



Week Seven Devotions

Provided by the Ministry and Program Staff of
The Presbyterian Church of Stanley

Day 43

Scripture: Psalms 89:14-Psalms 108:13

Psalms 89 and 90 are two of my favorites. It is probably because I am a guy and I love movies like "High Noon," "Gladiator," and "The Dark Knight" but this Psalm paints a picture of a God who will fight for you, a God who defends His beloved ones against the slings and arrows of a sinful world determined to destroy whomever God prizes.

Verse two teaches us that God is our "fortress...in whom I trust." Verses 5 and 6 remind us not to fear neither the terror of the night or the oppression of the day. Remember, it is God who took the darkness and spoke into and created the light. He is the Lord of both and He loves you, His beloved chosen one, unconditionally. You have nothing to fear.

Verses 7 and 8 are simply an awesome statement of God's power. I read them and envision a warrior on the battlefield, struggling against an implacable foe. Onto the battlefield wades Jesus Christ and the tide turns.

"A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked."

Finally, in verses 9 and 10, we see a passage misquoted by Satan when He tempted Jesus in the wilderness. When we make the Lord, the Most High our dwelling place and refuge, when we place our trust in Him—no harm shall come to us. "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."

The Lord protects us for His glory so that we may be of service to Him—not for us to put Him to the test. We don't need to test the Lord. He has already passed. We need to trust.

~Eric Laverentz, Senior Pastor

Day 44

Scripture: Psalms 109:1-Psalms 134:3

Psalms were used as teaching tools for the people of Israel. Written as poetry and memorized in song, the people of Israel would classify different Psalms for different purposes. Some were Psalms of Ascent that the people of Israel would sing as they remembered their ascent back into Jerusalem after being held in exile for seventy years in Babylon. Others were Psalms of Lament that the people of Israel sang when the people of Israel were suffering and crying out for God's presence and rescue.

A large portion of the Psalms in this section, declare God's majesty and the victory that we find in Him. These Psalms describe times when the people of Israel destroyed their idols, experienced God's presence, and amazing blessing that comes when we decide to be obedient to Him.

Where are you today? Are you crying out to God? Are you ascending a hill after coming out of a time of victory? Or are you on the mountain, being obedient to God, destroying the idols that bind you, and experiencing God's blessing like never before?

~Bo Burgener, Associate Pastor for Mission & Evangelism

Day 45

Scripture: Psalms 135:1-Proverbs 6:35

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This verse enjoys almost universal recognition as the key statement not only in Proverbs but in all the wisdom literature of the Bible (cf. 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Eccles. 12:13). Some people think of it as the motto of the book, others the foundational principle, others the major premise, or something similar. The verse contains a positive statement followed by its negative corollary.

The "fear of the Lord" occurs at least 18 times in Proverbs (1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:2, 26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; 31:30). "Fear" includes not only a correct way of thinking about God but a correct relationship with Yahweh. It is an affectionate reverence that results in humbly bowing to the Father's will. It is a desire not to sin against Him because His wrath is so awful and His love is so awesome.

"Beginning" does not mean that the fear of the Lord is where one starts learning wisdom, but then he or she can move away from it as from the starting line in a race. Rather the fear of the Lord is the controlling principle, the foundation, on which one must build a life of wisdom.

"What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the LORD is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book. 'Knowledge' is a relationship that depends on revelation and is inseparable from character. Even though many unbelievers have acquired much information without the fear of God, true knowledge rests on a relationship to God that revelation supports. We can learn the really important lessons in life only this way."

~Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 46

Scripture: Proverbs 7:1-Proverbs 20:21

Proverbs 14:26 "He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge."

The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary defines "fear of the Lord" as "the awe a person ought to have before God." Proverbs 14:26 speaks of the secure fortress we have when we live as people who live in awe of God. When we are able to live in such a way that we awake each day with a sense of wonder at what God will do with this day, we are living in the "fear of the Lord." When we are able to take notice of how God is moving in events and people, which cross our lives each day, we begin to recognize God's amazing love and His power. As we see His hand in our world and the universe it becomes easier to recognize His plan for all creation. Then we are able to truly live in the "fear of the Lord" rather than just "in fear." We have a secure fortress that will shelter us and our children from the storms of life. There is no more secure place for children to grow than in a home where their parents' lives demonstrate faith and trust in the Lord.

Jan Zimmerman, Children's Ministries Director

~Jan Zimmerman, Children's Ministries Director

Day 47

Scripture: Proverbs 20:22-Ecclesiastes 2:26

Proverbs was written for the young and Ecclesiastes was written for educated rulers. We really have a wide spectrum of scripture to assist us in our every day life. Proverbs is so rich in ways for us look into our heart and mind to see where our motives may lie. "Many people claim to be loyal, but it is hard to find a trustworthy person, The Lord looks deep inside people and searches through their thoughts, don't praise yourself. Let someone else do it. Let the praise come from a stranger and not from your own mouth, pride will ruin people, but those who are humble will be honored." These verses and others in Proverbs allow us to examine our hearts, thoughts and motives. Have we invited Christ into our every thought and motive? Many of the reflections within Proverbs may be seen as givens, but we all need reminders of the Cross and the way of Christ.

~Harlan Harper, Youth Ministries Director

Day 48

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-Song of Solomon 8:14

Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature written by King Solomon as he faces the deep and perplexing issues of life head on: showing the futility of so many of life's pursuits, struggling to find meaning, and in the end pointing to a solution. As you read this book, think about how your power to live a meaningful life comes not from you but from God. In Ecclesiastes 5:1, we read, "Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools." Then the writer continues, "Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to offer anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

When Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the mountain, Jesus was transfigured before Moses; Elijah appeared; and then they carried on a conversation with Jesus. The text goes on to say, "And *answering*, Peter said to them...if you wish, I will put up three shelters." Peter's words are so revealing. No one was even speaking to Peter. He was offering the sacrifice of fools. One reason we can hardly bare to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so accustomed to relying on words to manage and control others. If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let God take control until we trust God. **Silence is intimately related to trust.**

The tongue is a thermometer; it tells us our spiritual temperature. It is also a thermostat; it controls our spiritual temperature. Control of the tongue can mean everything. *Have we been set free so that we can hold our tongue?*

~Rev. Dr. Larry Thornton, Parish Associate

Day 49

Scripture: Isaiah 1:1-Isaiah 13:22

Isaiah was the son of Amos and is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. He was a counselor to kings from 740-701 B.C. His name means; "The Lord saves." In his book he unveils the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation. We are reminded God is "the Holy One of Israel" who must punish his rebellious people but will afterward redeem them.

How divine that I would be assigned to offer my devotion, which includes one of my very favorite passages, that we profess, in song, as a congregation almost every Sunday following the prayer of confession. It is from Chapter twelve which beautifully expresses Songs of Praise to our heavenly Father who is forgiving in spite of all our shortcomings. Verse two is paraphrased in our congregational response and the text is married to the tune "Surely it is God who saves me, I will trust in Him and not be afraid, for the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and He will be my Savior". Sing them to yourself often and hold on to them daily. These are words to live by from the prophet Isaiah.

~Robyn Hartfield, Music Director