

Not By Bread Alone

Psalm 91:15 *invocabit me et exaudiam eum cum ipso ero in tribulatione
eruum eum et glorificabo (The Latin Bible).*

*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will
deliver him, and honour him.*

(If you want to sound out the Latin, the “e” sounds like our Canadian “eh” and the “a” sounds like our “ah.” The “I” never sounds like “eye:” inside words it sounds like “ee”, and at the beginning of words it sounds like the “I” of “it.” – That’s how I learned it, anyway... Have fun!)

Psalm 91 has long been understood “messianically:” Christians soon identified the “He” in Psalm 91 with Jesus as the Messiah. But I have a friend, who asks me to read this Psalm every time we visit. She asks me to change all the male pronouns to female, and in her hearing reverses the positions of the first and third person, so the reading becomes: “I will call upon God and God will answer me; God will be with me in trouble, and deliver me, and honour me.” She has seen a lot of trouble and dishonouring, haven’t we all? Yet she calls on God and God answers her too.

I put up the Latin Bible version from bibleglot.com/pair/Vulgate/KJV/Ps.91/ because the first word, “Invocabit”/”He will call” is the old name for the First Sunday in Lent. It still sets the pattern for our Lenten spiritual disciplines: our fasts, our extra worship services, our Bible Study, our renewed home devotions, our re-dedication to Sunday Worship, our preparation for Baptism, our more watchful commitment to justice and service—all are based on “invocation:” calling on the Lord for help in temptation, in trails, in troubles, in times of suffering, in grief, in pain, all the time in everything.

When Jesus faced temptation, he called on the Lord just like Psalm 91:15 said he would. Faced with the temptation to turn stones into bread (that would be spiritual abuse even today!), Jesus overcame with Scripture: “We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that God speaks.” In a “suggested sermon outline” for “Invocavit Sunday,” Martin Luther unpacks some of the dimensions of our complicated relationships with “our daily bread:”

Since it is at hand, God nourishes us through it... so that we do not see it [God's provision] but think the bread does it; but where it is not at hand, there he nourishes us without the bread, only through the Word, as he does by means of the bread; so that thus bread is God's helper... that is, through and under our outward ministerial office he gives inwardly his grace, which he also could give and does give indeed without our office.... Thus God sustains us outwardly by bread; but only inwardly he gives that growth and permanency which bread cannot give. The summary is this: All creatures are God's larva and mummery, which he permits to work with him and to help and do everything he can do and does do otherwise without their cooperation, in order that we may cleave alone to his Word. Thus, if bread is at hand, that we do not therefore trust the more; or if there is no bread present, that we do not therefore despair the more; but use it when it is at hand, and do without it, when there is none; being assured that we shall still live and be sustained at both times by God's Word, whether there be bread or no bread. With such faith, one overcomes avarice ["greed for gain"] and temporal care ["worry"] for daily bread in the right way (from John Nicholas Lenker, editor and translator, *Sermons of Martin Luther: Volume 2*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983, p. 141).

Calling on God for our daily bread during Lent... connecting our daily bread intentionally to the bread of the Eucharist... helps us see God hidden behind the bread, providing for all our needs, always. If you are not in the habit of praying before or after your meals (or both), this Lent—especially with the rise in food prices and the concerns about inflationary interest rate increases—is a really good time to start. Who knows? The experts of self-transcendence and personal transformation say that 40 days is all it takes to start a good life-changing practice: try it for Lent this year and it may become a lifetime faith-building pattern that could even extend for generations!

A Prayer for the First Week of Lent (adapted from Herbert Lindemann, Editor, *The Daily Office*, Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri, 1965, p. 151f).

O Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of your Majesty to defend us from all who rise against us. Grant that, when we are tempted, we may resist in your strength; when we are worried, we may cast all our care on you; when we are weary, we may seek your rest, so that in all things

we may live this day to your glory, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen

Daily Readings for The First Week of Lent (from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 1123). **Friday:** Psalm 121—Micah 7:18-20—Romans 3:21-31. **Saturday:** Psalm 121—Isaiah 51:4-8—Luke 7:1-10.

Daily Readings for the Second Week of Lent (from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 1123). **Monday:** Psalm 128—Numbers 21:4-9—Hebrews 3:1-6. **Tuesday:** Psalm 128—Isaiah 65:17-25—Romans 4:6-13. **Wednesday:** Psalm 128—Ezekiel 36:22-32—John 7:53-8:11. **Thursday:** Psalm 95—Exodus 16:1-8—Colossians 1:15-23. **Friday:** Psalm 95—Exodus 16:9-21—Ephesians 2:11-22. **Saturday:** Psalm 95—Exodus 16:27-35—John 4:1-6.

A Prayer for the Second Week of Lent (adapted from Lindemann, p. 158f).

O God, you know how weak we are when we rely on our own strength. Keep us both inwardly and outwardly from all adversities of the body and all thoughts which hurt the soul. Relieve and comfort the persecuted and afflicted; speak peace to troubled consciences; show your comfort and goodness to all who are distressed in mind: cheer the melancholy, restore hope to the hopeless; protect the unconscious; calm the violent, that they may do no harm to themselves or others, and let no one injure them; dispel all vain delusions; confirm the health of the recovering; comfort the sick, receive the dying, forgiving whatever hurt they may say or do in their suffering; bless the efforts of all who labour and pray on behalf of those distressed in mind, and bring us all to the waters of comfort and the ways of righteousness in the kingdom of rest and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen