

# PSALM READING FOR JUNE 21, 2015

**START WITH SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 9:9-20

## **OBSERVE:**

There is a kind of plot or story-line in this Psalm: a declaration of the nature of God as deliverer, a call to worship, and a description of God's victory over his enemies. The overall theme is God's intervention on behalf of the oppressed, the needy and the poor.

The Psalmist begins with a declaration of the nature of God as *a stronghold for the oppressed*. This is a key theme statement for this Psalm, defining God's character on behalf of those who are helpless.

The Psalmist calls on the community to sing praises to this God, who avenges the blood of innocent victims – and then the Psalm becomes personal: *Be gracious to me, O Lord. See what I suffer from those who hate me.*

Then, at verse 15, there is a change of tone – the Psalmist turns from describing God and appealing for his help toward the consequences of God's intervention: the nations fall into a pit they themselves have dug, the wicked are snared in their own traps, and the wicked descend to Sheol.

This is a theme that appears several times in scripture, namely that the wicked reap what they sow. God allows them to suffer the consequences of their own actions.

However, the oppressed, needy and poor are lifted up from their humble circumstances.

Once again there is the theme of reversal – the proud and arrogant are humbled, and the poor and oppressed are exalted.

The *nations*, i.e., the Gentiles and unbelievers, are made to understand that their gods are false, and that true power rests with the Lord: *Put them in fear, O Lord; let the nations know that they are only human.*

## **APPLY:**

For those who have experienced real oppression or persecution, this Psalm is truly a source of comfort. I'm not sure that Christians in the West can quite comprehend this.

We would have to put ourselves in the place of Israelites surrounded by the overwhelming odds of the Philistines; or the Jews in Jerusalem surrounded by the Assyrian army; the early Christians facing Roman persecution; Jews facing the Nazi Holocaust; or contemporary Christians in the Middle East, Africa, China, or Indonesia facing daily discrimination or worse.

We may be able to spiritualize this, and understand that all of us face spiritual oppression from temptation and sin. And we must all remember that *The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.*

## **RESPOND:**

Most of my oppressions are internal and spiritual. I'm not likely to experience naked persecution. Even in my most self-pitying moments, life is still relatively comfortable, and I have options that many Christian brothers and sisters in the persecuted church don't have.

May this Psalm prompt me to pray for them!

*Lord, I pray for those who truly are oppressed, poor, and needy as the result of persecution and discrimination for the sake of their faith. While I give thanks for my freedom to worship you, I pray that you will bring deliverance for them as well. Amen.*

**BY TOM LETCHWORTH**

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