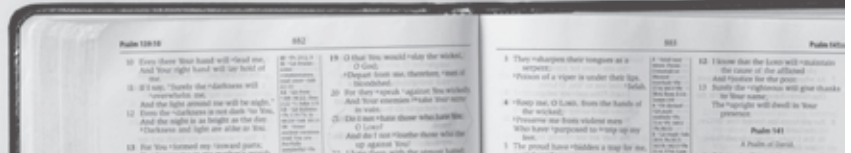


Words of Truth

Studying the Sacred Songs of Israel



Featured Authors

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Psalm 1: The Way of the Sheep

Chris Olive, Athens, AL

We must be conscious of where we are in our spiritual walk with Christ daily. Paul would say that he buffets his body daily. In Psalm 1, we see a contrast given to us. This contrast guides us in all things pertaining to life and Godliness. In John 10:14, Jesus says that he knows his sheep, and his sheep know him. As sheep go into the world, we must be aware of the temptation surrounding us.

THE WICKED- As we begin the text, we pick up the language of the wicked and how they behave. Sadly, the world that we live in has fallen to the wayside for the most part. Proverbs 4:14 warns us of the way of the wicked. The wicked are fruitless when the Lord looks upon them. In Matthew 7:15-20 we have an account of the characteristics of the wicked. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us of our adversary. So, how can we escape the wicked world that we live in?

THE WORD- What can save a man from wickedness? God's word can help us shift our focus off what the world calls good. Isaiah 5:20 warns us against this behavior. The word of God can bring forth growth in a once-barren heart. We need the Word to help us discern between the ways of the Lord and the wicked. In Hebrews 4:12, the Hebrew writer gives us a wonderful text full of love and hope. The word of God will not drop from heaven and land inside your mind. It takes dedication to know and cultivate it within your mind. 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us how to gain the wonderful knowledge of the word of God. We can now correctly apply it in our lives. In Psalm 119:11-14, the text indicates how the word of God can make us flourish and grow strong roots that will be able to withstand the storms of temptations that will come our way.

THE WAY- the way that we are going will determine our destination. A destination can only be reached by traveling a certain way. We have a choice to make, and what we base that choice on will give us our eternal home. In John 14:6, Jesus says he is the Way. Why would I choose this as my point of direction? In Psalm 119:102-106 we can hear the steadfastness in the writer's voice. Surely, this is the Way of which Christ spoke. The way of the righteous is forever full of joy Psalms 16:11. However, there is another way. This is the way of the wicked. The saddest thing I could ever imagine is to be thrust into a deep darkness and to be separated from God forever (Luke 13:28). Luke 19:10 states, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." We have a choice to make! I would choose wisely.

Psalm 19: Revealing the Will and Wonder of God

Ray Reynolds, Summerdale, AL

The first book of Psalms is mainly written by David. Ezra is believed to have compiled these psalms to keep this first book entirely comprised of Davidic psalms (only four are anonymous). One can trust his scholarship and the work of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21). This book also relates to the book of Genesis. The general theme is about man and His relationship to God (Psalm 1; cf. Genesis 1-2), then follows with man's fall and rebellion (Psalms 2-15; cf. Genesis 3-11) and ends with the hope of redemption through Christ (Psalms 16-41; cf. Genesis 12-50).

It should be noted that: 1) The first 41 psalms focus on God's ability to deliver those who fear Him as the Creator. They reflect much of David's life and his understanding of the glory of God. 2) This book uses the divine name Yahweh (273) more than Elohim (15). 3) Every kind of emotion is revealed in these Psalms. David pours his heart to God, begs God for protection, and asks Him for help against his enemies. These three things reveal a personal appeal to the reader to put ourselves in his shoes. God undoubtedly allowed these psalms to be preserved in the Bible to help one feel a one-on-one interaction with God.

Psalm 19 is a beautiful chapter highlighting God's majesty and glory as revealed through both the natural world and the divine law. It combines deep theology and simple poetic imagery. This particular psalm has three primary divisions: 1) Natural Revelation (vs. 1-6), 2) Biblical Revelation (vs. 7-11), and 3) Human Revelation (vs. 12-14). This article's objective is to help apply this great section of Scripture.

Natural Revelation (vv. 1-6)- The psalmist begins by celebrating how the "heavens declare" the glory of God, showcasing the craftsmanship of the Creator (Genesis 1). The imagery used paints a picture of a universal language spoken without words. The heavens "utter speech" to the inhabitants of the earth. Day and night communicate the undeniable knowledge that God created the universe and everything in it. There is no "speech" or "language" where this is not evident, even to the ends of the earth.

David powerfully uses the sun as an example of the testimony of God. Interestingly enough, several religious groups worship the sun. God had revealed to the nation of Israel that though the sun is a great entity, it only points to an intelligent Designer. There is One greater than the sun, moon, and stars of heaven.

Biblical Revelation (vv. 7-11)- The psalmist transitions into praising the law of the Lord. David reveals that the Word of the Lord is perfect, trustworthy, and wise.

It is capable of bringing joy and enlightenment to the heart. Even though the great creation of God declares His glory, God has also provided special revelation in the Bible. Paul says it is "profitable" to man in many different areas (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This revelation goes far beyond nature. Though not superficial, nature pales in comparison to God's statutes, commandments, and judgments.

The law is also depicted as a guide, offering direction and discernment to those who follow it. The Hebrew word "Torah" can be translated as guidance, teaching, or instruction. David uses wordplay in this section to emphasize the importance of God's guidance in navigating life. He uses several synonyms to reveal the nature of God's word and how it converts, cleanses, and changes a believer. God seeks to reward those who heed His warnings and humbly seek His guidance.

Human Revelation (vv. 12-14)- As the psalm concludes, David acknowledges his limitations and asks for forgiveness. He seeks redemption from foolish errors, hidden faults, and willful sins. If God's word is to dwell in nature and the word alone, how does it impact man? The truth is that God seeks to indwell the human heart! He wants to empower His people on the road to faithful living. This comes full circle when one reaches the New Testament and can see the indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord's church.

The closing plea is for the "words" and "meditation" of David, and ultimately the nation of Israel who sings this psalm, to be pleasing to God. This reflects a deep desire for one's alignment with divine principles. Every thought and intent must surrender to the will of God. A powerful testimony is given to all when God's people focus on acceptable worship and daily Christian living. One can become a child of God and emulate the Word of God.

Psalm 19 perfectly encapsulates themes of divine revelation through nature, law, and the human heart. David acknowledges the splendor of creation while emphasizing the importance of living in accordance with God's guidance. He helps the reader (or singer) to understand the power of God's word and the simplicity of the application to such a message. It must prick one's heart and move their mouth to praise. This wonderful psalm is a poetic expression of awe, humility, and a yearning for spiritual connection. If you follow it, you will find purpose.

Psalm 23: Do We Fear Death?

Reagan Amos, Oxford, AL

In the movie “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,” when Pippin talks about the end, Gandalf reassures him that death isn’t the end of the journey. He says, “End? No, the journey doesn’t end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take.”

Many people seem to fear death, even to the point where they allow fear to stop them from truly living. But in Psalm 23, we read one of, if not the most popular, Old Testament chapters. This chapter tells us that life can be enjoyed, and we have nothing to fear when death comes. Why? God’s word tells us we have everything to gain when the “end” comes.

What makes Psalm 23 so powerful are the chapters that come before and after it. Psalm 22 prophesies the death of the Messiah, how He would conquer it, and how the Father never abandoned Jesus but answered His prayer, as David prophesied (see Matthew 27:45-46). Psalm 23 speaks about how that same Messiah who conquered death would guide, protect, and provide for us in life and death. Psalm 24 discusses how the Messiah will come with His crown in glory.

Many scholars agree that David is the author of Psalm 23. In v. 1, shepherd; “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.” David is saying that the Lord is his shepherd. What does a shepherd do? A shepherd provides, protects, and feeds the sheep. He says that the LORD gives me everything I need in life, so if I have the LORD, there is nothing else I need or desire. But David tells us in detail what the LORD does for His flock in life and death.

In v. 2, we read, “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” Sheep never lie down in green pastures unless they have been well fed. The LORD fulfills our every need so we don’t have a void in our lives. He goes on to say, “He leads me beside still waters.” The original language means “waters of rest.” This entire verse speaks of the peace and tranquility that comes with being in union with our LORD. The still waters meant that the sheep were at rest. The LORD brings peace to our lives, surpassing all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Not only that, but we read that He restores our soul. He is the one that will bring us back into the fold when we go astray. But in v. 4, we read one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You

are with me; You rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Who is David referring to in this chapter and the chapters mentioned above? Who claims to be the God and the Shepherd? Our answer is found in John 10:7-30. In John 10, we read that Jesus claims to be the good shepherd. In John 10:27-28, we read, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

David says he is comforted at the thought that he knows the Messiah is coming and that the Messiah will die for him, cleanse him of all his unrighteousness, and not only that but will guide him (and us) through the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus had already conquered that valley! In John 10:27, Jesus is quoting from Psalm 95:27. And in John 10:28, Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 32:39. These verses would have been well known to the Jews at this point. Giving them comfort and confirmation that He was the Messiah would provide them with life and life more abundantly (John 10:10).

In John 14:1-2, Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Jesus is telling His audience then and now that He has conquered death and is preparing a place of rest and comfort. Based on promises like these, we can have peace and live life differently than those around us because we know death is not the end but an eternal homecoming!

Jesus confirmed that He was the prophesied good shepherd and would be our perfect sacrifice to reunite with our Father. And have confidence in that promise and sacrifice! And we, like David in Psalm 23:6, can not only say we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but we WILL dwell in the house of the LORD forever, based on the promise of our Savior!

Psalm 32: Blessed are the Forgiven

Matthew Thigpen, Fulton, MS

When Christians typically think about forgiveness from God, they are often tempted to think they have a monopoly on God's forgiveness. However, when one has this point of view, it is difficult to look at certain psalms like Psalm 32, 51, etc., because the question arises of how can the writer express such deep emotion for something foreign to them? What can be discovered by studying scripture is that the Jews also enjoyed forgiveness. Early in establishing God's Law with Moses and Israel, He explained the sacrifice of the sin offering (Leviticus 4). God told Moses that after the sacrifice was offered, the priest made atonement for the sinner, and his sins were forgiven. By studying this fact, one realizes that the Jews could enjoy forgiveness similarly to Christians. With this understanding, Christians can look at psalms like Psalm 32 and learn great lessons about how one should react and feel emotionally about the forgiveness given by God.

Psalm 32 is a psalm written by David in response to the forgiveness of his sins and expresses the joy experienced by the man whose sins have been forgiven. Many have placed this psalm alongside other similar psalms that David wrote to express the joy of having forgiveness from God, such as Psalm 51. Paul will quote from this psalm in Romans 4:6-8, as being written by David and as proof that God offers forgiveness to man because of His great love for man, not based upon man's actions. The first lesson we can learn from this psalm is that Christians today are blessed because of God's love and care for them in forgiving their sins and trespasses.

The following two verses teach what happens when one refuses to acknowledge sins. The psalmist presents an image of inward decay that happens upon a person as they try to hide their sins. It is an image of a man suffering greatly because he refused to admit he was in the wrong. There is also a note of God's hand weighing heavily upon the man and causing him more anguish.

Before going to the next section, notice the word "selah" is used at this point in the psalm. Though this word is typically skipped over when one reads the psalms, it does serve a purpose. It is a note by the author for the reader to stop and consider what was just said, to ponder and meditate upon those words before continuing. Interestingly, David pauses here after speaking of the negative effect that sin had upon him, possibly wanting the

readers to stop and think if they too might have some unconfessed sin in their life that is weighing them down and causing them trouble.

After the pause, David shows his reaction to weight upon him; he acknowledges his sin. He uses complimentary words to show what he did. Now, instead of hiding his sins and covering them up, he confesses them and uncovers them. He states that he confessed his sins to God, and then He forgave him. Again, he uses the word Selah, to call the reader to stop and ponder his words and the blessing that has now come to him.

He then uses his situation and the blessing he now feels as an opportunity to turn from speaking of the oppression and weight of sin to speaking of the safekeeping offered in forgiveness. He also calls his readers to repent if they have sin in their life and turn to God before it is too late. Before the waters come rushing in, and the sinner is overwhelmed. He wants his readers to find the strength and assurance only God can provide. Again, he uses Selah to call the reader to stop and reflect on this truth.

In the next set of verses, the psalm takes an interesting turn. It goes from David's words to God's words and his personal admonition to the reader. God calls the sinner to come to him, and he will teach them how they should live. He offers to guide them if they will listen and not be stubborn like a dumb animal that is forced to walk a path by a bit and bridle. He reaffirms what David said earlier: that to live in sin means to live a life where God is not close.

David finishes his psalm with a final plea to live a life of faithfulness to God. He contrasts the sorrows of the wicked with the joys of the righteous. He gives two options for life, to live without God and be separated from Him and deal with the problems of this world alone, or to come to Him and find the joy that exists in a righteous life with God. That simple message of David is the same message presented in the gospel for all men today: either choose to live in sin and suffer its sorrows, or repent and obey God and enjoy his blessings.

Psalm 46: Pause and Be Still

Derrick Muranto, Hatley, MS

On March 24th at 10:30 p.m., Amory, MS, braced for impact. My family and I had just come back from a fish fry. We were oblivious to the weather and what was soon to transpire. We had been reclining in our living room, winding down from a busy day, when I received the first phone call from my parents saying, “Son, I think we will ride out the storm in our closet.” I said, “OK,” thinking, “What storm?” I went outside underneath our carport to view the threat, noticing headlights coming down my driveway. Our neighbors decided riding out the storm in our storm shelter would be better. As they exited their vehicle, they asked if we were getting in the storm shelter, too. Again, oblivious to what was happening, I turned to my wife and said I guess we better get into the shelter with them. A few minutes later, my parents called and said they were coming too. When they arrived, I finally got them in the shelter. And, right before I closed the shelter door, I looked in the direction of the storm, and there it was. I closed the hatch, didn’t say a word, and within fifteen seconds, the tornado hit. You could feel the pressure leaving your body and what sounded like God punching the earth. We thought we lost everything. When it was finally over, we got out to inspect the damage. After assessing the damage and the chaos around me, I stopped and thanked God that my family was safe. I thank God for my family and our “storm shelter.” Many people in Amory did not have a shelter to protect them. Several had to get into their hallway and pray it was strong enough. I couldn’t have imagined what it felt like not being under the protection of shelter.

In thinking about what the Psalmist said in Psalm 46:1-3 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah” The first stanza in this Psalm reminds us that God is our place of safety and protection. God protects those who are His and those seeking refuge. Psalms 61:4, “Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. Selah.” With the uncertainty of tomorrow and the spread of viruses, diseases,

death, and storms, Psalm 46 powerfully and effectively conveys this truth- No matter what damage the storm causes in our life, we are safe under the shelter of God. God is ever-present! God’s people will experience turmoil. It’s inescapable. One of the downfalls of living in the South is that you will have to face bad weather. Christians will battle hardships, endure struggles, and face death. It may look like there is no way out of the storm. We have been looking at chaos and damage from the tornado for months, and it still feels like there is no end to the mess. However, I know this as I stand in chaos; God and His family are ever-present. The Psalmist is confident that our God is higher than the waters and stronger than the mountains. He is our ever-present refuge.

The Psalmist shows in Psalm 46:4-7 a city that is in danger of an attack but filled with gladness. The city of Jerusalem is calm in the face of danger. Why? I cannot express how excited I was that I bought our storm shelter after the F5 Smithville tornado of 2011. As the tornado came over our shelter, I was calm, maybe even a little too calm. I knew my family was safe. I knew that purchasing that shelter in 2011 was an excellent investment. I knew not only the protection the shelter brought, but also that God was ever-present. I knew we were not moving. The city of Jerusalem knew that God was in their midst and they would not be moved. Their very reason for their joy and gladness. Psalm 46:4, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God...” The river is a sign and seal of God’s refuge. They knew that when God raised his voice the earth would “melt.” The raging world became calm, like the quieting of the stormy sea. God is ever-present and always in control. The very reason we can be calm in the storm.

The final section of this Psalm describes how God will come and judge the wicked. He doesn’t come to judgment to bring more chaos but peace. He wants us to stop and be Still, acknowledging who He is and His work in saving us. Maybe that’s the best advice I can give you in the midst of a storm. Just pause and think about who God is.

Psalm 73: Avoiding Slippery Places

Justin Guin, editor

Why? As I held my 10-month-old daughter, I could not help but ask this question. It was the fourth week of June 2010, and we saw a barrage of specialists trying to figure out what was wrong with Afton. She had forty-eight grand mal seizures in seventy-two hours. Thirteen years later, we have “physical answers” to the question. Specialists diagnosed her with autism spectrum disorder caused by a malformation in her brain. But, probing this question on a metaphysical level left us wondering, “Why was our daughter born disabled?” We would never claim perfection but try to live for the Lord. We notice other children whose parents could not care less about living right or caring for their children, flourishing seemingly without problems. Why did this happen to us?

Struggles are a part of life, and you may have wrestled with the same question, “Why?” A cancer diagnosis, the unexpected death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or a spouse's unfaithfulness are just a few life experiences that may have caused you to ask, “Why do I have to go through this? Others are not afflicted, but I am!” This age-old question is pondered throughout the Bible. The story of Job shakes you to your core because a righteous man loses everything. How could God allow this to happen to him? Several Psalms address this question as the authors are in the throes of life (cf. Pss. 37 & 49). Of these chapters, Psalm 73 helps you ponder this question from the proper perspective. The Psalmist begins with his conclusion, “Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart” (Psalm 73:1, ESV). As you study this chapter, you will see this resolution did not come to Asaph easily.

The Deception of the Psalmist (73:4-15)

When you see others who have no inclination to serve the Lord prosper, it is tempting to be envious. The Psalmist felt this way (v. 3). They were fat, happy, and living their best life. The ungodly wielded influence and lived in arrogance (vv. 8-10). They felt like they were not accountable to anyone, especially God. In 73:11, they boasted, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” Notice how the Psalmist describes them, “Behold these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches” (v. 12).

How does this negatively affect a child of God? It may seem that serving God is for nothing. The Psalmist said, “All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hand in innocence” (v. 13). The Psalmist suffered, and it seemed the Lord was, at best, aloof to his situation. Does God care? Why does he provide for the ungodly while the godly suffer? You may have struggled with the same situation if you're honest with yourself. All around, it may seem ungodly do live

a carefree life while you are faithfully serving the Lord. The “daily grind” can undermine your faith as easily as a tragic event. The only difference is that it slowly chips away at it daily, leaving you with a pessimistic view of life and living for the Lord. Let us not fall into the trap of Satan.

The Discernment of the Psalmist (73:16-22)

When all seemed hopeless, the Psalmist went to the sanctuary of the Lord (v. 17). Trying to view life's issues from God's perspective puts them in a different light. The wicked may seem to have a solid foundation for life, but they are in slippery places (vv. 18). They will suffer ruin for their choices (v. 27). Furthermore, being envious of them is foolish. Notice what the Psalmist said, “When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you” (Psalm 73:21–22, ESV).

One of Satan's most effective devices is to deceive you and divert your focus from the eternal to the temporal. You do not see the problems they endure. The wicked do not have God's favor and do not have spiritual blessings such as redemption, eternal security, and hope. These blessings are only reserved for those “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Living by God's wisdom discerns their end and recognizes the fruit that hedonism bears. Selfish ambition and strife cause one to live in constant turmoil (Jas. 3:14-15). Seeking more due to a lack of contentment leads to unhappiness. And most importantly, the ungodly have no relationship with God (cf. 73:11).

The Dedication of the Psalmist (73:23-28)

After discerning their end, the Psalmist concludes, “Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand” (v. 23). Your flesh and heart may fail, but nothing of God fails. He is our strength and portion forever! This life may seem foolish to the wicked, but you cannot allow their faithlessness to deter you from faithfulness. Solomon similarly concluded, “Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.” (Ecclesiastes 8:12–13, ESV)

When you're in the valley of the shadow of death, look to the Lord instead of looking around you. This helps you realize they indeed are in slippery places, and the Lord is good to his people (73:1). It will result in a stronger faith (73:26) and a greater resolve to serve the Lord (73:28).

PREACHING MATTERS.

A Word of Encouragement

Preaching the Word, Psalm 119

There are numerous ways we can study and preach the Psalms. If our goal is to emphasize the Word of God, there is not a better place to start than Psalm 119. As you well know, this great Psalm is the longest chapter in our Bibles. The 176 verses that make up this Psalm are divided into twenty-two sections, corresponding with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. These divisions contain eight verses each. The theme for every section in the 119 Psalm is, "The Word of God."

Preaching this wonderful Psalm would challenge your Church family to focus their study on the Word. You could spend twenty-two weeks dealing with the "Characteristics of the Word," based on this chapter. We could discuss our relationship with God's Word based on the statements the Psalmist uses to express how he views God's Word.

Another outstanding study could deal with Characteristics of the Author of the Word. Depending on the translation one uses, I could find between ten & fifteen characteristics of God in this marvelous Psalm. Notice just a few: He teaches us. He reveals His Truth to us. He hears and answers our prayers. God is the source of our wisdom. He loves us. He comforts us. He brings good to us. He gives us mercy. He offers us salvation. He is our hope. He is faithful. He is righteous. He is near. We should visit his great chapter again, and preach it, emphasizing the life-changing, life-giving Word of God!

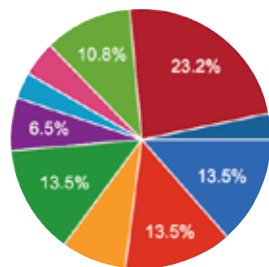
GREAT PREACHING QUOTES

"The Gospel has power, great power! All it needs is someone to preach it - someone with courage to tell it just like it is."

- Marshal Keeble



When did you last preach a series from the Psalms?



What is your Favorite Psalm?

10 had multiple votes

- Psalm 119
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 46
- Psalm 103
- Psalm 51
- Psalm 42

- Now or one is upcoming
- In the last six months
- In the last year
- In the last two years
- In the last three years
- In the last four years
- In the last five years
- Five years ago or longer

5 Ways to Preach the Psalms

1 Preach the five books within the Psalms

Book 1 (3-41), Book 2 (42-72), Book 3 (73-89), Book 4 (90-106), and Book 5 (107-150)

2 Preach through the Psalms chapter by chapter

3 Preach the Psalms of Worship and Praise

Psalms 18, 21, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 66, 106, 116, 138

4 Preach the Psalms of Ascent

Psalms 120-134

5 Preach the Psalms Thanksgiving

Psalm 34, 92, 30, 111, 57, 44, 89, 28, 95, 138

Reasons to Preach The Psalms

- **They help your listeners deal with the issues of life:** You will find patterns to help with every event of life. The joy of salvation, the pain of lost, the challenge of dealing with enemies, the thrill of worshipping with saints, the confusion and delight of striving to understand God and His ways. They are all there.

- **They help the listener to understand some of the nature of God:** The big themes of the Psalms will focus on the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God, the righteousness of God,

- **The Psalms will help members to develop a godly prayer life:** The Psalms teach the importance of being honest with God and that it's okay to ask: "Why?" and "How long, O Lord?" and "What's going on?" We learn the necessity of submitting to God in difficult times. We see the joy we have in approaching Him when we considering His greatness.

- **The Psalms will help our hearers to see the godly life:** In the Psalms we see the deep hurt in the heart that some express. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We see the mountain tops of celebrating past victories. We hear David praying for his enemies, we also see him praying for justice to be done. We listen as Moses struggles with the status of the unrighteousness. We learn the voice of repentance.

- **They help feed the minister's own heart:** The Psalms are deep with feeling and worship. As ministers who plea for the ancient order of things, who tend to see a pattern, and who typically think more analytically, the Psalms remind us that we are worshipping, and that true worship involves our spirit, our emotions, our passions, and must never become overly formatted or rout (especially toward lukewarmness).



The Words of Truth

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Q & A WITH MARK POSEY

QUESTION: The thief on the cross was saved without being baptized. Why, then, do you teach the necessity of baptism to be saved?

ANSWER: The thief on the cross was assured of his eternal salvation when Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42). The difference between the thief on the cross and people today is the difference between living under the Old Covenant and living under the New Covenant (Galatians 3:19, Colossians 2:14). Galatians 6:2 says, "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ." We must obey Christ's Law, and it commands baptism (Acts 10:48). Moses gave the Ten Commandments law to Israel (Deut. 5), and they had to follow it (Deut. 18:18, 19; Acts 3:22, 23); however, those same passages pointed to a greater prophet, Jesus, and declared: "...Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." The phrase, "he shall say unto you," constitutes Jesus' law. The thief lived under the Old Covenant, but we are bound by the New Covenant in Christ (Acts 4:12). The New Covenant was not in force until after Jesus' death (Heb. 9:15-17). It was not until His resurrection that baptism for salvation was commanded in His name (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). The thief never lived under Christ's New Covenant command to be baptized for the remission of sins. It is evident from Luke 23:40-42 that the thief rebuked the other, admitted to his guilt, accepted his punishment, respected Jesus, defended His innocence, and had some knowledge of His kingdom. However, this thief lived under the Mosaic Law, not Christ's. Today, repentant sinners must be baptized immediately, obeying Christ's command (Mark 16:15) and following the example set in the book of Acts (Acts 16:30-34; 2:38, 41).

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