

Meditation #1
Psalm 2:1
Prof. Herman Hanko

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psalm 2 is one of my favourite Psalms. It is also an important one in Scripture, for it is quoted twice in the New Testament. It is a Psalm written by David and expresses a truth of David's reign as king of Israel.

The nation of Israel, though quite large, was nevertheless surrounded by heathen nations which sought Israel's destruction: Moabites, Philistines, Ammonites, Syrians and others. During the early part of David's reign, David, with Joab his general, captured the stronghold of Zion, which had been held by the Jebusites since Israel conquered Canaan over 400 years earlier. Zion became the capital of the nation and, as a stronghold surrounded on two sides by high cliffs, it was impregnable and a picture of the church (Refer to Ps. 48, 87 and others).

The Psalm refers, therefore, in the first place to God's work of setting David over the nation, ruling from Zion and defeating all Israel's enemies. Verse 1 of Psalm 2 therefore, asks the rhetorical question: *"Why do all the heathen nations rage against Zion? God has set his king in Zion and no nation will ever conquer it. The heathen rage and plot in vain."*

But the Psalm has its fulfilment in Christ and, because Israel was the OT church, Zion is a type of that universal church of the old and new dispensation. In that church, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) God has set his own Son, Jesus Christ, as King. He is the strength of the church. Because of him, no enemy can ever destroy or harm the church, even though through 6,000 years of church history the wicked have tried.

Christ has become the King of the church because "I (God) have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (vv. 6-7).

Although Christ is in his person God's only begotten Son, he is also God's only begotten Son in his resurrection according to the New Testament. Romans 1:1-4 and Acts 13:33 state this literally. This is true because Christ becomes the King of the church through his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to God's right hand.

The wonder and blessedness of it is that Christ also rules over the wicked, not only to prevent them from harming his church, but also uses his rule over the attempts of the wicked to destroy the church, to save the church and the bring about the establishment of Christ's kingdom. That is why God laughs and holds the wicked in derision. They think they can destroy the church; in fact, they help to save the church – even though they do not know it.

Memory verse: *Psalm 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Meditation #2
Psalm 6:3
Prof. Herman Hanko

My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how Long?

The heading of the Psalm says, “David’s complaint in his sickness.” These headings are not inspired, but they are very old and quite often seem to be accurate. Although we do not read of any serious physical sicknesses in the historical accounts, the Psalm seems to suggest strongly that David had a grave illness (Ps. 6:2) that brought him very near death (Ps. 6:5).

David understood that his illness was due to divine chastisement; and that made his illness very grievous beyond physical suffering, for divine chastisement meant that God was angry with him for his sin (Ps. 6:1). No less than a child who loves his parents can bear their anger, can we bear the anger of our Father in heaven whom we love. This is the reason why David speaks of his soul as vexed.

It is usually true of God’s people that when they are very sick, or some other calamity happens to them, that they have spiritual problems as well as physical suffering. Job did, for although he had no doubt that he was righteous in his Redeemer, he repeatedly wondered why, being righteous, he had to suffer so dreadfully (Job 19).

Chastisement may be for a specific sin of which we are guilty, but this need not be so in every case. By nature we are totally depraved and God must use drastic measures to change a rotten, ugly, useless piece of clay into a saint with a body like that of Christ, and a glory greater than the angels.

Our calling is therefore to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6-8), repent of our sin and flee to the cross. Doing this we may surely pray for relief from suffering, spiritual suffering as well as physical suffering, but always according to the will of God.

Some sins, such as drunkenness, drug abuse, promiscuity and abuse of the body can result in chastisement that lasts all our life. A drunk remains a drunk all his life even though he has ceased drinking. The craving for drink remains, and if he succumbs, he is back to where he was.

But finally God’s ways are known to God alone.

Thy way is in the sea, O God,
Through mighty waters deep and broad;
None understood but God alone,
To man thy footsteps were unknown;
But safe Thy people Thou didst keep,
Almighty Shepherd of Thy sheep—Stanza 3 of Psalter 211, versification of Psalm 77

Memory verse: *Psalm 6:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

Meditation #3
Psalm 11:1
Prof. Herman Hanko

In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

It is clear from verse 2 that David wrote this Psalm when he was surrounded by enemies who were seeking his life. We are not told the circumstances under which David wrote this Psalm: it may have been during the years when David was fleeing from Saul (1 Sam. 21), or it may have been at the time Absalom took over the throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15).

If Scripture does not indicate the specific occasion, this is probably because the trials David experienced at this time are trials which God's people face constantly. The wicked are always trying to destroy God's people, and the devil, as Peter says, goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Apparently, his advisors were telling David to forsake his position in Israel, for things looked hopeless. The best way to do this was to flee to the mountains where no one could find him.

I can easily imagine this. In my own ministry I was so burdened with problems and the cares of the churches, that nothing seemed more desirable to me than to move with my family to a small cabin in the northern part of Alaska, far from people and far from trouble. As I recall, the major deterrent was the thought that I would be leaving the church of Christ, something I could not do.

But David tells us he will not do this - rather than run from his troubles, he will put his trust in the LORD. The LORD is enthroned high in the heavens and he sees all David's woes and he judges the terrible things David's enemies are trying to do (v. 4).

The LORD his God who sees all that is happening to his servant will judge both David and his enemies (vv. 5-7). He will judge his people in the blood of the cross and find them righteous. Their cause is right and God will publicly justify them, but the wicked he will punish with dreadful punishments. They shall be destroyed in everlasting torment.

The righteous are always hated by the wicked and their perils seem sometimes to be great. But we must put our trust in Jehovah God who will vindicate our cause and punish those who torment us.

Memory verse: *Psalm 11:5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*

Meditation #4
Psalm 22:1
Prof. Herman Hanko

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Everyone who has any acquaintance with Scripture will recognise the first question in the text as the fourth saying of our Lord while suffering on the cross of Calvary (Matt. 27:46). Even a bit of thought about this text will raise the question in our minds, *“Why, if this is the fourth saying, is it found one thousand years earlier in the Psalms of David?”*

There are two answers to this question.

The first is that Christ, by his Spirit, inspired the whole of the Scriptures and so he was speaking of himself. The Psalms are Messianic, some more than others. Psalm 22 is clearly Messianic (vv. 6-8, 13-15, 18 especially; see also Matt. 27:35, 39, 41-43, Luke 23:34, John 19:28).

The words our LORD spoke through the Psalmist, he now speaks while on the cross. On the cross Christ was utterly forsaken by his Father.

The second reason is that while David is prophesying, he is speaking of his own life as well, for these are his words as he experienced God’s forsaking in his own life.

The Psalms in many places speak of the Psalmists’ experience of being far from God. Sometimes, in their distress, they use very bold language. They ask God why he does not hear them; is it because he may be on a far journey, or, perhaps that he is sleeping and should wake up? They search everywhere for him, but cannot find him – as Job did (Job 23:8-9).

Besides being prophetic of Christ’s life and ministry, and besides having their reality in the lives of the Psalmists, they are also a spiritual biography of every child of God. David and Israel sang these songs; they could do this because Christ spoke these words; and finally all God’s people suffer with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17). Paul even speaks of the fact that Christ in his sufferings, left over some of his sufferings for his church, so that they may suffer as he did and in fellowship with him (Col. 1:24).

All our suffering he also endured, even our temptations (Heb. 4:15-16). He bore our sicknesses and pains. We sing of this in the Psalter rendition of Psalm 103, “He heals Thy sicknesses, soothes thy pain” (Psalter No. 277).

And so we too can sing Psalm 22:1 – as we do in Psalter No. 47.

Memory verse: *Psalm 22:24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.*

Meditation #5
Psalm 24:3
Prof. Herman Hanko

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

The main theme of Psalm 24 is the ascension of Christ. The theme of Christ's ascension binds the three sections of the psalm together in a beautiful way. Verses 1-2 emphatically state that the earth belongs to God. Verses 3-6 ask the all-important question: Who is worthy to ascend Mount Zion to dwell with God in his holy temple? The answer is: None are worthy. Only Christ can do that, is the implied answer.

With that answer, verses 7-10 shout to open the gates of Zion so that Christ, who is himself God, can enter in. He is the King of glory; he is the Lord strong and mighty; the LORD mighty in battle.

But the psalm, quite naturally, uses Old Testament imagery. The temple is the symbol of God living in covenant fellowship with his church. That true and heavenly temple, no longer on Mt. Zion, is in heaven. So the question naturally arises, *"Who is worthy to go to heaven and dwell with God?"* To this the psalm refers and points out Christ as the only one.

Verses 1-2 are therefore the answer of the church to the taunts of the wicked. The wicked brashly claim to own this earth, and that they have the right to do with it as they please. The church answers the boasting of the world: *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof. He created it. It is his!"*

The earth, however, is under the curse of God. Someone must be worthy to go to heaven and prepare a new heaven and a new earth free from the curse, where God's people can dwell with God in fellowship.

Who in the entire world is worthy? Who has clean hands, and a pure heart? Who has never lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully? The answer is none, except God himself!

Christ is God's eternal Son - who is God himself. Christ has clean hands and a pure heart. He is worthy! He alone can go to hell, rise from the dead, ascend into heaven and open the way for his people to have clean hands and a pure heart.

When the church learns this, then the whole church cries out in joyful song. The song so beautiful is sung sometimes in Handel's *Messiah* in a stirring anthem of praise.

"Lift up your heads, Oh ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle."

And he goes to the heavenly Zion to make all heaven and earth new.

The church then can answer the taunts of the wicked (2 Pet. 3:3-7): The earth is the Lord's!

Memory verse: *Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

Meditation #6
Psalm 27:1
Prof. Herman Hanko

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

While the psalm gives us no information of the circumstances under which it was written, verses 2-7 and 13-14 all suggest that David was in danger because of his many enemies. Saul, Israel's king and the armies of Israel may be the enemies of which David sings.

The psalm is a song that all God's people sing when threatened by wicked men and/or attacked by Satan and his hosts of demons. It is a song of triumph and of victory. It was one of my father's favourites.

Though the child of God is surrounded by evil men who seek his life, and faces attack from within by Satan and his hosts who go abroad as roaring lions, seeking whom they can devour (1 Pet. 5:8-9), the Psalmist is perfectly confident that he will not be overcome, but will be victorious. His confidence is in his God, Jehovah himself.

Jehovah is God's covenant name and expresses Jehovah's faithfulness to his covenant promises. He had promised to be our God, and he cannot go back on his promise.

Jehovah is our **light**. Light in Scripture is a symbol of perfection. God's holiness is a brilliant light which no man can see without being destroyed (Isa. 6:1-5). God is therefore our light and **holiness**.

Light is also **life** – as it was in the creation, it refers in Scripture to eternal life, which is itself holiness and fellowship with the holy God (John 8:12).

Because Jehovah is our light, our holiness and our life of fellowship with God, we need not be afraid of our enemies; we shall be victorious over them. If it is God's purpose to be our light and our salvation, and God's purpose will be accomplished because he is Jehovah - what can we possibly fear? Ultimately our final deliverance will be heaven itself when we are with God (v. 13).

But we have not received it yet, and sometimes grow weary and fearful. It seems sometimes to us that our deliverance will never come - that is why the psalm closes with an admonition to be of good courage and wait upon Jehovah (verse 14). For Jehovah is faithful and he will, in his own good timing and way, save us. He is the strength of our life; that is, our strength in all our life as a pilgrim on earth. This is why Paul sang his doxology to God recorded for us in Romans 8:31-39.

Memory verse: *Psalm 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

Meditation #7
Psalm 42:5
Prof. Herman Hanko

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Psalm 42 was a favourite of our ancestors in the Netherlands and in America. A very gifted though for the most part uneducated man in our congregation, spent his last years in a nursing home. I frequently went to see him for he had served as an elder in the congregation in which I had ministered. Because the majority of the patients had dementia or Alzheimer's disease, he had no companionship with the other patients except for one only lady, nearly 100 years old. She was Dutch, talked Frisian and knew the Dutch psalm book.

She was dying, and in a coma. The man of whom I spoke asked the nurses if he could see her before she died, and they gave their permission. At the side of the bed on which she lay, he said to her, "Ma'am, shall we sing Psalm 42:1 together before you go to heaven?" She woke momentarily from her coma, sat up and said, "Yah." Together, one in his 90s and the other near 100, sang Psalm 42 – in what were thin and reedy voices. I would have given my left hand to have heard that. When they were finished, she lay back on her bed, the elder said his goodbye and walked out of the room; she died before he was through the door. I think the angels joined with them in their song.

Psalm 42 is a psalm that people of God sing when in deep distress under God's chastening hand. They long for God's favour and tell their souls to trust in him who will in good time deliver them. The repeated refrain in the Psalm is: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?...hope thou in God!"

What the saints want desperately is the help of God's countenance. God's countenance is his face. It is a word used often in Scripture and is part of the Aaronitic blessing (Num. 6:26).

The light of God's countenance is the smile of God's love for his people. When we meet someone dear to us, we rejoice when the loved one smiles at us with shining eyes and an undeniable light of love. When the one we love frowns, we are frightened and afraid. We can tell when one we love looks sad; or when the one we love shows a smile that hides a treacherous heart.

When God smiles on us, sinners though we are, his smile means also his deliverance from all our woes and, wonder of wonders, our fellowship with the eternal and infinite God. His smile on his face (which we see in Jesus Christ), is all we really want. It is our salvation. It is wonderful! Even in life's most trying experiences.

Memory verse: *Psalm 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

Meditation #8
Psalm 44:21
Prof. Herman Hanko

Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

The man used by God to write this psalm is not known to us; it might have been David, but we cannot be sure. In any case, the psalmist is puzzled and disturbed for he wrote this in a time of deep affliction when it appeared that God had forsaken his people.

God had made it very clear that the nation indeed composed of his people and was the church of the old dispensation, by doing wonderful works for them (vv. 1-8). But suddenly the Lord had brought trouble and sorrow to the nation (vv. 9-16). The psalmist did not know why God had done this, for they had been faithful to God in their worship of him (vv. 17-18).

Although God sometimes chastises his people for no reason that he makes known to them (God's servant Job is a case in point, for God himself declared Job to be righteous (Job 1:1, 8); yet he sent him very grievous afflictions), the psalmist's statement in verses 16-17 indicates that this way of God's dealings with his people is unusual to men.

I dare say that most of the afflictions that God sends upon us are not for specific sins that we have committed. It is true that from the viewpoint of our total depravity and our continual sin, that we deserve every affliction God sends, but his reasons for sending affliction are not always revealed to us.

Now the psalmist says, as it were: *"If we are afflicted for some specific sin that we do not know, God will make that known to us."* This is certainly true (vv. 20-21). He will do this even if the sin is in our hearts and we are not conscious of it. There are sins in us that David calls "secret faults", in Psalm 19:12. The secret sins we do not know, God knows better than we can and do know ourselves.

But then, considering another possibility, the psalmist says that perhaps our affliction is the persecution which God sends to the church, not because the church has sinned, but because God gives to his people the privilege of suffering with Christ (v. 22 – a text quoted by Paul in Rom. 8:36).

Nevertheless, the psalmist begs God to deliver them using a powerful metaphor that I would hesitate to use, "Awake; why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off forever." This prayer God hears and answers, sometimes in this life, but always in heaven.

Memory verse: *Psalm 19:12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

Meditation #9
Psalm 50:13
Prof. Herman Hanko

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

In this psalm God speaks and with a mighty voice summons all the earth together, for he has something to say to them (v. 1-6). All the earth is divided into two groups, God's people and the wicked. He speaks to his people first in verse 7, "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God." In the English Revised Version which is a late 19th century British revision of the King James Version, "unto" is used instead of "against".

The words God speaks to his people are recorded in verses 7-15.

In his speech to the children of Israel, God first tells them that, although he commanded them to make their sacrifices to him (v. 8), they are not what is really acceptable to him, for they are only passing types and shadows. What pleases him is described in verse 14-15: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

Verse 13 is inserted into that part of God's speech to Israel, which reminds them that their sacrifices, though acceptable to God, are not really what he wants. They were but dim types and shadows of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sacrifices in themselves do not satisfy him, for they are of no value to him. But they pointed to the great gift of his only begotten Son, and he is the one who fulfills God's purpose.

The text is therefore a reminder to us that although it is good to worship God in our outward actions, that is not enough, nor what God requires. We are right to go to church, to sing with the congregation, to pay our tithes and support the causes of the kingdom of Christ. It is even good to serve in an office in the church. Nevertheless, if that is all we do, our worship becomes empty and vain, an outward worship while our hearts and minds are far from God.

God desires that we worship him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24), that we sing from the heart; that we give our gifts knowing that all we have comes from God; that by faith we lay hold on Christ who is brought to us through the preaching of the gospel; and that we give praise and glory to God.

Memory verse: *John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Meditation #10
Psalm 53:4
Prof. Herman Hanko

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

The theme of Psalm 53 is stated in the first part of verse one: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

Notice that it is the “fool” who denies the existence of God: not the ignorant man who has never heard of God. A fool is one who knows very well that there is a God, he knows that God is the only God, that he alone is to be worshipped and served. But a fool is one who denies it even though he knows it is true.

Paul makes this very emphatic in Romans 1:18-20. God makes known to everyone in the whole world that he alone is God. He makes this known to those who have never heard the Scriptures. God makes himself known through the creation. But the wicked suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They make idols of every creature and so change God’s glory into images of every living thing. For their sin, God gives them over to the terrible sin of homosexuality (Rom. 1:24) – as is happening with frightening speed today.

The psalm explains why there are so many fools in the world. Some deny God entirely – as is becoming increasingly common. Some deny God by claiming to be the church, but teach heresy, thus also creating an idol of God.

The psalm goes on to explain their foolishness by pointing that man apart from Christ is totally depraved. The wicked deny the obvious because they are very wicked and can do no good. They are totally depraved!

Verse 4 describes their worse sin: they eat up God’s people like bread. The greatest evil the wicked can perform is the killing of the people of God. For example, Paul claims to be the greatest of all sinners because he persecuted the church (1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Why do the wicked tolerate every sin committed under the sun and let every man believe whatever heresy he wants to believe – but kill God’s people? The answer is that the confession and life of God’s people testify that what the wicked do and believe is sin and the lie. Reminded repeatedly of their sin of denying what they know to be true makes them furious, and they kill those who speak and live the truth. Evolutionists hate Creationists because they know they are wrong, but in their sin they hate God and his church because God and his church constantly remind them that what they deny, they really know it is true.

The psalm ends with a prayer that God will save and protect his people. “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”

Memory verse: *Psalm 53:3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Meditation #11
Psalm 73:25
Prof. Herman Hanko

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

Asaph was one of the musicians who prepared and sang songs in the temple. In this psalm, which he wrote by divine inspiration, he tells us that he almost lost his faith (v. 2). The reason was that he saw an unexplainable (to him) happening in the world that he didn't want to believe since it was so unfair. God seemingly was much more gracious to wicked people than to his own people. The wicked were, generally, trouble free, wealthy and dying easy deaths, while he (and all God's people) was plagued all day and constantly chastened (v. 14). It seemed as if he served God for no purpose and his righteous walk was futile (v. 13). It was a dreadful time of doubt and despair for the psalmist; but it is a seeming unfairness of God that often bothers us as well and tempts us to think that it is useless to serve God, for God treats us worse than the wicked.

But Asaph went to church! He went into the sanctuary, and there God explained to Asaph why he gave the wicked more than the righteous (v. 17). All the prosperity that the wicked possessed was a terrible judgment from God rather than "common grace", what foolish and unbelieving people in the church think. Every possession of the wicked is a drop of water that freezes on the steep hill of their life, and the wicked slide down that slippery slope more swiftly into hell (vv. 18-19).

Although the psalmist has nothing to speak of in this world, God holds his right hand and guides him by his counsel, so that at the end of his pilgrimage, he may be received into heaven (vv. 23-24). God wills the suffering of the righteous so that he may bring them to heaven.

Because the psalmist has come to see this, he ends the psalm with a glorious confession (vv. 25-28). The text is part of that confession. The believer, even though he suffers, realises that to have his God as his friend is all he needs, and more than anyone could possess in earthly things. It is better to have God than all the money in the world. It is better that God hold us by our right hand than to possess all the treasures of the earth.

Do you believe that for yourself? Do you confess that to be your comfort? May God grant it.

Memory verse: *Psalm 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

Meditation #12
Psalm 77:13
Prof. Herman Hanko

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?

Psalm 77 is a Psalm I have often used on pastoral calls for verses 1-9 are a perfect description of a saint overwhelmed with troubles. But the child of God is delivered from these dreadful troubles by remembering the great works of God (vv. 11-12).

As he ponders these great works God has done for his church and for him, he is impressed with the one outstanding fact: God's ways are in the sanctuary. The sanctuary referred to is probably the tabernacle, for the psalm was written by Asaph, a contemporary of David. The tabernacle was the earthly and visible symbol of God's presence with Israel, living in covenant fellowship with his people. The prayer that begins in verse 13 is Asaph's conclusion to his meditations. He means to say that he now knows that God will deliver him from all his troubles, for God has done and will always do wonderful works.

The meaning of this is, in the first place, that, although his troubles were so great that he thought deliverance was beyond possibility, he recalled in his meditation on God's wonderful works of the past. Through which, he saw that God could do great things, things beyond human understanding. They were marvelous works beyond human expectation. God can do the same now.

But God is one whose ways *are in the sanctuary*. Why does the psalmist make a point of this?

It wondrously means that although God's ways are beyond our understanding, they are performed by the God who dwells in covenant fellowship with his people.

If God dwells in covenant fellowship with his people, God will and can do nothing but good for them. Would God, the eternal Bridegroom of his people, do anything that would harm his bride? That would be impossible.

And so we too, when swallowed up by problems and all kinds of sorrows, can and do find solace in the great truth that God does nothing but good to his people.

Remember that! Whether the ways of God through which he leads us are filled with trouble and affliction, and whether or not we understand God's ways, God is good! Beloved, never lose sight of God's goodness. Say in every affliction, "I do not understand why God does this, but God is good: good to his church; good to me." If we lose sight of the fact that God is good, we have lost everything.

Memory verse: *Psalm 73:11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*

Meditation #13
Psalm 89:8
Prof. Herman Hanko

O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

The theme of Psalm 89 by Ethan the Ezrahite is expressed in verse 1: the faithfulness of God's mercies. The mercies of the LORD of which the psalmist sings are especially the great mercy of Jehovah God in setting David on the throne of Israel. But the Psalmist knows that David is only a type, and that Jehovah's great mercies are especially to be found in giving David a son who, while typically Solomon, is really Christ. The psalmist makes this clear in verses 19-37. In these verses is a detailed description of what Christ, the seed of David, will do for his church.

At the heart of all God has promised to do lies his promise to establish the throne of David forever in a kingdom that shall destroy all the foes of the church and raise God's covenant people to the glory of the kingdom of heaven. That is God's covenant with David his servant (vv. 3-4).

Verses 6-18 are a beautiful song that extols the greatness and glory of Jehovah who alone is able to do all these things. He is the creator of heaven and earth and all creatures in them. He is the God who performs his wonders in the creation so that every creature obeys his will.

Verse 8 asks two rhetorical questions to underscore the greatness and majesty of Jehovah. The first rhetorical question asks whether anyone or anything can be stronger than Jehovah God. The answer is obvious: nothing and no one!

The second question asks who is faithful to one's promises like Jehovah. The answer again is obvious. When God promised way back in Paradise to send a Saviour, he made a promise that he would further renew and explain its rich blessedness: to Noah (his promise not to destroy the earth by flood, Gen. 9:11-17), Abraham (his covenant is in the line of generations, Gen. 22:1-18 cross referenced with Gal. 3:8), and Israel at Mt Sinai, during which God showed Israel that he would send someone, a Saviour, who would fulfil the law for them since they could not keep it, Rom. 8:3. Finally, to David and Solomon, that God's promise included the establishment of a kingdom of which Christ would be king (2 Sam. 7:12-16, 1 Kings 9:5). To those promises he would be faithful.

His name is Jehovah, which means "I am". In him is no beginning nor end, and therefore no change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He will do what he has promised.

The rather strange statement, "thy faithfulness [is] round about thee" simply means that everything we see and know in the creation is nothing but the proof of God's faithfulness. And so indeed it is. In him we can, with confidence, put our trust. He will save us!

Memory verse: *Psalm 89:1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*

Meditation #14
Psalm 116:12
Prof. Herman Hanko

What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

Psalm 116 has been and still is one of my favorite psalms. I have used it on pastoral calls; I have used verse 15 for comfort to those who have lost a loved one, and have preached on verse 16 on Thanksgiving Day.

The psalm was written almost immediately after the LORD had delivered the psalmist from great trouble (v. 3) and after he had prayed for and received deliverance from his overwhelming grief (vv. 4-5).

The psalmist is so filled with wonder at the goodness of God shown to him that he ponders in his heart how he can return God's gracious favour and so express adequately his thanksgiving. The question he ponders is expressed in this text: *"What can I give to the LORD which will express to him my gratitude for what he has done for me?"*

The psalmist soon enough realises that there is nothing he can give to the LORD – nothing at all. God is, after all, the creator of all things. He already possesses all he has created, even the psalmist himself. The cattle on a thousand hills are his. There is nothing that is not already God's possession.

But there are two things he can do (v. 13). The first is that he will take the cup of salvation, which is the cup of thanksgiving. This cup of which the psalmist speaks is the cup of wine, the drinking of which was the last act of Israel's passover feast. By drinking it, they expressed their thankfulness to their gracious God for their salvation. It was the cup that our Lord, at the last supper with his disciples, took and blessed and changed the cup of the typical passover feast into the cup we drink when we commemorate the suffering of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It was called "the cup of thanksgiving."

The second thing he will do to express his thanks to his gracious God is "call upon the name of the LORD". These are remarkable statements.

To put them in slightly different forms so that we can understand them, they mean: *"I will say 'thanks' to God for what he has done; and I will call upon him to give me more of what he has already given. I can do nothing else, but express my thanks, for all his gifts are purely of grace and never earned. And I can only seek grace from him who is the overflowing fountain of all good and who freely gives of his riches to those whom he loves in Jesus Christ – from whom all blessings flow."*

Memory verse: Psalm 116:1-2 *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

Meditation #15
Psalm 118:6
Prof. Herman Hanko

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

A group of psalms beginning with Psalm 113 and ending with Psalm 118 was called the Hallel. It was a group of psalms sung during the Passover Feast when celebrated by the Jews. The last psalm in the group was Psalm 118 and was sung during the drinking of the last cup of wine. It was the cup that Jesus changed into the wine of the Lord's Supper in the night before his death on the cross when he celebrated the last Passover Feast with his disciples and instituted the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Passover Feast was a feast that celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt; the Lord's Supper is the "feast" that calls to remembrance the suffering and death of the true Lamb of God who died to deliver his church from sin, death and hell. The psalm is an appropriate psalm to end the Lord's Supper.

This verse in particular, sounds the theme of the whole psalm, by singing of the victory that the church has over all her enemies. If God delivers Israel from the power of Egypt, a world power at the time of the exodus, and if the very Son of God died to save his church, crushing the head of Satan himself, what shall I fear? Who can harm me? God himself is on my side.

It is impossible for the wicked to destroy us because God has created the wicked, gives them their life and breath and directs the entire pathway of their life (Prov. 16:4). God will not permit the wicked to destroy the church.

God is on our side because he loves us with an eternal love and hates the wicked. In his love, he takes us into his own covenant life.

We need not fear anyone, even when the wicked hate us because they hate all God's people. They hate God's people because they hate Christ; and they hate God because Christ is God's eternal Son.

It is good and necessary for us to believe this, because when persecution comes, as it surely will, we need not be afraid of persecution. The wicked will kill us for, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. 8:36).

Our death brings us to heaven with Christ and to a martyr's crown.

Memory verse: *Psalm 118: 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Meditation #16
Psalm 119:9
Prof. Herman Hanko

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

David wrote this psalm to extol the virtues of God's Word. The poetry is unique to the Hebrew Psalter. It is divided into twenty-four sections: each section has eight verses; each verse begins with the same letter; the letter with which each verse in a section begins is one letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Verse nine gives the theme of the entire psalm, but does so in a very practical way. David was a young man when he wrote it, and he asks the question: *"How shall a young man direct his way?"*

As a young man, he has reached spiritual maturity, very much like one in the new dispensation who has finished his catechetical instruction and is ready to make confession of faith. He is therefore, a covenant youth, as is evident from the psalm. He does not ask, what vocation shall I enter? He does not ponder marriage over against remaining single. He does not ask concerning the possibility of visiting foreign lands. He asks concerning the spiritual direction he intends to take in the whole of his life. That is the most important question that he can ask. The question will determine not only the spiritual direction of his life, but the answer will also determine the goal of his life: the world or Christ; heaven or hell; the church or the pleasure palace.

His answer is spontaneous and quickly given. He knows - He will take heed to his way: that is, he will consider every aspect of his way and concern himself with how his answer affects every part of his life. He will not be, what today we call a Sunday-Christian, who goes to church on Sunday and the rest of the week makes money, gets rich, and enjoys life's pleasures as if he were non-Christian. No, the whole of his life, in every part of it is considered: what he reads, how he acts towards others, what is the most important and has priority.

What is there that I need to direct the whole of my life? There is only one answer. I will judge each step of my pathway by God's Word. That will be the roadmap of my entire life. That will guide my every thought, my every word, my every choice, my every step on my journey through life. That is what I will do.

What an answer! Every one of us must ask the one question of this verse. May we, by God's grace, echo the words of the psalmist.

Memory verse: *Psalm 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

Meditation #17
Psalm 130:3
Prof. Herman Hanko

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

This psalm has been a favourite of God's people among the penitential psalms. It progresses from an anxious cry of the psalmist concerning his sin to an exalted confession of God's certain redemption.

The word "mark" in this verse confesses that God knows all the sins we commit, whether they are what David in Psalm 19, calls presumptuous sins, and the secret sins we do not know (vv. 12-13). He confesses further, that God could, if he willed it, mark them all down in his record book of the sins of every man. And then the psalmist confesses that no man could stand before God blameless. It is a confession of total depravity.

From that confession, he goes on to say that he believes with all his heart that God, though he does not need to, is a God who forgives sin.

But then comes those anxious words in verses 5 and 6 that come from the depths of his soul. He wants to know that the God who forgives sin is the one who forgives also *his* sins! "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait... My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning". The psalmist is referring to his sleepless nights that come when he considers his sins and knows not forgiveness.

As surely as he is anxious over his sins does the psalmist come to peace and quietness of soul. There is mercy with God and an abundance of compassion. He will surely forgive the penitent sinner who cries out to him.

Interestingly enough, the psalmist goes from the personal desire to be forgiven to the hope of the whole church. He is a part of the whole church, the body of Christ, and as surely as God forgives all those who belong to Christ, he will forgive the psalmist. The proof of God's mercy and compassion lies in the great gift of his Son (John 3:16).

I say, this has been a precious song of the church in all ages. It describes us in the agony of our sin. It describes us when the knowledge of our wickedness robs us of sleep.

It may be that the anxiety of sin is so great that I cannot immediately find that forgiveness I desire, but God shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities! In the joy of it, I live!

Memory verse: *Psalm 130:7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*

Meditation #18
Psalm 139:21
Prof. Herman Hanko

Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

This text in Psalm 139 is one of those texts over which countless people stumble. Their objection to the text rises from its seeming contradiction with the command of the law to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Almost always those who object to this text are those who teach that God loves everybody, and so we must do the same. But it is not true that God loves everyone. Psalm 5:5 specifically teaches that God hates the workers of iniquity, and the whole Bible teaches that God loves only his elect people who are chosen in Christ Jesus. Those who teach that God loves everyone also have a low and incorrect view of God's holiness. God is after all, so holy that he can do nothing but hate wickedness and wicked people. He loves his church, though they are sinful as well as the world, but only because Christ died for them and paid for all their sins.

It is true that we are solemnly commanded to love our neighbour; it is also true that we have neighbours who do not love God. But God knows who are his elect people and who are not. We must consider the meaning of love and hate. God loves his people. In his love for his people, he saves them from their sins and takes them to heaven when they die. God hates the wicked, curses them (Prov. 3:33) and sends them to hell. Heaven is fellowship with God and eternal life; hell is God's abandonment of the wicked in wrath where there is only everlasting suffering.

We love our neighbour by seeking his salvation in all we do. Love is not mere sentimental feelings and being nice to people. Love seeks the happiness of the object of one's love, which is heaven. To seek one's salvation is to admonish the object of our love to repent and believe in Christ.

God uses our love for our neighbour to save him, if he is truly an elect child of God. Then he is taken into our fellowship. When the reprobate refuses to repent and believe in Christ, he shows his deep hatred of God and of God's people. He mocks and curses and blasphemes because he rises up against God (vv. 20-21). We cannot and may not have fellowship in any way with them, for we love God.

Are we really to love those who hate God? Can we have fellowship with those who blaspheme his name? No! Read James 4:4.

Memory Verse: *James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*