

Monday 22nd August

Psalm 71

In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

² In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;

turn your ear to me and save me.

³ Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go;
give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

**⁴ Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.**

⁵ For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.

**⁶ From my birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my
mother's womb. I will ever praise you.**

⁷ I have become a sign to many; you are my strong refuge.

⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendour all day long.

⁹ Do not cast me away when I am old;
do not forsake me when my strength is gone.

**¹⁰ For my enemies speak against me;
those who wait to kill me conspire together.**

¹¹ They say, 'God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him,
for no one will rescue him.'

¹² Do not be far from me, my God; come quickly, God, to help me.

¹³ May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.

¹⁴ As for me, I shall always have hope; I will praise you more and more.

¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long –
though I know not how to relate them all.

**¹⁶ I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD;
I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.**

¹⁷ Since my youth, God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds.

**¹⁸ Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare
your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.**

¹⁹ Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great
things. Who is like you, God?

**²⁰ Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore
my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.**

²¹ You will increase my honour and comfort me once more.

**²² I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God;
I will sing praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel.**

²³ My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you –
I whom you have delivered.

**²⁴ My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who
wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.**

Acts 3;11-end

Peter speaks to the onlookers

¹¹ While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and
came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. ¹² When Peter
saw this, he said to them: 'Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do
you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?'

¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified
his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him
before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy
and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed
the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made
strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has
completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ 'Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your
leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the
prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God,
so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the
Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you –
even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore
everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses
said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among
your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does
not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people."

²⁴ 'Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have
foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God
made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, "Through your offspring all
peoples on earth will be blessed." ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent
him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.'

Tuesday 23rd August

Psalm 73

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

² **But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.**

³ For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

⁴ **They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.**

⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.

⁶ **Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.**

⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.

⁸ **They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.**

⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.

¹⁰ **Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.**

¹¹ They say, ‘How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?’

¹² **This is what the wicked are like –
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.**

¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴ **All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.**

¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.

¹⁶ **When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply**

¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

¹⁸ **Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.**

¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!

²⁰ **They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.**

²¹ When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,

²² **I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.**

²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.

²⁴ **You guide me with your counsel,
and afterwards you will take me into glory.**

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶ **My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion for ever.**

²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

²⁸ **But as for me, it is good to be near God.**

I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Acts 4;1-12

Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

⁴ The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.

⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: ‘By what power or what name did you do this?’

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is

“the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.”

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.’

Wednesday 24th August

Psalm 86

Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

² **Guard my life, for I am faithful to you;**

save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God;

³ have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.

⁴ **Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you.**

⁵ You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.

⁶ **Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.**

⁷ When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.

⁸ **Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;
no deeds can compare with yours.**

⁹ All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

¹⁰ For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God.

¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

¹² I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name for ever.

¹³ For great is your love towards me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.

¹⁴ Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me – they have no regard for you.

¹⁵ But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

¹⁶ Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength on behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.

¹⁷ Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Acts 4;13-31

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

¹⁶ ‘What are we going to do with these men?’ they asked. ‘Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it.

¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.’

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

The believers pray

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. ‘Sovereign Lord,’ they said, ‘you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?’²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.”

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Thursday 25th August

Psalm 117

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.

² For great is his love towards us,

and the faithfulness of the LORD endures for ever. Praise the LORD.

Acts 4;32-5;11

The believers share their possessions

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there was no needy person among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

Ananias and Sapphira

⁵ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

³ Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.’

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸ Peter asked her, ‘Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?’ ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘that is the price.’

⁹ Peter said to her, ‘How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.’

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Friday 26th August

Psalm 55

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea;

² **hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught**

³ because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger.

⁴ **My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me.**

⁵ Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.

⁶ **I said, ‘Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.**

⁷ I would flee far away and stay in the desert;

⁸ **I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.’**

⁹ Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city.

¹⁰ **Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it.**

¹¹ Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.

¹² **If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide.**

¹³ But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend,

¹⁴ **with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God, as we walked about among the worshippers.**

¹⁵ Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the realm of the dead, for evil finds lodging among them.

¹⁶ **As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me.**

¹⁷ Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

¹⁸ **He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.**

¹⁹ God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not change –he will hear them and humble them, because they have no fear of God.

²⁰ **My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant.**

²¹ His talk is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords.

²² **Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.**

²³ **But you, God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of decay; the bloodthirsty and deceitful will not live out half their days.**

But as for me, I trust in you.

Acts 5;12-26

The apostles heal many

¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵ As a result, people brought those who were ill into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were ill and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

The apostles persecuted

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ ‘Go, stand in the temple courts,’ he said, ‘and tell the people all about this new life.’

²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin – the full assembly of the elders of Israel – and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ ‘We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.’ ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

²⁵ Then someone came and said, ‘Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.’ ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

Saturday 27th August

Psalm 76

God is renowned in Judah; in Israel his name is great.

² His tent is in Salem, his dwelling-place in Zion.

³ There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shields and the swords, the weapons of war.

⁴ You are radiant with light, more majestic than mountains rich with game.

⁵ The valiant lie plundered, they sleep their last sleep; not one of the warriors
can lift his hands.

⁶ At your rebuke, God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still.

⁷ It is you alone who are to be feared.

Who can stand before you when you are angry?

⁸ From heaven you pronounced judgment, and the land feared and was quiet –

⁹ when you, God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land.

¹⁰ Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise,
and the survivors of your wrath are restrained.

¹¹ Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfil them; let all the neighbouring
lands bring gifts to the One to be feared.

¹² He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth.

Acts 5:27-end

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be
questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ ‘We gave you strict orders not to teach in this
name,’ he said. ‘Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are
determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.’

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than human
beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead – whom you
killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as
Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their
sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God
has given to those who obey him.’

³³ When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all
the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for
a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: ‘Men of Israel, consider
carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas
appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him.
He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.

³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a
band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: leave these men alone! Let them

go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is
from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves
fighting against God.’

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged.
Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted
worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts
and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good
news that Jesus is the Messiah.