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**Day 116 – April 26**

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**Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)**  
***Psalms about Righteousness and Wickedness***

**Readings: *Psalm 1, 14, 15, 36, 37, 39***

***Reflections:***

- Psalm 1: It begins with a progress that follows “Walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, sit in the seat of mockers.” This is a great piece of insight. People don’t end up in bad places by one day just deciding to do something terrible. First they begin to explore and check out something. Then they decide to hang out for a bit. And finally they commit and plant themselves in the place where they will be given over to that sin. The challenge is to reflect on whether I may be in the early phases of just checking out any area of sin. I may be tempted to hang out and ultimately commit sin if I simply check it out enough. This can also be true of negative thoughts. We start by thinking, then we begin planning and before you know it, we are acting on things that reflect unbelief, doubt or discouragement rather than trusting in God.
- It is interesting that Paul in the New Testament uses the terms sit, walk, and stand as his ordering concept for Ephesians. He uses it to challenge his readers that they have been “seated with Christ” and therefore they must learn to “Walk worthy of this high calling of being God’s child” and then ultimately learn to “Stand in the battle of life.” Psalm 1 and its first few verses were no doubt understood as the introduction to the psalms and most likely the books of wisdom as well. With this said it makes sense that Paul as a well trained Pharisee knew these verses inside and out and decided to re-arrange this concept to show how righteousness works in Christ.
- The Psalmist actually gives us the way of growing in righteousness. It follows a very similar approach. “Delight in the law of God. This leads to “meditating on it day and night.” This ultimately leads to being “planted by streams of water.” This means that people who delight in God’s truth and heart will think about him all the time and will then be rooted deeply into his presence as they grow in his truth and love. The blessing that comes from this is that as you are rooted in God, even when things are tough and dry, you will still see good things come from your life. The wicked aren’t rooted like this and so they just get blown away like dry, flaky chaff.

- We should note that Jesus uses a very similar literary approach, modeled in some ways off of Psalm 1 when he begins his sermon on the mount with the eight stanzas called the Beatitudes. We will see that the key to Jesus is not setting your roots into the Law of God but being filled up with the mercy of God.
- Psalm 14: Fools deny God -- "There is no God." This may be complete atheism or it may simply be the unbelief of saying, "in this situation, I don't think God can do anything." God is looking for people who get Him, who understand his heart of faithfulness and his power and his love. The wicked deny God and then devour others through injustice. "They frustrate the plans of the poor." (The poor are trying to get justice and find stability in life.) But God is the refuge of the poor. Good reminders here about how important it is to value the poor and not simply life. "God-less" lives that are self-centered and ultimately deny those in need of our help and resources.
- Psalm 15: Begins with the question (great question), "who can be close to God?" The answer is rich and full. 1) A person who is without sin; 2) speaks only truth from his heart; 3) honors his neighbor; 4) rejects those who do evil and affirms those who are doing what is right; 5) shows covenant faithfulness even when it hurts; 6) who displays true justice to those in need (no interest on loans; no bribes to pervert justice). Now here is the problem, the very first condition no one can keep, let alone the other five. In Christ we see why it is so important that he removed all of our sin and then gave us God's Spirit to dwell within us to give us strength to walk out God's desires for us. We can stand in God's presence now, not because we are without sin but because we are completely forgiven. In God's presence he then teaches us how to speak the truth in love, love our neighbors and our enemies, to reach out to those who are doing wrong, to show true covenant faithfulness in all relationships and to be actively serving the poor and needy. It is fascinating that much of this list is actually quite passive compared to what Christ calls us too. The only one that is more passive is just the first one: "Receive my forgiveness and God's Spirit" and then out of that place you can actively do all these other things. It is amazing to see how Christ fulfills all that God gave in the Old Testament as his vision of what it means to be right in God's eyes. As we live this way in Christ, the promise holds true: we will never be shaken. We will stand even in the most difficult of times.
- Psalm 36: Here we see David mapping out the psychology of sinful people. No fear of God, self-confident to the point of not seeing their own sin, willing to say anything without conscience, rejecting true wisdom or a commitment to do the right thing (no doubt has rationalized what they are thinking of doing), they plan out evil when they are alone and then ultimately act on it. A good check list for when you are mad or angry or feel like a victim. Well, the response in this psalm is to now contrast all of this with God (rather than the righteous). God is limitless love, perfect in faithfulness, overwhelming in righteousness, endless in justice. His heart is for both people and his creation (beast). He offers all people perfect love, safety, blessing in abundance, grace to bring us delight,

light to light our path. David ends with a simple prayer: God, may your love continually flow to those who know you, but protect me from the wicked. Again, this is the right psalm to reflect on. As Paul will write in the New Testament: “you may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:19; also see Romans 8:39)

- Psalm 37: This is an awesome psalm loaded up with promises that are well worth putting to memory. Do not worry about evil people because they simply don't last, trust God and do good and you will be secure, delight yourself in God and he will give you the desires of your heart, commit all you to do God and trust him and he will work everything out and protect your reputation, wait quietly, patiently and without anger before God and you will receive your inheritance and will enjoy God's blessing and peace. The psalm then transitions to expand on the how those who truly love God live life: they are known and upheld by God and so they give generously to all who have need and they are able to speak out God's wisdom. The psalm concludes by encouraging the singer to reflect on those who are righteous and see that this is actually how things work. A great psalm to really encourage going for God and truly trusting him in all things.
- Psalm 39: David is getting angry in this psalm and feels so frustrated. But he acknowledges how weak and limited his life really is, he intentionally puts his hope in God alone and he pours out his hurt and need of God. It is interesting that he accepts the very difficult time he is going through as God disciplining him. Again in the New Testament, Paul encourages the same, to accept trials as discipline. This is often hard to do but if we do adopt this mindset, it helps us to actually see God being able to use all things to help us grow in humility, dependence and stronger resolve to do what is right. In Christ we see someone who knows the depth of suffering and so we are not alone but he is able to sympathize and enter into that pain with us. This gives us even greater comfort and reveals how much God truly loves us.