

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Jesus, be my friend today I pray. I know You have promised to care for me, but I sometimes lose track of that great truth. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, draw me close to You and even in the ordinary things of life, show me that You care about me and about everything I do. Jesus, stay nearby and never depart, I pray; You are my Saviour, Redeemer and Friend. AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

**Prayer ideas**\_(Alternatives that can broaden the experience of prayer)

Pray for each member of your immediate family. Ask the Lord to help you overcome any difficulties that there may be between you, so that you may live in peace and to the glory of God.

#### **On-going prayers**

- **Pray about air we breathe.** *Pray about the air we breathe on this planet, and pray against airborne infections and diseases that can cause grave illness in some. Pray that humanity will never gain the capacity to kill through airborne infection*
- *Give thanks to God for the clothes you wear and those you have available to wear. Ask the Lord to help you maintain a godly discipline in spending money on your clothes, and pray for the poor who cannot afford decent clothing*
- *Pray for those who seek peace throughout the world, whether in Libya or on the streets of our cities.*

### Meditation

God has promised us joy and gladness.

Who will believe this?

Who will live with this blessing?

God has promised us His Holy Spirit.

Who will accept this?

Who will receive the blessed gift?

God has promised to forgive our sins.

Who will turn to repent?

Who will change and change utterly?

God has promised to heal our hearts within.

Who will listen or hear?

Who will yield to the heart of Christ?

God has promised to give us His wisdom.

Who will value truth?

Who will use the Lord's abiding treasures?

Brothers and sisters, what glories are ours?

Cast disbelief aside

And join the revolution of God's love!

---

## Bible Study

Bible passage – Psalm 18:20-30

- <sup>20</sup> The Lord has acknowledged what I have done as right,  
and rewarded me because of my clean hands.
- <sup>21</sup> For I have kept the ways of the Lord,  
and have not been disloyal to my God.
- <sup>22</sup> All his judgements were before me,  
and I did not ignore His rulings.
- <sup>23</sup> I was honest before Him,  
and I kept myself from being grossly unjust.
- <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Lord has rewarded me for doing what is right,  
just as my hands are clean in His sight.
- <sup>25</sup> With the devout You show Yourself devout;  
with the honest You show Yourself honest;
- <sup>26</sup> with the pure You show Yourself pure;  
and with the devious You show Your cunning.
- <sup>27</sup> For You will save afflicted people,  
but humiliate the high and mighty.
- <sup>28</sup> You, O Lord, give light to my lamp;  
my God lights up my darkness.
- <sup>29</sup> With your help I can overcome armed intruders,  
and by my God I can scale a wall.
- <sup>30</sup> God's way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true,  
and He is a shield for all who trust Him.

## Review

In stark contrast to all we read yesterday about the wrath of God, today's passage of Scripture is rather more easy to read! The first five verses are the words of David as he seeks to justify himself before God. He has called on the Lord for help, and claims that he has always been loyal and faithful (18:20-24). The next three verses (18:25-27) are more general and they talk about God's deep and abiding knowledge of humanity, and His desire both to save those who are '*afflicted*', and also '*humiliate the high and mighty*' (18:27). The reading then ends with three remarkable verses of personal devotion. Verse 28 is a classic description of God as the light who '*lights up my darkness*', verse 29 describes the liberty of one who is saved by God, and verse 30 is another great statement of trust in God; His '*way is perfect ... He is a shield for all who trust Him*'.

There are a number of intriguing verses here that might tempt a preacher, but these are mostly from the second half of the reading (18:25-30). However, it is difficult to know exactly how to interpret the whole passage. The first five verses do not read like something a Christian might say, because they are self-justification, an unworthy sentiment for those who seek salvation as penitent sinners! So what do these verses mean, and how do they connect with either what went before in this psalm or the more appealing verses that come after them?

Yet again, it is by looking back to the time of David, the author of the psalm, that we can begin to find some resolution to these questions. Of course, David did not know Christ. Nevertheless, he was entitled to call upon God and claim that he was doing everything possible to be pure and worthy of God's love. We know from Scripture that David was unable to sustain his desire to be good, for it records that he committed some dire sins (e.g. adultery with Bathsheba - 2 Sam. 11). David's desire was nevertheless to do what was right, something that is always commendable to God. Moreover, in the course of his varied life, David came to know the truth that God saved him not because of his goodness, but by His gracious love (e.g. Psalm 53). So we should accept that these verses are not mere self-justification, but a reflection of a godly and heartfelt desire to do what is right before God.

Words such as these (18:20-25) were probably used in the days of the 'kingship' in Israel, when descendants of David ruled over Israel and Judah (950 BC to 600 BC). Their purpose was to instruct the kings in their duties towards God; they certainly make sense when read in this way, urging kings to be righteous and clean before God (18:20), loyal (18:21), honest in judgement (18:22,23), and devout (18:24,25). We can therefore read this for ourselves as a call to holiness and godly living.

Before we go on, there is one other thing worth considering. Christians have traditionally believed that where the earthly descendants of David failed, Jesus succeeded. With this in mind, these verses (18:20-25) make perfect sense, for they speak of Christ. He indeed was righteous and clean before God, loyal, honest in judgement and devout, and the perfect example of a human being. This is why we have faith in Him, and why His sacrifice is a perfect sacrifice of redemption for our sins in God's eyes, sufficient for the salvation of all.

Perhaps it is only when read in this way that verses 26 and 27 come to light; their words speak to us of Jesus, *'with the pure you show yourself pure ... You will save the afflicted ... and humiliate the high and mighty'* (18:26,27). This says a great deal about the merciful work of God in sharing human flesh, living in human life in Jesus Christ, and winning the battle against evil for the salvation of all humanity. These verses encourage a Christian today to be like Christ, and both identify with those who suffer so that they may be saved, and also defeat of the *'high and mighty'*.

The last three verses of this passage now leap out of the page at us, as a wonderful expression of faith in God. Verse 28 describes God as a light who gives light in order to light up the darkness of this world. It is a theme that Jesus takes up in his sermon on the Mount, when He says, *'you are the light of the world ...'* (Matt 5:14), and *'I am the light of the world'* (John 8:12, 9:5). The last verse (18:30) is a powerful doxology (or prayer of praise to God); when spoken, they form a wonderful offering of praise and worship to God.

One small treasure remains, in verse 29. It will be easy to gloss over it, but the words, *'with your help I can overcome armed intruders, and by my God I can scale a wall'*, express the confidence and joy of those who have been saved, in straightforward picture language. Our passage today presents us with no static formal religion, but a real picture of the saving love of God and the liberty of those who trust in Him for help.

---

## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. *What does this passage of Scripture reveal to you about your own walk of faith, and what contribution does this psalm make to Christian thought?*
2. *Do you aspire to do what is right, or do you simply believe you are always right? What is the difference?*
3. *If God's people should aspire to justice and purity, what does this mean, practically, for ordinary Christians?*

### Discipleship challenges

- *Write down your own reactions to this psalm, especially what you think about purity and how anyone who is a Christian can aspire to it. Make what you have written a subject of your prayer in the coming days.*
  - *Pray for your own church to be a light in the darkness. Try to add flesh to this picture, by being specific about what you mean. For you, to be a light will mean something quite different to someone else, and the darkness you experience will be different for people in other countries and places.*
- 

## Final Prayer

Father in heaven, make us day by day into the likeness of Your Son Jesus Christ, and deepen His life within us. Send us as witnesses the Gospel into a fragile world of tragedy and strife; and touch the hearts of people with Your love, so that they in turn may love one another. AMEN

---