

150 Days in the Psalms

*"You are the God who works wonders;
you have made known your might among the peoples.
You with your arm redeemed your people,
the children of Jacob and Joseph." Psalm 77:14-15*

Five of the seven Psalms for this week (Psalms 73-77) are written by a man named Asaph. There are three different people found in scripture named Asaph but the one we are concerned with is found in 1 Chronicles 6. In this chapter King David assigns several people to be ministers of song in the tabernacle, and Asaph was one of them. The duties of one of these ministers of song is laid out for us in 1 Chronicles 16. We know that Asaph was the chief of these ministers who were commanded by David to invoke, praise, and give thanksgiving to the Lord through song, trumpet, cymbal, harp, and lyre. We also know that the words of Asaph are placed right alongside the words of King David as worthy to be used in worship by King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:30).

Most of his psalms would be categorized as communal laments which means he is concerned with the well being of the community. A lot of the destruction that Asaph speaks of is yet to come (the destruction of the 1st temple), yet he knows just how horrible it will be for the people of Israel. You may notice that he invokes images of God's mercy of old (Psalm 77) such as the parting of the Red Sea from Exodus as a reminder of God's continual mercy for His people.

These are the perfect psalms to pray when the communities we live in are facing various hardships and strife and the people in them are suffering. Ultimately they will lead us back to the Lord who is our only hope and comfort in all times of need. They will remind us that our God is indeed a God of mercy, who sent his Son to redeem us and save us from the curse of sin.

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Luther's commentaries on the Psalms were translated by Bruce Cameron in his 1991 STM thesis "Luther's Summaries of the Psalms (1531)--A Model for Contemporary Psalm Interpretation". The thesis is, in part, a translation of *Summarien fiber die Psalmen*, is published under a Creative Commons 4.0 license.

Psalm 71

Monday



The 71st Psalm is (by my understanding) a psalm of prayer spoken from beginning to end in the person of all Christendom against all enemies and affliction. It prays especially for the time of old age, when one becomes feeble and grey. That is, it prays for the last Christians, for whom the times are dangerous, and faith--together with the Gospel--shall become cast down. In the same way, Daniel also proclaimed that the truth would be cast down and unrighteousness shall conquer. Therefore (in verse 15, 16, 17), he praises God's righteousness alone, which he has learned from God since his youth, or since the beginning. May this be a comforting prophecy for us, that God's word must return before the end of the world. With this word (he says [v. 20]), God will call for us from deep out of the earth and mightily comfort us. From this basis comes also the general statements concerning Christ: that Elijah and Enoch shall come, the lies of the antichrist shall be exposed, and all shall again be set right.

¹In you, O Lord, do I take refuge;

let me never be put to shame!

²In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;

incline your ear to me, and save me!

³Be to me a rock of refuge,

to which I may continually come;

you have given the command to save me,

for you are my rock and my fortress.

⁴Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,

from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.

⁵For you, O Lord, are my hope,

my trust, O Lord, from my youth.

⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;

you are he who took me from my mother's womb.

My praise is continually of you.

⁷I have been as a portent to many,

but you are my strong refuge.

⁸My mouth is filled with your praise,

and with your glory all the day.

⁹Do not cast me off in the time of old age;

forsake me not when my strength is spent.

¹⁰For my enemies speak concerning me;

those who watch for my life consult together

¹¹and say, “God has forsaken him;

pursue and seize him,

for there is none to deliver him.”

¹²O God, be not far from me;

O my God, make haste to help me!

¹³May my accusers be put to shame and consumed;

with scorn and disgrace may they be covered

who seek my hurt.

¹⁴But I will hope continually

and will praise you yet more and more.

¹⁵My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,

of your deeds of salvation all the day,

for their number is past my knowledge.

¹⁶With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come;

I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

¹⁷O God, from my youth you have taught me,

and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

¹⁸So even to old age and gray hairs,

O God, do not forsake me,

until I proclaim your might to another generation,

your power to all those to come.

¹⁹Your righteousness, O God,

reaches the high heavens.

You who have done great things,

O God, who is like you?

²⁰You who have made me see many troubles and calamities

will revive me again;

from the depths of the earth

you will bring me up again.

²¹You will increase my greatness

and comfort me again.

²²I will also praise you with the harp

for your faithfulness, O my God;

I will sing praises to you with the lyre,

O Holy One of Israel.

²³My lips will shout for joy,

when I sing praises to you;

my soul also, which you have redeemed.

²⁴And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long,

for they have been put to shame and disappointed

who sought to do me hurt.

Prayer

O Lord, our hope and confidence, do not forsake us in our advancing age, but come quickly to restore our lives that we may joyfully proclaim Your righteousness with all Your saints to all eternity; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 72

Tuesday



The 72nd Psalm is a prophecy, exceedingly magnificent and beautiful, of Christ and His rule in the whole world, in which neither sin nor the evil conscience shall flower and reign (as under the law) but only righteousness, freedom, and joy of conscience. However, this is not without cross. On account of the cross, their blood shall be shed, which blood however is counted as very precious to God. And the psalm also announces the new worship, in verse 15, which is to call on God and to thank Him. He tells us to pray to God daily and daily praise Him. This is our daily offering under all the Gentiles. Here we hear nothing of circumcision, nor yet that the kings and Gentiles should receive the law of Moses, but rather that they remain kings and Gentiles and receive this king as truly God by nature, call on Him, and glorify Him. For to call on God in distress and thank Him for His help is the worship which alone pleases Him, who is alone our helper in need and our Savior. Without Him all else is no help at all.

Psalm 72

¹Give the king your justice, O God,

and your righteousness to the royal son!

²May he judge your people with righteousness,

and your poor with justice!

³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!

⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

⁵May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!

⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!

⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

⁸May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!

⁹May desert tribes bow down before him
and his enemies lick the dust!

¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!

¹¹May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!

¹²For he delivers the needy when he calls,

the poor and him who has no helper.

¹³He has pity on the weak and the needy,

and saves the lives of the needy.

¹⁴From oppression and violence he redeems their life,

and precious is their blood in his sight.

¹⁵Long may he live;

may gold of Sheba be given to him!

May prayer be made for him continually,

and blessings invoked for him all the day!

¹⁶May there be abundance of grain in the land;

on the tops of the mountains may it wave;

may its fruit be like Lebanon;

and may people blossom in the cities

like the grass of the field!

¹⁷May his name endure forever,

his fame continue as long as the sun!

May people be blessed in him,

all nations call him blessed!

¹⁸Blessèd be the Lord, the God of Israel,

who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹Blessèd be his glorious name forever;

may the whole earth be filled with his glory!

Amen and Amen!

²⁰The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

Prayer

O God, for our redemption You gave Your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 73

Wednesday



The 73rd Psalm is a psalm of instruction against the great vexation that the godless are rich and everything goes well for them. They ridicule the poor and afflicted saints as if God neither knew nor

regarded them, but that only they and their holy works and what they taught and said were the precious thing and totally heavenly godly wisdom and holiness. This causes much pain, so that the psalmist says, "I must be a fool before You" (v. 22), that is, be called a godless heretic and despiser of God. Then, he says, Stop! Go into the sanctuary and hear what God's word says of them. Look at the former examples in the histories and you will find that they all at once come to nothing, for there is no ground or foundation under them, but only slippery footing, etc.

Psalm 73

¹Truly God is good to Israel,

to those who are pure in heart.

²But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,

my steps had nearly slipped.

³For I was envious of the arrogant

when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

⁴For they have no pangs until death;

their bodies are fat and sleek.

⁵They are not in trouble as others are;

they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.

⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;

violence covers them as a garment.

⁷Their eyes swell out through fatness;

their hearts overflow with follies.

⁸They scoff and speak with malice;

loftily they threaten oppression.

⁹They set their mouths against the heavens,

and their tongue struts through the earth.

¹⁰Therefore his people turn back to them,

and find no fault in them.

¹¹And they say, "How can God know?

Is there knowledge in the Most High?"

¹²Behold, these are the wicked;

always at ease, they increase in riches.

¹³All in vain have I kept my heart clean

and washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴For all the day long I have been stricken

and rebuked every morning.

¹⁵If I had said, "I will speak thus,"

I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

¹⁶But when I thought how to understand this,

it seemed to me a wearisome task,

¹⁷until I went into the sanctuary of God;

then I discerned their end.

¹⁸Truly you set them in slippery places;

you make them fall to ruin.

¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment,

swept away utterly by terrors!

²⁰Like a dream when one awakes,

O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as
phantoms.

²¹When my soul was embittered,

when I was pricked in heart,

²²I was brutish and ignorant;

I was like a beast toward you.

²³Nevertheless, I am continually with you;

you hold my right hand.

²⁴You guide me with your counsel,

and afterward you will receive me to glory.

²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

²⁷For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;

you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

²⁸But 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.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You call heaven and all the saints and apostles and prophets to rejoice when those who pretend to be the true Church are brought to judgment. Help us to discern between what is true and what is false, always knowing that Your kingdom comes through humility and suffering and that the truth of the Gospel is found in You alone; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 74

Thursday



The 74th Psalm is a psalm of prayer against the enemies who had laid waste Jerusalem, the temple, and all the schools of God in the land, together with the cities, Moreover, they slandered God, that He could not help His people. It appears however as if it were a prayer against the destruction still to come, that is, of the Chaldeans and thereafter by Antiochus Epiphanus. For only in these two instances were the temple in Jerusalem and the land destroyed.

¹O God, why do you cast us off forever?

Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?

²Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,

which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!

Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt.

³Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;

the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary!

⁴Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place;

they set up their own signs for signs.

⁵They were like those who swing axes

in a forest of trees.

⁶And all its carved wood

they broke down with hatchets and hammers.

⁷They set your sanctuary on fire;

they profaned the dwelling place of your name,

bringing it down to the ground.

⁸They said to themselves, “We will utterly subdue them”;

they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

⁹We do not see our signs;

there is no longer any prophet,

and there is none among us who knows how long.

¹⁰How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?

Is the enemy to revile your name forever?

¹¹Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?

Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!

¹²Yet God my King is from of old,

working salvation in the midst of the earth.

¹³You divided the sea by your might;

you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

¹⁴You crushed the heads of Leviathan;

you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

¹⁵You split open springs and brooks;

you dried up ever-flowing streams.

¹⁶Yours is the day, yours also the night;

you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.

¹⁷You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth;

you have made summer and winter.

¹⁸Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs,

and a foolish people reviles your name.

¹⁹Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts;

do not forget the life of your poor forever.

²⁰Have regard for the covenant,

for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

²¹Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame;

let the poor and needy praise your name.

²²Arise, O God, defend your cause;

remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

²³Do not forget the clamor of your foes,

the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, the temple of Your body was destroyed on the cross and three days later raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Father. Visit us now with this same body, that we may not deny that we know You but in faith hear in our ears Your life-giving voice and receive on our lips Your very body and blood to strengthen us in times of temptation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 75

Friday



The 75th Psalm is a psalm of comfort against the stiff-necked, proud, godless teachers who are self-secure and presume on their office, as if they need fear nothing, neither threat nor punishment. As Psalm 73 above has written: Who shall be our teacher? We are the teachers! We sit in the office, we have the power, and all must obey us or be excommunicated heretics, etc. So also today our secure Junkers and the factious spirits sit as spiritual and worldly tyrants, thinking that God Himself can neither see nor overthrow them.

But this psalm says otherwise. It gives us the comfort, that we should look forward to the judgment, when they will be judged and pass away. The earth will shake and tremble with all its inhabitants; nevertheless God will preserve the pillars, that is, the godly who bear and preserve this world, as St. Paul (I Tim 3:15) calls the church a

foundation and a pillar of truth. Thus, God preserved Lot when He overthrew Sodom, and preserved the believing Jews with the apostles when He destroyed Jerusalem. For He well knows how to deliver His own, when He destroys a land.

Psalm 75

¹We give thanks to you, O God;

we give thanks, for your name is near.

We recount your wondrous deeds.

²“At the set time that I appoint

I will judge with equity.

³When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants,

it is I who keep steady its pillars.

⁴I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’

and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn;

⁵do not lift up your horn on high,

or speak with haughty neck.”

⁶For not from the east or from the west

and not from the wilderness comes lifting up,

⁷but it is God who executes judgment,

putting down one and lifting up another.

⁸For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup

with foaming wine, well mixed,

and he pours out from it,

and all the wicked of the earth

shall drain it down to the dregs.

⁹But I will declare it forever;

I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

¹⁰All the horns of the wicked I will cut off,

but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, light of the world, You shine with the brightness of the sun in the darkness of our crooked and twisted generation. Give us strength to shine as lights in the world as we live out our baptismal life by serving our neighbors with thanksgiving and joy as sacrificial offerings of mercy and love; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 76

Saturday



The 76th Psalm is a psalm of thanks, similar to the 46th Psalm. For it gives thanks that God has His dwelling, word, and worship in Jerusalem and so magnificently Himself protects His people against the kings and the rage of warriors such as Sennacherib, by which they would be devoured. For He knew how to take courage away from princes and make them discouraged. In the same way He fights against our enemies. Be they as strong and as evil as they, it is hard for them to defend themselves against Him who takes away at once their heart and courage. Even the devil must flee when his courage fails him. What then can men do? Such a warrior-God must be praised, who deals thus with the noise of kings. He can save His own, without a sword, by fright and fear alone.

Psalm 76

¹In Judah God is known;

his name is great in Israel.

²His abode has been established in Salem,

his dwelling place in Zion.

³There he broke the flashing arrows,

the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.

⁴Glorious are you, more majestic

than the mountains of prey.

⁵The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil;

they sank into sleep;

all the men of war

were unable to use their hands.

⁶At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,

both rider and horse lay stunned.

⁷But you, you are to be feared!

Who can stand before you

when once your anger is roused?

⁸From the heavens you uttered judgment;

the earth feared and was still,

⁹when God arose to establish judgment,

to save all the humble of the earth.

¹⁰Surely the wrath of man shall praise you;

the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.

¹¹Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them;

let all around him bring gifts

to him who is to be feared,

¹²who cuts off the spirit of princes,

who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

Prayer

O God, our refuge and strength, You have cleansed Your children in the waters of Holy Baptism. Renew our hearts in the true faith that knows Your forgiveness and daily accepts Your good and gracious will; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Psalm 77

Sunday



The 77th Psalm is a psalm of instruction. The psalmist uses himself as an example how one might find comfort when affliction comes and the conscience is troubled as if God is angry with it. He says in verse 4 that he was so troubled that he could not have any sleep or even speak. He relates the same oppressive thoughts in verse 9, 10, and 11. But the comfort follows, that one may fight off such thoughts, with which he himself futilely suffered, and grasp with his heart instead the thought of the mighty works of God in the histories of old.

Here we find that God's work was to help the miserable, the troubled, and the abandoned, and to throw down the self-secure, proud scoffer; for example, when He delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. For this reason His paths are called hidden, that He is there to help when one thinks that he is totally abandoned. We should learn this well. God intends by this psalm to show us and teach us His manner of helping, namely that we are never abandoned by God when things go ill. Instead we should wait upon His help at that time with the greatest confidence, and not believe our thoughts.

Psalm 77

¹I cry aloud to God,

aloud to God, and he will hear me.

²In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;

in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;

my soul refuses to be comforted.

³When I remember God, I moan;

when I meditate, my spirit faints.

⁴You hold my eyelids open;

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

⁵I consider the days of old,

the years long ago.

⁶I said, "Let me remember my song in the night;

let me meditate in my heart."

Then my spirit made a diligent search:

⁷"Will the Lord spurn forever,

and never again be favorable?

⁸Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

Are his promises at an end for all time?

⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has he in anger shut up his compassion?"

¹⁰Then I said, "I will appeal to this,

to the years of the right hand of the Most High."

¹¹I will remember the deeds of the Lord;

yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

¹²I will ponder all your work,

and meditate on your mighty deeds.

¹³Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is great like our God?

¹⁴You are the God who works wonders;

you have made known your might among the peoples.

¹⁵You with your arm redeemed your people,

the children of Jacob and Joseph.

¹⁶When the waters saw you, O God,

when the waters saw you, they were afraid;

indeed, the deep trembled.

¹⁷The clouds poured out water;

the skies gave forth thunder;

your arrows flashed on every side.

¹⁸The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;

your lightnings lighted up the world;

the earth trembled and shook.

¹⁹Your way was through the sea,

your path through the great waters;

yet your footprints were unseen.

²⁰You led your people like a flock

by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Prayer

O God, You once delivered Your people Israel from bondage under Pharaoh and led them by a pillar of cloud where You parted the sea and led Your people to safety. Grant that we may so follow Christ that through the waters of Baptism we may daily die and rise with Him and walk in safety through the wilderness of this life until we see Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

