

Getting Into The Promised Land Without Falling Asleep In Leviticus

7. The United Monarchy – The Writings Part 1 - Psalms

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**A Teaching Commentary
of the Old Testament**

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1 Introduction

The book of Psalms is the official hymnal of the nation of Israel. A psalm is a hymn. It appears in our Bible and the Hebrew Bible as text only, but these were hymns that were sung by the Jewish people. Some offer praise and worship to God. Some raise the cries and the pains of the people to God. Some are prayers for reconciliation with God. The psalms contain the full range of human emotions and human experience and raise them up as an offering to God.

David is often cited as the author of the book of Psalms. In fact, David did write many of them. Many of the psalms, however, were written by people other than David. Many are anonymous. Some of those not written by David were written by his associates during his lifetime.

When I say that a certain psalm is attributed to a given individual (e.g. David), I mean that the text of the psalm actually cites that individual. For instance, Psalm 3 begins with: "A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom." In an English translation, this is treated as if it were some sort of commentary inserted by the publisher. In my Bible, it is separated from the text by a blank line and printed in smaller letters than the rest of the psalm. In fact, in the original Hebrew, this line "A psalm of David..." is verse 1 of the psalm. In an English translation, verse 1 is "O Lord, how many are my foes..." In Hebrew, that is verse 2. It is common for the English translation of a verse of Psalms to have a different verse number than its Hebrew equivalent.

The various psalms are attributed to many individuals, which include:

- David (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145)
- The Sons of Korah (42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88)
- Asaph (50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83)
- Solomon (72, 127)
- Ethan the Ezrahite (89)
- Moses (90)

It is also worthy of note that when the text says, for example, "A psalm of David," in Hebrew this could also mean "A psalm for David", or "A psalm to David." It is possible that some of these were not actually written by him but for him.

The Sons of Korah were more than likely a group of musicians who ministered at the temple. Asaph is mentioned by name in 1 Chronicles 25 as a man set aside by David to be a temple music minister. Ethan the Ezrahite is unknown outside of this psalm.

Many of the psalms say "A song of ascents" in the title. A song of ascents was intended to be sung by people as they walked to Jerusalem. Jerusalem sat on a hill and as one went to Jerusalem he ascended. It was common to sing a song of ascents as one approached the city.

Other psalms identify themselves according to the following types:

- maskil (32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142)

This is a Hebrew word that has an uncertain meaning in English (which is why NIV transliterates it rather than translating it). More than likely, it is a wisdom song – a teaching passage set to music.

- miktam (16, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60)

Again, the significance of this is uncertain. It is a Hebrew word that means "inscription" or "engraving."

- shiggaion (7)

Again, the meaning of this word is unknown.

The book of Psalms is in fact five books. Book 1 spans Psalm 1-41. Book 2 is Psalm 42-72. Book 3 is Psalm 73-89. Book 4 is Psalm 90-106. Book 5 is Psalm 107-150. These were probably five independent hymn books that were eventually combined into one book of Psalms and included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible.

Psalms contains the shortest chapter in the Bible: Psalm 117 (2 verses). It also contains the longest chapter in the Bible: Psalm 119 (176 verses).

When studying the psalms, it is important to remember that they are poetry. They are written to utilize the poetic aspects of the Hebrew language. Unfortunately, much of this is lost in the English translation, but the beauty is still there. These are not historical narratives. They are cries of the heart. They are also amazingly prophetic in some areas. We shall consider some of the Messianic prophecy in the Psalms as we go through them.

A feature of Hebrew poetry that is prevalent in psalms is that of parallelism. Consider Psalm 7:14:

He who is pregnant with evil
and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment

This is a good example of "synonymous" parallelism. A thought that is stated in one line is repeated in a somewhat rephrased form in the next. "Pregnant with evil" and "conceives trouble" are parallel ideas. The repeating gives emphasis to the overall concept. One will also find "antithetic" parallelism in such passages as Psalm 37:9:

For evil men will be cut off,
but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

In antithetic parallelism, one line states the opposite of the previous. Both methods add emphasis and also make the thought more memorable. Psalms and Proverbs both contain a great deal of parallelism.

The book of Psalms is not concerned with telling a story or advancing the history of the nation, but is instead an expression of emotions. Because of this, it is a rich portrayal of the character of God. It paints a picture of God on an emotional canvass and uses love, anger, pain, joy, and excitement for its colors. The result of this is a beauty that will not be found anywhere else in literature.

How does one analyze beauty? The difficulty that one faces in writing a commentary on Psalms is that the contents of Psalms were not meant to be studied or analyzed; they were meant to be experienced. There is no substitute for that. The intent of this overview will be to pull out some

of the themes of the psalms and to highlight some of their historical backgrounds in hopes that you will subsequently read your way through the book. It will be well worth your while.

Since the Psalms are expressions of emotions, the perception that an individual will have when he reads a given psalm may depend somewhat on his emotional state when he reads that psalm. If a person who is in trouble or under a great deal of stress reads a particular psalm, he may be impressed that the psalm is a cry to God for assistance or deliverance. If the same person reads the same psalm at a time in his life when everything is going well, he may be impressed that the psalm is a celebration of the greatness and power of God. The point is that the psalms have the ability to appeal to us differently depending upon where we are spiritually and emotionally in our lives. With that being said, there do seem to be certain themes that emerge from the various psalms. Many of the psalms have several themes, and again, what they are is very much in the eye of the beholder. The following table shows the major themes that seemed to emerge from the various psalms as I studied them. The number after each theme shows how many psalms contained that theme. For example, the first entry is “God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked (43).” This indicates that there are 43 psalms that contain that theme. In the right-hand column are the psalms that contain this theme. The ones that are in bold are explored more fully in the commentary below. Because so many of the psalms have overlapping themes, I have made no attempt to thoroughly discuss each one.

Theme	Psalms Containing This Theme
God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked (43)	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 49, 50, 52, 53, 58, 68, 73, 75, 81, 91, 92, 94, 107, 109, 112, 115, 125, 138, 140, 144
Praising God for his majesty and/or creation (31)	8, 19, 29, 33, 46, 63, 65, 66, 68, 75, 76, 78, 86, 89, 90, 93, 97, 99, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 114, 135, 136, 139, 145, 146, 147, 148
God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us (29)	3, 7, 9, 10, 13, 18, 27, 30, 31, 40, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 108, 110, 116, 118, 120, 124, 142, 143
A call to joyful praise and worship (21)	33, 34, 47, 66, 67, 81, 92, 95, 96, 98, 100, 105, 113, 117, 126, 134, 135, 136, 148, 149, 150
Calling out to God when he seems distant (18)	13, 22, 42, 43, 44, 74, 77, 79, 80, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 101, 102, 130, 137
Messianic prophecy (8)	2, 16, 22, 31, 69, 89, 110, 118
A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship (8)	6, 30, 32, 38, 39, 51, 106, 137
God is the source of all good things for those who seek him (7)	4, 23, 34, 63, 65, 121, 141
Celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple (5)	48, 84, 87, 122, 132
Calling upon God to bring judgment upon the wicked and/or defend the poor and oppressed (4)	82, 83, 129, 146
Humbling oneself before the holiness of God (3)	15, 24, 131
Seek eternal treasures rather than material wealth (3)	49, 62, 73
A cry for a deeper relationship with God (3)	61, 86, 123
The importance of giving God priority in the home (2)	127, 128

Celebrating the wedding of a righteous king of Israel or Judah (1)	45
A prayer for God to bless the king and make him a righteous servant (1)	72
Celebrating the law of the Lord (1)	119
A call for unity among the people of God (1)	133

2 Psalm 1

Psalm 1

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme of Psalm 1 is that God will protect and nurture those who follow after righteousness and that God will destroy the wicked. The choices that men make impact their relationship with God. God is a God of judgment and the day will come when he will deal with man's wickedness. When that day of judgment comes, the righteous will stand.

The psalm opens with "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners..." Note that it does not say "Blessed is the man who is not wicked and is not a sinner." It says that the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or hang around with sinners will be blessed. This is an important point. A righteous man who seeks counsel from unrighteous men will soon become an unrighteous man. A righteous man who stands in the way of sinners will soon be a sinner. Like it or not, we are a product of the company that we keep. In Genesis 13:12, Lot pitched his tent "near" Sodom. Exactly one chapter later (Genesis 14:12) we learn that he was living "in" Sodom. Why would we suppose that it would be any different with us?

Our delight is to be in the law of the Lord. A man who is anchored in the law of the Lord is like a tree planted by a stream. The nourishment to sustain it is always present. It brings forth fruit in its season, which is also an interesting observation.

Trees bear fruit in season. They do not bear fruit year-round. God designed them in such a way that they bear fruit in some seasons and rest in other seasons. These cycles allow the trees to grow strong, to sustain life, and to bring forth fruit, bearing seed capable multiplying – bringing forth new life. God designed us the same way. We are to bear fruit in season. We are to rest in season. At times we are to serve. At times we are to receive. If we violate these cycles then our lives are out of balance. At one extreme, we become lackadaisical, contributing nothing to the community or to the Kingdom of God. At the other extreme, we volunteer for every service opportunity, join every church committee possible, attend every service and every seminar and every conference, and worry that we are not doing enough. A person like this may look like he has great zeal for God, but frequently if not usually this person is operating in an obsessive-compulsive manner, often motivated more out of fear than out of grace, and ultimately he burns out and is of use to no one. God is a God of balance. We are to serve – to bear fruit in season. We are to receive – to rest in season. In this manner, we grow strong, sustain our strength, and bring forth fruit containing seed capable of multiplying our ministry – bringing forth new life. If everyone would do this then the needs of the community would be met with abundance.

According to the psalm, if we operate in this manner, our leaves will not wither. Whatever we do will prosper. In the end when the wicked are judged and blown away like chaff, we will stand in the protection of the Lord.

3 Psalm 2

Psalm 2

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; Messianic prophecy

Psalm 2 contains a Messianic vision of the future. The psalm refers to the Messiah, called the "Anointed One" in verse 2. "Messiah" or "Christ" (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah") literally means "Anointed One." Psalm 2 tells of a time when God will install his Anointed One as his king in Zion. This will be an individual that God calls his Son. The kings of the earth will rise up and rebel against this anointed king. He will rule over them with an iron scepter and dash them to pieces like pottery. The psalm admonishes people to serve him with fear in order to avoid his wrath but to rejoice, because those who subject themselves to him will be blessed.

This is a Messianic prophecy, but it seems to refer to the second coming rather than the first. In his first coming, Jesus was the suffering servant as described in Isaiah 53. In his second coming, we expect him to be the mighty king described in Psalm 2. This is the king still awaited by the Jews, and it was this concept of a king that caused so many of them to miss Jesus when he came the first time.

4 Psalm 3

Psalm 3

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 3 begins with "A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom." This is the first psalm that begins with an introduction. This particular introduction gives the historical setting for the writing of the psalm.

The message of the psalm is that even when we are pursued by enemies who desire to do us harm, God is the source of our protection. We may draw strength from the fact that God is our deliverer. It reminds us that even in those times when the world (or even our own family members) seek to entrap, humiliate, and destroy us,

But you are a shield around me, O Lord,
my Glorious one, who lifts up my head.

This is also the first psalm to include the word "Selah" in the text. We are not really sure what this word means, but it appears in many psalms. It seems to be some sort of instruction to the music leader, sort of like "crescendo" or "staccato" or "pianissimo" marks that might be found in music today.

Regardless of the circumstances, David knew who his deliverer was. The same God that had empowered him to kill lions and bears that had tried to attack his father's sheep, who had delivered Goliath into his hands, who had protected him when Saul tried to take his life, who had given him the Kingdom and had driven out the Philistines before him could be trusted to save him now. Every one of us needs a history with God. In times of challenge or trouble we need to be reminded by our own experiences that God is faithful and more than able to deliver through

the next obstacle or threat. When he does, that experience should strengthen the foundation of our faith and be a resource to us when we face the next challenge.

The psalm concludes with a promise and a prayer that David held close to his heart.

From the Lord comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people.

5 Psalm 4

Psalm 4

Author: David

Theme(s): God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

The text of Psalm 4 indicates that it is a psalm of David. It indicates that it is to be accompanied by stringed instruments. As already stated, the Psalms were the hymns of the nation and many contained instructions about how they were to be played. In like manner, Psalm 5 indicates that it is to be accompanied by flutes.

Poetry is a medium that is capable of capturing very deep thoughts in very few words. Psalm 4 is an example of this. The psalm is short, containing only eight verses. At the same time, the truths that it contains are deep.

David was a king. He lived in a palace. He had wealth and power. He had several wives and many children. It is easy to think of him as a man of luxury living a life of plenty. David was all of those things, but David was also a man who spent years hiding for his life because his father-in-law wanted to kill him. He was a man who spent most of his life fighting the enemies of the nation. He is a man who endured a rebellion led by his own son. He spent more of his life dealing with conflict than enjoying the luxury of his position. The hardships that he faced molded his character and taught him to rely upon God. These times of trial gave birth to the psalms of David, not the times of ease.

Psalm 4:4 says,

In your anger do not sin;
When you are on your beds,
Search your hearts and be silent (Selah.)

There were a number of people who did things to David that have to have made him angry. Saul betrayed and persecuted him. Joab was constantly insubordinate. Michal snubbed him. Absalom tried to take over his kingdom. Later Adonijah tried to take over his kingdom. The list could go on and on.

The point is that David surely spent part of his life angry at people. It is a human emotion. It is not sin. The manner in which we deal with anger can be sinful, however. Who among us has not had to contend with this?

Depending upon one's level of spiritual maturity, most wrongs that are done to a person are trivial enough to have no effect. Each person has some sort of threshold, however when a grievance becomes noticeable and provokes to anger. What can I do when my threshold gets crossed?

More often than not I do nothing when it actually happens. The trouble for me tends to come later. When I find myself with an unoccupied mind, the anger surfaces and my flesh begins to process it. It can happen while I am driving my car, taking a shower, or, as the psalm indicated, when I am in my bed. The offense replays in my mind. Unless I do something about it, I begin to imagine conversations that never occurred in which I give the offender a good piece of my mind and chastise him for ruining my life. In the process, my anger increases and the offense becomes bigger than it was before. The seed of anger turns into a full-grown tree of bitterness. Whatever happened becomes much more harmful to me than it ever should have been. It is all because I searched my emotions and embraced my anger rather than searching my heart, forgiving, and remaining silent. Paul cited this verse in Ephesians 4:26-27. There, he says, "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." When we violate this principle, we are giving the devil a foothold in our lives. Bitterness and unforgiveness open the door to a range of problems, from broken relationships (with God and with fellow man) to depression to physical illness.

Verse 7 says,

You have filled my heart with greater joy
than when their new grain and new wine abound.

David understood the source of true joy. Some men look to the harvest (the next paycheck or whatever) as the source of happiness. In fact, there are many things that the world can offer that will amuse or satisfy us for a time. It is always a fleeting joy, however. It comes and it goes. It does not endure.

The man who knows how to find his joy in the Lord, however has found a source that never runs dry.

Verse 5 tells us to offer "right sacrifices" and trust in the Lord. What are "right sacrifices?" 1 Samuel 15:22 says,

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
To obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Psalm 51:17 says

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

The best sacrifice that we can offer to God is that of obedience, of a submitted, broken, and contrite heart. If we bend before him, follow his ways, and trust in the Lord, as verse 5 indicates, then we will have peace. He will reward us with joy far greater than anything that new grain or new wine could bring.

If we live in harmony and forgiveness with our fellow man and in submission to God, looking to him as the source of our joy, the results will be as described in verse 8.

I will lie down and sleep in peace,
For you alone, O Lord,
Make me dwell in safety.

6 Psalm 5

Psalm 5

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

7 Psalm 6

Psalm 6

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; a cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship.

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 32, 36, 37, 49, 50, 51, 52, 73, 91, 94, and 137.

8 Psalm 7

Psalm 7

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 7 is identified as a psalm of David. The setting of the psalm is uncertain, but it could well have been written during the time that David was running from Saul. The text indicates that David is being pursued without cause and that people are seeking to kill him for no reason. In the psalm he is crying out for justice. He invites the Lord to search him and judge him but is confident that he will find favor in the process. Verse 8 says,

Let the Lord judge the peoples.
Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness,
According to my integrity, O Most High.

He is calling for God to bring down his wrath upon the unrighteous, upon those who are seeking to do him harm.

Verse 15 says:

He who digs a hole and scoops it out
falls into the pit he has made.

It is interesting to find this here in Psalms because this is repeated almost verbatim in Proverbs 26:27 and Ecclesiastes 10:8. The authorship of both of those books is attributed to Solomon, who must have learned this saying from his father.

9 Psalm 8

Psalm 8

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 8 is one of the better-known psalms. It rejoices in the hierarchy in creation. Above all things is God. Verse 1 says:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

Verse 2 says that God has ordained praise from the lips of children because of his enemies. The praise will silence the enemies of God. It is important for us to realize the power that we have when we simply praise God. We have the power to silence “the foe and the avenger” simply by lifting up the name of God in praise.

David is in awe of God – his majesty, his glory, and simply who he is. He is above all creation and greater than any enemy. In all of that, however, God cares for man and has exalted him. Verses 3-6 say:

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands,
you put everything under his feet.

God gave man dominion over the rest of creation! God made man to be a higher order of creature than any other! David found this to be an awesome thought and it should be no less awesome to us. We are special to God. It is not that God does not care for the rest of his creation; it is just that he cares for us more.

After David has reflected on all of this, he can reach only one conclusion. Verse 9 repeats:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

10 Psalm 9

Psalm 9

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

11 Psalm 10

Psalm 10

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

12 Psalm 11

Psalm 11

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

13 Psalm 12

Psalm 12

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

14 Psalm 13

Psalm 13

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us; calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 13:5-6 says:

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
for he has been good to me.

The psalm is the cry of a man who feels cut off from the presence of God. He is seeking God but cannot find him. He is in pain over the separation. Because of this separation, he feels that his enemies are having victory over him. Still, through it all, he trusts in God's love and his salvation. At times when we feel distant from God, we should still have that same level of trust and know that God loves us. He is the source of our salvation.

15 Psalm 14

Psalm 14

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

16 Psalm 15

Psalm 15

Author: David

Theme(s): Humbling oneself before the holiness of God

Psalm 15 gives the standards for which we should strive if we want to be in God's presence, or, as verse 1 says, to dwell in his sanctuary and to live on his holy hill. According to the psalm, that set of people includes:

- those whose walk is blameless
- those who do what is righteous
- those who speak the truth
- those who are without slander
- those who treat their neighbors right
- those who do not slur other people
- those who despise the wicked and honor those who fear God
- those who keep their oaths, even when it hurts
- those who are honest in financial dealings

The list is actually a bit scary. Who lives up to these standards? Who among us is consistently righteous, completely without slander, has never bent the truth, etc.? Nobody. Does that mean that none of us may dwell with God in his sanctuary or live on his holy hill? The answer is, "Yes and no."

None of us can meet these standards by our own efforts. Fortunately we do not have to meet them ourselves. When Jesus was on the cross he took upon himself the sin of the world. That is a very personal transaction. When he hung on the cross he bore the weight and the guilt of every unrighteous act, every untrue word spoken, every bit of slander, etc. that I have ever committed or ever will commit. He also bore yours. The humiliation, the pain, the suffering, and the death that he experienced that day were a result of my rebellion and yours. That day, cleansing from sin and forgiveness from sin were appropriated to anyone who would receive it. In the eyes of God, regardless of past, present, or future, a believer is a person

- whose walk is blameless
- who does what is righteous
- who speaks the truth
- who is without slander
- who treats his neighbors right
- who does not slur other people
- who despises the wicked and honors those who fear God
- who keeps his oaths, even when it hurts
- who is honest in financial dealings

Since Jesus paid such a terrible price for us to be such people, it is incumbent upon us to try to live up to these standards, but even when we fail, as we surely will, we are counted by God as worthy to dwell in his sanctuary and to live on his holy hill.

17 Psalm 16

Psalm 16

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; Messianic prophecy

A theme that is so common in the psalms of David is that God cares for those who are faithful to him and that his wrath and judgment will be poured out upon those to turn to other gods. This is one of those psalms. Often those psalms seem to have as a backdrop a time when David is being pursued by his enemies. Psalm 16 does not seem to be set in this context. If there was a particular event that prompted the writing it is not evident. More than likely it is simply a reflection by David on the nature of God. God does indeed protect and provide for those who are faithful to him. He will indeed judge those who turn from him and follow other gods.

Verses 3-4 say,

As for the saints who are in the land,
They are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.
The sorrows of those will increase
Who run after other gods.
I will not pour out their libations of blood
Or take up their names on my lips.

We often think of “saints” as being a New Testament concept, but here we find it embedded deeply in the psalms of David. The term “saint” means “holy one.” It simply refers to a righteous person. Sainthood was never intended to be a title bestowed by some religious committee. A saint is simply a person who seeks to live a righteous life, who has chosen to follow God rather than to follow gods. In the New Testament, the word “saint” is synonymous with “believer.”

How does one achieve righteousness? Understand that this is not something that we are capable of doing on our own. Isaiah 65:4 says that our righteous acts are as filthy rags. Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” You cannot work hard enough or long enough to produce your own righteousness. It is futile to try. The good news, however is that you do not have to try. By simply receiving the sacrifice of Christ, we also receive righteousness from God. Our responsibility is not to produce that righteousness; it is to walk in that righteousness. The things that we do, the attitudes that we have, and the choices that we make should be consistent with the righteousness that we have been freely given.

The point in the psalm is that saints – those who choose a life of following God – are a glorious delight to the Lord. It is surely beyond our ability to understand how much he loves us. He is excited about us. We are his delight – his glorious delight. On the other hand, those who pursue other gods are pursuing sorrow. God will reject them, pure and simple.

Verses 5-8 say,

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;
You have made my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
Surely I have a delightful inheritance.
I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
Even at night my heart instructs me.
I have set the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

David lived in the security of God's provision for his life. He knew that his portion and his cup were from God. His "boundary lines," or the land which he was given and upon which he dwelt were pleasant to him. His inheritance was delightful. God was his counselor. God spoke to him at night, probably filling him during his sleep with prophetic dreams and visions. David said that he set the Lord always before himself, which implies that he was always in a posture of following God. Because of the constant presence of God in his life, he could not be shaken.

We can look at the life of David and know that all of this was true in his life (more often than not – there was that incident with Bathsheba). What we may fail to realize, however is that God loves each of us as much as he loved David. David may have had a different sort of calling on his life than any of us, but God loves every one of us just as much as he loved David. Jesus did not die for David any more than he died for you or me. What does that mean? If I so choose, I can live in the security of God's provision for my life. I can know that my portion and my cup are from God. My boundary lines will be pleasant to me. My inheritance will be delightful. God will be my counselor. God will speak to me at night, filling me during my sleep with prophetic dreams and visions. If I will set the Lord always before me, always following God, then God will be a constant presence in my life and I will not be shaken. The same is true for you. That is our provision for this life. Verses 9-10 lead into the provision for the next.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
My body also will rest secure,
Because you will not abandon me to the grave,
Nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

David lived in expectation of the resurrection. He knew that those who follow God, the saints in whom he delights would not be abandoned to the grave. This passage also gives a Messianic glimpse of the Holy One who would not see decay. We obviously see this fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. In the broader sense, however this is fulfilled in the fact that all of us will experience the same sort of resurrection that Jesus experienced. None of us will be abandoned to the grave. As verse 11 says, we will have "eternal pleasures at your right hand."

What a great promise this is to those who are faithful to God.

We each have a choice to make. We can follow God, the result being that we are his glorious delight, receiving his protection and provision, receiving pleasant boundary lines, a delightful inheritance, his counsel, his instruction, and his constant protective presence. Alternatively, we can follow other gods and be rejected by the Creator of the universe.

18 Psalm 17

Psalm 17

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

19 Psalm 18

Psalm 18

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 16, 27, 30, 31, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 56, 62, 69, 73, 91, 94, 110, and 118.

20 Psalm 19

Psalm 19

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 19 is a psalm of David exploring the majesty of the Creator as revealed in his creation. There is not a man or woman on the earth who has not had a picture of the character of God, because it is written all over creation. Psalm 19:1 says:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Recently I visited a Museum of Natural History in one of the larger cities in the United States. Although many of the exhibits were very interesting, before long the whole experience began to frustrate me because the museum as a whole was an elaborate (and expensive) attempt to explore the mysteries of creation void of the Creator. When a person is hardened against the knowledge that life has an author, then he can explore forever the mystery of the origin of life and never find an answer. How can an intelligent person look at the intricacies and the order displayed by the simplest of life forms and conclude that all happened by chance? It is a much greater leap of faith than simply opening one's mind to the character of the Creator.

The heavens, and indeed all of creation declare the glory of God. Psalm 19 says that day after day the heavens pour forth speech and night after night they display knowledge. The revelation of God to man is constant. It reveals his character and his precepts. The standards of God may be understood by examining his work.

Verses 7-13 celebrate the law of the Lord. David says that the law revives the soul. His statutes are trustworthy and simple. They bring us joy and light. People often perceive the law of God to be an oppressive list of DON'Ts, but they were never intended to be that. The laws of God were the "paths of righteousness" mentioned in Psalm 23. They were intended to give us an arena of

safety in which to dwell. Inside those walls our lives should be joyful, full of light, safe, and simple. In verse 10, David says that the laws are “more precious than gold” and “sweeter than honey.” To him they were hardly oppressive. Neither should they be to us.

In verse 13 he prays, as we should that God will keep him from willful sins so that he can be blameless. It is as Jesus taught us to pray, “lead us not into temptation.”

Psalm 19 concludes with a familiar passage. Verse 14 says,

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be pleasing in your sight,
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

21 Psalm 20

Psalm 20

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

22 Psalm 21

Psalm 21

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

23 Psalm 22

Psalm 22

Author: David

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant; Messianic prophecy

Psalm 22 is one of the most stunning chapters in the Bible. This was written by David, around a thousand years before Christ. Still, it is one of the most moving portraits of the crucifixion of Jesus that exists.

Psalm 22:1 says:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

These are the very words spoken by Jesus when he was on the cross. David wrote them at a time when he felt isolated from God. This was a song of desperation for him. He felt encircled by his enemies who were seeking to do him bodily harm. Jesus spoke these words at that moment when God turned away from him because he had just taken on the sins of the world.

God could not look at the sin. For a time, Jesus was isolated from his father. It was an experience he had never had before. He was in desperation. He, too, was encircled by his enemies who were actually doing him cruel bodily harm.

22:6-8 says:

But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by men and despised by the people.
All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

Jesus was despised and rejected by men. At the crucifixion people did mock him and beat him and spit on him. The words of Matthew echo these events. Matthew 27:31 says "After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him." Matthew 27:39 says: Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads." Matthew 27:41-43 says:

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Psalms 22:14-18 says:

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted away within me.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.
Dogs have surrounded me;
a band of evil men has encircled me,
they have pierced my hands and my feet.
I can count all my bones;
people stare and gloat over me.
They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.

This was written by David, who had never witnessed a crucifixion. Crucifixions were Roman atrocities and at the time of David nobody had ever heard of the Romans. A crucifixion would have certainly pulled bones out of joint. When Jesus was crucified, to verify that he was dead they inserted a spear in his side and blood and water poured out. Physiologically, this was a sign that his heart had actually ruptured (melted away within him.) When Jesus was on the cross he cried out from thirst. He was encircled by evil men. His hands and feet were pierced. As he hung on the cross, his bones would have been quite visible. And the New Testament tells us that the soldiers cast lots for his clothing while he was dying on the cross.

Every time I read this I am astounded. Psalm 22 is one of the most stunning chapters in the Bible.

David wrote these words at a time when he was being pursued by an enemy and felt that his own life was being threatened. A band of evil men had encircled him. To him the language was

figurative. To Jesus it became literal. David trusted God in his circumstances. He believed that the Lord would vindicate him and rescue him from his trouble. He believed that God would restore him to a place of honor. In spite of the dire circumstances in which he may have found himself, he knew that God was worthy of honor, praise, and trust. He would entrust his fate and his wellbeing to the hands of God. In that light, at verse 19 the psalm turns to a positive note. He calls upon God to be his strength and his help, to rescue him from those who sought to take his life. He declares the praise of God and calls upon all who fear the Lord to honor him. In verse 26 he says that God will satisfy the needs of the poor. In verse 29 he says that the rich will kneel before him. He goes on to say that future generations will be told about the Lord and will proclaim his righteousness.

In writing the psalm, David expressed the song of his heart. He cried out to God in his bitter circumstances, yet expressed confidence that God would preserve him through the trial and restore him to a place of honor, bringing honor upon himself in the process. To Jesus it was more than a song of the heart. It was reality. He experienced everything that David penned, from the cruelty of the torture to the day of restoration and honor. He has satisfied the humble and humbled the rich. Generations have been told of his righteousness and have brought him praise.

Our God is marvelous. It is impossible for me to read this psalm of David and compare it to the events of the crucifixion without marveling at the wisdom of our God.

24 Psalm 23

Psalm 23

Author: David

Theme(s): God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

Psalm 23 may be the best known of the Psalms. It paints a picture of God as the good shepherd, a role that Jesus later claimed for himself. In a very real sense, Jesus was the fulfillment of Psalm 23. The psalm describes a God of provision, who meets our needs physically and spiritually. He provides for us. He protects us from our enemies. He protects us even from the shadow of death. Psalm 23 gives us a hope for eternity as it concludes with "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Some insight may be gained from an understanding of the Hebrew that occurs in the phrase "He leads me in paths of righteousness." Another translation for that word "path" is "rut." "He leads us in the ruts of righteousness." We tend to associate a negative connotation with the word "rut." Who wants to have a life that is "in a rut?"

In fact, a rut can be a very good thing. If you have ever gone bicycle riding across an open field, you may have found it to be an uncomfortable experience. You are never sure of the ground below you. You never know when you are going to hit a rock or a hole or some obstacle that might throw you from your bike. If you are lucky, you can find a trail that has been worn in the grass by people before you. If enough people before you have ridden their bicycles along a common path, the grass will be worn and there will be a visible path – a rut – for you to follow. When you ride in the rut, you are following a proven path and you are much less likely to encounter surprises that throw you from your vehicle and hurt you.

So it is with the ruts of righteousness. God has cleared a path – a rut – for us to follow. We stay in that rut by pursuing righteousness – living in the righteousness that he has given us – and

following his commandments. When we do so, our journey will be smoother and we are less likely to encounter surprises that throw us off course or hurt us. It's not really a bad deal.

Thank God for his ruts of righteousness.

25 Psalm 24

Psalm 24

Author: David

Theme(s): Humbling oneself before the holiness of God

Psalm 24 begins by asserting God's authority over the earth. Since he created it, he owns all of it. It then picks up on a theme found in Psalm 15. It asks (in verse 3) "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?" It answers this question by saying that the ones who are worthy to stand in God's presence are those with clean hands, pure hearts, free from idolatry, and pure in speech. The followers of some religions (e.g. some Moslems) physically wash themselves before praying. I do not think that is really necessary. We tend to go to the opposite extreme, however. Most people feel that they can simply charge into God's presence whenever and however they so desire. The fact is that there needs to be a spirit of purity in a person when he stands in God's presence. I do not think that God really cares whether or not you have dirt under your fingernails, but he cares very much whether or not you have sin on your hands. You do not stand before him in a state of unrepentance. You do not stand before him if your attention is divided between him and other gods. You do not stand before him if you are a liar. God has standards. Fortunately for us, Jesus has paid the price for us to be cleansed of all of these things so that we can stand in the presence of God, but we must appropriate for ourselves that forgiveness and allow our hearts to be changed in the process.

The psalm then shifts gears a bit. The first part of the psalm talks about those who seek the Lord. The second says "Lift up your heads." Your search is ended. Here he is. The latter section may be found in Handel's Messiah. Verses 7-10 say:

Lift up your heads, O you gates,
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty – he is the King of glory.

The words "gates" and "doors" are probably references to the gates/doors of the city of Jerusalem (it was a walled city). Possibly it is a visionary reference to the doors of the temple, which was not yet built. Either way, David was looking to a time when the King of glory would physically enter these gates. This King of glory is identified as the Lord Almighty himself. As we have seen earlier in Psalms, this is a vision of the Christ of the second coming and not the suffering servant Messiah. This is the Messiah who will be a strong and mighty leader in battle. The Jews are still waiting for him. He is still going to come.

26 Psalm 25

Psalm 25

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

27 Psalm 26

Psalm 26

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

28 Psalm 27

Psalm 27

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 27 is another psalm of David. Like so many other of David's psalms it seems to have as a backdrop a time of conflict in David's life, a time of being pursued by his enemies. In spite of his circumstances, David opened the psalm with

The Lord is my light and my salvation –
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life –
of whom shall I be afraid?

In Romans 8:31, Paul said, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" It is the same thought that is reflected in the opening of Psalm 27. If we look to God as our light and our salvation, as the strength of our life, then who can stand in opposition to us? He is a sure stronghold against which nothing and no one can prevail. David knew that with God as his strength, no man and no army could threaten him. God was the source of his confidence.

In verse 4 he said,

One thing I ask of the Lord,
this is what I seek;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

When this is the desire of the heart, the heart will be satisfied. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus told us to seek first the Kingdom of God and all other things would be added to us as well. David understood this paradigm. If our heart's desire is to seek the presence of the Lord then everything else will fall in line. As he says in verses 5 and 6, God will protect us and exalt us above our enemies so that we will be free to enjoy his presence. Verse 8 says, "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." So many of us are guilty of perpetually seeking the Lord's hands – looking for whatever he might give us or do for us. God is willing to give to us and to do for us, but what he wants us to do is to seek his face. We are to relate to who he is and seek out his character rather than simply what he can do for us. He created us for relationship. We satisfy a desire in him when we seek his face.

Verse 10 says, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." That is a message for today. We really know little about David's relationship with his parents. When Samuel came to the house of Jesse to anoint one of his sons as king, Jesse did not even think to present David as one of the candidates. That may have been an oversight, but it may also speak volumes about their relationship. We know little more about their relationship than that. David may have felt forsaken by his mother and father. So many people today feel forsaken by parents. One of the biggest problems facing people today, including Christians is that of having grown up feeling unloved, rejected, ignored, or even abused by parents. This has serious spiritual implications, because people tend to view God through the lens of parents. If the parents were mean then the person is apt to perceive God as mean. If the parents were distant then the person is apt to view God as distant. If the parents were abusive then the person is apt to view God as abusive. Even if we know intellectually that it is wrong, the tendency is still there and the conditioning is very hard to overcome. David understood that this is a lie, however. The Lord receives those who have been forsaken by the world – even by parents. It is a promise that we all need to claim. Embracing that truth is the first step towards healing this emotional and spiritual wound. The process of getting completely over it may take time. We may live in light of the promise at the end of the psalm. Verse 13-14 say,

I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

29 Psalm 28

Psalm 28

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

30 Psalm 29

Psalm 29

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

31 Psalm 30

Psalm 30

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us; a cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

Psalm 30 was written by David to be used at the dedication of the temple. We saw in 1 Chronicles that David made many preparations for the building of the temple. Preparing the music to be sung at its dedication was part of that.

The reason that I wanted to look at this psalm is because it does such a precise job of describing the two aspects of God's character. God is a God of judgment but he is also a God of mercy. David knew that and expressed it so well in verses 4-5:

Sing to the Lord, you saints of his;
praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

How blessed we are that God's balance tilts towards his mercy.

32 Psalm 31

Psalm 31

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us; Messianic prophecy

Psalm 31, like so many of the other psalms is another in which David finds himself being pursued and persecuted by an enemy. He speaks of his need of rescue (v. 2), the trap that is set for him (v. 4), his affliction and anguish (v. 7), distress, sorrow, and grief (v. 9), anguish and groaning that have brought him to a point where his bones are weak (v. 10). He sees himself as the contempt of his neighbors and a dread to his friends (v. 11). In verse 6 he identifies his enemies as people who cling to idols, which may imply that his enemies in this setting are people such as the Philistines rather than individuals within Israel such as the supporters of Saul or of Absalom.

Again, like so many of the other psalms, David's conclusion is that in spite of his circumstances, he looks to God for his protection and provision. He is confident that God will sustain him and deliver him. In the midst of strife, he could turn to God whom he trusted and say (verse 5), "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

Jesus was familiar with this and every other psalm. At the lowest point in his life he was pursued and persecuted by his enemies. The world for him was a hostile and a harmful place. Even as he hung on a cross, dying in pain, he trusted God the Father to be his refuge and sanctuary. Jesus turned his face towards heaven and uttered these same words to God. With that, the Father gave him his ultimate release.

Few, if any of us will ever face circumstances as terrible as those faced by Jesus on the cross. Few, if any of us will ever face circumstances as terrible as those that David faced during much of his life. In spite of those circumstances, both of them were men who trusted in God completely, found joy in their relationship with him, and received the protection and provision of God as a byproduct of that relationship. They did not live in fear because they knew the source of their strength. The psalm and the stories of David and of Jesus were given to us as examples of how we may choose to live as well. Seek God first for relationship (not for what he can give us or do for us) and the protection and provision of God will follow as a byproduct. Regardless of your circumstances, good or bad, into his hands commit your spirit.

33 Psalm 32

Psalm 32

Author: David

Theme(s): A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

What a lesson Psalm 32 has in store for us! What a shame that so many of us miss it so often. How silly to think that we can hide our sin from God. David said in verses 1-5:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me,
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord –
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

All of us have played the game of laboring under guilt while we pretend that God does not notice our sin. In fact, if we are faithful to confess and repent, he is faithful to forgive. What relief is found in that. When we are hiding, it consumes us as if our bones were wasting away and we were groaning all day long. It saps us of our strength. Although this is presented as figurative, poetic language, we may take it very literally. Living with the guilt of unconfessed sin can literally cause disease, including but not limited to the deterioration of bones. It can literally sap us of our strength and even our health. When we confess, however we are forgiven and the ultimate result is blessing and relief. The weight of the sin is gone. Our relationship with God is restored.

David finds sanctuary in this knowledge. In verse 7 he says:

You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

It is the desire of God's heart to be our hiding place, to protect us from trouble, to be our provider and deliverer. That is what he wants to do for each of us. The reason that so many people fail to find that hiding place, that protection, provision, and deliverance is really so simple. One can only hide IN God if he is not hiding FROM him. We need to live in a right relationship with God, which requires that we put aside our pride, humble ourselves, and confess our sins before him. When we cling to our pride and our sin then we hide FROM God, the result being that our bones waste away, our strength is sapped, and we end up groaning all day long. When we hide IN God, however, we find protection and deliverance.

34 Psalm 33

Psalm 33

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 33 is simply a call to worship and praise the goodness of God. The psalm does not seem to be motivated out of distress or a time of war as many of the other psalms were. The psalm does not claim Davidic authorship so it may have been written by someone who never engaged in war.

The psalm begins by calling upon the people to praise God with music – with singing, the harp, and the lyre. It proclaims that the word of the Lord is right and that he is faithful in everything. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of his love.

The psalmist is in awe of God, as each of us should be. Verses 6-7 say,

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.

That is how great our God is. Anyone who will take the time to stop and consider who he is, what he has done, and what he is capable of doing must surely stand in awe of him. Verse 8 calls upon us to consider who he is and to fear and revere him.

“The fear of the Lord” is a mixed metaphor. The word “fear” has multiple meanings. The primary meaning of “fear” is the sort of fear that brings terror. We fear things that can do us harm. Indeed we should have sort of fear of God. He can literally “blow us away” with a single breath. The wrath of God is a terrible thing. A believer who lives in the forgiveness that was appropriated for us at the cross does not need to live in this sort of terror, however. It is healthy for us to remember that God is capable of invoking that sort of fear, but as believers we live in his love and his protection and have his promise that we will not be the objects of his wrath. Still we should fear the Lord. The word “fear” can also mean “awe.” We should always fear the Lord in the sense of having awe about who he is. He spoke the universe into existence. He created

you and he created me. He set plans in motion that no one and nothing can thwart. He gives each of us the option to enjoin him in his plan and to become joint heirs of his Kingdom.

Verse 12 says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Indeed, blessed is the individual whose God is the Lord. It is hard to understand why anyone would oppose him or choose to live anywhere other than in his presence and favor. Verses 16-20 say,

No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.
But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love
to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.
We wait in hope for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.

1 Corinthians 13:12 tells us that we see through a glass darkly. I supposed that this is why so many people put their hope in kings or machines of war or the schemes of men. We need to be people who see face-to-face. God is waiting for us to seek his face. When we find it we find that it is good. He is worthy of our jubilant praise.

35 Psalm 34

Psalm 34

Author: David

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship; God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 4, 23, 33, 65, 66, 67, 100, 105, 121, 126, 136, 141, and 150.

36 Psalm 35

Psalm 35

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

37 Psalm 36

Psalm 36

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

In Psalm 36, David draws a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. Although we should all seek righteousness, we will always live side-by-side with the wicked as long as we are in this world. For that reason it is important that we understand their ways and ultimately their fate.

Verse 1 defines the primary characteristic of a wicked person; it is a man or woman who has no fear of God. When we cease to give God the place that is due him as the awesome, mighty, and wonderful yet fear-inspiring Creator of the universe then we slide into the camp of the wicked.

Verse 2 says,

For in his own eyes he flatters himself
too much to detect or hate his sin.

Everybody needs a god. If you do not give God his place in your life then you are likely to fill that void with yourself. The man who does not exalt God will exalt himself instead. He will lose perspective of who he is and will lose the ability to see his own faults. If he has no view of God then he cannot see himself in rebellion against God. Self-worship inhibits his ability to see or hate his own sin. It is a dangerous state.

Verses 3-4 go on to describe such a person as wicked and deceitful, lacking in wisdom and goodness. He is a plotter of evil and a pursuer of that which is wrong.

In verse 5, the focus shifts to the righteous, particularly to the character of God. Verses 5-7 say,

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
O Lord, you preserve both man and beast.
How priceless is your unfailing love!
Both high and low among men
find refuge in the shadow of your wings.

It is difficult for a finite man to comprehend the infinite love of God. It fills his creation. Likewise his righteousness and justice fill creation. His love protects and preserves those he created – man and beast. His love, justice, and protection are given with no view of the hierarchies or social strata of men. Both high and low find refuge in “the shadow of your wings.” “The shadow of your wings” is an image that occurs several places in Scripture (e.g. Psalm 17:8, Psalm 57:1, Psalm 63:7, Isaiah 34:15). It is not meant to imply that God literally has wings. It is an awesome portrayal of the manner in which he covers his creation with his love and protection, however.

Verse 8 tells us that the righteous feast from the abundance of his house and drink from a river of delights. Most of us are too busy trying to provide for ourselves to simply enjoy the abundant life that God has promised us. Life with God was intended to be a feast. Those who seek him are invited. Those who have rejected him do not get to participate.

The psalm closes with verses 10-12.

Continue your love to those who know you,
your righteousness to the upright in heart.
May the foot of the proud not come against me,
nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.
See how the evildoers lie fallen—
thrown down, not able to rise!

38 Psalm 37

Psalm 37

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

Psalm 37 continues the theme from psalm 36, contrasting the righteous with the wicked. There are times in this life when the wicked seem to prosper over the righteous. This is a fact that can seem confusing and discouraging to those who are trying to live the right kind of life. Psalm 37 recognizes that fact. In it, David encourages people not to be enticed by the success of the wicked because it will certainly be short-lived. Ultimately God extols the righteous and brings down the wicked. Endurance in righteousness is the key. Verses 4-7 say:

Delight yourself in the Lord
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this:
He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.
Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.

The wicked may prosper for a season but the righteous will endure. Life is not a sprint. It is a marathon. Hang onto the promise of verses 9-11.

For evil men will be cut off,
but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.
A little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look for them, they will not be found.
But the meek will inherit the land
and enjoy great peace.

39 Psalm 38

Psalm 38

Author: David

Theme(s): A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 30, 32, 51, and 137.

40 Psalm 39

Psalm 39

Author: David

Theme(s): A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 30, 32, 51, and 137.

41 Psalm 40

Psalm 40

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 16, 27, 30, 31, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 56, 62, 69, 73, 91, 94, 110, and 118.

42 Psalm 41

Psalm 41

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

43 Psalm 42

Psalm 42

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 42 is the first in the second book of psalms. It begins a series of psalms that were not written by David. The themes in the book do not differ greatly from those in the first. Psalm 42 in particular is a cry of the heart similar to what is found in the first book of psalms.

Psalm 42 is the yearning of a man who has felt God's presence in the past but does not feel it in the present. He has known what it is to experience God, his provision, his protection, and his love. For whatever reason, he cannot feel God now. The psalm opens with a beautiful expression of this yearning:

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the loving God.
When can I go and meet with God?

My tears have been my food day and night,
while men say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"

Most of us have felt those "dry spells" when our lives feel powerless and we thirst for the presence of God again. We do not really understand why we seem to be able to perceive God so much more clearly at times and at other times hardly at all (the fact is that we move away from him and not the other way around). Perhaps God wants to us to realize our dire thirst for him. Then perhaps we will clear our lives of distractions in order to be able to see and hear him clearly once more.

44 Psalm 43

Psalm 43

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

45 Psalm 44

Psalm 44

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 44 has a different tone to it than any of the others we have considered. It is written out of disappointment and frustration with God. This particular psalm is not a psalm of David. We are not sure when or specifically why it was written. We can surmise from the text that it was written following some military defeat suffered by the nation.

The psalm begins by praising God for the protection that he has given the nation in the past. It talks about the way that God drove out the enemies of Israel in the past and gave them military success. It recognizes that this success had nothing to do with the military prowess of Israel and everything to do with the provision of God.

Then in verse 9, the psalm takes a definite turn in its feel. The psalmist claims that the nation has stayed loyal to God but that he has abandoned them. He has crushed them and handed them bitterness and disgrace without cause. The psalmist is hurt and confused by this. He feels that the nation has done nothing to merit this and that God has no business handing them this treatment. He says in verse 22:

Yet for your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

The psalm concludes by asking God to awake to their cause and defend them once again. They call upon God's unfailing love to redeem them from their difficulty.

This is interesting. Many people feel that it is almost blasphemous to express anger against God. Believe it or not, God can handle it. He created our emotions. He understands them. He

really wants us to be honest about them with him. You can tell God anything. He is big enough to handle it. He wants your fellowship. Do not withdraw from him when you are angry.

The Apostle Paul was a man who faced his share of suffering in this life. In 2 Corinthians 11 he gives a list of some of the hardships he had to endure, which included things such as being beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, etc. By anyone's standards, he had every right to feel persecuted. This same Paul wrote Romans 8:18-39:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ... And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ... What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered"

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul quoted Psalm 44:22. He had a different perspective than the psalmist, however. Paul knew that the pain that this world currently endures is a result of its own decision to rebel against God. Creation will continue to groan under this pain until Jesus returns to liberate it. Paul was able to look through the pain, however, and see the God who sustains us and loves us through the pain. Suffering is not something endured just by bad people. Everyone has it. Yet through it all, we can be more than conquerors because we still have God. Paul's outlook is more akin to that of the writer of Psalm 37 than that of the writer of Psalm 44.

46 Psalm 45

Psalm 45

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Celebrating the wedding of a righteous king of Israel or Judah

This seems to have been a unique song written for a particular occasion.

47 Psalm 46

Psalm 46

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The writer of Psalm 46 had a view similar to that of Paul. No matter what might be going on around us, God is our strength and refuge, as verse 1 states. He is bigger than the mountains,

the seas, the rivers, nations, and kingdoms. When nature may be quaking and nations may be raging, verse 10 says:

Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.

What a lesson for us to learn. We need to know how to tune out the noise of the world and be still and know that God is God. Therein lies the source of peace and understanding. Only then can we hear his voice and have his assurance that he is with us.

Verse 8 calls us to “come and see the works of the Lord.” It is easy for us to get overwhelmed by our circumstances or by the bad things going on in the world. It is important for us to keep our eyes upon God and to behold his works. When we do, it puts everything else in proportion. The cares of the world fall away because we know that our God is bigger than all of them combined. As verse 9 says, he can make wars cease; he can break the bow and shatter the spear. God alone is abundant provision for anyone who will seek him. Verse 7 and then again verse 11 both say,

The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

48 Psalm 47

Psalm 47

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 4, 23, 33, 65, 66, 67, 100, 105, 121, 126, 136, 141, and 150.

49 Psalm 48

Psalm 48

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 84, 87, and 122.

50 Psalm 49

Psalm 49

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; seek eternal treasures rather than material wealth

There are those who say that the Old Testament does not contain the concept of an afterlife. Many Scriptures may be found in the Old Testament that run contrary to that supposition. Psalm 49:15 is one.

But God will redeem my soul from the grave;
he will surely take me to himself.

The psalmist was confident of spending eternity with God. As verse 10 says, all men die, both wise and foolish, rich and poor. It is a destiny common to us all. The riches, power, and glory that a man might amass in this life are torn from him in death. Verses 16-17 say,

Do not be overawed when a man grows rich,
when the splendor of his house increases;
for he will take nothing with him when he dies,
his splendor will not descend with him.

This is the psalmist's way of saying, "You can't take it with you." It was true then. It is true now. There is nothing wrong with material wealth as long as we keep it in its proper context and exercise godly stewardship over it. Verse 20 says,

A man who has riches without understanding
is like the beasts that perish.

Jesus echoed this idea in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:19-21 says,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The psalmist knows that death is certain for every man. When one reaches that threshold, there are two options. The ones who have invested their lives foolishly face eternal decay. The ones who invested wisely will spend eternity with God.

51 Psalm 50

Psalm 50

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

Psalm 50 is written from the standpoint of God. It is written as if he is addressing the people of the earth. There are two groups addressed.

He speaks first to the righteous concerning their sacrifices. He tells them that he does not need their sacrifices – they are not really doing it for his benefit. They are doing it because they need to be in his good favor. Verses 9-15 say:

I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know every bird in the mountains,
and the creatures of the field are mine.
If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?
Sacrifice thank offerings to God,
fulfill your vows to the Most High,
and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

People make sacrifices because it is good for them. It keeps them spiritually submitted to God, which is how we must exist if we are to be in right relationship with him. It is a way of honoring God. We stay in his good favor and reap the benefits.

God then speaks to the wicked. These are people who hate God's word, who deliberately choose wrong over right, who slander others, etc. God says that he will rebuke them, accuse them, and tear them to pieces.

Verse 23 closes with another word about sacrifices.

He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me,
and he prepares the way so that I may show him
the salvation of God.

52 Psalm 51

Psalm 51

Author: David

Theme(s): A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

Psalm 51 is a very well known psalm. This was written by David after Nathan confronted him concerning his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (See 2 Samuel 12). It is probably the fullest expression of a broken and repentant heart that may be found in Scripture. David realized that his sin had offended God and caused separation from him. It also caused David grief and robbed him of the joy that his relationship with God had once brought him.

Verse 4 offers interesting insight:

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba. He had Uriah killed. Still, his sin was against God and not against them. All sin is against God. People may be affected by our sin, but our sin is against God.

David felt the comfort of the Holy Spirit most of his life. As is often true with us when we are in a time of sin, he felt cut off from the presence of the Spirit and it wounded him deeply. God's dissatisfaction is more than David can bear.

When David's relationship with God was interrupted, he lost the source of his joy. He felt the weight of guilt and shame, which was an unusual sensation for him. The gap that he had placed between himself and God was more than he could bear. All he wanted was to be cleansed and restored. He knew that he needed both.

Often when we find ourselves under the weight of sin and separated from God, we begin trying to devise a plan for how we can work ourselves back into his good graces. To do so is religion,

which has nothing to do with the nature of God. Often people try to do certain things to regain God's favor. They may try to give their way back into God's favor. Indeed, the whole Protestant Reformation was triggered as a response to the church teaching people, requiring people, manipulating people to pay money or do or recite certain things to gain forgiveness for their sins. That mindset has never died. It is a lie and a scheme of the enemy to confuse people from understanding the simple nature of God's grace.

David understood the truth. In verses 16-17 he says,

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

What sort of offering will bring us back into God's good favor? Simply this – a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. That is all that God requires. We need to be broken by our sin to the point where we turn from it. We need to choose our relationship with God over our rebellion against God. Once we do, the sin is forgiven and forgotten. The relationship is restored. The sin may have brought other consequences that impact us, but our relationship with God is restored.

That is what David wanted above all else. He wanted his relationship with God to be restored. His words speak for themselves. Verses 7-13 say:

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.

53 Psalm 52

Psalm 52

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The preface to Psalm 52 says, "When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: 'David has gone to the house of Abimelech.'" This story is described in 1 Samuel 21-22. David was on the run from Saul. Abimelech was a priest in the city of Nob. David came to Abimelech and asked for provisions. Abimelech gave him food and sword, unaware that this son-in-law of Saul was in fact a fugitive from Saul. A man by the name of Doeg, an Edomite witnessed this. Hoping to gain favor or a reward from Saul, he informed Saul that Abimelech had assisted

David. Saul responded by accusing them of conspiring with his enemy. He executed all of the priests of Nob and then the rest of the residents of the city as well.

Psalm 52 was written in response to this. It begins by saying,

Why do you boast of evil, you mighty man?
Why do you boast all day long,
you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God?

It is unclear as to whether the “mighty man” in the psalm is Doeg or Saul. In spite of everything that Saul had done, it would be unusual for David to publicly denounce him. Still it does not seem to be a description of Doeg, who was basically a nobody. More than likely this psalm was directed at Saul, prompted by the atrocity that he committed against the people of Nob.

David speaks of a mighty man

- Who boasts all day long
- Who is a disgrace in the eyes of God
- Whose tongue plots destruction, is like a sharpened razor and full of deceit
- Who loves evil more than good and lies more than truth
- Who loves harmful words and deceit

He pronounces that God will bring this mighty man to an everlasting ruin, snatch him from his tent and remove him from the land of the living. He will become the object of laughter among righteous men.

In our lives we will always be surrounded by people like Saul – braggarts, liars, destructive and harmful people. We know that eventually they will be laid low, one way or another. While we wait for that to come to pass, we can rest in the assurance that David had in verses 8-9.

But I am like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of God;
I trust in God’s unfailing love
for ever and ever.
I will praise you forever for what you have done;
in your name I will hope, for your name is good.
I will praise you in the presence of your saints.

54 Psalm 53

Psalm 53

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

55 Psalm 54

Psalm 54

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

56 Psalm 55

Psalm 55

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

57 Psalm 56

Psalm 55

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 56 is a psalm of David. The introduction says that it was written when the Philistines had seized him in Gath. The incident that prompted this is uncertain. During the time that he was being pursued by Saul, David found himself in Gath several times. In 1 Samuel 21, David sought refuge in Gath but the people there recognized him as a warrior who had killed many Philistines. David was afraid for his life and pretended to be mad so that people would consider him to be no threat and leave him alone. This may have been the background of this psalm.

David expresses fear in the psalm. He talk about men who hotly pursue him and plot against him. He believes that his enemies are seeking to take his life.

David was a mighty warrior. He was perhaps the most successful military man to be found anywhere in the Bible. As a young boy he killed lions and bears who sought to attack his father's sheep. As a young man he took on the challenge of sparring with Goliath and killed him with a simple slingshot. He engaged in many battles with the enemies of the nation and enlarged the territory of Israel considerably during his reign.

In spite of all of this, if one reads the psalms of David he discovers that David was a man of normal human emotions. When he believed that his life was threatened, he experienced fear, just as any of us might when we experience persecution. What separated David from the rest?

Often when we are afraid we become servants to the fear. By embracing the fear and giving it a place in our lives we actually give the enemy a foothold from which he may oppress and harass us. God is love (1 John 4:8) and we know that perfect love casts out fear. In fact, 1 John 4:18 says,

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Fear is not from God. The one who abides in fear is not abiding in the perfect love of God. The presence of fear resident in our lives is evidence that the enemy has a stronghold in us. Fear is to be resisted. In Psalm 56, David has given us the tool that we need to resist fear. Verses 3-4 say,

When I am afraid,
I will trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can mortal man do to me?

Verse 11 says

in God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?

When we are afraid, we must choose to trust God. We should go to him in praise. His perfect love will drive out our fear. If we abide in his presence, mortal man can do nothing to us.

It really is so much simpler than we tend to make it.

58 Psalm 57

Psalm 57

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

59 Psalm 58

Psalm 58

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

60 Psalm 59

Psalm 59

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

61 Psalm 60

Psalm 60

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

62 Psalm 61

Psalm 61

Author: David

Theme(s): A cry for a deeper relationship with God

63 Psalm 62

Psalm 62

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 62 is a psalm of David. The text of the psalm gives no indication of the setting, any particular event that may have prompted the psalm. The theme of the psalm is common in the writings of David. There are enemies that would delight in destroying him but the delight of God is to preserve and to bless him. Verses 1-2 say,

My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

Verses 3-4 speak of his enemies, those seeking to do him harm. Then verses 5-6 repeat (albeit not verbatim) verses 1-2.

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

In verse 7 David declares that his salvation and honor find their source in God, who is also his source of refuge and protection. In verse 8 he calls upon the people to trust in God and to pour their hearts out to him.

That is such an important concept that is missed by so many people. It is also a bit of a paradox. The way that the tabernacle (and later the temple) was designed was intended to teach us about the holiness of God. There was a rather elaborate process through which the priest had to go in order to enter the presence of God. He is holy and he is to be approached in holiness and even in fear. Nadab and Abihu were killed for entering the tabernacle in an improper manner (see Leviticus 10:1-3). At the same time, David encourages us to pour out our hearts to God, which implies that we should go to him when we are at those times when we find ourselves whiney and irritated, put out by the world. We have a tendency not to feel very holy or awesome at those times.

Consider the psalms of David, however. When one reads through the text of the psalms, he will see David express every sort of human emotion to God. At times David seems angry at God. At times David seems disappointed in God. At times David is simply expressing joy and excitement to God. At times he comes to God because he is afraid and wants God's help and protection. Other times he is simply expressing gratitude.

David was a man who routinely poured out his heart to God. At the same time, he always did it in an attitude that reflected his understanding that God is holy and worthy of our awe and even fear. We can and should do the same thing.

God wants us to keep who he is in the proper perspective, but he wants us to bring ALL of our cares to him. He wants us to bring them sooner rather than later.

A doctor would rather have a patient come to him when the patient has a cold rather than waiting until the patient has pneumonia. It is not because it makes the doctor's job easier to treat it early on, but because he cares about the health and wellbeing of the patient. God would rather we come to him when our problems are new and manageable than waiting until they are full-blown disasters. It is not because it makes his job any easier to deal with it early on, but because he cares about the health and wellbeing of his people. If we would simply seek the counsel of God early and regularly then our lives would be much less of a shambles.

He is the holy and awesome God, creator of the universe. He is also your Daddy. A Daddy has no greater delight than his relationship with his children and he has no greater joy than watching them mature, succeed, and fulfill their dreams. Human fathers do not always live up to that ideal, but our Daddy in heaven does. As verse 8 says,

Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

Verses 10-12 tell us not to put our hope in riches or material things, but to seek the rewards that the Lord will provide to his people according to their deeds. Note that it does not say that we will be punished according to our deeds. Punishment is already in place. The wages of sin is death. Every man falls under that judgment. Those who have received the salvation that God offers are spared that judgment, however. It has been wiped away. What remains is rewards that will be granted based upon our faithfulness. It is a heck of a deal. Verses 11-12 conclude the psalm.

One thing God has spoken,
two things have I heard:

that you, O God, are strong,
and that you, O Lord, are loving.
Surely you will reward each person
according to what he has done.

64 Psalm 63

Psalm 63

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

65 Psalm 64

Psalm 64

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

66 Psalm 65

Psalm 65

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

Psalm 65 is a psalm of David simply celebrating the goodness of God. How blessed we are to have been invited to become his children and to live in his care. This psalm reminds us that:

- God is the one who cleanses us from sin and forgives us (v. 3)
- We get to live in and enjoy the abundant good things of his house (v. 4)
- He responds to us with “awesome deeds of righteousness” and gives us hope (v. 5)
- He is Lord of all of the universe, having created the mountains and the seas (v. 6-7)
- He bring us joy (v. 8)
- He brings forth streams of water and fields of grain upon the land so that his people may enjoy them. (v. 9)
- His provision and harvest are ones of abundance (v. 10-11)
- He can bring forth grasslands of abundance in the desert (v. 12)
- He clothes the hills with gladness. (v. 12)
- His meadows are covered with flocks, his valleys with grain. (v. 13)
- His creation shouts for joy. (v. 13)

That is the nature of the God whose children we have been invited to become.

67 Psalm 66

Psalm 66

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 66 contains nothing that indicates the author or the circumstances that prompted the writing. The theme of it is similar to Psalm 65 – celebrating the goodness of God. Verse 1 opens with:

Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious!

It calls upon the people to praise God for his awesome deeds, from the parting of the Red Sea to the power that he continues to exert over creation, ruling the nations. Verses 10-11 include something for which we often fail to be thankful.

For you, O God, tested us;
you refined us like silver;
You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.
You let me ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.

The psalmist is thanking God for subjecting them to severe trials. Why would anyone be thankful for that? Romans 5:3-5 says,

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Nobody enjoys going through trials. They have a purpose in our lives, however. They teach us perseverance. Perseverance is a necessary ingredient of character. Character is a necessary ingredient of hope. Our trials serve as the starting point of a journey that leads us through a process, building character and discipline in us, resulting in hope. The psalmist described the trials of the nation but concluded with the fact that it brought them to “a place of abundance.” For the nation of Israel, at the end of the wilderness experience was a land flowing with milk and honey.

God wants us in that place of abundance. We need to be disciplined first, however. If you have ever known anyone who had wealth without discipline it is a nasty thing to behold. It can lead to trouble far greater than a lack of wealth could ever cause. The psalmist rejoiced in trials because they prepared the way for abundance. We should keep our own trials in the proper perspective, because if we have the proper attitude about them and are appropriately submitted to God through them, then we can gain perseverance, character, and hope and enter into the abundance that God has waiting for us on the other side.

Verses 17-20 of the psalm say,

I cried out to him with my mouth;

his praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;
but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.
Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!

Verse 18 teaches us that God will not respond to the prayers of a man who cherishes sin in his heart. It is an important truth of Scripture. At times we find ourselves in seasons when it seems that God is completely unresponsive to our prayers. There could be different reasons for that. One of those reasons could be that we cherish sin in our hearts. Sin builds a wall between God and us. He does not put it there; we do. As long as we hide behind that wall we cloud our own ability to relate to God. What does one do if he finds himself there? Confess and repent. God will always hear prayers of confession and petitions for forgiveness. His utmost desire is to have relationship restored, and like the father of the prodigal son, he will run to meet us more than halfway.

68 Psalm 67

Psalm 67

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 67 is another psalm with no indication of authorship or circumstance of writing. The theme is similar to Psalm 66, calling upon the people to praise God for his goodness. Verses 1-2 open with a petition to God,

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine upon us, Selah
that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.

The psalm echoes themes found in many of the other psalms. Verses 5-6 say,

My the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you.
Then the land will yield its harvest,
and God, our God, will bless us.

Could it be that the success of the harvest depends upon the praise that we bring to God? To bring that question into context for most of us, we should ask, "Could it be that the number of sales, quality of product, security of paycheck, etc. depends upon the praise that we bring to God?" The answer is an unequivocal, "yes."

We see this same concept several other places in Scripture. A familiar passage is Malachi 3:10-12.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests

from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.

Haggai 1:5-11 says,

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

In both of these passages, the people were facing economic hardships because they were failing to give God his proper place in their lives, i.e. they failed to worship him. Worshipping God means putting him first. In Malachi and in Haggai, the people were consumed with trying to provide for themselves (how we love to be self-sufficient!) and as a result were neglecting the building of the temple or the paying of the tithe. A person who is putting the needs of his own house ahead of the needs of God's house is refusing to worship God. A person who fails to bring the tithe into the storehouse is refusing to worship God. As a result the land that these people tried to cultivate would not produce crops. Pests devoured their harvest. They faced drought. Times were hard because their hearts were hard.

Jesus put it so simply. Matthew 6:33 says, "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Give God his proper place in your life and everything else will fall into place. We have his promise.

69 Psalm 68

Psalm 68

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 8, 16, 19, 27, 30, 33, 36, 37, 46, 49, 50, 52, 65, 66, 73, 90, 91, 94, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147

70 Psalm 69

Psalm 69

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us; Messianic prophecy

Psalm 69 bears a striking resemblance to the last part of the Beatitudes. In Matthew 5:10-12, Jesus said,

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Psalm 69 is the cry of a man who is being persecuted because of righteousness. He is wholly devoted to God and as a result of his obedience, he is suffering at the hands of the unrighteous. He is crying out to God to vindicate him and to bring down those who are against him and against God.

The writer of Psalm 69 is experiencing a foreshadowing of some of the persecution that Jesus suffered for his wholesale devotion to the Father. Some of the things that he suffered are highlighted as follows.

For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face.
I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;
(verses 7-8)

Because of the way that the psalmist is following God, his own brothers have rejected him. More than likely his brothers had a knowledge of God, but it was the sort of religion that does not get in the way on Monday through Saturday (Sunday through Friday to the Jews). His brothers felt that he had gone "overboard" in this "religion thing" and wanted to help bring him back to earth. This is exactly what Jesus experienced with his own brothers. John 7:5 says, "For even his own brothers did not believe in him." Mark 3:21 says, "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" Shortly after that we see in Mark 3:31-34:

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Because of his devotion to God, the psalmist suffered the rejection of his own family. So did Jesus. In Psalm 69:9 we read:

For zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

In John 2:13-17 we read:

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The psalmist was consumed by a passion for the house of God. So was Jesus. Jesus was offended by the commercial trafficking that was going on in the temple – a place that was supposed to be reserved for prayer. The offense was great enough that he took authority and disrupted the activity. Because of this zeal and the disruption that it caused, Jesus became a further target of scorn by those put off by his devotion to God. It is interesting that the Jewish leaders did not question the appropriateness of what Jesus had done. They knew that it was wrong to turn the temple into a marketplace. Even worse, more than likely they were prospering by the activity. The merchants probably had to pay them to let the activity take place. They did not challenge the fact that Jesus had cleared the temple. Their only question was (in John 2:18):

Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

They figured that the only one who had the authority to do this would have been a genuine signs-and-wonders manifesting Messiah. Jesus would not play their game and give them a miracle sideshow. Thus they wrote him off as an annoying do-gooder. Thus the result of the zeal for his Father's house was the ire and the persecution of the Jewish authorities.

Psalm 69:21 says:

They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

When Jesus was on the cross, he cried out in thirst. John 19:29 and Luke 23:36 say that the soldiers offered him wine mixed with vinegar for his thirst. Matthew 27:34 identifies it as wine mixed with gall. Either way it was bitter.

Psalm 69 is the cry of a man who was persecuted for the sake of righteousness. It was true in his life. It was true in the life of Jesus. We should expect it to be no less true in our own lives. If we are truly sold out to God and obedient to his leading, we should not expect to experience the favor of the world. When you live in a righteous way, you make uncomfortable the people who are not living that way. They may well resent you for it. They may try to make you as miserable as you make them. They may try to pressure you into compromise so they will not feel so bad about themselves (God does grade on a curve, right?). There will be times when it hurts. There may be times when you wonder whether or not it is worth it. May you find the same hope expressed in Psalm 69:29-36:

I am in pain and distress;
may your salvation, O God, protect me.
I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.
This will please the Lord more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.
The poor will see and be glad –

you who seek God, may your hearts live!
The Lord hears the needy
and does not despise his captive people.
Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,
for God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah.
Then people will settle there and possess it;
the children of his servants will inherit it,
and those who love his name will dwell there.

71 Psalm 70

Psalm 70

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

72 Psalm 71

Psalm 71

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

73 Psalm 72

Psalm 72

Author: Solomon

Theme(s): A prayer for God to bless the king and make him a righteous servant

74 Psalm 73

Psalm 73

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

Psalm 73 begins book three of the psalms. It has a message to which all of us can probably relate. The psalmist is confessing to God that he has struggled with watching the unrighteous prosper. Sometimes it is very difficult watching people who show no reverence for God reveling in success as the world defines success. They have money, cars, and houses and arrogant attitudes that go with them. Like it or not, this is a fact of life. There is another truth that ought to help keep all of this in perspective, however. Verses 16-20 say:

When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me
till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!
As a dream when one awakes,
so when you arise, O Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.

Why does God allow the wicked to prosper while the righteous may not? The fact is that God wants our devotion to him to be motivated by a genuine love for him. If he materially rewarded everyone who followed him, then people would follow him for the material reward rather than for the relationship. Those who choose wealth for the sake of wealth are choosing slippery ground. Wealth may be lost in an instance. If a person's whole being is wrapped around his wealth, then the person may be swept away with his wealth.

There is nothing wrong with having material things. God may choose to shower wealth on a righteous man. Even a righteous man may lose his wealth in a flash, however. The point of all of this is that our happiness, our identity, and our sense of success must not be entangled with our bank accounts. They must be a function of our relationship with God. That will never be swept away. It is the only really secure thing we will ever have.

75 Psalm 74

Psalm 74

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

76 Psalm 75

Psalm 75

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 8, 16, 19, 27, 30, 33, 36, 37, 46, 49, 50, 52, 65, 66, 73, 90, 91, 94, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147

77 Psalm 76

Psalm 76

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

78 Psalm 77

Psalm 77

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 77 contains a theme found in several of the psalms. It was written by a man who feels cut off from the Lord and longs to feel his presence and his favor again. In verse 1 he cries out to God for help and that God will simply hear him. He is in a very dry place spiritually speaking. The psalm does not give any reason why the psalmist feels cut off from God. He simply finds himself at a loss. Verses 7-9 say

Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

There are times when we all feel this way. There are times when our prayers seem to go nowhere. There are times when the favor and the help of the Lord seem to be a distant memory. More often than not it is because of our own sin, but there are times when we do not understand the reason. We do not feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit about anything in particular. We simply feel like our spirits are lost somewhere in a fog and we do not know where to turn. What should we do when we find ourselves in such a state?

In verses 10-20 of the psalm we get a glimpse of how to sustain ourselves in such a time. Verses 10-11 say,

Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:
the years of the right hand of the Most High."
I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

At those times when we feel distant from God, we are to be comforted by the testimony of his faithfulness in our own lives. Our history with God should assure us of his constant love for us and that his watchful eye is on us always, even if we do not perceive it. Why does he allow us to feel that he is distant at times? None of us can answer that because none of us is God. He has his ways and his purposes which we do not necessarily understand or need to understand. He makes known to us what he wants to make known to us when he wants to make it known to us.

The psalmist looked back at the mighty deeds of God, his miracles, the way he delivered his people from Egypt, and the provision and protection that he gave his people. All of this

reminded him of the nature of the God that he served. It was sufficient to comfort him and to give him direction in the midst of the fog. The same should be true for us. We can turn to the same examples as the psalmist, of God delivering the children of Israel from Egypt and providing for them in the wilderness, but how much better to turn to our own private history with God. His faithfulness in each of our lives should be a beacon to us to assure us and guide us regardless of any temporary fog in which we may find ourselves. We can join the psalmist in his resolve as expressed in verses 12-13.

I will meditate on all your works
and consider all your mighty deeds.
Your ways, O God, are holy.
What god is so great as our God?

79 Psalm 78

Psalm 78

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

80 Psalm 79

Psalm 79

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 79 was written at a time that Jerusalem was under the judgment of God and under siege by an enemy (probably Babylon). The psalmist is calling upon God to relent and to come back to their aid. The people are not only dying, but they are being denied the dignity of burial because there is nobody left to bury them all. The author wants God's protection restored and he also wants to see the enemy come under God's wrath.

In Psalm 77, the psalmist does not understand why God seems to be distant from the people. In Psalm 79, the psalmist clearly understands that the people are suffering the consequences of their own sin. It makes the experience no less painful. Verses 8-9 contain the cry of this man's heart, born out of his desperation. It is a groan that any of us may experience from time to time.

Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need.
Help us, O God our Savior,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us and forgive our sins
for your name's sake.

81 Psalm 80

Psalm 80

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

82 Psalm 81

Psalm 81

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; a call to joyful praise and worship

The themes found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 33, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 66, 67, 73, 91, 94, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

83 Psalm 82

Psalm 82

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling upon God to bring judgment upon the wicked and/or defend the poor and oppressed

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the section on Psalms 146.

84 Psalm 83

Psalm 83

Author: Asaph

Theme(s): Calling upon God to bring judgment upon the wicked and/or defend the poor and oppressed

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the section on Psalms 146.

85 Psalm 84

Psalm 84

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant; celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple

Psalm 84 is a beautiful expression from a man who longs to be at the temple of God. Presumably this is an individual who has had access to the temple in the past and for some

reason has lost it now. This would most likely be a result of the Babylonian exile. When Brahms wrote his "Requiem," he used a portion of Psalm 84 as text for one of the pieces in the requiem. Psalm 84:1-4 says:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young –
a place near your altar,
O Lord Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.

The temple was God's physical dwelling place among his people. Separation from that place caused this man much grief. He was weary of his circumstances and wanted to go back. He was jealous of birds that were free to build their nests close to the temple. He continues his feeling in verse 10.

Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

This side of the cross, these same words speak to our desire to be with God in heaven. Sin has separated us physically from God. At times, we get weary of this life and simply want to be with God. We have a purpose here. God has given us things to do and people to love. Still, when we compare what we have here versus what we will have there, it can only produce the kind of longing that the psalmist feels. Paul expressed the same concept in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8:

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Haven't we all felt that?

86 Psalm 85

Psalm 85

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 85 is another psalm expressing a man's angst at the feeling that God is distant and his longing to feel the presence of God again, the relationship restored. In the first few verses of the psalm he lays the responsibility for this disruption squarely at the feet of the people because of their sins. Verses 1-3 acknowledge that God has forgiven their sins in the past and restored favor to them. Then verse 4 asks that they be restored again, which implies that they have fallen back into sin. The psalmist cries out to God to put aside his anger with them, revive them once more, and show them his unfailing love once more, granting them salvation. The last few verses of the psalm have an important message for all of us. Verses 8-13 say,

I will listen to what God the Lord will say;
he promises peace to his people, his saints –
but let them not return to folly.
Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

God promises peace to his people. If they do not have peace it is because of their own folly, i.e. their rebellion, which has caused them separation from the source of that peace. God has promised us salvation. It is readily available to those who fear him, i.e. to those who hold him in awe and reverence and submit to him. Those who seek the Lord will find love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace. The Lord will provide good things.

The closing verse contains an important thought. “Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.” When we pursue righteousness, we prepare the way for the Lord. Do you want the presence of the Lord in your life? Do you want his salvation, his peace, his love, his faithfulness, and his provision? Pursue righteousness. Live in righteous fear, i.e. awe of him. This attitude of the heart prepares the way for his steps.

We get to choose. You can have God and all of the benefits that he brings. Or you can do everything your own way and go it alone. It is not really much of a choice.

87 Psalm 86

Psalm 86

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a cry for a deeper relationship with God

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

88 Psalm 87

Psalm 87

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple

Psalm 87 celebrates Zion (Jerusalem) as God's chosen city. God loves the city and has chosen it as the place where he will dwell with his people. Because of that, men will revere the city as well. Verse 3 says:

Glorious things are said of you, O city of God;

The psalmist looks forward to the day when the Gentile nations (Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Cush, etc.) will acknowledge the special status of Jerusalem as well. Those who find salvation from God will be referred to as the citizens of Zion. Verse 6 says:

The Lord will write in the register of the peoples:
"This one was born in Zion."

Jerusalem was an important city in the history of the world. Jerusalem is an important city in the history of the world. Jerusalem will be an important city in the history of the world. Thoughts of Jerusalem have captivated the minds of God's people for thousands of years and continue to do so today. The words of Psalm 87 continue to inspire. Psalm 87 has given birth to more than one song. There is a traditional hymn titled "Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken." In the 1980s, Wayne Watson wrote a song around the line "This one was born in Zion." The reason is simple. Deep in our souls we want to be there and we want to have it said of us that we, too, were born in Zion.

89 Psalm 88

Psalm 88

Author: Sons of Korah

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

90 Psalm 89

Psalm 89

Author: Ethan the Ezrahite

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a cry for a deeper relationship with God; calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 13, 19, 22, 33, 42, 44, 46, 65, 66, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, 103, 105, 111, 136, 137, 139, 146, and 147.

91 Psalm 90

Psalm 90

Author: Moses

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 90 begins book 4 of the psalms. The text identifies Moses as the author. In it, the psalmist is feeling somewhat overwhelmed or insignificant in comparison to God. Verse 4 is well known:

For a thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.

The psalmist knows that God's perspective on things and man's perspective are very different. God can see time from beginning to end, but man tends to focus on the problems of today. The psalmist knows that a man's lifetime is an insignificant period of time to an eternal God.

The psalmist also feels overwhelmed by the holiness of God. He desires to draw near, but knows that he will be confronted with his own sinfulness when he does. Verses 7-10 say:

We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.
The length of our days is seventy years –
or eighty, if we have the strength;
yet their span is but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Yet, having considered the awesomeness of this God, the psalmist wants nothing more than to be in his presence. He wants the favor and the fellowship of God. He says in verses 15-17:

Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.
May your deeds be shown to your servants,
your splendor to their children.
May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;
establish the work of our hands for us –
yes, establish the work of our hands.

92 Psalm 91

Psalm 90

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

Psalm 91 offers an interesting contrast to Psalm 90. In Psalm 90, the psalmist stood in fear of being in the Lord's presence. In Psalm 91, the psalmist stands in fear of being anywhere else than in the Lord's presence. The psalm opens in verse 1:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

The writer goes on to describe the protection that is provided by God's presence. He will shield us from terror at night and arrows by day, from pestilence and plague, from traps and snares. From our vantage point in his shadow, we can see the judgment that falls on the wicked but we will be spared the effects of that judgment ourselves. Verses 9-13 say:

If you make the Most High your dwelling –
even the Lord, who is my refuge –
then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

The writer was saying that if you draw near to God and rest in his shadow, he will provide you with protection. This particular passage was quoted to Jesus out of context by Satan during his forty days of testing in the wilderness. Luke 4:9-12 says:

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

If you are standing in God's shadow and he tells you to go to the top of a high building and throw yourself off so that he can demonstrate his saving power, then you should do it. If you are standing in God's shadow and the devil suggests that you should go throw yourself off of a tall building so that God can demonstrate his saving power, and you do it, then you have just moved out of God's shadow. It is not up to us to force God's hand on issues. Also, based on my experience with God, it is contrary to his nature to ask people to do show-business stunts so that he can perform.

If you stay with him and listen to him and do what he says, he will provide you with shelter. That does not mean that nothing bad will ever happen to you. It does mean that you will be sustained through it. It also means (Romans 8:28):

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

93 Psalm 92

Psalm 92

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; a call to joyful praise and worship

The themes found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 33, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 66, 67, 73, 91, 94, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

94 Psalm 93

Psalm 93

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

95 Psalm 94

Psalm 94

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

Psalm 94 is another of the psalms that remind us that God will sustain the righteous and bring judgment upon the wicked and the proud. The first few verses of the psalm make the point that the enemies of God are essentially fools because they believe that they can somehow hide their deeds from God. They are wicked and arrogant. They bring oppression upon the righteous. They kill the helpless. Not only that, they are jubilant about it and proud of it. Their arrogance is a stench, and they believe that God does not notice. Verses 8-11 say,

Take heed, you senseless ones among the people;
you fools, when will you become wise?
Does he who implanted the ear not hear?
Does he who formed the eye not see?
Does he who disciplines nations not punish?
Does he who teaches man lack knowledge?
The Lord knows the thoughts of man;
he knows that they are futile.

One of the great things about God is that he is not limited by our perception of him. The one who created the ear can hear whether or not we believe that he can. The one who created the eye can see whether or not we think that he can. God not only hears what we say and sees what we do, he knows our very thoughts. He knows the depth of our hearts. There is nothing that we can hide from him and there should be no chronic attitudes or actions in our lives that we would want to hide from him. His knowledge of our condition is a safety net for us and we should allow ourselves to land in that net when we fall. It is designed to catch us and keep us safe from destruction. Verses 12-13 say,

Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord,
the man you teach your law;
you grant him relief from days of trouble,
till a pit is dug for the wicked.

The word “discipline” conjures up different sorts of impressions. Many of us think of the sometimes painful experiences we had as children, being disciplined for something that we did wrong. In that connotation, “discipline” is not necessarily a happy memory. Discipline has a much more positive meaning to a mature person, however. A disciplined musician, for example, is a person who has studied his instrument and invested the practice time required to become a quality performer. A disciplined craftsman is a person who has taken the time to learn a craft and to perfect it so that he can produce quality results. A disciplined worker is one who has

sufficient maturity and experience to manage his time wisely, prioritize his tasks appropriately, interact with others properly, and make a valuable contribution to an organization. Discipline separates the winners from the wannabes.

The discipline that we receive as children, albeit painful at times, is a necessary prerequisite to becoming disciplined adults. Being too harsh on a child to the point of abuse is a grievous act on the part of a parent. Equally grievous is allowing a child to grow up completely undisciplined, without the tools necessary to cope in a world of adults. Likewise, the discipline that we receive from God, albeit painful at times, is a necessary prerequisite to becoming disciplined believers. God cares enough about us that he never comes down too harshly on us. His punishment is never in the form of abuse. In the same manner, he cares too much about us to allow us to remain as undisciplined people. His discipline comes out of his love. It strengthens us. As verse 12 says, blessed is the man whom God disciplines. It gives us relief from days of trouble, which we would typically bring upon ourselves if we lacked the discipline.

God never expected and never wanted us to go through this journey of life alone. It is his joy to be by our side. If we would simply give him the place in our lives that he wants to have then we too could say with the psalmist (verses 17-19)

Unless the Lord had given me help,
I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.
When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, O Lord, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul.

96 Psalm 95

Psalm 95

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

97 Psalm 96

Psalm 96

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

98 Psalm 97

Psalm 97

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

99 Psalm 98

Psalm 98

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

100 Psalm 99

Psalm 99

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

101 Psalm 100

Psalm 100

Author: David

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 100 is a well-known psalm, probably because it is short and to the point and easy for Sunday School aged children to memorize. It is a psalm of thanksgiving, instructing people to shout for joy, worship with gladness, enter his gates with thanksgiving and praise, and know that the Lord is God and that he made us and keeps us.

Verse 5 says,

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Why are we supposed to shout for joy to the Lord, to worship him with gladness, to enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise, and to give thanks to him and praise his name? We are supposed to do these things because the Lord is good and his love endures forever. We are supposed to do them because his faithfulness continues through all generations.

We are all human. There are times when we are frustrated or depressed. There are times when we have trouble relating to the concept of shouting for joy. If we focus on who God is and how he cares for us, however then bringing him praise and singing him joyful songs should be a natural byproduct. We should not have to force our praise or our glad songs. If we live in the faithfulness of God and receive his goodness and love then it will be a natural outflowing of our spirits. If, however one finds himself chronically unable to feel this way, he probably needs to seek ministry because it is a sure sign that there is some sort of spiritual obstacle that he needs to confront.

God does not want us to live behind obstacles. He wants us to rest in the promise of verse 3.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

102 Psalm 101

Psalm 101

Author: David

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

Psalm 101 is another of the psalms of David. The first two verses of the psalm say,

I will sing of your love and justice;
to you, O Lord, I will sing praise.
I will be careful to lead a blameless life –
when will you come to me?
I will walk in my house
with blameless heart.

The fact that David expresses, “when will you come to me?” indicates that he finds himself in one of those places and times when God seems distant. We all feel this way from time to time. It can be a very helpless feeling, particularly to one who spent most of his life safely under the shadow of God’s wing. What does one do when he feels that God is distant? Why does God allow his people to feel this way from time to time?

It is hard to answer that question exactly. God does what he does because he is God. He understands, but we do not necessarily know what is going on when it is going on. There are some things that we should understand, however because God has made them very clear to us. We are capable of erecting walls between ourselves and God through sinful behavior. If we read the text of this psalm, David seems to feel convicted that this is the reason for the distance.

Thus in verse 2 he resolves to live a blameless life. In the next six verses, he enumerates his resolve. He resolves to:

- Set no vile thing before his eyes. The things that we allow to enter our spirits through our eyes can defile us. They can lead us spiritually to places that we do not want to go and have no business going.
- Keep perverse men from his company. The people with whom we keep company influence our thoughts and behaviors. Perverse men lead other men into perversion.

- Silence slanderers. Allowing people to carry on slanderous conversations in our midst gives tacit approval to the behavior. It poisons our thoughts about the people being slandered. In dishonoring people that God created we dishonor God.
- Avoid haughty and proud people, focusing instead on the faithful and blameless. Again, it matters what sort of company we keep.
- Avoid deceitful people and liars. Again, these are people that we should keep out of our circle of companions because they taint us.

We do not know exactly what prompted the writing of this psalm, but it seems that David realized that he has allowed into his “inner circle” people who are leading him astray. God does not want us to keep company with evil people. God loves those people. God may call us to minister to those people. God does not, however want them ministering to us. He does not want them to influence us.

We are in a battle. A battle has two opposing sides. We need to make sure that the people on our team are actually fighting for the same side as we are. If we do not, then we may find ourselves fighting for their side. If that happens, then we will feel estranged from God, just as David did in this psalm.

103 Psalm 102

Psalm 102

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

104 Psalm 103

Psalm 103

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 103 offers another contrast to Psalm 90. Like Psalm 90, the writer recognizes that the life span of man is insignificant compared to the eternity of God. Verses 14-16 say:

For he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
As for man, his days are like grass,
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.

In contrast to Psalm 90, the writer of Psalm 103 is overwhelmed with the forgiveness that he finds in God. Verses 2-5 say:

Praise the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits –
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Verses 9-12 continue:

He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

Thus we have Psalm 90, which describes a God who is intolerant of sin, and Psalm 103, which describes a God who has compassion and forgiveness for sinners. Which one is right? Both of them. God is intolerant of sin. He will not allow people into his presence without dealing with the sin issues first. But when we confess our sin and repent of it, we find the God of Psalm 103, who is ready to remove our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. We find forgiveness and compassion.

None of the psalms is a stand-alone systematic theological treatise. The psalms were emotional outpourings from individuals who were impressed by certain things at certain moments in their lives. To get an understanding of the nature of God, we have to piece the Psalms together with each other and with the rest of Scripture. To see God strictly through the lens of Psalm 103 would produce a distorted picture. The same would be true of seeing strictly through the lens of Psalm 90. Taken together, we more fully understand the nature of God.

105 Psalm 104

Psalm 104

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

106 Psalm 105

Psalm 105

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 105 is a psalm of thanksgiving. The psalm opens by extolling the virtues of God and praising him for the wonderful things he has done for his people. Verses 1-3 say:

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Most of the remainder of the psalm is dedicated to a retelling of some of Israel's history, a recollection of the provisions that God has made for the nation and the manner in which he has brought his word to pass. Why are we supposed to give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make him known among the nations, glory in his holy name, and rejoice? We do these things because of who God is, as demonstrated in his acts throughout history and his care and love for us now. The stories in the Bible are not just interesting anecdotes or ancient history. They represent a love letter from God to his people. If we would focus more on the character of God and less on our own circumstances, then our lives would be filled with more joy and less stress.

God can still do today everything that he did in the past. He can do for you in your circumstances what he did for the children of Israel in theirs. Even more amazing is that he wants to do these things for us if we would let him. If we would stand aside and let God be God, then we could personally testify to our own version of verses 43-45.

He brought out his people with rejoicing,
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;
he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they fell heir to what others had toiled for –
that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.
Praise the Lord.

107 Psalm 106

Psalm 106

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 30, 32, 51, and 137.

108 Psalm 107

Psalm 107

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked; praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The themes found in this psalm are explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 8, 16, 19, 27, 30, 33, 36, 37, 46, 49, 50, 52, 65, 66, 73, 90, 91, 94, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147

109 Psalm 108

Psalm 108

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

110 Psalm 109

Psalm 109

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

111 Psalm 110

Psalm 110

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

Psalm 110 is a very important psalm. Its importance comes from two verses. Verse 1 says:

The Lord says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet."

Verse 4 says:

The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
"You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

These two verses, coupled with the fact that David is the author, result in major Messianic significance.

Verse 1 is an acknowledgment that the Messiah has authority over David. This is indicated by the fact that David refers to him as "My Lord." Verse 4 indicates that the Messiah has spiritual authority that David did not have. David was king of the nation and his authority extended to almost every area. Still, there were certain functions that could only be performed by members of the Aaronic priesthood. David was not allowed to minister at the temple (remember what happened to Saul when he assumed the authority to oversee the sacrifices in 1 Samuel 13). He had no authority there. Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem who was also high priest. He appeared in Genesis 14:18. His authority extended over both the civil and the religious affairs of

the nation. Psalm 110 indicates that the Messiah will be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. He will have authority in all areas, exceeding the authority of David.

Matthew 22:41-45, Mark 12:35-37, and Luke 20:41-44 all contain accounts of a time that Jesus confronted the Pharisees with the words of this psalm. Matthew 22:41-45 says:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked, them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,

"The Lord said to my Lord:

'Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.'"

If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

The only way that the Pharisees could reconcile the fact that David referred to his own descendant as "Lord" and "a priest in the order of Melchizedek" would be to admit that this son of David was also the son of God. They were not willing to do so.

David did not have a problem with giving Jesus his due place.

112 Psalm 111

Psalm 111

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 111 gives praise to God for who he is, for his glorious and majestic deeds. The psalm enumerates some of the wondrous attributes of God. It says that:

- His works are great (v. 2) and his deeds glorious and majestic. (v. 3)
- His righteousness is everlasting. (v. 3)
- He is gracious and compassionate. (v. 4)
- He provides for those who seek him. (v. 5)
- He uses his great power to give military victory to his people. (v. 6)
- He is faithful, just, and trustworthy. (v. 7)
- His faithfulness and uprightness are everlasting. (v. 8)
- He provides redemption for his people. (v. 9)

The psalm concludes with

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” is a phrase that occurs several places in the Bible. We find it verbatim in Proverbs 1:7 and Proverbs 9:10. The phrase also appears (with slightly different wording) in Proverbs 15:33, Micah 6:9, and Job 28:28. Since it occurs so frequently it must be an important concept.

In the section on Psalm 33 we discussed the concept of the fear of the Lord. To repeat it here, “The fear of the Lord” : is a mixed metaphor. The word “fear” has multiple meanings. The primary meaning of “fear” is the sort of fear that brings terror. We fear things that can do us harm. Indeed we should have sort of fear of God. He can literally “blow us away” with a single breath. The wrath of God is a terrible thing. A believer who lives in the forgiveness that was appropriated for us at the cross does not need to live in this sort of terror, however. It is healthy for us to remember that God is capable of invoking that sort of fear, but as believers we live in his love and his protection and have his promise that we will not be the objects of his wrath. Still we should fear the Lord. The word “fear” can also mean “awe.” We should always fear the Lord in the sense of having awe about who he is. He spoke the universe into existence. He created you and he created me. He set plans in motion that no one and nothing can thwart. He gives each of us the option to enjoin him in his plan and to become joint heirs of his Kingdom.

When one considers the nature of God and realizes that his works are great, his deeds are glorious and majestic, his righteousness is everlasting, he is gracious and compassionate, he provides for those who seek him, he uses his great power to give military victory to his people, he is faithful, just and trustworthy, his faithfulness and uprightness are everlasting, and that he provides redemption for his people, it should fill us with awe – the fear of the Lord. To hold God in the proper fear and awe is the beginning of wisdom. To do anything else would be foolish. Those who follow him and his teachings have good understanding, i.e., they are wise.

To him belongs eternal praise. He is awesome.

113 Psalm 112

Psalm 112

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

114 Psalm 113

Psalm 113

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

115 Psalm 114

Psalm 114

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

116 Psalm 115

Psalm 115

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

117 Psalm 116

Psalm 116

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

118 Psalm 117

Psalm 117

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

119 Psalm 118

Psalm 118

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us; Messianic prophecy

Psalm 118 is the source of many treasures. It opens with praise for God's enduring love. Verse 1 says:

Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

The psalm opens on this high note and then elaborates on the goodness of God. He and he alone is to be trusted with our care. Verse 12 says that he is our strength, our song, and our salvation.

Verses 22-23 say:

The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

What does this mean? The Lord has chosen a man or perhaps a nation (Israel) that was rejected by the rest of mankind and made him (it) the cornerstone of the Kingdom of God. This could be taken several ways. In a corporate sense, the nation of Israel was hardly extolled by its neighbors for the majority of its history, yet God chose this nation to be his special people and to be his priests to the rest of the world. This could also be taken in an individual sense. It could mean that God chose some man who was rejected by other men and made him a leader in his Kingdom. We certainly have examples of this, starting with David.

In Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, and Luke 20:17, Jesus implied that this "capstone" was a reference to him. In Acts 4:8-12, Peter stated it outright:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is

'the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the capstone.'

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Likewise in Ephesians 2:20, Paul understands this to be a reference to Jesus, as does Peter in 1 Peter 2:7.

Psalm 118 continues with the familiar verse that every kid learns in Sunday School, Psalm 118:24:

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

In the psalm, "the day" refers to the day that God took the stone the builders rejected and made it the capstone. In our lives, we should wake up every day and say, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Following this, we have more Messianic prophecy in verses 25-27:

O Lord, save us;
O Lord, grant us success.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you.
The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine upon us.
With boughs in hand join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.

The word "Hosanna" in Hebrew literally means "Save us." There was a day, commonly known as Palm Sunday, when Jesus made his way from Bethany to Jerusalem and went to the temple – to the horns of the altar. As he went, people cut off branches and held boughs in hand and formed a festal procession. We read in Matthew 21:8-9:

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus, the cornerstone that was rejected by the builders, was the very object of the devotion and celebration portrayed by these verses. His steps that day literally fulfilled the prophecy set out in this verse. He came to save us. He came to grant us success. "The day," or the new era that he brought was the day that the Lord made and we should rejoice and be glad in it. It was meant to give us joy. The psalm concludes with the same sort of thanks that we should have in response to this day. Verses 28-29 say,

You are my God, and I will give you thanks;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

120 Psalm 119

Psalm 119

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Celebrating the law of the Lord

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, containing 176 verses. It is unlike any of the other psalms, and is almost fits in better with the wisdom literature than with the psalms. Even in form it is unlike the other psalms. The psalmist carefully and methodically wove this together. It is in the form of an acrostic. The first eight verses all start with "Aleph," the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next eight verses all start with "Bet," the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, etc., up through the last eight verses, which all start with "Taw," the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters times eight verses each, giving the 176 verses. The 22 stanzas and 176 verses are intertwined around the theme of God's word, God's law, God's commandments. The psalmist is wholly devoted to God's word and gives it a special place of reverence in his heart.

It is unlikely that many Sunday School kids are taught to memorize Psalm 119 in its entirety, but there are a few verses from it that are very well known. Psalm 119:11 says:

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:105 says:

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.

Why would anyone want to write 176 verses about the law? Especially now that we are living in an age of grace, what does this have to do with us? Read Psalm 119 and you will know the answer to these questions. Just these two verses by themselves let us know the importance. God has standards. If we know what they are (hide them in our hearts) then and only then can we avoid offending him. If we do know them, they can guide us like a lamp to the feet so that we can avoid making painful mistakes in life. Is the law for Old Testament people only? Hardly.

As believers, we do not live under the condemnation of the law. They are still God's standards, however. They still define the difference between right and wrong. As believers we do not live under condemnation but we should still desire to live under the standards. Doing so keeps us in right relationship with God and it also provides us a safety net. The laws of God were not designed to restrict us from things that are fun and fulfilling; they are designed to keep us in a safety zone and away from things that would destroy us. They are the "paths of righteousness" mentioned in Psalm 23. As a lamp to our feet and a light for our path, they keep us from falling flat on our faces.

The psalmist found a great treasure in the laws and the word of God. So should we.

121 Psalm 120

Psalm 120

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

122 Psalm 121

Psalm 121

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

Psalms 120 – 134 are called songs of "ascents." A "song of ascent" is a psalm intended to be sung by the people as they approached the city of Jerusalem. Once the people were settled into the land, they made regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. God dwelt among the people in the temple in Jerusalem. That is where they had to come to make sacrifices, etc. Jerusalem was (and is) a city built on a mount – elevated from the areas that surround it. It was common, particularly in those days to build cities in elevated places like this

because it made them easier to defend militarily. When people approached Jerusalem from any direction, they had to ascend the mountain to get to it. Thus the name, "song of ascents."

Psalm 121 is a beautiful word of comfort. Many of us recognize that we need help that is bigger and stronger than we are. For us, it is comforting to know that the God who watches over us at all times does not slumber.

Verse 5 says that he is the shade at our right hand. Shade implies protection and comfort. The right hand is symbolic of power (most people are right-handed and thus this tends to be the more powerful hand). It can signify that part of us that produces a living, protects and provides for our families, etc. God gives us comfort and protection in that area of our lives.

The psalm says that God will keep us from harm day and night, as we come and as we go, all of our lives. It is hard to say much more than the psalm itself says. May you rest in the assurance that it promises.

123 Psalm 122

Psalm 122

Author: David

Theme(s): Celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple

Psalm 122:1 is another verse that every Sunday School kid learns:

I rejoiced with those who said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."

In Sunday School, we were taught that this meant that we should be happy to go to church (and I agree that we should be happy to go to church). That is similar to what this is about, but not it exactly. This was expressing the joy of going to the actual temple in Jerusalem. That was the city that God had chosen for his temple and where he chose for people to come meet him. Thus the psalm admonishes in verses 6-7:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels."

The psalmist encourages people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (remember that this is a "song of ascents," that was written to be sung as the people approached Jerusalem) because people should be able to come to God in peace. There are those who pull this verse out of context and offer it as a Biblical mandate to continually pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Although it is never wrong to pray for peace anywhere, particularly Jerusalem, I do not think that this strict interpretation of this verse still stands. Jerusalem is no longer where we go to meet God. The intent of this verse was to pray for peace in the place where people encounter the presence of God. People should be able to have an encounter with God without first having to encounter warfare with the enemies of God. That is still true. Anywhere there is military oppression of religious freedom in the world we should pray against that. Whether or not this includes Jerusalem, it is not limited to there.

I should add that any believer who has ever been to Jerusalem will treasure that place in his heart, just because of the significance that it had in the lives of our spiritual forefathers and in the life of our Lord. When political strife occurs there, he will pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

124 Psalm 123

Psalm 123

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A cry for a deeper relationship with God

125 Psalm 124

Psalm 124

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

126 Psalm 125

Psalm 125

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

127 Psalm 126

Psalm 126

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 126 was written to thank God for returning exiles to Jerusalem. More than likely, this is related to the return from Babylonian exile. Verses 1-2 say:

When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion,
we were like men who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."

The psalmist rejoices that God will replace the suffering that they have endured with joy. Verses 5-6 say:

Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy.
He who goes out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with him.

128 Psalm 127

Psalm 127

Author: Solomon

Theme(s): The importance of giving God priority in the home

Psalm 127 talks about a God-centered home. It has two related sections. The first talks about the physical provisions of the home and the second about the children in the home.

God is the source of the physical provisions of the home. If we seek to provide any way outside his will then we are working in vain. Verses 1-2 say:

Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchmen stand guard in vain.
In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat –
for he grants sleep to those he loves.

The psalm then shifts to the topic of children. Not only are the physical provisions of the home from God, but so are the children. Verses 3-5 say:

Sons are a heritage from the Lord,
children a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are sons born in one's youth.
Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Children are not accidents or untimely problems. They are creations. They are gifts from God. The God that provides children to the home as indicated in the second part of the psalm is the same God that provides for the needs of the home in the first part of the psalm. It all comes together when we look to him as provider.

129 Psalm 128

Psalm 128

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): The importance of giving God priority in the home

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the section on Psalms 127.

130 Psalm 129

Psalm 129

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Calling upon God to bring judgment upon the wicked and/or defend the poor and oppressed d

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the section on Psalms 146.

131 Psalm 130

Psalm 130

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 13, 22, 42, 44, 77, 79, 84, 85, 90, 101, and 137.

132 Psalm 131

Psalm 131

Author: David

Theme(s): Humbling oneself before the holiness of God

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 15 and 24.

133 Psalm 132

Psalm 132

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Celebrating the city of Zion (Jerusalem) and/or the Temple

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 84, 87, and 122.

134 Psalm 133

Psalm 133

Author: David

Theme(s): A call for unity among the people of God

Psalm 133 is a call for unity among believers. It says that when the people of God cooperate and live together in harmony, it is precious like the oil used to anoint the priests or like the dew from Mount Hermon falling in Jerusalem. The last metaphor might require a bit of explanation. Mount Hermon is in far north Israel, almost in Syria. It is very tall and steep, and is certainly one of the highest points in Israel. The dew that would fall there would be thick and rich. The psalmist is imagining the dew from Hermon falling in Jerusalem. If it did, it would be denser than the dew that Jerusalem normally gets. The water that it would bring would be very beneficial to Jerusalem. In the same way that it would be precious and valuable, so is unity among believers. Verse 1 says:

How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!

135 Psalm 134

Psalm 134

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

136 Psalm 135

Psalm 135

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

The themes found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 67, 90, 100, 103, 105, 111, 126, 136, 139, 146, 147, and 150.

137 Psalm 136

Psalm 136

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

Psalm 136 is an antiphonal chorus. When it was performed, it would have had a leader singing one part and a choir responding with the second part (like a responsive reading) or it would have had two choirs singing the two parts. Thus the leader or the first choir would sing "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good." and the antiphonal choir would respond "His love endures forever."

Then the leader or first choir would sing "Give thanks to the God of gods." and the antiphonal choir would again respond "His love endures forever."

The antiphonal choir always responds "His love endures forever." Thus the flow of the psalm is found in the text for the leader or the first choir. That section explores God's goodness as revealed in creation, in the delivery from Egypt, and his giving them the Promised Land. He has done all of these things to demonstrate his care. The conclusion that we can draw from each of these acts is that "His love endures forever."

138 Psalm 137

Psalm 137

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Calling out to God when he seems distant; a cry for forgiveness and restoration of relationship

Psalm 137 is a reflection on the bitterness of exile in Babylon. Because of the fact that it is framed in the past tense, we assume that it was written by an exile who had returned. He was looking back on the pain of the time in exile. Verses 1-4 say:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?

It is important to put this in historical perspective. The exiles in Babylon did not have a bad life. They were not treated like slaves, the way that we think of slavery. They lived with a great deal of freedom. They practiced their trades. Many of them rose to be important figures in the government (e.g. Daniel and Nehemiah). In fact, when the exiles were finally given permission to return, a great number of them chose to remain in Babylon because they had a good life there. That being the case, what is the reason for the bitter taste in this psalm?

Whether or not the people had a good life, the fact is that they had been ripped from their Promised Land and forced to live in a foreign place. This was a bitter reality to them, because Jerusalem was the place where God had taken up residence. It was where their temple used to be and where they could go to meet God. When they were taken to Babylon, that vital part of their lives was cut off. That was bitter to them. To the really faithful, the good life that they had in Babylon was only a distraction. Verses 5-6 say:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem
may my right hand forget its skill.
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you.

There are times when we get separated from God, typically because of poor choices we have made. At those times, the enemy will supply us with all sorts of distractions that will beg for our attention. The reason is simple. At times like that, our focus should be strictly on restoring the

relationship with God, but the enemy wants us to be consumed with other things. We need to join the psalmist in saying, "If I forget you, O God, may my right hand forget its skill."

This psalm ends on a very harsh note. The psalmist wants revenge for those who disrupted their religious life. Verses 8-9 say:

O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is he who repays you
for what you have done to us –
he who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks.

139 Psalm 138

Psalm 138

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

140 Psalm 139

Psalm 139

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 139 celebrates the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God, but at a very individual and personal level. The psalmist knows that wherever he goes, God is there. He knows that God is familiar with every detail of his life, starting with conception. Verses 13-16 say:

For you created my inmost being,
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

This passage should settle once and for all the question of whether or not life does indeed begin at conception and not at birth. Long before that debate ever raged, the psalmist knew that we are creations and not accidents.

God's monitoring of our lives did not stop at birth. Every day, he knows every move that we will make before we make it. He knows what we say, what we do, when we sleep, and when we wake. The psalmist finds great comfort in the fact that God is so involved in his life. There is

safety in it. He also marvels at God's ability to do this. Verses 7-10 reflect on God's marvelous ability to watch over us wherever we are:

Where can I go from your Spirit?
where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

The psalmist also knows that his shortcomings are visible to God. He is willing and anxious to submit that side of himself to God as well. He wants to be led in the ways that are right and away from transgression. Verses 23-24 conclude the psalm:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

We should all be close enough to God that submitting to him in this way is not a fearful thing. We should all desire to be led in the way everlasting.

141 Psalm 140

Psalm 140

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

142 Psalm 141

Psalm 141

Author: David

Theme(s): God is the source of all good things for those who seek him

Psalm 141 Psalm 141 is a psalm of David. In it he expresses his desire to be in right standing before God so that his prayers may be pleasing to God. Verses 1 and 2 say,

O Lord, I call to you; come quickly to me.
Hear my voice when I call to you.
May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

It is David's heartfelt desire that when he approaches the presence of God in prayer that it be as pleasing to God as the evening sacrifices. A man who genuinely loves God will feel the same way. Surely when we look into his face we want to feel his pleasure.

David knows that the condition of his heart has a great deal to do with how he will be received. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds can cloud that experience with God. In verse 3 he asks God to set a guard over his mouth and to “keep watch over the door of my lips.” Careless or mean-spirited words can lead us astray. What we say matters. David knows that his words need to be pure.

In verse 4 he asks God to guard his heart. He does not want it to be drawn to evil things and he does not want to find himself in the presence of evildoers, who might lead him astray. It is very similar to what Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” The fact that Jesus taught us to pray this is a good indication that we are apt to be drawn in this way. It should be the prayer of our hearts to be kept from evil and from temptation because each battle that we have to fight is one that we could lose if we are not on our guard.

In verse 5 David said,

Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness;
let him rebuke me – it is oil on my head.
My head will not refuse it.

Most of would not normally invite rebuke or appreciate being struck by another person. If the purpose of it is to correct us and keep us in the “paths of righteousness,” however, then we should value it. David recognized that such rebuke was for his own good. It was as if he were being anointed with oil. Anyone who can help us to remain in good standing with God is doing us a huge favor. We should all pray to be kept from the presence of those who would lead us into evil and to be kept in the presence of those who would edify us.

David knew that the world was full of people who would lead him astray or seek to do him harm. He knew that his only place of safety was in God. In verse 8 he states that his eyes are fixed upon the Lord, as ours should be. Because of that, he could say in verse 10

Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I pass by in safety.

143 Psalm 142

Psalm 142

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

144 Psalm 143

Psalm 143

Author: David

Theme(s): God is our protection when we are threatened or when our enemies seek to destroy us

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 3, 7, 13, 27, 30, 31, 56, 62, 69, 110, and 118.

145 Psalm 144

Psalm 144

Author: David

Theme(s): God protects and provides for the righteous but destroys the wicked

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 1, 2, 7, 16, 27, 30, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 73, 91, and 94.

146 Psalm 145

Psalm 145

Author: David

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 90, 103, 105, 111, 136, 139, 146, and 147.

147 Psalm 146

Psalm 146

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Sometimes people have a sincere desire to be involved in some sort of ministry for the Lord but they just do not know how. Psalm 146:7-9 says:

He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets prisoners free,
the Lord gives sight to the blind,
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the alien
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Maybe if we want to be involved in some sort of ministry for the Lord we should give food to the hungry, set free those in bondage, pray for the blind, lift up those who are low, fellowship with the saints, and take care of aliens, orphans, and widows. Standing orders are good orders.

148 Psalm 147

Psalm 147

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation

Psalm 147:7-11 says:

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make music to our God on the harp.
He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.
He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.
His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of a man;
the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

God can spin the earth on the end of his little finger. He manipulates the clouds and the rain and tells the grass when to grow. If he can do all that, he is not going to be very impressed with any of our physical feats.

God wants our devotion, our reverence, our fear. If you do not give him that, nothing else that you do for him or in his name will matter.

Nothing.

149 Psalm 148

Psalm 148

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): Praising God for his majesty and/or creation; a call to joyful praise and worship

The themes found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 8, 19, 33, 46, 65, 66, 67, 90, 100, 103, 105, 111, 126, 136, 139, 146, 147, and 150.

150 Psalm 149

Psalm 149

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

The theme found in this psalm is explored more fully in the sections on Psalms 33, 66, 67, 100, 105, 126, 136, and 150.

151 Psalm 150

Psalm 150

Author: Unknown

Theme(s): A call to joyful praise and worship

It is interesting that the book of Psalms is the official hymnbook for the nation of Israel but it contains very few references to musical instruments. Psalms 4, 5, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67, and 76 contain notes to the music director about what kinds of instruments should be used to accompany the psalm. Psalms 33, 49, 57, 68, 81, 92, 98, 108, 137, 144, 149, and 150 are the only ones that mention musical instruments in the actual text of the psalm. Psalm 150 celebrates the use of musical instruments in the worship of God. It calls upon the people of God to praise God mightily for the things that he has done and to do so using trumpets, harps, lyres, tambourines, dancing, strings, flute, and cymbals.

There will be a good worship team in heaven.

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