



Prayer and Praise from the Psalms

Third Quarter Wednesday Evening Adult Bible Class, Southport Church of Christ, 2021



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**Preface to *Prayers and Praise from the Psalms:*
Understanding Prayer Generally**

1. What verse(s) do you think best *defines* prayer?

2. Matt.6:9-13. How would classify or describe each part of this *model* prayer:
 - a. v.9?

 - b. v.10?

 - c. v.11?

 - d. v.12?

 - e. v.13?

3. 1Tim.2:1 identifies four *elements types* of prayers:
 - a. *Entreaties (supplications, KJV): deesis-* want, need, penury, privation; seeking, asking, cf. Rom.10:1; 1Tim.5:5; Jas.5:16;
 - b. *Prayers: prosuche-* prayer or a place of prayer, cf. Matt.21:13,22; Rom.12:12;
 - c. *Petitions (intercessions, KJV): enteuxis-* to fall in with; converse or for any other cause, cf. 1Tim.4:5 (*enteuxis* is only found in 1Tim.2:1 and 4:5, though the verb form, *entynchano {intercede}*, is found also in other passages such as Rom.8:27,34; Heb.7:25); and,
 - d. *Thanksgivings: eucharista-* the giving of thanks, cf. Matt.26:27 (different form of same root); 1Cor.14:16; Phil.4:6.

4. Which of these *elements/aspects* are most common in our prayers (especially the *public* ones)? Why do you think this is so?

5. What other *types* of prayers can you name (if possible, provide a biblical example of that *type* of prayer)?

Lesson 1- Introduction, *Prayers* and *Praise* from the Psalms

I. Why *prayers* instead of *psalms*?

- A. Many of the “psalms” are *prayers* (more on this later).
- B. It is much more difficult to compose and sing a *psalm*, even if we utilize inspired words, than it is to compose and offer a *prayer*. But,
- C. Our *prayers*, much like our *singing*, can easily become rote recitations rather than sincere expressions of our true *heart’s desire*, cp. Matt.6:7 and Rom.10:1. Therefore,
- D. Our *prayers* and *praise*, especially our *public* ones, even with the *intercession of the Spirit*, cf. Rom.8:26, could typically be enhanced by greater *understanding* and more *emotion (heart)*... and the better *expression* of both.

II. Differences between *Hebrew* and *Western* poetry:

- A. Western (as related to the globe, not cowboys) poetry utilizes primarily rhyme and meter.
- B. Hebrew poetry is much more centered on *rhythm* and *parallelism* (the use of successive verbal constructions in poetry or prose which correspond in grammatical structure, sound, meter, meaning, etc.).

III. Organization of the Psalms. There are five distinct *Books*- each one has its own *doxology* at the end (Book 5 has an entire psalm which serves as its *doxology*).

- A. Book 1, Psalms 1 – 41
- B. Book 2, Psalms 42 – 72
- C. Book 3, Psalms 73 – 89
- D. Book 4, Psalms 90 – 106
- E. Book 5, Psalms 107 – 150

IV. *Writers of the Psalms*:

- A. **David**, with no fewer than 73 attributed to him;
- B. **Asaph** (50; 73 – 83)
- C. **Sons of Korah**, (42 – 49; 84 – 85; 87 – 88)
- D. **Solomon**, (72; 127)
- E. **Heman**, (88)
- F. **Ethan**, (89)
- G. **Ezrahites and Moses**, (90)

V. Possible explanations of repeated but largely unidentified *terms* and *expressions*:

- A. *Selah*, may imply a *pause* (even as a *sigh*) or an *interlude*;

- B. *Maskil*, possibly indicating a *contemplative, didactic, or skillful* (making one wise or spiritually skillful); cf. Ps.32; 42; 44 – 45; 52 – 55; 74; 78; 88 – 89; 142;
- C. *Miktam*, perhaps an *epigrammatic (pithy or short) poem*; or a psalm of *lament, a plea for atonement, or plea for protection- a spiritual SOS*; cf. Ps.16; 56 – 60; and,
- D. *Sheol*, can refer either to *death/the grave* or the *nether world* (realm or state of the dead).

VI. Why prayer when “psalms” refers to songs?

Perhaps this quote will help to explain: “The marrow of the religious life of the psalmists was undoubtedly their *knowledge of God*. They never tire of singing his majesty in creation. In all his works in the heavens, the earth and the sea he has made himself known as the all-powerful, the all-knowing, the everywhere-present God. He is also the God of all history who guides everything towards the final goal which he has purposed to fulfil. But this Ruler of the world, this King of kings, is also Lawgiver and Judge, the Vindicator of all who are oppressed and their Saviour. He is therefore merciful and faithful, just and righteous, the Holy One whom men and angels adore. But the God of the psalmists is also, and uniquely, the God of Israel. The God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who through Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, entered into covenant with them and gave them the promised land, is the God of Israel still, the Lord and Defender of the chosen people.

With such a high conception of God it is not surprising that the psalmists found their chief delight and privilege in prayer to God. There is a directness, a spontaneity and an immediacy in the prayers of the psalmists that convince us of the reality of prayer for them. They believe in his providence, trust in his presence, rejoice in his righteousness, rest in his faithfulness, confide in his nearness. In their prayers they praise, petition and commune with their God, and find refuge from sickness, want, pestilence and slander, and humble themselves under his mighty hand. In the progressive life of the community their behaviour is marked by fidelity to God, reverent obedience to the law, kindness to the oppressed and joy in the worship of God’s people.”¹

From this, note a few important points (especially as relating to the purpose and format of our study):

1. The center (or “marrow”) which *fueled* the writers of Psalms was “**undoubtedly their knowledge of God.**” Thus, “They never tire of singing His majesty in creation.” Such is abundantly evident, as an example, in Psalms 19:1-6.
2. This *knowledge* (of God) and the resulting desire to sing “of His majesty in

¹ Thomson, J. G. S. S., & Kidner, F. D. (1996). Psalms, Book Of. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., pp. 983–984). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

creation” also produced a **profound attitude of affection for and dedicated to His law, testimony, and commandments**, Psalm 19:7-14 (again, as an example).

3. This supreme regard for God and His law, testimony, and commandment found expression in Psalms, which in many cases, are **rhythmically chanted or sung prayers**. Thus, “it is not surprising that the psalmists found their chief delight and privilege in prayer to God. There is a directness, a spontaneity and an immediacy in the prayers of the psalmists that convince us of the reality of prayer for them.” Furthermore, “In their prayers they praise, petition and commune with their God, and find refuge from sickness, want, pestilence and slander, and humble themselves under his mighty hand.”
4. The recognition of the Psalms largely as *prayers*, and the study of them as such, will hopefully: a) Allow the *knowledge of God* and the *appreciation of His majesty* to likewise produce *more delight in the privilege of prayer* for us; b) Increase our regard for the *law, testimonies, and commandments of God*; and, c) Provide not only *greater emotion* in our prayers, but the *better expression* of it.
5. Obviously, we are not divinely inspired *poets* or *composers* like the Psalmists. But hopefully, by a better understanding of these *prayerful songs*, our prayers (and songs!) will become more genuine and heartfelt expressions of our love for God, our appreciation of His blessings, our dedication to His will, and our absolute dependence upon Him.

VII. Types and Purposes of *Prayer/Psalms* to be Considered:

- Why study this? Having some knowledge of the Basic Differences between *Hebrew* and *Western Poetry*, the *Organization* and *Writers* of the Psalms, the *Headings* and *Unidentified Terms*; and the *Various Types* of Psalms hopefully provides a foundation upon which to build our understanding of what it really means to “praise” God, whether in song or prayer, and will help in both areas.
- **Praise and Thanksgiving**- Recognizing and Acknowledging God’s *Provision* and Expressing *Gratitude* in Prayer and Praise
- **Guidance**- Seeking, Inviting, and Welcoming God’s *Direction* in Prayer and Praise
- **Instruction**- Learning God’s *Truth* and *Ways* in Prayer and Praise
- **Confession**- Recognizing and Acknowledging *Sin, Heartbrokenness*, and *Repentance* in Prayer and Praise
- **Nature**- Understanding and Articulating *God’s Glory, Greatness*, and *Faithfulness* demonstrated through *Creation* in Prayer and Praise
- **Hope**- Basing and Communicating our *Confidence* in the *Messiah* through Prayer and Praise

Lesson 2, *Prayers and Praise from Psalms*

Type of Psalms: *Praise and Thanksgiving*

Text for the Lesson: Psalm 100; Psalm 139; Psalm 148

These particular psalms were not chosen just because the word “*praise*” is found or repeated often within them. Instead, they were selected because they help to explain and expound upon *why* we praise and thank God. This understanding is essential to the *what* and *how* of our praise and thanksgiving, both in *prayer* and *song*, 1Cor.14:15.

Psalm 100

This psalm is comprised of two sets of *commands/admonitions*, and two corresponding sets of *motivations*. The *commands* are in vv.1-2 and v.4; while the *motivations* (what is *known* or *understood*) are in v.3 and v.5. *Worship*, particularly in matters of *praise* and *thanksgiving*, is driven by *knowledge* and *understanding*- otherwise, it is at best faulty or incomplete, cf. John 4:22 and Acts 18:24-28; and at its worst becomes idolatrous, cf. Acts 14:8-18; 17:16-31. Simply put: Our *praise* of and *thanksgivings* to God must be based in our *knowledge* and *understanding* of Him. Such knowledge and understanding then necessarily *motivates* our praise and thanksgiving- not merely because of what He *provides us*, but because of *who* He is!

1. What are the specific *commands/admonitions* of vv.1-2?
2. What *knowledge/understanding* motivates them from v.3?
3. What are the specific *commands/admonitions* of v.4?
4. What *knowledge/understanding* motivates them from v.5?
5. Is our *praise* and *thanksgiving* (in song and prayer) typically motivated more by *what God provides* or *who He is*? Why is this?
6. How do you think being more motivated by *who God is* would change our *prayers* and *praise* of Him?

Psalm 139

This psalm is not typically included in lists of *praise* and *thanksgiving* psalms. It is incorporated here because it tells so much about God; and therefore, provides the *motivation* of our prayers and praise of Him (as mentioned in the previous section). Note that the psalm can be easily divided into three *main* parts and three *resulting* conclusive or application parts. The three *main* parts outline God's: *Knowledge* (omniscience), vv.1-6; *Presence* (omnipresence), vv.7-11; and *Power* (omnipotence), vv.13-16. This *knowledge/understanding* of God leads to three subsequent

conclusions and/or applications: *Reverence* for the *thoughts* of God, vv.17-18; *Imprecatory* pleas, vv.19-22; and *Desire to be pleasing* to God, vv.23-24.
Comprehending- to the extent that *revelation* and *human limitations* allow, God's *omniscience*, *omnipresence*, and *omnipotence* not only changes who we are and how we view ourselves by comparison, it changes *why* and *how* we pray to and praise Him.

7. Does God's omniscience of vv.1-6 *comfort* or *concern* you? Why?
8. Does God's omnipresence of vv.7-12 *comfort* or *concern* you? Why?
9. Does God's omnipotence of vv.13-16 *comfort* or *concern* you? Why?
10. How do you think vv.17-18 should influence our *prayers* and *praise*?
11. How do you think vv.19-22 should influence our *prayers* and *praise*?
12. For what is David really asking in vv.23-24? How should this influence our *prayers* and *praise*?

Psalm 148

This psalm enjoins *the whole creation* to "*praise the Lord!*" Though anonymous, it is generally thought to originate from the period of the restoration of Israel under Nehemiah. Regardless of the writer or time period, it calls for the *praise of God* from every *created thing*, animate or inanimate, each in its own endowed capacity, for His *creative* and *establishing/sustaining power*, His *inherent glory*, and His *compassion* and *resurrecting authority*. It does not merely suggest *praise*, but commands it emphatically!

13. This question may be both a little late in the study and obvious, but what does "praise" mean- both *literally* and in *application*?
14. From what two *realms* does this psalm command the *praise of the Lord*? Why do you think this is significant?
15. Vv.5-6 and vv.13-14 provide the *reasons* that *the whole creation* should "*Praise the Lord!*" What are these reasons specifically?
16. Given the answers to the previous question, *how* should these things affect our *praise of/to God* in our songs, and in our prayers?
17. To what "*horn*" does v.14 refer? Please explain your answer.