Our Bible notes this Thanksgiving season are meant to draw out the multi-faceted nature of the gift of faith. Not only does it *instrumentally* receive the free gift of Christ's imputed righteousness – it also nourishes the believer, enabling perseverance on the daily road of the Cross. All disciples must follow that road – even when it means that we are given a costly and shocking picture of evil. The Scriptures do not shirk in describing evil, and it is promised to be the life-experience of every disciple of the Lord; this is what David experienced in Psalm 36. May further study this week of this Psalm give us both real joy and realism about the Christian life.

Mon/Tues: Read Psalm 36:5-9. **The Way of Faith and The Way of Evil Contrasted**

4 (The wicked) plots trouble while on his bed;
he sets himself in a way that is not good;
he does not reject evil.
5 Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
your judgments are like the great deep;
man and beast you save, O Lord.
7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
8 They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
9 For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light do we see light. **(ESV)**

The way of the wicked is described in verse 4. The wicked man has a life consumed by plotting to further his own wicked, self-centered goals – even on his bed! His whole life can be characterized as "a way that is not good."

How different the life of faith. Such a life comes back continually to dwell upon God's steadfast (hesed) love and faithfulness. The Christian reflects on the astonishing scale of God's saving righteousness (verses 5-6). How wonderful it is to drive around a national park, with every view dominated by the main attraction: Mt. Rushmore; Half-Dome in Yosemite or Yellowstone Canyon come to mind. Just so with the life of faith. Faith is continually looking outside itself to the Lord; faith is able to behold the wicked people and events of this life with an unflinching gaze because faith knows that the Mt. Everest of God's saving righteousness is always in view.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the dominating view of God's saving grace which the life of faith gives us, using hymn # 528:

1 My faith looks up to thee,
thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine;
now hear me while I pray,
take all my guilt away,
O let me from this day
be wholly thine.

2 May thy rich grace impart
strength to my fainting heart,
my zeal inspire;
as thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee
pure, warm, and changeless be,
a living fire.

3 While life's dark maze I tread,
and griefs around me spread,
be thou my guide;
bid darkness turn to day,
wipe sorrow's tears away,
nor let me ever stray
from thee aside.

4 When ends life's transient dream,
when death's cold, sullen stream
shall o'er me roll,
blest Savior, then, in love,
fear and distrust remove;
O bear me safe above,
a ransomed soul.

Wednesday: Read Psalm 36:1-9 & Hebrews 4:12-13 **Wickedness Uncovered**

The Armor of God in Ephesians 6 includes the "belt of truth." When we are by grace committed to "truth in the inward parts," and have the Sword of the Word of God in our hand (Ephesians 6:17) then we can face wickedness unafraid.

This is what the Psalmist does in Psalm 36:1-5. Though he has a chilling oracle *about the way wickedness sounds* as it plots evil on its bed (verses 1-4), David can nevertheless find refreshment and rest in thinking on his Father's character of saving steadfast love and righteousness. Thus, even in the midst of conflict and war, David is gripped by the fiery word of God. Though *the subject of* this word which begins Psalm 36 is an unsavory and unsettling portrait of evil, David is comforted, knowing that *all oracles* are from God. God takes the initiative in Psalm 36 to lay bare the plots, the words, the actions which the wicked man seeks to cloak in darkness. Thus, we ought to be thankful that, "nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight" (Hebrews 4:13). Even the wicked cannot hide from the Lord!

Meditate and Pray: Use *Trinity Hymnal* # 36 (from Psalm 139) as a prayer that the Lord would uncover and defeat wickedness wherever it is found, especially in our lives:

1 Lord, thou hast searched me, and dost know
where'er I rest, where'er I go;
thou knowest all that I have planned,
and all my ways are in thy hand.

2 My words from thee I cannot hide;
I feel thy pow'r on every side;
O wondrous knowledge, awesome might,
unfathomed depth, unmeasured height!

3 Where can I go apart from thee,
or whither from thy presence flee?
In heav'n? - it is thy dwelling fair;
in death's abode? - lo, thou art there.

4 If I the wings of morning take,
and far away my dwelling make,
the hand that leadeth me is thine,
and my support thy pow'r divine.

5 If deepest darkness cover me,
the darkness hideth not from thee;
to thee both night and day are bright,
the darkness shineth as the light.

Thurs/Fri: Read Psalm 36:1-9 **Transported by the View**

This week the view of the Psalmist stretches from the basement of grim realism, where wickedness festers, up, up to God's expansive steadfast love "reaching to the clouds!" What a comfort to accept that these two scenes always go together. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He will not hide uncomfortable realities, and we will always be reminded in the pages of the Bible that we are to stand *against evil* at every turn. At the same time, the Spirit as Comforter provides inexplicable supply and inexhaustible peace at the very point of need. Truly, the Lord knows how to "prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies."

The Puritan John Owen speaks about this frequently:

> Faith often finds a peculiar sweetness and encouragement in and from the consideration of God's gracious nature … especially when driven there from all other strongholds. With nowhere else to go, Divine goodness is appealed to and hoped in. (John Owen, *Works*, Vol 4, p. 99, Vol 6, p. 408, to name just two places.)

Beware of the danger too much time considering the full force of wickedness in this evil world. (And here we have a good cautionary warning for election season, the news cycle, and the crime reports.) John Calvin writes about this and warns us:

> It usually happens, that in condemning the wicked, the contagion of their malice insinuates itself into our minds when we are not conscious of it; and there is scarcely one in a hundred who, after having complained of the malice of others, keeps himself in true godliness, pure and unpolluted.
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> … Whenever the corruption of the world affects our minds, and fills us with amazement, we must take care not to limit our views to the wickedness of men who overturn and confound all things; but in the midst of this stranger confusion, it becomes us to elevate our thoughts in admiration and wonder to contemplate the secret providence of God.

Meditate and Pray: Sing # 56 from our *Trinity Hymnal* that underlines the importance of looking away (and looking up) by faith, unto the riches of God's grace in Jesus:

1 When all your mercies, O my God,
my rising soul surveys,
transported with the view, I'm lost
in wonder, love, and praise.

2 Unnumbered comforts to my soul
your tender care bestowed,
before my infant heart conceived
from whom those comforts flowed.

3 When worn with sickness, oft have you
with health renewed my face;
and when in sins and sorrows sunk,
revived my soul with grace.

4 Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
my daily thanks employ;
nor is the least a cheerful heart
that tastes those gifts with joy.

5 Through ev'ry period of my life
your goodness I'll pursue;
and after death, in distant worlds,
the glorious theme renew.

6 Through all eternity to you
a joyful song I'll raise;
for oh, eternity's too short
to utter all your praise.

Sat.: Read Ps. 36:7-11 & Eph. 3:14-19 **Unsearchable, Impregnable, Inexhaustible**

The width, length, height and depth of God's gracious purposes defy any ability in men to naturally comprehend or understand this steadfast mercy and love. Yet "through Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith" we begin to grasp by faith alone this love "that passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3: 17&19).

Such is the grand picture of God's love given to us in Psalm 36:5-9.

> Here is a whole world to explore, "a broad place" to be brought into: unsearchable (*heavens, clouds*), impregnable (*mountains*), inexhaustible (*the great deep*); yet, for all that, welcoming and hospitable (Psalm 36:6-9). It is only man's world that is cramping.
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> Human fickleness makes a drooping contrast to this towering covenant-love and *faithfulness* (verse 5); human standards, where all is relative, are a marshland beside the exacting, exhilarating mountains of His *righteousness* (verse 6); human assessments are shallowness itself in comparison with His *judgments.*
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> Derek Kidner, commentary on Psalms 36 in *Psalms 1-72.*

Meditate and Pray: Lord, lift our eyes out of the muddy marsh that we live in, up to the higher plane and stronger ground of our present help and future destiny.

Sunday: Read Psalm 36:10-11 & Philippians 3:12-15 Love Leading Ahead

We often speak of mountain top experiences and long for days when we felt God to be closer. But the Psalmist will have none of our poignant longing for past experiences, for the "good old days" when, through rose-colored glasses, life appears to have been "happier." When it comes to the elect persevering in faith, Paul says, "One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (Phil. 3:13).

Let us join with the Psalmist in prayer in Psalm 36:10, that the Lord would "continue His love" towards us each day; leading into our future; guiding us into our destiny and our eternal welcome into realms of light. All these future blessings depend only on God's "continuing," His drawing out His lovingkindness in a protracted, prolonged way. God's mercies, we pray and confidently trust, will be "new every morning."

Meditate and Pray: Listen to how one Puritan describes God's continued mercies in our lives:

> When mercies come forth, God will not presently shut the door of mercy again. *Continue thy lovingkindness*. The Hebrew is, draw forth, or draw out thy lovingkindness: a metaphor either taken from vessels of wine, which being opened once, yield not only one cup, but many cups; so when God opens the tap of the wine cask of his mercy, he will not fill your cup once, but twice and seven times: or, taken from a mother, who hath her breasts full of milk, draws them out for her child, not once, but often.
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> Wm Greenhill, in Charles Spurgeon's *Treasury of David* (edited)