

Psalms

The Lord Hears and Delivers

Lesson #4 for January 27, 2024

Scriptures: Psalm 121; 139:1-18; 17:8; 34:17; Matthew 23:37; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Hebrews 4:15-16.

1. Anyone who has read Psalms even a few times, recognizes that there are many calls by the psalmists for God's help. There are also many promises of God's deliverance. We have already studied several verses that tell us that God is our Creator and Sustainer. These verses appear not only in the Old Testament and in Psalms, but also in the New Testament.

Our God is a personal God who cares about every one of us. That includes you!

2. This might produce some questions: How could God be close to us people, His people, and yet be living on the other side of the universe, somewhere in heaven?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] God is close to His people and to His creation, both in heaven and on earth (*Ps. 73:23, 25*). Though He "has established His throne in heaven" (*Ps. 103:19, NKJV*) and "rides on the clouds" (*Ps. 68:4, NKJV*), He also is "near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (*Ps. 145:18, NKJV*). The Psalms unswervingly uphold the truth that the Lord is the living God, who acts on behalf of those who call upon Him (*Ps. 55:16–22*). The Psalms are meaningful precisely because they are prompted by, and are addressed to, the living God, who hears and answers prayers.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, January 20.†§

Psalm 73:23-25: ²³ Yet I always stay close to you,
and you hold me by the hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your instruction
and at the end you will receive me with honour [*sic-Br*].

²⁵ What else have I in heaven but you?

Since I have you, what else could I want on earth?—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Psalms 73:23-25). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].‡

3. If we know that God is constantly with us and aware of everything that we think and do, how should that impact our behavior? And our thinking?
4. How does the nearness of God and His attention to every detail of our lives impact how we live? Are we fully aware that both good and evil angels are constantly beside us? There are few Psalms that give more details about God's individual care for us than Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:1-18: ¹ LORD, you have examined me and you know me.

² **You know everything I do;**
from far away you understand all my thoughts.

³ **You see me, whether I am working or resting;**
you know all my actions.

⁴ Even before I speak,

you already know what I will say....

⁷ Where could I go to escape from you?

Where could I get away from your presence?

⁸ If I went up to heaven, you would be there;

if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.

⁹ If I flew away beyond the east

or lived in the farthest place in the west,

¹⁰ you would be there to lead me,

you would be there to help me.

¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me

or the light round me to turn into night,

¹² but even darkness is not dark for you,

and the night is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are the same to you.

¹³ **You created every part of me;**

you put me together in my mother's womb....

¹⁵ When my bones were being formed,

carefully put together in my mother's womb,

when I was growing there in secret,

you knew that I was there—

¹⁶ **you saw me before I was born.**

The days allotted to me

had all been recorded in your book,

before any of them ever began.

¹⁷ O God, how difficult I find your thoughts;

how many of them there are!

¹⁸ If I counted them, they would be more than the grains of sand.

When I awake, I am still with you.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

5. Are you comfortable with the idea that God knows everything? Even your thoughts?
6. Have you ever had the experience of wanting to do something for someone, but you could not, for whatever reason? Have you ever been in an experience where you wished that someone could do something for you? But, for whatever reason, they could not? David recognized that God was near and knew everything about him even when he was still in his mother's womb! Apparently, David wrote psalms throughout much of his life.
7. Many, many people, certainly most Christians, recognize that **God has the ability and the plan to judge us some day**. But, do they recognize that **God Himself is on trial**?

Romans 3:1-4: ¹ Have the Jews then any advantage over the Gentiles? Or is there any value in being circumcised? ²Much, indeed, in every way! In the first place, God trusted his message to the Jews. ³But what if some of them were not faithful? Does this mean that God will not be faithful? ⁴Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says,

“You must be shown to be right when you [God] speak;

you must win your case when you are being tried.”—Good News Bible.*†‡

8. Notice that the question about God in Romans 3 is not how He saves us, but rather, about His own righteousness in light of the accusations by Satan in the great controversy.

[BSG:] God’s presence is highlighted by depicting God as reaching as far as “hell” (*sheol*, “grave”) and “darkness” (*Ps. 139:8, 11, 12*), places not typically depicted as where God dwells (*Ps. 56:13*). His presence also is depicted as taking “the wings of the morning” (east) to reach “the uttermost parts of the sea” (west) (*Ps. 139:9*). What these images convey is the truth that **there is no place in the universe where we can be out of God’s reach**. Though God is not part of the universe, as some believe, He is close to it all, having not only created it but sustaining it, as well (see *Heb. 1:3* [and *Acts 17:25,28*]).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, January 21.†‡§

9. We, of course, recognize that God could communicate with Jonah, even in the belly of the giant fish! Even the fish heard God’s command and did what He asked!
10. But, the question then comes: What can or what does God do for us in our situation today?
11. Remember that God’s diagnosis of our problems is 100% accurate 100% of the time. Just imagine having a doctor who is that good!
12. The gospel is all about knowing the truth about God! If we understand how much He loves us and cares about us, how could we be afraid? Look at Psalm 121 to see how the psalmist regarded God’s care for his day-by-day activities.

Psalm 121:1-8: ¹ I look to the mountains;

where will my help come from?

² **My help will come from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.**

³ He will not let you fall;
your protector is always awake.

⁴ The protector of Israel
never dozes or sleeps.

⁵ The LORD will guard you;
he is by your side to protect you.

⁶ The sun will not hurt you during the day,
nor the moon during the night.

⁷ The LORD will protect you from all danger;
he will keep you safe.

⁸ He will protect you as you come and go
now and for ever [*sic-Br.*].—*Good News Bible.*†‡*

13. Repeatedly in the Psalms, we are told that God is with the psalmist. Are we living our lives, recognizing that the Lord is always with us? See for example Psalm 7:1; 9:10; 130:1-2. Psalm 121 makes it clear that God will not allow even our feet to be moved off the path. Almighty God keeps track of us day and night, 24/7. He is not only our Protector and Guardian, but also He provides shade! Think of the children of Israel, following and protected by the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Exodus 13:21-22: ²¹During the day the LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and during the night he went in front of them in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel night and day. ²²The pillar of cloud was always in front of the people during the day, and the pillar of fire at night.—*Good News Bible*.* [How you would like God for your nightlight?][‡]

14. In many places in Psalms, we are described as being protected by God’s right hand. The right hand is considered to be the stronger hand—the hand of action. (Psalm 74:11; Psalm 89:13) In light of God’s promises, what are some practical ways that we can understand, comprehend, and experience God’s reality? Do we need to cooperate with God?
15. David talked with God as if they were just having a discussion. (2 Samuel 2 :1-2) Could we have a similar relationship? David had no questions about God’s presence and activity!

2 Samuel 2:1-2: ¹ After this, David asked the LORD, “Shall I go and take control of one of the towns of Judah?”

“Yes,” the LORD answered.

“Which one?” David asked.

“Hebron,” the LORD said. ²So David went to Hebron, taking with him his two wives: Ahinoam, who was from Jezreel, and Abigail, Nabal’s widow, who was from Carmel.—*Good News Bible*.* [How many wives did God allow David to have?][‡]

16. Many of the psalmists wrote psalms because for one reason or another they were in trouble. For example, see Psalm 17:7-9.
17. A great Psalm about protection is Psalm 91.

Psalm 91:1-7: ¹ Whoever goes to the LORD for safety,
whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty,
² can say to him,
“You are my defender and protector.
You are my God; in you I trust.”
³ He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers
and from all deadly diseases.
⁴ He will cover you with his wings;
you will be safe in his care;
his faithfulness will protect and defend you.
⁵ You need not fear any dangers at night
or sudden attacks during the day
⁶ or the plagues that strike in the dark
or the evils that kill in daylight.
⁷ A thousand may fall dead beside you,
10,000 all round you,
but you will not be harmed.—*Good News Bible*.*

18. There are many stories of Adventist missionaries protected from evil, even bombing raids.
19. We need to remember that *faith* or *trust*, as it is sometimes called, is a deliberate choice. Faith is acknowledging God’s Lordship over our lives in all circumstances.

20. Because our lives are fairly easy and trouble-free, do we not need trust in God? Think of the life of David and all the battles he fought. Was it easier for him to put his trust in God?
21. It is hard for us to imagine what it would be like to live a life of frequent wars fought on a hand-to-hand basis. One would never know for sure whether he would be alive the next day!
22. When Jesus was on the earth, He mourned the rejection that He experienced in Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:37: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!”—*Good News Bible*.*

23. We are told that we will be protected, like a chick under its mother’s wing.
24. We may not feel like we are in a physical battle or physical war at the present time. However, we must never forget that we are in the midst of the final battles of the greatest war of all time—the great controversy over the character and government of God. The Devil will do everything that he can to prevent us from joining God’s side.
25. We should not need anyone to remind us of the constant care and protection that God provided for the children of Israel, wandering those 40 years in the wilderness. Notice these words from Paul about that experience.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4: ¹ I want you to remember, my brothers and sisters, what happened to our ancestors who followed Moses. They were all under the protection of the cloud, and all passed safely through the Red Sea. ²In the cloud and in the sea they were all baptized as followers of Moses. ³All ate the same spiritual bread ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink. **They drank from the spiritual rock** that went with them; and **that rock was Christ himself** [*sic*].—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

26. Did the children of Israel recognize that God was actively caring for each one of them?
27. That experience was described also by the psalmist in Psalm 114.

Psalm 114:1-8: ¹ When the people of Israel left Egypt,
when Jacob’s descendants left that foreign land,
² Judah became the Lord’s [*sic*] holy people,
Israel became his own possession.
³ The Red Sea looked and ran away;
the River Jordan stopped flowing.
⁴ The mountains skipped like goats;
the hills jumped about like lambs.
⁵ What happened, Sea, to make you run away?
And you, O Jordan, why did you stop flowing?
⁶ You mountains, why did you skip like goats?
You hills, why did you jump about like lambs?
⁷ Tremble, earth, at the Lord’s [*sic*] coming,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
⁸ who changes rocks into pools of water

and solid cliffs into flowing springs.—*Good News Bible*.*†

28. Bible students recognize that the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt was repeatedly referred to by later Bible writers in order to encourage the children of Israel. In that experience, God was able to protect them during the plagues on Egypt, to carry them through the Red Sea, to protect them from the Egyptian army, to give them food and water during their time in the desert, to help them cross the Jordan River, and to fight for them in places like Jericho. Could those types of experiences be true about us as well?
29. In our day, the Jordan River is not much more than a small stream because so much water is taken out of it for irrigation, drinking water, etc. However, when Joshua and the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, it was in flood stage.

Joshua 3:14-17: ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ It was harvest time, and **the river was in flood**....

As soon as the priests stepped into the river, ¹⁶the water stopped flowing and piled up, far upstream at Adam, the city beside Zarethan. The flow downstream to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and the people were able to cross over near Jericho. ¹⁷While the people walked across on dry ground, the priests carrying the LORD's Covenant Box stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan until all the people had crossed over.—*Good News Bible*.*† [When fully flooded, almost the entire Jordan Valley was covered by water.]‡

30. Imagine the people of Jericho, feeling quite comfortable because they knew nobody could cross the Jordan River in flood stage. And then, suddenly, they discovered that the children of Israel were on their doorstep!
31. From the New Testament, we have a very obvious example of the power of God to protect us from the elements, even from fierce storms.

Matthew 8:23-27: ²³ Jesus got into a boat, and his disciples went with him. ²⁴Suddenly a fierce storm hit the lake, and the boat was in danger of sinking. [Could the Devil have caused that storm? The Devil wanted to wipe out the whole Christian movement before it progressed any further.] But Jesus was asleep. ²⁵The disciples went to him and woke him up. "Save us, Lord!" they said. "We are about to die!"

²⁶ "Why are you so frightened?" Jesus answered. "How little faith you have!" Then he got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop, and there was a great calm.

²⁷ Everyone was amazed. "What kind of man is this?" they said. "Even the winds and the waves obey him!"—*Good News Bible*.*†

32. What are the greatest spiritual dangers that we face today?
33. God's presence is described as having been in the sanctuary or on the hill of Zion. See Psalm 3:4; 14:7; 20:1-3; 27:5; 36:8; 61:4; 68:5,35.
34. When we as Seventh-day Adventists talk about the sanctuary, we often think of the final judgment scenes depicted in Zechariah 3 and Daniel 7. But, in the Psalms, God's sanctuary was regarded as a place of safety where one could hide in His presence.

Psalms 84:4: How happy are those who live in your Temple,
always singing praise to you.—*Good News Bible*.*

35. If you believe that God will protect you in His sanctuary, who could possibly cause you any trouble? And even if troubles come in this world, and perchance we might even die, we know that God has a plan for us to live on forever with Him.
36. We could never live lives good enough to merit a place in God's "sanctuary"; but, His loving kindness and undeserved forgiveness for us welcomes us into that environment.
37. The experience of Jacob as he prepared to face his brother Esau is referred to in several places as being similar to the struggle that the people living in the final days of this earth's history will experience. We call it *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God could not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life.** So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but **the Lord shows in His dealing with Jacob that He can in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession, and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God, and the more certain the triumph of the great adversary.**

Yet Jacob's history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. God thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved. Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the atonement. **We can do nothing of ourselves. In all our helpless unworthiness we must trust in the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour [sic]. None will ever perish while they do this. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten.** [There is nothing wrong with God's memory!] **But He who listened to the cries of His servants of old, will hear the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word.**

Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith. **The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not**

those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power.

Those who are unwilling to forsake every sin and to seek earnestly for God's blessing, will not obtain it. But all who will lay hold of God's promises as did Jacob, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Luke 18:7, 8.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 202.2-203.2.†‡

38. The story of Jacob's struggle beside the Jabbok River poses one very challenging question: With whom was Jacob wrestling on that night of struggle? The Bible suggests and Ellen White confirms that it was Jesus Christ wrestling with Jacob! Why would Jesus do something like that?

[EGW:] God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 493.2.‡

39. After reading psalms like Psalm 91 and 121, do you sometimes feel like the experiences of the psalmists do not match your experience in everyday life?
40. Is it harder to trust God when things are going poorly? Or, when things are going well? Is it a greater temptation to forget God when things are going smoothly? Is more trust developed when we go through difficult experiences and we see how God has preserved us?
41. It should be obvious by now that:

[BSG:] The Psalter is a book of prayer. Whatever the subject—whether praise, lament, the Messianic hope, the kingdom of God, or redemption history—the psalmists manifest strong confidence in the Lord. No matter what their needs or circumstances, they trust that the Creator will abide with them.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.‡

42. Let us try to summarize some of the important points of this lesson.

43. **God Hears Us.**

[BSG:] The psalmist constantly pleads with the Lord to hear him. Several psalms start with a cry for YHWH [*sic*] to listen: Psalm 4:1, Psalm 13:3, Psalm 17:1.... [Doesn't God know?] In such songs, the psalmist cries out to God, his heart filled with grief: "O LORD God of hosts, *hear* my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!" (*Ps. 84:8, NKJV; emphasis supplied*). In their prayers, the psalmists insist on being heard (*Ps. 30:10; Ps. 38:16; Ps. 39:12; Ps. 66:16; Ps. 69:13, 16, 17; Ps. 119:145, 149*). **They cry out in the assurance that "the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles"** (*Ps. 34:17, NKJV*).

Sometimes the writers of the Psalms affirm that God has heard their complaints and needs.... Remembering God's answers to prayer in the past strengthens the psalmists in the assurance that He will answer them now and in the future. In full confidence of a divine response, the psalmists state repeatedly that the Lord will answer their prayers (*Ps. 4:1; Ps. 6:8, 9; Ps. 17:6; Ps. 65:2*). They assure us that God is available to hear our prayers morning, noon, or night (*Ps. 5:3, Ps. 55:17*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.†‡§

44. **God Cares for Us.**

[BSG:] In the book of Psalms, the Lord is depicted as a powerful King, ready to fight for His people. At the same time, He also is represented as a kind and loving God who cares for those who believe in Him. Various images are used to portray God's tender care. God is depicted as a tender Shepherd taking care of His defenseless sheep (*Psalms 23*). **As their Shepherd, He provides everything for them (*Ps. 23:1*)—rest, food, and water (*Ps. 23:2*); comfort and guidance (*Ps. 23:3*); His presence in the valley of the shadow of death (*Ps. 23:4*); abundance (*Ps. 23:5*); and goodness and mercy (*Ps. 23:6*).**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.†‡§

Psalm 23:1-6: ¹ The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, LORD,
for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honoured [*sic-Br*] guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.—*Good News Bible.*†*

45. Can you think of an experience that affected you or a good friend personally in which God seemed to step in and care for you?

46. Many years ago in the country of Tanzania before cars were fitted with seatbelts, my two children, Todd and Patrice, were riding in our Volkswagen Combi. A Volkswagen Combi has facilities inside for cooking and preparing food. It was time for us to have our evening meal. But, as my wife was preparing a meal in the back and I was driving, the children were sticking their heads out the window, just enjoying the cool air blowing past. The road was narrow, and we were driving a vehicle designed for Europe or the USA in which I sat on the left side in the front in the driver's position. But, we were driving in a "left-hand" or left side drive country.

So, when my wife told the children to please get out of her way while she prepared a meal, they moved to the front seat beside me and stuck their heads out the window on left-side passenger side. As I was coming down a long hill, I could see a truck coming toward us in the opposite direction on that narrow road. At the bottom of the hill, there was a narrow bridge. The truck was blinking its lights as it came down the hill. I was closer to the bridge, and I did not realize that the truck was driving as fast as it was. I assumed the truck would slow down a little bit and that I would be able to cross the narrow bridge and then move over a little bit so the truck would have room to cross the bridge. But, apparently, the driver of the truck felt that by blinking his lights, I would just stop and get out of his way! Just before we reached the place where the narrow bridge was located, my wife called our two children to come to the back to get ready to eat. As I was on the narrow bridge, I realized that the truck driver had no intention of slowing down! As quickly as I could, I got across the bridge. I immediately swerved to the left since we were in a left-side drive country. Even so, the truck, probably driving 60 miles per hour, came so close to us that it destroyed our rearview mirror on that side of the vehicle! If the children had still been there, they both would have been decapitated! Would you consider that a miracle, an answer to prayer?

47. In the Hebrew language, there are not many adjectives. So, the psalmists often used comparisons to describe what they were talking about. When talking about God as our shelter, He is called a Shelter, a Tower, a Defender, a strong Fortress, a Protection, and a Shield. He is described as a Strength, a Rock, a Fortress, and a Stronghold.

48. **God also is our Defender** in a legal sense.

[BSG:] **God is our Vindicator, our Advocate, and our Champion. This imagery is obviously drawn from the legal realm and is primarily employed in the context of the widow and the fatherless. The book of Job and the Psalms depict the Lord as the Defender of widows and orphans (Ps. 68:5, Hebrew *dayin*, meaning “judge”).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54.†‡§**

49. But, God does not always act immediately to prevent problems. On some occasions, He is described as a Deliverer. He is described in that term four times in the book of Psalms. (See Psalm 18:2; 40:17; 70:5; 144:2.)

50. **God definitely is our Shield.** He wants to defend us from sin, its consequences, anxieties, and problems that surround us in the world.

51. As we think about all the comments and references in this lesson, we should spend time meditating on the imagery and figures used in the Psalms. Try to imagine yourself in the positions in which the psalmists found themselves.

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