

June

June 1

Ezra 1-2

The Exile of God's people was not a mild punishment by God. The Babylonian Empire had swallowed up and enlarged upon the Assyrian Empire, and now they took the majority of the inhabitants of Judah on a 600 mile journey *by foot* to Babylon . When the Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian Empire, the new emperor allowed any Jews that wanted to return to their homeland, but very few ever did.

Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, is inspired by God (though he wasn't a believer) to allow the Jews to rebuild their holy temple. Zerubbabel leads 42,360 people back to Jerusalem . These are mostly Levites, with a long family heritage of working in and around the former temple. It's not surprising that these persons would have the greatest desire to return to their homeland.

June 2

Ezra 3-5

How best to start the temple? They started with offering sacrifices instead of laying the foundation. That is, they started building the *spiritual* foundation first. Good move!

This was both a joyous and a bittersweet time. As the new temple was begun, the glory of the old temple was remembered. Would the new temple be able to compare to the temple prepared for by David and built by his son Solomon?

Is it clear why some of the locals didn't want the Jewish temple rebuilt? Zerubbabel and the Jews did not want any non-Jewish help in rebuilding; they were almost paranoid to do everything in a manner to perfectly please God. Out of spite, or jealousy, the local officials worked to stop the construction, and finally managed to do so. Of course, another reason to persuade the Jews to stop construction was lingering under the surface: These officials had life going the way they wanted it, with the main empire leadership far away and not watching them too closely.

After something like ten years of pause in building, Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, finally encouraged the Jewish leaders enough that they dared start building again. This was now the Persian Empire , with a new emperor. The locals now tried to appeal to the new emperor, Darius, to again halt construction.

June 3
Ezra 6-7

In my opinion, the real heroes thus far in the rebuilding of the temple were the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. It's human tendency to back off from serious opposition, but the prophets kept after the people to resume building. Even when the opposition is beyond what we are able to overcome, in our own strength, God's strength is more than enough to help us accomplish God's purposes. Haggai and Zechariah reminded them that this project was "a God thing" and not just a project they devised themselves.

When the local officials asked Darius to intervene---"let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem"---I'm sure they fully expected no such decree to be found. After all, the empire had undergone many changes. When the decree by Cyrus *was found*, Darius endorsed it wholeheartedly.

Now that the temple was rebuilt (though not the walls), the time was ripe for Ezra to go to Jerusalem . He had impressive credentials as a Bible teacher. The house of God had been built, *but now it was time to work on the church*, the people of God. Many had to be taught the basics of the faith, but the ones who knew how to worship God had to be taught not to make the same mistakes that had led to exile in the first place. The emperor was totally supportive, hoping that currying favor with the God of the Jews would result in extending his reign.

June 4
Ezra 8-9

Ezra now heads to Jerusalem, with about 1800 people and a huge offering taken up in Babylon of gold and silver. He had already told the emperor that the hand of God was with this enterprise, so asking for any military protection of this caravan laden with riches would look like a lack of faith; instead, they prayed in earnest. Some disreputable types might have seen this as easy pickings, but no robberies were attempted during their entire journey, nor any embezzlement.

This time they were going to do it right. Those who had returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel 70 or 80 years before had started with good intentions, almost paranoid about keeping God's laws, so that there would never be another Exile. Now what's happened to that initiative? Ezra is appalled at what he sees and at the reports he hears. There is no set-apartness, no holiness, at least as far as marriage was concerned. The Jews that returned had intermarried freely with all the pagan people around them; how long would it be before the Jews again got into worshipping other gods? Ezra knows nothing else to do but confess their sins before

God and put the Jews at God's mercy. It is starkly obvious what the people deserve. What sorry God-followers they have become!

**June 5
Ezra 10**

Okay. I've been living in great suspense since yesterday's reading. How will God react when a person confesses blatant, disgusting, stupid, irresponsible sin? We need to know! If God is just, we can expect what we deserve, which is harsh punishment. It's only right. Deep in our hearts, though, we need to know that we can always come home to God, no matter *what* we've done.

Ezra has made a real spectacle of himself, tearing his clothes and weeping uncontrollably. He gathers a crowd of men, women, and children. They realize that he is right, that they've really messed up this time. Shecaniah, however, speaks out bravely, "But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel ." This is incredible faith!

Shecaniah, with the backing of the people, declares that they will recovenant with God, and asks Ezra to take strong action. After a few more days of repentance before God, Ezra calls an assembly of all those who have resettled in Israel .

When everyone had assembled, Ezra was bold enough to ask for the only action that would make things right: Separate yourselves from your foreign wives.

The whole assembly (only 4 men were opposed) solemnly agreed that it was the only right choice. In less than 3 months, all the foreign wives had been sent back to their homes of origin.

Was God celebrating? Ezra really doesn't say. We are left with the conviction that, though the right thing to do is sometimes extremely difficult, it is still the right thing.

**June 6
Nehemiah 1-3**

Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews back from exile in Babylon in 538 BC. Ezra led a second group back about 458 BC. The temple, that replaced the destroyed temple Solomon had built, was finished in 516 BC.

A dozen years later, about 446 BC, Nehemiah speaks with his brother, Hanani, who has just returned from Jerusalem . Evidently Nehemiah was an optimist --- in his own mind, Israel must be about back to respectability, since the

new temple had long ago been completed. His brother's description of a country that was still a wreck was heartbreaking.

Nehemiah spent many hours in prayer, seeking God's mercy, and asking for God's favor as Nehemiah sought the emperor's help.

Consider how close Nehemiah came to losing his job and/or his life. Nehemiah was the cupbearer (wine taster). That is, Nehemiah tasted any drink brought to the emperor first, to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Nehemiah had let his thoughts about Jerusalem make him sullen --- the emperor should have wisdom enough to know that a moody wine-taster could not be trusted, and should be gotten rid of. The emperor's life depended on his cupbearer.

God protected and blessed Nehemiah. The prayer worked; the emperor gave him time off from his duties and as much supplies as he needed.

Upon returning to his homeland, Nehemiah made a midnight inspection of Jerusalem's protective wall, and found it in awful shape! After a pep talk, the people began to repair gates and wall, a little section by each family. It seemed a miracle of cooperation.

**June 7
Nehemiah 4-6**

Sanballat- governor of the Persian province of Samaria (formerly Israel)

Tobiah- governor of Transjordan, Persian province to east of Judah

Nehemiah- governor of Persian province of Judah

A weak Judah had been beneficial to these neighboring governors. Tobiah, especially, had stretched his influence into the fabric of life in Judah (6:17 -19). Sanballat probably felt threatened by a stronger religious influence. (Could he trust God not to infringe on his authority?)

Nehemiah stands up to these external threats, and is a great encourager to the people as they rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. With neighbors like Judah has, you can see the need for a protective wall!

Nehemiah, in chapter 5, demands that the Jews (people of Judah) live a life above reproach. Taking advantage of one's neighbor is a pitiful example to outsiders.

Verse 6:2 is an obvious death plot, and Nehemiah easily sees through it.

Verses 6:5-7 is a threat of blackmail. Verse 6:10 is suspicious; either this was another death plot, or his detractors would accuse Nehemiah of establishing the temple as a fortress base of operations to start a rebellion against Persia.

June 8 Nehemiah 7-8

Nehemiah was a little paranoid about doing temple things right. He made sure that any priest or Levite had written credentials before he was allowed to minister. He wanted to make sure they did all in their power to follow God and follow the Law.

Now that the wall had been completed that protected Jerusalem physically, Nehemiah sought spiritual strengthening for the Jews that had resettled in the Promised Land. This was probably more important as a wall of protection. He assembled all the people, and 8:1 says *they* called for Ezra to read the Book of the Law (the Bible that was written so far).

What an incredible session! Ezra read some, then the Levites explained what it meant, then Ezra read some more, and the Levites explained it to the people, until all the Scripture had been read. For many, it was the first time they'd heard parts of the Scripture, and for most all, they'd never had it all read and explained in one session. You and I know how powerful the Bible is --- what a great revival they had!

June 9 Nehemiah 9-10

Chapter 9 is a short but accurate recounting of the history of "God's chosen people". They were chosen by God to be a sign to other nations, but through years of disobedience, they were a sign of curses and not blessings.

These returned people of Judah (Jews) make a covenant with God to follow His commands this time around, not like their ancestors. They've learned their lesson. They want to do right.

But how long will it last? Can we really do God's decrees perfectly, by the strength of our own will? Evidently not. The same prophets that had spoken to the peoples of Israel and Judah before their Exiles, trying to turn them back to God, also predicted the need for a savior, a messiah.

Not only had God intended his people to be examples of good and of discipline to the countries around them, not only had He intended them to show others how

wonderful God's plan for their lives was, but I suspect God also meant to demonstrate through them the need for a savior. Humans cannot by will power follow God's commands. They need supernatural intervention.

And that's why Jesus came.

June 10
Nehemiah 11-12

For the protection of the temple and the walls of the city, Nehemiah wanted the city of Jerusalem to be filled to capacity with residents. Evidently many people did not want to be 'city slickers', but they chose by lot which persons must make their homes there. Verse 11:2 says those who would do this were commended, like it was a personal sacrifice.

Note that Levites did have ancestral property. Though we remember that this tribe was to be temple workers and wouldn't receive a 'province' like the other tribes, still they had been given 48 cities and lands around them, scattered throughout Israel and Judah.

It's amazing to me that the Jews kept meticulous ancestral records, even during the Exile. You'd think that they would have given up, that they'd not worry any more about who was of what family of temple workers. Did they really have faith that the temple would be rebuilt, and they'd have temple singers and instrumentalists and all those other temple jobs again?

Quite a celebration they had for the rebuilt wall! Sounds like a parade on top of the wall, going on into the temple. It needed to be memorable.

June 11
Nehemiah 13

Nehemiah spent 12 years in Jerusalem, and during that time the wall around the city was rebuilt. He reinstated the priestly system, designating particular families of Levites for particular roles in worship and maintaining the temple.

Probably Nehemiah's greatest improvement was to gather all the Jews, returned after exile in Babylon, and have the Holy Scripture read to them, in its entirety, with Levites to explain every passage. He re-made God's people. Younger Jews didn't know much about their religion or their God, but now *everyone* knew. They knew what God required of them, and they knew God's intent to bless them.

Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem a few years later, to find much of what he had done fallen by the wayside. After he had reclaimed them for God, they had given

themselves away. At this point, other men might have given up, but Nehemiah took the bull by the horns and systematically straightened out the mess.

"Remember me for this, O my God." Nehemiah learned, just as you have learned, that people are sinful. The Bible tells us we are born with a tendency to turn away from God and try to run our own lives. All God wants for us is the best, and He is able to guide us to that, but we'd like to try another way. God, have mercy on us. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

**June 12
Esther 1-3**

The setting for Esther is the court of Persian emperor Xerxes I, also known as Ahaseurus. (This would have been the emperor that preceded the one Nehemiah was the cupbearer for.)

Why did Queen Vashti refuse to come before the emperor? I've assumed it was because he and all his friends were dead drunk, and she wanted to avoid all kinds of embarrassment a beautiful lady might be subject to at such a gathering. It could also be that she was too busy to slip away from the party *she* was hosting for several hundred women.

Nevertheless, Vashti should have known there might be consequences for disobeying the emperor.

I think the emperor may have regretted his action in deposing the queen (verse 2:1). His attendants quickly made a plan to soothe the emperor's feelings of loss. Knowing how large an emperor's ego must be, it probably thrilled him to "audition" the most beautiful girls in the world to be his next queen. Verse 2:12 says, though, that Ahaseurus lived without a queen for a full year while waiting for the auditions to begin.

Verses 2:21-23 may seem irrelevant right now, but keep them in mind. They become very important in chapter 6.

Chapter 3 details Haman's plot to have all the Jews killed. It irked him that the whole capital city bowed down to him *except* Mordecai. The reason given was that Mordecai was a Jew. It wouldn't be enough, therefore, for Haman to have Mordecai killed. Evidently, all Jews would show the same disobedience.

**June 13
Esther 4-7**

Mordecai sure hears a lot while sitting at the “king’s gate”! Besides hearing the edict that threatens the lives of the Jews, he also hears how much money Haman offered to have the law passed...ten thousand talents of silver!

Mordecai is powerless to stop this new law, but decides Esther may have enough influence with the king to get a hearing. She agrees to try, though there is a chance she could be killed.

Why doesn’t Esther tell the king her request immediately? Could be that she understood that a woman’s words in that day didn’t carry much weight, or perhaps she was a little scared. Esther invites the king and Haman to a second meal, and promises to tell the king her request then.

In the mean time, Haman gets soundly humiliated. This Jew, Mordecai, who wouldn’t bow down to Haman, receives great honor from the king, and Haman must lead Mordecai in parade through town. Though God is never mentioned in this book, Haman’s wife recognizes a supernatural force that is unstoppable in this dramatic change in fortunes. True. Haman is soon hanged.

June 14

Esther 8-10

Esther and her family (Mordecai) inherit a considerable estate from the death of Haman. (Remember the huge sum of money, 3:9, Haman was willing to pay as a bribe?) The position of the Jews is highly elevated.

It seems cruel that the Jews would exact revenge all those that hated them, after being miraculously spared from death and destruction. Is this gratefulness? Yet the book reminds us what a fierce warrior He is for those He loves.

The new favor the Jews were held in paves the way for Ezra (under this emperor) and Nehemiah (under the next) to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city walls.

June 15

Job 1-4

Chapter 1 covers a lot of ground! Job is very rich, as measured by the size of his herds---“this man was the greatest of all the people of the east”. Also notice that Job had seven sons; sons were considered a blessing from God, and Job was very blessed.

Can you hear the disgust in Satan’s voice when God asks where he has come from? “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.”

Satan had been kicked out of heaven when he and a third of the angels rebelled against God's authority. Though earth can be wonderful, it can't compare in the least to Heaven.

Job's misfortunes come because God loves him! God knows that Job will rely on Him, no matter what Satan throws at him. Wow! Does God hold *us* in such high esteem?

Verse 2:13 tells of three close friends who came to console Job in his great loss. For the first seven days, they just sat. Good! Our friends who have suffered a great loss need us to be with them, even if we say nothing. They know your heart. (The friends didn't mess up until they said the wrong thing.)

June 16

Job 5-8

I see little wrong with Eliphaz, in chapter 4 and 5, suggesting that Job do a self-examination for unforgiven sin. That's a good place to start any day, whether or not tragedy has befallen us.

Job answers that he's already looked into that. In fact, he lays himself open for criticism from his friends, asking them to show him any sin he might not have seen. Since they saw nothing obvious, that should have settled it. Friends should always give you the benefit of the doubt, and should take you at your word. Time to back off, guys!

Another friend, Bildad, pursues the same idea now, in chapter 8. It seems cruel, but Job must have sinned. Their belief structure in that day was very closed-minded about this: Sin brings misfortune, piety brings blessing. They just couldn't understand an incident that didn't fit that pattern.

June 17

Job 9-12

"How can a mortal be just before God?" verse 9:2 says. Job proclaims his innocence, unless God is judging him by rules he hasn't been made aware of.

Job starts to long for death. Life isn't worth living, in his present condition. He hatches a new idea: If he could have God meet him face-to-face, he could argue his innocence, and make God explain His actions. It seems a little presumptuous, but Job decides that it's only fair.

Zophar, in trying to understand Job's plight, insists that Job needs to repent. He gets a bit insulting about it in 11:11-12, referring to a man like Job as

“worthless”, “stupid”, and “a wild ass born human”. Job sees this ‘tough love’ as mean and cold.

June 18

Job 13-16

How should we react, when God seems distant and doesn’t answer our prayers? On the one hand, God is not afraid of our honesty. As in the book of Psalms, God wants us to communicate all our joys, sorrows, frustrations, anger...to Him! On the other hand, we need to work while we wait for God’s answer, doing diligently what we last heard as God’s instructions. Our faith in God’s providence should help us continue through the ‘silent’ times.

Verse 15:7 and the first half of 15:8, spoken by friend Eliphaz, sounds remarkably like something God says later. It’s not as much a case of Eliphaz being in tune with God’s thinking at this point, as it is a proof of the old proverb, “Even a blind squirrel finds a nut once in a while”. The friends are more concerned now at defending their own reputations than speaking for God.

Job lays the blame for his tragedies on God. Obviously, the reality of Satan and evil forces that constantly vie against God was unrecognized at that time. It was thought that either God blessed you or, if you were guilty of sin, God brought tragedy and despair.

June 19

Job 17-20

It is hard to change, and the bigger the change you make, the harder it is. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar need to change the whole framework of their lives. Their whole concept of how everything relates to God has come into question. They’ve built their lives around, “God blesses the good and curses the evil, so anyone who is blessed must be good, and anyone undergoing hardship must be out of God’s favor.”

They fight to hold on to this worldview, whether or not their friendship with Job become a casualty. Job, however, has discovered a flaw in their worldview, a worldview he also shared. What if a good man experiences tragedy? God has opened a new door of understanding for Job, and he desperately wants to walk through it.

June 20

Job 21-24

Chapter 21 gives the other half of Job's life-changing discovery: Not only can a good man experience tragedy, but also the wicked often prosper. He challenges his friends to explain this truth by the present view of how God relates to people.

Eliphaz just can't handle this discovery of Job's, and his arguments start to get kind of mixed up. "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous?" (22:3) That goes against his previous arguments. Verses 22:5-10 accuse Job of wickedness that Job never did, but if he did do such things, it sure would fit the old worldview.

Job ignores his friend's present argument, instead reviving the idea of having a 'day in court' with God. "I would lay my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me."(23:4-5) Job's friends don't have the answers, but God does.

June 21

Job 25-29

By now, the three friends of Job are just grasping for straws. There must be a logical explanation for why God has caused Job's misfortunes. Bildad's newest argument admits Job's goodness, but says Job must have fallen short of a higher standard. Job tells him quickly---"You're no help."

Job holds on to his faith in God. Only God can explain Job's plight.

Job longs for the 'good old days', not only for his own comfort, but for others. He used to be able to do good things for the least ones of society, but now doesn't have the resources. What a good man! That's a jolting reminder to me and you: Do all the good you can while you've got plenty. Don't hoard your blessings, for one of the great pleasures in life is to do good to others.

June 22

Job 30-33

Job hasn't yet figured out any other source for his calamity than God. "You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me."(30:21) One more time, he takes inventory: What could I have done to deserve this? He finds nothing.

In verse 32:1, we find that Job and his three friends come to an impasse. The three friends have done all they can to make Job admit to some sin equal to the degree of his tragedy, but he persists that he is blameless.

A young acquaintance speaks now, Elihu, who has been respectfully standing back while his elders spoke. First, he tells Job he'll do his best to give an impartial opinion.

Perhaps Job has been too narrow-minded, Elihu says, when he claims God has not spoken to him. God speaks in a wide variety of ways; Job is looking for an answer from God in a particular way, so much so that he may miss God's answer. True! God speaks to all Christians, though many claim they have never had God speak to them.

June 23

Job 34-37

Elihu points out that Job's speech has acquired a rebellious tone. How can he expect God to listen to a rebel? God is holy! Keep Him in His rightful place.

Job has questioned what it has profited him to serve God. Elihu reminds him that his good has helped others. It's not all about him! Many people have benefited from Job's good works.

Elihu's next advice is timeless: Don't worry about the other person's relationship to God, worry about your own. Job compared the fate of wicked who prosper, to his own fate. This gets him nowhere. He should spend his time on upkeep of his own relationship with God. Did you hear that?

June 24

Job 38-40

Here we are, in chapter 38---finally God responds. Who are you, Job, to question God? That's God's question, and He demands an answer! God really puts Job in his place. How can he expect to face God in some kind of trial or court, when they are so incredibly unequal?

God is in control. God runs the universe. Without God's daily intervention, nothing would go on living. God does not have to answer to anybody. Rightness is defined by God.

Ah, we still slip into this kind of sin. We think we have a better idea than God of how things ought to work out. We set our own standards for what is the "good life". Trouble is, we aren't God! God's guidelines for living are always best. Why should we settle for less (our own ideas)?

Job says something like, "Sorry. I'll just shut up now." God answers that He doesn't offer that choice.

June 25

Job 41-42

God spends a good bit of time talking to Job about just one of His wondrous creations. He's driving the point home---"Who are you to question me?"

It's not altogether certain what Leviathan is. Though some experts suggest Leviathan was some now-extinct sea monster, most agree that God must be talking about a whale.

Job repents of his insolence in attempting to call God to task for his unfair treatment of Job. That ends it. God never gives Job an explanation of what happened.

Not having heard any repentance from the three friends, God now sets them straight. To quench His wrath, God demands an offering of them...and how can they refuse? It's time they understood that life is not as simple as they thought. If God was always constrained to make life comfortable for the good, He would pretty much be their servant, and they would miss some of life's greatest lessons.

It's a happy ending. Job's fortunes are restored. More importantly, though, the old paradigm has come into question, for the good of everyone. Sometimes bad things happen to good people.

June 26

Psalms 1-9

Psalms are worship songs. They come in a wide variety, expressing a broad range of emotions. If you catch nothing else from this book of the Bible, catch this: God is not afraid of your emotions. No matter how you feel today, God's love is such that He always wants to hear from you.

It's not hard to imagine a worship in which the first five Psalms would fit...but Psalms 6? It doesn't sound at all like it would encourage our faith. Yet eventually we all have times when life is caving in on us, and God seems distant. The faith-strengthening part comes in 6:8-9: "The Lord has heard me." Knowing how much God loves us, that's the beginning of His supply of our need.

June 27

Psalms 10-17

Wow! Out of all the praise and the faithful sayings in this section, the last phrase of Psalm 11 stands out: "The upright shall behold His face." That is what

makes the Christian life worth any persecution we have to go through. It's the greatest reward of eternity! It's all the reason I need to continue in His ways.

Psalm 13 really tears at your heart. Someone is desperately waiting for God to throw them a lifeline. They don't know how much longer they can hold on! Yet, through it all, they find that the solid 'something' they longed to lean on was their faith. They then rejoiced, because God has already proven His character sometime in their past.

Not all the Psalms were written by David, but he wrote more than anyone else. He cries out to God when he's joyous, when he's despairing, when he's confident, when he's unsure. David shared all his emotions with God. See why it was said that he was "a man after God's own heart"? In faith, he made himself transparent and completely vulnerable to God, knowing God would be just as honest in return. You would expect nothing less of your best friend.

June 28

Psalms 18-22

Psalm 18 is a gorgeous litany of praise. Do you ever get that caught up in telling folks how good God has been to you? Too often, we're inhibited by thinking that others will consider us strange (unless they've experienced God's goodness themselves). But---who cares? God deserves extravagant praise. Oh, by the way, it's good for you when you praise God.

More thrilling poetry follows. Both 19:7-10 and 20:7-8 are incredibly exhilarating and would enhance any worship service.

Psalm 21 reminds us to count our blessings. (Here it's the king counting, but the principle still works for anybody.) It's so easy to live life ungratefully. If anyone would have reason to be self-centered, it would be the king, for he had so much and so many at his command. Yet King David realized that all he had was dependent on God's favor.

Verse 22:1 is quoted by Jesus on the cross! Jesus often quoted scripture, with Psalms being among His favorites. And why not? You can find verses in Psalms to match any emotion.

June 29

Psalms 23-30

Why is Psalm 23 such a favorite? For me, it's a calming influence in stressful times, whether it be times of loss or persecution or just uncertainty. It reminds me that God is in control. My favorite line is, "He makes me lie down in green

pastures". When I'm under a lot of stress, I often miss the obvious---rest. God will find a way to make me take a break.

How winsome is the seeking Christian! "Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths."(25:4) They are worth their weight in gold, in their church or family or place of business. The best and most correct path is God's path; if everyone earnestly sought it, we'd almost have heaven on earth.

Psalm 27 is a mainstay of funeral services. It is a very good description of a faithful lifestyle: No matter what comes up, I will trust God. It is an incredible compliment if one of your loved ones is eulogized with this Psalm. "Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord."(27:10)

June 30

Psalms 31-35

I love the quiet strength of Psalm 31. There is a lot of emotion beneath the surface here, but it also oozes with confidence in the Lord's rescue. Amid the stress, there is no hint of doubt.

How profound is 32:3! If you don't seek God's forgiveness, sin will eat you up inside. It's a shame that we have to learn this by trial and error. (It'd be so much less painful to just believe the Bible.)

Did King David pray Psalm 35 every time he went to war? It would have been a good idea! Why do we face anything without asking for God's help? We might be able to handle the situation in own might if nothing goes wrong...but things go wrong.