

²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, ²⁸ but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. ³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.

Judas committed a truly heinous sin by pretending to be Jesus' friend, sharing a meal with him but then going out and betraying Jesus. But notice how this passage from John 13 ends. As Judas goes out to betray Jesus, Jesus says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God glorified in him." What an amazing connection. The betrayal of friend brings about Jesus' glorification. How can that be? Because the betrayal brought Jesus one step closer to the cross. It led to his arrest, which in turn led to his crucifixion. Our sin doesn't stop God's plans. God in His sovereignty accounts for our actions and even uses our sin to accomplish His purpose. This of course doesn't excuse Judas' sin, nor does it excuse ours.

Romans 6:1-4 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

God's grace and sovereignty don't give us an excuse to keep on sinning—in Christ we have been raised to new life. But know this, God even uses our sin to glorify himself. Rather than seeking forgiveness, Judas walked away from grace and walked away from God and hung himself. But it doesn't have to be that way. Jesus died so that our sins can be forgiven. Don't walk away from grace—run to it.

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our*

defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

July 26 – Psalm 42 – 43

Psalms 42 and 43 were originally one Psalm, and that becomes very clear as you read them together, because there is a similar refrain that we find in 42: 5, 11 and 43: 5. Notice also the pattern of this Psalm, as the psalmist understands the danger he is in, then questions where God is, and then in the refrain, that repeats itself three times, reminds himself of God's love and faithfulness. More than anything this psalm expresses a deep desire for the Psalmist to be in the presence of God. Look how Psalm 42 opens. The psalmist says he desires God just as strongly a deer that is dying of thirst from being on the run, because it is being hunted, desires water. Do we desire God in that same way? Do we long to be in His presence?

So often we take God and His presence in our lives for granted, and we don't really appreciate it until we come to times of great distress in our lives when it seems like God is nowhere to be found. That may be what happened to the psalmist. He used to enjoy being in the presence of God (42: 4), but now it seems like it is impossible for him to be where God is. He feels cut off from God and far away from God. His troubles seem to be drowning him (42:7), and yet even though he can't physically be at the temple where God dwelt, he clearly feels God's presence in his life (42:8). But, at the same time because of the great distress he is in, he also feels like God has forgotten him (42:9). Don't we often times feel that same way? Don't we often know in our hearts that God is with us, but our minds play tricks on us and make us feel sometimes like God has abandoned us?

We don't have to go to the temple to find God, because we have the true temple Jesus. Because we have Jesus we have hope, even if it seems like the waves and breakers are sweeping over us.

Hebrews 6:19-20 *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*

Because of Jesus we can put our hope in God and know that our hope is anchored not in the bottom of the sea, like a boat's anchor, but in the throne room of heaven. Through faith in Christ we belong to Jesus forever and no one and nothing can ever take us from him.

John 10:28-29 ⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*

*When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil.*

*On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.*

My Hope is Built

Edward Mote

July 27 – Psalm 46

The words of this Psalm moved Martin Luther to pen the hymn *Mighty Fortress is Our God*. As you read the Psalm and think about the hymn the connection becomes very clear.

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours, thru him who with us sideth.*

*Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever.*

We live in a world that is filled with chaos and unrest. Trouble seems to be all around us. But none of this is surprise to God, and the Book of Revelation tells us that things are going to seem to get worse before they get better. But because of Christ we belong to God, and no matter what is happening all around He will be faithful, and He will be our refuge and strength.

Revelation 6:12 - 7:3 *I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³ "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."*

Revelation 7:9-17 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" ¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them*

white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (Psalm 46:11).

July 28 – Psalm 51

This is a Psalm that David wrote after he had sinned with Bathsheba, and it is a model of what real repentance looks like—the kind of repentance that drives us to Jesus. David starts the Psalm, in verses 1 – 6, by acknowledging his sin and pleading for mercy. One of the first things we have to understand is that we cannot receive mercy until we own our sin and acknowledge it, because the only way to receive God's mercy is to ask for it. It is there for the taking but God only extends it to those who are driven to their knees and acknowledge their sin. In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 2), Jesus referred to people who are willing to own their sin as being poor in spirit, because they see the magnitude of the debt that owe to God. You can see that here in Psalm 51: 4, as David acknowledges that the primary person that he has wronged is God. Why would David say that? Think back to Nathan the prophet's words to David about his sin:

2 Samuel 12: 7 – 9 *The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. ⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed?*

In spite of all of God's kindnesses to David, David has gone and done this horrible deed that has caused a disruption in his relationship to God. Sure, it hurt Uriah (it cost him his life), and brought upheaval and chaos to Bathsheba and David's family, but ultimately David's sin was an offense against God's love, and God's rule. David longs for restoration (verse 12), but knows that the only way restoration can come is if God makes a way for David's sin to be cleansed (verses 7, 10). David knows that just a sacrifice won't be

enough (verse 16), that what God really wants is a broken and contrite heart (verse 17)—a heart that is poor in spirit and mourns over sin (1st and 2nd Beatitudes—Matthew 5: 2 – 3). When a sacrifice is offered with a broken and contrite heart the sacrifice is pleasing to God, without a broken and contrite heart it is just a religious ritual.

The same is true for us. Without a broken and contrite heart—a heart that mourns over our sin and humbles us, we can't receive Christ's sacrifice, and without that we cannot be reconciled to God. It is not enough for us to just believe that Jesus died on the cross, we have to see that he died for our sin, and the only way to see that is to be willing to own our sin as David does here.

July 29 – Psalm 57

Psalm 57 is another Psalm that David wrote while he was up to his neck in difficulties. In the first half of the Psalm, David describes the danger that he is in and then cries out to God for help. That is exactly what most of us would do if we found ourselves in trouble like David did. However, what is really interesting is what David says beginning in verse 7. In spite of all of his troubles, David says his heart is steadfast. He is trusting in God to the point where he breaks into a song of joy—rejoicing ahead of time at what he knows God will do to deliver him.

How often do we display that same kind of confidence? We too cry out to God, but most of the time our minds and hearts are filled with doubts that God will really be able to come through for us. Look what David says in verse 9, "I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples." David knew that God would deliver him, and David was resolved in his mind that when that happened he would be make a point of telling others all that God had done for him. How often do we remember to do that? We cry out to God, but then when God comes through for us, we often forget to tell others of all that God has done for us.

Notice in verses 10 – 11 the three things that David is intent on telling others about God. His great love, his faithfulness, and his glory. Think about God's love and faithfulness in your life. Do you have a story to tell others?

In the book of Revelation, we are told that the nations will be gathered the throne of Jesus drinking in his glory and praising him for his love and his faithfulness.

Revelation 5:6-13 *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.... the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

We will be part of that song someday, so why don't we start now to tell people of all that Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. If it will be our song in eternity, shouldn't it be our song today?

July 30 – Psalm 58

In Psalm 58, David speaks against unjust judges and calls on God to deal with them harshly. Look at verse 2. David says that, "In your heart you devise injustice, and your hands mete out violence on the earth." David's words were written 1000 years before Jesus was put on trial, but it sure sounds like he is describing exactly what happened to Jesus.

Matthew 26:3-5 *Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴ and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. ⁵ "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."*

Jesus was murdered as part of a conspiracy that perverted justice, and the trial against him was filled with on injustice after another.

Matthew 26:59-68 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward ⁶¹ and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" ⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴ "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. ⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

Imagine the Son of God, being subjected to such great injustices. Yet, Jesus never complained about the injustice, instead he cried, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they do." In Psalm 58 David was so appalled by the lack of justice that he wanted God to smash them, but Jesus, like a lamb, went quietly to his slaughter and he did it for us. The great injustice against Jesus brought justice to us by paying the debt for our sins.

"The philosopher Plato once imagined what would happen if a perfect man ever came to live on this imperfect planet. The kind of person Plato had in mind would be "a just man in his simplicity and nobleness," willing to hold on to his "course of justice unwavering to the point of death." The great philosopher could well imagine what would happen to such a man in this wicked world: "Our just man will be thrown into prison, scourged and racked, will have his eyes burnt out, and, after every kind of torment, be impaled." Without realizing it, Plato described Jesus of Nazareth, also called Christ. For Jesus was a just man, a man of noble simplicity who maintained his justice to the point of death. And he was treated the way Plato expected. Jesus was arrested, tortured, and executed. Furthermore, Jesus was put to death in precisely the manner Plato indicated. He was impaled on a tree; or, as the custom was in those days, he was crucified....From a legal standpoint, the whole thing was a travesty, the greatest miscarriage of justice in the history of the world."

JESUS ON TRIAL by James Montgomery Boice and Philip Ryken