

I Will Help the Poor



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 3

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 18:3–18; Psalm 9:18; Psalm 82; Psalm 58:6–8; Psalm 96:6–10; Psalm 99:1–4.

God will save His children.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD says, ‘The poor are being robbed. Those [people] who are in need groan [moan; cry in pain]. So I will stand up to help them. I will keep them safe from those [people] who tell lies about them’ ” (Psalm 12:5, NlrV).



The Book of Psalms tells us about God's anger against all sin and suffering that happens on this earth.

WE ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES who live in an evil age. The poets who wrote the Book of Psalms also lived in an evil time. The Book of Psalms tells us about God's anger against all sin and suffering that happens on this earth.

Yes, the Lord is patient. He holds back His anger because He doesn't want anyone to die. The Lord wants everyone to confess their sins and change their evil ways (2 Peter 3:9–15). God doesn't always act or do things when we expect Him to or want Him to do things. But we know that the day is coming when God will finish His work as Judge (Psalm 96:13; Psalm 98:9). We need to trust in Him until that day comes. God is a fair and holy Judge (Psalm 89:14; Psalm 97:2). He also is the One who made us. So, God is the only One who can make life new or judge us. God's work as our Judge includes two parts: (1) God will save His children, and (2) He will destroy evil people because they refused to accept His mercy.

God promises to do these two things for His people. We can trust God to keep His promises. But the Book of Psalms teaches us that God will do His work in His time, not ours.

THE LORD IS A MIGHTY FIGHTER (Psalm 18:3–18)

Read Psalm 18:3–18; Psalm 76:3–9, 12; Psalm 144:5–7. What word pictures do these verses use? How do these word pictures show that God is ready to save His people?

Psalm 18; Psalm 76; and Psalm 144 are hymns. These hymns praise God for saving His people from their enemies. These hymns show us that God is a Judge and a mighty Fighter. The Book of Psalms often shows God as a mighty Fighter. The poets used this word picture to show us that God fights for His suffering people who cry to Him for help:

“The Lord thundered [made loud noise] from heaven.
God Most High raised [shouted with] his voice.
And there was hail and lightning.
He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies.
His many bolts [flashes] of lightning confused them [his enemies] with fear.
Lord, you spoke strongly.
The wind blew from your nose.
The valleys of the sea appeared [were seen].
The foundations of the earth were seen” (Psalm 18:13–15, ICB).

Psalm 18 helps us to understand that we shouldn’t doubt that God cares for us. He is strong enough to fight our enemies. We just need to wait on Him to help us in His time.

When God’s people needed saving, they knew that human help was useless. King David knew this Bible truth. King David praised God as the One who helped him win the wars he fought. David gave all the praise for his success to God.

David says that the Lord trains his hands for war (Psalm 18:34). But David never praises his own skill in battle. He always trusts in God to fight for him and save him (Psalm 18:47, 48).

In the Book of Psalms, King David praises the Lord as the only Savior of His people (Psalm 144:10–15). Praise and prayer to the Lord are the secrets to David’s success and strength. Praise to the Lord and prayer are more powerful than any weapon of war. We can trust only in God. He is the only One who is worthy of our worship.

Who gave you your skills and success in life? Why must you always remember that you owe everything to God?



The Book of Psalms often shows God as a mighty Fighter.

HELPING POOR AND NEEDY PEOPLE (Psalm 9:18)

Read Psalm 9:18; Psalm 12:5; Psalm 40:17; Psalm 113:7; Psalm 146:6–10; and Psalm 41:1–3. What message do we get from these poems?

The Bible teaches us that God cares about people who are poor, needy, widows, orphans, and foreigners (Exodus 22:21–27; Isaiah 3:13–15). The Book of Psalms gives us this same message.

Many poems in the Book of Psalms use the words “poor and needy” to talk about people who need God’s special help. The poets do this to show that God wants to help all people everywhere and not only His chosen people.

The words “poor and needy” mean more than people who don’t have a lot of stuff or money. “Poor and needy” also shows us people who are helpless and easily hurt. God loves poor and needy people very much. The words “poor and needy” also show us that the person suffering is all alone. God is the only One who can help this person. “Poor and needy” also has a spiritual meaning. The poets use it to show a person who loves God and His Bible truth. This person depends fully on God and not on self.

When we take care of the poor and needy (Psalm 41:1–3), we show our faith in God. In Bible times, people who hurt the poor and needy were guilty of a terrible crime (Deuteronomy 15:7–11). The Book of Psalms teaches us to do everything we can to help the poor and needy. We must take a strong stand against anyone who hurts the poor.

The Book of Psalms shows that we can trust only in God for wisdom and safety. God’s people must not put all their faith in humans to save them and solve their problems. Many of these people don’t follow God or His ways.

The Lord Jesus came to this earth and lived as a poor Man. He showed in His life that He cared about the poor and needy. Jesus became poor to make us rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus’ riches include saving us from sin and suffering. Jesus promises us everlasting life in God’s kingdom (Revelation 21:4). Jesus is our Judge, who will punish everyone who hurts the poor or needy or refuses to help them (Matthew 25:31–46).

How much do we think about the “poor and needy” who are around us? How much do we do for them?



The Bible teaches us that God cares about people who are poor, needy, widows, orphans, and foreigners (Exodus 22:21-27; Isaiah 3:13-15).

EVIL LEADERS (Psalm 82)

The Lord gave Israel's kings the wisdom to make fair decisions (Psalm 72:1–7, 12–14). Israel's kings also served as judges. God commanded these leaders to keep peace in Israel and to take care of the poor and needy. When the leaders obeyed God, He promised to bless the people and the land. The king's strength as a leader came from his obedience to God and not from human might or wisdom.

What happens when leaders aren't fair and hurt the people they should protect? Read Psalm 82 for the answer.

In Psalm 82, God announces His punishments against Israel's evil judges. In Psalm 82:1, 6, the "gods" are not statues or angels. Angels and statues can't save God's people. So, the gods can't be judged for not saving Israel. The gods, we learn, are Israel's leaders. How do we know? Because the leaders' crimes are listed in Psalm 82:2–4. These crimes help us remember the laws that God gave Moses in Deuteronomy 1:16–18 and Deuteronomy 16:18–20. (Also read John 10:33–35.) God asks the leaders if they are fair when they judge problems. God knows that the leaders haven't been fair. So, God announces their punishment. The leaders have no understanding (Psalm 82:5), because they refuse to obey God's law (Psalm 119:105).

The Bible tells us again and again that the Lord is the only God. God shares His control of this earth with the human leaders He chooses (Romans 13:1). All too often, these leaders are not loyal to God.

Psalm 82 shows the evil in the hearts of some leaders. These leaders behave as if they are "gods" who are above other people. God gave wisdom and strength to Israel's leaders. God named these leaders His children. But God rejects evil leaders. God wants evil leaders to remember that they won't live forever. They must obey the same laws that the people obey. These laws are God's laws. Everyone must keep God's holy Law (Psalm 82:6–8).

God will judge the dead and the living. God's people also must stand in front of God and explain their actions and their behavior to God. Both the leaders and the people should live the way that Jesus, their Judge, lived while He was on this earth. Jesus is the only One who can save them.

Are you a leader or someone's boss? How fair are you?



The king's strength as a leader came from his obedience to God, and not from human might or wisdom.

POUR OUT YOUR ANGER, LORD! (Psalm 58:6–8)

Read Psalm 58:6–8; Psalm 69:22–28; Psalm 83:9–17; Psalm 94:1, 2; and Psalm 137:7–9 and then answer the questions. What is the poet upset about? Who in these poems is the avenger who punishes evil?

Some poems in the Book of Psalms ask God to punish people and kingdoms who want to hurt Israel or who hurt them in the past. We may have a hard time understanding why the poets get so mad and upset in their poems. We've been taught that we should love our enemies. So, we may feel the angry language of the poets goes against the Bible rule to love your enemies (Matthew 5:44).

But the poet's anger against evil shows us what is in his heart. His anger shows us that he cares about what happens to people. He also cares about God's holy law and hates any sin that breaks this law.

The poet doesn't try to get back at his enemies or punish them. He believes that only God is the Avenger for His people. The poet asks God to remember that He promised to punish evil people with the curses in His promise (Deuteronomy 27:9–16). So, the poet asks God to keep His promise and act now.

We must remember that the poems in the Book of Psalms are prayers. At the same time, they are also announcements about God's future work as Judge. Psalm 137 warns that God will judge Babylon. Babylon attacked many people and kingdoms and caused much suffering. God will cause the Babylonians to feel the suffering that they caused other people. The poems in the Book of Psalms contain many warnings from God to evil people. God won't always allow evil people to do whatever they want. God will punish them.

When God judges people, He is fair. He shows mercy. In the same way, God asks His children to pray for the people who hurt them. We also must pray for God to change the hearts and lives of the ones who hurt us so that they will serve Him (Psalm 83:18; Jeremiah 29:7).

God knows all that His children suffer. "Very dear to the Lord are the lives of his followers. He cares when they face death" (Psalm 116:15, ERV). Because God will judge evil people, we must warn everyone against sin and evil. The poets of the Book of Psalms let suffering people know that God sees all their pain. God will be their Avenger. God promises to punish the evil people who hurt His children.



God promises to punish the evil people who hurt His children.

OUR JUDGE AND HIS TEMPLE (Psalm 96:6–10)

Where does God's work as Judge happen? What does this answer mean for us? How does God's temple in heaven help us understand how God will solve the problem of sin and evil? Read Psalm 96:6–10; Psalm 99:1–4; and Psalm 132:7–9, 13–18 for the answers.

God's work as Judge is connected with the temple in heaven. The Bible truth about the temple helped the poet of Psalm 73 understand how God will solve the problem of sin and evil (Psalm 73:17–20). The clothing of Israel's high priest, or spiritual leader, showed that God's temple was the place where He will do His work as Judge and solve the sin problem (Numbers 27:21; Exodus 28:15, 28–30). Many poems in the Book of Psalms show God on His throne in the temple in heaven. There, God is ready to judge the dead and the living for everything they did in this life.

God's temple helps us understand His plan to save us from our sins. In Bible times, people who worshiped false gods believed that sin was something that must be removed with magic. The Bible tells us that sin is breaking God's law. God's holy life means that He loves everything that is fair and clean. So, God's people should be fair and holy in everything they do. To be holy, God's people must keep His law. The law shows us God's holy heart and life.

The temple in heaven is the place where God forgives sins. He also makes us new and holy from His temple. At the same time, the God who forgives is also the Avenger for His people. He punishes evil people who don't confess their sins and stop doing them (Psalm 99:8).

The Lord's work as Judge happens on Mount Zion. Mount Zion is a name for God's holy temple. In His work as Judge, God will save His children and punish evil people (Psalm 132:13–18). God's temple gives His people hope. The temple teaches us to expect God to do His work as Judge. The Book of Psalms gives us faith and hope in God's work as Judge (Psalm 96:13; Psalm 98:9). Jesus Christ is our Judge who works to save us in the temple in heaven (Revelation 11:15–19).

Read Romans 8:34. Why is Jesus' work for us in the temple in heaven good news for His people? How does Romans 8:14 help us answer this question?



God is on His throne in heaven, ready to judge the dead and the living for everything they did in this life.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Beatitudes,” pages 6–13, 29–35, in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

“Jesus said, ‘People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds [types] of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do that, know that great [many] blessings belong to you’ [Matthew 5:11, ERV]. Jesus also told His followers to remember the words of God’s prophets in the Old Testament. These prophets were God’s special messengers. They preached all the words that the Lord told them to say. These special messengers were examples for Jesus’ followers. The Bible says, ‘Brothers and sisters, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for the Lord. The prophets suffered many bad things, but they were patient.’ James 5:10 [ERV]. Abel was the first Christian of all the children that Adam had. Abel was killed because of his faith in the Lord. Enoch lived a life of obedience. The people at that time didn’t understand Enoch because he walked with God. In Noah’s day, the people made fun of him for his faith and beliefs. ‘Some [of God’s children] were laughed at and beaten. Others [of God’s children] were tied up and put in prison.’ [Hebrews 11:36, ERV]. ‘There were women who lost loved ones but got them back when they were raised [brought back to life] from death. Others [some of God’s children] were tortured but refused to accept their freedom. They [God’s children] did this [refused freedom] so that they could be raised [made alive] from death to a better life.’ Hebrews 11:35, ERV.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 33, adapted.



“‘The prophets suffered many bad things, but they were patient.’ James 5:10 [ERV].”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① When we see evil happening around us, we may wonder, “Is the Lord really in control?” How can we stay strong in the Lord during these times when our faith is put to the test? What must we do to keep our faith strong in God’s love and might? What does the Cross teach us about God’s love and strength?
- ② Why is it important not to depend on, or trust in, leaders, governments, or special groups always to make fair decisions or to solve the problems we see around us? Why must we trust only in God’s Word, the Bible, and His work for us as our Judge?

SEKULE'S STORY (PART 2): INVITED TO CHURCH

17-year-old Sekule was a high school student in Sarejevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sekule wanted to know Bible truth. So, he started to visit different churches. But he didn't find answers to his questions about why a loving God would burn someone in hell forever. So, Sekule decided to read the Bible and discover the truth for himself. He started with the New Testament.

Then summer came. Sekule went home to his village in the country of Montenegro. When he got home, he read one Bible book each day. On the first day, he read the 28 chapters of Matthew. The next day, he read the whole book of Mark. Then he read Luke, John, Acts, and Romans. Sekule read one book a day.

As Sekule continued to read the New Testament, he got answers to some of his questions. But Sekule wanted more information. He visited several more churches and the houses of worship from other religions. But he didn't visit a Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sekule heard many terrible stories about Seventh-day Adventists. He thought, "Those people are crazy. They can't have the truth."

Sekule went back to school. He continued to visit different churches and houses of worship. But he didn't find answers in the many houses of worship he visited. In the end, Sekule decided that God wasn't real. So, he stopped reading the Bible.

Then a high-school teacher saw Sekule's Bible. The teacher was a Seventh-day Adventist. She and some other teachers were searching the rooms of the students to see if they were hiding alcohol or drugs.

The teacher said to Sekule, "You have a Bible!"

Sekule nodded. "Yes."

His teacher asked him, "What have you learned?"

Sekule answered, "Many things."

The teacher asked Sekule about the book of Daniel. Sekule remembered everything he read. He answered her questions.

His teacher was surprised. "You understand the Book of Daniel well! You're the first person I've met who understands. You must come to the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

Sekule was afraid to refuse her invitation. She was his teacher. He was afraid she would give him a bad grade if he didn't go.

He said, "OK, I'll go." But he lied. He really had no plans to go to her church.

Sekule Sekulić is a businessman who lives in Montenegro. Read more about Sekule's story next week. Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in Montenegro.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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"You have a Bible!"