

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

March 16 Read Philippians 4:1-9

Psalm 48:8 Did you hear the voice of Christ yesterday? Did He speak to you through the sermon? Consider what you heard; have you seen in the church’s history the truths of what you heard? God’s people throughout history have been given accounts of His wonderful works. But they do not just get the history of these works, God’s people experience His wonderful works in their lives. Daily we know that God is on our side, and we need not fear what man may do to us. What we hear and see only happens in one place. That place is the church of God. People of God, you will not experience the goodness of Jehovah anywhere else but in His church. Do not try to find peace and rest in another place. God has spoken and His word never changes. Sing Psalter 131:4.

March 17 Read Lamentations 3:22-32

Psalm 48:9 We hear men speak of how good God is, and we agree readily. We can say this after a birth of a covenant child, or after some “good” thing that happens in the church. Sometimes we are very quick to acknowledge the mercies and lovingkindnesses of Jehovah. But can we do it in a situation like Jeremiah’s? Jerusalem had been destroyed. He had seen God’s people brutally killed and taken off to slavery. He had seen the king and the priest deny that God was God. It seemed at times that no one wanted to hear the voice of Jehovah. In the midst of that suffering, Jeremiah penned the words of today’s reading. He confessed that God’s mercies were new every morning. Is this your confession, people of God, no matter what the circumstance is? Are you able to say that truly God is good? Notice one other little part of this verse. The confession of God’s lovingkindnesses is done in God’s temple. Does that sound familiar? Sing Psalters 132:1 and 133:1.

March 18 Read Revelation 19:11-21

Psalm 48:10 This verse is completely God-centered. First of all we see that God’s praise is based in His name. He is God-almighty. Any praise we bestow on Him must be with that realization in mind. When we pray, when we sing, the contents of those prayers and songs must be God-centered. To do anything else would be to blaspheme

the holy name of God. Secondly God is a God of all the earth. There is nowhere where His name is not heard. Even though God's national blessings were confined to Israel of old, His name was worldwide. Do we confess this today? Do we really confess an holy *catholic* church? Finally we see that these things are so because in God's right hand of power is righteousness. He is righteous as He judges the nations. He is righteous as He weighs our every action in His scales of justice. Are we found wanting in those scales? We must pray for the grace of Christ so that we be not found wanting in God's righteous scales. Sing Psalters 132:2 and 134:1.

March 19 Read Romans 2:1-11

Psalm 48:11 This verse is a continuation of the thought found in the last part of verse 10. God is the righteous judge. The church can be happy about that fact. Israel of old had to wait for God to judge the heathen in a physical way. They, because of the covenant, knew that their God was powerful. This fact gave them great feelings of joy. We, too, must have such feelings. We must know that God's judgments are just and righteous. We may be impatient at times. Or we may forget that every act of our lives is weighed in His scales. But we must be patient. We must live lives in holiness to our God, the judge of all men and all things. Be glad in that fact, people of God. Rejoice with the rest of the church and teach your children to rejoice even when it appears that Satan is gaining the upper hand. Sing Psalters 132:3 and 134:2.

March 20 Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Psalm 48:12-13 The goal and purpose of catechism instruction is outlined in these two verses. Israel was instructed to walk around Jerusalem and see her strength against attackers. Why? So that it could boast in its power? So that they could claim greatness in the world? Of course not. Israel was only strong because God made them strong. We must never say that the strength of our churches lies within ourselves. To do so would be utter folly. As we walk around the church, we must see in its confessions and teachings nothing but the hand of God. We must see that it is only by grace that the church is what she is. Those confessions which serve as our defense and bulwark in times of trouble have been given to us by God. We may not just admire them. No, like Israel of old, we must teach them to our children. Catechism instruction must be precious in our lives. We must not let the church become slack in such instruction, and we must not become slack in such instruction. Our covenant children must know of God, about God, and how great God is. Only in that way will He bless our churches in generations to come. Sing Psalters 132:4 and 133:2.

March 21 Read Psalm 48

Psalm 48:14 We now come to the verse of trust. After confessions of praise to God in all our lives, we must trust that He will be with us until He takes us from this world. The verse starts with the word *for*. This word indicates that we can have confidence that all we have read before will come to pass. Our God is eternal. He is before time and He will be after this world is destroyed. We can trust the everlasting God to preserve us in whatever situation we find ourselves. Not only can we trust that we will get through such situations, but we also know that He will guide us through them. Just as a guide is helpful through unfamiliar territory on this earth, having a guide through unfamiliar spiritual territory is a good thing. God is our guide; what more do we need? God is our guide; He will be faithful even unto and through death. Sing Psalters 132:5, 133:3, and 134:4.

March 22 Read Psalm 49

Psalm 49:1-2 People of God, do you hear God speaking to you? Are you listening daily for His voice? Are we, like Samuel, willing to replay, “Speak Lord for thy servant heareth”? This Psalm begins with the command for people of all kinds to listen to the words of Jehovah. God’s speech is for all kinds of people. It is for the office bearers and for the member in the pew. It is for adults, children, and young people. Where does He speak? First of all He speaks through His Word. We must read that Word daily and listen to what He says. He speaks through that primary means of grace—the sermon. Are we eager to hear it and believe it? He speaks through His creation. Do we listen to the signs in nature? Do we hear His voice? Let us listen because He speaks volumes. Sing Psalter 135:1.

March 23 Read I Timothy 4:12-16

Psalm 49:3-4 The fact that you are reading this probably indicates that you participate in some kind of meditation. It is my hope and prayer that this is daily in nature. I wish this not because of my writings, but rather I wish for you to daily meditate upon the Word of God. The only way that we can speak of God’s wisdom is to know God’s wisdom. Our heart’s meditation will be full of understanding when they are guided by God’s Word. By meditating on God’s Word, we can hope to understand some of its depths. It is only by study that the Word will be opened to us. This passage also speaks of the value of singing the songs of Zion as part of our meditation. Are we profiting? We will when our meditation is based on Jehovah’s word. Sing Psalter 135:2.

March 24 Read Job 5:17-27

Psalm 49:5 Job went through many trials and afflictions in this life. These afflictions were for his profit and our instruction. Job had to be taught what the profit was, and

how that affliction was profiting. He had to learn that God was God. His experiences are recorded for us. When we are tempted to say, “Why me, Lord,” we need to turn to that record and learn from it. Psalm 49:5 sums up Job’s lesson. That lesson is that the child of God need not fear oppression. We need not fear what the forces of evil may do to us. God is on our side. Evil’s forces can never harm us. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 135:3.

March 25 Read Zephaniah 1:12-18

Psalm 49:6-7 As this passage has instructed us to listen to God’s word, we need to see what these verses are telling us. It is tempting for us to look around and covet the riches of those in the world. We fall into the trap of “trying to keep up with the Joneses.” We want the same material goods that others have. We fall hard to the sin of materialism. The Psalmist brings us up short with this message of reality. Not one penny of earthly wealth can buy salvation for ourselves or even if we felt magnanimous for our brothers. Money cannot buy salvation. Talent cannot buy salvation. Salvation is merited only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. God does not even look at our earthly goods or abilities. He only looks at us through Christ our Savior. Let us learn to be content with what God chooses to give us. Sing Psalter 135:4.

March 26 Read Exodus 15:11-18

Psalm 49:8-9 What does it mean that we are redeemed? Oh, I am not looking for the theological definition of redemption. That has merit and needs to be understood. But what does it mean for us in this life. Is there any profit in being bought by the blood of the lamb? The answer is yes. Israel experienced this truth as they passed through the Red Sea and watched Egypt’s army being drowned. That is a picture for us. Our redemption means that we will live for ever. Not in this life, of course, but in the life to come. We will not see the corruption that spiritual death brings. God will protect and bring us safe to the promised land of heaven. This should provide for us the confidence that we need as we travel through this valley of the shadow of death. In today’s vernacular; this makes it worthwhile. This makes life worth living. Sing Psalter 135:5.

March 27 Read Ecclesiastes 3:17-22

Psalm 49:10-11 As men prepare to die many wish to be remembered after they are gone. They wish a son to continue their name. Some even go to great lengths to make this happen. Others make sure that some material structure has their name on it so that they are remembered by man. The testimony of Scripture is that all die and go to the grave. What is the attitude of the child of God to death? Does pride cause him to make

sure that his name remains? Or does he realize that death is but a passageway to glory? Is death to be dreaded by us? Wisdom looks to the life hereafter which is not spent on this earth. Folly dreads death because its pride is squelched forever. Be wise, people of God, and see that in death is life. Sing Psalter 136:1.

March 28 Read Proverbs 14:1-12

Psalm 49:12-14 Today's verses are a continuation of yesterday's. The Psalmist continues to explore the idea of death and its consequences. Here we see that a man of foolish pride dies and is buried just like an animal. After he dies, he is gone forever. This is true spiritually as well as physically for the reprobate. Death is the end for them. In fact they will be judged by the righteous in the last days. Scripture testifies of this here and in other places. We must remember these things as we live in this earth. There is a heaven and hell. Real people will inhabit both places. Are you wise or foolish? Sing Psalter 136:2.

March 29 Read I Corinthians 15:12-23

Psalm 49:15 But! Just a three letter word. But what a three letter word! After hearing about the end of the wicked the Psalmist tells the righteous what he can expect. What a difference! We have the confidence that we are redeemed. Even though this earthly body will see destruction, our soul will be redeemed by God through Christ. We need not fear as we face death. There is no uncertainty about our final reward. God will receive us. He will not turn us away because we have been redeemed. The grave has no victory over us. The grave is not our enemy! We are redeemed! Sing Psalter 136:3.

March 30 Read Isaiah 5:11-17

Psalm 49:16-17 From the confidence given in verse 15, we now have practical advice given to us. We are not to be afraid because of the wicked who is made rich. We might be tempted to worry about what they have and what they might do with their riches. We also must not worry that his riches will affect our salvation. Our salvation is not dependent on what another has. Our salvation is only dependent upon the grace of God in Christ. Many times we compare ourselves to our neighbors for what they have or what they do. We must not do this. God has given to every individual his calling, his talents, and his salvation. The wicked have their reward, and the righteous have theirs. What a confidence! What a blessing! Rejoice and be happy. Sing Psalter 136:3.

March 31 Read Psalm 49

Psalm 49:18-20 These verses finish the thought began in yesterday's meditation. The plight of the wicked is gloomy. They have no hope! Their end is destruction. They are destined for Hell! Yes, Hell is a real place with real torment. It is for those who have boasted of their greatness throughout their lives. It is for those whose pride rules their lives. The end of the wicked has no hope just like the animals. But for the humble, diligent child of God, he has much in which to hope. His end is heaven. His final condition is eternal life. These facts should afford us great comfort. They should also direct our lives on this earth. Take heed, people of God, and listen to the voice of God. We have a calling on this earth, and we have a reward in heaven. Let us humbly bow in prayer and thank God for His precious gifts to us, and also ask Him to help us live lives that are pleasing to Him. Sing Psalter 136:4.

Devotional by Skip Hunter

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The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

April 1 Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:1-3 God speaks! Do we listen? Everyday God speaks to the world and the church. We know the world does not listen. What about the church? Are we listening to what God says to us? He speaks to us in creation. He speaks to us in what happens in our daily lives whether that be at home, at school, at work, or where ever He has placed us. Are we listening? Are there troubles around us through which God is telling us that we are not living a life of sanctification or are not walking according to His Word. Verse three tells us that God will speak to us. He will not keep silence about our sins. Our God is a consuming fire and this fire burns both elect and reprobate. Fear not, however, for we do have the comfort that we will not be consumed because He cares for His people. God speaks! People of God, we must listen. Sing Psalters 137:1 and 139:1-3.

April 2 Read Micah 6:1-9

Psalm 50:4-6 Yesterday we explored the idea of our speaking God. Today we see something of the process. First of all there is a gathering together to listen. Do we gather enough to listen to God? We gather often; of that there is no doubt. But are our gatherings devoted to listening to God. This means first of all attendance at the worship service. But this also implies attendance at lectures and Bible studies. These are means the church has historically used to listen to God. Secondly there is the content of that gathering. Micah told us that He shows us what is good. This is not something that we can learn from anywhere else but His Word. God speaks the truth. We must hear it. We see this truth in creation. All creation testifies to the righteousness of God. Finally we see that He is judge. We may never usurp this attribute of our sovereign God. He is Judge and He alone. Sing Psalms 137:2 and 139:4-6.

April 3 Read Hebrews 10:1-10

Psalm 50:7-8 In two days we go to worship our God. Is our worship totally God glorifying? Are we committed to worshipping Him only in the way He has commanded in His Word? To do otherwise, you know, is a violation of the second commandment. Man loves to tinker with the worship service to make it more palatable for more people. Sermons are shortened or done away with. Hymns or worse are sung or played in the worship service. Much is added which is forbidden by Scripture. Worship is not for man; it is for God! Israel as a nation was reprimanded, taken into captivity, and finally pruned from the vine for not worshipping God or not worshipping Him as He commanded. What about us? Are we worshipping to pay honor to God or to impress man? Sing Psalm 137:3.

April 4 Read Matthew 6:25-34

Psalm 50:9-11 People of God, have you ever pondered the greatness of our God? Today is Saturday. Many of us may use this break from our everyday labors to get out into His creation. What do you see? Do you realize that everything is God's, and He knows every rock, animal, and plant? He not only knows about them, but He knows where they are and what is happening to them. God does not need us to make Him great. He is great within Himself. He gives to us some pictures of His greatness so that we with our minuscule minds can have some insight into His greatness. Go ahead, look around you, see God's greatness, and then do nothing which detracts from that greatness. Sing Psalm 137:4.

April 5 Read Isaiah 43:1-13

Psalm 50:12-13 We are creatures; God is the creator. What are the implications of this truth for us and our lives? First of all we must keep that relationship foremost in our

minds. As we carry out our daily work, and especially as we worship we must confess that God is the creator. This confession will help us live lives pleasing in His sight. It will help us in decisions about our family and its life. Secondly we must acknowledge that God is God. How many people wish to do away with this truth and allow man a part in his salvation. God is not a man. God is God! Confess this truth and live this truth until the day that Christ returns to take His church to heaven to live in sweet communion with God. Sing Psalter 137:5.

April 6 Read Deuteronomy 26:10-15

Psalm 50:14-15 Three commands are given in these two verses. Offer God thanksgiving. Did we do that yesterday? Are we doing it today? Will we do it tomorrow? Pay our vows to God. These are not just the vows of desperation, but these are the solemn vows made in our lives. For example there are the baptismal vows, the vows made at confession of faith, or the marriage vows. Are we keeping those? Finally we are commanded to call upon God in trouble. We need not run to earthly counselors or earthly means of help. Our God is faithful. He has promised to help us in times of trouble. He will deliver us. Why? So that we can glorify Him. Sing Psalters 137:6.

April 7 Read Acts 17:29-31

Psalm 50:16-17 People of God and especially young people and children, do you hate the instruction of God? What a terrible thing if you do! What is our attitude to the study of God, His Word, and His works whether it be at catechism, school, society, or elsewhere? To disregard it or despise it is horrible. God has terrible punishments for those who despise Him and His Word. Paul warned the Athenians about this terrible sin. That warning is for us as well. We have many opportunities to learn and study about our God. First of all we must make good use of them. Secondly we must do it out of love and gratitude for our God. Sing Psalters 138:1.

April 8 Read Proverbs 24:21-29

Psalm 50:18-20 I am always amazed and sobered when I hear the commandments preached in church. We tend to dismiss them as either being general guidelines or being against really bad sins. The three verses of today's text are for us. When we hear the commandments preached, we must realize that we sin against them daily. We do it by actions, and as these verses tell us we do it by not reprimanding or stopping another who is sinning. The principle of corporate responsibility is very important for all of those who are members of God's church. We must be holy even as our God in heaven is holy. Let us live a life of sanctification in gratitude for our salvation. Sing Psalter 138:2.

April 9 Read Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 50:21 Sometimes it appears to us that God overlooks sin. Is this true? We know that He sees all that happens on this earth, but does He excuse some sins? The answer is no, No, NO! It is an often repeated truth in the Bible that every work of man must be accounted for. What does this verse mean for us then? First of all we see that the character of sin is that we make ourselves greater than God. God will never allow that to stand, will He? It appears that He overlooks sin because one or two things are happening. First of all, the cup of iniquity of the wicked is being filled. Think, for example, of the lives of Ahab and Jezebel. Secondly, He may be using our “lamentable falls,” as the Canons call them, to work for our repentance and to cause us to flee back to His love and care. He will reprove us, and He will set our lives in order. Pray that God leads us not into temptation but delivers us from evil. Sing Psalter 138:3.

April 10 Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:22-23 The final two verses serve as a summary of the teaching found in this beautiful Psalm. First of all, we see that the wicked will not be delivered but they will be destroyed. This should be a solemn warning about how we must live our lives. Secondly, we see that those who do the commandments of God will be blessed both in this life and the life to come. We see that we must praise Him in all of our lives. We may never do anything that is not praiseworthy to God. We also see that a conscious walk of sanctification will result in the final glory given to us by God. We are saved by grace alone. We will be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. God will lead us to glory and give to us all the blessings of salvation. Thanks be to Him for His gift! Sing Psalter 138:4.

April 11 Read Psalm 51

Psalm 51:1-2 In this Psalm we not only have David’s confession of sin but also his return to grace. The second is not possible without the first. He begins by throwing himself upon the mercy seat of God’s throne of justice. He knows that he has sinned against the all-righteous God and now seeks forgiveness for that sin. He knows that God is merciful and has a fountain of mercy for His people. Is this our experience, people of God? Do we confess our sins daily? Do we throw ourselves upon the mercies of God that are new every morning? We must wish to be washed completely clean. Not one speck of filthy sin can remain in us in order to enter the eternal rest. By God’s grace and mercy it is possible. Christ died for us! We are washed clean! Thanks be to God! Sing Psalters 140:1, 142:1, and 143:1.

April 12 Read Acts 5:1-11

Psalm 51:3-4 Ananias and Sapphira thought that their sin was against man. They thought that by fooling Peter and the other apostles they could gain for themselves some notoriety in the church. They were wrong...dead wrong. Sin, though it may be an offense against a brother, is always against God. David thought that Uriah's death would clear him from judgment. After all Uriah was dead and Bathsheba needed a husband, didn't she? God knew as Nathan pronounced with the words, "Thou art the man." Those same words convict us of our sins. We sin and we sin against God. This is what we must confess. Our sins offend the righteous God. We must confess our sins to God, knowing that by His mercy He will forgive us our sins. Sing Psalters 140:2 and 143:2.

April 13 Read Job 14:1-12

Psalm 51:5-7 The truth of total depravity is not a popular doctrine today, but it is the truth. That is David's testimony in verse five. Job knew it as well, as we read in Job 14. But both men knew that God desires and demands that His people remain truthful. They both knew that by God's grace they would be redeemed and cleansed from the filth of sin. Man can never do this by his own strength; it can only be the work of God. David knew that this was not easy even as he asked God to scrub him clean with strong methods. But David knew that these strong methods were the only way he could obtain the cleanliness demanded by God. We, too, must seek that cleanliness, and we, too, must know that it is only available through the blood of the Lamb. Sing Psalters 140:3 and 142:2.

April 14 Read Isaiah 38:9-20

Psalm 51:8-9 Hezekiah's prayer provides all the commentary we need on these two verses. Read them slowly and savor their full blessings for the child of God. And then turn to God yourself and pray that he will grant forgiveness for all your sins. By this means we find peace with God. Sing Psalters 140:4 and 143:3.

April 15 Read John 13:1-11

Psalm 51:10-12 Notice David's six requests in these verses. He and we can only ask these things if we feel the work of the Spirit in our hearts. Sometimes we must be brought to the depths of despair in order to see our need of a Savior. Sometimes we need to see that we can do nothing to earn salvation. It is a fearful thing to be cast out of God's sight. Think of Judas Iscariot. Think of Peter. Only through confession of sin was Peter restored to the fellowship of Christ. Salvation's joys are many, but they are not for the unrepentant sinner. Read these requests and then turn with me in prayer and take these requests upon your lips and from the heart confess your sin before God.

David did, and he found the joy of salvation once again. Sing Psalters 141:1, 142:3, and 143:4.