

"In Thy Light Shall We See Light"

Psalm 36

This psalm and the 18th psalm are the only two psalms that call David "the servant of the LORD." He might have been a king; he might have been "the man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22); but we find in the title of these two psalms that he was a servant as well. It should remind us that no matter who we are or what God has blessed us with, we should always consider ourselves as a "servant of the LORD."

The title of the psalm also includes the familiar address: "To the chief Musician." There are at least fifty-five (55) psalms with this title - this is the fifteenth (15th) - so it is a common part of the title and, as we've pointed out before, it indicates this psalm was intended for temple worship.

Trying to categorize this psalm is challenging. It seems to be a combination of types: mainly that of a Wisdom Psalm with aspects of a Psalm of Rejoicing included.

The title of this message is taken from verse nine (9) - "In thy light shall we see light." What a wonderful thought - His light allows us to see clearly: to see the wicked clearly, to see Him in all His glory clearly, and to see ourselves as His children clearly. That's the basic outline of this Psalm.

I. HIS LIGHT MANIFESTS THE WICKED - VS. 1-4

A. The first line of verse one has troubled readers of this psalm for a long time.

The first line of the psalm is showing how the "transgression of the wicked" troubled David's heart and mind, and as the light of the Lord and His Word shone in his heart, the starkness of their wickedness got ever more disturbing.

The same should happen to us.

1. The word "saith" (סַאִי) is a common one often used of the voice of the Lord being heard by His prophets. In this case, it is pointing to that "still small voice" of our conscience pointing out sin and wickedness.
2. There are some that interpret this as the wicked speaking within "his" heart, rather than "my" heart, but the grammatical structure in no way supports that. This is David stating how troubled in his heart and mind he was about the response of the wicked to the Lord.
3. There are others that view this as David being the one that is wicked, viewing the old, sinful nature in the light of the holiness of God and considers himself the transgressor. There may be truth to that, but it doesn't fit the context, especially verse ten (10) where David comes back to the subject presented in the first four verses and seems to imply that he was "the upright in heart" spoken of or at least includes himself in that group.

B. The second line of the first verse is quoted in Romans 3:18 in a greater text (9-20) demonstrating that there are none righteous on their own and describes mankind without Christ.

C. Verses 2-4 add description to what is meant by the term "transgression of the wicked" of verse one.

II. HIS LIGHT MAGNIFIES HIMSELF - VS. 5-9

This is a marvelous text demonstrating the greatness of the LORD. There are at least ten (10) attributes of

God given in these verses that contrast the wickedness of fallen man. For all the evil that man is, God is far greater in His goodness.

A. "Thy mercy"

1. Defined as "compassion shown to a person who is in a position of powerlessness or subjection, or to a person with no right or claim to receive kindness; kind and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected, esp. in giving legal judgment or passing sentence." (OED)
2. "Is in the heavens" - speaks to the abundance and infinite nature of His mercy.

B. "Thy faithfulness"

1. He is trustworthy; faithfulness to His word is governed by His absolute holiness.
2. "Unto the clouds" - parallelism to "in the heavens," and speaks of the same abundance and infinite nature. They transcend all our ability to comprehend them.

C. "Thy righteousness"

1. Speaks to "the justice of God considered as residing in his own nature; his justice in his laws; his justice in his providential dealings; his justice in his plan of delivering man from sin; his justice to the universe in administering the rewards and penalties of the law." (Barnes)
2. "Is like the great mountains" - **גְּבוּרֵי-אֵל** - the word for "great" is the word most commonly

used for God ("El") and is used here to speak to the strength and greatness of the mountains as the work of the Almighty. Comparing the righteousness of God to mountains is showing that the justice of God is as fixed and stable as the mountains He created - "immovably firm, eternally unchanged, majestically conspicuous" (Cambridge Bible notes).

D. "Thy judgments"

1. "The executions of thy counsel" (Wesley) is a good way of understanding the use of this word here.
2. "Are a great deep" - "mysterious, unfathomable, inexhaustible, as the vast subterranean abyss of waters" (Cambridge Bible notes).

[Romans 11:33](#)

³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

E. "Thou preservest man and beast"

1. "Preservest" - נִשְׁמַר (nishmar) – a word that means to save, deliver, or defend. "The underlying idea of this verb is bringing to a place of safety or broad pasture" (Complete Word Study Dictionary).
2. The amazing thing about all these attributes, and the unending supply they offer, is that they are all for us, both saved and lost. He is all these things and more because He loves us.

And not only mankind, but animal life. Jesus even refers to this on more than one occasion.

Matthew 6:26

²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Matthew 10:29-31

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

³¹ Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

F. "Thy lovingkindness"

1. Same word translated "mercy" in verse five but with a slightly different meaning. It is almost exclusively used as a scriptural term and has the idea of "kindness arising from love; tenderness; compassion" (OED).
2. "How excellent is..." - the lovingkindness of God is far above the most valuable precious stone or metal known to man. It is because of this attribute that we are redeemed today and on our way to an eternity with Him!

Psalms 139:17-18

¹⁷ How **precious** also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

1 Peter 2:6-7

⁶ Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

⁷ Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

G. "The shadow of thy wings"

1. "Therefore" - because of the excellence, the preciousness of God's lovingkindness - "the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

Deuteronomy 32:11

¹¹ As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

Psalms 91:1

¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalms 91:4

⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

2. This speaks of the absolute trust we have in God as our protector, knowing that nothing can separate us from His lovingkindness for all eternity. We are safe!!

H. "The fatness of thy house"

1. "Fatness" speaks of abundance, and points to

the fact that God will provide our needs, both spiritually (the context here) as well as physically.

"It indicates the spiritual blessing of God as abundance, fatness, richest of food freely bestowed on His people" (CWSD).

2. "Thy house"

- a) In the context of the psalm, and the fact it was written for public worship, this is speaking of the Temple as the house of God - a place of worship.

By application, it speaks of the church today where we are to receive the truth from God's word to help us live for Him with all the wickedness that surrounds us (vs. 1-4). This puts the burden of provision on the pastor/shepherd of the church to "feed the flock of God."

- b) The word for "house" also means family, and for the believer today, we belong to the family of God, the house of God, and we can be confident in the faithfulness of God in supplying our needs.

[Philippians 4:19](#)

¹⁹ But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

3. "They shall be abundantly satisfied"

- a) "They" - "the children of men" in the previous verse, speaking of the child of God.
- b) "Abundantly satisfied" - רָחַם – a word meaning to give water, or to drink one's fill.

Considering the context of "the fatness" of His "house," He provides all we need to be adequately and abundantly filled with what we have from and in Him.

I. "The river of thy pleasures"

1. This is a synonymous parallelism to the first line of the verse.
2. "And thou shalt make them drink of the river" - corresponds to "abundantly satisfied."
3. "Of thy pleasures" - speaks of the enjoyment that God gives to His children. It's not just the things we need that He gives - He gives us many things to delight in, to enjoy. It's a word that is used in a literal sense for luxurious things.

This word has the same root as the word "Eden," and speaks of the same ideas that Eden represents in Scripture.

J. "Thy light"

1. "For with thee is the fountain of life" - He provided initial life in creation, sustains life today, and more importantly He provides eternal life for those that accept the gift of God's grace.

It's a never-ending source.

[John 4:14](#)

¹⁴ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing

up into everlasting life.

Revelation 21:6

⁶ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

2. "In thy light shall we see light" – John 1:4-13

- a) Synonymous parallelism to the first line – just as He is the never-ending source of life, He is the never-ending source of light.

Revelation 21:23

²³ And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Revelation 22:5

⁵ And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

- b) This is in stark contrast to the first four verses of this psalm and the darkness of the wicked. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" because they have ignored the Light and turned from it.

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the

light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

III. HIS LIGHT MOTIVATES THE UPRIGHT - vs. 10-12

A. To see the LORD as the One that keeps us righteous - vs. 10

Our desire ought to be to "continue" in His lovingkindness and righteousness" as spoken of in verses six and seven. This isn't to be taken to mean that God will remove these from us if we don't comply but is meant by the psalmist to encourage the children of God to ask Him to keep them from straying from these attributes.

B. To see the danger of the world as they try and draw us away from the LORD - vs. 11-12

As in verse ten, our prayer ought to be that God keeps the influence of the wicked ("the foot of pride" and "the hand of the wicked") out of our thoughts and our paths. We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world.

Conclusion: This psalm puts into perspective the choice that we, as believers, made when we put our trust in Christ. We chose to follow the God who is described here in so many elegant and wonderful ways rather than stay with the wicked.

It's still a choice we make - not for salvation but for holiness. We need to choose wisely, and this psalm makes it very easy to know why.