

PR

*devotional*

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*I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.*

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*Psalms 121:1*



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# MONDAY

## *scripture*

*Psalm 90*

## *song*

*All Glory be to Christ,  
House Project*

This is our annual fast and prayer week at Covenant Fellowship. This year, our theme verse is from Psalm 121:1-2,

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

Together we're going to fix our eyes on the God of the psalms to guide our prayers in seeking God this year.

We begin our week with Psalm 90. This psalm begins the fourth book of the Psalter and grounds our pursuit of faith in God in our weakness and his eternal and unchanging nature. It's the oldest of the Psalms, and the only one written by Moses. Most scholars believe it was placed at the start of this section of the Psalter to set the paradigm for the returning Exiles. They had to seek faith in God while they were confronted with an Israelite kingdom that was now in shambles. Israel's trust could not be in their own strength, and neither can ours. It's not in our power or strength that we trust, but in this place.

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (vs 1-2)*

As we claim these words for our own reality, now in a greater sense because we are indwelt by the Spirit, we align ourselves with the God of Moses. The same unchanging one is our dwelling place, and his strength is in complete contrast to our weakness.

So, no matter how we are feeling the weakness of our faith, God remains in control. Our personal ambitions may have diminished this year, but God is unfading in glory. God has kept his people through bondage, the wilderness, exile ... and he will be our dwelling place in the blessing and struggles of this year.

Verse 12 says,

*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

It is good to take time at the beginning of the year to acknowledge the transience of our lives - to remember that we are dust. To not fix our happiness on our own health, wealth, or material prosperity this year.

We are not promised tomorrow. In your prayer time today, let's take time to acknowledge our weakness before the Lord. Let's tell God about the ways we've felt the fragility of life this past year. Let's recommit to following him though all else falls away.

Verse 14 says,

*Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

Though we can't depend on the passing pleasures of this world to give us fulfillment, God will daily satisfy us! The reality of knowing God deeply produces happiness and joy, because we know that 2021 represents an opportunity to experience the steadfast love of the Lord in new ways. We know that the steadfast love of God goes so deep that it caused him to send his Son to live and die for us. Surely if he was willing to give up his Son for us, our weakness cannot dissuade him from loving us?



We can rejoice and be glad, even in weakness, knowing that God's love has not weakened in the slightest. His love is stronger than death. Now waters cannot quench this love; no bribe can remove it. This is the type of love that truly satisfies our hearts!

Take time to pray that God would satisfy you this week and this year. If you've been in a place of depression, pray with expectation that God would be your source of joy. Pray for favor from God and that he would establish the work of your hands this year.

No matter what today holds we have reason to rejoice because the steadfast love of Jesus is going to mark every day of this year.

I'm so grateful for how God acknowledges our weakness and embraces us with his steadfast love in this passage. Let's live today as those who are the cherished children of God. Let's live satisfied in God and God alone.

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# TUESDAY

## *s c r i p t u r e*

*Psalm 42-43*

## *s o n g*

*Lord, From Sorrows Deep I Call,  
Matt Papa & Matt Boswell*

These psalms call us to move from a place of despair to hope again in the God of our salvation. It speaks to our darkest experiences and provides the way towards the light.

We're covering two psalms today because most commentators believe that these two psalms were treated as a complete whole. You can see that in how they are held together by the repeated refrain,

*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*

You'll hear this refrain in verses 5 and 11 of Psalm 42 and verse 5 of Psalm 43.



*My soul is downcast within me. (vs 5)*

This spiritual darkness is a common experience of Christians in a world broken by the effects of the fall. Whether in a season of unexplained dryness, under the attack of others, or experiencing a wave of terrible suffering, we can all find our souls downcast at times.

But this was a particularly low moment for the psalmist. He describes it in verse 7 as he surveys the Jordan River overflowing its banks and crashing down waterfalls. His life feels as though the waves of this river have overwhelmed him; he is drowning in spiritual depression. Those of you who feel like this today, know that it doesn't necessarily mean that God is angry with you or that you are being punished. Like Job, the most righteous followers of God may sink under the waves of depression. There is hope for you today. God is eager to meet you in that place today.

But even as he acknowledges his spiritual darkness, he repeatedly cries out,

*Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. (vs 5)*

We hear his desperation to not stay in the place of being downcast. He rises from the waves and gasps for hope. So, what does he do to move towards hope?

In verse 4 he remembers previous seasons of happiness,

*These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.*

Later in verse 5 he says,

*My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you*

Let's follow the psalmist here in remembering God's personal faithfulness in the past.

Behind the psalmist's cry to his soul is the expectation that God stands by ready to help! He has not withdrawn because we are struggling. He is not sick and tired of us. We are not "ruining his vibe" because we feel down. He stands eager to give hope. He will meet you with joy again.

Then in Psalm 43 we hear that we are to expect to experience gladness once again. Even at our lowest, we should expect God to not allow us to remain there.

In verse 3 and 4 he says,

*Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.*

You can know that God has answered this prayer! He has sent out his Light and Truth. The light of Christ has come and shined salvation into our darkness. The Word of Truth has come to reveal God to us. Jesus entered into your darkness and took your punishment in darkness on the cross and he rose in the light of victory on the third day! You can know that as surely as Christ did not remain in the grave, you will not remain in spiritual darkness if you trust in him. He will bring you to a place of hope and gladness again!

*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. (vs 5)*



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# WEDNESDAY

## *scripture*

*Psalms 51*

## *song*

*Have Mercy on Me,  
Sovereign Grace Music*

This psalm shows the love of God for the broken and contrite prayer.

This psalm is one of the most famous in the Bible because of the setting. David, a man of incredible power and privilege, used his might to seize a helpless woman and satisfy his lust. And in the cover up, he murdered her husband to manage the optics of his sin. In an era of increased sensitivity to abusive situations, this story is particularly unsettling to us today.

In verse 3 David says,

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.*

As it should be. What he did was heinous. Yet here David acknowledges a profound reality in verse 4,

*Against you, you only, have I sinned.*

Even though he had committed atrocities against Bathsheba and Uriah, it was first and foremost their Creator he had harmed.

Some of you are feeling the weight of your sin today. You think back on the past and your sin is ever before you. Don't hide from God. Don't run away. Your sin is first against him, but he wants you to run to him for cleansing.

With David we cry,

*Create in me a clean heart, O God! (vs 10)*

And we know that when we cry to God in full acknowledgment and repentance for our sins, we do not receive anger, or mockery, or even avoidance from God. In fact, we meet endless compassion and new mercy.

Your God delights in a broken spirit. So, when we see our sin we can confess, and cry out to him for help instead of hiding. Jesus came to meet you in your need, die in your place, and atone for every sin you've every committed. Now you can know that he is reaching towards you in love when you confess. He's not turned away by your failure but is moved to compassion.

He delights in the broken of spirit. Let's confess our sins to our Savior who loves to extend mercy and find in him forgiveness and the resulting renewed joy of our salvation.

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
(vs 17)*



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# THURSDAY

***s c r i p t u r e***

*Psalm 34*

***s o n g***

*Psalm 34*

*Brooklyn Tabernacle*

This psalm calls us to radiant joy in trial because of the present provision of God.

Our psalm today begins with a setting. David wrote this when he was fleeing for his life from Saul into his enemy's territory. In our psalm it says he changed his behavior and the story in 1 Samuel 21 says he actually pretended to be insane. He had to flee from Saul into his enemy's territory and he faked insanity for his own safety. That's the context of these joyful words,

*I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! (vs 1-3)*

And this psalm speaks to you who are in trial, even when you feel like your life is in danger. It calls all of us to joy. Why?

Verse 4 shows God's reactive love. David sought the Lord, and he answered. Even as he experienced the shame of pretending to be insane, he could say,

*Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. (vs 5)*

We can have joy in trial because God will always answer with love. Cry out to him today, taste and see that God is good. Even when you are all alone like David, surrounded by your enemies, you can pursue joy knowing that he will deliver you.

He may not deliver us the exact way we think is best, but he will lovingly deliver us from *all* our troubles.

Why can we be joyful in trial?

Verse 15 shows that God sees your pain and takes up your defense.

*The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and his ears toward their cry.*

He knows your struggles, and he will deliver you in his timing, because he loves you, for his glory.

Why can we be joyful in trial?

Verse 19-22 tell us that not even death can condemn us. Affliction will slay the wicked and they will be condemned, but God proves a refuge that can weather even death itself! Because Jesus has felt our afflictions, endured the wrath meant for us, conquered our enemies, and defeated death, we can rejoice even in trial knowing that our faces will be radiant and not be put to shame! We will one day shine with the radiant, joyful glory of the resurrected saints for all eternity!

Let's rejoice together in prayer through this psalm today.



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# FRIDAY

## *scripture*

*Psalms 103*

## *song*

*He Will Hold Me Fast*

*Shane & Shane*

This Psalm calls us to bless God because he is gracious and he is lovingkindness.

We see the phrase so often repeated in the Old Testament here in this psalm, "steadfast love." Literally, *hesed* in the original text. That God is *hesed* communicates that in his essence, in who he is in his ultimate and eternal being, God is

*gracious and sensitive, and abundant in 'lovingkinndness.'* (Ray Ortlund)

He loves us not in an empty goodbye or thrown away phrase type of way. He is love! He doesn't love us in theory, but in action! Loyal, endless action that sticks by those he has bound himself to through any trial.

Long before Jesus came, God bound himself to his people who cried to him in faith for salvation. And he demonstrated his *hesed* love towards us by making the ultimate sacrifice. God the Father gave his Son to die in our place.

Jesus died our death and showed us that he will hold us fast and never let us go through life and death! Our God is faithful and loves us despite a full knowledge of our sin. He knows we are dust; he knows we are as weak as grass.

*For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (vs 14)*

But he loves us with a fatherly compassion. He delights in us at our worst far beyond how we feel about our own children at their best moments!

*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.  
(vs13)*

God's love is unending, loyal, faithful, undeserved loving action toward us because of Jesus' work.

That is who we worship; that is who we fear. He will punish the guilty, he will maintain justice, but he is slow to anger and surpassingly kind and faithful in his love towards us.

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (vs 11-12)*

Whatever is the greatest thought you've had of God's love for you - his love is greater! Stronger than our deepest passions. More faithful than our deepest commitments. More intentional than our most careful compassion. God's *hesed* love for you will *never* cease.

You are an incredibly blessed person today. Let's use this psalm to bless the Lord today and thank him for his *hesed* love!



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# SATURDAY

***s c r i p t u r e***

*Psalm 121*

***s o n g***

*Psalm 121,*

*The Corner Room*

Our last psalm for our Fast & Prayer week is Psalm 121. This psalm fixes our eyes to the source of our help: the keeping love of God.

As we think back on this past year, it can be challenging to think that every single moment of this past year has been kept by a faithful God. Surprising sorrows have abounded. But our psalm doesn't give us any wiggle room on this. We hear the psalmist declare that God is our keeper six times in only eight verses!

No matter our experience, we can know without a doubt that God has kept us this past year. If we think carefully, we can probably trace his keeping hand in many of our trials. Take time to thank him for that. But even in the unanswered questions we know he has not forgotten us, and that his keeping hand directed all of our experiences this year.



This is a psalm of ascent. These psalms functioned as a reminder of protection over the Israelites as they made their journey to worship in Jerusalem each year. Heat, lions, ambush; there were many threats to the pilgrimage. As they sang of the keeping love of God, these verses strengthened their face for the dangers of their journey. Similarly, it serves as a comforting reminder to us as we embark on our 2021 journey and consider the potential dangers.

Verse 3 and 4 tell us that our keeping God never sleeps.

*He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

Nothing has happened in this past year or will happen in this new year outside of his control. So, we can rest. We can close our eyes on the journey knowing that he will keep watch. As Victor Hugo said, we can,

*Go to sleep in peace. God is awake.*

We don't need to work harder this year to keep 2020 from happening again. We can work and rest with a complete reliance upon God because he's promised to keep us.

Verses 5-6 tells us that God actively protects us in seasons of great and small trial.

*The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.*

He is your right hand, empowering you, strengthening you, keeping you as you seek faith in him.

Finally, verse 7-8 tells us that God keeps us comprehensively and in the smaller details of life. Nothing gets past the watchful and protective eyes of our keeper.

*The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.*

Ever wonder if God cares about the minutia of your daily routine? Here we see that God keeps it all! And even when we feel the fiery trials of life and count it all joy, we can know that even this is governed by our keeping God and that he will see us through it.

And we know, oh how we know, that we no longer need fear the ultimate heat of Hell because Jesus absorbed the wrath of God for our sins in our place and bound himself to us in covenant love. Now we are kept by the capable savior!

Friends, we can rejoice this year looking at months of prolonged mask wearing, social distancing, political turmoil, and potential division among believers knowing that God is our keeper. We can pursue unity in earnestness because we know that our union with God and one another is kept intact by the constant and steadfast love of Christ.

We can sleep. We can rest. We can go out and come in. We can go out in the heat of day, or in the dangers of night of 2021 knowing that he will keep us. Knowing that he has proven his keeping love in the cross.

Let's lift our eyes to the hills and worship our keeping God in faith today.

*Now to him who is able  
to keep you from stumbling  
and to present you blameless  
before the presence of his glory  
with great joy,  
to the only God, our Savior,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority,  
before all time now and forever.  
Amen.*

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*Jude 1:24-25*





Covenant Fellowship Church  
One Fellowship Drive  
Glen Mills, PA 19342  
610.361.0606

**[www.covfel.org](http://www.covfel.org)**

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