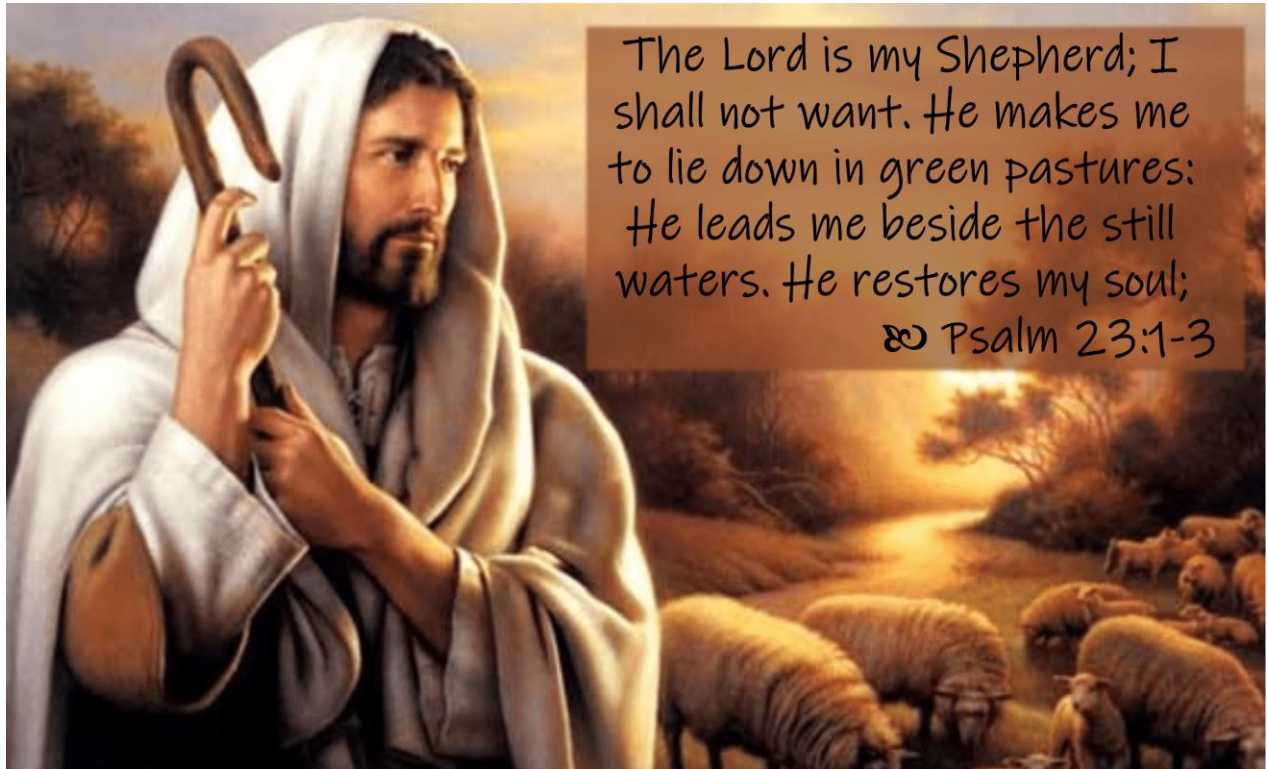


READING & PRAYING & LIVING THE PSALMS

by David Lee Burris



The Lord is my Shepherd; I
shall not want. He makes me
to lie down in green pastures:
He leads me beside the still
waters. He restores my soul;
∞ Psalm 23:1-3



Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

Psalm 23 NIV

God of the Storm

One of the arenas in which we can see Yahweh's 'glory', the evidence of His goodness, is in the storm. So in chapter 29 verses 3–9 David moves on to say we should be **taking in Yahweh's display on earth**. Here the psalm relates a massive thunderstorm (v. 3) apparently moving off the Mediterranean, working its way east and north of Israel. The storm breaks cedars: 'Yahweh shattered the cedars of Lebanon.' That's quite impressive, considering those cedars grew to a height of 70–80 feet and that their trunks could sometimes be 30–40 feet in circumference. Even mountains are fragile before Yahweh's storm. When Lebanon and Sirion are skipping around 'like the young of a wild ox', is it because of the fury of the storm or has an earthquake been thrown into the mix? Then come the slashes and bolts of lightning, the 'flames of fire' (v. 7) that Yahweh hews out. The storm moves on and convulses wilderness areas (v. 8), thunderous outbursts scaring the female deer into labor and leaving forests in tatters (v. 9).

This is quite a collage. It's as if David says, Look at what mighty items His voice destroys (v. 5), what massive items He moves (v. 6), what isolated areas He shakes (v. 8), and what a range of creation He affects from the timid doe (v. 9a) to whole forests (v. 9b). And all those 'sons of God' in the heavenly temple explode with 'Glory!' (v. 9c).

I don't doubt that Psalm 29 may have Baal theology in view. Not to endorse or imitate but to oppose. Psalm 29 may partly function as 'put-down' theology, as if to say to the pagan media: 'Nuts! Baal is no storm god. Yahweh is God of the storm. Here's a clip of Him at work. And He brings his storm right across Phoenicia, supposedly Baal's backyard!'

Some people probably wince at the idea of biblical faith using put-downs—it seems rather nasty. But put-downs (well, we can clean them up and call them polemics) are sometimes necessary and very effective. But why does David paint this scenario of 'Yahweh's voice'? Because he wants me to be impressed with Yahweh's glory and majesty.

Finally, at the end of the psalm, David wants us to be **resting in Yahweh's adequacy for His people** (vv. 10–11). In these two verses David gives us a double revelation of Yahweh, as both reigning King (v. 10) and sustaining God (v. 11).

In verse 10 we meet something of the dual nature of Yahweh's kingship. The first line mentions the flood, *mabbûl*, the word always used of what we call Noah's flood (Gen. 6–8). Since the reference is to a previous historical event, I think the 'perfect' Hebrew verb should be translated as a past tense. Hence: 'Yahweh sat (enthroned) at the flood.' The next line uses the same verb but a different form to point to Yahweh's continuing kingship: 'And Yahweh has seated (himself) as king forever.' So, there's a double claim: there is a premier moment of Yahweh's kingship—at the flood, and there is the ongoing exercise of His kingship—forever. (The earlier episode was not a flash in the pan—His sovereignty continues.)

Why does this matter? Well, we might have a little more put-down theology operating here. In pagan materials like *The Gilgamesh Epic* the gods go berserk over the flood. They 'were terror-stricken at the deluge', 'cowered like dogs and crouched in distress,' and 'Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail'. But in the Bible we don't have a bunch of divine nervous breakdowns: 'Yahweh [emphatic] sat enthroned at the flood.' He was there. He was in control. He sat as King at the flood, at that supreme chaotic event in the past (v. 10a) and He remains as King forever (v. 10b)—on through whatever His people may face in post-flood time. Now David adds that additional touch: Yahweh is not only reigning King (v. 10) but sustaining God (v. 11).

We are right back, then, to Psalm 28 (see 28:8)! And, after all the fireworks of verses 3–9, it is fascinating that the last word of the psalm is 'peace'. But we mustn't miss the double emphasis: reigning King, sustaining God. For though Yahweh is King (v. 10), it's as if He gets down off His throne to put fresh heart into His people.

One can hardly study Psalm 29 without conjuring up the episode in Mark 4:35–41. Jesus, asleep in the boat, the storm that even terrified the fishermen among the disciples.... Fully awakened, Jesus rebukes the wind and stifles the sea. Here in the psalm Yahweh brings the storm, in Mark 4 Yahweh calms the storm (cf. v. 41, 'Who then is this?'). Either way He is Lord of the storm. And, anyway, we know that as long as Jesus is in the boat nothing too bad can happen!

¹ Davis, D. R. (2020). [*In the Presence of My Enemies: Psalms 25–37*](#) (pp. 79–87). Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus.

Royal Prayer

I see no reason to doubt the superscription of this psalm, that it stems from David, and I assume then that when he refers to Yahweh's 'anointed one' in chapter 28 verse 8, he is referring to himself as the anointed covenant king. Hence it is a royal prayer. And he is praying in the midst of some emergency (vv. 1–5) which he always seemed to be facing. When we hear him pray in Psalm 28, who knows what particular trouble he may have been in? Could have been any of his 'disasters'.

We will trace David's concerns through the psalm, and, first, we note **the silence he dreads** in verses 1–2:

... don't be deaf to me;
lest, if you are silent to me,
I shall be like those going down to the pit.
Hear the voice of my pleas for grace....

Here is prayer that names its fears. His chief fear is that Yahweh will be 'deaf' or 'silent'—unresponsive. If Yahweh doesn't 'hear,' what then? That brings on another fear: 'I shall be like those going down to the pit.' The 'pit' (*bôr*) is sometimes synonymous with Sheol (the realm of the dead) and with death (cf. Ps. 30:3; Isa. 38:18). But there may be something more sinister here. Allen Ross is likely on target:

Those going down to the pit are not just dying, but dying without hope. In this simile David is comparing himself to the ungodly: if his prayer goes unanswered, he will not appear to be different. He will die as they die, without any reprieve from the LORD.

And yet even as he declares these fears his prayer packs gleams of encouragement. For one thing, he calls Yahweh 'my Rock' (cf. Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31; Ps. 95:1) with its overtones of security and stability. And perhaps more. Motyer points to Exodus 17:1–7, where the rock Moses struck became the source of life-giving water. Yahweh himself was closely associated with that stricken rock (Exod. 17:6). So 'rock' may not only convey security and stability but Yahweh's sustenance and sufficiency as well.

Then there's another slice of encouragement when David speaks of lifting up his hands 'toward your inner sanctuary' (v. 2c). The inner sanctuary was the 'most holy place' of the tabernacle where the ark of the covenant sat. Only the high priest went into that innermost compartment and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 16). David never went in there. And yet he assumes that his prayers do! When he lifts up his hands toward Yahweh's inner sanctuary, isn't he assuming that is the case? David can never bodily enter into that sacred space, but his prayers can and do. Hence, a sliver of hope.

But let's come back to his primary fear: what if Yahweh is 'silent' or 'deaf' to his cries? What if He shouldn't 'hear'? What can be more basic or fundamental than that? Here we are at the basement floor of prayer. If Yahweh doesn't hear, it's all over. Everything depends on this. That's why we should never mumble through such parts of the Psalms. **Take a look at Psalms 5:1–2; 22:1–2; 55:1–2; 61:1–2a; 83:1; and 102:1–2. These are pleas to be *heard*.** And I think, if we're fairly familiar with the Psalms, that we become mentally inoculated against these opening salvos. We tend to think they are just conventional verbiage, sort of required openings before we get to the 'real stuff.' But these cries are no formality. If Yahweh doesn't hear, there is no hope.

If Yahweh is not there, if He is 'silent', then his prayer is the way to Nowheresville. That's why one imagines he is half-ecstatic when he calls God, in the old Authorized Version, 'O thou who hearest prayer' (Ps. 65:2). That is the main matter.

Secondly, David speaks of **the justice he craves** (vv. 3–5). Here we meet the petition proper, especially in verse 4. But first we meet the problem of the wicked (v. 3). There *are* wicked people, evildoers. Nor should we think these 'wicked' come from pagan nations; more likely, David is here thinking of folks within Israel who hate and oppose his reign as covenant king. There are two difficulties with them. They are *devious*: they 'speak peace with their neighbors but with disaster in their heart' (v. 3b). They make a good show of cozying up to the Lord's servants while in actual fact they are plotting their overthrow. They are masterful hypocrites. But then they are *dense* as well: 'they will never discern the deeds of Yahweh, nor the work of his hands' (v. 5a).

King David's Diagnostic Confession Prayer Style

Turning The Wheels Of The Wills

- Psalms 6: 1-3 & 6,7 –

“Every night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears.”

- Psalms 38: 3 – 9 & 18 –

“My wounds are loathsome and corrupt, because of my foolishness... Lord, all my desire is before thee; And my groaning is not hid from thee. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.”

- Psalm 51: 10 – 14 --

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation... And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness”

Though they may know the facts of Yahweh's creating, providing, rescuing work, it doesn't 'get through' to them. They are so 'thick' that they do not acknowledge Yahweh's works or praise Him for them. So, what does King David then do? He prays against them. Verse 4 is the primary petition:

Give to them in line with their work and in line with the evil of their deeds; in line with the work of their hands give to them; pay them back what they have dished out.

David asks for God's retribution on them. With his three-fold 'in line with' he pleads that Yahweh will pay them back in equitable proportion. This may seem too brutal to some of us in the West, who exist in a soft-headed, emotion-dripping, feeling-soaked culture. But a moment's thought tells us that David is doing nothing more than Paul would later require in Romans 12:19: Don't take vengeance yourselves; commit vengeance to God. How do you do that? You *pray* that God will take vengeance on them. Like eating your oatmeal, it's the right thing to do. That's what David is doing here—committing vengeance to God by praying that God will take them out.

In late August 1944 about 2,000 American troops stationed in England were impressed by a regimental prayer written by Lieutenant James Morton, which began: 'Almighty God, we kneel to thee and ask to be the instrument of thy fury in smiting the evil forces that have visited death, misery, and debasement on the people of the earth.' It was a prayer that pleaded for justice against evil. There's a certain rigor in such prayers, and Christians might learn from them. Sometimes believers must pray prayers that have hair on their chests.

I think Psalm 28 is instructive for Christian believers. Sometimes, depending on our circumstances, we may think 'there is nothing we can do' about the ravages of evil and wicked men. But Psalm 28 says we can do something. We can pray. We can pray against them. We can pray God will punish them. We can pray that God will take them out.

Now the tone of the psalm changes and David tells of **the praise he offers** (vv. 6–8). Yahweh has answered his prayer and so praise is in order. There is such an *exuberance* about it: 'Blessed be Yahweh!', he exclaims (v. 6a). Then he goes on to recount how he trusted in Yahweh and has received help so that his heart is 'ecstatic' (v. 7). His praise is full of delight and given with gusto.

If you read verses 6–7 properly you see that David was seized by an ‘uncontrollable gladness’. But there’s more. There’s such an *assurance* in this praise (v. 8). As he pours out his praise, he confesses truth about Yahweh and that truth reinforces his assurance:

Yahweh, the strength of his people
—and he is a stronghold of salvation
for his anointed one.

So, praise sustains confidence. It is a double confidence—Yahweh is both ‘the strength of his people’ and ‘a stronghold of salvation for his anointed one’. The ‘anointed one’ is the reigning king, which, if we credit the superscription, is in this case David. There’s likely a causal relation between these two matters. It would probably be right to say that Yahweh is the strength of His people *because* He is a saving stronghold for their king. **As goes the king so go the people. If the king is victorious, the people are secure. With a little thought a Christian can grab hold of this. If his/her King has died, risen, sits at the right hand of God, and intercedes (Rom. 8:34), who possibly can condemn? As king, so people.** In any case, here clearly what the king declares in praise willy-nilly provides additional assurance for God’s people.

Yet there is simply such a *propriety* about this praise: ‘Blessed be Yahweh! *For* he has heard the voice of my pleas for grace’ (v. 6). He had asked Yahweh to hear these ‘pleas for grace’ in verse 2. He has done so, and for that reason praise is due. **Yahweh’s answer places a claim on me, and there is something desperately wrong if it doesn’t elicit praise.**

I ran into an odd episode during the ‘Revolutionary’ War in my country. One night in August 1780 Francis Marion, the ‘Swamp Fox’, received word that the British were holding 150 Continental soldiers captive at a plantation six miles north of his camp. The British intended to march these captives down to the South Carolina coast and incarcerate them on British prison ships there. Marion and his seventy men rode all night and attacked just before daybreak. The surprise attack was over in minutes and Marion recovered all 150 prisoners. So, they gladly joined Marion’s ranks? Wrong. Almost all of them decided they had had enough of fighting. They had been through a harsh winter in New Jersey and found the humid south unbearable.

They had not long before been decisively whipped by the British at Camden (even their commanding general, Horatio Gates, had run away from that battlefield, rightly puncturing his bloated reputation). They saw no point in carrying on the war. So over half of them went on down to the coast and to the mercies of British prison ships; the rest pretended they were going back to their unit in North Carolina but, in fact, most deserted. And three of them stayed on to fight with Marion. Rescued, delivered, set free, and they were nothing but a bunch of ingrates.

Finally, David concludes by speaking of **the people he remembers** (v. 9). He appends a prayer for Israel here at the end of the psalm:

Save your people
and bless your possession,
and be their shepherd
and carry them forever.

This is obviously a prayer for ongoing need. It was one thing for their king to be delivered and for Yahweh to show, once more, that He is ‘the strength of his people’ (v. 8). But Israel will face more troubles and will have more need of Yahweh’s sufficiency. **And what more welcome image than Yahweh as ‘shepherd’ who ‘carries’ His people?** He is the Exodus God who always carries His people (see Deut. 1:31; Isa. 46:1–4; 63:9). And how, sometimes, they need to be *carried*, for they can scarcely stand by themselves.

There’s something more we should observe about this prayer: it has what we might call a prophetic spin. As David the covenant king here prays for Israel, does it not point us to the final Davidic king, Jesus, who always intercedes for His people? One thinks of Jesus’ prayer for His disciples: ‘Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me ... keep them from the evil one’ (John 17:11, 15). So, the people of God still have a King who prays for them. How then can we fail to make it?²

² Davis, D. R. (2020). [*In the Presence of My Enemies: Psalms 25–37*](#) (pp. 65–75). Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus.

[150 Hebrew Poems]

DAVID (73) HEMAN & ETHAN (2)
 ASAPH (12) SOLOMON & MOSES (3)
 SONS OF KORAH (11) ANONYMOUS (17)

MANY WRITTEN FOR CHOIR... BUT NOT A HYMNBOOK

(SEE 1 CHRONICLES 25 & 1 NEHEMIAH 11:22-23)

PSALMS

Torah & Messiah Lament & Praise Faith & Hope

PRAISE

PROFESS OF JUD & COLLEBRATION
 DRAW ATTENTION TO LORD'S GOOD IN THE WORLD
 RETELL THE STORY & THANK GOD

LAMENT

PRAYERS OF PAIN, CONFUSION, & ANGER
 DRAW ATTENTION TO LORD'S LONGING IN THE WORLD
 ASK GOD TO DO SOMETHING

LAMENT & PRAISE

BOOK 1
3-41

1. BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO MEDITATES ON THE TORAH
TEACHING: 3 TIMES OF REEDS
 PSALMS = A HEBREW TORAH ABOUT PRAYER

2. POETIC REFLECTION ON 2 SAMUEL 7
MESSIANIC KING
 BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO TAKE REFUGE IN THE KING

PSALMS: THE PRAYERBOOK OF GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE STRIVING TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE TORAH AND LONGING FOR THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

BOOK 2
42-72

12-17. HOPE FOR A FUTURE RETURN TO THE TEMPLE IN ZION

16-18. DAVID'S FIRST DELIVERANCE: ELEVATION AS KING

19. PSALM 119 TORAH

20-22. DAVID'S FIRST DELIVERANCE: KINGSHIP OVER THE NATION

21. CALL TO COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

72. 16-17. FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM (15:7-17 = GEN 12:3 & 22:17)

BOOK 3
73-88

73-77. PROMISE OF A MESSIANIC KINGDOM

EXILE & DOWNFALL OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

87-88. DON'T FORGET YOUR PEOPLE

BOOK 4
89-106

89-90. HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SERVANTS!

91-97. THE LORD REIGNS IS KING

LET THE TREES CLAP, LET THE MOUNTAINS & RIVERS SING

106-108. THE SONGS OF ASCENTS

BOOK 5
107-145

107-110. THE MESSIANIC KING

DEFEATS EVIL & DRINKS GOD'S KINGDOM

113-118. THE HALLEL

119. PSALM 119 TORAH

120-136. THE SONGS OF ASCENTS

137-145. THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

MAY THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL BE BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN AND AMEN

146 HALLELU-YAH
 147 HALLELU-YAH
 148 HALLELU-YAH
 149 HALLELU-YAH
 150 HALLELU-YAH

created by the Bible Project

PSALMS

SUBJECT

[#] ACROSTIC
 + MESSIANIC

#	THANKSGIVING	#	PRAISE
#	PENITENTIAL	#	HISTORICAL
#	IMPRECATORY	#	LAMENT
#	ASCENTS		

ASCRIBED TO

DAVID	D
ASAPH	A
KORAH	K
HEZEKIAH	H
ETHAN	E
SOLOMON	S
HEMAN	H
MOSES	M

BOOK 1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41			

BOOK 2

42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72													

BOOK 3

73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
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BOOK 4

90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106
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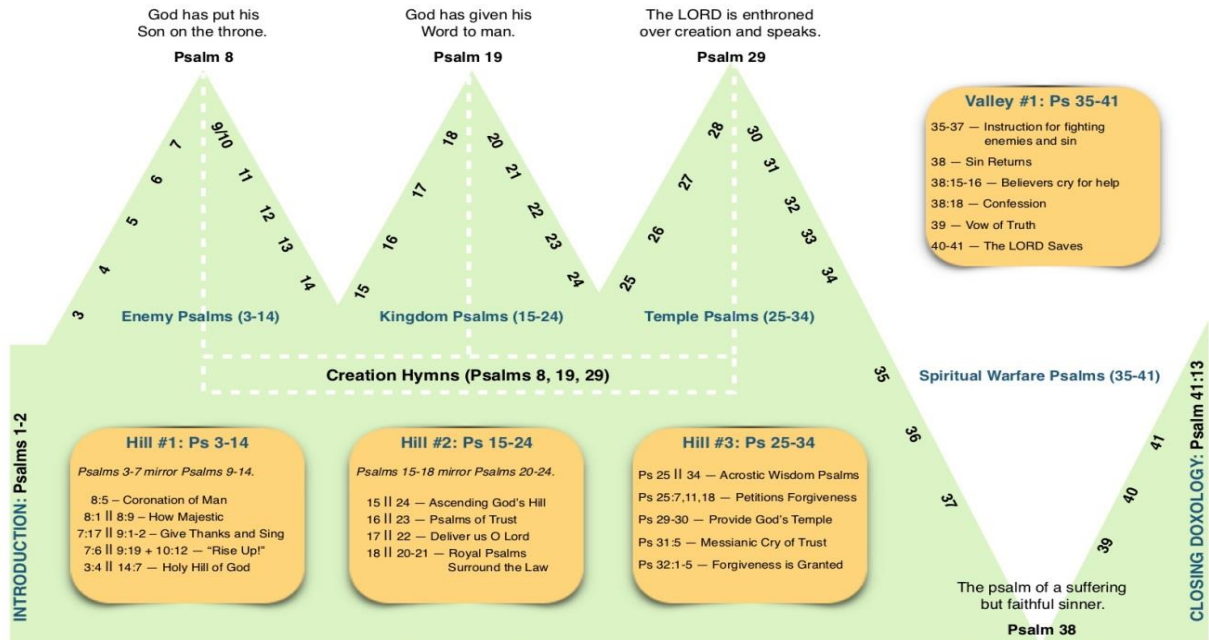
BOOK 5

107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128
129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150

VISUALTHEOLOGY

Book 1: Psalms 1-41

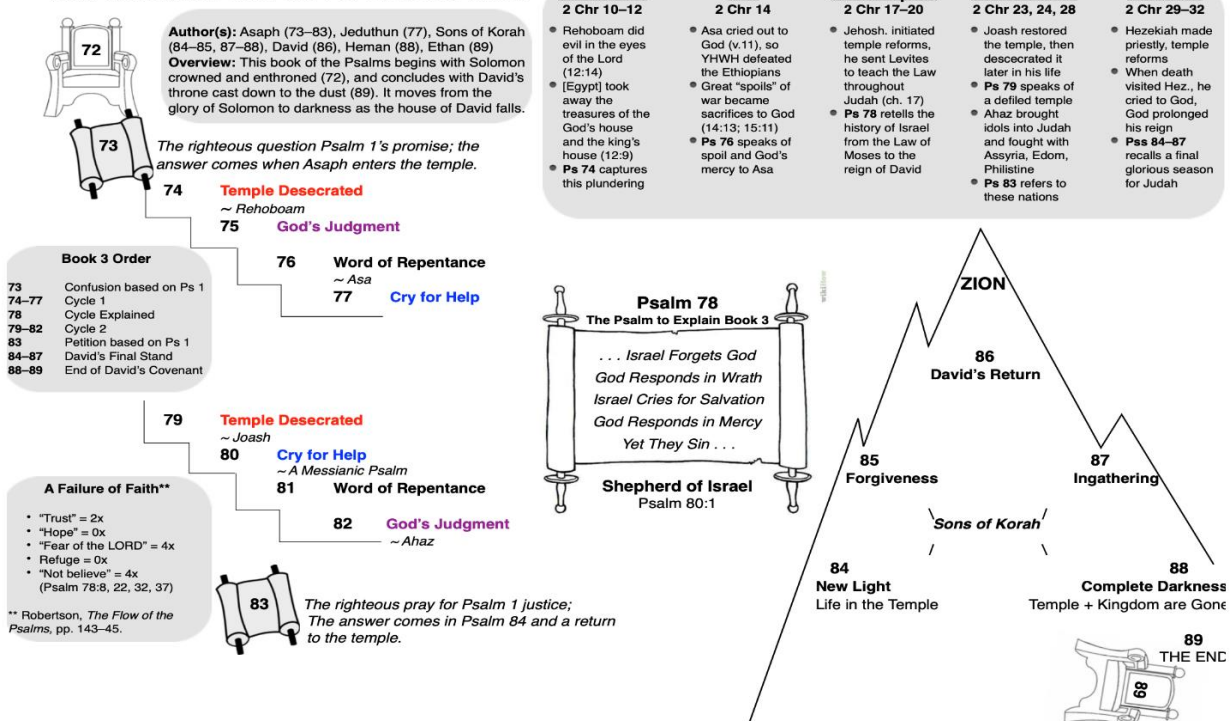
Yahweh will save David and establish his throne in Zion.

Book 1: Psalms 1-41**Author:** David**Overview:** Passing through great affliction and enemy opposition, David is exalted as God's King. He seeks refuge in God and becomes God's vice-regent, reigning from Zion.

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Book 3: Psalms 73-89

From Exaltation to Exile: The Fall of David's Throne



A Psalm of Encouragement

Psalm 46

The emphasis on this psalm is on the presence of the Lord with His people and focuses on the Lord and what He is to His people when we trust Him in the changes and difficulties of Life.

This psalm contains three essential truths about God. It demonstrates His dependability in:

Give a little background: Hezekiah was king over Judah. Israel had fallen to the Assyrian earlier. Sennacherib was now king of Assyria. Was invading Jerusalem. Hezekiah tried to deal with Sennacherib. Tribute of silver and gold from temple. Sennacherib took money but sent an army against Jerusalem anyway. Hezekiah sent for Isaiah and put on sackcloth and ashes. Prayed to be delivered. God heard God delivered. At night the angel of the Lord came and smote the Assyrians 185,000. In the midst of whatever you're feeling today, God desires to be our refuge, our strength and our help.

God is our refuge even when what seems permanent is demolished. When the world crashes around us. God is still there protecting us.

Our very-present help = it literally means that He has proved Himself in the past to be such a help therefore we can trust Him in the present.

If God is our refuge and strength we do not have anything to worry about this morning.

We have only one source of security - God. When the economy collapses, wars break out, natural disasters destroy our homes, government fails, health deteriorates, our friends betray us, God IS THE ONLY PLACE WE CAN FIND PEACE AND SECURITY. Our world with all its advances in edu. Tech. science is no safer today than it was a 1000 yrs ago. If not more so.

II. God's Presence 4-7

The city of God - Jerusalem

God is in the midst of her - God is with His people. It is from the root word for Immanuel which means God with us.

And that right early - one translation "God will help her at the break of day" - meaning just in time / at the right moment.

Rage - same word for roar in verse 3

The LORD of host - The Lord Almighty = the host refer to all the armies of heaven. Ready to do His work.

Refuge - a different word than in verse 1 = a stronghold, a high tower or fortress. Figuratively of God being a strong fortress for His people.

As a nation and as a church we are called to come (run or pursue) in order to see (to gaze or contemplate) what God is doing and has done.

Verse 9: The Assyrian empire was at that time the mightiest nation on the globe. It had already overrun many of the smaller countries with hope of ruling the world. But God had other plans.

1. He is able to stop wars with His word.
2. A broken bow is of no use
3. A spear that is shattered is no longer of any use.
4. Burned out chariots cannot function

In His position as sovereign king, GOD IS IN CHARGE

Verse 10: Philippians 2:20-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus Christ is God and Lord of history.

1. Nothing has happened outside of His plan.
2. Nothing ever leaves him bewildered or astonished or scratching His head
3. Nothing ever catches Him by surprise.
4. Although there is tragedy, war, mountains falling into the sea those who know Christ have nothing to fear.

Life is way too unpredictable and too brief to live in w/o God at the center. We count our lives in years, BUT God tells us to number our days. (90:12)

What to we need to do.

1. get right with God
2. Be ready for His return
3. Tell others about Jesus
4. Its time for the church to be the church.
5. Love people who are different than us.

I. God's Protection 1-3

Background: 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 36-37

In verse 1 we find that God is:

1. **Our refuge** - a shelter/a rock of safety=literally meaning to flee as in running to a shelter for protection.
2. **Our Strength** - implies that we can rely on His might when we feel weak and defenseless.
3. **Our very-present help** - a help often found = it has been frequently tried and proved to be ever near.

Verse 2 & 3 Verse 2 & 3 are true only if verse 1 is true. The psalmist is imagining the worst possibly calamity that hit his people. (Earthquakes, erupting volcanoes and sudden changes to the landscape)

Roar - to be in great commotion = out of control

Give a little background: Jerusalem was one of the few cities that was not built by the banks of a river. Babylon - Euphrates Egypt - Nile Rome - Tiber.

Hezekiah wisely had built an underground water system that connected the Spring of Gihon in Kidron with the Pool of Siloam within the city walls.

The psalmist realized that God was their river of Life. (John 7:37-39) *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

Isa. In chp 8 spoke of the Assyrian invasion as an overflowing river, but reminded the Jews that their God was like a quiet river and would bring peace. Streams are not rapid but gentle, like those of Siloam that the psalmist knew well

This river can also be compared to God's Word and ordinances and the promises are the streams that make His saints glad in a cloudy and dark days.

Joyful is the symbol of an endless stream of God's blessings.

No matter what the circumstances, we may drink at the river of His joy and blessing and find the peace and strength we need.

To hear God we must be listening. 1 Kings 13:11-13

In verse 7 as in verse 1 God is depicted not only as powerful but our fortress.

III. God's Position 8-11

Come - Means to run or pursue in order to "see"

Behold - to see = refers to gazing, contemplating or perceiving.

In His position as sovereign ruler He can:

1. Make wars to end on the earth
2. Breaks the bow
3. Shatter the spears
4. Burn the chariots

Be still - the word means to 'take your hand off' - relax

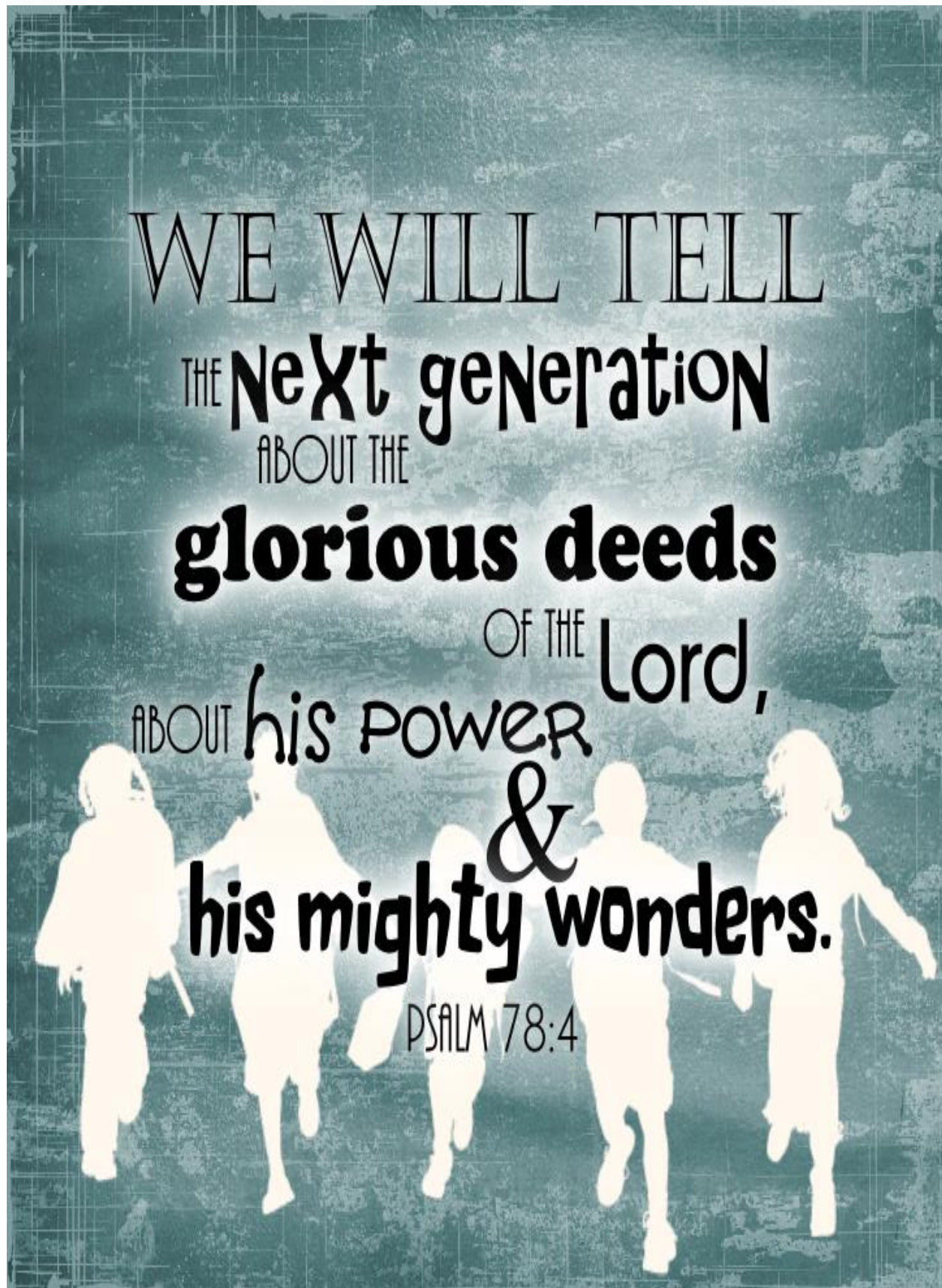
Know - to learn by experience.

This is really a rebuke. We are to cease our striving and working in our own self effort and submit ourselves to the Lord.

The LORD of host of host is with us. He is the God of the individual.

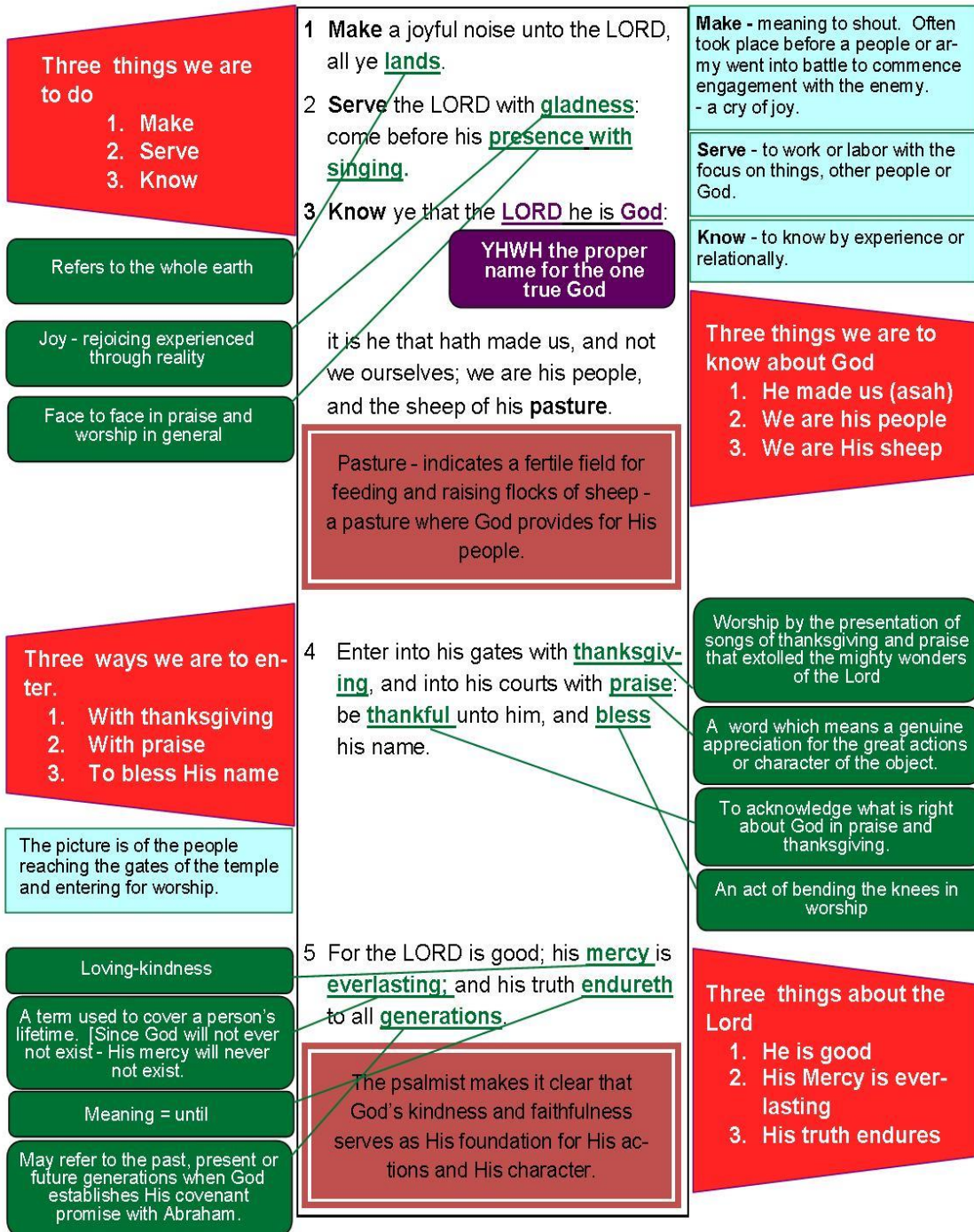
When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor over 60 years ago, there was a feeling of exhilaration among our enemies. But one man knew better. Japanese Adm. Yamamoto knew that rather than victory, Japan had instead sowed the seeds for its final defeat. He said, "We have awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve."

My prayer is that the sleeping giant called the church wake up and resolve to exalt God and be the church that God intends.

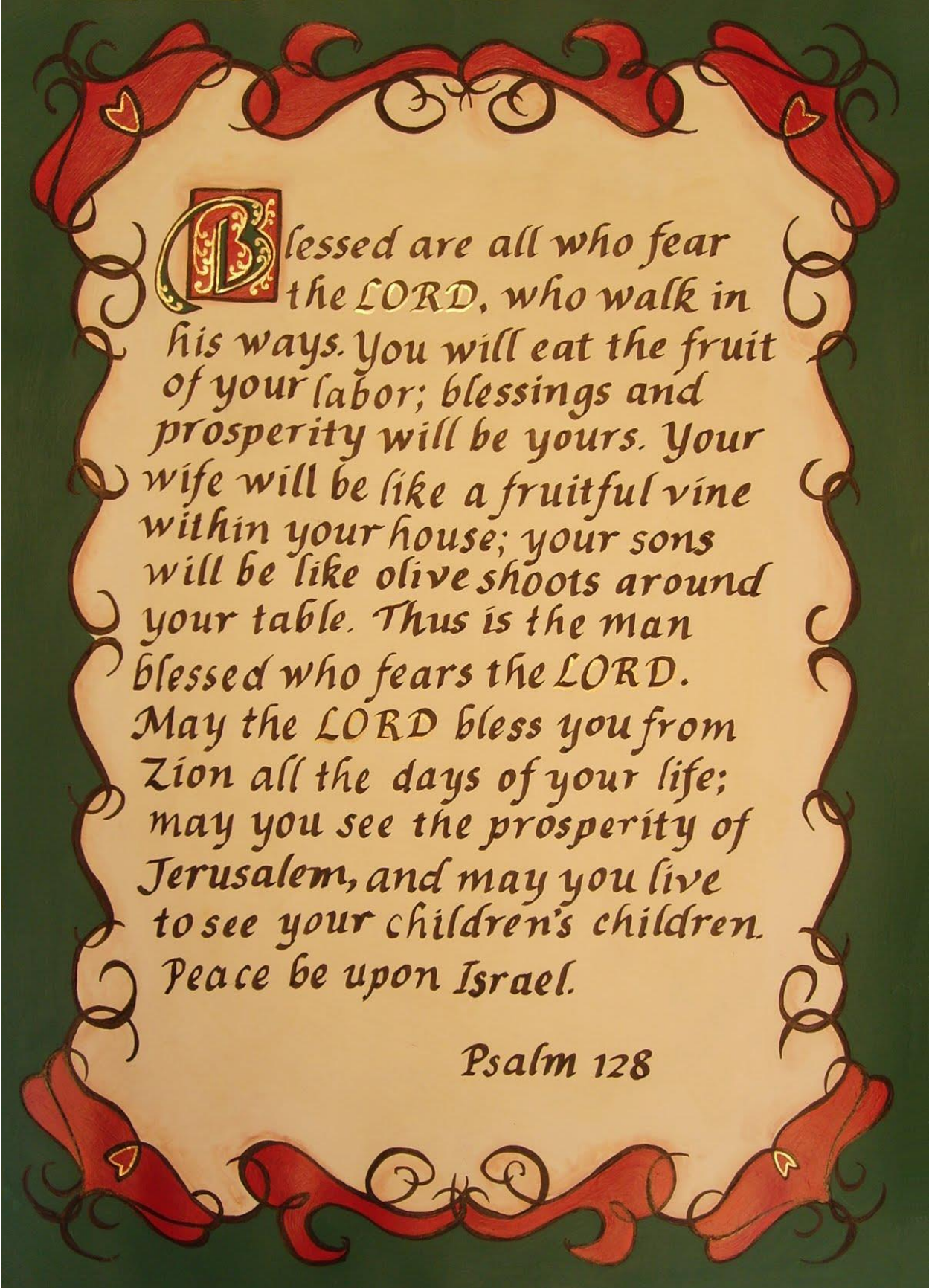


A Psalm of Praise

Psalm 100







Blessed are all who fear
the LORD, who walk in
his ways. You will eat the fruit
of your labor; blessings and
prosperity will be yours. Your
wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house; your sons
will be like olive shoots around
your table. Thus is the man
blessed who fears the LORD.
May the LORD bless you from
Zion all the days of your life;
may you see the prosperity of
Jerusalem, and may you live
to see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel.

Psalm 128

Book 5: Psalms 107–150

Psalms of Praise: The Son of David is David's Lord

Author(s): David (108–110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145), Solomon (127)

Overview: At last, a son of David will rule righteously on his father's throne. From the ingathering of the exiles, to the arrival of the Son, to the exaltation of his throne, and final spiritual battle, Jesus Christ will lead his people to infinite praise.

107	108–110	111–117	118–119	120–134	135–137	138–145	146–150
Ingathering Introduction	A New David Arrives	Egyptian Hallel 3 — 1 — 3	Crown & Covenant	Songs of Ascent 7 — 1 — 7	Worship & War	David's Final Victory	Infinite Praise

Ps 107

- The Ingathering of the exiles (107:1–3) answers the plea of Ps 106:47.
- Four kinds of exiles are delivered when God hears their cry; this redemption leads to jubilant praise.



Pss 108–110

- Three David Psalms
- "Right hand" permeates - 108:6; 109:6, 31; 110:1, 5
- Psalms 108, 109 speak of David's enemies.
- Psalm 110 introduces the son of David who is David's Lord.



Pss 111–117

- 3 Hallel Psalms (111–113)
- 1 Psalm about Egypt (114)
- 3 Hallel Psalms (115–117)
- Ps 111–17 respond to Ps 110; their praise is not ultimate but remains outside Zion. (116:19).



Pss 118–119

- 3rd King-Torah Pair (1–2, 18–19, 118–119)
- 118 – The priest-king who defeats enemies in Ps 110 now brings New Covenant.
- 119 – The New Covenant creates a delight in the Law of the Lord unlike anything before.



What's 'in the air' of Book 5?*

- Hesed** – "His steadfast love endures forever" (107:1; 118:1, 29; 26x in Ps 136)
- Ingathering** – Like the Prophets (Isa 11:10–12; 66:18–21; Jer 31:8–11; Ezek 20:34–41), Book 5 gathers God's people from the nations (107:3).
- A New David** – Receives the throne (110), enjoys a new temple (132), and defeats his enemies (108–10, 138–45).
- Hallelujah!** – "Praise" is prominent in Book 5 unlike other books, but there is also escalation. Psalms 111–17 praise YHWH incompletely from outside of Jerusalem (cf. 116:19); Psalms 146–50 praise YHWH endlessly (40x in 5 Pss) within Zion.

The Shaping in Book 5**

- Four Acrostic Psalms** – Psalms 111, 112, 119, 145 are all acrostic.
- Psalm 108** is a combination of Psalms 57 and 60, only 108 omits all the struggles David faced with his enemies.
- Psalm 144** is a collection of previous Psalms.
vv. 1–2 = 18:34 v. 7 = 40:1–2 v. 15 = 33:11
v. 3 = 8:4 v. 9 = 96:1
vv. 5–6 = 104:32 v. 12 = 128
- Psalm 145** – the last David Psalm is his only psalm of praise; the placement is intentional.

** cf. O. P. Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms*, pp. 183–237.

Temple

127 – The Lord has built his house (=temple).

126 – The return to Zion is like a dream come true.

125 – Security is found in Zion

124 – Thanksgiving

123 – Trust in God

122 – Entering Jerusalem

Exile

121 – Help for the journey

120 – Sojourning outside Israel

Exaltation 134 – Final Blessing

133 – North & South Unite

132 – God established David's house.

131 – Israel is contented in the Lord.

130 – Forgiveness is granted to God's people.

129 – YHWH cut off the enemies of Zion.

128 – Blessings come to the covenant keeper.



Pss 146–150

- Every psalm begins and ends with 'Praise the Lord!'; "praise" is called for over 40x.
- All creation is reconciled to God; the Maker is now enthroned in Zion.
- The laments of Books 1–2 have been replaced by infinite praise.



Pss 138–145

- The final 8 Psalms of David. Ps 145 is David's only praise psalm.
- In them, the presence of enemies returns (e.g., 138:7; 139:19–22; 140:9–11; 141:8–10; 143:9; 145:20) and warfare must again take place.
- David's throne is finally established bringing infinite praise.



The Songs of Ascent (Pss 120–134)

- Centers on the Lord's Temple – Solomon's Psalm is central.
- The name of the LORD (YHWH) is perfectly distributed — 24x (1st 7 songs); 24x (2nd 7 songs).
- On both sides of Solomon's psalm (127) are two psalms of David (122, 124 || 131, 133).
- Elements of the Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24–26) are distributed throughout.
- Fifteen songs may correspond to fifteen steps in Temple (*m. Suk. 5.4; t. Suk. 4.7–9*).
- The ascension corresponds to the entrance of God's people into God's place

Pss 135–137

- Another abbreviated round of praise (135), thanksgiving (136)
- In response the establishment of David's house (132) and access to God's presence, Pss 135–36 worship YHWH.
- Worship is followed by warfare, as Ps 137 remembers the pain of exile.



DAVE MILLER, Ph.D.

D BIBLE STORIES OLD TESTAMENT

From Issue: Discovery 7/1/2017

Psalms is the songbook of the Jewish nation. It is a collection of 150 songs, laments (mournings), and praises by several different inspired men, including David, Solomon, Asaph, and the sons of Korah. Most of these psalms were written around the 10th century B.C., during the lifetimes of David and Solomon.

The Psalms are one of five books in the Old Testament known as wisdom literature and written in the form of Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry has a certain rhythm (of words and tones) and parallelism—not with accented syllables or rhyme, as in Western poetry. **Parallelism** is its major feature. Lines may parallel each other with words that mean the same thing, with words that are opposite, or with words that have a similar pattern.

By design, a Psalm may be sung or read. Some are written from the perspective of the individual, while others are written to speak for the community as a whole. . .

REPETITION VERSUS PARALLELISM

Repetition a rhetorical device that involves the repetition of the same word, phrase or sentence.

Repetition refers to the repetition of words, phrases, or clauses.

Repetition focuses more on the meaning.

Repetition can be categorized into different groups.

Parallelism is a literary device that juxtaposes two or more similar syntactic constructions.

Parallelism refers to the repetition of the structure.

Parallelism focuses more on the structure.

Parallelism can be created using different types of repetition.

TYPES OF PARALLELISM IN HEBREW POETRY

1. Synonymous Parallelism

The second line repeats the first line.

2. Antithetical Parallelism

The second line contrasts with the first line.

3. Synthetic Parallelism

The second line adds to the first line.

4. Climactic Parallelism

The successive lines build to a climax.

5. Emblematic Parallelism

The figure of speech is explained in the second line.

6. Alternate Parallelism

The 3rd line repeats the 1st and the 2nd the 4th - ABAB.

7. Chiastic Parallelism

The 1st and 2nd lines are reversed in 3rd and 4th - ABBA.

PSALMS

PARALLELISM (RHYTHMS)

- Psalms (Hebrew Poetry) also not exception
- Rhythms in Psalms are called "Parallelism"
(The meaning of the first line repeated, balanced or explained in the second line)

- **1. SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM**

(Using another word meaning is repeated)

Example: Ps.103: 7

He made known his ways unto Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel

- **2. SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM**

(Meaning is elaborated in the second line)

The Psalms

Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry

- Synonymous parallelism (Psalm 24:2; 15:1)
- Antithetical parallelism (Psalm 1:6)
- Synthetic parallelism (Psalm 119:11; 1:3)
- Progressive parallelism (Psalm 1:1; 29:1)
- Introverted parallelism (Psalm 91:14)

Central Theme:

Despite the variety of subject matter and the difficulty in pinpointing a central theme for the book of Psalms, we must be impressed with the fact that God is worthy to be praised and adored. It is only natural for the child of God to frequently express heartfelt worship to Him in all circumstances throughout life.

Outline of Psalms

Since this book is a collection of diverse psalms written by various writers, the book as a whole contains no unifying thought structure or theme (beyond the idea of praise or wisdom). However, the book shows various organizational features. The book can be divided into five books:

Book I (1-41)

Book II (42-72)

Book III (73-89)

Book IV (90-106)

Book V (107-150)

The Psalms can also be evaluated according to content categories, such as thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 30), expressions of trust in God (Psalm 4), wisdom (Psalm 37), lamenting (Psalm 3), and others.

The Psalms may also be classified according to general themes, such as Messianic (Psalm 2), Creation (Psalm 8), Exodus (Psalm 78), Repentance/forgiveness (Psalm 6), Victory (Psalm 18), as well as others.

The Theology of the Psalms by Wayne Jackson

The Bible is characterized by theological unity; accordingly, one isn't surprised to learn that the great truths which burst into full bloom in the New Testament are found in germ form in the Old Testament.

The Psalms contribute significantly to this concept. For example, the nature of God is graphically set forth in the Psalms. He's eternal (90:2), omnipresent (139:7-12), powerful and wise (147:5), immutable (33:11), holy (47:8), and just (89:14); therefore, he is worthy to be praised (18:3).

The Psalms affirm that Jehovah is the creator of the universe (8:3; 19:1), and maker and preserver of man (139:14; 36:6). These poems underscore the fact that man has introduced sin into this world and that horrible consequences have followed in its wake, including the prospect of divine judgment (58:1-11). But God is represented as a gracious and merciful redeemer (51:1-2; 78:38-39; 86:15), who is willing to pardon all those who seek his forgiveness through obedience (81:13; 103:17-18).

Some religious materialists (i.e., those who argue that the wicked cease to exist at death) allege that a basis for their doctrine is to be found in the Psalms, but that assertion is baseless. As A. F. Kirkpatrick noted: "Death is never regarded in the O. T. as annihilation or the end of personal existence." In death, though man's association with this earth is cut off, and though the hope of the future is dimly viewed, nevertheless, the righteous soul will be redeemed from the power of Sheol (49:15), and received into glory (73:24; cf. 16:11; 17:15).

The sacred poetry of the religions of ancient paganism has faded in the dust of oblivion. Scarcely anyone at all can quote a line of it. And yet **the Psalms are as fresh as if written yesterday. How can this be? There is but one explanation: they were invigorated by the Spirit of the living God. Let us bathe our souls in this spring of divine truth.**

Messianic Prophecies of the Psalmist

"... that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Luke 24:44

Psalm Reference	New Testament Reference	Prophecy
Psalm 16:1	Acts 2:27-31; 13:37	Would be resurrected
Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46	"My God, my God, why havet You forsaken me"
Psalm 22:7-8	Matthew 27:43	Would be laughed at and scorned
Psalm 22:16	John 20:20-25	Hands and feet would be pierced
Psalm 22:18	Matthew 27:35	Lots would be cast for His garments
Psalm 41:9	John 13:18-27	Would be betrayed by a friend
Psalm 68:16-18	Matthew 27:34, 38	Gall and vinegar would be offered Him
Psalm 72:7-8, 11	Hebrews 2:8-9	His glorious reign
Psalm 78:2	Matthew 13:34	He would speak in parables
Psalm 110:1, 4	Matthew 22:42-44	Would be priest and king
Psalm 118:22	Matthew 21:42 Acts 4:1	Would be rejected by men



Barnes' Bible Charts

Psalms of Comfort

Day 1 – Psalm 73:28 – Draw near, Trust Him & Declare His works
 Day 2 – Psalm 86:7 – When in Trouble, call out & He will answer
 Day 3 – Psalm 89:15 – We are blessed to know Him
 Day 4 – Psalm 107:28 – He will deliver us from our distress
 Day 5 – Psalm 107:9 – He satisfies our soul
 Day 6 – Psalm 105:43 – He brings joy and gladness
 Day 7 – Psalm 103:20 – God will bless you for doing His work
 Day 8 – Psalm 103:12 – Our sins are As far as east is from west
 Day 9 – Psalm 102:27 – He is the same and never changes or ends
 Day 10 – Psalm 91:5-7 – No matter what we face, He is with us
 Day 11 – Psalm 138:7 – Even in the midst of trouble, He preserves us
 Day 12 – Psalm 100:2 – Serve with Gladness & singing
 Day 13 – Psalm 72:12 – We aren't the only ones to say Hurry God
 Day 14 – Psalm 118:1 – His love and mercy are forever
 Day 15 – Psalm 116:5 – He is merciful

Day 16 – Psalm 111:10 – Wisdom starts with God
 Day 17 – Psalm 118:24 – Today matters
 Day 19 – Psalm 119:105 – He will light our way
 Day 20 – Psalm 121:2 – The One who made the heavens & earth – HELPS us
 Day 21 – Psalm 108:4 – His love is greater than the heavens
 Day 22 – Psalm 121:7-8 – The Lord will keep you
 Day 23 – Psalm 128:1 – A respectful fear of the Lord brings blessings
 Day 24 – Psalm 130:5 – While waiting on the Lord, we can wait in HOPE
 Day 25 – Psalm 136:1-4 – HIS love endures forever
 Day 26 – Psalm 139:14 – We are wonderfully made
 Day 27 – Psalm 145:8-9 – The Lord is Gracious, merciful, slow to anger & steadfast in love
 Day 28 – Psalm 145:18 – God is just a whisper away
 Day 29 – Psalm 146:5 – The same God of Jacob is our help and hope
 Day 30 – Psalm 46:5 – God is in the Middle of it all



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A Study of Messianic Psalms

By Jason Jackson, Christian Courier Magazine

The Psalms have much to say about Jesus the Messiah. Jason Jackson details the characteristics of these moving prophecies.

Shortly before his ascension, Christ reminded the disciples concerning some of the things he had taught them. He brought to their attention the truth that “all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

From Genesis to Malachi, one can see the progressive message of the coming Savior, the Anointed, the Seed of David, the suffering Servant, the Prince of peace. As the remarks of the Lord reveal, the book of Psalms also previewed his coming and his work.

What are the criteria for classifying a psalm as Messianic? First, Jesus said the Psalms spoke of him (Luke 24:44). Second, specific psalms are designated as Messianic by inspired New Testament writers.

The Nature of Christ

The nature of Christ is one area the Messianic psalms preview. The name for deity, God, is applied to Christ by none less than the Father himself. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9).

Jesus is also called the Son of God. “Thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee” (Psa. 2:7; Heb. 1:5). As one who possesses the nature of God, Jesus is worthy of worship. “And let all the angels worship him” (Psa. 97:7; Heb. 1:6).

Likewise, the prophetic Scriptures recognize his humanity. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels? But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus?” (Heb. 1:6-7,9; cf. Psa. 8:4-6).

Christ’s Work

In addition to the nature of Christ, the Psalms also anticipated his work. “I come to do thy will, O God” (Psa. 40:7-8; Heb. 10:7). The roles of both king and priest would be an integral part in his work. “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom” (Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9). David wrote, “Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa. 110:1-2; Mt. 22:43-44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13; 10:12-13).

Jesus Christ's atoning work as priest is observed in the following prophetic declaration: "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:17,21).

The Rejection of Christ

As the Gospel records indicate, Jesus Christ was rejected by the Jews. This was no surprise to the Father, the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. The fact of his rejection was noted in Messianic psalms centuries before (as well as other passages like Isaiah 53). In opposition to the popular theory of dispensational premillennialism, which views the Jews' rejection as an unexpected ordeal, the Scriptures had declared: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner" (Psa. 118:22-23; Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10-11; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:7).

In connection with this foreknown rejection, the Psalms displayed an awareness of the Lord's betrayal. Christ quoted from Psalm 41:9, saying: "I speak not of all of you: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me" (Jn. 13:18).

Interestingly, in this quotation Christ omits the phrase, "in whom I trusted" (vs. 9). The situation of the Psalmist typified the Lord's own circumstances; however, while the picture of a friend's betrayal was generally appropriate, the one element which the Lord excludes was not characteristic of his relationship with Judas. He knew in advance that Judas would betray him; **it could not be said that the Lord "trusted" him** (Jn. 6:64).

Psalm 41:9 illustrates how the experiences faced by the psalmists were often **types** of the kinds of ordeals that Christ would experience. **A type involves similarities, not an exact duplication.**

Psalm 69 contains a great deal of Messianic material, but the entire Psalm is not Messianic. In view of the flawless character of Jesus, verse five was obviously applicable only to the inspired composer, for he said: "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." The correct interpretation of Messianic psalms is known by the light of the New Testament and its usage of them.

Jesus' Suffering and Death

No passage in all of the Bible predicts the suffering and death of Christ in the way Psalm 22 does. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psa. 22:1; Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). The antagonism and malice of the crowd is observed. "Commit yourself unto Jehovah, let him deliver you" (Psa. 22:8; Mt. 27:43). Details relating to his death were previewed. "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psa. 22:16; Jn. 20:25). "They part my garments among them" (Psa. 22:18; Mt. 27:35; Lk. 23:34; Jn. 19:24).

The Resurrection

One of the most remarkable features of the Messianic psalms is found in the prophecy of Jesus' resurrection.

“I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall dwell in safety. For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption” (Psa. 16:8-10).

This Psalm does not portray some experience of the writer which finds its fulfillment in the life of Christ. To the contrary, it is a prediction by the prophet David which has nothing to do with his own death.

The New Testament commentary of the inspired Peter is this:

*“Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch **David**, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore **a prophet**, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne, he foreseeing this **spake of the resurrection of the Christ**, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:29-31).*

Anthony Ash comments on Psalm 16:10 in the following way:

*“In Acts 2, Peter, quoting from the LXX, applies this verse to Jesus’ resurrection. **Pit** has the same consonants as the word for ‘corruption’ (the LXX translation), which lends itself to Peter’s argument (see also Acts 13:35). However, Peter may have been guided by God in applying this text, **the psalmist is not teaching resurrection here**” (75; emphasis added).*

The problem is: Peter’s language does not lend itself to Ash’s argument. Ash implies that even though the psalmist was not teaching the resurrection, God could have guided Peter to say that the psalmist was speaking of the resurrection.

Peter, by the Spirit of truth (Jn. 16:13), affirmed that David was a prophet, and that he foresaw, and spake of the resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2:30-31). It is incredible that one should claim: “The psalmist is not teaching resurrection here.” Peter does not suggest that the language of Psalm 16:10 is simply a fitting way to speak of Christ’s resurrection. He argues, in the clearest terms possible, that David was prophesying about the resurrection of Jesus when he wrote Psalm 16:10. Paul makes the same point in Acts 13:35-37.

Ash’s statements contradict the inspired commentary of the New Testament. His thoughts must be rejected. Interestingly, the gentleman says elsewhere: “If the New Testament use of the Old Testament does not suit our conditions of understanding, it is we who must change” (29). We might say to him this parable, “Physician, heal thyself.”

Conclusion

The book of Psalms provides a thrilling study of Christ. His nature, work, rejection, betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection are all previewed there.

“Now therefore be wise, O ye kings: Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way. For his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him” (Psa. 2:10-12)

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

What Goes In Comes Out

In the early days of computers, people said, “Garbage in, garbage out.” That was a way of explaining that the computer only worked with the data put into it. If we wanted different results, we needed to put in different information. Most people understand that concept, but when it comes to their minds, many don’t seem to get it.

If you are going to win the battle of the mind, where you focus your attention is crucial. The more you meditate on God’s Word, the stronger you’ll become and the more easily you’ll win the victories you desire.

There is a difference between meditating on the Bible and reading the Bible. Some people like to think that whenever they read God’s Word, they’re absorbing the deep things of God, but often they have little idea of what they’ve read when they finish. Those who meditate on God’s Word are those who think—and think seriously—about what they’re reading. They’re saying, in effect, “God, speak to me. As I ponder Your Word, reveal its depth to me.”

The psalmist made it quite clear that meditating on and thinking about God’s Word bring results. “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law [His precepts and teachings] he [habitually] meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted [and fed] by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season; its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers [and comes to maturity]” (Ps. 1:2–3).

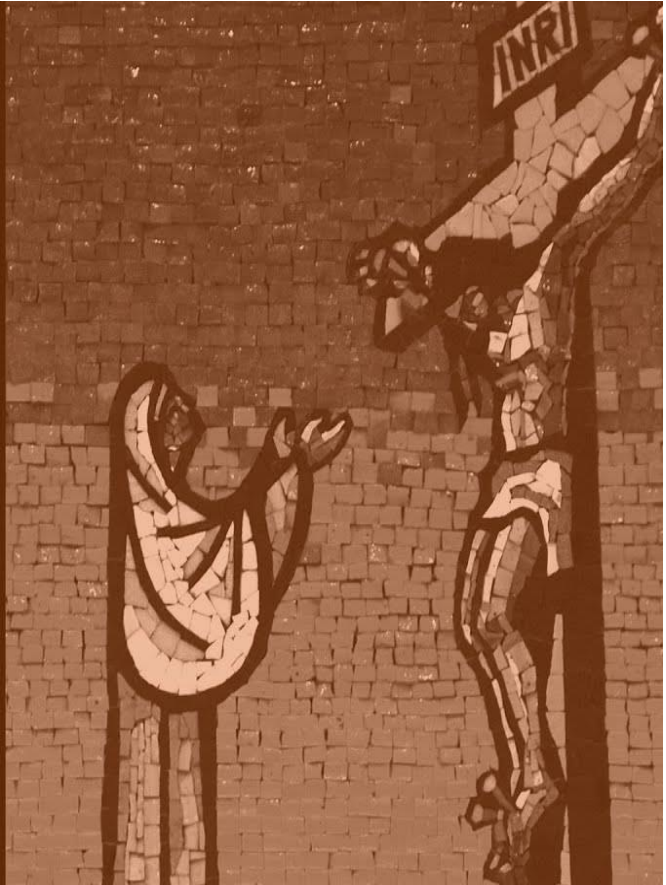
As you ponder who God is and what He’s saying to you, you’ll grow. It’s really that simple. If you read about and allow your mind to focus on God’s love and power, that’s what will operate in you. If you think about loving others, that is what you will end up doing, but if you think only about how others have hurt you and what people should be doing for you, then you will be self-focused.

Sadly, some Christians don’t put much effort into studying the Word. They hear others teach and preach, and they may listen to online sermons and read the Bible occasionally, but they’re not dedicated to making God’s Word a major and regular part of their lives.

Be careful what you think about. The more you think about Jesus Christ and the principles He taught, the more you become like Jesus and the stronger you grow. And as you grow, you’re winning the battles in your mind.³

³ Meyer, J. (2017). [*Battlefield of the Mind Psalms and Proverbs*](#). New York City, NY: FaithWords.

The Seven Penitential Psalms



PENITENTIAL PSALM

Themes of a Penitential Psalm

- ✕ Confession & Divine Compassion
(Verse 5)
- ✕ Mortality & Salvation
(Verse 6 & 7)
- ✕ Repentance & Forgiveness
(Verses 1 & 2)

I will ponder
the way that
is blameless.

Oh when will
you come to me?

I will walk
with integrity
of heart within
my house;

-Psalm 101:2

The Penitential Psalms

(Psalms 6, 37, 38, 51, 143)

by Ralph Walker

Reading the **diary entries of David** which describe his wrestlings with sin, I discovered two things. First, I sensed an attitude toward sin unfamiliar to me. Second, I saw a pattern of thinking emerge from the various texts (Psalms 6, 37, 38, 51, 143).

David's attitude toward sin


Ironically, it's as a sinner that I clearly see David as "a man after God's own heart." If God's heart is pure holiness, then that same holiness drives David. When in his iniquity, **David's revulsion at what he's become stands out.** No excuses, justifications or incriminations—just an absolute overwhelming by sorrow and guilt. **David knows his rebellion has moved him from God.** He admits he is perishing and can do nothing personally to reverse his peril. Don't talk to David of a "little wickedness"—that concept is as foreign to him as it is to his God! If a true understanding of holiness and sin defines the divine heart, I see David as resting in the inner chambers of God's.

The pattern of penitence

While every step I'll discuss here isn't found in every psalm examined, I see enough repetition to call this a pattern.

1. Confession. Confession means "to speak the same thing." In confessing sin, we say about it the same thing God says about it. King David is emphatic in his confessions—**his sin is his death.** He refers to his wasting away physically, the absence of peace of mind, the proliferation of external enemies and the total isolation from God's presence. He has no illusions that God has maybe failed to see his disobedience, or that He may grade him on the curve and pass him anyway.

Not only does David confess his sinfulness, but he confesses two facts about God. First, he admits God is righteous. Though David is suffering tremendously at the hands of this God, he acknowledges it is deserved. God, as Judge and Jailor is just, and David is not one unfairly jailed, as he sees it. As the **psalmist pleads for release from punishment and pain, it's on the basis of God's fairness; he has paid the price and learned his lessons and begs for acquittal.** He even uses God's righteousness as the leverage he needs to regain his favor.



For with the
Lord there is
steadfast love,
and with him is
great power to
redeem.

-Psalm 130:7

Second, David confesses God's lovingkindness. It seems odd that a man being so crushed by God would be praising His love. **Even though parents often speak of love and punishment in the same breath ("Because I love you, I'm spanking you"), no child under the infliction would associate these words together. David does. David knows God loves him. This is the only ray of hope in all his darkness.** As Psalm 130:3 puts it, if God isn't loving, who can stand?

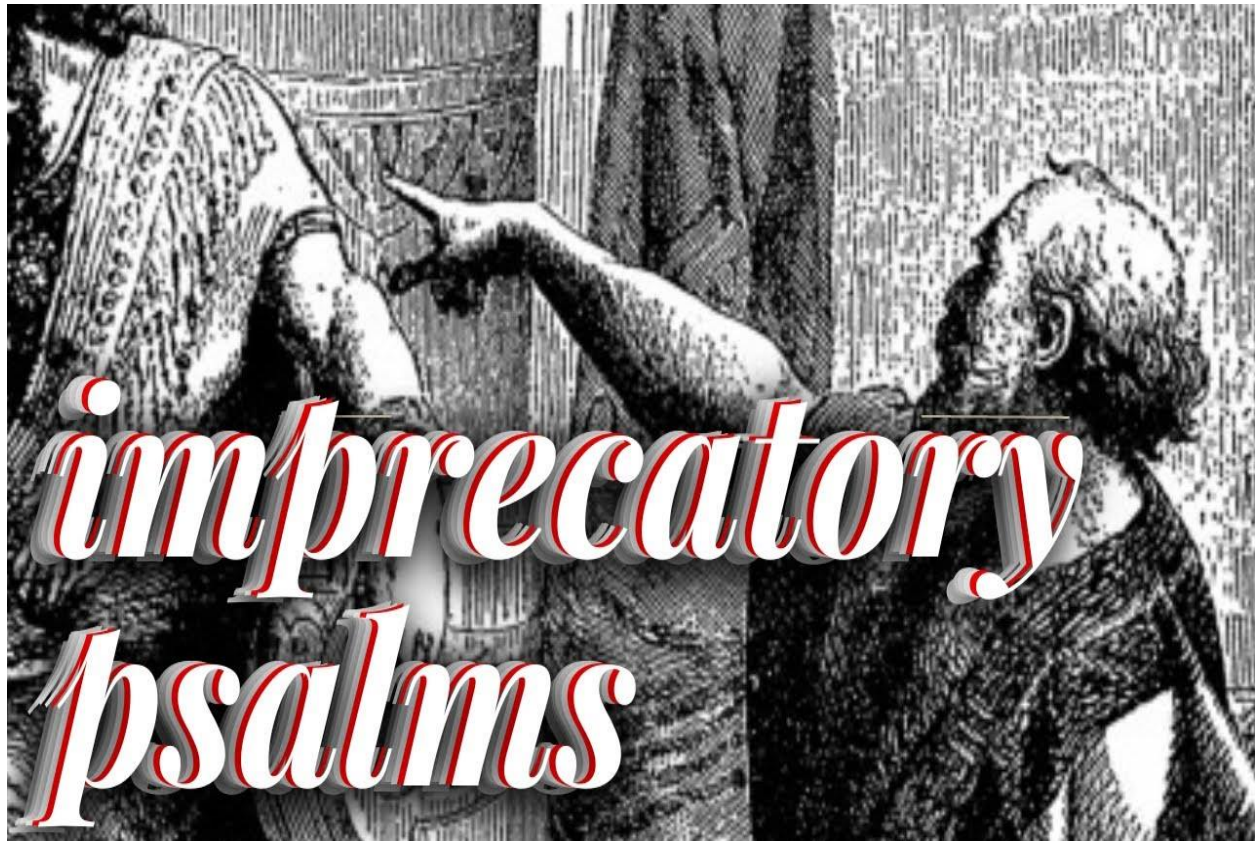
2. Petition. After confessing his sin, God's righteousness, and God's love, David makes the following requests:

"Cleanse me from sin." Obviously, if sin is what blocks him from God, he wants that removed. This desire only comes after he confesses clearly and sorrowfully what he has done wrong. Forgiveness isn't captured where it hasn't been pursued.

"Purify me for service." David wants to be God's servant again. In 51:13 he looks for the time when he can help others convert to his God. If God ever needs motivation to release David from his punishment, this is it. The penitent wants to go back to work for his Master.

David also desires purity which will enable him to effectively worship (51:14–15). I am amazed at saints who will publicly honor Jehovah for years and are then exposed in some long-standing sin. David respects and knows God too well to attempt that game. God doesn't play charades!

These penitential psalms show me more about my own sin than I sometimes want to know. But more, they reveal a God worth giving up everything this old world has to offer, just to bask in His love.
Selah.



What do we mean by 'imprecatory'?

Imprecatory – Relating to the language of curses or the act of uttering curses on enemies.

[The Lexham Glossary of Theology]

Imprecatory, *adj.* - 1. Expressing or involving imprecation; invoking evil or divine vengeance; cursing, maledictory. *[Oxford English Dictionary]*

Imprecatory Psalms... are those that invoke judgment, calamity, or curses, upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God. *[Wikipedia]*

Imprecatory Psalms
are motivated by a
holy abhorrence of sin
and a zeal for God's
name, God's glory,
and God's kingdom.

Dr. Robert Fugate

Biblical Imprecations: Christians' Secret Weapon

[#kindlequotes](#)

PSALM 59:11

5 so that it does not hear the voice of charmers
or of the cunning enchanter.

6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths;
tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!


7 Let them vanish like water that runs away;
when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted.

8 Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime,
like the stillborn child who never sees the sun.

9 Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns,
whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away!¹

10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
surely there is a God who judges on earth."



Deliver Me from My Enemies

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT
DESTROY. A MIKTAM² OF DAVID, WHEN SAUL SENT
MEN TO WATCH HIS HOUSE IN ORDER TO KILL HIM.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me;
deliver me from those who work evil,
and save me from bloodthirsty men.

For behold, they lie in wait for my life;
fierce men stir up strife against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD,

The Imprecatory Psalms

(Various, See Below)

by David Holder

Sunday morning worship. Brother Smith will lead our first prayer (after two songs, of course!). We sing, “God is Love” and “Angry Words.” Brother Smith prays: “O Lord, there are wicked people in the world, and their wickedness sometimes insults, injures, and threatens the righteous. O God, smash their teeth in their mouths; break off their lion-fangs, O Lord. Destroy them in wrath, destroy them, that they may be no more. May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually. May they be blotted out of the book of the living, and may they not be recorded with the righteous. May burning coals fall upon them; may they be cast into the fire, into deep pits from which they cannot rise.”

After the congregation recovers, this is probably a good time for a lesson about “imprecatory psalms.” The worshipers might be shocked to know that brother Smith expressed sentiments taken directly from several psalms (58:6; 59:13; 69:23, 28; 109:9, 13; 140:10). The after-service subject of conversation on that day would obviously be the shocking language in brother Smith’s prayer, and whether he was right to pray this way about the wicked.

These imprecations or curses employ vehement and violent language against enemies and evildoers. Such expressions are prevalent in several Psalms (35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140) and in passing comments (5:10, 10:15, 17:13, 54:5, 55:9, 139:19, etc.). We are helped in understanding this blunt language by knowing about the categories of the righteous and the wicked that dominate the psalms, categories distinguished from the very first psalm: “How blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord ... he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water ... The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.”

The wicked, the evildoers, and the enemies are prominent throughout Psalms (see 10:1–10 and 36:1–4 for longer descriptions). They are evil, deceptive, proud, violent, cruel—and more and worse. They oppress, threaten, strike, pursue, and otherwise act maliciously against individuals, the nation, and God. The psalmists were obviously in the real world, **seeing with their own eyes & experiencing in their own lives the injustices, cruelty, and violence that people do to other human beings.** The psalmists were outraged and their souls were inflamed to the point of a righteous reaction to evil.

The congregation is also helped by recognizing that the psalmists generally are careful to take God's viewpoint in these matters: "Do I not hate those who hate Thee, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against Thee? I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies" (139:21–22). It is not only a personal affront that enrages the psalmists, but their understanding that such wickedness is an affront to God and to them in their seeking after God.

In addition, the Christians should realize that, as in the language of brother Smith's prayer, the language of most imprecatory psalms is directed to God. The psalmists call on God to activate appropriate curses in consequence of the wicked words or deeds. No doubt the psalmists personally bore the brunt of evil in many situations, but they were careful to leave the vengeance in the hand of God (Psalm 94:1–7). They were not shy to express their feelings of fear, hurt, and anger, but **neither did they take matters in their own hands.**

Christians must be persistent in praying for our enemies, refusing to take personal revenge, and returning good for evil (Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12:14, 17, 19–21). But brother Smith was right in praying as he did, provided it was not a prayer of personal animosity (1 Cor 16:22, 1 Timothy 1:20). We should be offended and outraged at the world's evil and evildoers. We dare not glibly minimize them or think it does not matter. There are some people and some actions that are so evil, so flagrantly anti-God-and-good that we must righteously react.

We pray that the wicked may know Jesus and His love; we pray that they will seek His forgiveness and righteousness. At the same time, we pray for justice and truth. We pray that evil is diminished and defeated (Revelation 6:12–17; 14:9–12; 16:4–7; 18:1–19:7), that every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 3:9–11).

The Creation Psalms

(Psalms 8, 33)

by Dan Petty

Psalm 33: Praising God as Creator and Sovereign

This triumphant hymn opens with a call to the Lord's saints to give Him praise for His word and work (verse 1–4). They are to use every mode of expression available, and to worship with jubilation (3). Such worship befits one whose work is portrayed by such moral terms as “upright”, “faithfulness”, “righteousness”, “justice”, and “lovingkindness” (4–5).

To know that everything that exists came into being *out of nothing* by God's command is to be confronted with pure creation & for that alone God deserves praise (Psalm 148:5; Hebrews 11:3). In figurative language the psalmist describes God's creative work making oceans, as effortlessly as one would fill a waterskin with water or store up a water supply in a “storehouse” (verse 7; Genesis 1:9–10). He simply “spoke, and it was done” (verse 9). Therefore, all inhabitants of earth should be filled with reverence and awe of His mighty power (8).

God is more to His creation than its Maker. He is also the sovereign King, overruling all the affairs of men. Peoples and nations and their counsel either serve God's immutable purposes, or they come to nought (verses 10–12). But He blesses the nation that serves Jehovah.

This truth is based upon the fact that God sees all human activity and, being the Creator of men, understands all human plans and motives (verses 13–15). Such a realization should remind us that, as God is our Maker, He also is the One who judges even “the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12–13).

Nothing can save a man or a nation, not even a “mighty army” or “great strength” (16–17), apart from God. But to those who fear God and trust in Him, “He is our help and our shield” (18–22), and we praise our Creator as a God of lovingkindness.

Psalm 8: What is Man?

“O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!” Thus, begins and ends Psalm 8, David's song of praise to Jehovah. This opening and closing statement is the burden of the psalm, and David sees the proof of God's majesty manifested in His creation of the universe and of man. It is a truth reflected upon in other psalms of David (19:1), by New Testament writers (Romans 1:20), and by many thoughtful and wise persons who have considered the heavens and the earth and the evidence of purpose, power, and wisdom reflected therein (Job 12:7–9; Jeremiah 5:21f).

The wisdom and power of God are manifested when one beholds the wonder of a newborn baby no less than when marveling at the vastness of space and the numberless stars (verse 1 & 2). This paradox is the message of the entire psalm. The first impression would suggest the puniness and relative insignificance of man in comparison to the heavens—the intricate artistic work of God’s “fingers” (3). “What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?” (4). The question is an expression of astonishment that Jehovah, the Creator of such splendor, would not simply ignore man, but would be mindful of him and attend to him.

Yet the question already points to its answer, for what other being in God’s entire creation has the insight even to ask such a question? Indeed, man stands not beneath the rest of creation, but above it. Fashioned in God’s image (Genesis 1:26), man was made “a little lower than God” and thus is the crowning glory of God’s great creation (5).

Man’s special status among all God’s creatures gives him a dignity unequalled by any other creature. God placed man in that position, and “crowned him with glory and honor” (5). The Creator also endowed man with the right of dominion over His creation (Gen. 1:26–28). Thus, man was entrusted with a stewardship, to “rule” over that which was placed in his care (6–8). At his best, mankind in this majestic position is represented in the New Testament as a type of Jesus, who in His death and resurrection, was “crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:9).

Man’s dominion over nature, however, wonderful as it is, always takes second place to his calling as a servant and worshipper of God. The proper fulfillment of man’s role of dominion can be realized only as he should recognize his total dependence upon the Creator (Acts 17:24f). Such a responsibility should not lead to pride, but to a humble acknowledgment of the glory of the Creator. “O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!” (verse 9).

The Pursuit of God Psalms

(Psalms 27, 42, 63)

by Rod Amonett

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So, my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1–2a, NASB). With a few simple words the Sons of Korah describe a scene from everyday life that helps us to understand the righteous man’s desperate yearning for God. In a circumstance similar, David besought the Lord: “O God, Thou art my God, I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, In a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1).

The “Pursuit of God Psalms” reflect the deepest and most urgent need which man can know. Once honest hearts have learned of God, the fulfillment of our physical and emotional needs will no longer be sufficient to make us content. Not even the close companionship of another individual will fill the great void we feel inside. God has indeed set eternity within our hearts and enlightened by the truth, men long with all of their being to “walk” with their Creator.

What is so marvelous is that God Himself desires and makes possible this communion. Paul declared to the Athenians that God has made us that we should “seek” Him (Acts 17:27), and David assured Solomon that the Lord will reward the diligent and honest searcher: “for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chronicles 28:9b). The psalmists were men that certainly knew God already. They had sought to serve Him faithfully, but in these psalms they find themselves pursued by enemies and feeling cut off from God’s blessings & association. There are two important points we can notice from these psalms:

1. It is in life’s darkest moments that we are reminded of our great need for God. In good times men may develop a deep faith in God and gratitude for His blessings, but it is in difficult times when such a faith becomes our much needed comfort and ally. Only when men are brought face-to-face with their frail and helpless nature do they become truly aware of God’s magnificent strength and the precious nature of His love for us.

Each of us face moments of trial or grief when there is no one we can really turn to but God. The psalmist lamented: “My tears have been my food day and night,” and “O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore, I remember Thee . . .” (Psalm 42:3a,6a). David cried, “Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation! For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the Lord will take me up” (Psalm 27:9–10). Again, David writes, “I meditate on Thee in the night watches, for Thou hast been my help” (Psalm 63:6b–7a).

Such cries for God's assistance are with confidence, knowing God cares for us and will act in our behalf: "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence" (Psalm 42:5).

2. Opportunities to worship with the Lord's people are important to our sense of communion with God. The writer asks, "When shall I come and appear before God?" and says: "These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping the festival" (Psalm 42:2b, 4). David longed for the time when he would "offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord" (Psalm 27:6b).

The psalmists regarded worship as a great privilege. They felt deeply deprived and frustrated when they were prevented from such blessed occasions. His reliance upon God for help and favor fueled his desire to bow before God and acknowledge His greatness.

Today we are no less desperate in our need for God's fellowship and help. We come "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3), aware His association is only for those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). With the psalmist we proclaim, "My soul clings to Thee; Thy right hand upholds me" & "My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:8, 5).

The Hallelujah Psalms

(Psalms 113–118)

by Melvin D. Curry

The two primary categories of the psalms are praise and lament, and the hallelujah psalms represent the purest form of the first group. Hallelujah is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase that means “praise the Lord [Yah].” In Psalms 146–150 each psalm begins and ends with this phrase, clearly marking the group out as hallelujah psalms. Psalm 115 fits this same pattern; however, the lines of demarcation in Psalms 114 and 118 do not include the expression “praise the Lord” & Psalms 115–117 place it at the end. In the Greek translation (LXX) of the Old Testament, the final “praise the Lord” (113:9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2) is moved to the beginning of each psalm that follows, making all but Psalm 115 begin with “hallelujah.” Consequently, with some sense of justification, the group is called “hallelujah psalms.”

We may read the psalms of praise, especially hallelujah psalms, with more understanding if we know some things to look for. First, a basic three-part pattern generally emerges: a call to praise, reasons why God should be praised, and further calls to praise. For example, notice how Psalm 117, the shortest psalm (chapter) in the Bible, fits this pattern. However, if the pattern, in part or in whole, is not obvious, there is no reason to classify a psalm as a psalm of praise. It is better, therefore, to call Psalm 114 an historical psalm and to classify Psalm 118 as a thanksgiving psalm.

Second, while reading psalms of praise, one notices two reasons for praising God: for who He is (description), and for what He does or has done (declaration). In the first category, He is “high above the nations, and his glory above the nations” (113:4). In the second category, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy from the dunghill; that he may set with the princes ... of his people” (113:7–8); “He makes the barren women to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children” (verse 9); He “turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters” (114:8); He “made heaven and earth ... earth hath he given to the children of men” (115:15–16); “out of my distress I called on Jehovah: Jehovah answered me and set me in a large place” (118:5); “Jehovah is my strength and my song; and He is become my salvation” (verse 14). Notice how the description of God and the declaration of what He has done provide the pivotal point of Psalm 113: “Who is like unto Jehovah our God, that has his throne on high?” (verse 5); “that stoops to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?” (verse 6).

Third, figurative language abounds in psalms of praise. The most obvious example of such in the group we are studying is personification, a figure in which inanimate things are given characteristics of living beings. “The sea saw it, and fled; the Jordan was driven back; the mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs” (Psalm 114:3–4).

Psalms 113–118 are “orphan” psalms; they have no designated author. Many psalms have headings that provide information about authorship, historical background, melody, function, etc., but these do not. Therefore, when there is no heading, one must depend on the context of a psalm to reveal such matters. To cite but one example, the historical background of Psalm 114 is the exodus: “When Israel went forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob out from a people of strange language; Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion” (verses 1–2).

Jewish tradition suggests that Psalms 113–118 were sung at Passover. Psalms 113–114 were sung before the passover meal; Psalms 115–118 afterward. Psalm 136, the Great Hallel, was sung at the climax of the feast. This practice may be that reflected in the action of Jesus and His disciples: “When they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives” (Matthew 26:30). Certainly, our practice of singing a song before the Lord’s Supper is commendable. Adding a song afterward would be even better. Perhaps six hallelujah songs wouldn’t be amiss.

The Degree or Ascent Psalms

(Psalms 120–134)

by David Posey

Psalms 120–134 make up a little booklet, a Psalter within the Psalter, that could be entitled, “There’s no place like home.” But home is where the heart is, and the heart of true worshippers is always in the home of the heavenly Father. Each of these psalms are similarly subtitled as a “Song of Ascents” or “Song of Degrees,” but the meaning of “ascents” is not obvious. There may be a **step-like progression**, or “ascent,” in each of these psalms; or, based on a remark in the *Talmud* that the fifteen “songs of ascent” correspond to the fifteen Temple steps, the idea may be that each of the psalms represents a step leading up to the Court of the Men; or, they could be songs about “going up” from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem (see Ezra 7:9). **Probably, these were songs sung by “pilgrims” on their way up to Jerusalem for one of the feasts.**

One is reminded of Psalm 84, where the sons of Korah sing “How lovely is your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts!” The psalmist there is far from God’s house, desperately longing for “the courts of the Lord.” His attitude is “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage” (84:5).

These fifteen psalms amplify the motif of pilgrims longing for the courts of God. There is an **urgent desire on the part of the “homeless” to “stand in the house of the Lord”** (134:1), because it is where the Lord dwells (132:14). Therefore, the psalmist is “glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’ ” (122:1). But before they were able to stand in the house of God they had to make a journey, a journey fraught with dangers and snares. It got depressing at times: “Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud” (123:4). But they kept on going, knowing that “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (124:8).

In about 125 A.D., Aristeides wrote in a letter to a friend, “If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they accompany his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.” But we must “do pilgrimage” before we stand permanently in the house of the Lord. We, too, must “sojourn in Meshech and dwell among the tents of Kedar!” (120:5). **We become disillusioned with this world and echo the words of those who are weary of the lying lips and deceitful tongue (120:2), tired of dwelling too long with those who hate peace (120:6), sick of the haughty attitudes of those who are too proud to rely on God (123:4); tired of “crooked ways” (125:5).**

We, too, are given to ask, “From whence comes my help?” The answer: “From the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (121:2).

Temptations and trials are the lot of earth-dwellers. But to those whose hearts are set on pilgrimage, these changes induce us to rivet our attention squarely on the Lord who made heaven and earth. So, we wait on the Lord, and hope in the Lord and in His word (130:5, 6), and enjoy the simple life of a pilgrim (131:1–3). A calm and quiet spirit prevails because, regardless of the turmoil around us, our God is still in heaven. So “Let us go into His tabernacle, let us worship at His footstool” (132:7).

We pay a price for becoming strangers on earth, but we can *enjoy* the price because we know that “the Lord has done great things for us;” therefore, “we are glad” (126:3). We sow in tears here, but we will *reap* in joy. “He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (126:6). Our purpose here is to sow, sometimes in tears. The reaping will come later. But knowing we will reap makes us glad today. So even now we can taste a bit of what we will be doing for all eternity: “... stand in the house of the Lord and lift up our hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord” (134:2).

The Acrostic Psalms

by Thaxter Dickey

[Acrostic Sermons] seems overly cutesy to me & of little intellectual value. But when I observe that some inspired psalms are acrostics, I have to reconsider. There are nine acrostic psalms. Actually, they are alphabetical psalms, in that, they are organized so that each line or each line series begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. If God uses such an arrangement, it is not silly and there is probably a reason for it.

I can think of three reasons for the alphabetic format. First, it is an aid to memory. Most cultures during this time used poetry this way. This is the case with the great Greek epics: the Iliad and Odyssey. In addition to being poetic and thus more easily memorized, an acrostic psalm is arranged in **natural mnemonic order** - the alphabet. However, this cannot be the reason for the acrostic format because only a small number of the Psalms are acrostics and I can't see that they are more important than others.

A second reason to use the acrostic format is to demonstrate the flexibility of the writer - a mere demonstration of cleverness. This is not true of God's Psalms. However, **the acrostic format not only can demonstrate the flexibility of the poet, it also can demonstrate the flexibility of language.** It is amazing we can choose such an artificial format and, with relative ease, complete a coherent series of sentences of praise. **Language, which is God's gift, is a wonderfully elastic means of communicating, as is demonstrated in the acrostic psalms.**

Perhaps the most reasonable explanation for the acrostic psalms is that the format is a part of the message. Using the entire alphabet is a way of saying: Here is an extensive topic; it has to take up the entire alphabet to speak of it. Such is surely the case with **the most familiar acrostic psalm, Psalm 119, which is written to praise the law of God.**

PSALM

- 9 Verse 2 says to God, I will praise you with my whole heart, and according to my thesis the acrostic format says, I will praise you with the entire alphabet.
- 10 This psalm expresses complete confidence in God's power over evil. Psalms 9 & 10 are only partial acrostics; may be part of a larger and complete acrostic.)
- 25 An alphabet of entreaties is the title that Kidner gives to this psalm.
- 34 The subject here is the complete happiness of those who trust in God.
- 37 The complete blessings of the righteous are considered in verses 1-8 and contrasted in the second half with the complete calamity brought on the wicked.
- 111 The subject of God's goodness is not exhausted by the entire alphabet.
- 112 The psalmist considers the complete blessedness of the righteous.
- 119 The goodness of God's law is not completely expressed even though the psalmist uses each letter eight times before moving on to the next.
- 145 God's love is a theme for all men (verse 4), and for all the letters of the alphabet, too.

Certain psalms use acrostic format to emphasize the inexhaustible nature of their subject. Here I list the acrostic psalms with comments indicating how the acrostic format matches their content.

God has blessed us with the wonderful gift of language. Is there any better use we can make of it than praising Him and teaching others about Him? But even with the almost unlimited power and flexibility of language we shall never exhaust His praise.

The “Omni” Psalms

(Psalms 139, 147)

by Dan Truex

Knowledge of these [Omni] particulars not only surpasses our comprehension but our imagination as well. After all, we have no human standard by which to measure His divine characteristics. But description, now that is something that David does beautifully.

Humanity would seem to be too much for any god, or pantheon of gods, to handle. But David, in Psalm 139, met Jehovah, the One True God. David found Him, not in the recesses of his imagination, but on the job—caring deeply for His creation, sharing His will and Word, searching every thought and action, and benevolently intervening in our lives. He, and He alone, is the God of power, knowledge and presence.

“You have searched me and known me”

Most of us must candidly confess that we seldom see ourselves honestly. But God does. He knows us through and through. He is first to say “Good morning” as we rise and the first to scrutinize our activity during the day: “You know my sitting down and my rising up ... You comprehend my path and are acquainted with all my ways” (verses 2, 3). He knows what we are going to say, what we do say, what we wish we would have said, and what we think about saying: “For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether” (verse 4). And notice how the Psalmist makes this doctrine personal: “You know my sitting down, my rising up, all my ways.” Creation’s God’s grand experiment and humankind His greatest work. As a kind and just Creator and Sustainer, He has knowledge of the most minute detail of our lives.

“Where can I go from Your presence?”

It’s not just that God is “acquainted” with us, but He is ever our companion and benefactor. His presence is not to be escaped (And why would righteous men want to?), for “in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Height, depth, speed, darkness, light; none suffice to hide us from the presence of God. That is not to portray the Father as a cosmic policeman, watching every move of every creature, eager with glee to pounce upon our every failure. His presence for our own good. What wondrous assurance it is for His children, that regardless of time or place, “even there Thy hand shall lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me” (verse 11).

Perhaps this is what makes sin the heinous crime it is. It is not committed in the secrecy that we naively assume darkness affords. Sin is an affront to the Almighty to His face. It is treason of the highest order committed at the very foot of His throne. And thus, He asks, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:24).

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made”

Men are awestruck by the latest innovations in computer, medical, or science technology. Yet all pale in comparison with the ability, the unparalleled power, to create and sustain. We marvel that through human ingenuity we are able to fuse together the elements necessary to animate a robot, while often ignoring the omnipotent hand of Jehovah who “knit me together in my mother’s womb” (verse 13). He “embroidered” or “wove” together veins and sinews, muscles and nerves. True, we are “made a little lower than the angels.” And yet we “are crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:7). Reflect on the wisdom and power that went into the creation of your heart, the love and kindness spent in the design of your eyes, the benevolent replication of a bit of your Father in the giving of your soul. It’s easy to understand David’s amazement.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart”

The omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of our Father ought to naturally evoke a righteous response. Had He been so disposed, God could have used these awesome traits to our detriment rather than for our benefit. How fitting then, how absolutely proper, that David, and we after his similitude, give God the free hand He desires in leading us “in the way everlasting” and the humble, obedient heart necessary to make it so.

How Do You Spell ‘Relief’?

Our contemporary culture places much guilt in the ‘false guilt’ category. Someone has guilt feelings which he feels he shouldn’t feel and so seeks some recourse to eliminate them. Not that there isn’t false guilt, but there’s truly something wrong when most guilt is assumed to be false guilt. Which is why it’s so refreshing to get shoved in among Christ’s church—it’s so counter-cultural. As someone has said, only the church engages in confession of sin.

Now David is our teacher in this matter in Psalm 32. He endured a devastating bout with guilt. Some think Psalm 32 comes out of the same background as Psalm 51, the Uriah-Bathsheba affair (see 2 Sam. 11–12). But we don’t know; we can’t be sure. Better not to worry about it and move on to ask what Psalm 32 teaches. We might sum it up under three heads.

The first is: **the misery of guilt and the mercy of misery** (vv. 3–4). Verses 1–2 form a ‘conclusion’ that is stated first, but verses 3–4 recount the experience that preceded that conclusion.

David depicts his misery—it came in the wake of his keeping ‘silent’. The time of silence was the time of unconfessed sin, and he says it was *wearing* (v. 3, ‘my bones wore out’), *weighty* (v. 4a, ‘day and night your hand was heavy upon me’), and *withering* (v. 4b, ‘my vitality was changed into the drougths of summer’). So, among other things, David endured ongoing insomnia (v. 4a), draining fatigue (v. 4b), and general exhaustion (v. 3), what we might call **psychosomatic effects of unconfessed sin**. David gives us a picture of the destructiveness of guilt. We’re not claiming that unconfessed guilt is always the root of such troubles, but it can sometimes be the root cause. Sometimes it can be that simple.

But, David says, there is mercy in and with the misery. ‘Day and night your hand was heavy upon me.’ The misery was miserable, but God was at work in it. Yahweh Himself was mixed up in this misery, indeed causing it, or at least aggravating it. **The misery of sin can be a gift from God. It is divine pressure meant to drive us to confession and forgiveness.**

So, the Lord may prey on your conscience, day and night, if need be. He may not flinch to use the most extreme and painful measures. God is so good to you that **He refuses to allow you to be comfortable and happy in sin**. There is mercy in the misery.

Secondly, we must notice **the anatomy of sin and the vocabulary of forgiveness** (vv. 1–2, 5). Verses 1–2 strike a tone of ecstasy, but we are not quite there yet. Let’s stop first to dwell on some of the sin-words David uses.

‘Rebellion’ (*peša*), sometimes rendered ‘transgression’, is refusing subjection to rightful authority, in this case to Yahweh, the legitimate king, and to His covenant Law. The related verb can be used of political revolt or rebellion (2 Kings 1:1). There is an attitude that lurks beneath the external action.

Then David mentions ‘sin’. The word comes from the root *ht*, which occurs about 600 times in the Old Testament, the commonest root for ‘sin’. Though we must not push the matter, it sometimes carries the idea of failure or ‘missing’ a mark or goal (cf. Judg. 20:16; Prov. 8:36; 19:2). ‘Sin’ is certainly a coming short of God’s intention or requirements.

Next David mentions ‘iniquity’ (*āwōn*). The root may suggest being bent or twisted or being made crooked (cf. Lam. 3:9), and so a perversion or distortion.

David’s blessing also alludes to ‘deceit’ (v. 2b). Deceit is at work whenever one denies or hides, extenuates or excuses, this or that favorite sin. It’s the engine behind the whole cover-up process.

Verses 1–2 are not meant to give us a detailed picture of sin, not meant to make us more familiar with Hebrew words; rather, these verses express the excited joy of forgiveness—but it is a joy you will never know unless you realize that sin is not some semi-naughty act but a multifaceted, complex octopus-like monster that has you. You must see the treason of sin, the failure of sin, the twistedness of sin, the duplicity of sin; you must see that you are in revolt against the only true King, continually missing the mark of what He requires, having a twisted, perverse nature that excels in covering up the cancer—or forgiveness will not mean squat to you.

Now David also speaks of forgiveness here. He speaks of the one whose rebellion is ‘forgiven’. The verb is *nāṣā*, a common verb that means to lift up and/or carry away; hence **forgiveness is like relief from a burden**. Then he alludes to sin being ‘covered’. The verb is *kāṣā*. There is a paradox between its use in verse 1b and its use in verse 5. In the latter David said, ‘I did not *kāṣā* (cover) my iniquity.’ He had done that—see verses 3–4. But **when we uncover our sin (v. 5), God covers it (v. 1b); when we cover it (up), it remains uncovered**. So, forgiveness is like the hiding of a record. Then David speaks of God’s ‘not charging’ one with iniquity (the negative with the verb *hāšab*); that is, He does not hold us liable for iniquity, and so depicts forgiveness as the dismissal of a debt. **Yahweh meets the anatomy of sin with the vocabulary of forgiveness: it is relief from a burden, the hiding of a record, the dismissal of a debt.**

We might tarry a moment in the land of biblical theology and ask, ‘How can these things be?’ If rebellion is lifted, who carries it? Peter, drawing on Isaiah 53:12, tells us Jesus Himself ‘carried our sins in his body upon the tree’ (1 Peter 2:24). If sin is covered, how has it happened? ‘He erased the certificate of debt ... that was against us ... and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross’ (Col. 2:14).

If we are not charged with iniquity, who pays? ‘But the LORD made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved’ (Isa. 53:6b, TEV). Jesus carried the load, erased the record, paid the debt.

Yet we must go beyond the vocabulary of forgiveness. Look at verse 5 and the emphasis there:

My sin I wanted to acknowledge to you, and my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, ‘I will confess my rebellions to Yahweh,’ and **you**, you forgave the
guilt of my sin!

I want to draw attention to the emphatic ‘you’ in the last line, but first I need to touch on this matter of confession. Obviously, David is saying that **confession** was **a condition of his forgiveness**. However, it’s crucial to see that **a condition is not a cause**. Confession is essential but it does not convey forgiveness. That can only come from the One who has been wronged. Let’s say you have gangrene. However, let’s say that for weeks and months you have denied it. You have refused to acknowledge that you have gangrene. Then, finally, you admit it. Your ‘confession’ does nothing to cure your malady. It’s a necessary preliminary toward a possible cure but your admission in itself does not effect that.

Beyond his confession, however, David revels in the thrill of forgiveness: ‘And **you**, you forgave the guilt of my sin!’ Sadly, it’s often hard for us to feel David’s joy. Part of this may be because we seldom ponder the sheer miracle of God’s nature. How we should shudder to say, ‘Who is a God like you—pardoning iniquity and passing over rebellion ...’ (Micah 7:18). It’s almost too much to hope for, almost something that shouldn’t happen.

Thirdly, David underscores **the lessons of experience and the call to joy** (vv. 6–11). The lessons come first and the **first of those is that you should crave this unhindered fellowship in prayer (vv. 6–7)**. Verse 6 begins, ‘For this let every covenant one pray to you at a time of finding’ (literally). I take the ‘this’ as referring to the enjoyment of that open confession-forgiveness relation noted in verse 5. ‘Covenant one’ is *ḥāsîd*, the one God loves and who loves Him in return (Motyer). We’re not talking here of the wicked and the pagans; but every Yahweh-lover should be eager to seek God in prayer and enjoy a reconciled relation with Him. Verses 6b–7 (regarding the ‘deluge of many waters’ and ‘distress’) indicate that **‘by repentance one comes into a new sphere of divine protection amid the storms of life’**. With the reconciled relation (vv. 5–6a) comes also a certain security (vv. 6b–7). Not that one is immune but preserved, not that one may not be overtaken but not overwhelmed. The upshot seems to be that the verse-5-kind-of-relation gives an overall stability to a believer’s life.

The second lesson is that you should be sensitive to God's pressure on your conscience (vv. 8–9). **The instruction he wants to pass on based on his experience.** In verse 9 he goes to the farm, to horses and mules. The trouble is that horses can horse around, and mules can be, well, mule-ish, and they won't do what you want unless you have them under bit and bridle. David's instruction is: Don't be mule-ish. Don't be like I was in verses 3–4; you can avoid the divine pressure-cooker. Why should God have to break you? David gives no details about his specific sin; he simply passes on what he has learned. **Have a tender conscience, he says, not a hard heart.** Don't be dense about admitting your sin.

Then in verses 10–11 David issues his call to joy. He picks up the keynote from verses 1–2 when he began, 'How blessed ... how blessed!' So, he exclaims, 'Be glad in Yahweh and rejoice, O righteous ones!' (v. 11a). Who are the 'righteous ones'? If we look at the near-by parallels they consist of 'the one trusting in Yahweh' (v. 10b) and those 'who are upright in heart' (v. 11b). But then, more broadly, they are those in verses 1–5 who have been forgiven iniquity and rebellion and sin. So, the contrast in verses 10–11 is not between the wicked and the perfect but between the wicked and the 'righteous', that is, the forgiven. And who has more reason for joy than they?

How do you spell relief? In God's dictionary it begins with an 'f'—forgiveness. And His people never get over it.⁴

⁴ Davis, D. R. (2020). [*In the Presence of My Enemies: Psalms 25–37*](#) (pp. 119–131). Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus.

READING THE PSALMS

RENOVARE' PERSPECTIVE @ JULY 2008

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“Reading the Bible for *interior transformation* is a far different endeavor than reading the Bible for historical knowledge, literary appreciation, or religious instruction. In the latter case we learn head knowledge; in the former knowledge of the heart. To allow the Bible to infiltrate us with the Life God offers – piercing us like a two-edged sword dividing ‘soul from spirit, joints from marrow... {judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart}’ – we must bring to the Bible our whole selves, expectantly, attentively, and humbly.”

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● *More Than A Textbook - -*

“Reading the Bible for spiritual transformation is tantamount to inviting a Damascus road experience. If we venture onto ancient roads of the Bible’s world with an open mind and an inquiring heart, we can expect to encounter the living God. The Bible is far more than just a resource text, which we can use to shape our theology or ethics. It is God’s living and active voice & every time we open its covers we expose ourselves to the possibility of a life -changing encounter with Jesus Christ!”

BEST READ THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES FIRST

Excerpts Touchstone's: "Chasing Of Wisdom"

The True Ways of Knowing by Douglas Groothuis

Ecclesiastes offers us an abundance of topics to consider and verses to ponder. I will ask what Ecclesiastes can teach us about epistemology, which is the study of the nature, means, and scope of knowledge.

Epistemology

Epistemology is intrinsic and inexorable in biblical studies, theology, apologetics, ethics, science, and more. For any subject matter, the natural question is, "How do you *know* that?" Epistemology is our approach to knowing, and it determines our approach to living and our thriving or our dying. If one possesses knowledge on any subject, he possesses a privileged belief that matches objective reality and that is well supported by fact and reasoning.

It was no throwaway line when the Evangelical philosopher Francis Schaeffer wrote, "Unless our epistemology is right, everything is going to be wrong," and this is why he dedicated two chapters to it in his short book, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. One cannot *know* what is false, but one can *believe* what is false. However, one may come to a true belief that does not attain knowledge. As T. S. Eliot wrote in *Murder in the Cathedral*, "The last act is the greatest treason. To do the right deed for the wrong reason." *Mutatis mutandis*, we can affirm that "*believing* the right thing for the wrong reason" is equally treasonous to reality.

Developing Our Ability to Know

But the knowledge of many things "under the sun" (a phrase so often used in Ecclesiastes) does not come easily. Rather, knowledge often requires an accurate assessment of one's ability to know, the standards for knowledge, and a fine focus on the things worth knowing. These concerns are axiological: they require a sense of objective value related to cognition and intellectual habits.

Christians are called to cognitive rectitude before reality—divine, human, and creational factuality. The Holy Bible in general, and Ecclesiastes in particular, emphasizes what philosophers call virtue epistemology, which, according to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, is a "subfield of epistemology that takes epistemic virtues to be central to understanding justification or what is knowledge or both. An epistemic virtue is a personal quality conducive to the discovery of truth, the avoidance of error, or some other intellectually valuable goal."

The writer of Hebrews upbraided his readers for not discharging their God-given powers of reason and sensibility in this way:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! . . . But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:11–14)

The writer teaches that habitual patterns of moral discernment are required for higher-level teaching. One must build from a firm foundation & that foundation must be secured through godly habits of knowing—otherwise, it may be lost.

One could go on, but suffice it to say that God's revelation gives us knowledge we could not have otherwise and, through its wise counsel, orients our own knowing in ways conducive to virtuous intellectual comportment. This is a huge theme needing systematic exposition. However, I will only address the epistemological themes I find in Ecclesiastes.

Epistemology in Ecclesiastes: Preliminaries

I take a maximalist view of the text: we should extract as much meaning as possible from it and not place ourselves above it applying modern sensibilities or even certain scholarly conventions. The entire book of Ecclesiastes is Holy Scripture. What Paul affirmed to Timothy applies to Ecclesiastes and the entire Hebrew Bible: "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:14–17). Ecclesiastes teaches us how to live wisely in a fallen world that is still God's world.

Seeking Wisdom

How to seek wisdom is, I claim, the central theme of Ecclesiastes. The Teacher earnestly pursues knowledge concerning the meaning of life, the significance of nature, and human activities in light of wealth, sensual enjoyment, time, fatigue, injustice, aging, and death. He does so not as a detached observer or as a recipient of a divine vision, but as an aged but ardent inquirer, who is leaving his wisdom to those younger than he (in typical wisdom literature fashion). He relates his story and conclusions after an auspicious introduction:

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher.

"Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (Eccl. 1:1–2)

The NIV's rendering of *hebel* as *meaningless* is unsatisfactory, as is the poetic King James's "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Whatever *hebel* means, the writer's repetition indicates a superlative. Given the rest of the book, and the lexical possibilities, it seems that *hebel* is better taken as *breath* or *air* in the sense of *vapor* or *mist*. *The Jewish Study Bible* says, it's something insubstantial and refers to "actions and work that do not last, or appear to lead to no lasting goal, or cannot be explained in any rational, i.e., human way."

Hebel does not mean *absurd*, since the Teacher, despite his perplexity and even cynicism, entrusts all things to God, who knows all & who will bring everything into account. The vapor evaporates; **it is ephemeral**; it is not meaningless in the sense taken by atheistic existentialism or nihilism. The Teacher uses this phrase or the word *hebel* by itself 38 times; it punctuates and organizes his diverse reflections (see 2:15,17,19,21,23,26; 3:19, etc.). In some cases, the phrase, "a chasing after wind," is either added or stands alone. This phrase appears nine times and further strengthens the point.

The Bible speaks of the ephemerality of life loudly and frequently. Consider the only Psalm of Moses, the man of God:

Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning: In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered. (Psalm 90:5–6)

Ardor for Knowledge

Yet the Teacher seeks wisdom even in the midst of a vaporous existence. If he meant that life was *absurd*, lacking any objective meaning, his counsel would be pointless, as would the very writing of the book.

Here is the first lesson for epistemology: The Teacher *applied* his mind, he **experienced wisdom and knowledge**, but this was a chasing after wind. However, the book does not end here. There must be some worth in chasing after wind—at least in the manner of the Teacher. He takes us on a journey for knowledge and wisdom as he recounts his sojourn into darkness and light. After surveying more vexation under the sun, the Teacher writes: "All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun" (8:9).

This search was deeply **experiential**. The Teacher not only observes but also responds to what he observes emotionally, even viscerally:

So, I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. (2:17–18)

Life, from one angle, is hateful, because good things don't last and bad things last longer than they should. One's earnest toil is left to another, who may even misuse it. The Teacher knows this and feels this. Yet the pain does not throw him off the scent of pursuing knowledge and wisdom. He works through pain in his arduous epistemic pursuit, thus evincing the intellectual virtues of tenacity and studiousness.

It seems that **"eternity in the human heart"** is the fuel for the human engine that seeks knowledge even in the world of mystifying mist. As Michael Eaton has written:

The eternity of God's dealings with mankind corresponds to something inside us: we have a capacity for eternal things, are concerned about the future, want to understand "from the beginning to the end" and **have a sense of something which transcends our immediate situation.**

The Conclusion of the Matter

So much more could and should be explored about the epistemology of Ecclesiastes, particularly the meaning of sorrow in knowing (7:1–6). I will offer one application from the Teacher's approach to life and knowledge. It is this: the Christian, who has access to more knowledge than the Teacher, still needs to *place his ignorance of life under the sun within a framework of knowledge that God has revealed and which can be defended through Christian apologetics.*

Reading With Compunction

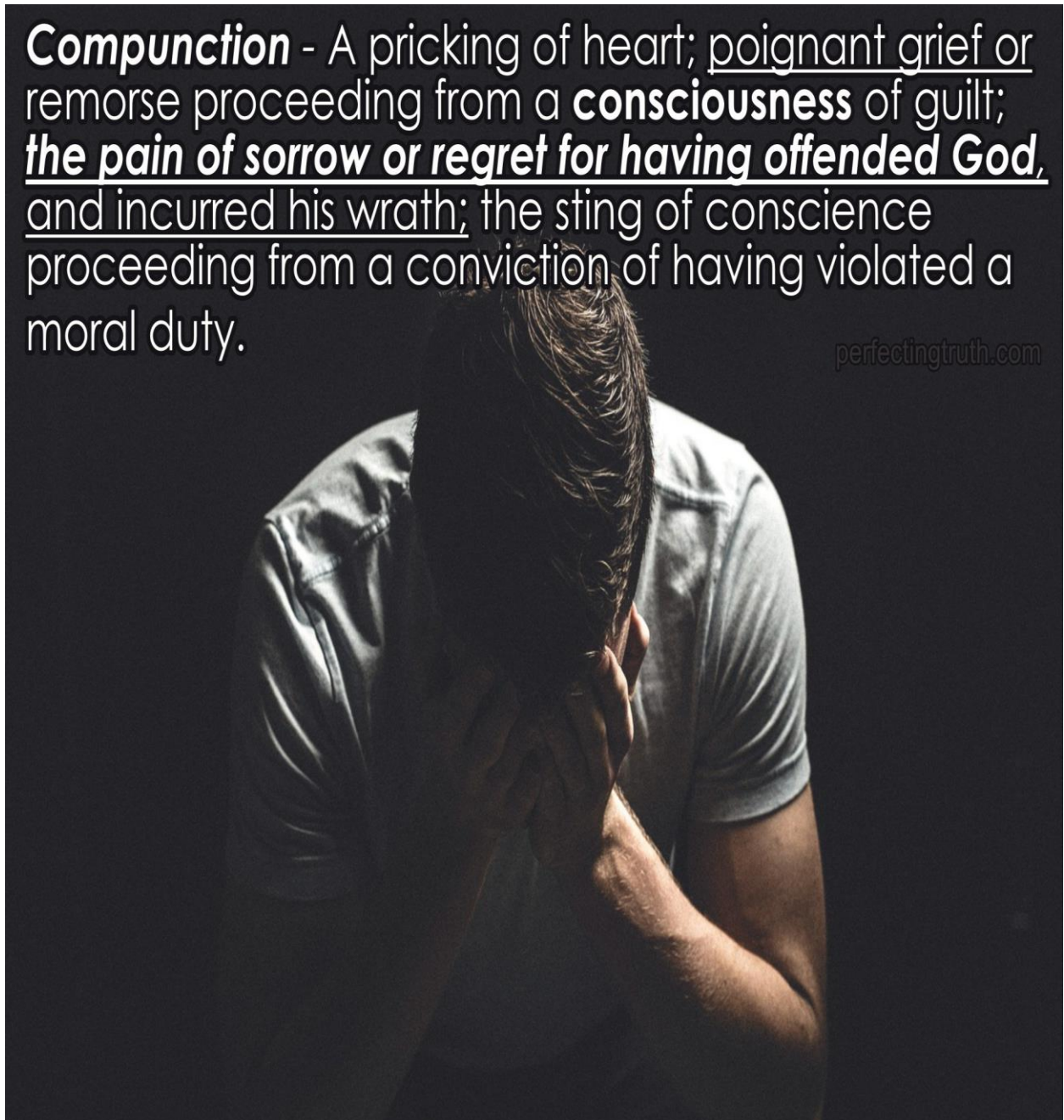
LIFE EXPERIENCE FOR DEEP UNDERSTANDING

Excerpts Touchstone's: "LET'S TALK OF SIN"

*Retrieving Compunction & Introspection - by **Hans Boersma***

Compunction - A pricking of heart; poignant grief or remorse proceeding from a consciousness of guilt; **the pain of sorrow or regret for having offended God,** and incurred his wrath; the sting of conscience proceeding from a conviction of having violated a moral duty.

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I want to talk with you about sin. People *always* talk about sin, but typically we find it easiest to talk about the sins of others and about sins that are corporate. Talk about our own, personal sins is something I think needs retrieval, for if anything is neglected in our secular age, it is personal sin.

We have learned to begin theological talk with Christ—that is to say, with grace and forgiveness—since we see the character of God most clearly in Christ. Let me say up front that all theological talk *should* begin with Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Still, I'm going to make a plea for a retrieval of sin, a theology of personal sin that through compunction and introspection yields purification and healing. **Beginning with Christ means beginning with grace.** But, as I hope to make clear, this grace involves the recognition of how unlike Christ we are, so we may become more like him, being renewed in him. The introspection for which I want to make a plea isn't without pain. But when it comes to hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), the saying holds true: no pain, no gain.

Compunction: Joyful Sorrow

It is divine revelation—God in Christ, biblical words—that leads to the compunction or grief over sin that I want to discuss. Words often involve violence and pain. Writing—reflecting, I think, the healing pain caused by the Word—used to be a rather physical, violent activity.

How writing functioned in the premodern world may be unnerving:

We should keep in mind the vigorous, if not violent, activity involved in making a mark upon such a physical surface as an animal's skin. One must break it, rough it up, "wound" it in some way with a sharply pointed instrument. Erasure involved roughing up the physical surface even more: medieval scribes, trying to erase parchment, had to use pumice stones and other scrapers.

In other words, writing was always hard, physical labor, very hard as well on the surface on which it was being done; this vigorous physical aspect, I believe, was always part of that **master-model of memory as a written surface**. (*The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Cambridge University Press, 1998)

In our age of computers, we tend to forget the harsh and laborious character of writing throughout most of history. Carruthers's phrase **"memory as a written surface"** makes the point that not only was writing a rough, physical activity, but reflection upon the Word—**meditation or memorization—was, too**. Technology may have made writing easier, but meditation hasn't lost its demanding character.

The "wounding" of the parchment Carruthers mentions is matched by a "wounding" of the mind in reflection or meditation upon divine revelation. In other words, it is not just writing but also the reading of words that can be painful.

The word *compunction* gives us a sense of how painful the process of reading can be. **The Latin term *compunctio* speaks of the reader being painfully "pierced" in confrontation with the text.** The spirit language of compunction comes from the Latin *pungere*—to pierce or puncture. **What biblical reading does—if we do it as it is meant to be done—is to violently pierce the core of our being.**

The monastic writers took the term *compunctio* from the book of Acts. When Peter finished his Pentecost sermon, the people who heard it "had compunction in their heart" (Acts 2:37). Contemporary versions often translate that they were "cut to the heart."

Compunction means that being confronted with God's revelation in Christ is painful in character. Perhaps the primary and most difficult cost of discipleship is the pain of compunction over personal sin. This is not to say that compunction is simply about morbid introspection. Contemplation, joy, and peace are the result. And it is not always and only sin, but **sometimes also joy that pierces the heart. Either way, the heart must be pierced for God in Christ to heal us and for us to reach our desired end.**

CUT TO THE HEART BY THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

"...THE **SWORD**
OF THE **SPIRIT**,
WHICH IS THE
WORD OF GOD."
EPHESIANS 6:17

"CIRCUMCISION
IS
CIRCUMCISION
OF THE **HEART**,
BY THE SPIRIT,
NOT BY THE
WRITTEN CODE."
ROMANS 2:29

"CIRCUMCISE YOUR
HEARTS, THEREFORE,
AND DO NOT BE
STIFF-NECKED
ANY LONGER"
DEUTERONOMY 10:6

"THE **LORD YOUR GOD** WILL
CIRCUMCISE YOUR HEARTS AND
THE HEARTS OF YOUR DESCENDANTS,
SO THAT YOU MAY LOVE HIM WITH
ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL
YOUR SOUL, AND LIVE."
DEUTERONOMY 30:6



"THIS CHILD IS DESTINED
TO CAUSE THE CAUSE THE
FALLING AND RISING OF
MANY IN ISRAEL, AND **TO**
BE A SIGN THAT WILL BE
SPOKEN AGAINST, **SO THAT**
THE THOUGHTS OF MANY
HEARTS WILL BE
REVEALED. AND A
SWORD WILL PIERCE
YOUR OWN SOUL TOO."
LUKE 2:34-35

"WHEN THE PEOPLE
HEARD THIS,
THEY WERE
CUT TO THE HEART
AND SAID TO PETER..
"BROTHERS, WHAT SHALL
WE DO?" PETER REPLIED,
"**REPENT AND BE BAPTISED**,
EVERYONE OF YOU, IN THE
NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE
FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS. AND
YOU WILL **RECEIVE THE GIFT OF**
THE HOLY SPIRIT." ACTS 3:37-38

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Compunction & Comfort

Compunction is the moment we move from meditation and the various types of prayers to contemplation in ineffable prayer.

Compunction (*katanyxis*) is pretty much the same thing as mourning (*penthos*). . . "an eternal torment of the conscience which brings about the cooling of the fire of the heart through silent confession." It is sin that causes the conscience to be in pain. This pain over sin has to do with confession and repentance, for only they cause the sorrow that we need. In such pain, we cannot but mourn our sin. Mourning, "is a melancholy of the soul, a disposition of an anguished heart that passionately seeks what it thirsts for."

The pain of mourning leads to tears. We should recall both our sins and the judgment of God, so that the tears will come. **Mourning is the result both of God graciously entering the soul and of us reflecting on our sin.**

But why mourn if it involves this incredible cost of detesting our lives, keeping the fires of hell before our eyes, and experiencing agonizing pain? **Compunction leads to joy and consolation. As soon as we experience the pain of compunction, comfort mixes in and it takes over - we are just like children, both laughing and crying at the same time.**

Climacus even invents a new word to describe **this mingling of joy and grief** in compunction. He calls it *charmotypē*, a term made up from the Greek words for "joy" (*charma*) and "grief" (*lypē*). In "joyful grief," joy enters into the grief. Or, as Climacus also puts it, the fear lifts and "joy comes dawning." Compunction, while driven by sorrow for sin and fear of hell, invariably gives way to comfort and joy, a **foretaste of eternal life.**

Tears & No Tears

Compunction entails great inward turmoil. Its very purpose is to transform us, and the only way to get there is by allowing Scriptures to speak into our lives. Scripture interprets the reader as much as the reader interprets Scripture. Indeed, we read two books at the same time: the book of Scripture and the book of experience.

Just as the book of Scripture opens to us the book of experience, so it is our personal experiences that give us access to the inward sense of Scripture.

Why do we try to express in everyday language affections that no language can describe? Those who have not known such things don't understand them, for they could **learn more clearly of them only from the book of experience (*libro experientiae*)** where God's grace itself is the teacher.

It is useless to try to explain the ineffable realities that the reading of Scripture makes present to us. Instead, **it is the book of experience that functions like a gloss or commentary; experience reveals the spiritual or inward sense of Scripture.**

The flipside of these observations is that whenever there is a lack of experience, this becomes a pressing issue when in trying to search the spiritual depth of Scripture: how can we reach the inward sense if we don't have *liber experientiae* allowing us to read the Scriptures well?

The requirement of feeling or emotion means that lack of experience (*inexperta*) precludes one from understanding Scripture, which in turn serves to keep the desired experience beyond reach.

Precisely because Scripture confronts our lives—including our sins and shortcomings—theologians often worried that their lack of real experience exposed them as hypocrites.

Anselm wrote - "When truly, because of my wretchedness, feeling and grief are not in me, how can I hope? Without hope, how can I pray? And without prayer, what can I obtain?"

How to overcome this double bind? Sometimes the tears don't come. Sometimes, the much-vaunted experience is simply absent. None of these authors, however, ends in despair.

Scriptural Tears

The first type of tears is that caused by *the thorn of our sins*. Scripture gives examples of this in **Psalm 6:6** ("I have labored in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears") and in **Lamentations 2:18** ("Let tears run down like a torrent day and night: give thyself no rest, and let not the apple of thy eye cease").

Then there are tears that flow from the contemplation and longing of eternity, as in **Psalm 42:2–3** ("When shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night").

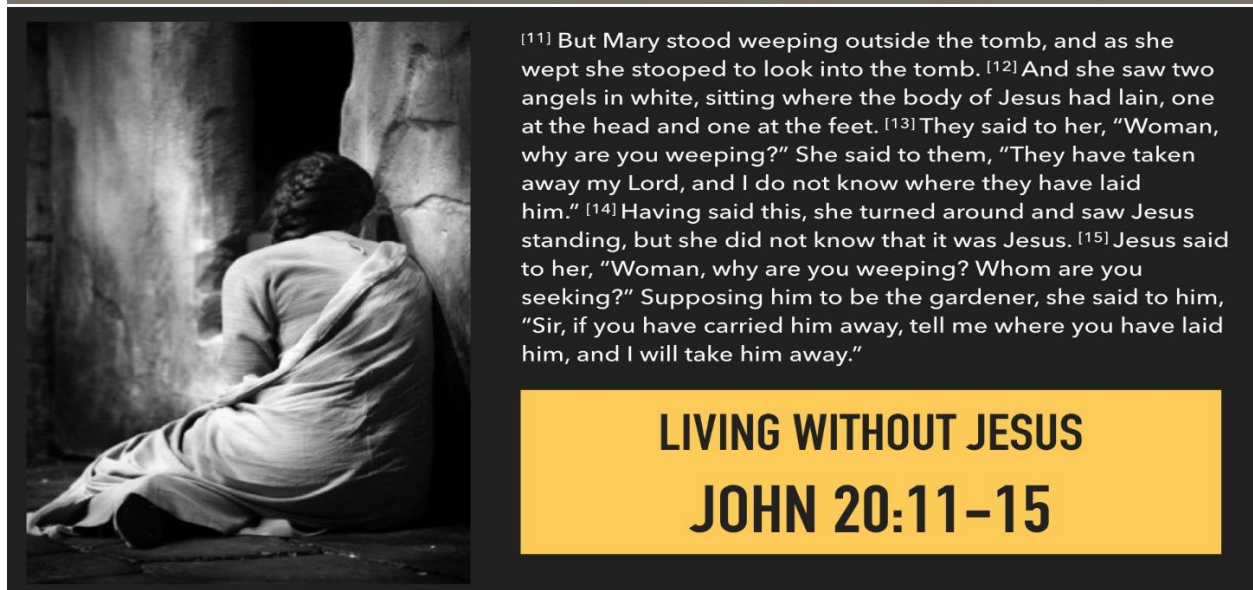
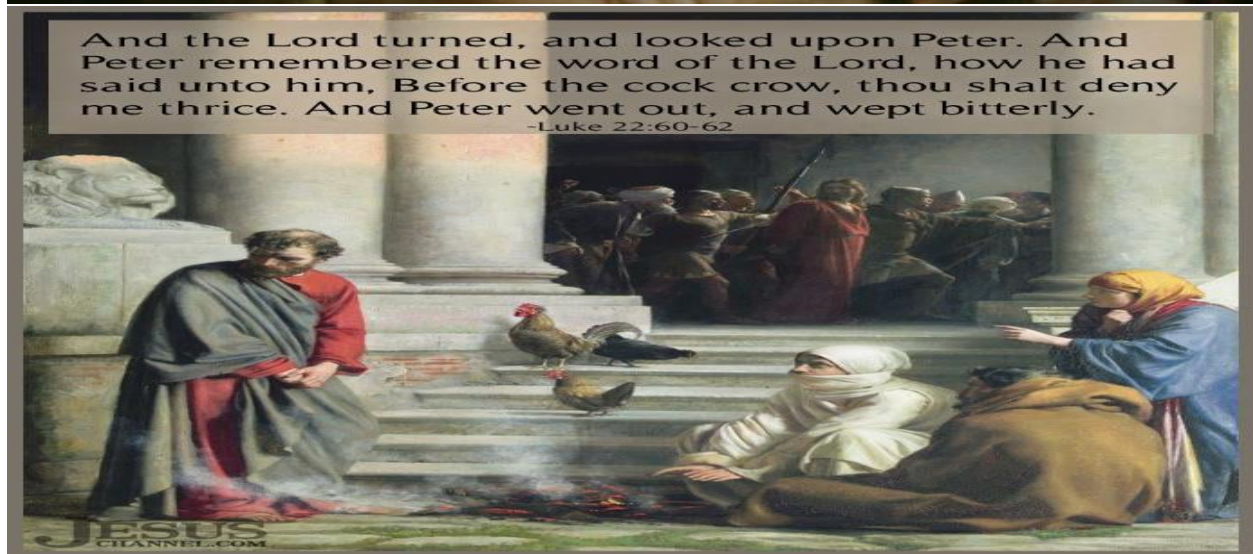
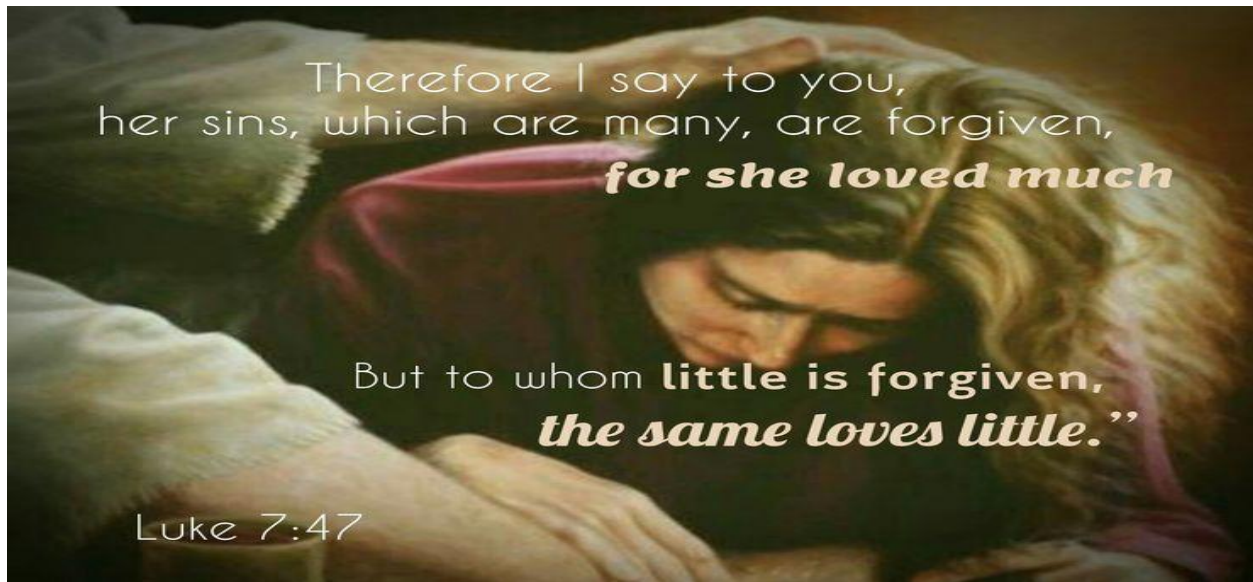
A third type of tears is caused by fear of hell and judgment, as seen in **Psalm 143:2** ("Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified").

Yet another kind of tears is caused by the sinfulness of others, as when Samuel wept over Saul (1 Samuel 15:35) or the Lord wept for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

And finally, sometimes believers simply express their worries and anxieties with tears to the Lord. Jeremiah did so when he cried, "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jeremiah 9:1); as did also the poor, worried man who poured out his complaint to the Lord in **Psalm 102**: "I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (v. 9).

Bible, Imagination & Tears

Readers imaginatively enter into the place of the weeping biblical characters.



We have for too long ignored the language of sin, thinking we can rely upon God's cheap grace.

Insisting on starting with grace, at times we may fail to discuss our own personal sin at all.

The Bible pries open our lives and exposes the secrets of our hearts. We need a retrieval of compunction and tears, for the joy of salvation rests upon the experiential repentance from sin.

The “Why” Psalm

(Psalm 73)

by John Kilgore

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!” (verse 1) and “surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning (verses 13–14). Between these two statements by Asaph, each introduced by “surely” (NASB), lies a painful road connecting the valley of disillusionment and doubt to the mountain top of confidence and certitude. The journey was necessitated by the reality of Asaph’s world where he observed the prosperity and care of the wicked (verse 3) and the pain and trouble of the righteous (13–14), and asked “Why?”

Why does a good God permit this unfairness? Is He really good to Israel, the pure in heart? For Asaph this wasn’t merely an interesting philosophical question to be debated in the academy, for he was the one suffering, even to the point of being envious of the arrogant wicked (3) & questioning the profitability of keeping his heart pure (13). If Asaph was to keep his faith in the goodness of God, he had to have an answer (2).

Questioning God is like a double-edged sword. It can cut both ways: one way to unbelief and the other to faith. In the case of the Jews with Jesus, their questions punctuated an ever-descending spiral into the pit of hatred and murder. On one occasion, Jesus even characterized their questioning as indicative of an evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39). But in the case of Asaph, and all truly devoted disciples, it is essential in order to climb to the top of confidence in both God’s goodness and justice. **To ask God “why” is risky but necessary.**

Questioning God leads to a destruction of our faith when really our questions flow from our pride. An unwillingness to accept evidence already given to us by God and demand more implies that God lacks truly convincing evidence. If God would only give us true credible evidence, we would believe.

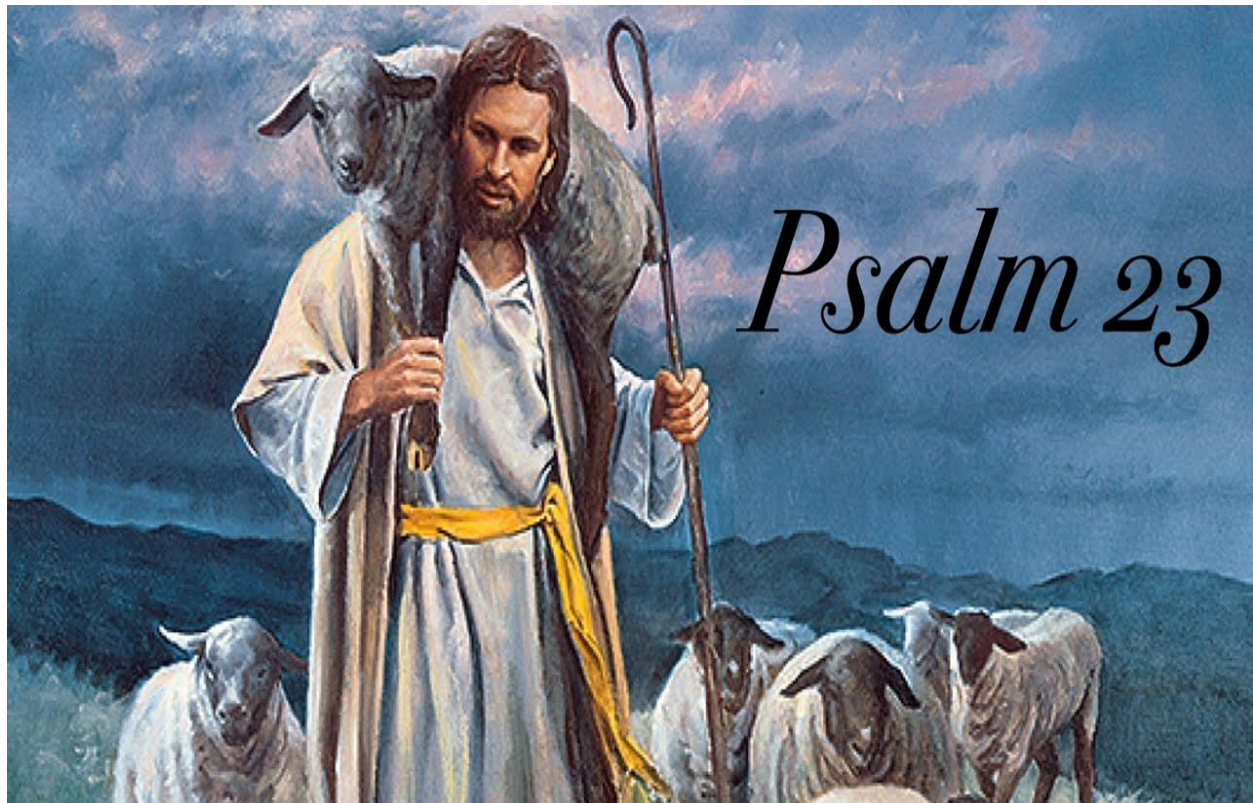
This self-delusion, often disguised as intellectualism and “open-mindedness,” is in reality the consequence of a hardened will. The scribes and Pharisees who had already counseled together as to how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:14) kept asking for a sign (12:38). This charade of honest investigation was exposed by Jesus for what it was - self-willed, hardened hearts getting harder and harder. When God wants us to believe the unbelievable, He gives sufficient evidence to do so (Gideon and his fleece, Judges 6:34–40). To reject His evidence and demand more is to harden our hearts against faith.

Questioning God from an elevated sense of the importance of our own physical circumstances also flows from pride, and will also destroy faith. This rationale allows the temporal to have greater importance than the eternal and places our satisfaction in time in the center of the universe, dethroning God. For men to sit in judgment of God’s goodness, especially from the standpoint of their earthly “happiness,” is arrogant.

Asaph came “close to stumbling” (verse 2) as he began to envy the arrogant rich. In essence, he said that God owed him. His purity demanded it. Surely God can’t expect us to serve Him for nothing (verse 13). It’s ironic that it is arrogance that produces envy of the arrogant. Fortunately, Asaph changed his course of questioning and in the process received a greater faith.

When pain is used as God’s megaphone to get our attention (C. S. Lewis) our “whys” can produce a deeper faith, for now we are ready to listen to God. Listening to Him, we can see that when embittered within, we are like a senseless, ignorant beast (21–22), but when within the grasp of His hand, we are destined for glory (23–24).⁵

⁵ Turner, R. F. (1994). [God the Father and God the Son Psalm: \(Psalm 2\)](#). (B. Lewis, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 11(3), 12–36.



Psalm 23

PSALM 23

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED

HE RESTS IN FIELDS OF GREEN GRASS
LET'S ME **AND LEADS ME TO QUIET POOLS OF FRESH WATER**

HE GIVES ME NEW STRENGTH

HE GUIDES ME IN THE RIGHT PATHS, AS HE HAS PROMISED.
EVEN IF I GO THROUGH **THE DEEPEST DARKNESS,**

I WILL NOT BE AFRAID

LORD, FOR YOU ARE WITH ME YOUR SHEPHERD'S ROD AND
YOU PREPARE A **BANQUET** FOR ME, -STAFF PROTECT ME.

WHERE ALL MY ENEMIES CAN SEE ME

YOU WELCOME ME AS AN HONOURED GUEST AND FILL MY CUP TO THE BRIM.
I KNOW THAT YOUR

GOODNESS & LOVE

WILL BE WITH ME **ALL MY LIFE; AND YOUR HOUSE WILL BE MY HOME**

AS LONG AS I LIVE.

Alethea Avan-Nomayo

- The New Testament presents the Lord Jesus as exercising a threefold shepherd ministry. In John 10:11 He calls Himself the “good shepherd” and declares that “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” In Hebrews 13:20 the inspired writer calls the Lord “that great shepherd of the sheep” and says that He became the great Shepherd through being “brought again from the dead.” In 1 Peter 5:4 the Lord Jesus is called “the chief shepherd” and Peter declares that He becomes the chief Shepherd in His second advent when He shall give to His own “a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”
- Here, then, the Lord Jesus is placed before us as the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd. As the good Shepherd, He *dies for the sheep. As the great Shepherd, He lives for the sheep. As the chief Shepherd, He comes for the sheep.*
- It is the relationship of the *good Shepherd to the sheep rather than the relationship of the great Shepherd to the sheep that is referred to by many people when they quote verse 1 of Psalm 23. They are thinking of the ministry of the good Shepherd who died for them on Calvary’s cross, and who, for that matter, is also living in heaven and whom they are sure they will meet someday. The glorious truth that they should be meeting Him every day in green pastures and beside still waters has never dawned upon them, or at least has never become a blessed, daily experience in their Christian life. True it is that one cannot know Christ as Shepherd without knowing Him as Savior, but the tragedy is that born-again believers who know Him as Savior may never know Him in their daily experience as a blessed present Shepherd.*
- This threefold shepherd ministry of Christ is beautifully set forth in the triplet psalms, namely, Psalms 22, 23 and 24. Psalm 22 presents Him as the good Shepherd in death. Psalm 23 presents Him as the great Shepherd in life. Psalm 24 presents Him as the chief Shepherd in His sure return.
- The opening sentence of Psalm 22 is the very dictation of Calvary’s cry of rejection—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” These words are not primarily a quotation from Matthew 27:46, but Matthew 27:46 is the Lord Jesus Himself quoting from Psalm 22:1—quoting in awful, literal and terrible fulfillment all of the black and overwhelming portent of these words!
- Psalm 22 is a literal word picture of the death experiences by crucifixion; but more than that, *the death of the Son of God by crucifixion. Even the details of garments parted, lots cast upon vesture, and pierced hands and feet, are here laid bare before us. Surely this is the good Shepherd giving His life for His sheep.*

Ketcham, R. (1972). *I Shall Not Want*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.



With - in the paths of right - eous - ness,

A'cappella
America's Favorite Hymns

The Ovation Chorale
Volume 10

The image is a composite graphic. The top section features a musical score on a black background. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef, and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics "With - in the paths of right - eous - ness," are written below the notes. Below the score is a landscape photograph of a green field under a blue sky with white clouds. The bottom section is a dark brown rectangle containing a central image of a person's silhouette with arms raised against a sunset background. Text is overlaid on this section: "A'cappella" in a large, stylized font, "America's Favorite Hymns" in a bold, sans-serif font, and "The Ovation Chorale Volume 10" at the bottom.

The “If Only” Psalm

(Psalm 81)

by Bill Moseley

How many times most of us have said, “If only ...” followed by “what might have been!” Psalm 81 demonstrates this concept, dealing with “what might have been” for Israel “if only” they had done certain things. The nation never realized the potential God had for them in many areas. *If only* they had conformed to God’s righteous statutes and judgments, how differently they might have then conducted themselves, even when Christ came into the world.

God has ever desired that His people praise Him, as seen in the opening verses of the Psalm. God is “our strength,” and as such we should “sing aloud” to Him. One basis of this worship is the previous benefits God had bestowed upon the nation. In verse 6, we note that God removed the burden of Egypt, and how firmly etched this was in the minds of Israel. Their slavery had been lifted from their shoulders, as they were **“delivered from the pots.”** In their time of trouble, God delivered them (verse 7). As they cried out to God, He “answered thee in time of trouble”. Following this, He “proved them at Meribah.”

Then God assures them that He indeed is the God that brought them out of Egypt (verse 10). They are to “open thy mouth wide,” and the promise is that “I will fill it.” “Open mouths” indicate a need for the blessings of God; these people were receptacles wherein God would bestow His goodness. Yet, they refused to hear their God (verse 12), and so as He often did, God “gave them up,” allowing them walk in their own ways.

We then approach the “if only” portion of the psalm in verse 13. There God cries out, “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!” Or, as we might say it, “If only ... they had done these things!” What then would follow?

First, God tells them He would have subdued their enemies. Instead, because of their refusal to hear God, He often used those enemies as instruments of destruction among them. How clearly this is seen in events such as the carrying away into the captivity of Babylon. That need not have happened—*if only* they had turned their backs upon idolatry, reversed their conduct and returned to God. Destruction of their enemies was dependent upon their listening to God & walking in His ways.

The “enemies” of verse 14 are then called “haters of the Lord” in verse 15. Instead of God’s people being brought into ignominious subjection to those enemies, it could have been the other way around—*if only* they had been faithful to God. The very nation that God established to bring Christ into the world lost her exalted place among the nations as a world power nearly 600 years before Christ came into the world. *If only* they had been faithful to God, they “should have endured forever.” Instead, they became a “hiss and a byword” among men.

Next, we see the great provisions the nation could have expected from God *if only* their faith in Him would have continued. God would have fed them “with the finest of wheat,” as well as with “honey out of the rock” (v. 16). Here are symbols of the splendid blessings they might have expected from God. It was not merely “wheat,” but the “finest of wheat.” In the wilderness they had received water from the flinty rock, but now there is “honey” from the rock.

The first part of this psalm shows us how the people should have conducted themselves before God. *If only* they had done this, the latter part demonstrates what God would have done for them.

Can we make an application of this for our lives as God’s people today?

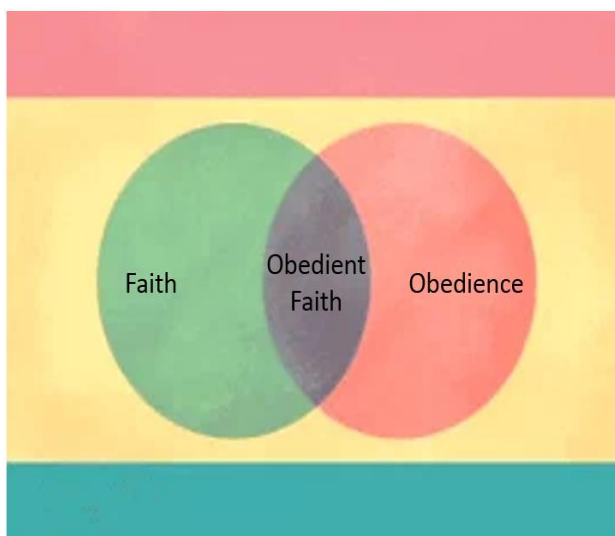
This writer is of the persuasion that we can! When we come to stand before our God in judgment, and it is our lot to hear Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you,” can the thought escape us that *if only* I had faithfully served God what “might have been!”⁶

⁶ Turner, R. F. (1994). [God the Father and God the Son Psalm: \(Psalm 2\)](#). (B. Lewis, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 11(3), 12–36.

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *When by His grace,*

I am Glory for me, glory for me;

When by His grace I shall look on His face,

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

