

## THE PSALMS - HANGING IN WITH GOD Senior Lesson September 2011

During the past few months we have been reading and studying a variety of Psalms that express much about God, our selves and our relationship with him. No doubt, many Psalms encouraged you and strengthened your trust in God. But perhaps others contained things that you found disturbing. You may have noticed that some Psalms seem harsh and vindictive, filled with pleas for God to destroy one's enemies. Is this right? Should we be praying like this? These Psalms used to bother me until I realised that the writers weren't taking personal revenge but rather expressing an understanding of God's holiness, justice and hatred of sin. They saw that all evil actions are actually against God and were asking that He deal with the perpetrators. These "imprecatory" Psalms can actually be a great comfort to us during times when we feel under "enemy" attack, whether spiritual, emotional or physical. Like the writers we can find God's presence and protection in our times of trouble.

READ PSALM 35 This Psalm was written by David, possible while being hunted by king Saul.

Question 1. In your own words, what does David ask for himself in verses 1-3, 22-24?

Question 2. In your own words, what does David ask for his enemies in verses 4-8?

Question 3. What personal encouragement do you find in this Psalm?

You may not be feeling the attack of an enemy. But you may be feeling discouraged, worried or fearful about something. Perhaps you have been feeling God is remote, he's not listening to your prayers and the Bible is irrelevant? You will find expressions of all of these emotions and many more in the Psalms. Let's look for some.

AFRAID? - READ PSALM 3

Question 4. Why could David sleep peacefully despite being surrounded by his enemies?

FEELING ALONE? - READ PSALM 12 Following God's ways can be a lonely path.

Question 5. Why can we trust God?

DISCOURAGED? - READ PSALM 43

Despite his feelings, the writer makes some intellectual choices in verses 4 & 5 determining "I will".

Question 6. What choices does the writer make?

BURNED OUT? READ PSALM 63

Question 7. How does David describe a) God's love b) God's protection

WITHOUT HOPE? - READ PSALM 88

This Psalm doesn't give any answers, but it shows that no matter how we feel we can express our feelings to God. Even when forsaken by friends, without hope and probably close to death, we can cry out to God and he will hear and understand.

THERE IS HOPE - READ PSALM 37:1-24, 39-40

For all who commit themselves to God there is hope. He can be trusted to care better than anyone.

Question 8. What promises are there for those who put their trust in God?

a) verse 4 b) verse 6 c) verse 11 d) verses 23-24 e) verses 39-40

The word "Psalm" comes from a Greek word meaning "a sacred song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument". They were originally intended to be sung as prayers, poems, and hymns that focused on God in praise and adoration. Do you use the Psalms as part of your worship and prayer to God? You might like to read a Psalm or a few verses of one each day. Perhaps you could personalise them by inserting your own name where appropriate. You could also use them in praying for others by asking God for those things that the Psalmists asked of him. As you spend time in the Psalms, they will come alive and impart God's comfort, encouragement, peace and love to your soul.