

# 150 Days in the Psalms

*“For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.  
On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.” Psalm 91:11-12*

Psalm 91 is a favorite of many Christians. Some of you, upon reading this psalm, may think of the well-known hymn “On Eagles Wings.” This is no accident. Michael Joncas, a Catholic Priest and songwriter, wrote this beloved song with Psalm 91 in mind. This Psalm is also quoted (or to better put it, misquoted) by Satan as he tries to tempt Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4. He misuses verses 11-12 by tempting Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple because God will surely command His angels to lift Him up so that His foot may not strike a stone.

This is the perfect psalm to go to in all times of trouble and tribulation. It was heavily used at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic by many Christians because it is one of the few psalms which speaks of pestilence. The psalmist rightfully confesses that we should not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. This is indeed a bold saying in the face of trouble that can honestly be hard to confess. Of course we believe that God will preserve us for he is our Fortress, but when the arrows of the Evil One are flying all around us we can easily become disheartened.

But fear not, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for God promises that at this very moment he is commanding His angels to watch over us. There are forces in this life that we can not see. The Devil and his demons are as real as you and me, and they wish to lead us away from Christ. While we can not see these forces, we can see their work in the darkness of sin and death that consumes this world. But fear not, for God has sent his army to protect you from the things that you cannot see. We know that they will be victorious for Christ has gained the victory for them in His death and resurrection!

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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 85

Monday



The 85th Psalm is a psalm of prayer in which the psalmist pleads against God's wrath and seeks His grace. The wrath consists in this, that they have a lack of God's word and true preaching and also a lack of good government, peace, and godly authority, and finally a lack of fruitful times and good harvest. These afflictions hang together, one with the other. Therefore he prays that God would speak against them, so that His people will not fall into folly, blaspheme in impatience, nor seek other gods; so that peace, unity, truth, and love might wash over His people and the land be fruitful; so that they can live a proper and honorable life in a God-pleasing way in peace and quietness, as St. Paul (I Tim.2:2) also teaches us to pray.

- <sup>1</sup>Lord, you were favorable to your land;  
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- <sup>2</sup>You forgave the iniquity of your people;  
you covered all their sin.
- <sup>3</sup>You withdrew all your wrath;  
you turned from your hot anger.
- <sup>4</sup>Restore us again, O God of our salvation,  
and put away your indignation toward us!
- <sup>5</sup>Will you be angry with us forever?  
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
- <sup>6</sup>Will you not revive us again,  
that your people may rejoice in you?
- <sup>7</sup>Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,  
and grant us your salvation.
- <sup>8</sup>Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;  
but let them not turn back to folly.
- <sup>9</sup>Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,  
that glory may dwell in our land.
- <sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- <sup>11</sup>Faithfulness springs up from the ground,  
and righteousness looks down from the sky.

<sup>12</sup>Yes, the Lord will give what is good,  
and our land will yield its increase.

<sup>13</sup>Righteousness will go before him  
and make his footsteps a way.

## Prayer

Eternal Lord, ruler of all, graciously regard those who have been set in positions of authority among us that, guided by Your Spirit, they may be high in purpose, wise in counsel, firm in good resolution, and unwavering in duty, that under them we may be governed quietly and peaceably; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

# Psalm 86

Tuesday



The 86th Psalm is a psalm of prayer. The title itself calls it "a prayer of David." It is easy and clear to understand. In his distress, David calls on His God, against his enemies, who seek to put him to death, whether that be Saul, Absalom, or whoever it may be. But notice how richly and masterfully he praises God for His goodness, faithfulness, and power, so that he may truly excite his own faith and bring warmth to his prayer. So should we do also. The sign which he desires is that God would finally help him, so that it must be said: God has helped him, and well approved his case, against the rage of his enemies, who have violated God's rule, etc.

- <sup>1</sup>Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.
- <sup>2</sup>Preserve my life, for I am godly;  
save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.
- <sup>3</sup>Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
for to you do I cry all the day.
- <sup>4</sup>Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- <sup>5</sup>For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- <sup>6</sup>Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.
- <sup>7</sup>In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me.
- <sup>8</sup>There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,  
nor are there any works like yours.
- <sup>9</sup>All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship before you, O Lord,  
and shall glorify your name.
- <sup>10</sup>For you are great and do wondrous things;  
you alone are God.
- <sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O Lord,  
that I may walk in your truth;  
unite my heart to fear your name.

- <sup>12</sup>I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever.
- <sup>13</sup>For great is your steadfast love toward me;  
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- <sup>14</sup>O God, insolent men have risen up against me;  
a band of ruthless men seek my life,  
and they do not set you before them.
- <sup>15</sup>But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- <sup>16</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me;  
give your strength to your servant,  
and save the son of your maidservant.
- <sup>17</sup>Show me a sign of your favor,  
that those who hate me may see and be put to shame  
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

## Prayer

Almighty, everlasting God, through Your only Son, our blessed Lord, You commanded us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who persecute us. Therefore, we earnestly implore You that by Your gracious working our enemies may be led to true repentance, may have the same love toward us as we have toward them, and may be of one accord and of one mind and heart with us and with Your whole Church; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

# Psalm 87

Wednesday



The 87th Psalm is a prophecy of the holy Christian church, that it shall be a city as wide as the earth is, and in it shall be born Ethiopians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Philistines, residents of Tyre and peoples of other lands and tongues. And this shall all happen through the Gospel, which shall preach marvelous things of God, namely, the knowledge of God, that is, how one may come to God, be freed from sin, and be saved from death, namely through Christ, etc. And the worship of God in this city shall also be singing and dancing, that is, they will proclaim, praise, and thank God's grace with joy. In that city, no Moses shall plague and torment us with his law.

<sup>1</sup>On the holy mount stands the city he founded;

<sup>2</sup>the Lord loves the gates of Zion  
more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.

<sup>3</sup>Glorious things of you are spoken,  
O city of God.

<sup>4</sup>Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon;  
behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush—  
“This one was born there,” they say.

<sup>5</sup>And of Zion it shall be said,  
“This one and that one were born in her”;  
for the Most High himself will establish her.

<sup>6</sup>The Lord records as he registers the peoples,  
“This one was born there.”

<sup>7</sup>Singers and dancers alike say,  
“All my springs are in you.”

<sup>23</sup>Nevertheless, I am continually with you;  
you hold my right hand.

<sup>24</sup>You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

<sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

<sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

<sup>27</sup>For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;  
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

<sup>28</sup>But 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

Almighty and everlasting God, since You have revealed Your glory to all nations in Jesus Christ and in the Word of His truth, keep, we ask You, in safety the works of Your mercy so that Your Church, spread throughout all the nations, may be defended against the adversary and may serve You in true faith and persevere in the confession of Your name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

# Psalm 88

Thursday



The 88th Psalm is a psalm of prayer, which prays in the person of Christ and all other great saints, lamenting the high spiritual suffering which is above all suffering, namely, the terror of God. This he calls death, the grave, and hell, as it truly is, causing miserable and pitiful conditions. St. Paul called it "the messenger of Satan" (2 Cor, 12:7) which beat on him with his fists, and "a thorn in his body" with which he was pierced (as in Greece they speared an evildoer). In like manner, the heathen slanders our Lord and call Him the "pierced one," while the Jews call Him "the one who was hung." It is the inheritance of Christ and His people to receive this ridicule and to suffer in the world, as this psalm also says that their friends and relatives, who should cry for them and suffer with them, are instead far from them.

<sup>1</sup>O Lord, God of my salvation;  
I cry out day and night before you.

<sup>2</sup>Let my prayer come before you;  
incline your ear to my cry!

<sup>3</sup>For my soul is full of troubles,  
and my life draws near to Sheol.

<sup>4</sup>I am counted among those who go down to the pit;  
I am a man who has no strength,

<sup>5</sup>like one set loose among the dead,  
like the slain that lie in the grave,  
like those whom you remember no more,  
for they are cut off from your hand.

<sup>6</sup>You have put me in the depths of the pit,  
in the regions dark and deep.

<sup>7</sup>Your wrath lies heavy upon me,  
and you overwhelm me with all your waves.

<sup>8</sup>You have caused my companions to shun me;  
you have made me a horror to them.  
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;

<sup>9</sup>my eye grows dim through sorrow.  
Every day I call upon you, O Lord;



I spread out my hands to you.  
<sup>10</sup>Do you work wonders for the dead?  
Do the departed rise up to praise you?  
<sup>11</sup>Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,  
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?  
<sup>12</sup>Are your wonders known in the darkness,  
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?  
<sup>13</sup>But I, O Lord, cry to you;  
in the morning my prayer comes before you.  
<sup>14</sup>O Lord, why do you cast my soul away?  
Why do you hide your face from me?  
<sup>15</sup>Afflicted and close to death from my youth up,  
I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.  
<sup>16</sup>Your wrath has swept over me;  
your dreadful assaults destroy me.  
<sup>17</sup>They surround me like a flood all day long;  
they close in on me together.  
<sup>18</sup>You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;  
my companions have become darkness.

## Prayer

Almighty God, merciful Father, keep and preserve our whole Church, its teachers and officers, true to Your Word. Cause the work of our Synod to grow and flourish. Guard and protect all Christians against the danger of sinful ambitions, the love of dissension, and the spirit of indifference in doctrine and practice. Give us faithful pastors and teachers of Your Word. Accompany all missionaries on their perilous ways, and help them to perform their work faithfully. Gather the elect from every nation into Your holy Christian Church, and bring them at last into Your Church triumphant; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

# Psalm 89

Friday



The 89th Psalm is a prophecy of Christ and His kingdom. The psalmist calls it a heavenly kingdom (as Christ Himself does in the Gospel) and takes up the prophecy given to David of Christ, and emphasizes it with an abundant spirit. Particularly he emphasizes that this kingdom shall never, for the sake of any sin, come to an end or be left behind. Thus, accordingly, our salvation shall not be based on our goodness. Even the promised kingdom of the Jews and all other earthly kingdoms last no longer or stretch no farther than they are good.

But in verse 38, he begins to prophesy how such a precious and fruitful kingdom would be trampled, torn, and subverted by the Antichrist, so that it appears as though God has forgotten His former abundant promises and is doing the opposite of His own Words. But this all is announced beforehand, to be a comfort to us in these last days. Therefore we should not despair, though it seems to us that there is no Christendom any more on earth. When one looks at the regimes of Mohammed or the Papacy, there appears no light of the church anymore under them, and yet it must remain under them both, however distressed, broken, and persecuted.

<sup>1</sup>I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;  
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

<sup>2</sup>For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever;  
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”

<sup>3</sup>You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:

<sup>4</sup>I will establish your offspring forever,  
and build your throne for all generations.”

<sup>5</sup>Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord,  
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

<sup>6</sup>For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?

Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,

<sup>7</sup>a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,

and awesome above all who are around him?  
<sup>8</sup>O Lord God of hosts,  
    who is mighty as you are, O Lord,  
    with your faithfulness all around you?  
<sup>9</sup>You rule the raging of the sea;  
    when its waves rise, you still them.  
<sup>10</sup>You crushed Rahab like a carcass;  
    you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.  
<sup>11</sup>The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours;  
    the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.  
<sup>12</sup>The north and the south, you have created them;  
    Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.  
<sup>13</sup>You have a mighty arm;  
    strong is your hand, high your right hand.  
<sup>14</sup>Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;  
    steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.  
<sup>15</sup>Blessèd are the people who know the festal shout,  
    who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,  
<sup>16</sup>who exult in your name all the day  
    and in your righteousness are exalted.  
<sup>17</sup>For you are the glory of their strength;  
    by your favor our horn is exalted.  
<sup>18</sup>For our shield belongs to the Lord,  
    our king to the Holy One of Israel.  
<sup>19</sup>Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said:  
    “I have granted help to one who is mighty;  
    I have exalted one chosen from the people.  
<sup>20</sup>I have found David, my servant;  
    with my holy oil I have anointed him,  
<sup>21</sup>so that my hand shall be established with him;  
    my arm also shall strengthen him.  
<sup>22</sup>The enemy shall not outwit him;  
    the wicked shall not humble him.  
<sup>23</sup>I will crush his foes before him  
    and strike down those who hate him.  
<sup>24</sup>My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him,  
    and in my name shall his horn be exalted.  
<sup>25</sup>I will set his hand on the sea

and his right hand on the rivers.  
<sup>26</sup>He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,  
my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'  
<sup>27</sup>And I will make him the firstborn,  
the highest of the kings of the earth.  
<sup>28</sup>My steadfast love I will keep for him forever,  
and my covenant will stand firm for him.  
<sup>29</sup>I will establish his offspring forever  
and his throne as the days of the heavens.  
<sup>30</sup>If his children forsake my law  
and do not walk according to my just decrees,  
<sup>31</sup>if they violate my statutes  
and do not keep my commandments,  
<sup>32</sup>then I will punish their transgression with the rod  
and their iniquity with stripes,  
<sup>33</sup>but I will not remove from him my steadfast love  
or be false to my faithfulness.  
<sup>34</sup>I will not violate my covenant  
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.  
<sup>35</sup>Once for all I have sworn by my holiness;  
I will not lie to David.  
<sup>36</sup>His offspring shall endure forever,  
his throne as long as the sun before me.  
<sup>37</sup>Like the moon it shall be established forever,  
a faithful witness in the skies."  
<sup>38</sup>But now you have cast off and rejected;  
you are full of wrath against your anointed.  
<sup>39</sup>You have renounced the covenant with your servant;  
you have defiled his crown in the dust.  
<sup>40</sup>You have breached all his walls;  
you have laid his strongholds in ruins.  
<sup>41</sup>All who pass by plunder him;  
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.  
<sup>42</sup>You have exalted the right hand of his foes;  
you have made all his enemies rejoice.  
<sup>43</sup>You have also turned back the edge of his sword,  
and you have not made him stand in battle.  
<sup>44</sup>You have made his splendor to cease

and cast his throne to the ground.  
<sup>45</sup>You have cut short the days of his youth;  
you have covered him with shame.  
<sup>46</sup>How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever?  
How long will your wrath burn like fire?  
<sup>47</sup>Remember how short my time is!  
For what vanity you have created all the children of man!  
<sup>48</sup>What man can live and never see death?  
Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?  
<sup>49</sup>Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,  
which by your faithfulness you swore to David?  
<sup>50</sup>Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked,  
and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations,  
<sup>51</sup>with which your enemies mock, O Lord,  
with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed.  
<sup>52</sup>Blessèd be the Lord forever!  
Amen and Amen.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, Your kingdom continues to be in our midst as You come to us now through holy water, holy words, and holy food. Help us to see that Your kingdom is a kingdom of suffering, but that through suffering, we will be prepared to enter into glory when You return on that final day; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever.

# Psalm 90

Saturday



The 90th Psalm is a psalm of instruction, in which Moses teaches the origin of death, namely sin, which, though known only by God and hidden from the world, is yet inborn in all from Adam to us. It shows how life here is not only short, but also miserable, so that it may well be called a daily death. Nevertheless, he says that such a life is good, so that through it we would be driven to seek God's grace and help to deliver us from it all. For those who never think of death and feel no misery remain senseless fools caring nothing for God's grace or help. The psalm ends with the prayer that God would show us His work, namely, His deliverance from sin and death, that is, that He would send Christ. And he asks that, while we live here, God would establish our work, that is, that both spiritual and worldly authority may be and remain favorable. A short, fine, rich, and full little prayer.

<sup>1</sup>Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.

<sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

<sup>3</sup>You return man to dust  
and say, "Return, O children of man!"

<sup>4</sup>For a thousand years in your sight  
are but as yesterday when it is past,  
or as a watch in the night.

<sup>5</sup>You sweep them away as with a flood;  
they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning:

<sup>6</sup>in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.

<sup>7</sup>For we are brought to an end by your anger;  
by your wrath we are dismayed.

<sup>8</sup>You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your presence.

<sup>9</sup>For all our days pass away under your wrath;  
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

<sup>10</sup>The years of our life are seventy,  
or even by reason of strength eighty;  
yet their span is but toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

<sup>11</sup>Who considers the power of your anger,  
and your wrath according to the fear of you?

<sup>12</sup>So teach us to number our days  
that we may get a heart of wisdom.

<sup>13</sup>Return, O Lord! How long?  
Have pity on your servants!

<sup>14</sup>Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

<sup>15</sup>Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and for as many years as we have seen evil.

<sup>16</sup>Let your work be shown to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.

<sup>17</sup>Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and establish the work of our hands upon us;  
yes, establish the work of our hands!

## 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 91

Sunday



The 91st Psalm is a psalm of comfort which exhorts us to trust in God in all distress and affliction. It is full of abundant promises flowing from and spun from the first commandment. It is the second psalm in which the dear angels are proclaimed to be our guards and protectors [cf. Psalm 34] which is comforting and good to remember. I have given my thoughts above on the four afflictions mentioned in verse 5-6.

- <sup>1</sup>He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
- <sup>2</sup>I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust.”
- <sup>3</sup>For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- <sup>4</sup>He will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
- <sup>5</sup>You will not fear the terror of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
<sup>6</sup>nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- <sup>7</sup>A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- <sup>8</sup>You will only look with your eyes  
and see the recompense of the wicked.
- <sup>9</sup>Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—  
the Most High, who is my refuge—  
<sup>10</sup>no evil shall be allowed to befall you,  
no plague come near your tent.
- <sup>11</sup>For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.
- <sup>12</sup>On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.



- <sup>13</sup>You will tread on the lion and the adder;  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
- <sup>14</sup>“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;  
I will protect him, because he knows my name.
- <sup>15</sup>When he calls to me, I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and honor him.
- <sup>16</sup>With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation.”

## Prayer

Father of mercies and God of all consolation, before You all hearts are laid bare and no secrets are concealed. Open the lips of Your children that they may not hide their iniquity and so waste away in deceit, but in truth acknowledge their sin and receive Your word of absolution. Guide me, Your servant, by Your Word and Spirit, that I may rightly discharge this holy office with faithfulness and mercy, wisdom and compassion. Guard the door of my lips that I never utter what is divulged in confession and, by the word of pardon that You have placed on my lips, grant that those whose bones have been crushed by the weight of Your wrath might be restored with the forgiveness purchased by the blood of Your Son. Protect them from the accusation of the evil one as he strives to rob them of Your peace. Save them from temptation and keep them in the company of Your holy Church to sing of Your saving righteousness forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.