

Refine Women's Ministry
The Psalms: Prayer Book of God's Saints
January 13, 2021 by Kim Peelen

The unfailing, unchanging truths of the Psalms have been their (believers) greatest source of strength in such hours of difficulty. It is, unquestionably, the divinely inspired Psalter that brings courage and comfort, support and stability to our lives in times of greatest need. Steven J. Lawson

God has inspired a psalm for every sigh of the soul. . . the very purpose God put them in his Word to us is for us to put them in our words to him. Donald S. Whitney

By praying the Psalms back to God, we learn to pray in tune with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Ben Patterson

That the Israelites are given their own national collection of songs is a tribute to the God of love who has called them into relationship with himself. . . As a treasure trove of wisdom, Israel's songs are a storehouse of moral insight, gentle reproof, and daily exhortation. F. LaGard Smith

Our Theme for this year is 'Christ. . . The Anchor of the Soul' from *Hebrews 6:1*, *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.* The truths from our fall study on the I AMs of Christ- I Am the Bread of Life, I Am the Light of the World, I Am the Door, I Am the Good Shepherd, I Am the Resurrection and the Life, I Am the Way, The Truth, and the Life, I AM the True Vine -in order to keep our souls from drifting off course, must invade our thoughts, emotions, and actions. To continue strengthening our hope in Christ, our study this semester is the prayer book of Israel, The Psalms. Though not exhaustive, we will briefly overview the book as well as examine several psalms, and in small groups you will practice praying the psalms aloud.

The Psalms are a collection of poems, prayers, and songs - referred to as "The Book of Praises" in Hebrew, and "The Book of Psalms" in Greek (songs sung to accompaniment of stringed instruments). It is the hymnal of the Jewish people. Matthew Henry aptly says, *"If we make the psalms familiar to us, whatever we have to ask at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may be assisted from thence. Whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may here find words to clothe it; sound speech which cannot be condemned. In the language of this Divine book, the prayers and praises of the church have been offered up to the throne of grace from age to age.* (page 454). If we want to rest in the peaceful hope of Christ, while skillfully navigating the rough waters of our culture, this book can be the compass that keeps us on course.

As an introduction to the Psalms, watch the video from the *Bible Project: Book Overview of The Psalms*. It is very dense with information, but don't be discouraged; take in what you can and marvel at the purposeful design and organization of these 150 songs written by numerous authors over 1000 years.

OVERVIEW:

The Book of Psalms is organized into five divisions, each ending with a concluding benediction, *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.* These smaller divisions reflect the truths of the Torah, or Law of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Preaching The Psalms, page 84).

Organization of Book of Psalms

Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Psalm 1-41	Psalm 42 – 72	Psalm 73 – 89	Psalm 90 – 106	Psalm 107 –150
Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Creation	Ruin/Redemption	Sanctuary/Holy	Wilderness	God’s Word
David	David	Asaph/sons of Korah/Heman	Moses/Anonymous	David/Anonymous
Compiled 1000BC David	Compiled 700BC Hezekiah	Compiled 700BC Hezekiah	Compiled 450BC Ezra	Compiled 450BC Ezra

Purpose of the Psalms: A guide for proper worship of God as it directs the heart of the believer toward God in every aspect of life.

Introduction to the Psalms: Psalm 1 (anonymous) and Psalm 2 (Acts 4:25 credits David)

These two psalms introduce the main themes of the remaining 150 Psalms:

Two Paths/Two People – RIGHTEOUS - those right with God and
WICKED - those wrong with God

Invincible Kingdom of Christ – RIGHTEOUS KING/RULER defeats worldly

rulers/enemies **Conclusion to the Psalms:**

Psalms 146 – 150 – an extended series of praise poems to Yaweh concludes the book. Note the repetition of “Praise the LORD!” throughout, ending with the last psalm in which every line begins with “Praise Him”.

Superscriptions and Notations: Words added to the beginning of a psalm as editorial information on author, history, context, musical accompaniment, or how to sing it. They are considered reliable additions. As a songbook, these notes give worship leader direction to interpret the singing and playing. For instance, *Selah*, is a term that signals a brief interlude, change of accompaniment, a pause to reflect on the words, or to begin a new section.

Literary Types: understanding these types is important for interpreting the psalms.
Praise – adoration for God based on Who He is and His greatness to His people

Lament – cry for deliverance for pain and suffering

Pilgrim – inspiration for praise to God as they travel to Jerusalem for festivals

Wisdom – stark contrast between the two paths of life between

righteous/wicked Imprecatory – invoke God’s wrath on God’s enemies

Royal/Messianic – rule of earthly king and Christ the Messiah, King of Kings

Discussion Groups: Introduction to the Book of Psalms in Psalm 1 and 2

1. Read Psalm 1.

Psalm 1 (NIV 1984)

*Blessed is the man who
does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers,
but his delight is
in the law of the LORD, and
on his law he meditates day and night.*

*He is like a tree
planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season and
whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.*

*Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked
will not stand in the judgment [have a standing in the law before the
judge] nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

*For the LORD
watches over the way of the righteous, but
the way of the wicked will perish.*

2. Note any key words, repeated phrases, and main ideas.

3. What two kinds of people are described?

4. What characterizes the “blessed man” – what does he do or NOT do?
5. What characterized the “wicked man” – what does he do or NOT do?
6. Compare the image of a tree planted by streams to chaff that the wind blows away. What decision and action is necessary to be a person planted rather than be like weightless chaff?
7. Who enforces the ultimate fate of the righteous (blessed man) and the wicked?

Psalm 2 (NASB) headings by Alec Motyer

Kings opposing:

*Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
"Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!"*

The LORD speaks:

*He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury,
saying, "But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."*

The Son speaks:

*"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession.
'You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"*

Kings submitting:

*Now therefore, O kings, show discernment:
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
Worship the LORD with reverence
And rejoice with trembling.
Do homage [kiss] to the Son,
that He not become angry, and you perish [in] the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!*

1. In this “conversation”, what are the opposing kings planning to do?

2. What is the LORD’s response to their plans?

3. What is the LORD’s plan for the Son? What will the Son do to the kings/nations?

4. What does the LORD command the opposing kings to do? What happens if they do not obey the LORD’s instructions?

5. How does this psalm address your situation?

Psalm 1: Two Paths/ Two People (explanations taken from Alec Motyer)

There are two types of people, blessed or wicked, the psalmist declares. This truth seems too simplistic for our tastes, we want to categorize and quantify effort apart from intention and outcome. Not so the LORD – He sees only two types of people.

- BLESSED – *ashrey* – *one who is under God’s blessing*. The psalm opens with this man Who is this person and what marks him out for God’s favor?

First, he intentionally avoids getting ensnared with those who oppose the LORD by having a fixed attitude or decision in three areas of life:

First, not **walking** or seeking advice of the wicked, sharing their man-centered worldview

Next, he will not **stand** or ‘be counted with’ the way of sinners, adopting their lifestyle

Finally, he will not **take a seat** “get settled”, have close relationships with mockers of God.

The three verbs: walk, stand, and sit describe a progression of becoming aligned with the thoughts, ideals, and actions of the wicked – each term expressing a more defiant, settled rebellious attitude against God and His commands until he is a cynic or scoffer.

That is what the blessed man DOES NOT do. In stark contrast, what he DOES do is establish inward realities (not outward obedience) that place the law of the LORD as the delight of his will, and meditation that directs and feeds his mind continually. The result of this is his

life, or “tree”, is not in its natural position or where it once was; rather it is transplanted from a desolate desert to a delightful spot chosen specifically to maximize its fruitfulness. With his mind set on obeying God’s commands, his position of faith will prosper; it will go well with him because he is right with God.

- WICKED - Not so with the wicked! Verse 4 begins a stark contrast to the Blessed one with the imagery of chaff, a papery covering of grain that must be removed before eating. Chaff is so lightweight that a gentle wind can separate it from the grain so it can be burned and not contaminate the grain. Compared to the tree that is firmly anchored by streams of water, the chaff cannot resist even a puff of air before it is blown off course.

This lack of anchoring or having God’s truth in his heart, mind, and soul, the wicked will not “rise up” or have a standing in the law before God the Perfect Judge; they are guilty as charged and will suffer their punishment.

How well Yaweh knows the hearts of men! He is intimately aware of and maintains a caring relationship with the ones right with him – the ‘righteous ones’ – and they will be pardoned by God. However, the wicked and their characteristic habits of life will lead to perishing.

Psalms 1 begins with BLESSED and ends with PERISH – the two paths for the two types of people: a path of blessing for those who delight in the LORD; a path of perishing for the wicked who mock and reject the LORD.

Psalm 2: Anointed King of Kings (explanations taken from Alec Motyer)

Verses 1-3: The psalm opens with a conference of the earthly kings who rule the nations. The verb tenses give the sense of fixed determination and repeated actions – this is the customary behavior of these rulers who oppose the way of the LORD. They plot to unshackle themselves from the control of God in favor of their rule of self.

Verses 4-6: God, who is the reigning reality and power and is The Sovereign One (LORD), laughs mockingly at the earthly kings’ plans -they are ridiculous! After His laughing runs its course, it will be time for Him to act, and He will be angry, even snorting in anger. God expresses His choice for king that He will install ‘on the hill where His holiness is present and is its most significant feature’.

Verses 7-9: The Son, with strong personal determination, relates Yaweh’s statute (carved in the rock for permanency) that He will possess the nations, shepherding His faithful ones with firmness and strength. His enemies, however, will face His absolute power with their total helplessness and shatter like earthenware.

Verses 10 -12: This is a final exhortation for the world’s decision makers or “judges” to show discernment, to worship the LORD with reverence, to rejoice with trembling, and do homage to the Son. If they continue in their way (unchanged lifestyle), the LORD’s anger will consume them; like the wicked in Psalm 1 they will perish. Finally, the psalmist exclaims, “*How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!*” ending Psalm 2 where psalm 1 begins, with blessing for the one who delights himself in God.

CONCLUSION: These Psalms are linked– the beginning blessing of Psalm 1 is repeated the end of Psalm 2. The LORD’s favor is on the person who is ‘right’ with God, whose way of life

exhibits obedience to His Way: distinctive advice (counsel), distinctive principles (takes his stand), and distinctive convictions (sit in the seat). Psalm 2 ends with a call for a special relationship with God's Anointed Son that includes personal devotion (homage) and reliance (seek refuge). The individual who lives this way is changed for the better, being transplanted from what he used to be to a new position - to streams of life-giving water or in Psalm 2, to joyful submission to the King of Kings reigning on Zion. How can this newness of life and position come to be? It only comes by heeding and submitting to the Word of God and being devoted to the Lord Jesus, the LORD's King!

Do you desire a hope, an anchor, to keep you from worry, fear, and despair in these uncertain times? Then take refuge in Jesus Christ - humbly submit to His rulership over your life and be saved. Do not delay for one day the King will speak in wrath and condemn all who reject Him.

HOMework:

- Pray Psalm 1 and 2 reflecting the truth back to God from a verse or two, apply a specific request (for you or others) based on that truth.
- Watch the BibleProject: Book Overview of Psalms again.
- Read Psalm 90 and 91 for next week

RESOURCES

BibleProject.com -Book Overview: Psalms [videos, study guides, and blogs]

The Psalms by the Day: A New Devotional Translation, by Alec Motyer, 2016

Preaching the Psalms: Unlocking the Unsearchable Riches of David's Treasury, by Steven J. Lawson, 2012

The Daily Bible: 30 Days Through the Bible by F. LaGard Smith, 2004, NIV

Praying the Bible by Donald S. Whitney, 2015

Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 1-75 and 76-150, by Steven J. Lawson

Matthew Henry's concise Commentary on the Whole Bible, by Matthew Henry, 1997