

Monday 21st February

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 5all day long,
for those who wanted to harm me
have been put to shame and confusion.**

2 Timothy 4;1-8

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the
dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

² preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke
and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will
come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their
own desires, they will gather round them a great number of teachers to say
what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the
truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations,
endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your
ministry.

⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my
departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have
kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which
the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to
me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Tuesday 22nd February

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.**

2 Timothy 4:9-end

Personal remarks

⁹ Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹² I sent Tychicus to

Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

¹⁶ At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final greetings

¹⁹ Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill in Miletus. ²¹ Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.

Wednesday 23rd February

Psalm 77

I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me.

² **When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted.**

³ I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.

⁴ **You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.**

⁵ I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;

⁶ **I remembered my songs in the night.**

My heart meditated and my spirit asked:

⁷ ‘Will the Lord reject for ever? Will he never show his favour again?’

⁸ **Has his unfailing love vanished for ever? Has his promise failed for all time?**

⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful?

Has he in anger withheld his compassion?’

¹⁰ **Then I thought, ‘To this I will appeal:**

the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.

¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD;

yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

¹² **I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.’**

¹³ Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God?

¹⁴ **You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.**

¹⁵ With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

¹⁶ **The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.**

¹⁷ The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.

¹⁸ **Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.**

¹⁹ Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.

²⁰ **You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

Titus 1

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – ² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Appointing elders who love what is good

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Rebuking those who fail to do good

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because

they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.'¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Thursday 24th February

Psalm 79

O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.

² **They have left the dead bodies of your servants as food for the birds of the sky, the flesh of your own people for the animals of the wild.**

³ They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem,
and there is no one to bury the dead.

⁴ **We are objects of contempt to our neighbours,
of scorn and derision to those around us.**

⁵ How long, LORD? Will you be angry for ever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?

⁶ **Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you,
on the kingdoms that do not call on your name;**

⁷ for they have devoured Jacob and devastated his homeland.

⁸ **Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.**

⁹ Help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.

¹⁰ **Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.**

¹¹ May the groans of the prisoners come before you;
with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.

¹² **Pay back into the laps of our neighbours seven times
the contempt they have hurled at you, Lord.**

¹³ Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you for ever from generation to generation we will proclaim your praise.

Titus 2

Doing good for the sake of the gospel

² You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

⁹ Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰ and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Friday 25th February

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.

Titus 3

Saved in order to do good

³ Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone.

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but

because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. ¹¹ You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

Final remarks

¹² As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. ¹³ Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. ¹⁴ Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

¹⁵ Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Saturday 26th February

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.

Philemon

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,
To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker – ² also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier – and to the church that meets in your home:

³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and prayer

⁴ I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

Paul's plea for Onesimus

⁸ Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹ yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul – an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus – ¹⁰ that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him – who is my very heart – back to you. ¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favour you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. ¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for ever – ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back – not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

²² And one thing more: prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴ And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.