

Monday 19th July

Psalm 1

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

⁴ Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

2 Corinthians 11;1-15

I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! ² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. ³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the snake's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

⁵ I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'super-apostles'. ⁶ I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. ⁷ Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. ¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody

in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

¹² And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. ¹³ For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Tuesday 20th July

Psalm 5

Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament.

² Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.

³ In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

⁴ For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome.

⁵ The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong;

⁶ you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, LORD, detest.

⁷ But I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down towards your holy temple.

⁸ Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies – make your way straight before me.

⁹ Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with malice. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they tell lies.

¹⁰ Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

¹² Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield.

2 Corinthians 11;16-end

¹⁶ I repeat: let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. ¹⁷ In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. ¹⁹ You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. ²¹ To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Whatever anyone else dares to boast about – I am speaking as a fool – I also dare to boast about. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised for ever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

Wednesday 21st July

Psalm 119;1-32

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD.

² Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart

³ they do no wrong but follow his ways.

⁴ You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

⁵ Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

⁶ Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

⁸ I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

⁹ How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

¹² Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.

¹³ With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

¹⁶ I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

¹⁷ Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word.

¹⁸ Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

¹⁹ I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.

²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

²¹ You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,
those who stray from your commands.

²² Remove from me scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes.

²³ Though rulers sit together and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your decrees.

²⁴ Your statutes are my delight; they are my counsellors.

²⁵ I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word.

**²⁶ I gave an account of my ways and you answered me;
teach me your decrees.**

²⁷ Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.

²⁸ My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.

- ²⁹ Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me and teach me your law.
³⁰ **I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws.**
³¹ I hold fast to your statutes, LORD; do not let me be put to shame.
³² **I run in the path of your commands,
for you have broadened my understanding.**

2 Corinthians 12

12 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. ³ And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – ⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul’s concern for the Corinthians

¹¹ I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the ‘super-apostles’,¹ even though I am nothing. ¹² I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles. ¹³ How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!
¹⁴ Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

¹⁵ So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? ¹⁶ Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!
¹⁷ Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? ¹⁸ I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?
¹⁹ Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. ²⁰ For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. ²¹ I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

Thursday 22nd July

Psalm 32

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.

⁷ You are my hiding-place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ **Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.**

¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

2 Corinthians 13

Final warnings

13 This will be my third visit to you. 'Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'^[a] ² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: on my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, ³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong – not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored.

¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority – the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

Final greetings

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Friday 23rd July

Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² **Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.**

³ They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

⁴ **Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.**

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ **It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.**

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸ **The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.**

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ **They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.**

¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² **But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.**

¹³ Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ **May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.**

James 1; 1-11

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:
Greetings.

Trials and temptations

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. ⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation – since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

Optional

Saturday 24th July

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

James 1;12-end

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Listening and doing

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

