

Week 21 Psalm 40, Acts 11-15, Psalm 41

Psalm 40 — David’s “remembrance of salvation (vv. 1-5) leads to willing commitment to God (vv. 6-10) and an appeal to God for support (vv. 11-17).” #6 p.267 Verses 6-8 are referenced by the author of Hebrews 10:5. Some even consider the entire psalm to be messianic. There are difficulties with verse 12 which make that interpretation problematic. Others claim it refers to David or Israel. None of those views fit perfectly either. The most recognized is that it refers to David with portions that are messianic. **What is the relationship portrayed between the author and God? (look for “I” and “LORD”)**

Acts 11— Upon hearing that the Gentiles became disciples, those Christians in Judea who were Judaizers protested that to truly become a disciple a man first must be circumcised. After rehearsing the story of Cornelius and those of his house, and how they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, the people rejoiced that God had even granted “the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life (v. 18 NLT).” When the Gentiles in Antioch began to turn to Christ in large numbers, the Apostles sent Barnabas to encourage and teach them. He went to Tarsus to search for Paul in order to bring him back to Antioch to assist him teaching and making disciples. During this time the prophet Agabus predicted a famine, and so the church in Antioch sent money to the elders in Jerusalem to help them with their need. ***How was this church in Antioch important in the early history of Christianity?***

Acts 12— Another wave of persecution came over the church, and King Herod killed James, John’s brother, with the sword. When he saw that the Jewish leaders were pleased, he arrested Peter and held him in prison until after the feast of the Unleavened Bread was finished so that he could bring him to trial and execute him. The night before coming to trial, the church earnestly prayed for Peter’s safety. An angel of the Lord came and rescued him from prison. When Peter arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the people that were praying were completely shocked by Peter’s rescue. He explained how the Lord had saved him from sure execution. After King Herod interrogated the guards and ordered their execution, he went down to Caesarea. While giving an oration to the people of Tyre and Sidon, King Herod was struck down by God and eaten with worms because of his pride in accepting the adulation of the people. ***How are we like the people that gathered for prayer at Mary’s house? Do we always believe God answers prayer? What answer to prayer have you seen in the last few months?***

Acts 13— As the church at Antioch prayed and fasted, the Holy Spirit directed the believers to send off Barnabas and Saul to win souls, make disciples, and plant churches. On their first stop, they came to the island of Cyprus which was the home of Barnabas. Cyprus had a large Jewish population. The Roman governor of the island became a believer when through Paul’s words, the Lord struck Bar-Jesus (Elymas), the sorcerer, with blindness (vv. 1-12). Leaving the city of Paphos on the island of Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Perga in the province of Pamphylia where John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. Going on to Antioch in Pisidia, Paul was invited to speak a message of encouragement in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He then gave a gospel message which included the history of Israel and God’s promises to them, the life of Jesus Christ including His death, burial, and resurrection, and the offer of forgiveness of sins to all who believe on Him. Nearly the whole town came to listen to him the next Sabbath, and the Jews became jealous of the large crowd and incited leading men and prominent women against Paul and Barnabas. They were expelled from Antioch and went on to Iconium, but the new believers

were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. *After reading the Apostle Paul's message in the synagogue (vv. 16-41), what things stand out in your mind about its structure and content?*

Acts 14— The next stop for Paul and Barnabas is Iconium where they first go to the synagogue and proclaim Christ. Although a great number of Jews and Greeks believed, part of the town tried to stone them so they fled to Lystra (vv. 1-7). In Lystra a man lame from birth was healed by Paul. This healing caused the crowd to think they were gods that came down from heaven. Then the priest from the temple of Zeus tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. They were barely able to stop the people from offering sacrifices to them. Then Jews that came from Antioch and Iconium, won the crowds over, and incited them to stone Paul. They dragged Paul out of the city thinking he was dead, but he got up and went back into the town (vv. 8-20). Going to Derbe next, they made many disciples, and then returned through all the cities encouraging the believers, appointing elders, and telling them “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (v. 22b NIV).” *When the missionary journey was completed, who did Paul and Barnabas report to about their first missionary journey? Why was this important, and how is this an example to our churches today?*

Acts 15— Now we come to a decisive council in Jerusalem where an important decision had to be made as to whether the Gentiles would be forced to be circumcised and live under the Law of Moses in order to be saved as the Pharisaic wing of the church in Jerusalem demanded. First, Peter made it clear that through his mouth the first Gentiles were saved, and upon believing the gospel message they received the Holy Spirit. Next Barnabas and Paul described all the signs and wonders God has done through them among the Gentiles. Finally, James brings scripture to bear upon God's purpose of enfolding Gentiles into His eternal plan. He then passed on four guidelines to the Gentile churches which would bring unity between Jews and Gentiles in the local assemblies. A letter then was written by those in the council to all the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Upon hearing the letter, the church was very encouraged and strengthened. Paul wanted to return with Barnabas to the churches they planted but had a sharp disagreement happened because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them although he had deserted them on the first journey. As a result of the contention, Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus, and Paul departed with Silas to revisit and strengthen the churches in Syria and Cilicia. *Give the steps from start to finish that these leaders and Apostles used to resolve their conflict about whether or not Gentiles have to keep the Law of Moses to be saved.*

Psalms 41— It appears that David has become exceedingly ill, to the point of death. In verses 4 and 8 David pleads to be healed of a vile or deadly disease. He prays for God's help and vindication. **Who might David be referring to in verse 9? See John 13:18, also II Samuel 11:3, 23:34?**

Week 22 Psalm 42, Acts 16-20, Psalm 43

Psalm 42— A wonderful Psalm of encouragement when one finds themselves in tragic circumstances. Peace comes when our hope, yearning and thirsting is for God. Accusers taunt the author with questions, but also the author asks himself 6 “whys”. **What are they and how do they teach us to renew our own hope in God?**

Acts 16— Paul and Silas returned to the churches in Asia Minor that were planted and gave them the report of the Jerusalem council, and the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily. They tried to take the gospel to other parts of Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't allow them to go. Timothy and Luke had joined them along the way. When they came to Troas, Paul had a vision of a man pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us (v. 9b HCSB)!” After arriving in the city of Philippi in Macedonia, they went on the Sabbath day to the riverbank outside the city and found some women gathered for prayer. One of the women in the group was Lydia who was a merchant of expensive purple cloth. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe, she was baptized, and then she invited Paul's team to stay at her home. When Paul cast demons out of a slave girl who was constantly bothering them, her owners seized Paul and Silas and dragged them off to the authorities. After a mob stripped off their clothes and beat them, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. At midnight as Paul and Silas were singing, God sent a violent earthquake which loosened everyone's chains. Since no one escaped, the jailer asked “Sirs, what must I do to be saved (v. 30 ESV).” After believing in the Lord Jesus, the jailer and his family were baptized. Since Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the city magistrates apologetically escorted them out of the city. ***Where do we see the work of the Holy Spirit in this chapter? What work does the Holy Spirit do in your life?***

Acts 17— Paul's team traveled from Philippi to Thessalonica where he reasoned with them from the Scriptures in the Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths. Although many Jews and God-fearing Greeks were persuaded to believe in Christ, other Jews became jealous, formed a mob, and forced Paul and Silas to leave town (vv. 1-9). As was their custom, Paul and Silas went to the synagogue in Berea and taught the scriptures. The Jews of this city were more open-minded and fair and eagerly examined the Scriptures to see if Paul was speaking the truth. A large number believed in Berea, but Jewish agitators from Thessalonica came and forced Paul to leave Macedonia (vv. 10-15). Silas and Timothy stayed in Macedonia to instruct the believers, but Paul went on to Athens to await them. He taught in the synagogue but also reasoned with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who took him to the Areopagus to share his strange ideas with them. Having been taught in Greek philosophy, he adapted his message of the gospel in a way the Greeks could understand by talking about the altar to an unknown God and even quoting Greek philosophers. After finishing his message on the theme of Christ and the resurrection, some ridiculed him, some wanted to hear more another day, and others believed (vv. 16-34). Paul used the altar to the unknown God and Greek philosophy as points of contact between the people and the gospel. ***What are some of the ways we can contextualize (adapt and relate the gospel to a culture) the gospel today in order to reach people for Christ? See I Corinthians 9:19-23.***

Acts 18— After leaving Athens, Paul arrived in Corinth and found a believing couple from Rome by the names of Aquila and Priscilla who were tentmakers as he was. When Silas and Timothy joined them, Paul was occupied with the message of the gospel in the synagogue. Although many believed in Christ, he was strongly opposed by the Jews and thus dedicated his

time to reaching the Gentiles. God promised to protect Paul in Corinth, and so he boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah for a year and a half. When Paul was dragged into court, the judge by the name of Gallio would not accept the Jews arguments and had them escorted out of the court. Leaving Corinth, Paul went to Ephesus where he stayed for a short period of time and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, Paul sailed back to Caesarea and Antioch where he greeted the churches. He then returned through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the churches. When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak boldly in the synagogue, he only declared what John the Baptist said about Jesus. “They took him home and explained the way of God to him more accurately (v. 26b HCSB).” Crossing over to Corinth from Ephesus, Apollos greatly helped the believers and refuted the non-believing Jews in public. This chapter introduces us to a dynamic couple by the name of Priscilla and Aquila. ***What information can we glean about them from this chapter as well as other parts of Paul’s writings? See verses 1-3, 25-26, Romans 16:3-5, I Corinthians 16:19, and II Timothy 4:19.***

Acts 19— Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist who he taught clearly the gospel of Christ and had them baptized in the name of Jesus. After their baptism Paul laid his hands on the twelve men, and they spoke in other languages (tongues) and prophesied (vv. 1-7). For two years Paul spoke boldly the message of the gospel so that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. The Lord performed extraordinary miracles through Paul, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Believers who had previously been involved in the occult brought their incantation books and burned them in a public bonfire (vv. 8-20). Because of the large number of converts in Ephesus and surrounding cities, the silversmiths who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis were losing a vast amount of money. Demetrius assembled all the craftsmen who became enraged by the loss of business, and so they dragged Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s travelling companions, into the amphitheater. Confusion reigned for two hours as the people shouted “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” The city clerk calmed the crowd down, urged the silversmiths to bring charges in a court of law if they have any, and then dismissed the assembly (21-41). ***As you have read and thought about the last seven chapters (13-19) that record Paul’s missionary journey, what seemed to be his strategy in church planting and evangelism?***

Acts 20— Paul departed from Ephesus to go to Macedonia and Greece. He spent three months in Corinth, returned to the cities of Macedonia, and then stopped seven days in Troas. He assembled the church together on the first day of the week and preached until dawn. A young man by the name of Eutychus, who was sitting on a window sill, sank into a deep sleep and fell from the third story and died. Through Paul, the Lord brought him back to life (vv. 1-12). Arriving at Miletus Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. First, Paul reviewed his ministry with them which was preaching everything they needed from the Word including repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Even though he knew that going to Jerusalem would mean prison and suffering, his concern was not his life but that he will finish the course and ministry of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace (vv. 12-24). Now the writer Luke begins to show the deep love and concern that Paul had for the churches and challenges the elders to be on guard for the flock that the Lord has called them to shepherd. He warned them to constantly be on the lookout because savage wolves will come in to tear the sheep apart with false doctrines in order to lure away disciples to themselves. He then described his behavior which he wanted them to imitate such as providing for their own needs and not being greedy.

After his farewell heartrending message, they knelt down and prayed together with a great deal of weeping and grieving when he told them that he would never see them again (vv. 17-38). In this chapter Paul is completely transparent. *After reading verses 17 to 38, describe what Paul reveals about his motives, character, and person.*

Psalm 43— The psalmist pleads for vindication from deceitful men and encourages himself with the realization that when his focus is on the Lord and not his circumstances, everything begins to change. We see a pattern in the Psalms of men coming to God for justice, but not based on personal merit. **What is the basis of their petition (see verses 2, 4)?**

Week 23 Psalm 44, Acts 21- 25, Psalm 45

Psalm 44— The sons of Korah remember the former glory and subsequent ruin of their nation. Verse 22 is cited by Paul in Romans 8:36. At face value, it would seem God is being unfair to them. **Is that true? Why or why not?**

Acts 21— Paul and his team left Miletus and sailed to Phoenicia, spending time with the disciples in Tyre and Caesarea. At every place the Holy Spirit indicated that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Even the prophet Agabus said that Paul would be bound in chains, but this did not deter Paul on what he knew the Lord wanted him to do (vv. 1-14). Coming to Jerusalem, Paul met with James and all the elders as he declared what God had done among the Gentiles. Since it was rumored that Paul encouraged the Jews to abandon the Law of Moses, they advised him to fulfill a Nazirite vow with four other men, thus showing that he was not rejecting the law (vv. 15-25). On the last day of the annual feast of Pentecost (presumably), the Jews from Asia saw Paul and leveled false charges against him, stirred up the crowd, and dragged him out of the temple complex. As the mob tried to kill him, the Roman commander and the soldiers rescued Paul. After identifying himself to the tribune, Paul asked and was given permission to speak to the crowd (vv. 26-40). In Acts 16:3 Paul had Timothy circumcised, and in this chapter Paul fulfilled an Old Testament custom of a Nazirite vow which included seven days of purification and then making animal sacrifices. ***Was Paul right in doing these rites, or was he compromising and denying the doctrine of salvation by grace. See also I Corinthians 9:22***

Acts 22— Paul then addressed the audience of the Jews in Aramaic which was the common Hebrew language. He describes his background, education, and zeal before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He then tells the story of his conversion and calling, but when he mentions his ministry to the Gentiles, the crowd once again erupts in yelling and tossing dust in the air. The commander then ordered that Paul be brought in to be flogged to find out why the people were shouting and out of control. When the commander was told that he was a Roman citizen, those who were going to flog him withdrew at once. ***How were Paul's Roman citizenship, his speaking Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, his birth in Tarsus, and his education under the rabbi Gamaliel assets to his ministry to both Jews and Gentiles? How has your background as to place of birth and childhood, parents, gifts, talents, and personality prepared you for Christian service in your life?***

Acts 23— The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, and so he convened a meeting with the Sanhedrin and Paul. Realizing that the Sanhedrin was divided between the Sadducees and Pharisees, Paul said, “I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead (v. 6b NIV).” Because of their belief in the resurrection, the Pharisees began to defend Paul, and the dispute became so violent that the commander had to rescue Paul and bring him back to the barracks (vv. 1-10). The Lord gave Paul a promise that night that he would also testify in Rome. There was a conspiracy of 40 men who vowed to kill Paul, but Paul's nephew found out and told Paul. When the commander was told of the plot, he prepared 200 soldiers, 70 mounted troops, and 200 spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea at nine o'clock that night. The commander, Lysias, sent a letter to Felix the governor giving in detail the reason he sent Paul to Caesarea. Felix promised a hearing when Paul's accusers were able to come to present their case (vv. 11-34). ***What was the difference in beliefs between the***

Sadducees and the Pharisees? How did Jesus show that the teaching of the resurrection was found in the five books of Moses (Pentateuch)? See Matthew 22:31-32 and Exodus 3:6.

Acts 24— Five days later Ananias, the high priest, came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus to accuse Paul. They charged Paul with being an agitator among the Jews throughout the Roman Empire, a ringleader of the Nazarene cult, and a desecrater of the temple (vv. 1-9). Paul skillfully defended himself declaring that he had come to Jerusalem to bring charitable gifts and to worship without attracting a crowd or causing an uproar. He said that the Jews from the province of Asia should bring their charges against him if they have any. He asserted that the people of the Way (Christians) believe in all that is taught in the Old Testament including the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous (vv. 10-21). Felix called Paul to listen to him talk concerning the subject of Christ Jesus, but also hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe. He left Paul in prison for two years as a favor to the Jewish leaders (vv. 22-27). ***What response should we have as Christians when we are falsely accused and persecuted?***

Acts 25— Felix is replaced as governor by Festus who immediately confers with the Jews in Jerusalem. The chief priests and the Jewish leaders wanted him to act right away on Paul's case and bring him to Jerusalem to be judged, but their real intent was to have him killed on the way. Not willing to bring Paul to Jerusalem, Festus held court in Caesarea where the same accusations they had given to Felix were presented by the Jews, and the same defense was given by Paul. When Paul sensed that his options were either to go to Rome or be killed on the road to Jerusalem, he said to Festus, "I appeal to Caesar!" Festus said, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go!" When King Agrippa and Bernice paid a courtesy call on Festus, he made them aware of a prisoner left by Felix who had appealed to Caesar. Since Agrippa knew the Jewish culture well, Festus wanted him to clarify the charges that needed to be brought to the Emperor in Rome. The next day King Agrippa and Bernice entered the auditorium with great fanfare to hear Paul. Many prominent people of the city were also in attendance to see King Agrippa and hear Paul. The Apostle Paul received protection from the Roman authorities during this period in his life. **Can we trust God to work out His will through civil authorities? Explain. See Romans 13:1-5. Do we really appreciate and pray for our government officials, police officers, and first responders as they serve us? I Timothy 2:1**

Psalms 45 — This chapter is a wedding song for David or Solomon. The author shifts his focus in verses 6-9 to one greater than David or Solomon, the Messiah Himself. He continues with the earthly wedding in verse 10. God is mentioned three times in verses 6 & 7, indicating two different persons. **Who are they (see Hebrews 1:8-9)?**

Week 24 Psalm 46. Acts 26-28, Romans 2, Psalm 47

Psalm 46 — This is a prophetic song celebrating the ultimate triumph of God over the nations, when He "makes wars to cease" and instills a lasting peace on earth. We are reminded to "be still and know that He is God". See verses 9 & 10. Look for the instances of verb "to be" (is, was, am, will be) where God is the subject. God is, I will, I am God, etc. **List the attributes of God mentioned in these verses.**

Acts 26— Paul gave his defense and testimony before King Agrippa, beginning with his background as belonging to the strictest group of the Jews as a Pharisee, and showing his great zeal for Judaism by his persecution of those who belonged to Jesus the Nazarene. He shared his conversion experience of how he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul clearly declared to Agrippa and to those who were listening the gospel story and the reality of the resurrection. He said that the reason he was seized in the temple complex by the Jews with the intention to kill him was that he told the Jews that God has offered this gift of salvation also to the Gentiles. Both Festus and Agrippa reacted to Paul's testimony since Paul encouraged them to believe in Christ. King Agrippa asked Paul if he believed that he would be persuaded to become a Christian so quickly. After the encounter with Paul, both Agrippa and Festus agreed that he had not done anything that deserved imprisonment. ***Write down from this chapter the verses that describe the message of the gospel. As Paul gave his testimony in this chapter, what group of people did he emphasize, the Jews or the Gentiles? Why?***

Acts 27— Luke describes the trip from Caesarea to Rome in graphic details giving us knowledge of what travel on the Mediterranean Sea was like at that time. When they reached Fair Havens on the island of Crete, they found the harbor unsuitable to winter in and decided to sail on to Phoenix even though it was late fall and very dangerous to sail. Paul warned that the voyage would have damage and heavy loss if they tried to sail on to Phoenix before winter, but the captain and owner of the ship paid no attention to his words. As Paul predicted, bad weather ensued and a violent storm was raging that carried them on without seeing the sun or stars. They did all they could to lighten and to gird the ship but it was to no avail. The storm continued violently for two weeks with their hope of being saved growing dim. Paul stood up among them and encouraged them to take heart since the angel of the Lord promised him that he would stand before Caesar in Rome and all those on the ship would be safe. Paul prevented sailors from escaping and the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Coming to an island and sighting a beach, they planned to run the ship ashore, but they struck a sandbar. Eventually, all of the 276 that were on the ship arrived safely to the island of Malta. Luke describes in vivid detail the unbelievable treacherous storm the people in the ship experienced where they even despaired of life. Describe a terrible "storm" that you have suffered in your life. ***What caused this storm? What did you learn from this storm? How has this storm changed you?***

Acts 28— They wintered on the island of Malta and were given warm hospitality by the friendly Maltese. Paul survived a poisonous snake bite without any effect and healed many who were sick on the island including the father of Publius, the chief officer of the island. After three months, they set sail for Rome, and Paul arrived at the port of Perteoli about 130 miles south of Rome. As they traveled on foot, they were greeted by Roman believers about 40 miles outside of Rome. In Rome Paul was able to rent his own living quarters with a Roman soldier guarding him. He invited the Jewish leaders from Rome to come to his house, and he declared the gospel of Christ from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. After a full day from morning to evening, some

believed and some didn't. From that time on Paul went to the Gentiles to preach the Good News boldly and without hindrance for two years. ***How is the attitude of the Jews in Rome different from the Jews in Jerusalem and Asia? How do you account for the difference?***

Romans— Romans was written by the Apostle Paul in about 57 AD before ever going to Rome from the city of Corinth as he was preparing to go to Jerusalem. The book has been called the Mt. Everest of all scripture with Chapter 8 being the summit. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this great treatise explaining the Christian faith. The outline of Romans can be easily remembered by five words; 1. Sin (1-3:23) 2. Salvation (3:24-5:21) 3. Sanctification (6-8) 4. Sovereignty (9-11) and Service (12-16).

Romans 1— Paul begins with an introduction and greeting to the church at Rome, declaring to them his desire to visit them to reap a harvest among them (v.1-15). In verses 16-17, he states the overall themes of the Gospel and the Righteousness of God. God's wrath is justly revealed against sinners because they suppress the truth and turn to idolatry (v. 18-23). The fruit of their rejection of truth and the acceptance of idolatry causes the complete moral disintegration of society (v. 24-32). **1. Explain what Paul means by "God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith (or 'by faith from first to last') as it is written ' the just (righteous) shall live by faith' (v.17)." See also Colossians 2:7. 2. What does the Bible teach about homosexuality? See verses 26-27, I Corinthians 6:9- 10, Leviticus 18:21-25, and Jude 7. What should be our attitude toward those who practice it?**

Romans 2— After a vivid description of human depravity in Chapter 1, Paul now speaks of the pride and judgmentalism of the Jews who think that God will overlook their sins for the simple reason they are Jews. God, however, shows no partiality and will judge each person according to their works and His gospel (v. 1-16). Simply because the Jews had the law and received the rite of circumcision, they thought they were approved by God. Paul says that only those who are Jews inwardly and have a circumcised heart by the Spirit will be praised by God (v. 17-29). **What arguments did Paul give to the Jews who thought they were special with God but in reality because of their sins would suffer the same condemnation as the Gentile sinners? Extra Question: Do verses 12 to 16 teach that the Gentiles do not have to be saved by trusting Christ if they live a life of obedience to the law? Explain.**

Psalm 47 — This is a joyous song remembering the victories of God when He subdued the land of Canaan (vv. 1-4). God's dominion over the whole earth concludes the Psalm (vv. 5-9). **What are the actions attributed to God**