

Meditations on the Psalms

Volume Six: Psalms 51-60

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1. Psalm Fifty-One

Against You, You only, Have I Sinned

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight -- that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.

9 Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise.

18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

This is one of the seven psalms of repentance (which are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). David wrote it as a confession of a painful sin, which was taking the poor man's ewe lamb by force for himself. His conscience lay dormant until Nathan the prophet woke it up. Then he discovered he was wrong and confessed his sin: I have sinned against the Lord. Nathan answered, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). It was said of David that "he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5).

We often ask ourselves: Why has the Bible recorded the mistakes of the believer's who were heroes of faith? Why does this psalm start off with the bad reason that called for writing it? Wouldn't it have been wiser to conceal the news of this sin? (The story is in 2 Samuel 11.) Here is the answer:

1. * The Bible recorded these sins for us to teach us that we are all sinners. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Our only Saviour is Christ. He visited earth for 33 years, during which he never sinned. Therefore He is the only one who can be our Intercessor and the Forgiver of our sins. He Himself does not need intercession. The Bible says of Him, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). He gave Himself as ransom for us, obtaining eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 7:25-28).
2. * God wants to encourage us. There is no sin that is too big to be forgiven through Christ's atonement. "If our sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). God is loyal in His love and just in His judgement, so He charged the full extent of sin to Christ's account. Now, if we confess our sins to Him and take shelter in His redemption, He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all iniquity (1 John 1:9). Let us come to our Saviour who proclaimed, "Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick ... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:12,13).

The Gospel is good news! In His love, God came down to us, while we were in the abyss of sin, and extended His loving hand to us. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The Bible does not say that God was reconciling Himself to us, because He was never at odds with us. God always loves and forgives. It is we who needed reconciliation because we have sinned and perverted what was right. Then He came, in His perfect and eternal love, to offer us forgiveness. Our psalm is a

song that we should all sing, no matter what our sin and departure from God. We must always trust that our loving God accepts those who repent.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Asking for cleansing from an evil act (verses 1-4)
- Second: Asking for cleansing from evil nature (verses 5-8)
- Third: Asking for forgiveness and renewal once again (verses 9-12)
- Fourth: The psalmists pledges after forgiveness (verses 13-19)

1.1. First: Asking for Cleansing from an Evil Act

(verses 1-4)

The psalmist asks the Lord to forgive and cleanse him because he acknowledges his sin and repents of it. He takes shelter in God's mercy alone, because "He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

In these four verses we find a description and the remedy for evil:

1. The description of evil:

1. **It is transgression:** "Blot out my transgressions"(verse 1) "For I acknowledge my transgression" (verse 3). Transgression in Hebrew (pesha) means rebellion against God. A rebellious person considers God's commandments unfair and commits what they prohibit. Transgression says to God, I am not satisfied with the laws You have set. I will rebel against You! Adams transgression consisted in eating from the forbidden tree, and from Adam came people who began to say flagrantly, "Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways" (Job 21:14; 22:17).
2. **It is iniquity:** "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity"(verse 2a). "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity" (verse 5). Iniquity (Hebrew *avon*) means crookedness, and a crooked man is unrighteous. We can notice crookedness in David's case: The whole army went out for battle, but he, the commander in chief, stayed in his palace! When his people were fighting he was on the top of his house looking around. And he coveted what he saw. Trying to camouflage it, he called forth the lady's husband and had him killed. He simply used his royal authority to cover up his sin.
3. **It is sin:** "And cleanse me from my sin"(verse 2b). "Against You, You alone, have I sinned" (verse 4). "I was brought forth in iniquity" (verse 5). Sin is to miss the mark, not to hit. Each one of us has a purpose that God created him for. When we miss it we commit sin. Perhaps this is because we are short-sighted- we don't have enough foresight. David did not think of the consequences of this sin on himself as prophet, leader and king. He could not see beyond his nose! Man also misses the mark because

- of bad evaluation. After Christ adopts us by grace we often evaluate our status in Him incorrectly and do not do what He expects us to do (1 John 3:1). Neither do we evaluate nor consider the others, whom we should love as ourselves (Mark 12:31).
4. **It is an evil act:** "And done this evil in Your sight"(verse 4). Evil consists in overstepping the line that God drew for our actions. Once we overstep that line we commit sin. It is sad that the other side of the hedge always seems greener, and man always covets what he does not have. "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" (Proverbs 9:17 NIV). Sin is simply lawlessness (1 John 3:4).
2. **The remedy for evil:**The remedy for evil has two aspects: a human one and a divine one:
1. **The human aspect:**We greatly respect David for writing this psalm with such honesty with himself and God:
 1. **He confessed his sin:** "For I acknowledge my transgression"(verse 3). He confessed that he was a sinner and did not blame anyone else for what he had done. He blamed himself rather than others. Any man who wants to confess to the Lord must not approach Him with excuses, but come confessing ones sins truly and honestly.
 2. **He confessed that he sinned against God:** "Against You, You alone, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight"(verse 4). He confessed how enormous the offence of disobeying God was, and did not try to depreciate the horrid thing he had done. When tempted to commit a similar evil, Joseph said a long time before David, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). In saying so David did not deny his offence against Bathsheba, her husband Uriah and Joab his army chief, whom he commanded to kill Uriah. He merely considered that his chief sin was levelled against God, because the one who loves God must love his fellow man first. Also, as king he considered himself as God's steward, who judges with justice and according to the law. When he overstepped the line he considered himself a dishonest steward.
 3. **He confessed God's justice:** "That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge"(verse 4). Any punishment God inflicts on him is a just, divine and earned requital. He accepts it without much grumbling or discussion, for there is no margin of error in the pronouncement of God's judgement on the sinner, nor in executing it. Hanging on the cross, the repentant thief said, "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41 NIV). The apostle Paul quoted this verse from the Septuagint in Romans 3:4 "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged."
 2. **The divine aspect:**
 1. **God's mercy:** "Have mercy upon me God, according to Your loving-kindness;

according to the multitude of Your tender mercies"(verse 1). Forgiveness depends on mercy alone, without any mediation of human effort. "The Lord compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love...as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him" (Psalm 103:8,11). But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:4,5,8,9).

2. **What God does:**

1. **He blots out transgression:** "Blot out my transgressions"(verse 1). Sin is recorded in the Book of the Lord, and the confessor desires it to be blotted out and be no more. He asks God to fulfil His promise that He will no more repara any sin we confess, because Christ paid the debts of the confessing sinner. God's justice cannot demand the debts twice! When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. "He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Corinthians 2:13,14 NIV). He will again have compassion upon us, and will subdue our iniquities. "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). He will not charge it to our account! He will forget our sins, and they will not be found in His sight. He says to us, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not repara your sins I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 43:25; 44:22). When one returns to God in repentance, one joins King Hezekiah in saying, "You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17).
2. **He washes the heart clean:** "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity"(verse 2), meaning "Shake off of me all my misdeeds, and get out all the dirt and lust that stuck to me and the evils that permeated the tissue of my life." The psalmist got this idea from the way they used to beat clothes on a rock along a running stream in order to clean them. He asks God to wash the filth of sin away from him no matter how painful it might be. The pains of cleansing are much less than the pains of filth, and "the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6 NIV).
3. **He cleanses:** "And cleanse me from my sin"(verse 2). This term is borrowed from the law of the purification of a leper. When anyone would come close to a leper, the latter would have to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" so that the healthy ones should not catch the infection. When God would grant healing to

a leper, he had to take a certificate of purification from the priest to be able to go back to the fellowship of the healthy (Leviticus 13). The psalmist felt that he was as unclean as a leper, in need of healing and a proclamation of that healing.

1.2. Second: Asking for Cleansing from Evil Nature

(verses 5-8)

1. **The evil human nature:** "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me"(verse 5). David tried to conceal his sin after he had done it, but he felt how horrid it was as soon as God uncovered it. He immediately confessed it and repented of it, and God accepted his repentance. This misdeed opened his eyes to the fact that this was no passing whim, but the corruption in which he was conceived that is inherent to his nature. David did not mean to accuse his mother of any moral misbehaviour, otherwise he would not have called her God's maidservant (Psalm 86:16; 116:16). Neither did he see anything wrong with the process of procreation which God instilled in humanity when He commanded: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28), as long as it is done in the right way. And here is the biblical model that we should follow: "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure" (Hebrews 13:4 NIV). But David saw his tendencies going against God's will. Isaiah felt the same when he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Paul captured the same idea when he stated that "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18,19 NIV).
2. **The remedy for the evil human nature (verses 6-8):**
 1. **Divine wisdom:** "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom"(verse 6). There was no wisdom in what David did to Bathsheba. Sin is folly and is not worth the price paid for it. But "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). David continued performing all the ceremonial obligations of worship, but did not have a right relationship with God. He did not realise how big his tragedy was, and that was foolish. There was a wide gap between what pleases God and what he had done. This was also foolish of him. What pleases God, however, is when man is faithful in his intents and honest in his attitudes. This shows itself in total sincerity in the hidden person of the heart (1 Peter 3:4) and in true worship, which goes beyond mere ceremony. Man can only get that sincerity through wisdom that comes from heaven "which is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17 NIV). "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it

will be given to him" (James 1:5). Here is how wisdom begins: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

Every time we do something bad, hurt someone else's feelings with a harsh word or hurt even ourselves with the wrong we do, we need to call upon God to show us wisdom in the inward parts of our soul to correct the wrong and keep away from it.

2. **Purity:** "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow"(verse 7). Hyssop is an aromatic, herbal plant that grows on the walls. It was gathered sheaves and used to purify from leprosy (Leviticus 14:4,6), pestilence (Leviticus 14:49-51) and for ceremonial purification (Numbers 19:6,18). The Israelites also used it in sprinkling the blood (Exodus 12:22; Hebrews 9:19), as well as in washing clothes to cleanse them. The psalmist's intent was to call upon God to purge him from within with the work of grace, not through the medium of ceremonies and a priest. All these acts of purification set out in the Old Testament represented the true purification through the blood Christ the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Christ says of His forgiven saints that "they have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Revelations 3:4).
3. **Listening to the Lord's voice:** "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice"(verse 8). Words of joy and gladness are the words of God that confirm His love, acceptance and forgiveness. When God tells us these words, the bones that were broken by remorse rejoice. We rejoice greatly when we hear Christ calling, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "The one who comes to Me, I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

1.3. Asking For Forgiveness and Renewal Once Again

(verses 9-12)

In these verses the psalmist asks for forgiveness and renewal once more. He asks four things of God:

1. **To hide His face:** "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities"(verse 9). Hiding God's face and blotting out iniquity are the results of atonement and redemption. The psalmist seems to be saying, Put Your blood over me to atone for my sin. Atonement (Hebrew *kopher*) refers to covering or hiding.

The believer who received forgiveness from God will still need more forgiveness no matter what his degree of cleanness. Christ reminded Peter: "He who is bathed needs only

to wash his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:10). A man is clean and in a right standing with God when Christ cleanses him through His atonement, but he still needs a new, daily wash. He needs God to hide His face from his sins and iniquities that spatter his white garment. There are personal sins and weaknesses that weigh a man down, as well as social sins that so easily entangle us. We need to throw off all of them (Hebrews 12:1). Thanks be to God, now we have a way of escape and salvation from them, for "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

2. **A clean heart:** "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me"(verse 10). The psalmist does not stop at forgiveness and purification, but goes on to ask for the creative power of God to grant him a new, clean heart. He calls upon God's Spirit to renew within him an upright spirit as He promised: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you" (Ezekiel 36:26,27 NIV). This is what Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You must be born again" (John 3:7). The following statement of Paul's describes what this is all about: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When God gives us wisdom in the inward parts (i.e. the depths of our soul; verse 6) we understand God's word and begin to say, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, so that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). We become ready to have a clean heart, washed by the blood of Christ's atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit. Then we realise, as David did, that one sin leads to another, because we will try to cover our first one by a second one, and so on. Sin is a vicious circle of crookedness and iniquity. Nevertheless, when God creates in us a clean heart and an upright spirit, we walk uprightly after His own heart.

3. **The continuity of the work of the Holy Spirit in him:** "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"(verse 11). To be cast away from God's presence is to be banished from the Holy Land, the Lord's community, the Lord's covenant and the Lord's favour. What a deadly punishment! He dreaded having to join the heathen who were strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope or God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). David implores the Lord to spare him that evil end, and to keep him a part of the Lord's community.

The psalmist requests the Holy Spirit to continue working in him: convicting him of his sins, renewing his spiritual life, cleansing him and sanctifying him. King Saul took his own life when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him after his disobedience, and came down on David (1 Samuel 16:13,14).

From Pentecost on, God gave the believer's the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 1 John 2:27). Now it is the believer's duty to be careful not to quench the work of the Spirit in them (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Let us appear in His divine presence so that He would

appear before us always, have His Holy Spirit convict us of our sins and teach us His way. When we abide in Him the anointing we received from Him will teach us all things and remind us of everything that Christ said (1 John 2:20).

- 4. The joy of salvation:** "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit"(verse 12). The psalmist asks for the joy of salvation, which he lost, to come back to him. He also asks for a generous Spirit that gives willingly and liberally to others, with no obligation from anyone. It is obvious from the request "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" that the psalmist did not lose his salvation when he sinned, only the joy of his salvation. He was no longer able to experience the Lord as his light and salvation, nor call him as a child: "I will love you, O Lord, my strength ... the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalm 18:1,2). "He still belongs to the Lord, because He has adopted and chosen him" (John 15:16), but he lost his enjoyment of the Lord because of the sin that separated him from the pleasure of being in His presence. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). When the Lord restores to us the joy of our salvation we have a continual and permanent communion with Him. Nothing will stand between us and Him. We will get the full benefit of the Benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14) and receive His strength: "For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

"When God gives us a generous Spirit we give freely, because God loves a cheerful giver"(2 Corinthians 9:7). We not only abstain from taking what does not belong to us, but also give of what God has given us. David took the ewe lamb of his poor neighbour, and now he desires to be a willing giver and to fit the description: "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (Ephesians 4:28 NIV).

1.4. The Psalmist's Pledges after Forgiveness

(verses 13-19)

After becoming aware of his sin, David asked God to show mercy on him and cleanse him from his wicked deed and evil nature. Then he repeated the same request again for forgiveness and renewal. And now that he was sure his petition has been answered, he began thinking of paying God back a little of what he owed Him, not just with words but with actions also. He pledged to do four things:

- 1. A pledge to evangelise:** "Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You"(verse 13). Once God healed him of the defilement of sin, he wanted to rescue the defiled. The news about David's sin spread out in the whole army and throughout the land. Can he then teach transgressors the way of God, so that sinners would be converted? Yes, because this was his duty and privilege. When we sin we

encounter our human weakness and feel the forgiving divine love. This makes us more tender with sinners and more compassionate with those who are afar off. As we see someone sinning we don't jump on them and condemn them because we are better than they. We rather sympathise with them because we have sinned like them before. We were forgiven only because we confessed, so let us offer the sinner the message of divine love we have together with all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

We are required to show compassion for the fallen sinners, just as much as Jesus loved the tax collectors and sinners whom nobody loved (Luke 7:34). The Bible says that "he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). We must obey the commandment: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32) and "go out to make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

2. **A pledge to praise:** "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise"(verses 14,15). David asks the God of his salvation to secure his deliverance and release him from the punishment for shedding innocent blood. Then his voice will praise and glorify to the God of righteousness, who is faithful to His promises and word. God has promised to forgive the one who confesses and takes shelter in the great divine redemption, and He must fulfil that promise to David (1 John 1:9). But whether God punishes or pardon he is still the God of righteousness, justice and faithfulness. David's lips were shut to praise due to his feelings of guilt, so he asked the Lord who granted him forgiveness to grant his lips the grace to sing. He was like a leper secluded from the Lord's community. But now that he came back, he will join the congregation of those who declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).
3. **A pledge to offer an acceptable sacrifice:** "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-these, O God, You will not despise"(verses 16,17). The Mosaic law did not include any sacrifice of burnt offering for the intentional sins, especially of adultery and murder. Had there been any such sacrifices David would have offered them. Now since God has forgiven him he feels humble, contrite and broken before God. He realises well that God does not despise such a repentant, humble heart of one who is ashamed of his sin and stands far off from God. For indeed David is far. He would not even look up to heaven, but rather beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13 NIV). In the same vein, David said, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened; burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not require" (Psalm 40:6). He mourned for his own sins and those of others, but Christ blesses those, saying "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"

(Matthew 5:4).

4. **A pledge to encourage the people to worship:** "Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then they shall offer bulls on Your altar"(verses 18,19). Jerusalem's walls were not completed by the time of David and Solomon, so both of them did a lot of building (2 Samuel 5:9; 1 Kings 3:1; 9:15,19). Maybe David felt that the Lord would forbid him from building because of his sins, so he asked for permission to complete the walls of Jerusalem. He moves on from praying for himself to praying for his people and capital city, which lies on several hills, one of which is Mount Zion. He considers the safety of the capital as good as the safety of the whole country. He also thinks that completing the building will fill the peoples hearts with joy, which will make them offer bulls, sacrifices of righteousness from righteous hearts and sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise for the completion of the work. Building the walls would provide protection for the capital and its inhabitants. These praises will go up like an aromatic incense to gladden God's heart.

One can perceive a spiritual sense in David's request to build the walls of Jerusalem. Sin pulls down the wall of godliness that protects the soul and the Church. Now when David sinned a great spiritual wall was destroyed inside those who admired him, who took him as their example. Perhaps this made them look lightly on committing sin. All this made him ask God to rebuild this wall and erect a living, spiritual building in the congregation of the believers. We also should take part in building spiritual and material homes for God everywhere, so that praises of thanksgiving should go up to Him from all quarters of the earth.

Lets ask Him to forgive us our sins and cleanse us. Then our hearts will be made clean, and we will enter a holy covenant with God. This is a covenant of evangelism, worship and building His Church.

1.5. Questions

1. The psalmist uses four words to describe his sin - define each of them.
2. What is the remedy of these sins?

2. Psalm Fifty-Two

The Goodness of God Endures Forever

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."

1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually.

2 Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3 You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah

4 You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue.

5 God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

6 The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying,

7 "Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

9 I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.

There are seven psalms which Saint Augustine calls "The Psalms of the Fugitive". They are Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 142. David composed those psalms during his flight from King Saul. He was running from one country to another, and from one cave to another, even to the lands of the Philistines. When someone is a fugitive his thoughts get muddled up and he finds it hard to write poetry and put it to music; but David's fugitive heart was anchored in the Lord. God occupied a large part of his heart; that is why he was a man of singing and prayer. We thank God for those who love the Lord with all their hearts, those who react to His love and speak to Him, complain to Him and explain to Him their circumstances and situations.

David wrote this psalm after he knew from his bosom friend Jonathan that Saul would hunt him down to kill him. He preferred fleeing to Gath, the Philistine capital, to be far from Saul's reach. On his way to Gath he needed food and a sword, so he headed for the priests city Nob and met Ahimelech, the high priest. Ahimelech gave him consecrated bread, which only the priest could eat, and Goliath's sword (1 Samuel 21:1-9; Mark 2:26). Doeg the Edomite (a descendant of Esau who was in charge of Saul's livestock) reported this news to the king and presented it as treason on the side of the priests. Saul ordered them killed, but David escaped. Nevertheless, Saul continued to pursue David, who took the brunt of suffering and pressure. No doubt David felt guilty of the murder of those priests who helped him. It was out of all this that this psalm was created.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The condition of the wicked (verses 1-5)
- Second: The condition of the believer (verses 6-9)

2.1. First: The Condition of the Wicked

(verses 1-5)

1. A description of the wicked: (verses 1-4).

1. **He boasts in evil:** "Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures forever"(verse 1). The psalmist starts off his psalm with a protest against the wicked man who boasts in his evil. He reminds him of God's enduring goodness and asks him: "Why boast? Is it because you are a mighty, proud tyrant who believes he is a hero? Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine!" (Isaiah 5:22 NIV). "They are not valiant for the truth on the earth" (Jeremiah 9:3). "One official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still" (Ecclesiastes 5:8). The Most High God is merciful and good, and His mercy embraces the sinner and makes him repent.
2. **He devises evil:** "Your tongue devises destruction"(verse 2a). The tongue devises lies. The wicked not only boasts in evil, but also fabricates fibs and lies about it. After a little while he gets tired of repeating the same lie over and over, so he devises another lie, more foolish than the first. Indeed, out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). "The tongue of the wicked is an unruly evil" (James 3:8). It wounds the reputation of the innocent, as Doeg the Edomite wounded the reputation of David and Ahimelech, causing the massacre of the priests and the continued pursuit after David. An Arab poet said:

The wounds of the swords will heal,
But those of the tongue never will!

3. **He practices evil:** "Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully"(verse 2b). He disrupts peoples reputations and hurts the people themselves. He wounds them physically, as well as cutting up their souls.
 4. **He loves evil:** "You love evil more than good, and lying rather than speaking righteousness. You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue"(verses 3,4). The wicked man's love for evil and harm is far bigger than that for good. His love for lying is far greater than his love for telling the truth. He is of his father the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44). A sinner is a sinner both by his actions and by his corrupt nature, which gives rise to the actions.
2. **The end of the wicked:** "God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living"(verse 5). The wicked must pay for his sin. He is weak no matter how mighty in evil he might be. He will be pulled out by the roots, because they are not deep. The psalmist gives these descriptions of the end of the wicked:
- Destroy you like a great, high building. He will fall down and not rise again. Doeg the Edomite had a prominent position in the royal court. As high as his position was, he was still destroyed.

- Take you away like plunder.
- Pluck you out like a tent without pegs sailing in the winds!
- Uproot you like a tree pulled out by the roots. "But the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it" (Proverbs 2:22).
- Forever. "For with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:2), and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

2.2. Second: The Condition of the Believer

(verses 6-9)

1. The believer's reaction to the punishment of the wicked: (verses 6,7).

1. **The believer sees:** "The righteous shall see"(verse 6a). They see and ponder. It is worthy of the believer never to let any good or bad circumstance pass him by without pondering it, asking about it and thinking about it. With God nothing happens by accident; all His works have been ordained from the beginning. So lets ask the Lord: What is Your purpose? What will You do, and what will You have me do? Why have You brought me into the fiery furnace? Why have you caused me loss? Why has my hope perished?
2. **The believer fears:** "And fear"(verse 6b). The believer knows that God lives and that He will never leave anything unrequited, whether good or bad; therefore he fears God with his heart. There is a difference, though, between the wicked person's fear of the Lord and that of the believers: the wicked fear the punishment, but the believers revere and respect God, which is the beginning of wisdom.
3. **The believer laughs:** "And shall laugh at him"(verse 6c). This is not a laughter of gloating over the punishment that the wicked received, but a laughter of rejoicing in divine justice. "Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (Rev 15:3).
4. **The believer learns:** "Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness"(verse 7). The believer learns from the punishment of the wicked that wickedness kills the wicked: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26 NIV). The lands of the foolish rich man yielded fruits and his crops were plentiful, but his riches were for himself not for God. Therefore he died without taking anything of what he had hoarded. Jesus' introduction to the parable of the foolish rich man was "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15-21 NIV). The believer gives out what he has learned to other believers, as well as to sinners, in the hope that they would repent. Indeed "Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them" (Psalm 62:10 NIV).

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God" (1 Timothy 6:17).

2. A description of the believer's behaviour:

1. **The believer's personality:** "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of the house of God"(verse 8a). The believer loves to be in the house of the Lord and wants to dwell in it forever (Psalm 23:6). The psalmist must have had in mind an olive tree that was planted in the temple's court. In it he could see an image of himself:
 - **An olive tree is an evergreen plant:**The believer is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers (Psalm 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:7,8).
 - **An olive tree is a perennial plant:**An olive tree lives for a hundred years or more. An olive tree planted in the temple's court will surely receive better care, which will make it live longer. No one will do it any harm, and so is the believer. You search for the wicked and do not find him, but the believer receives from God a long and deep life.
 - **An olive tree gives out oil:**Olive oil was used in providing light for the temple. The Lord says to the believers, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Oil was also added to the offerings (Leviticus 2:1-7), and Paul says that it is poured onto the sacrifice of the believer's faith (Philippians 2:17). Oil has a medicinal use (Luke 10:34), and likewise the believer heals the pains of the weary with a sweet word (Isaiah 50:4). This is like a healing balm that soothes a wounded heart. The one who has learned from God knows how to succour others with a wise word from God. The believer satisfies others, lights the way for them and relieves them. He is a byword of peace and prosperity. Even when crushed and squeezed out like olives, he blesses and sheds light (Philippians 1:14,15). The wood of olive trees was also used to make some parts of the temple (1 Kings 6:23,33), and in like manner the believer is like an olive tree established in the house of the Lord. It was an olive branch which the dove carried back from its scouting trip in the earth (Genesis 8:11), which has become a symbol of peace and stability. So also is the believer: he always carries in his heart overflowing peace that affects others, and his mouth carries glad tidings. He is Christ's ambassadors, imploring all people on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God and each other. The Bible says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). An olive tree stands for prosperity, too. The psalmist says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table" (Psalm 128:3). Christ took olive trees as a chamber of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane and knelt by them.
2. **The believer's trust:** "I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever"(verse 8b). The

believer trusted in the Lord and saw what could not be seen. The eye of faith does not only see what is here and now, but also what is unseen and will come. Christ chose a group of weak disciples because He knew what they would be when He filled them with the Spirit of God. They would receive power and become His witnesses in Jerusalem and everywhere (Acts 1:8).

3. **The believer's praise:** "I will praise You forever, because You have done it"(verse 9a). The believer who loves God thanks Him always. Lets develop a life of thanksgiving, saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:1,2).
4. **The believer's waiting:** "And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good"(verse 9b). The psalmist declares in the presence of all the saints that the Lord is good and that he waits on Him with all confidence: "In the ways of Your judgements, O Lord, we have waited for You; and the desire of our soul is for Your name" (Isaiah 26:8). The believer does not wait on the Lord indolently and passively, but actively and expectantly. For as he waits he prepares his heart to receive the blessing. The kings of Israel, Judah and Edom went out for battle, but forgot to provide water for the three armies. They called on Elisha the prophet and he told them that water will come from the direction of Edom. He also told them to dig ditches in the ground to store the water. The kings wasted no time; they had the soldiers dig although there was no sign of water. Their waiting was active, not passive, and it received its reward when water came down and filled all the ditches they had prepared (2 Kings 3:16-20). This is how a believer should wait on the Lord, doing his part and expecting the blessing of heaven.

2.3. Questions

1. Verse 5 tells 5 things God does to the sinful person. Mention them.
2. How does a pious person resemble the olive tree?

3. Psalm Fifty-Three

They Have all Turned Aside

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath." A Contemplation of David.

1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good.

2 God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

3 Every one of them has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good,

no, not one.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God?

5 There they are in great fear where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you; you have put them to shame, because God has despised them.

6 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

See comments on Psalm 14, which identical to this psalm.

4. Psalm Fifty-Four

Strangers Have Risen Up against Me

To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"

1 Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength.

2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life; they have not set God before them. Selah

4 Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life.

5 He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth.

6 I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

7 For He has delivered me out of all trouble; and my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.

There are seven psalms which Saint Augustine calls The Psalms of the Fugitive. They are Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 142. David compiled those psalms during his flight from King Saul. He was running from one country to another, and from one cave to another, even to the lands of the Philistines. David wrote this psalm when the Ziphites had gone to Saul and told him that David was hiding among them, which made Saul chased him to kill him (1 Samuel 23:19). The Church has made it its practice to read this psalm on Good Friday.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: A Prayer for rescue (verses 1-3)
- Second: Trust in divine help (verses 4-7)

4.1. First: A Prayer for Rescue

(verses 1-3)

1. David presents three requests (verses 1,2):

1. **A request for salvation:** "Save me, O God, by Your name"(verse 1a). The name represents the power. The name of someone carries his power, authority and revealed character. The psalmist turns to God, who has such a great character, to save him, because "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). "The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save" (Zephaniah 3:17). God saves the sinner by forgiving him (1 Timothy 2:4), and the sick by healing him (Luke 8:36) and the oppressed by delivering him (Psalm 27:1-3). Salvation is comprehensive- it encompasses all aspects of man's life. David prayed: "Save me, O God from Saul's hand and the Ziphites who inform on me and wanted to hand me over to him" (1 Samuel 23:19).
2. **A request for justice:** "And vindicate me by Your power"(verse 1b). In this request David approached God as a judge who judges with righteousness and enforces His judgements by His own power. David was sure of his own innocence, as well as of the guilt of Saul and the Ziphites. So he turned to God to rescue and deliver him. He knew that God's deliverance comes with such power and quiet that it astonishes everyone. This was Peter's experience when the believers could not believe he escaped from Herod's prison (Acts 12:16).
3. **A request for an answer:** "Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth"(verse 2). Neither sufferings nor troubles could keep David from turning to God. Many people murmur or blame God and stop communicating with Him when they fall into trouble, but those who are sure of His love come closer to Him in their time of trouble as much as in prosperity. There is destruction that lays waste at noonday (Psalm 91:6) when man prospers and thinks that he has got everything under control and that he can steer the ship of his own life. Let's turn to God in prayer in times of trouble as well as in prosperity, because men always ought to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let's make this our motto: "I am a man of prayer" (Psalm 109:4 NIV), for then we will have a ceaseless communication with God. We should never stop communicating with Him regardless of the circumstances. It is worthy of note that David asks the Lord to listen to the words of his mouth after the Lord has answered his prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

2. Three reasons for David's request (verse 3):

1. **Because his enemies are strangers:** "For strangers have risen up against me"(verse

- 3a). The people of the desert of Ziph were no strangers to David according to the flesh, for they were cousins of the tribe of Judah. They rose up against him because they estranged themselves from him by standing against his cause and betraying him to Saul, a Benjaminite. This is exactly what Judas Iscariot did when he betrayed Christ, his master and teacher, fulfilling the prophecy: "Who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). Christ said to His disciples, "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends" (Luke 21:16). We often suffer because of a brother from whom we expected love, only to find estrangement or betrayal. We sometimes find out that man's enemies are the people of his household, for they do not grasp the meaning of his faith (Micah 7:6; Matthew 10:36).
2. **Because his enemies are unjust:** "And oppressors have sought after my life"(verse 3b). His oppressors were unjust; they did not content themselves with estrange themselves from him, but went as far as attacking him with unexpected severity. David rescued the people of Keilah from the enemies, yet they resolved to hand him over to Saul. Should a good deed deserve a bad one? Although the Ziphites were divinely rescued through David, they still wanted to betray him to Saul (1 Samuel 23)!
 3. **Because his enemies are wicked:** "They have not set God before them"(verse 3c). They sought after David's life, not knowing God's plan for their lives and his. Everyone who opposes the worker of good opposes God's purposes, whether knowingly or not. For this reason Christ's first word on the cross was "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

4.2. Second: Trust in Divine Help

(verses 4-7)

In these four verses David declares his trust in the Lord's love, as well as his trust in an old, personal relationship with God.

1. **Trust in God's love:** "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life"(verse 4). David declares his trust in the Lord who upholds, support, helps and grants victory. Describing God with the words uphold and helper indicates that God sympathised with David and felt what he was going through. That God feels for His saints is made clear in what Jesus said to Paul of Tarsus: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5), or what God said through Isaiah: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them" (Isaiah 63:9). The two descriptions also indicate David's trust in God's help and support. He trusts that the Lord will justify him, because if God is for us who can be against us? (Romans 8:31). "His loving-kindness is better than life" (Psalm 63:3) and He helps David personally as well

through commissioning human or angelic agents. How often does God help us through our parents, our mates, our leaders who teach us the word of God and everyone who imparts to us a word or good news about the Lord.

2. **Trust in God's justice:** "He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth"(verse 5). David trusts in the law of divine justice: whoever sins must receive his due punishment. He urges God to do this according to the commandment: "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense ... For the Lord will judge His people and have compassion on His servants" (Deuteronomy 32:35,36).
3. **Trust in the personal relationship with God:** "I will freely sacrifice to You, I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good (verse 6). God loves a cheerful giver"(2 Corinthians 9:7). There were sacrifices that the Mosaic law commanded to be offered, but there were others which were offered freely. These are more than what the law requires and they testify to the Lord's goodness and mercy. David also said, "Uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (Psalm 51:12,13). This kind of sacrifice was mentioned in Numbers 15:3 and is called freewill offering.
4. **Trust in God's salvation:** "For He has delivered me out of all trouble; and my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies"(verse 7). God has dealt greatly with David and helped him tremendously in all past experiences: he stood up while his enemies fell down, he was established when his opponents collapsed. Christ said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29,30 NIV). Blessed is he who experiences God's salvation because "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds Him with his hand" (Psalm 37:24). Lets therefore pray with confidence and expect victory. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry ... For He has delivered me out of all trouble" (Psalm 40:1; 54:7).

4.3. Questions

1. In verse 3 David asks for three things. Mention them.
2. In verses 4-7 David announces his trust in God. Give two reasons for his trust.

5. Psalm Fifty-Five

Oh, that I Had Wings

To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Contemplation of David.

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication.

2 Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

4 My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me.

6 So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

7 Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go around it on its walls; iniquity and trouble are also in the midst of it.

11 Destruction is in its midst; oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.

12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him.

13 But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance.

14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.

15 Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.

16 As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me.

17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.

18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many against me.

19 God will hear, and afflict them, even He who abides from of old. Selah Because they do not change, therefore they do not fear God.

20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has broken his covenant.

21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.

22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

23 But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in You.

This psalm expresses David's despair and sadness because a friend betrayed him. This friend could have been Ahithophel, who abandoned David and joined his son Absalom in the coup

he planned against his father (2 Samuel 15:10-37). Jerome called this psalm Christ's voice against the Jewish elders and against Judas the traitor.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The cry of a mourning soul (verses 1-8)
- Second: The memories of a mourning soul (verses 9-15)
- Third: The confidence of a victorious soul (verses 16-23)

5.1. First: The Cry of a Mourning Soul

(verses 1-8)

1. **David's cry:** "Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me and hear me"(verses 1,2). Psychologist Eric Bern says that in each one of us there is a child that cries when faced with a problem bigger than what we can handle. As a scared child looking for security David called the Person who was closest to himself, that is God, to help him. He knew that God would not hesitate to rush to his aid, but would assist him with His power and guide him to the potentials and talents within him. He would mobilise all these and direct them in the right way to enable David to get out of his predicament and do whatever is needed.
2. **David's sadness (verses 2b-5):**
 1. **Sad and restless:** "I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me"(verses 2b,3). Fear hit him with what seemed like paralysis, so he couldn't think right or utilise his potential! How could his son Absalom possibly rise up against him? And how could Ahithophel, a very trusted friend, help this recalcitrant son? David could not find satisfactory answers to these questions!
 2. **Sad and fearful:** "My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have fallen upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me"(verses 4,5). He was terrified that his own people rejected him and feared over the unknown future. He saw the terrors of death coming upon him and lost his self-confidence. Perhaps he even thought that the Lord also rejected him.
3. **David's thoughts:** "And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest"(verses 6-8). He wanted to be like a dove, the symbol of innocence, weakness and high flying. David escaped quickly before death overtook him at the hand of his next of kin, his son who rose against him. He left his palace and power barefoot for the wilderness where he could rest his head on

nothing but rock! However, a man like David should not have escaped. Jeremiah went through a similar experience and said, "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And like their bow they bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth" (Jeremiah 9:1-3). A lodging place for wayfaring men is something like an inn on a desert road far away from people. It was to there Jeremiah wanted to go, and it was to a far place that David wanted to escape, far away from Absalom and Ahithophel! This, however, is not the solution, but rather a spontaneous desire born of the problem itself. As soon as David thinks the situation over and finds rest in the presence of the Lord, he says what Nehemiah said, "Should such a man as I flee?" (Nehemiah 6:11). God lifted David up in spite of his sons' revolution against him and the abandonment of his friends. He used the difficulty well, so God blessed him through it. It no longer was the heavy burden that weighed him down. Thanks be God that "those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

5.2. Second: The Memories of a Mourning Soul

(verses 9-15)

David tried to escape the bitter reality, so he looked back to his memories and repaired two things:

1. **An unjust capital (verses 9-11):** He repaired the evil and the wrong that afflicted the capital Jerusalem after he had been driven out of it. Pillaging and looting was everywhere, revolution against civil authority broke out, deceit in trade was rampant, unjust judgements prevailed, and destruction engulfed everything. How the faithful city has become a harlot! Righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers (Isaiah 1:21). No doubt a bit of that happened when David was still in Jerusalem. Had David himself been fair, he would have divided judicial responsibilities among a bigger number of judges in Israel, rather than making everyone who had a case come to him personally. It was this very thing that gave the chance to Absalom to say that his father was unfair. We ought to learn how to organise our responsibilities so as to create more love, preclude clashes and decrease injustice. Let us not repeat David's experience with his son Absalom.
2. **Unjust friends (verses 12-15):**
 1. **He was close to him:** "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who magnified himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance"(verses 12,13). Betrayal came from his companion who has long been with him rather than

- from his enemy.
2. **He used to bring him joy:** "We took sweet counsel together"(verse 14a).
 3. **He used to worship with him:** "And walked to the house of God in the throng"(verse 14b). Worship added a holy, spiritual dimension to the relationship: "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). This friend, however, turned back on the love of God and David.
 4. **He asks God to punish him (verse 15).**

5.3. Third: The Confidence of a Victorious Soul

(verses 16-23)

1. The characteristics of confidence (verses 16-21):

1. **Continuous:** "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice"(verses 16,17). He spoke to God regularly, in the evening and in morning and at noon. He had confidence in Him, therefore he triumphed. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord gets saved from his sins and all his troubles (Romans 10:13). Daniel used to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10). Peter use to pray at noon (Acts 10:9). David, however used to pray in the evening, because the events of the next day start from the evening of the previous one. David put the problems and the occurrences of the day before God, so that he could sleep before the problems of yesterday could turn sour in his mind and mess up the next day. He also used to pray in the morning to start his new day with a new spirit, a new love and a new forgiveness. He prayed at noon, too, to get new strength from God, so that the sun would not go down on his anger and the devil would not take any place in his heart (Ephesians 4:26,27).
2. **Understanding:** "He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle which was against me, for there were many against me. God will hear and afflict them, even He who abides from of old"(verses 18,19a). The Lord redeemed David because He was his redeemer and closest relation, and so David got the peace that kept his mind and heart in the Lord who sits on His throne from of old. "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One?" (Habakkuk 1:12). David bases his present confidence in the Lord on the Lord's dealings with him in the past, and bases the future on both of them.
3. **Despite difficulty (verses 19b-21):**David was not triumphantly confident because of his advantageous situation, but rather despite his difficult situation. There was no mercy in his enemies hearts, instead they were treacherous and dissimulating. Despite all that, David declared his triumphant confidence in God.

2. The basis of confidence (verses 22,23):He based his confidence on two things:

1. **Casting his burden on the Lord:** "Cast your burden [Hebrew: anxiety] on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved"(verse 22). "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression" (Proverbs 12:25). It is amazing that the word burden in Hebrew can also mean gift or present. Sometimes God sends us blessings of pain. David seems to be calling us to hand over to the Lord the free gifts He gives us, the pains He permitted, and cast ourselves and our burdens on Him. He will work out everything for us because He wants to and is able to deliver us from every anxiety, trouble and temptation. He is the God of the impossibilities, and everything that is impossible with men is possible with God (Matthew 19:26). "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7 NIV).
2. **The Lord punishes the wicked (verse 23):**This God who punishes the sinner is the God that David trusts. "But I will trust in You."

5.4. Questions

1. David has sad memories - give a resume of them.
2. David bases his trust in God on two things. What are they?

6. Psalm Fifty-Six

There Are Many who Fight against Me

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Silent Dove in Distant Lands." A Michtam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath.

1 Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me.

2 My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High.

3 Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

4 In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

5 All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God!

8 You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?

9 When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me.

10 In God (I will praise His word), in the LORD (I will praise His word),

11 In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

12 Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You,

13 For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

There are seven psalms that Saint Augustine calls The Psalms of the Fugitive. They are Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 142. David composed those psalms during his flight from King Saul. He was running from one country to another, and from one cave to another, even to the lands of the Philistines. The occasion of this psalm is the same as that of Psalm 34, so please refer back to the introduction of that psalm.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: A complaint about the enemy's pursuit and how it was resolved (verses 1-4)
- Second: A complaint about the enemy's plots and how it was resolved (verses 5-8)
- Third: Reassurance with God (verses 9-13)

6.1. First: A Complaint about the Enemy's Pursuit and How It Was Resolved

(verses 1-4)

1. The cause of the complaint (verses 1,2):

1. **The enemy pursues him:** "Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up ... my enemies would hound me all day"(verses 1,2a). He seeks God's mercy and complains of the enemy who chases and pursues him, although the enemy is a mortal man. Man is of dust and to dust he shall return, but in his evil he thinks that he is strong and able to pursue and kill David. No doubt that God's mercy is far greater than a mortal mans, and it shall rescue the hunted psalmist.
2. **The enemy never stops pursuing him:** "Fighting all day he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me the whole day"(verses 1b,2a).
3. **The enemies are numerous:** "For there are many who fight against me, O Most High"(verse 2b). It is a naive believer who does not expect evil and oppression. The devil is like a roaring lion that prowls around seeking someone to swallow (1 Peter 5:8). Christ said to Peter, "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:31,32).

2. The answer to the complaint (verses 3,4):

1. **Dependence on God:** "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You In God I have put my trust; I will not fear"(verses 3,4b). The Bible records only one time when David was afraid of the enemy. That was the time when he was in Gath (1 Samuel 21:12). In his fear he submitted his case to the One who sees, yet is unseen, the All-powerful. Thus he became one of Those who trust in the Lord who are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever (Psalm 125:1,2).

2. **Praising God's word:** "In God whose words I praise"(verse 4a NIV). "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope" (Psalm 130:5). "Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord has spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).
3. **Knowing peoples weakness:** "What can flesh do to me?"(verse 4c).

6.2. Second: A Complaint about the Enemy's Plots and How It Was Resolved (verses 5-8)

1. The cause for complaining of the plots (verses 5,6):

1. **They twist his words:** "All day they twist my words"(verse 5a). When Saul fell into David's hand, he asked him, "Why do you listen to men who say, Indeed David seeks your harm?" (1 Samuel 24:9). Doeg the Edomite twisted David's words and the interpretation of what the high priest did and lodged a false complaint against them which led the murder of 85 priests and the attack against the city of Nob with all its men, women, children, babies and animals (1 Samuel 22:18,19).
2. **They think about evil:** "All their thoughts are against me for evil"(verse 5b). They are of one father, which is the devil, and "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" (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).
3. **They look for evil:** "They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life"(verse 6). Like spies watching him, whenever he is aware of them they hide. They kept on watching him and marking his movements to report them to Saul who had ordered them: "Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah" (1 Samuel 23:22,23 NIV).

2. Two requests for resolving the complaint (verses 7,8):

1. **The punishment of the plotters:** "Shall they escape by iniquities? In anger cast down the peoples, O God"(verse 7). David bases his trust on the fact that God's justice must deliver him from those who plotted against him. God's justice repays everyone according to his works.
2. **Divine deliverance:** "You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your Book?"(verse 8). The Lord numbers, or counts, even the hairs of the believer's head (Matthew 10:30). God counted how many times David wandered, how many times he hid in caves, how many difficulties he went through and how many troubles he had, and sent the angel of His presence to save him. In His love and tender mercies He released him, lifted him up and carried him (Isaiah 63:9). God kept

David's tears in His divine bottle (a container of leather, like a wineskin). This expression is taken from an ancient custom. When a friend would go to another mourning friend he would weep with him, then wipe his tears with a cloth. The cloth is then wrung into a small bottle, which was kept as a memorial of the sympathetic friendship. David trusts that the Lord is his friend. He knows that He commiserates with him, shares his pain and records all his sorrows and tears in His Book. "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name" (Malachi 3:16 NIV). It appears that God records the situation of every believer who prays to Him in a special notebook, so the pray-er does not need to keep on repeating and babbling the request like those who assume that they will be heard because of their many words (Matthew 6:7).

6.3. Third: Reassurance with God

(verses 9-13)

On the basis of the truth of divine revelation and previous experiences the believer finds reassurance, peace and rest. He refers his reassurance to:

1. **Confirmation of the enemy's defeat:** "When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me"(verse 9). Reassurance comes first from knowing for sure that the enemy is defeated and that the believer is delivered. Here is another parallel: "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies" (2 Samuel 22:4).
2. **Confirmation of victory:** "In God (I will praise His word), in the Lord (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"(verses 10,11). It is true that He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded (Proverbs 13:13). The godly will rest assured because he trusts that victory will come, according to God's promises. He will not only be delivered, but triumph as well! Here the psalmist repeats what he said earlier in verse 4: he extols God's words and promises and trusts Him. He has nothing to fear, for what can man possibly do to him. The Lord, the King of heaven and earth says at the beginning of every morning, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you ... Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (Matthew 7:7; John 16:24 NIV).
3. **Confirmation of the relationship with the Lord (verses 12,13):**

David's relationship with the Lord shows itself clearly in the vow he pays and the thanksgiving he offers.

1. **Paying ones vows:** "Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God"(verse 12a). Despite the fact that he is a stranger in the land of the Philistines he trusts that he will

come back to the place of worship in Jerusalem to pay his vows. "I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble" (Psalm 66:13).

(Refer to the comment on Psalm 50:14 for more information on vows).

2. **Thank offerings:** "I will present my thank offerings to you"(verse 12b NIV). The psalmist believes that God will deliver him from future problems, so he will express his thanks. "I will sacrifice fat animals to you, and an offering of rams. I will offer bulls and goats" (Psalm 66:15 NIV).
4. **Confirmation of deliverance:** "For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not delivered my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"(verse 13). David speaks of the future as though it were past already, because he is sure of the deliverance. He has experienced the divine deliverance many times before: God delivered him as a boy from a preying lion; God delivered him and his people from Goliath. How often has the enemy tried to push him, so as to make them stumble and fall, but the Lord set him up on an immovable rock! How often has he tried to hurl him into the shadow of the grave, but the Lord prevented him! David said to his enemy, "I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me" (Psalm 118:13 NIV). He believes that he will walk before the Lord in the light of the living, not in the darkness of the grave. He will live on in the Lord's presence, under His protection, to offer Him an acceptable service. Everyone who follows the light of the world will not walk in darkness, but has the light of life (John 8:12).

Lets focus on God, that we may experience, together with David, His goodness, loving care and undiminishing favour.

6.4. Questions

1. The enemy wanted to swallow David. How did David find his rescue?
2. David expressed his gratefulness to God by doing two things. Mention them.

7. Psalm Fifty-Seven

Until these Calamities Have Passed By

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.

1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.

2 I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me.

3 He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. Selah God

shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

4 My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen. Selah

7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake, my glory! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations.

10 For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.

There are seven psalms which Saint Augustine calls The Psalms of the Fugitive. They are Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 142. David composed those psalms during his flight from King Saul. He was running from one country to another, and from one cave to another, even to the lands of the Philistines. The superscription says that David wrote this psalm when he fled from Saul into the cave. It is not sure whether this cave is the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22) or the cave of En Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea (1 Samuel 24). This psalm, like the previous one, starts off with the supplication: "Be merciful to me, O God." The Church has considered this psalm suitable for the morning of Christ's resurrection when he overcame the forces of death and Hades (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Also the last verse in the psalm says, Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: God is our protection in calamities (verses 1-6)
- Second: Praising the One who delivers from calamities (verses 7-11)

7.1. First: God Is our Protection in Calamities

(verses 1-6)

Since God gave victory to His people through David, Saul grudged him. Running for his life, David kept moving from one place to another, so much so that he asked Saul one time, "Whom do you pursue? ... A flea?" (1 Samuel 24:14). Fleas are very tiny insects that keep jumping here and there, and it is very difficult to catch them. David seems to be saying that he did not deserve to be pursued by Saul, who would never catch him anyway!

Maybe we are not in David's circumstances, but how many of us have not been haunted by

guilt and are in need of the shelter of atonement that covers sins? Who among us has not been tempted by Satan? God has only one sinless Son, but even He was tempted. Who among us has not encountered the difficulties of persecution and come up against troubles of the present, evil age? Paul said, "All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). We are in the same boat with David- buffeted by storms! In the first six verses of our psalm we will find five facts:

1. **A request for mercy:** "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge"(verses 1,2). Depending on God's tender compassion and faithfulness to His promises, David asks for mercy. He repeats his petition twice because he feels unworthy. Christ came, not to those who thought themselves righteous, but to the unrighteous who are aware of their transgressions and confess them (Matthew 9:13). David seeks protection under the wings of the Lord from the calamities that pass over him like successive waves threatening to drown him. It is an expression pregnant with love, speed, upliftedness, comfort, shade and security. For when the little chicks sense danger, they rush to take refuge under the shadow of their mothers wings. "As a father pities his children, so He pities those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:13).

The Lord protects the believer from difficulties as well as from the scorching heat of the sun. This is what Christ wanted to do to Jerusalem when He said, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (Matthew 23:37). Boaz said to Ruth, "The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge" (Ruth 2:12). David sought protection of the Most High God, the King of the universe, who is sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe fills the temple (Isaiah 6:1). He is far above the psalmists enemies, and He is the Advocate and the Intercessor who is able to aid those who are tempted. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16). He is in the position of authority in heaven and on earth, and He will protect all those who love Him always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18,20).

2. **Expectation of protection:** "He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth"(verse 3). God has many ways of rescue, all of them are heavenly, full of wisdom in timing and action. He sends whomever He will whenever He wills. He sends His mercy and His truth, which are like guardian angels serving the godly who cry out for deliverance. These two reproach and put to shame the enemy who would swallow the psalmist up.
3. **The seriousness of the situation:** "My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men

who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword"(verse 4). Enemies were all around David wanting to devour him, just as when Daniel was in the lions den (Daniel 6). Despite the fires of resentment and animosity that raged in their hearts against him, David lay down to sleep! David said as he fled before Absalom, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). He slept in the cave of Adullam as Peter fell sound asleep in prison, even though he knew that Herod's anger kindled against him (Acts 12:6). A scared man may sleep to escape danger, but a believer both lies down and sleeps because he trusts in the perfection of God's love for him. True, they tore his soul to pieces with their harsh words, which were like sharp arrows or swords, but he knew that his deliverance must come because the believer shall judge every tongue that rises against him in court (Isaiah 54:17).

4. **Seeking the glory of the Lord:** "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth"(verse 5). The psalmist asks the Lord to reveal His glory: "The LORD alone will be exalted in that day. The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled)" (Isaiah 2:11,12 NIV).
5. **Finding protection:** "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen"(verse 6). How many nets has Saul set up and how many pits has he dug to catch David, whose soul was bowed down because of the incessant hunt! Yet, the Lord saved him from them all, and his enemies reaped what they planted. "Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake" (Ecclesiastes 10:8 NIV).

7.2. Second: Praising the One who Delivers from Calamities

(verses 7-11)

1. **The spirit of praise:** "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise"(verse 7). One would expect him to say after all the fears he described in the previous verses, My heart is fearful. And he would even have the right to say so according to human standards. However, he established his heart in the Lord despite all the odds. God has given him sure promises and dealt with him in such magnificent ways. He could never forget the day Samuel the prophet came to his fathers house to anoint a king to the Lord. Jesse brought his six sons, but Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse answered, "There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep." Samuel replied, "We will not sit down until he arrives." Samuel waited until David came, then anointed him king according to the Lord's command, and the Spirit of the Lord fell on David (1 Samuel 16:1-13 NIV). Due to David's stability in the Lord he never stopped praising. Neither the devil nor Saul's pursuit nor the treachery of the Philistines could stop him. David made the walls of the Adullam cave echo the sound of his praise. His

motto was: "I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid? He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. You continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel" (Psalm 146:2; 27:1; 112:7; Colossians 1:23 NIV).

2. **The enthusiasm of praise:** "Awake, my glory! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn"(verse 8). David calls the most glorious thing in him to praise the Lord: He calls his mind that thinks, his heart that loves, his tongue that utters, his poetic imagination that composes psalms and his artistic abilities to set the right tune to praising the Lord. He calls all his musical instruments, both lute and harp, to awaken the dawn with him. The Talmud says that it was David's habit to hang a lute over his head when he went to bed. After midnight the northern wind would blow on the lutes strings and make it produce tunes. Hearing this, David would wake up to read the Torah until dawn. The Talmud quotes David saying, Dawn awakens kings, but I awaken dawn.

An Arab poet said:

"Awaken in the dark, O worshipper,
Until when will you lie upon your bed?!"

3. **The place of praise:** "I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations"(verse 9). David praised the Lord among the peoples with an evangelistic spirit that went beyond nation and race, just to testify to his God before those who didn't know Him. His desire came true, for worshippers in all churches sing his psalms as though he were the choir leader of all churches!
4. **The motives for praise:** "For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds"(verse 10). Mercy and truth moved David to praise. He had asked God for mercy at the beginning of the psalm, and at the end of it he affirms that it has reached to the heavens, high above the injustice of Saul and all his adversaries. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him" (Psalm 103:11 NIV). David saw God from within the cave, and, coming out, he saw high clouds and a rainbow. He recognised this old covenant of God with his forefather Noah and was sure of God's faithfulness. And as rain, which waters man and plants, came down in abundance he was aware of God's mercy. It does happen sometimes that the truth hides behind the clouds of falsehood, but the suns hiding behind the clouds does not mean that it does not exist. It is just behind the cloud. Likewise, God is present behind all the temptations of life, and nothing will hinder His mercy from reaching us.
5. **The humility of the praiser:** "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth"(verse 11). David realises that his singing and praising is not enough,

so he calls upon the angels and the spirits of the perfected saints to complete his limited singing with their great chorus. He calls all human beings to exalt the name of the Lord in all the earth, so that His will in heaven would be the same as on earth: "Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" (Nehemiah 9:5).

May the Lord always grant us His mercies that never end, so that His glory would be exalted over all the earth! "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns" (Revelations 19:6 NIV).

7.3. Questions

1. Verses 1-5 explain the wickedness of the wicked. Give a resume.
2. Give two lessons we learn from the destruction of the wicked.

8. Psalm Fifty-Eight

Surely He is God who Judges in the Earth

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David.

1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?

2 No, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear,

5 Which will not heed the voice of charmers, charming ever so skilfully.

6 Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!

7 Let them flow away as waters which run continually; when he bends his bow, let his arrows be as if cut in pieces.

8 Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes, like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the burning thorns, He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, as in His living and burning wrath.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,

11 So that men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth."

David presents us in this psalm with a man sinful in his actions and evil destination, and

urges us to repent. He emphasises that God wants to save us from the destiny of the wicked. He starts off by rebuking the officials who do not judge with justice. He claims they are worse than the accused who are tried by them. He also affirms that God will make the unjust unable to hurt the innocent, for He will wipe them out from the earth. At this point men will say, Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth.

Perhaps this psalm was written during the time of Absalom's unsuccessful revolt against his father David (2 Samuel 15).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The manifestations of the evil of the wicked (verses 1-5)
- Second: The results of the evil of the wicked (verses 6-9)
- Third: Two lessons to learn from the destruction of the wicked (verses 10,11)

8.1. First: The Manifestations of the Evil of the Wicked

(verses 1-5)

1. **He conceals truth:** "Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?"(verse 1). David reproaches the wicked rulers who conceal the truth and fail to reveal it, those who do not judge with justice and righteousness. He asks them a rhetorical question, Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men? The expression sons of men applies to man in his weakness and mortality. David reminds them that they will not hold their positions for ever. Why then, he asks, do they conceal the truth although "Anyone ... who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17 NIV)?
2. **He devises violence:** "No, in your heart you work wickedness; you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth"(verse 2). They have resolved with all their hearts to sin, because their nature is corrupt. They ought to weigh matters carefully to judge uprightly, instead they weigh matters in the balances of violence. They ought to fill the scale of the balances with justice, instead they filled it with violence, and tip the scale of violence against the people. They feign justice and practice violence; they substitute justice with violence, and righteousness with wickedness.
3. **His nature is corrupt:** "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies"(verse 3). Since the beginning of creation man's wickedness has been great "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more" (Ephesians 4:17-19 NIV). As for those

who repented and opened their hearts to the grace of the Lord, God says to them, "You, however, did not come to know Christ that way" (Ephesians 4:20 NIV). They have risen with Christ to a new life.

4. **They refuse to repent:** "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, which will not heed the voice of charmers, charming ever so skilfully"(verses 4,5). The wicked are the peoples enemies, and like snakes they poison peoples lives. They reject God's words and do not repent. The psalmist compares them with a deaf cobra that stops its ear so that it wont hear the voice of wise charmers playing on the flute. They refuse to be hypnotised by them and have their fangs extracted, for they want their venom to remain in them.

There are sinners who not only reject God's work, but resist His Holy Spirit. To those Stephen, the first Christian martyr, says, "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him" (Acts 7:51-53 NIV). How often does God call us to repent! He uses a biblical verse, His daily contact with us when He touches or disciplines us lovingly or a friend who would speak with us about the transformation that took place in his life. Through these and a host of other ways God extends to us an open invitation to repentance, saying, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelations 3:20) to fill his heart with the forgiveness of his sins and grants him the grace of adoption that secures him an eternal life.

8.2. Second: The Results of the Evil of the Wicked

(verses 6-9)

Since they are so sinful and unwilling to repent, David declares that God will break their evil power.

1. **Their power breaks down:** "Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!"(verse 6). God must destroy the power that wants to prey on the righteous one. How often has God broken the teeth of the wicked and led him to repentance, after showing him how helpless he was and making him abandon his violence and start obeying his Lord!
2. **Their work will fail:** "Let them flow away as waters which run continually, when he bends his bow, let his arrows be as if cut in pieces"(verse 7). If they are as solid as ice they will melt away and the ground shall swallow them. Perhaps they thought that their power will last for ever, but the ground will certainly swallow them, and they will vanish. Their arrows will fail to hit the mark, which is the heart of the righteous. They wish to destroy and annihilate the believer, but God will stand by him to ensure his safety, foil

the attack of the wicked and cut off their memory from the earth.

3. **Their end is total destruction (verses 8,9):**

In these two verses there are three pictures of the end of the wicked:

1. **"Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes"(verse 8a).**Snails are molluscs that live in shells. How many empty shells do we find because the snails left them and never returned to them!
2. **"Like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun"(verse 8b).**He asks for the wicked to be born dead, that he may he die before sighting the sun, and the earth be spared from his evil.
3. **"Before your pots can feel the burning thorns, He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, as in his living and burning wrath"(verse 9).**He asks God to hasten to destroy the wicked before heat reaches the pots of food and cooks the meat within, before it is known whether the thorns used for burning are green or dry. The Scripture will apply to them: "I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found" (Psalm 37:35,36 NIV). "But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches ... You will lie down in torment" (Isaiah 50:11 NIV). Before the unjust judges taste the fruit of their injustice, God's wrath will befall them like a sweeping flood "But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away ... and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place" (2 Samuel 23:6,7).

8.3. Third: Two Lessons to Learn from the Destruction of the Wicked

(verses 10,11)

1. **The righteous who is persecuted rejoices in justice:** "The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked"(verse 10). As much as the righteous grieves for the destruction of the wicked he rejoices that God has performed His divine justice and that he himself escaped from the evil of the wicked. The believer stands in perplexity before the destruction of the wicked: Will he rejoice or grieve? He paces the battleground after the battle is over and ponders its effects. He sees the wicked fallen down and the glory of the Lord lifted up, and says, "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37 NIV). The day will come when Christ's victory is announced, and the overcomers will reign with Him. "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying Alleluia! Salvation and honour and glory and power to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgements" (Revelations 19:1,2).
2. **The victory of divine justice:** "So that men will say, Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth"(verse 11). When divine justice takes

its course we can see the fruit of a godly life, for a man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7). Seeing the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper may make us assume that God no longer cares for mankind, but the truth is that God is a loving Father and just Judge in all the earth. Victory will never belong to the evil one nor to his hosts, because the believers will overcome with the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Revelations 12:7-17).

This psalm extends an invitation to every soul that is far away from God to repent before it is broken and smashed to pieces. "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7,8). God's voice calls on us to repent, just as the flute of the charmer calls the poisonous snake to remove its fangs. Let us hear His voice and respond to it. Let us return to God with all our hearts and accept His invitation, so that we might have the good part that will never be taken away from us (Luke 10:42).

8.4. Questions

1. Verses 1-5 explain the wickedness of the wicked. Give a resume.
2. Give two lessons we learn from the destruction of the wicked.

9. Psalm Fifty-Nine

They Gather against me, not for my Transgression!

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men.

3 For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD.

4 They run and prepare themselves through no fault of mine. Awake to help me, and behold!

5 You therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to punish all the nations; do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah

6 At evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city.

7 Indeed, they belch with their mouth; swords are in their lips; for they say, "Who hears?"

8 But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision.

9 I will wait for You, O You his Strength; for God is my defence;

10 My God of mercy shall come to meet me; God shall let me see my desire on my enemies.

11 Do not slay them, lest my people forget; scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

12 For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride, and for the cursing and lying which they speak.

13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth. Selah

14 And at evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city.

15 They wander up and down for food, and howl if they are not satisfied.

16 But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17 To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defence, my God of mercy.

David wrote this psalm after King Saul sent his men to arrest him at home, at the house of his wife Michal, Saul's own daughter (1 Samuel 19). He expected encouragement from his father-in-law, not murder. He expected honour from his king, not pursuit. Often the enemies of man are his own household (Matthew 10:36). But the heavenly Father is and will always be faithful and true to His promises. He will open His door wide for the oppressed and will never shut anyone out! When our confidence in those near us is shaken He remains our secure refuge. Whenever man's enmity increases, we rush quickly to the shelter of Providence.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The fugitive seeks protection (verses 1-9)
- Second: The fugitive demands retribution (verses 10-17)

9.1. First: The Fugitive Seeks Protection

(verses 1-9)

- 1. He asks for protection from those who rise against him:** "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men"(verses 1,2). Oh how much has David suffered at the hand of his wrong-doing, bloodthirsty enemies who rose up against him. And how much has God protected him from them in His stronghold and under the shadow of His wings! God was his stronghold and fortress.
- 2. He asks for protection from men of intrigues:** "For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression nor for my sin, O Lord. They run and prepare themselves through no fault of mine. Awake to help me, and behold!"(verses

3,4). Although David did not commit any evil act against his enemies, yet they quickly surrounded him, having devised evil intrigues against him. They dug him a hole and threw a net over it, so he thought that the Lord was asleep and asked Him to awake and rush to his aid with a mighty army.

3. **He asks for protection from those who repeatedly attack him:** "You therefore, God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to punish all the nations; do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors. At evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city. Indeed, they belch out with their mouth [talk empty words]; swords are in their lips; for they say, Who hears?"(verses 5-7). The psalmist turns to the God of hosts who deploys His angelic, celestial, natural and human soldiers to defend him. He also turns to the God of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps, who is not pleased with injustice. He pleads with him to pay attention to him and rescue him from his enemies, whom he describes as belonging to the nations. They are of the descendants of Abraham all right, but their thought patterns and actions are like those of the nations. They live in ignorant violence: they are treacherous and do not deserve God's mercy; they are immersed in evil; they behave like fierce, stray dogs that sleep by day in laziness and awaken by night to roam the streets searching for food. Hunger makes them growl in low-pitched tones that are almost inaudible. They belch out empty, ridiculous words, for "The mouth of the fool gushes folly the mouth of the wicked gushes evil" (Proverbs 15:2,28 NIV). They hurt David with their words and assume that God does not hear or care, and that He will not help David at all. They say, "The Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand. Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?" (Psalm 94:7-9).
4. **He asks for protection from those who will end up in shame:** "But You, O Lord, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision; I will wait for You, O You His Strength, for God is my refuge"(verses 8,9). The enemy is stronger than David, so he runs for his Refuge, whom he experienced scores of times. True, "The people plot a vain thing ... He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision ... Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him" (Psalm 2:1,4,12).

9.2. Second: The Fugitive Demands Retribution

(verses 10-17)

1. **He asks to see their retribution:** "My merciful God shall come to meet me; God shall let me see my desire on my enemies"(verse 10). David declares that God's mercy will go ahead of him to defend him and prepare a way for delivering him and punishing his enemies. He will turn around and no longer see them because the Lord has destroyed them. The same mercy that goes ahead of him punishes those who hunt him.
2. **He asks that they pay for their sin (verses 11-15):**

1. **Through being scattered:** "Do not slay them, lest my people forget; scatter them by Your power and bring them down, O Lord our shield"(verse 11). He does not ask for his enemies to be killed immediately, but to be scattered and brought down by God so that the people should see God's deliverance of His servant and the bad end of his enemy. Then they would recall how greatly God delivered him. How many miracles do people not mention because they simply happened in secret! David, therefore, asks for an evident, unforgettable miracle. With Saul pursuing him all the time God's care for David would manifest itself in the fact that his enemies are continually scattered. His enemies wander restlessly like Cain, of whom God said, "When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:12 NIV). They will wander like the children of Israel, of whom the Bible says, "The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone" (Numbers 32:13 NIV). David asks the Lord to strike his enemies severely and to bring them down, because the Lord is our shield. Thus they will appear powerless and helpless, and it will be clearly seen that one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still (Ecclesiastes 5:8 NIV).

No doubt the spirit of the Gospel differs from that of the Torah in relation to enemies; the Gospel urges us to forgive those who trespass against us (Matthew 5:38-42), whereas the Torah promotes the eye-for-eye-and-tooth-for-tooth principle (Leviticus 24:20). David simply demanded the application of the law that was known at his time.

2. **Through being consumed:** "For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride, and for the cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth"(verses 12,13). After asking God to bring extended misery and torture of wandering upon them, he demands that He to consume and destroy their conspiracies, and punish them for the sin of their mouth, their verbal attack on him, their lying and pride. He repeats his request: "Consume ... consume" to make sure God will put a certain end to their power and might, "... but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires" (Proverbs 11:6 NIV). Some people may take the sins of speech lightly, but God must judge him who speaks evil: "I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant!" (Luke 19:22 NIV).
3. **Through their failure:** "And at evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city. They wander up and down for food, and howl if they are not satisfied"(verses 14,15). Like wild dogs, David's enemies rest all day and at the evening they growl in low pitched voices, roving around the city, seeking David's life to devour it (cf. verse 6). They are thirsty for the shedding of blood; they will not achieve their goal, for when dawn breaks David will still be safe. They will keep on seeking his blood, but try as they might, they will never have their satisfaction in

killing him!

3. **He offers thanksgiving to God who rescued him:** "But I will sing of Your power; yes I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defence, my God of mercy"(verses 16,17). David concludes his psalm with a reference to the destiny of the godly who trusts in God's salvation. He praises and thanks the Lord because He granted him deliverance and offered him protection. He used to take shelter in the caves that God made. We, too, turn to many natural strongholds which God made. But the supernatural strongholds of protection, which we cannot dream of or grasp, are even more! "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:20,21). He is the defence and refuge to whom we can run in time of distress. Then we will shout out loud: "To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defence, the God of my mercy" (verse 17).

9.3. Questions

1. What did the violent men do to David?
2. What is the punishment he is asking to befall them?

10. Psalm Sixty

A Banner to be Displayed because of the Truth

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Lily of the Testimony." A Michtam of David. For teaching. When he fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

1 O God, You have cast us off; You have broken us down; You have been displeased; oh, restore us again!

2 You have made the earth tremble; You have broken it; heal its breaches, for it is shaking.

3 You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion.

4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah

5 That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me.

6 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth.

7 Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.

8 Moab is My washpot; over Edom I will cast My shoe; Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me."

9 Who will bring me to the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom?

10 Is it not You, O God, who cast us off? And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?

11 Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless.

12 Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

This psalm glorifies the Lord on account of the victory He granted His people after they had been painfully defeated. This is every believer's experience, for Satan and his demonic and human lackeys do not cease to attack the believers. They always raise accusations against the children of God. Satan comes to us and accuses God of not loving us anymore. He whispers to our souls and says we are no good spiritually, so that we should lose our confidence and stop obeying the Lord. Yet, in the Lord, we have victory over Satan and his minions. We can, and we do, overcome temptation, sickness and trouble. No doubt there are victories and defeats in our faith lives, and defeats must not frustrate as much as victories must not make us haughty and proud. On the contrary, a previous victory should always inspire and encourage us to achieve further victories. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us and, in our struggle against sin, resist to the point of shedding our blood (Hebrews 12:1,4).

Psalm 60 is a witness to future generations; it declares that the final triumph belongs to the Lord and all those who follow Him. The occasion for writing Psalm 60 is found in 2 Samuel 8 where David fought against Aram Naharaim (Mesopotamia) and the Arameans (Syrians) of Zobah in the North, and was attacked by the Edomites from the South. So he had to return from the North to the South to repel their attack and won the battle. He won another time against the Edomites later on (2 Kings 14:7).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The psalmists confusion (verses 1-3)
- Second: The psalmists expectation (verses 4,5)
- Third: God's promises to the psalmist (verses 6-8)
- Fourth: The psalmists hope (verses 9-12)

10.1. First: The Psalmist's Confusion

(verses 1-3)

David was confused by the fact that the enemy had invaded his country from the South while he was engaged in battle in the North. He did not have enough forces to fight on two fronts. He felt that God rejected him and allowed his enemies to attack him because of His wrath against him. The earth was shaken under him, in consequence, and was cracked, so that he

could no longer stand firm on his feet. He saw hard things and troubles; he drank the wine of confusion; he became like a drunkard unable to assess his damages. People who saw him made him their object of ridicule, and he did not know how to defend himself.

The confused psalmist, however, understood the cause of what happened to him, and knew how to solve it. Oh, restore us again, he pleaded, because being far away from God was the cause of defeat, and only by being restored to Him would that defeat be removed. Heal its breaches, he implored, because the earth was shaken and broken by none other than the Almighty God. In saying so he shows a great confidence in God who will get him out of his confusion. Some of us may stop at confusion and not pray, thus doing wrong to ourselves, for there is no way out for someone confused except prayer!

10.2. Second: The Psalmist's Expectation

(verses 4,5)

The psalmist says that God gave those who fear Him a banner that may be displayed because of truth. Now we know that this banner is God's love for them: "His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4). They must conquer, because God's love neither diminishes nor changes. God's love delivers God's beloved ones and makes God's right hand save them. The Lord himself is also the banner of His people, because His name is The-Lord-Is-My-Banner (which was the name of the altar Moses built in memory of his victory over the Amalekites in Exodus 17:15).

The Lord has brought His people into a covenant with himself, and He expects them to fulfil this covenant, for it is true. War against the enemy of the Lord, therefore, is for the sake of truth and must be done by means of the weapons of truth. Now David was the Lord's beloved (his name meant the beloved of the Lord and he was the only one who had such a name in the Bible). He must be delivered through God's banner, even if the heathens attack him, for the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety with Him (Deuteronomy 33:12). God reassures him: "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3). It is out of loving-kindness that God purifies the believer through troubles and leads him to repentance. In the trouble the believer receives blessings: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Through God's grace he will be able to bear the trouble according to His promise: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

10.3. Third: God's Promises to the Psalmist

(verses 6-8)

1. **Promises of dividing the land:** "God has spoken in His holiness"(verse 6). He had

promised the land to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:18-21), brought His people out of the land of bondage, helped them cross the Red Sea and gave them the land. All the fortifications of the enemy gave way before them: the East of the Jordan fell; Succoth, Gilead (Aglon) and Manasseh, as well as the West of the Jordan; Shechem (Nablus), Ephraim and Judah. Then Joshua divided the land up for the people (Joshua 18:10).

The victories of God's people in the past give the believers in all ages courage, confidence and faith. One cannot forget how the manna was provided on a daily basis for the people in the desert of Sinai for forty years (Exodus 16:4-11), nor the ravens that fed Elijah (1 Kings 17:2-7), nor the widow and the little oil which filled the jars (2 Kings 4:1-7), nor the prisons gates that were opened to let Peter go free (Acts 12). The Lord always brings out of the eater something to eat, and out of the strong something sweet (Judges 14:14). He uses the most difficult circumstances to give us the greatest blessings. He turns the hardest days into great experiences of His divine love. For in the hard circumstances the believer discovers his weakness, as well as the grace of the Holy Spirit that strengthens him. Even the sin into which he falls will teach him that the Lord is forgiving and always gives a second chance.

2. **Promises of exalting the people:** "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver"(verse 7). God declares that He owns Gilead and Manasseh, to the east of the Jordan, which was given to the half tribe of Manasseh. Likewise He affirms that Ephraim, the fighter, is the strongest tribe after Judah. He likens him to a helmet that protects a warriors head. It was Ephraim that Moses blessed, saying, "His horns are like the horns of a wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth" (Deuteronomy 33:17). The tribe of Judah also belongs to God, who has compared it to a sceptre, for from him David would come. It was about Judah that Jacob prophesied: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Genesis 49:10). And most importantly, it was from him that the Messiah came, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelations 5:5).
3. **Promises of the enemy's fall (verse 8):**His three enemies will fall.
 1. **Moab:** "Moab is my washpot"(verse 8a). A washpot is like a basin in which people used to put water for washing themselves. Namely, the psalmist washes his feet after a dusty trip on the road upon Moab, which shows Moab in a state of abject servitude. Isaiah said, We have heard of the pride of Moab -he is very proud- of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath the glory of Moab will be despised (Isaiah 16:6,14).
 2. **Edom:** "Over Edom I will cast my shoe"(verse 8b). This means that Edom will become a servant for the psalmist, who will take off his shoes to wash them. It can also mean that he will possess the land of Edom. It was the custom those days that whoever buys a house or land takes off his shoes and lay them on the house or land,

indicating that he owns it and that it became his own.

3. **Philistia:** "Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me"(verse 8c). Philistia will raise a shout of triumph for him, because it was subdued under his power. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). They are not only at peace with him, but they serve him, too!

The believer has three enemies: The flesh, the world and Satan. Our flesh pulls us toward wrong; the world tempts us with its continuing lust; Satan paints sin for us in glowing terms. Yet, the One who granted David victory in the past will surely grant us victory over these three enemies of ours. So let us ask of God confidence, strength and victory. Let us also put on the full armour of God to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-13).

10.4. Fourth: The Psalmist's Hope

(verses 9-12)

1. **God will lead him to Sela (Petra):** "Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom? Is it not You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?"(verses 9,10). The strong city is the capital of Edom, which is now known as Petra. It is a very strong and elevated city, built into the rocks and is invincible. The psalmist trusts that God will lead him to Edom and give him victory, although He refused him and no longer went out with his army. Spiritually speaking, we can get the privileges from God that He promised us, such as forgiving us, giving us peace of mind and sanctity of life and lastly bringing us into His eternal glory. Quoting David, we will say, "Who, O Lord, will lead us into all these blessings? Isn't it You, O God? Although You left us because we let go of Your hand, You will hold our hand once more and lead us again." "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him" (Job 13:15).
2. **Help is from the Lord:** "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man. Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies"(verses 11,12). David learned a lesson from defeat. He had depended on himself and his allies, but he came to learn that man's help is futile and that God alone is his help in time of trouble. This verse gives a lesson to the soul-winner: Only through Jesus do we reach a sinners heart, as fortified as it is against the knowledge of God and as resistant to God's love as it can be.

David commenced his psalm in perplexity, but concluded it in victory. He started off shaken and fallen, but ended up valiantly through God. This tremendous power is still available to each and every believer to help him do valiantly and conquer everyone who treads down on him, whether it be sin, difficulties, enemies or temptations. Oh, that we may learn to knock at the Lord's door in confidence, love and obedience, so that the door to great victory may be open unto us! We will be more than conquerors through Him who loved us, and nothing will

separate us from the love of Christ. We will always be in fellowship with the Overcomer, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (Romans 8:37,39; 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV).

10.5. Questions

1. In verses 6-8 the psalmist mentions promises of God. Write down two of them.
2. What are the hopes of the psalmist?

11. Quiz

There are two questions at the end of each chapter. If you answer 15 of these questions correctly you may join our Bible school by correspondence and work toward a certificate.

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