

## Weekly Newsletter: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Reflection: Everyone Struggles With Gratitude (Psalm 124)

By Dan Barnard

Last week, I walked into our greenhouse, and I saw a cucumber and a tomato plant. The tomato plant was healthy, ready to burst forth with fruit, yet the cucumber was shrivelled, a victim to malnutrition. The image has stuck with me as I have been thinking about gratitude. Often, as I think about my heart, I feel like the cucumber plant. Although I want to be like the tomato, thriving with spiritual thankfulness, instead, my heart seems sapped of joy. Psalm 124 reminds me that this does not need to be the case. If I remember the right truth, the roots of my soul can be watered by the goodness of God.

To begin, Psalm 124 encourages me to think about what has not happened. The psalmist writes, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive." For many, this sounds pointless. Why should we think about consequences that never existed? Its relevance, in part, comes from the fact that we are shortsighted in spotting reasons to be grateful. We limit ourselves to what we can see and what happens in the moment. Thus, thinking about what has not happened is an effective means to widen the radar of gratitude. Here is an example of this. Last April, my family and I were driving through the Cotswolds. As we approached a bend in the road, a lorry frantically swerved into our lane and barely missed us. Unfortunately, there was another lorry behind us which led to a head on collision. Looking back, it is scary to think about what could have happened. We easily could have been involved in a serious accident. Yet, although this is frightening, I am sincerely grateful that the Lord protected us in such a tangible way. The more I repeat to myself, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," the more grateful I feel.

A second way in which Psalm 124 equips me to be more grateful is in thinking about what has actually happened. The psalmist writes, "We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!" Here, instead of contemplating "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," I consider what is the case because the Lord *is* on my side. I often suffer from ingratitude because I take blessings for granted. One way to counteract this is counting simple blessings. My bedroom is a great example. I think about my desk, my comfy bed, the book I am reading, the fact that the room is tidy, my guitars, and, accordingly, I begin to feel grateful. I have been told that it is a good idea to list 30 reasons to be grateful every night. And I have found that this advice is soul nourishing. It is difficult at times to list 30 reasons, but as I work my way into the 20's, something extraordinary happens: gratitude spills over the banks of my heart.

Finally, Psalm 124 teaches me that the depths of gratitude are experienced not in reflecting in what God has done, but in who he is. The psalmist writes, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." This is clearly exemplified in God's unwavering faithfulness to his people. As recorded in the Old Testament, Israel broke God's covenant countless times. They served other gods, and became like the surrounding pagan nations. Yet, God sent them judges. He even allowed them to have a King who would represent his cosmic Kingship on earth. For Israel, these blessings were undeserved. But, this is exactly why the Psalmist could rejoice. God is faithful, even when we are faithless! If you struggle with gratitude, meditate on the phrase "our help is in the name of the Lord." Like Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, we were stuck in the miry pit. Yet God set our feet on solid ground. Why did God do this? The answer is His character. The more we meditate on this character, the more gratitude we will feel.

Maybe you, like me, often feel like the withered cucumber in my greenhouse. If so, let me encourage you to read Psalm 124. This Psalm can help you cultivate thankfulness by directing your thoughts to three things: first, what would be the case apart from God's grace; second, what is the case because of God's grace; and finally, who God is for us.

## Prayer Meeting – this Wednesday

Rhian Muir will be speaking at our prayer meeting this Wednesday. She's finishing doing the Relay programme (a year of mission, discipleship and training) with UCCF and is about to start work with Christian Focus Publications. Come along at 7pm (refreshments served from 6.45pm).

## Home Groups

By Joe Barnard

At the AGM, I explained that in the autumn we would be moving to having a morning and evening service each week. This will mean that Home Groups will go back to meeting midweek, alternating with the prayer meeting. With this new rhythm, it seems the right time to look at the purpose of our Home Groups and how we plan for growth. The elders will be considering how we do this over the next few weeks and I will write more about these changes in a reflection later this month.

## Leith Walk Primary School – Food Bank

Thank you to everyone who donated items for the Food Bank at Leith Walk Primary (on Brunswick Road). It is great to be able to support local families in this way and Joe delivered the items to the school on Monday.

The collection box is back in the foyer if there are any last minute items, Joe is happy to deliver them next week.

Please see last week's newsletter for the list of items needed. Thanks again for your support with this!



## Summer Appeal 2024

**Summer Appeal 2024**

Hannu & Hazel Sorsamo  
Finland

Lorna Ferguson  
Japan

James Stewart  
Singapore

To contribute please use the bank details on [holyroodevangelical.org](http://holyroodevangelical.org) (use reference 'Summer Appeal'), send a cheque to our treasurer, Nick Archer, or speak to your elder.

The summer appeal is open for 2024 and will go towards the support of our three overseas missionaries – the Sorsamo family in Finland, Lorna in Japan and James in Singapore.

The church bank details can be found [here](#) and please use the reference 'Summer Appeal'.

Cheques (made payable to Holyrood Evangelical Church) and cash in an envelope marked 'Summer Appeal' can also be placed in the offering box or given to Nick Archer.

## Missional Planning Morning + Picnic

On **June 22nd** the Mission Team is organising a strategic planning morning. The hope is to plan a calendar of local missional events for the next year (Autumn-Spring). Anyone interested is welcome to come. The plan is to have a bacon roll at 9.30am and then break into small groups for brainstorming and feedback. We'll think strategically about how to reach specific groups in the area as well as how to make use of strategic seasons such as Freshers Week, Christmas/Easter, etc. The planning and prayer will be done by 12pm.

We'll then head out to the park for a picnic (bring your own) and games. Everyone is welcome for the entire morning or just for the picnic.

## Summer Holidays and Pulpit Supply

Joe will be on holiday for three Sundays in June and July and is speaking at the Moray Convention in August. Here's a note of who will be taking our services while he's away-

Date	Morning	Evening
30 <sup>th</sup> June	David Nixon (Carrubbers Christian Centre)	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)
7 <sup>th</sup> July	John Tellis (Word of Life UK)	Caleb Shocklie (Church Planter in Meadowbank)
14 <sup>th</sup> July	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)
4 <sup>th</sup> August	Communion Service - Bob Akroyd (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)	Steven Randall (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)

**There will be no communion in July and Bob Akroyd will take our communion service at the beginning of August.**

The prayer meetings will continue to be in person (with an online option) during July and August. There will be no refreshments beforehand over the summer.

For any pastoral matters when Joe is away, please contact one of the elders (Aaron Allen, Nick Archer, Alex MacDonald, Murdo Macleod, Mark Malaczynski, Robert Nelson, Alasdair Roberts, Andy Scott, Ernie Shippin, John Stewart or Roy Tatton)

Liz will be on holiday from Monday 8th July until Monday 22nd July. There will be no newsletter or prayer bulletin for these two weeks.

## Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom)
- Sunday:
  - Worship Service at 10.30am (and livestreamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
  - Evening service at 6pm (and livestreamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
- Monday:
  - Baby and Toddlers from 10 – 11.30am (last one for the term)
  - Communications Team Meeting at 8pm on Zoom



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