

“Meeting God in the Psalter: A Practical Guide to the Psalms”
Part 3 – Worship and the Psalms

I. Introduction: The Psalms are a “call” to worship

A. Remember the worshipful purpose of the Psalms

“The book of Psalms is a collection of the prayers, praises, meditations, and liturgies of ancient Israel that were set to poetic form and deposited in the sanctuary for use by individual worshippers and choirs.”¹

1. To guide our prayers and praises as we await the coming of His kingdom.
2. To make us wise as we meditate upon the pages of the Psalter and to engender hope in the promises of God as we wait patiently for God’s divine Deliverer.

B. Reorient your affections by the Psalms

- To dispel unworthy loves
- To expose worldly concerns
- To teach our hearts *how* to praise and worship Him
- To see God vindicate his own name

II. The Psalms shape our worship

“The use of the Psalter would ensure that worshippers would regularly contemplate the holy God of glory, the Creator, Redeemer, and King, in the beautiful and powerful ways that he chose to reveal himself.”²

A. The character of God’s person (e.g., Psalm 139)³

1. God’s knowledge is great (vv. 1–6)
2. God’s presence is great (vv. 7–12)
3. God’s sovereignty is great (vv. 13–16)
4. God’s thoughts are great (vv. 17–18)
5. God’s name is great (vv. 19–22)
6. God’s ways are great (vv. 23–24)

¹ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishers, 2006), 262.

² *Ibid.*, 268.

³ See Ben Holland’s sermon, “Psalm 139: The Glory and Gravity of the Greatness of God” (preached on November 19, 2017 at Grace Community Church-Huntsville).

One reason we love the Psalms is because they tell us so much about God. The Psalms give us a dialogue with God in which we speak our joys and sorrows to God, and God for his part meets our needs and receives our praise.⁴

B. The centrality of God’s Son

I presuppose that a Christian can scarcely read the psalms without foundationally and explicitly thinking of the Savior. As one meditates on the issues of instruction, sorrow, and praise that are represented in the various songs, one is immediately driven to the One who was the greatest Rabbi, the Man of Sorrows, and the awesome Lord of the universe—even more so than in other sections of the OT.⁵

Jesus Christ, the King (portrayed in Matthew)	Jesus Christ, the Servant (portrayed in Mark)	Jesus Christ, the Son of Man (portrayed in Luke)	Jesus Christ, the Son of Man (portrayed in Luke)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ps. 2: Christ rejected as King by the nations • Ps. 18: Christ is Protector and Deliverer • Ps. 20: Christ provides salvation • Ps. 21: Christ is given glory by God • Ps. 24: Christ is King of Glory • Ps. 47: Christ rules in His kingdom • Ps. 110: Christ is King-Priest • Ps. 132: Christ is enthroned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ps. 17: Christ is Intercessor • Ps. 22: Christ is the dying savior • Ps. 23: Christ is Shepherd • Ps. 40: Christ is obedient unto death • Ps. 41: Christ is betrayed by a close friend • Ps. 69: Christ is hated without a cause • Ps. 109: Christ loves those who reject Him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ps. 8: Christ is made a little lower than angels • Ps. 16: Christ's resurrection is promised • Ps. 40: Christ's resurrection is realized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ps. 19: Christ is Creator • Ps. 102: Christ is eternal • Ps. 118: Christ is the Chief Cornerstone

⁴ Michael E. Travers, *Encountering God in the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003), 12.

⁵ Timothy M. Pierce, *Enthroned on Our Praise: An Old Testament Theology of Worship* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 222.

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C. The instruction of God’s Word (Psalms 1; 19; 119)

There is little question that the book of Psalms views instruction as an integral part of worship . . . [which] corrects the notion that worship is linked solely with singing in the Scriptures. . . [The Psalms] starting point is in the matter of instruction and teaching, and they advocate the idea that instruction must take place even in music.⁶

- **Psalm 19:7–9** summarizes the focus of instruction in the Psalms. There are six **titles**, six *characteristics*, and six **effects**.

⁷The **law** of the LORD is *perfect*, **restoring the soul**;

The **testimony** of the LORD is *sure*, **making wise the simple**.

⁸The **precepts** of the LORD are *right*, **rejoicing the heart**;

The **commandment** of the LORD is *pure*, **enlightening the eyes**.

⁹The **fear** of the LORD is *clean*, **enduring forever**;

The **judgments** of the LORD are *true*; they **are righteous altogether**.

“Focusing on instruction simply advocates that everything done in worship should teach something.”⁷

David Starling, “The Psalter is a powerful reminder that a living and active doctrine of Scripture need to be prayed and sung and practiced, not merely defined and defended.”

D. The expressions of God’s praise

Worshipping in the OT context, with the Psalms, was “a holy meeting in which God grants forgiveness, comfort, and guidance, and where the worshipper responds in praise, often reciting God’s great redemptive acts.”⁸

- Adoration – recognition of God’s character

⁶ Ibid., 238–9.

⁷ Ibid., 239.

⁸ J. Muilenburg, *The Way of Israel* (New York: Harper, 1961), 107–8.

- Confession – acknowledgement of our character
- Assurance – affirmation of grace
- Thanksgiving – expression of devotion
- Petition/Intercession – desire for aid in living for God
- Instruction – acquiring knowledge for pleasing God
- Communion – communing with God and His people
- Benediction – living unto God with His blessing

III. *How should I respond in worship?*

“If the Psalter were restored to a prominent place in worship, it would put more of the Word of God on the lips of worshippers, teach people how to pray and praise, and strengthen and encourage their faith.”⁹

- A. *Doxologically* – Praise the Lord our God for who he is, what he has done, is doing, and will do yet.
- B. *Devotionally* – Meditate upon the greatness, glory, goodness, and grace of God and be encouraged to make all your needs and problems known to him.
- C. *Vocally/Liturgically/Musically* – Follow the Psalter’s vocabulary for worship, praying, praising, and giving thanks to the Lord both personally and corporately with the church.

“Music must be immersed in proper theology precisely because it has a power to instruct and evoke in a manner that few mediums can.”¹⁰

- D. *Theologically* – Learn about the nature of God and his ways, his saving purposes and plan of redemption.
- E. *Confessionally* – Use the Psalter to rightly confess your sin to the Lord and profess faith in His gracious desire to forgive and pardon our iniquity.
- F. *Relationally* – Communicate with God in prayer in every circumstance, crisis, and opportunity.
- G. *Prayerfully* – Use the Psalms to pray the Scriptures and developing a greater awareness and understanding of praying to the Lord.

⁹ Ross, 267.

¹⁰ Pierce, 239.

See next page for two examples of prayers based on the Psalms.

"Two Paths" (Psalm 1)	"His Love in Sorrow" (Psalm 52)
<p>All knowing Lord You know the way of the righteous And You know the way of the wicked For you know all things. You declare the end from the beginning And from ancient times, Things which have not been done. You know when we lie down and when we rise up. You are omniscient and unchanging and there is no variation to your faithfulness.</p> <p>Yet Lord, we have often gone astray. Help our minds to discern the foolish counsel of the wicked, Help our eyes to see the corrupted path of sinners, Help our ears to hear the mocking voices of scoffers.</p> <p>We long to delight in Your law, For Your Word is more desirable than gold And sweeter than honey. Your Word is living and active and sharper Than any two-edged sword, And it uncovers the deep recesses of our hearts.</p> <p>Lord as Your people, we desire to be like trees... firmly planted, In a place where we can flourish and grow. Plant Your Word in our hearts today. Help us to pay attention to what You are saying And help our hearts to be swift to obey.</p> <p>Help us to hear Your Word today May Your Holy Spirit apply these wonderful truths to our hearts. Through the application of Your Word Make us more like Christ As our minds are renewed and refreshed this morning...</p> <p>May Jesus Christ be praised For all that he has done in us and through us. To the glory of the Triune God Who is worthy to be praised And Who is blessed forevermore.</p>	<p>Our great Father and giver of all Grace, You have disarmed your foes and vanquished our sin At the cross of your beloved Son. Yet we still find as David here in this Psalm. That foes still abound, they are defeated yet they fight, We are justified by the cross, yet still tempted We are holy in your sight yet we still struggle With indwelling sin.</p> <p>So whether our temptations are without or within We pray, like David, "I will trust in the lovingkindness of God Forever and ever. I will give thanks and wait on your name."</p> <p>We come expectant this morning. We expect that you will be near to the brokenhearted, the lonely, And the hurting. We expect that you will move hearts to obedience by the indwelling power of Your Spirit. We expect that you will forgive sin for all who look to you in time of weakness and temptation. And we expect that you will equip us by Your Word To carry out ministry to one another and to the world.</p> <p>We pray that you would deepen in us these truths Write them upon our hearts, doing what only You can do.</p> <p>Because you are our God and we are Your people So we praise Your name, Through Jesus, in the Spirit, to the Father Amen.</p>

Recommended Resource (for devotional reading of the Psalms)

William Varner, *Awake O Harp: A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms* (Kress Biblical Resources, 2011).

John Calvin, *Heart Aflame: Daily Readings from Calvin on the Psalms* (P & R Publishing, 1999).

