

*the
Lord
saves
me*

40 CHRIST-CENTERED FAMILY
DEVOTIONS FROM THE PSALMS

IAIN M. DUGUID



P U B L I S H I N G

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A Scripture quotation from the New Testament uses the ESV's alternate, footnoted translation of *adelphoi* ("brothers and sisters").

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A Word to Readers

The psalms are the songs that God's Old Testament people sang in the temple in Jerusalem. They sang them as they waited for their Messiah to come—the one we know as Jesus. King David wrote many of these songs. Others were written by Moses, Solomon, and temple musicians such as Asaph and the sons of Korah. After the people of Israel were carried off to be slaves in Babylon, they collected the psalms into a book. They knew they needed to sing these songs so they could remember God's promises to them. *As you read the psalms in this book, look for God's good promises.*

Some of the psalms are celebratory and rejoicing songs that praise God for who he is. Others are songs of lament and mourning that ask God for help. Still others give thanks to God for rescuing his people. Some are instructional psalms that teach us how we should live. *As you read the psalms in this book, think about what kind of psalm each one is.*

Since King David wrote many of the psalms, they often give us the point of view of the king of Israel. We often read the psalms as if they are from *our* point of view. That isn't wrong, because David was one of God's sheep, just as we are. But sometimes we can understand the psalms better when we remember that a king is speaking. Plus, reading them this way reminds us that the psalms also point us forward to King David's greater son, Jesus. *As you read the psalms in this book, look for the presence of the king in the psalm.*

Jesus himself grew up singing the psalms. He tells us that the psalms speak about him. They tell us about his life and his suffering and about the glorious things that happened afterward (see Luke 24:44). After Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples often used the psalms to explain who he was and what he had come to earth to do. So it is important for us and our children to know not only the stories of the Old Testament but the psalms as well. Yes, the book of Psalms is a mirror that reflects back our own feelings of joy and sadness, but we must also learn to see how it shows us the sufferings of Jesus and the glories that are yet to come.

We can see Jesus in the psalms in a few simple ways. To begin with, we can remember that we are singing these psalms beside him. Jesus has felt the same joys, fears, and sorrows that we have—yet without sharing our sin. On his happiest days, Jesus always gave thanks perfectly to God. On his bad days, he always ran to God and made him his safe hiding place.

We can also think about Jesus singing these psalms when we can't. Some psalms show us things that happened to Jesus that are far harder and more painful than anything our heavenly Father will ever ask of us. Jesus is not only our friend in our sufferings but also our Savior who suffered in our place to rescue us.

We can also think of Jesus singing these psalms now, in the glory of heaven, as he looks forward to coming back to earth. We will not be sad and hurt forever. Some psalms show us the amazing party that will light up this sad world when everyone finally bows down to King Jesus. *As you read the psalms in this book, look for Jesus in every one.*

Words, People, and Places to Know

Ark of the covenant. A special box that reminded God's people that he was with them. In a way, it was the footstool of God's throne. It was the closest God's people could get to seeing *any* of his throne.

Babylon. One of Israel's biggest enemies, long ago. They captured Jerusalem because of Israel's sin and took most of the people away to be their slaves. But the Lord brought his people back to Jerusalem because he made a promise—and God can always be counted on to keep his promises.

Children of Adam. Human beings, who all come from the family that Adam and Eve started way back at the beginning. The children of Adam are the same kind of people (with all the same problems) that Adam was, because we all sin like he did.

Euphrates River. A big river in the land where Israel's enemies Assyria and Babylon lived. When Psalm 72:8 talks about how God's reign stretches from that river to the ends of the earth, that means that he rules over everyone.

God's name. God's name stands for, and tells us about, his character. His name is not only *the Lord* but everything that goes with that (see Exodus 34:6–7).

Holy. Set away from other things, on its own, and treated as special. God is holy, and so his people must be holy too. That means we must stay away from sin, keep all his rules, and follow his commands.

Israel. God's people, whom he rescued when they were slaves in Egypt and brought into the promised land—the land he had said he would give them.

Jacob. Abraham's grandson. Jacob was the father of twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, God called *Jacob* “Israel,” and the whole nation of God's people got its name from him.

Lord of Armies. Another way to say this is “the Lord of Hosts.” This is a name for the Lord that reminds us that he is in charge of the strongest soldiers. In fact, armies (or “hosts”) of *angels* serve and fight for him. They do whatever he tells them to.

Messiah. This word means “the Anointed One.” In the time of Israel, kings and priests would be *anointed* when sweet-smelling oil was poured on their heads. This was a way of showing that they'd been specially blessed by God. They were signs, showing us that someday the true King and Priest, Jesus, would come and give us all God's blessings.

Mount Zion. The place where Solomon built the temple in the city of Jerusalem, high up on a mountain. Also known as “the Lord’s mountain.”



PSALM 1

¹ We should want to be the person
 who doesn't listen to bad people,
or go along with those who do wrong,
 or sit down with those who make fun of God.

² Instead, he loves to read God's Word
 and whispers it to himself all the time.

³ He's like a tree
 that has been planted next to a stream:
Its leaves are always green,
 and every year it has lots of fruit.
Everything he does goes well.

⁴ Bad people aren't like that.
 They are like straw blown away by the wind.

⁵ They will not do well when God punishes those who
 do wrong,
nor will they be invited when God gathers good people
 to celebrate with him.

⁶ This is because the Lord watches over the paths that
 good people take,
but the path bad people choose leads to disaster.



Like a Tree

Do you know someone who always seems happy? Maybe they always do well in school or win every game they play. Do you ever wish you could be more like that person?

Some people break the rules and aren't nice. They say bad things and like being mean. Do you ever wish you could be like *them*?

The psalm we just read, Psalm 1, tells us about the best kind of person to be: someone who stays away from bad people and doesn't listen to them . . . and who loves God's Word and thinks about it all the time. Is that what you do? I know *I* often don't love to read the Bible as I should, and I sometimes like to join bad people when they're saying bad things.

The writer of Psalm 1 tells us that the person who loves God will do well in everything they do. They will be like a tree that is planted close to the water. The water keeps the tree strong and healthy. We should all want to be like that!

The psalm also tells us about bad people. Yes, they sometimes seem to have fun, but the good things they have last for only a little while. Soon they will blow away like dry straw. This is because the Lord watches over good people, and he punishes bad people. Did you know that?

But aren't we *all* bad people, deep down inside? Even though we love Jesus, we still have mean hearts. We *all*—even moms and dads—do, and say, and think things that we shouldn't. Sometimes we don't want to listen to the Bible, or sit still in church, or pray. Sometimes we don't want to share our toys or be kind. We often do what *we* want to do—not what God tells us to. Do you ever act like that? I do.

Only one person in all of history has always been like the good person in this psalm. That person is Jesus. Jesus obeyed God the whole time he lived on earth. He always wanted to pray and to read God's Word, and he loved his parents and everyone around him. He never made fun of anyone or treated anyone badly.

But do you know what happened to Jesus? He died on a cross. God punished Jesus just like this psalm says he punishes bad people.

Do you know why Jesus was punished, even though he was God's perfect Son? It's because he took our place. At the cross, Jesus took the punishment we deserved for the bad things we do: He got in trouble instead of us, so that we could receive the prize he won for obeying perfectly. What is that prize? A happy life with God forever.

This is wonderful good news. If you believe in Jesus, then other people should want to be more like *you*! *Everyone* should want to be safe in Jesus and to have his goodness as their own. Let's give thanks to God for being so kind to bad people like us.

Dear heavenly Father, none of us are good people. Even though we love you, we still have mean and sinful hearts, like the bad people the psalm tells us to stay away

from. Please forgive us, Lord. Thank you that Jesus came to rescue us by living a perfect life in our place. Help us love him and love your Word, the Bible, more and more. Help us want to do what is right. Thank you that, because of Jesus, you always watch over our steps and will never leave us alone, even when we disobey you. In Jesus's name, amen.

PSALM 2

- ¹ Why do nations get angry
and people whisper together, even if it's useless?
- ² The rulers of the world come together to make plans
against the Lord and his Chosen One:
- ³ They say, "Let's get rid of the ropes
he has tied us up with!"
- ⁴ The Lord in heaven chuckles
and laughs at their tantrums;
- ⁵ then he speaks to them in anger,
and they are afraid of his fury.
- ⁶ He says, "I have placed my king on a throne on Mount
Zion, where my holy temple is."
- ⁷ The Chosen One, the Messiah, says,
"I'll tell people what the Lord said:

The Lord told everyone that I'm his Son
and he's my Father!

⁸ The Lord said, 'Ask me for the nations
and I'll give them to you as a present.

⁹ You'll break them with an iron bar,
shattering them into tiny pieces.'"

¹⁰ Be careful, kings!

Pay attention, judges of the earth!

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear

and be happy even though you are shaking!

¹² Welcome the Son as your king,

or he may be angry and destroy you.

Running to hide in him is a good idea;

he'll soon be angry at those who don't.



Be Careful, Kings!

We live in a messed-up world. Bad people join together to fight against God, but this psalm tells us they can never win. In fact, God thinks their plans are funny. It's as if a baby wanted to fight somebody! People all over the world may kick and scream, but they will never get rid of God's rules. They just make life hard and sad for all of us.

Do *you* ever want to fight against God's rules?

The Lord is angry with those who try to fight against him or hurt his people. He's especially angry when anyone plans to fight or hurt his Chosen One. God has promised to protect his Chosen One from anyone who fights him, just like a good father protects his children from bullies.

The people who read this psalm in Old Testament times knew it was talking about King David.* David was God's chosen king of Israel. But this psalm was also telling them about David's very, *very* great-great-great-grandson. Do you know who that is?

Jesus is God's ultimate Chosen One. He is both the Son of David and the Son of God. God has put him in charge of the whole world. He runs everything perfectly.

* See 2 Samuel 7 for the whole story.

Even though Jesus is so good, we *all* start out as his enemies. Like the bad people in our psalm, we want to break free from him. We don't like his rules. We don't want to listen to him or obey. God is right to be angry when we fight against him.

This psalm tells us to stop fighting. Fighting is useless! God gives us the chance to welcome Jesus as his chosen, perfect king. He tells us to trust in Jesus and run to hide in him. He will keep us safe, and he will give us his goodness and make us good too.

Bad people can't win against Jesus, but one time it looked as though they had. Long ago, they nailed him to a cross. They put a sign above his head that said, "This is the King of the Jews." They thought that by killing him, they could get their own way. But when Jesus rose back to life again, the rest of this psalm came true: He became the strongest king forever.

Now people from all over the world are doing what this psalm tells us to do. God is saving people from every country on earth. People all over the world are bowing down to Jesus, the chosen king who rules forever. We can join them. When we bow down to Jesus, he becomes a safe hiding place and strong castle for us, just as the psalm says he will.

Heavenly Father, we often act like the people all over the world who fight against you: We want everything to go our own way. We don't listen to your loving rules or to our parents. We get angry when anyone tries to stop us from doing what we want to do. Please forgive us, Lord. Help us want to love and obey Jesus every day and find our safe hiding place in him. Thank you that he

obeyed perfectly and died on the cross to make us into people who can love and obey him instead of fighting him. Thank you that now we are your children as well. Please help people from every country to worship him, love him, and want to obey him. Thank you for all the people in the world, including all the people we know, who do trust in him. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.

PSALM 3

*A psalm by David, when he was running
away from Absalom, his son*

¹ Lord, I have so many enemies!

So many people are ganging up on me

² and saying, "God won't save him."

³ But you're my shield, Lord;

you're the one whose opinion really counts,

and you still see me as your friend.

⁴ I called out to the Lord

and he answered me from the temple.

⁵ I lay down and fell asleep;

I woke up because the Lord was protecting me.

⁶ I'm not afraid of the millions of people

who are attacking me on all sides.

⁷ Get up, Lord! Save me, God!

You always punch my enemies in the mouth;

you break the teeth of those who are bad.

⁸ The Lord saves me;

your smile rests on your people!



The Lord Saves Me

Has someone ever really scared you? What did they do to make you so scared?

You've probably never been scared because someone wanted to kill you, have you? But one time King David's own son, Absalom, tried to kill him and be king in his place. Can you imagine how sad and scared David felt?

David had to run away from home. He ran far away to hide from Absalom and his soldiers. Could *you* sleep if you knew a big army might be sneaking up on you? David tells us in this psalm that he slept great! He knew God was with him. He knew God would be his shield to keep him safe. He knew God would hear him call for help and answer his prayers. That's why David wasn't afraid.

Are you ever afraid? It's normal to feel scared when bad things happen. But our powerful God loves us. He protects us because he is our perfect Father. Even scary things that hurt us are under his control. He will always make sure that even the bad, scary things that happen end up being good for us.

David was certain that this was true, but we can be even *more* certain. Why? Because we know the story of Jesus. That story shows exactly how God makes bad things turn out for good.

Jesus had enemies, just like David's enemies in this psalm. We might expect God to punch Jesus's enemies in the face, but that's not what happened. To rescue us from our sins, God let the people who hated Jesus punch *him* in the face and treat him like he was God's enemy.

Those bad people were sure that God wouldn't save Jesus. But God did! He raised Jesus from the dead and put him in charge of his kingdom.

God saved David, and he saved Jesus, and he saves people like us too, even though we don't deserve it at all! Isn't that wonderful? Because Jesus took our punishment for us, we are now God's friends. God now smiles on us with love and joy, and we know he will always be our shield. He will always protect us. We don't need to be scared anymore!

Lord God, thank you that you always hear our prayers, for Jesus's sake, and always protect us. Help us remember your strength and love so we can sleep without fear when life is scary. Please protect us from those who want to hurt us, and remind us that we are always safe in you. We ask you to stop bullies from being able to hurt your people, Lord, and to remind us always to thank you for making us your children when we trust in Jesus. Amen.

PSALM 4

A psalm by David

- ¹ Answer me when I call, O God—the God who says I am
right with you;
when I was in a tight spot, you gave me room
to breathe;
be kind and listen to my prayer.
- ² How long will you strong people hate me and make
fun of me?
You love silly things and run after your fake gods.
- ³ Remember, the Lord has chosen the faithful one to
be his;
the Lord will listen to me when I call to him.
- ⁴ It's okay to feel angry, but don't sin when you're angry;
when you are in bed, talk to yourself and calm down.
- ⁵ Give the proper sacrifices to the Lord
and trust in him.
- ⁶ Many people ask, "Who will give us good things?"
Lord, let us see your face smiling down on us.
- ⁷ You make me happier than others,
even when they have a lot of delicious food to eat.
- ⁸ I will lie down and go to sleep peacefully,
for only you, Lord, keep me safe.



The Lord Will Listen to Me

Can you remember a time when your life felt really hard? Did you ask God to help you?

Many people completely forget about God when they are in a tight spot. They know they need *something* or *someone* to help them, but they trust the wrong things. Today's psalm talks about people who turn to fake gods—idols—that they worship and hope will keep them safe. They think these idols will give them what they want.

When he wrote this psalm, King David and his people were in a tight spot. Some people said that idols could get them out of their trouble. They were wrong.

David wrote his psalm to those people. They were scared. David tells them that he is not. Even when he is in danger, he knows that God will listen to him, keep him safe, and give him everything he needs.

Are you like David when things are going wrong? I'm often more like David's people. It's easy for me to be angry and scared, especially at night. I toss and turn and worry. I forget that God watches over everyone who trusts in Jesus. His face smiles down at them and shines with love.

Why does God smile down at us? Is it because we are so good? Actually, no one can be right or loyal enough to become one of God's people on their own. Only Jesus can make us faithful and right with God, because he is the *Most Faithful One*. He was so faithful that he went all the way to the cross. He faced the worst and hardest thing anyone ever suffered: The face of God the Father, which had always shone down on him, turned away from him and left him alone in the dark.

Now Jesus doesn't just give us good *things*, like the people in this psalm wanted. No, he actually gives us his own goodness—the kind of goodness the Father loves. This is why God smiles at us all the time. It's why we can lie down and sleep instead of tossing and turning, no matter how hard life is: God loves us, for Jesus's sake, and always holds us in his strong arms. Because he turned his face away from Jesus on the cross, he will never turn his face away from *us* or leave us alone.

Heavenly Father, when we think you have forgotten us, show us that you still hear our prayers. When we are scared, worried, or angry, talk to our hearts and help us calm down and sleep in peace. Remind us that because of Jesus, we are never alone. He loves us and will never leave us. Help us not to trust in fake gods but to place our trust only in you. Amen.

PSALM 8

A psalm by David

- ¹ O Lord, our Master,
you are very famous all over the world;
your brightness shines out higher than the heavens!
- ² You have used the praise of even children and infants
to build a strong castle—
one that keeps out dangerous people who want to
hurt us.
- ³ When I look up at your heavens, which your fingers
made,
the moon and the stars that you put in place,
- ⁴ what is a human person that you would notice him,
or a son of Adam that you should bother to take
care of him?
- ⁵ You made him a little lower than the angels,
and you gave him a beautiful and shiny crown!
- ⁶ You made him the ruler over everything you made:
- ⁷ All the sheep and cows,
the wild animals,
- ⁸ the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea
—everything that swims in the sea.
- ⁹ O Lord, our Master,
you are very famous all over the world.



DAY 5

You Are Very Famous All over the World

David wrote this psalm, Psalm 8, to say how happy he was. Why was he happy? Because God, who is so important and famous, cares about us. He pays attention to us even though we are so much less important and powerful than him.

Our God is so amazing. He put the moon and the stars in their faraway places. He made all kinds of different animals. He has done great things that everyone can see . . . but he still takes the time to look after us. Imagine that!

David was also happy because God gave *us* this world he made. Did you know that God made all the amazing animals so that you can enjoy them—and also look after them? We often feel small and weak, but God has given us a special job in his world. We are his workers, and he is our Master. We are very important to the Lord!

But the amazing world that God made has changed. Do you remember what Adam and Eve did? Instead of ruling perfectly over the world that God had made, they disobeyed him. And because they disobeyed him and sinned, this world God made for us is no longer a safe place. Now

it is filled with many dangers and many people who can hurt us.

But God fixed this problem for us. He sent Jesus into our dangerous world as a baby. When Jesus grew up and died on the cross many years later, he didn't just save and protect disobedient children of Adam, like us—no, he also made a way for his whole world to be saved one day. All the animals and birds and fish that this psalm talks about will be made new and perfect again.

We can look forward to living with Jesus in a wonderful new world where there are no enemies or dangers. And while we wait for that day, we should make this amazing and famous God even *more* famous by shouting happily about his love everywhere we go!

Creator God, thank you for the wonderful job you gave to people when you first made us: You placed us at the very top of your world so that we could take care of it. Forgive us for disobeying you like Adam and wandering away from you. We have all done what we wanted to do rather than serving you and doing our special job the right way. Thank you for rescuing us and making a way for even the earth and moon and stars to be made beautiful and new again. We love you, and we want your power and kindness to be celebrated and made even more famous by everyone around the world. Amen.