



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 1-30

Week 3

Seekers Wanted: Who Measures Up?

Psalm 15:1-5

OPENING
up to the Word

What admission requirements did you have to meet before being admitted to college, the armed services or some other organization?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What and where is this “sanctuary” or “holy hill”? What qualifies someone to enter in or dwell there?

2. Who could qualify for this privileged membership or access? (a) priests only, (b) any sinner who first cleans up his act, (c) any well-behaved person regardless of faith, (d) anyone who fulfills God’s old covenant law, (e) no money-lenders or bribe-takers, (f) the Davidic king.

LIVING
out the Word

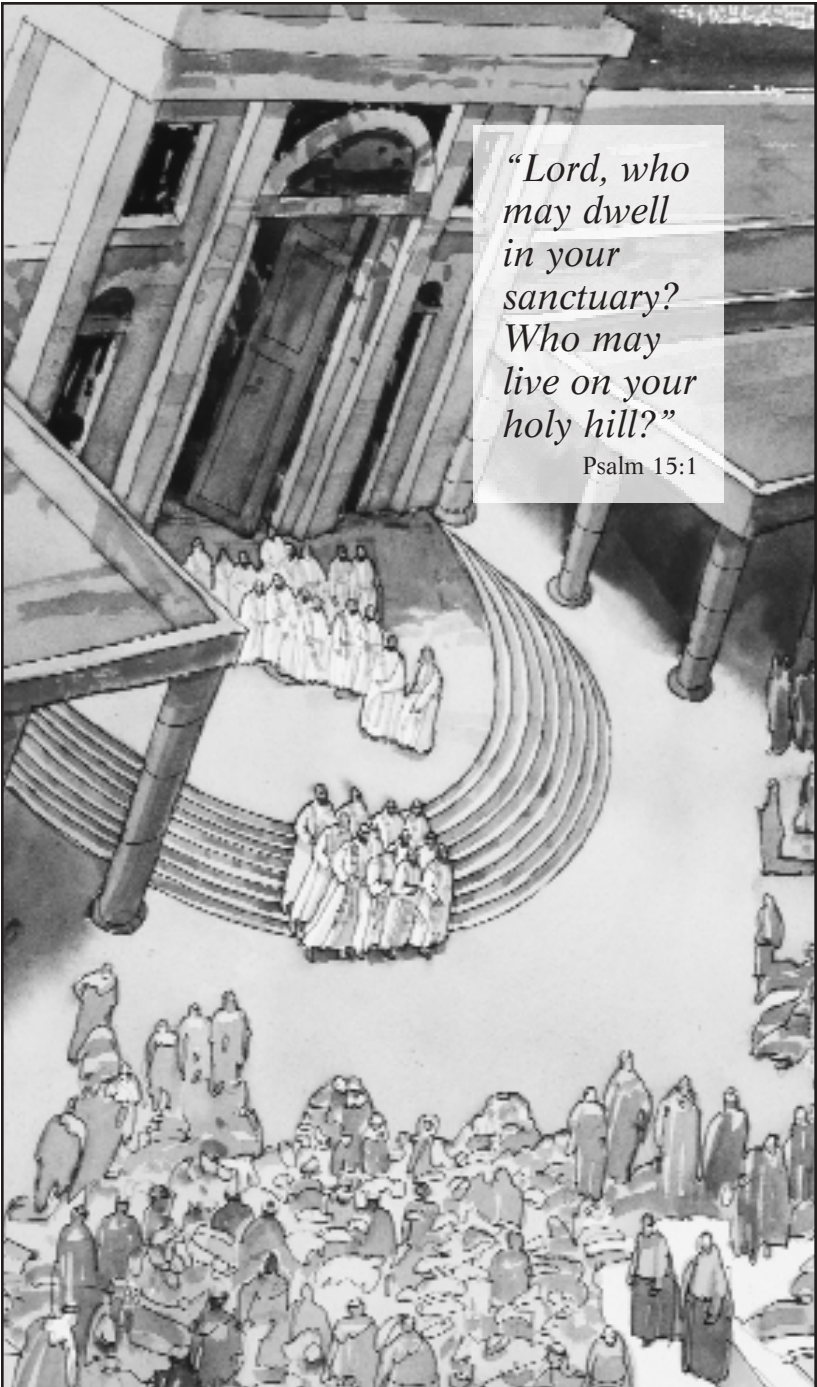
1. Would you qualify to enter the temple according to this psalm? Why or why not?

2. Under the new covenant, what qualifications do you need to come into God’s presence in prayer? Does God restrict prayer to only certain people or are all humans freely qualified and given access to God through Jesus Christ?

3. Consider: under the new covenant, we are each a temple in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live. Instead of us coming into God’s presence, God had come to us!

WINDOW
on the Word

This psalm was a liturgy prepared by David for entry into his yet-to-be-built temple—but not for permanent residency, as only priests were to be quartered there. In fact there were clear rules governing who could not enter the temple—the temple environs was off limits to foreigners and the ceremonially unclean. The inner court and outer sanctuary was accessible only to priests. The Holy of Holies was accessible only to the high priest on the Day of Atonement. This psalm merely illustrates the proper attitude and character that David wished to encourage for anyone approaching God’s temple.



*“Lord, who
may dwell
in your
sanctuary?
Who may
live on your
holy hill?”*

Psalm 15:1

“The Lord Is All I Want”

Psalm 16:1-11

OPENING
up to the Word

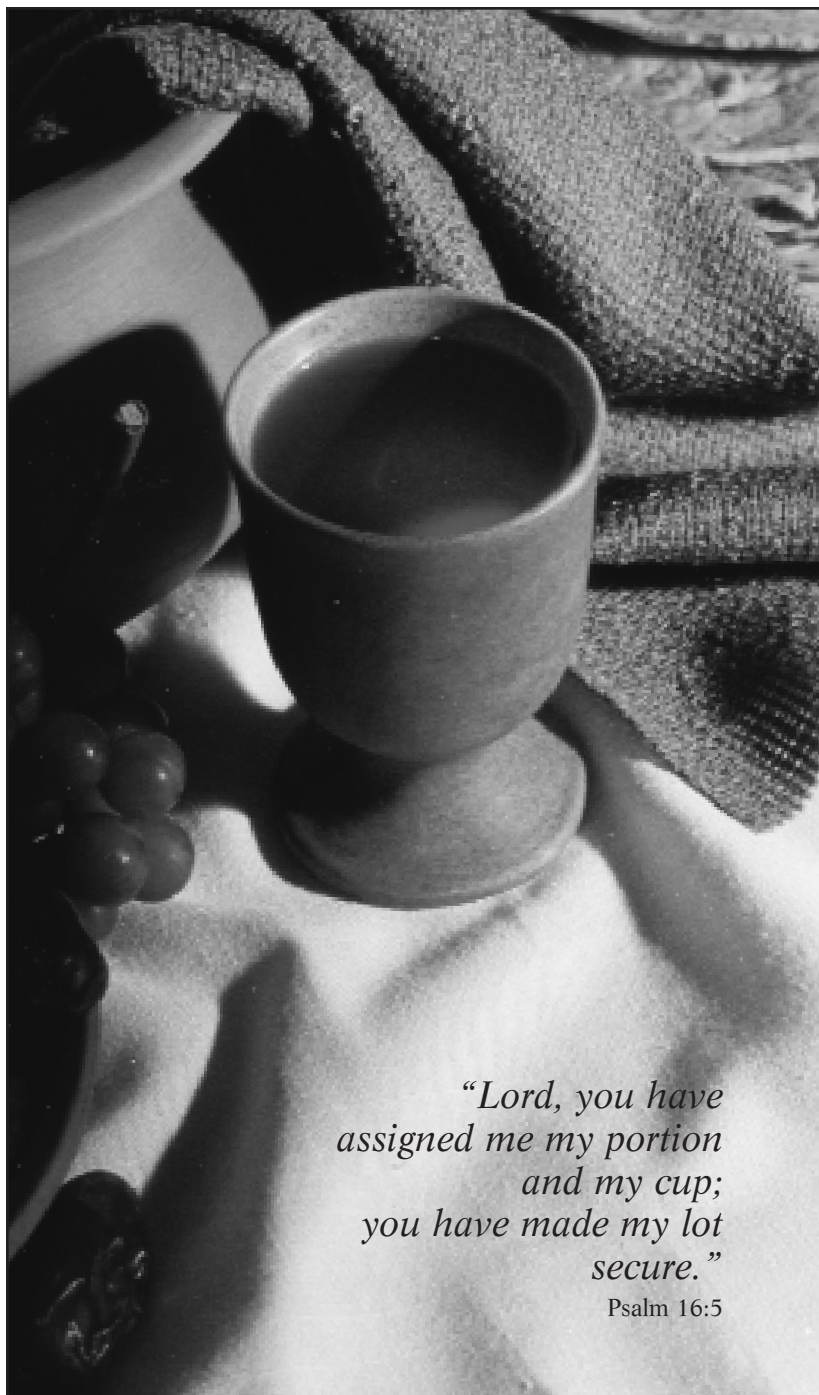
Who's your best friend? Why? How long have you known each other?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did David relate to his Lord (vs. 2, 5-8, 11)?
 2. What did that commitment imply for his dealing with other gods? For accepting his lot in life? For pursuing other pleasures?
 3. What did God do that caused David to delight in his Lord? For example, what is the inheritance that God's people will receive (vs. 5-6)? What other benefits are cited in this song of trust?
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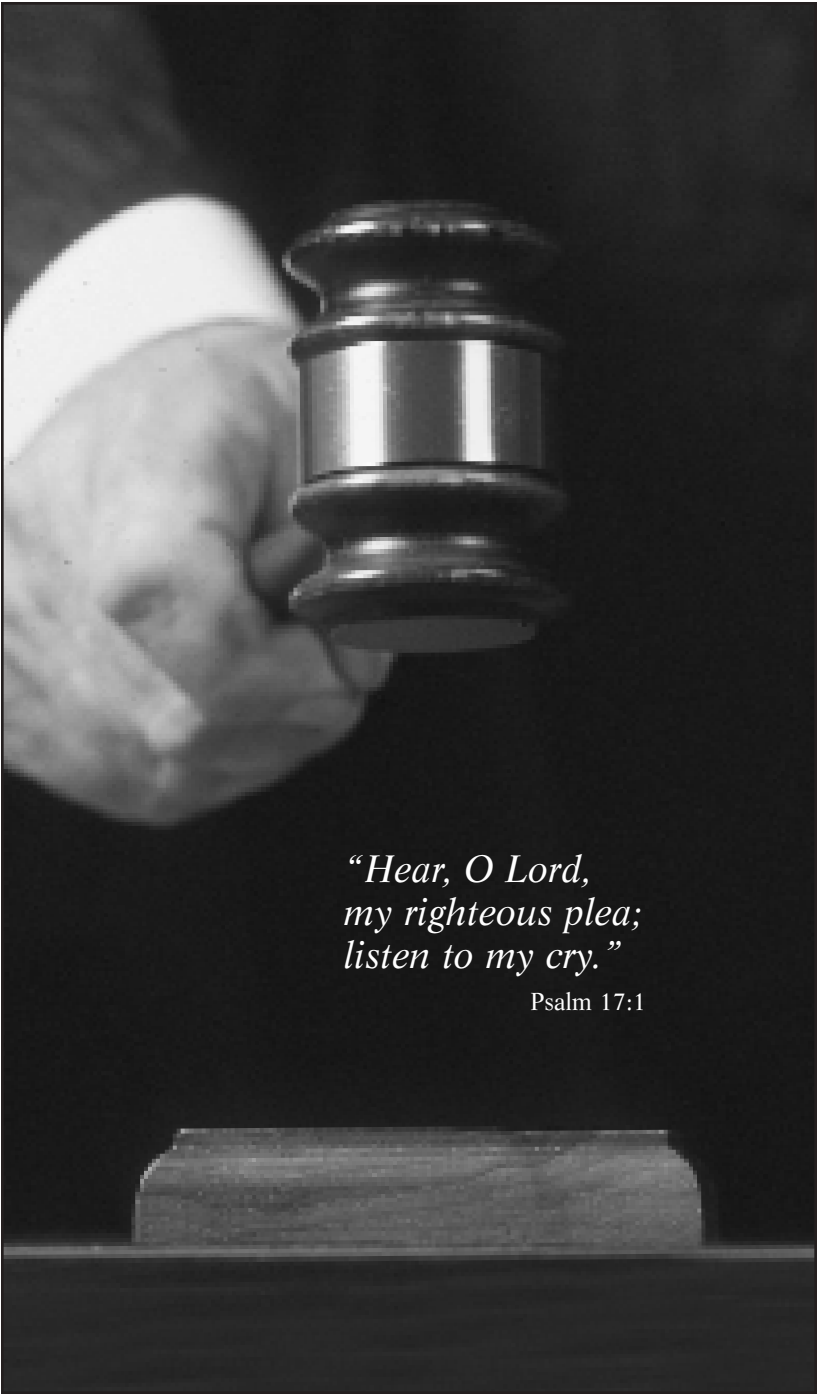
LIVING
out the Word

1. Jesus applied language from this psalm to himself and his disciples (compare v. 2 to Jn 15:5). What can you do apart from a vital relationship with your Lord?
2. Peter applied language from this psalm to Jesus (see Ac 2:31). How do you see your future with God, and why? (a) blah, (b) bleak, (c) blessed, (d) beautiful, (e) bountiful, (f) boundless.



*“Lord, you have
assigned me my portion
and my cup;
you have made my lot
secure.”*

Psalm 16:5



*“Hear, O Lord,
my righteous plea;
listen to my cry.”*

Psalm 17:1

Opening Arguments

DAY 17

Psalms 17:1-15

What experience do you have with small claims, civil, family, criminal or appeals court? (a) jury duty, (b) plaintiff, (c) defendant, (d) witness, (e) none of the above.

1. Describe the courtroom drama in this psalm. Who is the prosecutor? The defense attorney? The defendant? The witnesses? The judge and jury? How convincing is the evidence?
2. Why did David bring his case before God? What did he want God to do and what outcomes did he want to see?
3. What comparisons did David use to set himself apart (vs. 3-5) from his enemies (vs. 9-12)?

1. When falsely accused—by a spouse, parent, teacher, police officer or boss—or even pastor—how do you typically respond? (a) with fists, (b) silence, (c) tears, (d) yelling, (e) plea bargaining, (f) wondering if the accusation might be true.
2. What roles would you like God to take with respect to a case that remains unresolved in your life—perhaps a conflict at work, at home or even in court? (a) referee, (b) peacemaker, (c) judge, (d) mother hen or father eagle hiding you under his wing, (e) lover of your soul. How can God help you solve that problem (vs. 6-8, 13-15)?

In this **lament** and appeal for protection, David formally and forcefully protested his innocence. The **apple of your eye** (v. 8) was the pupil, that delicate part of the eye so essential for vision and needing constant protection. The **shadow of your wings** was another metaphor for protection. Much as a shade tree protects from the heat of the noonday sun, so the Lord himself is protective shade for his people in the heat of battle.

OPENING
up to the Word

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WINDOW
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Victory Celebration

Psalm 18:1-50

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

Do you have any award certificates or special honors that you have kept since your youth?

1. What was David celebrating here?
(a) deliverance from enemies, (b) victory over King Saul, (c) God's ability to intervene at anytime, (d) David was tooting his own horn.
2. What characterizes this psalm as a thanksgiving psalm? As a corporate or as an individual psalm? As a royal psalm? As Messianic?
3. Note the many metaphors. What qualities of God are represented by each? (a) rock, fortress and shield; (b) horn of salvation; (c) law-giver; (d) oil lamp refueler; (e) military and athletic trainer.
4. God is said to have ears, nostrils, mouth, feet, legs and hands. What does this mean? Does he have a body? How is he like or unlike one of us?
5. How and why did God deliver David? What was David's deliverance based on? (a) his innocence, (b) his status as anointed king, (c) God's irrevocable promise, (d) David's loyalty and love for God.

LIVING
out the Word

1. From what snare has God delivered you?
2. David credited God with taking his side. How do you know whose side God is on when nations are at war today?
3. The Lord rewarded David. How does Jesus reward you when you trust in him? (a) with money, (b) better circumstances, (c) answers to prayer, (d) promotion, (e) God's grace is sufficient!

WINDOW
on the Word

*Parallel poetic expressions, either synonymous or contrasting, help define the many **metaphors** (direct assertions that represent the Lord in terms of some other image). The same is true of **anthropomorphism** and **anthropopathism**—images that represent the Lord in terms of human-like qualities and emotions. Some figures of speech, however, demand a broader context to understand them. In this royal thanksgiving psalm, the psalmist borrows language from Canaanite mythology to portray the Lord as the Divine Warrior who beats back the mythical sea to rescue David and set him on the Rock, secure from the powers of chaos. Such vivid poetic imagery must be understood for what it is.*

THE MYTHICAL LANGUAGE OF CANAAN

In the Canaanite mythology which has profoundly influenced these portrayals, Death (Mot) was regarded as a god in his own right—the powerful king of the underworld. According to Ugaritic mythological literature from about 1400 B.C., Mot seeks to extend his kingdom over the earth and thereby challenges the authority of El, the Father of the gods. However, the youthful storm-god, known



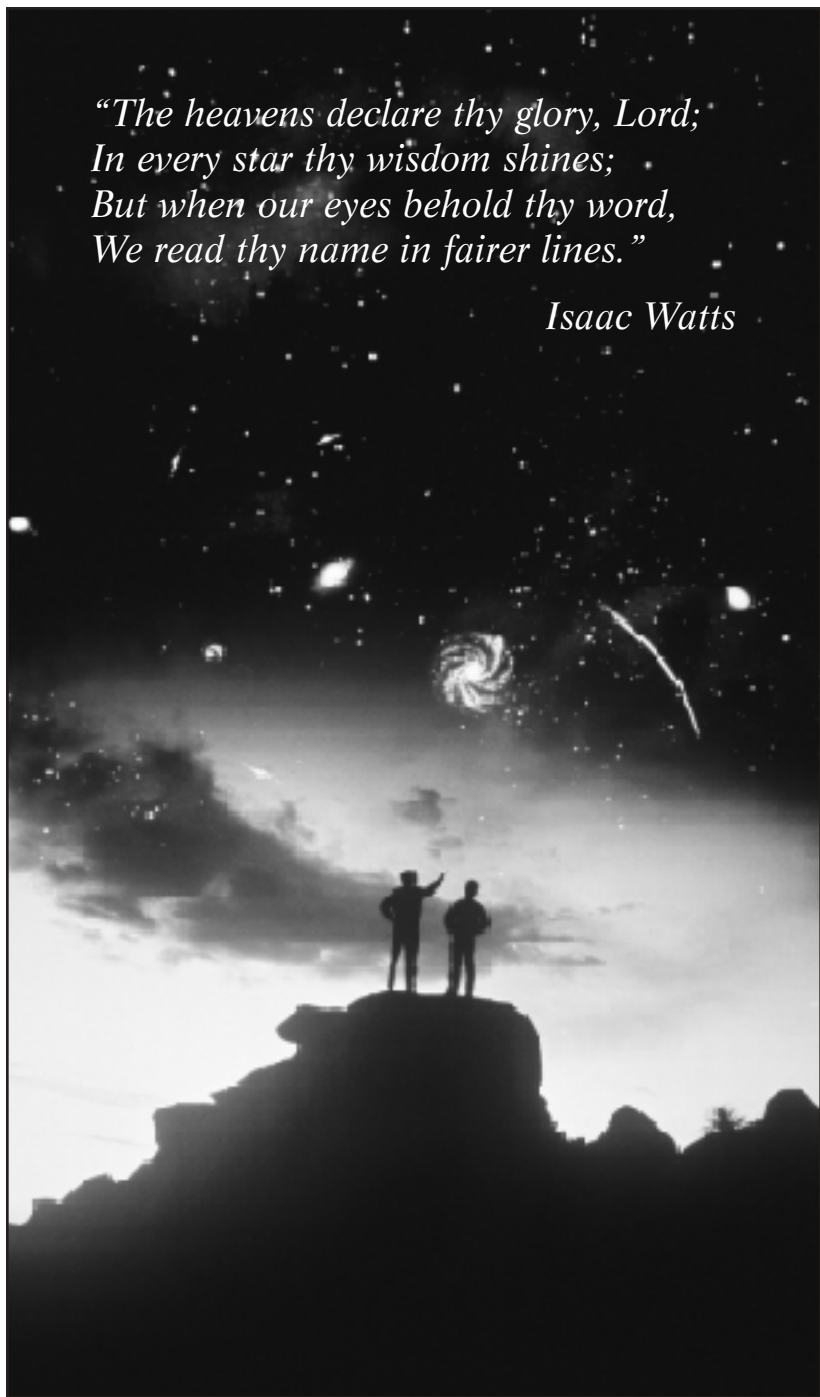
Storm-God Baal from Ugarit, now Ras Shamra, on the north Syrian coast.

as Baal, takes up the challenge and achieves a great victory over Mot, but upon Baal's death, the conquest of death is not decisive, for it has to be repeated as the cycle of the seasons moves from the barrenness of winter to the renewal of fertility in the spring, from death to resurrection. The Israelite faith, in confrontation with the Baal religion which dominated Canaan, repudiated the view that the meaning of human existence is given in the rhythms of nature. It proclaimed, rather, God's historical actions in decisive, non-recurring events (chiefly the Exodus) which called the people of Israel into being and guided them in their historical journey. However, Israel appropriated the old mythical language and reinterpreted it to express historical experiences of threat and limitation which seemed to call into question the sovereignty of God. In the Psalms, death is a power (though no longer a deity) that reaches out greedily to take hold of the living, a deposed king whose shadowy kingdom encroaches upon the historical world, an enemy that stands in opposition to the purpose of God. The psalmists testify that it is only God who can save one from death's power.

— Excerpted from *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*
by Bernard Anderson.

*“The heavens declare thy glory, Lord;
In every star thy wisdom shines;
But when our eyes behold thy word,
We read thy name in fairer lines.”*

Isaac Watts



Look! Up in the Sky... It's... God!

DAY 19

Psalm 19:1-14

What family traits do you have? What family traits would you want your children to have?

1. How do the heavens declare God (vs. 1-6; also 89:5-8; Ro 1:18-20)? (a) only at the dawn of Creation, (b) only to the eyes and ears of faith, (c) in sunlight and heat we feel God's presence, (d) God is creation.

2. Is God's glory affected by human pollution? By disturbances in nature—such as earthquakes, fires and floods? By flaws in human nature (vs. 12-13)? Why or why not?

3. Could either God's creation or Old Testament law, by themselves, lead someone to accept his New Testament offer of eternal life? Why or why not?

1. What or Who would make the words of your mouth and the meditations of your heart acceptable to God?

2. What will you look and listen for the next time you go on a hike, camping trip or a drive through the country? Remember that the Creator, Jesus Christ, will be there with you!

Simile (the comparison of two dissimilar things, as in vs. 4-6) is a literary device that does not convey literal or scientific truth. This ancient, unscientific picture of the universe conveys theological truth about God's sun-like presence in everyday life, but does not support, for example, the idea of a flat earth. **The law** is this psalm is included as part of God's creation. Like God's physical creation, it is and was only temporary. While God's law for Israel was the best body of law in the ancient world—it was so holy and perfect that it was impossible for flawed humans to keep it. It has been superseded by the new covenant and the law of Christ who lives his life in us.

OPENING

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on the Word

The Desire of Your Heart—Part I

Psalm 20:1-9

OPENING
up to the Word

What “desire of your heart” have you seen fulfilled? (a) the college you got into, (b) the job you landed, (c) the sweetheart you married, (d) the kids who came along, (e) some life recovery issue. (f) knowing Jesus.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. In this royal psalm, what prayers for the king were offered before entering battle?

2. Why was the king so brave in battle? What did he rely on? (a) his reputation, (b) his sacrifices, (c) a better army, (d) the prayers of others, (e) the God who answers prayer.

LIVING
out the Word

1. How might these prayers, initially said on behalf of the king, also be said for your government leaders? Your Christian teacher? Yourself?

2. What current “desire of your heart” will you discuss with God in prayer today?

Desire of Your Heart—Part II

DAY 21

Psalms 21:1-13

What has God done for you lately?

1. Does this royal thanksgiving psalm emphasize asking, telling or thanking God? Why?
 2. What was the desire of David's heart (v. 2), as developed in this psalm?
 3. By trusting in God's strength (vs. 1, 7, 13), what results can always be counted on? (a) anything we ask for persistently, (b) rich blessings, (c) eternal blessings, (d) his presence, (e) God's victory and exaltation—not ours, (f) nothing is that predictable—even God.
 4. David was sure God would destroy all his enemies and their descendants (vs. 8-12). How did he presume to know that's what God would do?
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1. When you pray, what do you do first? (a) ask God for something, (b) thank him for what he's already given you, (c) recall when he didn't say "Yes" to your prayers, (d) ask if what you want is according to his will for you.
2. Our lack of thanksgiving says to God, in effect, "What have you done for me lately?" Answer that question right now and thank him accordingly. Then make your requests known for today.

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