

Psalms Class

MISSION STATEMENT



Reading, understanding, meditating, singing, and praying the Psalms
for heightened worship of God and changed lives.

Monday
6:00–7:30 PM

Introduction to the Psalms

1.0 Meditating on the Psalms

- Augustine's reflections on the psalms. Your own journal of meditations on Psalms.

2.0 Singing the Psalms

- "To be saved singing is to be saved indeed." — Charles H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 1/1:237.

3.0 Praying the Psalms

- The Book of Psalms is itself a series of prayers.
- The book's Hebrew name: *Tehillim* = Praises.
- Psalms like Psalm 100 help us learn how to pray. Consider how we might derive sentence prayers from the psalm's wording.

1 A Psalm for Thanksgiving.
Shout joyfully to the LORD,
all the earth.

- ✓ Father, accept my prayer of thanksgiving today.
- ✓ I shout for joy while giving thanks to You.
- ✓ On this Lord's day, may all believers from all lands bring their thanks to you with great joy.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.

- ✓ Lord, help me to serve You with gladness today.
- ✓ Give me a joyful heart and fill my mouth with songs of praise.

- ✓ As I prepare for church this morning, help me to sing Your praises rather than to be impatient and complaining.
- What sentence prayers might you compose from the final verses of Psalm 100?
 - 3 Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us,
and not we ourselves;
We are His people
and the sheep of His pasture.
 - 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving,
And His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
 - 5 For the LORD *is* good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting,
And His faithfulness to all generations.

4.0 Psalms Outside the Old Testament

- Dead Sea Scrolls
- New Testament: approximately 360 quotations from the OT, one-third are from Psalms.

5.0 The Book of Psalms

- 150 psalms in the Psalter.
- Divided into 5 “books.”
- Each “book” of the Psalter concludes with a doxology:

BOOK	PSALMS	DOXOLOGY
I	Psalms 1–41	41:13
II	Psalms 42–72	72:18–20
III	Psalms 73–89	89:52
IV	Psalms 90–106	106:48
V	Psalms 107–150	150:1–6

- Individual psalm headings indicate that a number of poets composed psalms:

6.0 The Psalm Titles

- 116 psalms have titles/headings.
- The psalm titles ought to be preserved as Scripture. The evidence points to the authors writing the psalm titles as part of the original composition.
 - They are authentic.
Compare 2 Samuel 22:1 with Psalm 18:1.
 - They are ancient.
Terms used in psalm titles like those on Psalms 46 and 58 are so ancient that they have not been understood since at least 250–300 years before Christ.

- They are accurate.
Compare Luke 20:42 with the title on Psalm 110: “David himself” emphatically identifies David as the author—a detail contained only in the psalm heading.

■ Thirtle’s Theory concerning the psalm titles:

Habakkuk 3

Verse 1: **A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.**

Verse 19: The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds’ feet, And makes me walk on my high places. **For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.**

7.0 The Poetry of the Psalms

- Parallelism: Parallel thought expressed in similar grammar, similar sentence length, and similar vocabulary.
 - Psalm 6:9
- Repetition: Repeated words or phrases.
 - Psalm 29
- Refrain: Chorus-like repetition dividing the psalm into sections.
 - Psalm 107
- Inclusio: A bracketing or envelope form of repetition that occurs at the beginning and ending of the psalm or a major section of the psalm.
 - Psalm 103
- Chiasm: A sequence of lines with a mirror relationship in which the first and last are parallel, the second and next to last are parallel, the third and third from last are parallel, etc.—so that the last half is in inverted order.
 - Psalm 19:1
- Metaphor: Use of a figure as an illustration for expressing a concept.
 - Psalm 23

8.0 Recommended Books for Personal Bible Study of Psalms

Boice, James Montgomery. *Psalms*, 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996.
 Bullock, C. Hassell. *Encountering the Book of Psalms*. Encountering Biblical Studies. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
 Davidson, Robert. *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.
 Grogan, Geoffrey W. *Psalms*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008.
 Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973.

- . *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975.
- Lawson, Steven J. *Psalms 1–75*. Holman Old Testament Commentary 11. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2003.
- . *Psalms 76–150*. Holman Old Testament Commentary 12. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006.
- Spurgeon, Charles Haddon. *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. Reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.
- Travers, Michael E. *Encountering God in the Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003.

Monday

7:45–8:45 PM

More on Psalm Headings, Psalm 1

Psalm Headings

- 1.0** Psalm Headings Elsewhere in Scripture
 - 1.1** Isaiah 38:9, 20
 - 1.2** Ezekiel 19:14
- 2.0** Psalm Headings in the Ancient Near East
- 3.0** Psalm Headings in Light of Thirtle's Theory
 - 3.1** Psalm 4
 - 3.2** Psalm 9
 - 3.3** Psalm 30
 - 3.4** Psalm 56
 - 3.5** Psalm 57

Psalm 1 — Two Ways

1.0 Introducing Psalm 1

- The preamble to the Psalter. It serves to introduce the entire Book of Psalms.
- Canonical “seams” between the Pentateuch and the Prophets and between the Prophets and the Writings.
- Acts 13:33 – “second(?) psalm.”
- The parallel themes of the wicked and the righteous are characteristic of Psalms.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 1 “Blessed ...”

2.1 Outline

- I. Introduction (v. 1a)
 - II. The Way of the Righteous (vv. 1b–2)
 - III. The Figure of the Tree (v. 3)
 - IV. The Figure of the Chaff (v. 4)
 - V. The Way of the Wicked (v. 5)
- VI. Conclusion (v. 6)

2.2 Notes

- “How blessed is the man” (v. 1)
 - Psalm 1 begins with a blessing and Psalm 2 concludes with one (2:12).
 - 25 beatitudes in Psalms:
 - 1:1; 2:12; 32:1, 2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; 41:1; 65:4; 84:4, 5, 12; 89:15; 94:12; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1, 2; 127:5; 128:1; 137:8, 9; 144:15 (2x); 146:5
 - The first three words of the psalm begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (‘*aleph*’)—alliteration.
- Chiasm (v. 1)

A	who does not walk		
		B	in the counsel of the wicked,
		B'	in the path of sinners,
A'	Nor stand		
		B''	in the seat of scoffers
A''	Nor sit		
- Triplet (v. 1)
 - Three separate and distinct actions in a specific order of progression?
 - Three representative actions referring to a way of living? (merism)
- “the law of the LORD” (v. 2)
 - “Law” or *Torah* can mean the Pentateuch, the legal content of the Pentateuch, or “instruction” generally.
- “meditates” (v. 2)
 - The Hebrew word can mean to murmur or roar or mutter.
 - Vocal meditation.
- “like a tree” (v. 3)
 - See Jeremiah 17:7, 8.
 - Rooted in the *Torah*.
 - Egyptian influence on Psalms?
 - ✓ *Teaching of Amenemope*, 12th century B.C.
 - ✓ “Egyptian jewels, as at the Exodus, have been re-set to their advantage by Israelite workmen and put to finer use”—Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC, 24.

(But) the truly silent man holds himself apart.
He is like a tree growing in a *garden*.

It flourishes and doubles its yield;
 It (stands) before its lord.
 Its fruit is sweet; its shade is pleasant;
 And its end is reached in the garden....

— Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 422

- The two ways (v. 6).
 - Different stands and associations.
 - Different views of the *Torah*.
 - Different life results.
 - Different relationships to God.

Monday

9:00–10:00 PM

Messianic Psalms, Psalm 2

Messianic Psalms

- 1.0 The Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 19:10)
- 2.0 The Context of Scripture
- 3.0 The Testimony of the New Testament
 - 3.1 Luke 24:25–27, 44–47
 - 3.2 Acts 26:19–23
 - 3.3 1 Peter 1:9–12
- 4.0 Beware of *Eise-Jesus*

Psalm 2 — Song of the Son

1.0 Introducing Psalm 2

- Psalms 1 and 2
 - ✓ Psalm 1 begins with a beatitude (1:1); Psalm 2 ends with a beatitude (2:12).
 - ✓ Psalm 1 contrasts the righteous and the sinner; Psalm 2 contrasts a rebellious world and the righteous Son.
 - ✓ “Meditates” in Psalm 1:2 and “plot” in Psalm 2:1 are from the same Hebrew word (*hagah*).
 - ✓ In Psalm 1 the wicked are blown away like chaff; in Psalm 2 the wicked are broken in pieces like pottery.
 - ✓ In Psalm 1 the righteous one is like a tree planted beside streams of water; in Psalm 2 the Righteous One is set on the holy Mount Zion.
 - ✓ Piety in Psalm 1 is measured by one’s meditation on the written Word of God; piety in Psalm 2 is measured by one’s adoration of the Son, the living Word of God.

- ✓ In Psalm 1 “**the way** of the ungodly shall perish” (1:6); in Psalm 2 the ungodly are to “kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in **the way**” (2:12).
- Psalm 2 and the New Testament
 - ✓ Psalm 2:1 — Revelation 11:18
 - ✓ Psalm 2:1–2 — Acts 4:25–26
 - ✓ Psalm 2:2 — Revelation 19:19
 - ✓ Psalm 2:7 — Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35
John 1:49
Acts 13:33;
Hebrews 1:5; 5:5
 - ✓ Psalm 2:8 — Hebrews 1:2
 - ✓ Psalm 2:8, 9 — Revelation 2:26–27
 - ✓ Psalm 2:9 — Revelation 12:5; 19:15
 - ✓ Psalm 2:11 — Philippians 2:12

2.0 Understanding Psalm 2

2.1 Outline

- I. The World Conspires against Their King (2:1–3)
- II. The Father Confirms His King (2:4–6)
- III. The Father Confirms the Son (2:7–9)
- IV. The World Contemplates the Son (2:10–12)

2.2 Notes

- “Against the LORD and against His Anointed” (v. 2).
 - Who is the king of Psalm 2?
 - ✓ Is he David?
2 Samuel 7:14
2 Samuel 10
 - ✓ Is he Solomon?
1 Chronicles 17:13–14; 22:10
 - ✓ Is he Ahaz?
Isaiah 7; 2 Chronicles 28
 - ✓ Is he Messiah?
 - A universal spiritual and political insubordination: As subjugated vassals, the nations and their kings rebel against and conspire against the LORD and His “anointed” (= *messiah*) — Psalm 2:1–3.
 - The wrath of God is associated with the enthronement of the king — 2:4–6.
 - Universal dominion and judgment is associated with the Son — 2:7–9.
 - Spiritual service and fear of the LORD together with submission to the Son are demanded of the world’s leaders — 2:10–12.
 - Spiritual blessing is granted to all who “put their trust” in the Son — 2:12.

Is any of the above possible with regard to any historical king of Israel who reigned in Jerusalem?

Tuesday
6:00–7:30 PM
Psalms 15 and 16

Psalm 15 — The Godly Person

1.0 Introducing Psalm 15

- Is Psalm 15 intended to be instruction in godliness that can be measured by the Law (Torah)?
- Is Psalm 15 an entrance liturgy designed to be employed by the priests to insure that only worthy worshippers entered the grounds of either the Tabernacle or the Temple?
- Is Psalm 15 intended to replicate the Ten Commandments in ten characteristics of a godly person?
- Is Psalm 15 a wisdom psalm highlighting the Law and obedience?
- Is Psalm 15 the OT's equivalent of the Epistle of James in the New Testament?

2.0 Understanding Psalm 15

2.1 Outline

- I.** The Question (v. 1)
- II.** The Answer (vv. 2–5b)
 - A.** Integrity (2)
 - B.** Relationships (3–4b)
 - C.** Selflessness (4c–5b)
- III.** The Promise (v. 5c)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1 Rhetorical Questions**
 - Rhetorical questions are employed for dramatic effect.
 - Rhetorical questions create interest and grab the audience's attention.
 - Rhetorical questions are often used in the Hebrew Bible to open a poem or the stanza of a poem.
- **v. 1 Compare the Questions**
 - “Abide” is a Hebrew word referring to sojourning or spending the night some place—temporary residence. “Dwell” is a Hebrew word referring to settling down—permanent residence.
 - “Tent,” like “abide,” refers to a temporary dwelling. “Hill,” like “dwell,” refers to a permanent dwelling place.
 - Such language seems to direct the reader's attention to the Tabernacle and the Temple (or, the more permanent abode of God Himself in Heaven).
 - See Isaiah 33:14–16.
 - See John 4:20–24.

- **v. 2** “walks . . . works . . . speaks”
 - These three verbs are participles that refer to characteristic or habitual actions. That raises the question of the purpose of this description:
 - ✓ Does such an emphasis on characteristic action mean that the Scripture teaches “sinless perfection”?
 - ✓ Does such an emphasis mean that the Scripture teaches salvation by works?
 - ✓ Is this description of the characteristic actions of the godly refer only to the final sanctification a believer experiences upon arrival in Heaven?
 - Psalm 15 is about sanctification, not salvation.
 - See James 2:14–17.
- **v. 2** “in his heart”
 - The reader expects “with his lips” immediately following “speaks truth.” However, “in his heart” was written by the psalmist.
 - See James 3:14.
 - Mark 7:20–23.
- **v. 3** “not . . . nor . . . nor”
 - In the Hebrew of verse 3 the negatives are used permanent, objective negation, rather than temporary, subjective negation.
 - As with the participles in verse 2, the verbs of verse 3 refer to tried qualities and habitual actions.
 - The purpose of the description of godly characteristics that are negative as well as positive is due to the ultimate aim: full (not partial) sanctification. It aims at consistent behavior rather than intermittent behavior.
- **v. 3** “does not slander”
 - The Hebrew word is related to the words for “leg” and “spy.”
 - “Slander” refers to someone walking around seeking tidbits of gossip to pass on to someone else. Such people behave as spies or conspirators trafficking in information that tears someone else down.
 - See James 1:26–27; 3:1–12.
- **v. 3** “neighbor . . . friend”
 - The word “neighbor” refers to one’s fellow human being.
 - See Leviticus 19:18.
 - See Luke 10:30–37.
 - “Friend” is a word referring to one’s closest relationships—especially those of one’s own family.
 - See Leviticus 21:2.
 - See 1 Timothy 5:4, 8.
- **v. 4** “In whose eyes a reprobate is despised”
 - “Reprobate” refers to one who has been rejected by God. A reprobate is a particularly vile person.
 - What was wrong with Samuel’s attitude when God rejected Saul (1 Sam 16:1)?

- **v. 5** “money . . . interest . . . bribe”
 - According to biblical teaching, God’s people are to put people before money (cf. Matt 19:23–26) and God before money (cf. Matt 6:24; Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5).
 - See 1 Timothy 6:10.
- **v. 5** Promise
 - As in verse 3, the negative employed is permanent and objective. In addition, it is emphatic by means of the addition of “forever.” That’s why the translation says “never” (= “not” + “forever”). It is similar to saying “Never ever . . .”
 - Verse 5 is the answer to the questions asked in verse 1.
 - See Psalm 112:6–7.
 - See Proverbs 12:3.
 - See 2 Peter 1:10

Psalm 16 — The LORD, My Portion and My Cup

1.0 Introducing Psalm 16

- “Mikhtam of David”
 - ♦ The same heading is found on Psalms 56–60.
 - ♦ Luther gave the meaning of “*mikhtam*” as “golden jewel.”
 - ♦ The Latin Vulgate translation interpreted the word as “humble” or “blameless.”
 - ♦ A recent suggestion was that it referred to what was called “an atonement psalm.”
 - ♦ Others have given the interpretation as “secret (or, silent) prayer.”
 - ♦ One of the more likely explanations was found in the old Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) 250 years before Christ: “inscription.”
 - ♦ “Inscription” fits well with the idea of indelible preservation.
 - Jeremiah 2:22—a related word (*nikhtam*) is translated “stain” to express that something is indelible.
 - Job 19:23–24—the description of words written on stone in order to preserve them.
- New Testament Usage
 - ♦ Non-Messianic
 - Immediate crisis and immediate deliverance.
 - The psalmist’s experience is typical of all mortals.
 - The psalmist’s experience is applicable to Christ.
 - ♦ Messianic
 - Peter in Acts 2:25–28.
 - Paul in Acts 13:35.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 16

- **Outline**
 - I.** Petition (v. 1)
 - II.** Confession of Faith (vv. 2–4)
 - III.** Thanksgiving (vv. 5–11)
 - A.** Experiencing Blessing (vv. 5–6)
 - B.** Expressing Praise (v. 7)

C. Explaining Confidence (vv. 8–11)

W. Graham Scroggie's Outline (*The Psalms* [1948; reprint, Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973], 106):

- (1) Looking *Above* (vv. 1–2)
- (2) Looking *Around* (vv. 3–4)
- (3) Looking *Within* (vv. 5–8)
- (4) Looking *Beyond* (vv. 9–11)

- **Notes**

- **v. 1** “God”
 - The name of God used here is *El* (as in “El Shaddai”). It is the title used of the supreme deity and indicates His strength and power.
 - “LORD” (= *Yahweh*; some pronounce it *Jehovah*) is the divine title that points to the covenant relationship that God has with His people.
 - “Lord” (= *Adonai*) speaks of the sovereignty and authority of God.
- **vv. 3–4**
 - David delights in the fellowship he experiences with fellow believers.
 - But, he detests the deeds and character of the ungodly.
 - See Psalm 15:4.
- **vv. 5–6**
 - Compare David's blessings with those of the Levites in Numbers 18:20, 24.
- **v. 7** “has counseled me”
 - The psalmist speaks of the LORD's guidance.
 - Note that it is counsel, not coercion.
- **v. 8** “I will not be shaken”
 - The reference is to stability in the life of the psalmist regardless of the circumstances in which he might find himself.
 - *I will not be, I will not be moved.*
- **vv. 9–10**
 - Resurrection is deliverance from the realm of the dead.
 - Sheol is the place of the dead.
 - Peter (Acts 2:25–28) indicated that David understood the reference.
 - Paul (Acts 13:35) tied it to the covenant with David (2 Sam 7; Ps 89).
 - God will not abandon David or God's promised “seed” in the grave.
- **v. 10** “to undergo decay”
 - The second half of the verse could have been fulfilled only by the Messiah.
 - “[T]his language is too strong even for David's hope of his own resurrection” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975], 86).
- **v. 11** “the path of life”
 - Eternal life.

- An OT concept?
- Where else?
- **v. 11** “fullness of joy”
 - Endless bliss.
 - See 1 Peter 1:8 (“joy inexpressible and full of glory”).
- **v. 11** Heaven or Earth?
 - Earth
 - ✓ “not the afterlife, but the fullness of life here and now” (Craigie)
 - ✓ The psalmist’s prayer was already answered—refers to undisturbed life in this world.
 - ✓ Traditionally and liturgically taken as reference to immortality, but questionable.
 - Heaven
 - ✓ “he is thinking of everlasting life” (Briggs)

Tuesday
7:45–8:45 PM
Psalm 18

Psalm 18 — Twice Given—Twice Triumphant

1.0 Introducing Psalm 18

- Scripture also records Psalm 18 in 2 Samuel 22. Its double appearance indicates its significance for God’s people. The psalm presents an extended hymn of praise for divine deliverance from the psalmist’s enemies.
- The psalm in 2 Samuel 22 is older—probably the original. An historical appendix to the Book of Samuel (2 Sam 22–24) offers the psalm as one of the official documents supporting the history of David.
- David may have edited Psalm 18 himself to make it more suitable for singing in Temple worship. See John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms*, 2 vols., John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988), 1:137.
- Both psalms begin with the same inscription.
 - ♦ It employs the longest inscription on any psalm in the Psalter.
 - ♦ This repetition makes a strong argument for the authenticity and inspiration of the psalm inscriptions.
 - ♦ The musical subscription (“For the choir director”) occurs only in Psalm 18 because it has been displaced from the end of Psalm 17 (cf. Hab 3:19). The musical notation was unnecessary for the document as historical evidence in 2 Samuel 22, but was needed for the liturgical setting of the Psalms.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 18

2.1 Outline

- I.** Introductory Praise (vv. 1–3)
- II.** Account of Deliverance (vv. 4–19)
- III.** Instruction in Righteousness (vv. 20–29)

IV. Example of Devotion (vv. 30–45)

V. Concluding Praise (vv. 46–50)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “from the hand of”
 - Double occurrence. Both are symbolic of power or control.
 - The first is literally “palm” or “grasp” while the second is “hand.”
- **v. 1** “I love You”
 - Opening words do not appear in 2 Samuel 22.
 - This is not the usual word for “love.” It is more often translated “have mercy,” “have compassion,” or “have pity.” The particular Hebrew form of the verb here is unique.
 - God is more frequently the subject of this verb (cf. Pss 102:13; 103:13).
- **v. 2** Metaphors
 - This verse is rich with metaphors: rock, fortress, refuge, shield, horn, and tower.
 - All the metaphors are symbolic of strength, security, and refuge.
 - The repeated “my” personalizes God’s strong and secure refuge for David.
 - David draws from his experience in the wilderness while fleeing from Saul. These metaphors help express David’s escapes and victories.
 - Such language confirms David’s trust in the LORD, the One Who provides protection.
- **v. 3** “worthy to be praised”
 - David places this first in the Hebrew text. By position it is emphatic and exclamatory.
- **v. 4** “cords of death . . . torrents of ungodliness”
 - David refers to death and Sheol in these two metaphors.
 - ✓ Death restrains the individual from return to this life.
 - “Torrents of ungodliness” is literally “floods of Belial”—symbolic of the overwhelming wickedness of David’s enemies. In 1 Samuel 25:17 “a worthless man” is literally “a son of Belial” (cf. Deut 13:14).
- **v. 10** “He rode upon a cherub and flew”
 - “He rode upon a cherub” in the Hebrew exhibits alliteration or assonance of consonants.
 - ✓ David intended the assonance to enhance a memorable depiction of the LORD and to focus attention upon the concept of His swift intervention.
 - The imagery of this verse could personify a thunderstorm.
- **vv. 12, 13** “Hailstones and coals of fire”
 - This phrase does not occur in 2 Samuel 22:14 (parallel to Ps 18:12). The repetition heightens the hymnic and liturgical nature of Psalm 18.
 - Clouds, fire, darkness, thunder, lightning, and hailstones characterize the appearance of God (theophany) in the OT when He acts on behalf of His people or presents revelation.
 - ✓ See Exodus 19:16; Deuteronomy 33:2; Joshua 10:11; Psalm 78:48; Isaiah 30:30; Ezekiel 1:13; 38:22.

- **v. 18** “But the LORD was my stay”
 - “Stay” is the same Hebrew word as “staff” in Psalm 23:4.
 - The LORD is the psalmist’s support and protection.
- **v. 19** “into a broad place”
 - Having space or room to breathe depicts relief from the pressures and stress of enemies and calamity.
- **vv. 20, 24** “according to my righteousness . . . the cleanness of my hands”
 - David’s words, repeated for emphasis, affirm that the LORD rewards those who obey Him (vv. 21–23) and serve Him.
 - ✓ The text does not speak of salvation from sin, but of deliverance from enemies.
 - ✓ Cf. 1 Kings 8:32; Psalms 1:6; 5:12; 7:9; 34:15, 17, 19; 37:39; 55:22 (cp. 1 Pet 5:7).
- **v. 28** “You light my lamp”
 - “You” is emphatic: “You Yourself.”
 - The Israelite soldiers referred to King David as “the lamp of Israel” (2 Sam 21:17; cp. Ps 132:17). The parallel to Psalm 18:28 in 2 Samuel 22:29 declares that the LORD Himself was David’s “lamp.”
 - Scripture also uses the “lamp” as a figure of life and preservation (Job 21:17; Prov 13:9; 20:20).
- **v. 30** “His way is blameless”
 - See verses 25 and 32. Whatever God does is right. Those who worship Him must display the same characteristic.
- **v. 31** “who is God”
 - The Hebrew word for God (*Eloah*) occurs here for the first of its four uses in the Psalter (cf. 50:22; 114:7; 139:19).
 - ✓ *Eloah* makes its first appearance in Deuteronomy 32:15 and 17.
 - ✓ However, its earliest biblical occurrences are its 41 uses in Job (e.g., 3:4, 23; 16:21; 19:26; 33:12; 35:10; 40:2).
 - ✓ *Eloah* (Hebrew) and *Allah* (Arabic) are equivalent and etymologically related titles. Scripture seems to locate Job’s home, Uz (Job 1:1), among the Edomites (descendants of Esau) in the Arabian peninsula (cp. Gen 36:19–43).
- **v. 34** “a bow of bronze”
 - This phrase can be understood a number of ways:
 - ✓ A wooden bow with bronze decoration.
 - ✓ A bow shooting bronze-tipped arrows.
 - ✓ A bow “snakelike” (“bronze” and “snake” are similar Hebrew words) in shape—a double-convex bow.
 - ✓ A poetic figure speaking of a bow of great strength.
 - ✓ Best view: a literal bronze bow.
 - Job 20:24 also refers to a bronze bow.
 - James K. Hoffmeier reports the recovery of Egyptian bronze bows in the Sinai (see <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/688/eg10.htm>).
 - Another ancient source, the “Instruction Text for the Lords of the Towers” (47.3) of the Hittite king Arnuwanda I, refers to “bronze bows” in a context referring also to bronze scale armor (see

<http://www.hittites.info/translations.aspx?text=translations/adminInstruction/AWARIYAS.html>).

- **v. 35** “Your gentleness”
 - Literally, “Your humility” or “Your condescension.”
 - God condescended to come down from Heaven and intervene on behalf of David.
- **vv. 37–42** David Owes His Victory to God
 - The psalmist makes it very clear that the victory was not due to his own skill, strength, armaments, or strategy (cp. vv. 47–48). The king dare not be proud, because the LORD was the true Victor.
- **v. 46** “The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock”
 - Beginning at verse 46, “The epilogue is in the form of a doxology which puts the king’s triumph in context. The initial joy-filled cry, ‘The LORD lives!’ . . . , sums up the witness of the whole psalm.”—Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship*, 68–69.
- **v. 49** “I will give thanks to You among the nations”
 - Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:9 at the beginning of a number of OT citations proving that God’s plan had always been for the Gentiles to experience spiritual salvation and worship the LORD.
 - ✓ The context and grammar of Romans 15:8–11 indicates that Christ is the one speaking the words from the OT.
 - ✓ “In Paul’s citation the risen Christ implicitly stands in the place of David.”—Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 689.
- **v. 50** “His anointed”
 - Who is the “anointed” (Hebrew: “messiah”)?
 - “It is impossible to find a definitive historical setting for this psalm, some victory by a king of Judah that would account for its language.” “This ‘mythic’ character of the psalm makes it inherently prophetic.”—James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 95.
 - King David penned the psalm as thanksgiving to the victory that God had given him over his enemies. David, as God’s “anointed” king, established the role of “messiah” that the ultimate Davidic King would fulfill to an even greater extent.

Tuesday
9:00–10:00 PM
Psalms 19

Psalm 19 — The Heavens Reveal, The Word Regenerates

1.0 Introducing Psalm 19

- Psalm 19 is “the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world”—C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958), 63.
- Psalm 19 clearly divides into two halves:
 - ♦ The name of God changes: El (once) in verses 1–6, Yahweh (Jehovah; 7 times) in verses 7–14.

- ♦ The content changes: the World Book in verses 1–6, the Word Book in verses 7–13.
- ♦ The length of lines changes: longer lines in verses 1–6, shorter lines in verses 7–15.
- ♦ The application or illustration changes: the sun in verses 4–6, the servant in verses 11–14.
- Psalms 18 and 19 contain a number of related terms and phrases:
 - ♦ Compare 18:30 (“The word of the LORD is tried”) with 19:8–10.
 - ♦ “Blameless”/“Perfect” (18:23, 25, 30; 19:7, 13).
 - ♦ “Rock” and “Deliverer”/“Redeemer” (18:1–2; 19:14).

2.0 Understanding Psalm 19

2.1 Outline

- I. Natural Revelation (vv. 1–6)
 - A. Continuousness (vv. 1–2)
 - B. Universality (vv. 3–4b)
 - C. Illustration: The Sun (vv. 4c–6)
- II. Special Revelation (vv. 7–13)
 - A. Characteristics and Work (vv. 7–10)
 - B. Application: The Servant (vv. 11–13)
- III. Prayer (v. 14)

2.2 Notes

- v. 1 Chiasm—the first half of the psalm begins and ends with a chiasm.
- v. 2 “pours forth”
 - “The image is literally of a gushing spring that copiously pours forth the sweet, refreshing waters of revelation”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 1:163.
- v. 3 “Their voice is not heard.”
 - Better to translate: “*Where* their voice is not heard” (NKJV) or “whose sound goes unheard” (NJPS) or “Without their voice being heard.”
- v. 4 “their line”
 - See Isaiah 28:10, “line on line.”
- v. 5 “It rejoices as a strong man to run his course”
 - “The psalmist paints an unforgettable scene of the horizon exploding in vigorous, radiant sunrise.”—Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 45.
- v. 6 Chiasm
- v. 7 “revives the soul”
 - In Psalm 23:3 “It may picture the straying sheep brought back, as in Isaiah 49:5, or perhaps Psalm 60:1 (Heb. 3), which use the same verb, whose intransitive sense is often ‘repent’ or ‘be converted’ (e.g. Ho. 14:1f.; Joel 2:12). Psalm 19:7, by its subject (the law) and by the parallel verb (‘making wise’), points to a spiritual renewal of this kind, rather than mere refreshment. On the other hand, *my soul* usually means ‘my life’ or ‘myself’; and ‘restore’ often has a physical or

psychological sense, as in Isaiah 58:12, or using another part of the verb, Proverbs 25:13, Lamentations 1:11, 16, 19. In our context the two senses evidently interact, so that the retrieving or reviving of the sheep pictures the deeper renewal of the man of God, spiritually perverse or ailing as he may be.”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 110.

- **v. 9** “they are altogether righteous”
 - “Righteousness inheres in the *torah*, and the righteousness of persons depends on it”—James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 99.
 - “They are altogether righteous” can also be taken in the sense of “They make completely righteous” in the sense of “sanctify.”
- **vv. 11, 13** “great reward” and “great transgression”
 - The concept is one of quantity, not quality: “much/abundant reward” and “much/abundant transgression.”
- **v. 12** “errors”
 - “The words related to *shagah*, ‘to err,’ suggest some act of turpitude, perpetrated through distraction under the effect of anger, alcoholic intoxication, or the passions of love and hatred (Job 5:24; 12:23; 19:4; Prov 5:23; 19:27; 20:1; cf. 1 Sam 14:24; 26:21; Isa 28:21).”—Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 213.
- **v. 13** “let them no rule over me”
 - The language here is reminiscent of Genesis 4:7.
- **v. 13** “presumptuous *sins*”
 - See Numbers 15:30–31; Deuteronomy 17:12

Wednesday
6:00–7:30 PM
Psalm 22

Messianic Trilogy: Part One
Psalm 22 — The Suffering Messiah

1.0 Introducing Psalm 22

- Gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ cite Psalm 22 (see chart on page 18, below):
 - ◆ Psalm 22:1 = Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. Jesus personally applied the psalm to Himself in order to fulfill Scripture (cf. John 19:28).
 - ◆ Psalm 22:18 = John 19:24. The New Testament writers cited the psalm when speaking about New Testament persons, events, and words (cf. Matt 27:35, 43; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34).
 - ◆ Psalm 22:22 = Hebrews 2:12. New Testament writers demonstrate a messianic interpretation of the psalm (cf. Matt 27:39//Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35–36).
 - ◆ New Testament writers may have used the imagery of Psalm 22 in situations concerning non-Messianic mortals: Philippians 3:2 (“dogs,” Ps 22:16, 20); 2 Timothy 4:17 (“I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth,” cf. Ps 22:21).
- Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix IX: “List of Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied in Ancient Rabbinic Writings”:
 - ◆ *Yalkut* on Isaiah 40 applies Psalm 22:7 to the Messiah.
 - ◆ *Yalkut* applies Psalm 22:16 to the Messiah.
 - ◆ The ancient rabbis clearly taught the rejection of Messiah from Psalm 22.
- Some interpreters deny any intent of the psalmist to speak of the Messiah.
- Other interpreters believe that the Messianic representation is intentional and undeniable.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 22

2.1 Outline

- I. Messiah’s Aloneness (vv. 1–5)
- II. Messiah’s Abuse (vv. 6–11)
- III. Messiah’s Affliction (vv. 12–18)
- IV. Messiah’s Assistance (vv. 19–21)
- V. Messiah’s Attestation (vv. 22–24)
- VI. Messiah’s Adoration (vv. 25–31)

CHRONOLOGY OF CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION

TIME	SCRIPTURE	EVENT	PSALM 22
9 am	Luke 23:26 Luke 23:33	Led to Calvary. Crucified.	16
10 am	Luke 23:34a Luke 23:34b Matt 27:39–43 Luke 23:35 Luke 23:39	<i>"Father, forgive them"</i> Soldiers divide up clothes. People "hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads" Chief priests and rulers mocked, "He saved others" One criminal mocked, "Save Yourself and us!"	18 6–8 12–13
11 am	Luke 23:40, 42 Luke 23:43 John 19:26–27	Other criminal: "Jesus, remember me" <i>"Today you shall be with Me in Paradise."</i> <i>"Woman, behold, your son!"</i>	
Noon	Luke 23:44	Darkness came over the whole land for 3 hours.	
1 pm	Matthew 27:46 John 19:28	<i>"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"</i> <i>"I am thirsty."</i>	1 14–15
2 pm	John 19:30 Luke 23:46	<i>"It is finished!"</i> <i>"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."</i>	31 19–21
3 pm	Matthew 27:51 Matthew 27:52 Matthew 27:54 Luke 23:48 John 19:31–32 John 19:34 Matt 27:57–60	Earthquake and tearing of the Temple curtain. Tombs break open. Centurion exclaims, "Truly this was the Son of God." Crowd witnesses Jesus' suffering, beats their breasts. Soldiers break the two criminals' legs. Soldier pierces Jesus' side with a spear. The burial of Jesus.	15
6 pm		Sabbath begins.	

3.2 Notes

- **v. 3** "You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel"
 - The picture: Israel's praise surrounds God and He sits on a throne made up of their praises.
 - Israel's praise confesses that the LORD rules the world.
 - See Psalm 99:1–3.
- **v. 7** "separate with the lip . . . wag the head"
 - Gestures of contempt and ridicule.
 - They shoot out their lips in an insulting facial expression and shake their heads in derision.
- **v. 10** "You have been my God from my mother's womb"
 - The individual's suffering and rejection is the exact opposite of his lifetime experience from the time of his birth.
 - A helpless, newborn infant is totally dependent.
 - See Isaiah 49:1, 5, 14–15.
- **v. 14** "all my bones are out of joint"
 - The individual's limbs are dislocated. He is incapable of defending himself.

- “While verses 14, 15, taken alone, could describe merely a desperate illness, the context is of collective animosity and the symptoms could be those of Christ’s scourging and crucifixion; in fact verses 16–18 had to wait for that event to unfold their meaning with any clarity.”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, 107.
 - Verses 14–16 are extended verses with more than the normal two parallel lines of text. The weight of the psalmist’s focus is on the physical suffering of the individual described in these verses.
- **v. 16** “They pierced my hands and my feet” (NAU, KJV, NKJV, ESV, NIV)
 - The Greek Septuagint supports this translation nearly 200 years before Christ.
 - See Luke 24:39.
 - Alternate reading, “Like a lion, my hands and my feet.”
-
- **vv. 21–23**
 - A cluster of chiasms (vv. 8 and 12 are also chiasms in this psalm).
 - Verse 21 concludes the fourth section of the psalm. Verses 22–23 commence the fifth section of the psalm.
 - “You answer me” (v. 21) is the turning point of the psalm.
 - The focus is on public praise because the Lord has heard the individual’s prayer and will deliver him.
 - **v. 27** “all the families of the nations will worship before You”
 - Such description transcends anything that could be attributed to the suffering of a mortal Israelite king.
 - The context erupts in a declaration of eschatological hope.
 - **v. 29** “Even he who cannot keep his soul alive”
 - Perhaps a reference to the poor in contrast to the “prosperous.”
 - Or, this statement might belong with v. 30 indicating a posterity to serve the Lord.
 - **v. 31** “He has performed *it*”
 - This announcement is very similar to “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Wednesday

7:45–8:45 PM

Psalm 37**Psalm 37 — Don't Fret****1.0 Introducing Psalm 37**

- See the Introduction for Psalm 36 for the relationships between Psalms 35–37.
- Psalm 37:11 appears to have been the source for the Third Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the gentle [or, meek], for they shall inherit the earth”).
- Psalm 37 is an acrostic psalm, with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet being the first letter of every other verse. See Psalms 9–10, 25, and 34. The next acrostic psalm will be Psalm 111.
- This psalm was written by David in his old age (verse 25).
- It is a fitting sequel to Psalm 36, which concluded with the visualization of judgment:
 There the doers of iniquity have fallen;
 They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 37**2.1 Outline**

- I.** Precepts for the Righteous (vv. 1–11)
- II.** Punishment of the Unrighteous (vv. 12–22)
- III.** Preservation of the Righteous (vv. 23–29)
- IV.** Promise for the Righteous (vv. 30–34)
- V.** Perpetuation of the Righteous (vv. 35–40)

2.2 Notes

- **Psalm 37 and Parallels in the Book of Proverbs**

Psalm 37	Proverbs
v. 1	23:17; 24:1, 19
v. 5	16:3
vv. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34	2:21
v. 16	15:16; 16:8
v. 22	3:33
v. 23	20:24
v. 24	24:16
v. 28	2:8, 22
v. 30	10:13, 31
v. 32	1:11
v. 37	23:18
v. 38	24:20

- **v. 1** “Do not fret”
 - The command is literally, “do not get heated.”

- In modern terms, the equivalent might be, “Don’t get all worked up” or “Stay cool” or “Don’t get in a tizzy.”
- See Proverbs 24:19.
- “Rather than destroying themselves with negative emotions, the godly must keep things in perspective (v. 1; cf. vv. 7–8; Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19). Anger, resentment, and jealousy destroy ‘faith’ in God’s goodness and justice and affect one’s inner attitude toward everything (cf. Ps 73).”—Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:298.

● **vv. 1–8** Fifteen Imperatives (cf. vv. 27, 34, 37)

Verse	Positive Imperative	Negative Imperative
1		Do not fret
		Be not envious
3	Trust in the LORD	
	Do good	
	Dwell in the land	
	Cultivate faithfulness	
4	Delight yourself in the LORD	
5	Commit your way to the LORD	
	Trust in Him	
7	Rest in the LORD	
	Wait patiently for Him	Do not fret
8	Cease from anger	
	Forsake wrath	Do not fret

- **v. 5** “Commit your way to the LORD”
 - “Commit” is literally “roll” (on the LORD).
 - “Way” refers to one’s entire life and how he or she lives it.
 - See Psalm 1:6.

● **vv. 9–38** Eight Contrasts

Verse	The Wicked	The Righteous
9	Will be cut off	Will inherit the land
10–11	Will be no more	Will inherit the land
17	Arms will be broken	The LORD sustains them
18–20	Will perish/vanish	Will inherit forever Will not be ashamed Will have abundance
21	Borrow/don’t pay back	Gracious/gives
22	Cursed/cut off	Blessed/will inherit the land
28	Cut off	Preserved forever
37–38	Posterity will be cut off	Will have a posterity

- **vv. 11, 37** “prosperity . . . peace”
 - In both of these verses the Hebrew word is *shalom*.

- The meaning is much more than cessation of war. The word conveys the concepts of soundness, completion, well-being, security, wholeness, and prosperity.
- **v. 15** “Their sword will enter their own heart”
 - This is the “boomerang principle” with regard to wicked deeds.
 - See Psalm 7:12–16.
- **v. 25** “I have not seen”
 - Such personal observations are characteristic of wisdom literature in the OT (see v. 35; Prov 24:30–34).
 - Was David’s observation accurate? Is it a normative principle that we can expect to be true even today?
- **v. 28** “His godly ones”
 - The term is the same one used to refer to the Hasidic Jews: *hasid*.
 - This is related to *hesed*.
 - Its meaning is “faithful ones” or “loyal ones.”
- **v. 35** “like a luxuriant tree in its native soil”
 - This is the reverse of Psalm 1:3, where the righteous is depicted as a fruitful tree.
 - The contrast in character but identity of apparent prosperity is exactly the reason for the question for which this psalm is the intended answer.
- **vv. 37–38** “posterity”
 - “Posterity” could also be translated as “end” or even “future.”
 - Even as “future,” their offspring could be intended (cf. Prov 24:20).
- **vv. 39, 40** “strength . . . helps . . . refuge”
 - “The psalm ends with calm objectivity, the answer to the fretful impatience encountered at the start. Note the *from* Him (39) and the *in* Him (40): His initiative in sending, and our response in taking shelter; the help that He gives, and the refuge that He is.”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 153.

Wednesday

9:00–10:00 PM

Psalms 42 & 43

Psalm 42 — Thirsting for God

1.0 Introducing Psalm 42

- Beginning with Psalm 42, a different author is encountered for the first time: “the sons of Korah.” Note the following comparisons between Books I and II:

	Book I (Psalms 1–41)	Book II (Psalms 42–72)
By David	37	18
By Others	0	9 = 7 by Sons of Korah + 1 by Asaph + 1 by Solomon
Anonymous	4 (Pss 1, 2, 10, 33)	4 (Pss 43, 66, 67, 71)
Names of God	Yahweh (LORD): 272x Elohim (God): 15x	Yahweh (LORD): 30x Elohim (God): 164x

- Psalms 42 and 43 are often considered together.
 - ◆ A number of Hebrew manuscripts join them as one psalm.
 - ◆ Only Psalms 43 and 71 in Book II lack a psalm heading.
 - ◆ A refrain found twice in Psalm 42 (vv. 5, 11) is also found in Psalm 43 (v. 5).
 - ◆ Psalm 42:9 is echoed in Psalm 43:2.
- “The sons of Korah” (or, Korahites):
 - ◆ They were descendants of Kohath in the tribe of Levi (1 Chron 6:22–28; 9:17–32) who were assigned responsibilities for the Tabernacle and the Temple.
 - ◆ One of their Temple ministries was the performance of music (1 Chron 6:31–43; 2 Chron 20:19).
 - ◆ Korah led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness and God destroyed him and all those who followed him (Num 16), but his sons survived (26:10–11; apparently they had not joined their father in his rebellion).

2.0 Understanding Psalm 42

2.1 Outline for Psalms 42–43

- I. The Psalmist’s Introspection (42:1–5)
- II. The Psalmist’s Retrospection (42:6–11)
- III. The Psalmist’s Vindication (43:1–5)

2.2 Notes

- **Heading:** “A Maskil”
 - This is the second occurrence of this term in a psalm heading.
 - It occurs in the headings to thirteen psalms: Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, and 142.
 - The meaning is best taken as an artistically molded song in keeping with the principles of wisdom. See the use of *maskil* in Psalm 47:7 and in 2 Chronicles 30:22 (ESV: “who showed good skill”).
- **v. 2** “the living God”
 - Is this title a contrast to lifeless idols or a reference to the psalmist’s source of life?
 - Note verse 8, “the God of my life.”
 - Compare verse 2b: “When shall I come and appear before God?”
 - God is the ultimate source of the psalmist’s life in both its content and its quality.
- **vv. 3, 10** “Where is your God?”
 - Occurring twice, there is a degree of emphasis on this question from the psalmist’s taunters.

- In a society where virtually no one was an atheist, this was a particularly hurtful question.
- Its meaning is “Where’s your God when you need him? Is He really of any use?”
- vv. 5, 11 “Why are you in despair, O my soul?”
 - The psalmist is experiencing depression.
 - What are the symptoms of his depression?
 -
 -
 -
 - What are the things that are involved in curing his depression?
 -
 -
 -
- v. 6 “Therefore I remember You”
 - Remembrance in the biblical sense is more than just a reference to memory.
 - It is a recall that calls one to action based upon that recall.
 - Forgetfulness, on the other hand, involves resisting or rejecting what is recalled, resulting in inaction.
- v. 6 “Mount Mizar”
 - “Mizar” means “little hill” or “little mountain.”
 - Mizar was probably one of the lesser peaks in the Mt. Hermon range.
 - Perhaps the psalmist is in that region or remembers his visit(s) to that region at the headwaters of the Jordan River.
- v. 7 “deep . . . waterfalls . . . breakers . . . waves”
 - The metaphor of overwhelming water and flood depicts the psalmist’s sense of despair and need for help.
- v. 8 “The LORD will command His lovingkindness”
 - “In the midst of the drowning flood, God throws the psalmist a lifeline. . . . His thrashing hand grips the line of God’s ‘love [*hesed*]’ (42:8), God’s faithful, committed, covenant love that endures forever.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 673.
 - “It is no accident that here alone in this first psalm of the Elohistic Psalter, the name of Israel’s covenant God, Yahweh (‘LORD’), appears. It is as if the two belong together; Yahweh and *hesed* cannot be separated.”—Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 673.

Psalm 43 — Light and Truth

1.0 Introducing Psalm 43

- Psalms 42 and 43 are often considered together.
 - ♦ See notes on Psalm 42 for the reasons.
 - ♦ Note the refrain found twice in Psalm 42 (vv. 5, 11) is also found here in Psalm 43 (v. 5).

- “[I]t has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song; but it is always dangerous to allow these theories of error in Holy Scripture, and in this instance it would be very difficult to show just cause for such an admission. . . . We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore in after life he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner.”—C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 1/2:292.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 43

2.1 Outline for Psalms 42–43 (see outline above for Ps 42)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Vindicate me”
 - God alone can vindicate the psalmist.
 - God has the authority and power to defend the psalmist and to prosecute the enemy.
- **v. 1** “an ungodly nation”
 - Enemies of the psalmist and of his nation have made life unbearable and depressing.
 - If this is a hymn penned during Judah’s exile, the reference would be to all the Israelites suffered at the hands of the Babylonians.
- **v. 3** “Your light and Your truth”
 - “The light of God is the experience of the fullness of his redemption (36:9; Isa 58:8, 10; 60:1, 3). The ‘truth’ . . . of God is the expression of his covenantal fidelity (40:10; 57:3).”—Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein, 5:336 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).
- **vv. 3–4** “Let them bring me to Your holy hill”
 - Is this a return from exile or leaving this earth in death?
 - Note the movement:
 - Mt. Zion (“to Your holy hill,” v. 3a).
 - The Temple (“to Your dwelling places,” v. 3b—the plural gives an intensifying force: “Your very dwellingplace”).
 - The altar in the Temple (“to the altar of God,” v. 4a).
 - God Himself (“To God my exceeding joy,” v. 4b).
- **v. 5** “The help of my countenance and my God”
 - This third stanza, as it were, added to the first two (in Psalm 42) expresses a prayer of strong conviction.
 - God is the psalmist’s help in time of need (cp. Hebrews 4:16).

Thursday
6:00–7:30 PM
Psalm 49

Psalm 49 — The High Cost of Redemption

1.0 Introducing Psalm 49

- Some common themes show up in Psalms 47–49:

Preceding Psalms

48:14 God, Our God . . . will guide us
until death

47:1 O clap your hands, all peoples;

48:10 So is Your praise to the ends of the
earth;

Psalm 49

v. 14 Death shall be their shepherd

v. 1 Hear this, all peoples;

Give ear, all inhabitants of the
world,

- Psalms 49 and 73 share many similarities. Both are wisdom psalms.
- The wisdom characteristics of Psalm 49 are also common to Ecclesiastes and Proverbs:

Psalm 49

v. 3 My mouth will speak wisdom

v. 4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will express my riddle on the harp.

v. 10 *even* wise men die;

v. 10 leave their wealth to others

vv. 12, 20 like the beasts that perish

v. 14 the upright shall rule over them

v. 17 when he dies he will carry nothing away

Ecclesiastes & Proverbs

Proverbs 10:31

Proverbs 1:6

Ecclesiastes 2:16

Ecclesiastes 2:18; 6:2

Ecclesiastes 3:19

Proverbs 12:24; 17:2

Ecclesiastes 5:15

2.0 Understanding Psalm 49

2.1 Outline

- I. The Psalmist's Call (vv. 1–4)
- II. The Psalmist's Query (vv. 5–12)
- III. The Psalmist's Consolation (vv. 13–20)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “the world”
 - The Hebrew word *heled* indicates the temporary world of time.
 - People exist in a transitory world.
- **v. 2** “low and high . . . Rich and poor”
 - These two merisms refer to all people by means of two extreme categories of people.
 - Compare “young and old” and “ladies and gentlemen.”
- **vv. 3, 20** “understanding . . . without understanding”
 - References to “understanding” form an inclusio highlighting the condition of fallen man in contrast to the wisdom God offers by revelation.

- **v. 4** “a proverb . . . my riddle”
 - **Proverb:** “Man in *his* pomp is like the beasts that perish” (the refrain in vv. 12 and 20).
 - **Riddle #1:** What can a man give in exchange for his own soul?
 - **Answer:** Verses 6–9.
 - See Matthew 16:26.
 - **Riddle #2:** What is the great equalizer between rich and poor?
 - **Answer:** Verse 10.
 - The riddle might be “the contradiction encountered when those who are wicked enjoy ease and prosperity while the righteous suffer oppression and want.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 748.
- **vv. 5, 16** “Why should I fear . . . Do not be afraid”
 - Another inclusio providing a rhetorical question and the understood answer.
- **v. 8** “the redemption of his soul is costly”
 - Compare 1 Peter 1:18–19.
- **v. 9** “That he should not undergo decay”
 - Literally, “That he should not see the pit.”
 - Note the parallelism. The second line speaks of death.
 - Compare Psalms 16:10; 30:3, 9.
- **vv. 9, 14** Eternal Life?
 - “That he should live on eternally” (v. 9) and “And the upright shall rule over them in the morning” (v. 14).
 - “It is doubtful that the poet believes in an afterlife with God. The psalm is too early in the development of Israel’s thought to formulate such a belief.”—Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 124.
 - “Most moderns, even A. B. Davidson and Salmond, minimise the Eschatology of the ancient Hebrews, so as to reduce it much below the level of that of the ancient neighbouring nations.”—Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (reprint; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 1:411.
- **vv. 12, 20** Refrain
 - The differing portions (“will not endure” and “yet without understanding”) involve assonance (similarity of sound: *bal yalin* and *welo’ yabin*).
 - The first refrain refers to the transitory nature of man and his wealth or power. Literally, “does not spend the night.”
 - The second refrain refers to the ultimate distinction not erased by death: spiritual understanding (= fear of the LORD).
- **vv. 13, 15** “Selah.”
 - *What are the concepts upon which the reader is to meditate?*
- **v. 14** “Death shall be their shepherd”
 - NIV’s “death will feed on them” is based upon the verb’s ambiguity. It can mean “shepherd” or “graze.”

- In either phraseology, the picture is sinister and a stark contrast to Psalm 23's shepherd motif.
- "Those who thought they needed no divine guide end up with a shepherd whose name is Death, who herds them into Sheol to dwell forever"—Schaefer, *Psalms*, 126.
- **v. 15** "But God"
 - This is the hope of the psalmist.
 - Not only will God "redeem" him, God will "receive" him.
 - Compare Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11 (both use the same Hebrew verb).

Thursday
7:45–8:45 PM
Psalm 51

Psalm 51 — Biblical Confession

1.0 Introducing Psalm 51

- Several well-known individuals turned to Psalm 51 at the time of their death.
 - ♦ Both Sir Thomas More and Lady Jane Grey recited this psalm when they were on the scaffold as martyrs during the reigns of Henry VIII and Queen Mary.
 - ♦ Henry V requested it be read to him on his deathbed.
 - ♦ William Carey requested it be the text of the sermon at his funeral.
- Psalm 51 is one of the so-called "penitential" psalms.
 - ♦ Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.
- The background for the psalm is recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 51

2.1 Outline

- I. Confession (vv. 1–9)
 - A. I Have Sinned (vv. 1–4)
 - B. I Am a Sinner (vv. 5–9)
- II. Restoration (vv. 10–13)
- III. Praise (vv. 14–17)
- IV. Intercession (vv. 18–19)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** "Be gracious to me"
 - Confession and forgiveness are both based upon the reality of God's grace.
- **vv. 1–2** Three Words for Forgiveness
 - "Blot out" = the metaphor is erasing or removing writing from a book—perhaps an accounting metaphor.
 - "Wash" = the metaphor is that of the ancient near eastern laundryman who soaked, soaped, beat, wrung out, and rinsed clothing to get it clean.

- “Cleanse” (same as “purify” in v. 7) = the metaphor is purification in order to approach the altar or to participate in worship at the Tabernacle.
- Such multiplied references look at the totality and absoluteness of divine forgiveness.
- Note the reverse order of the same three terms in verses 7–9.
- **vv. 2–3 Three Words for Sin**
 - “Transgressions” = rebellion against divine authority.
 - “Iniquity” = perversion and guilt.
 - “Sin” = falling short of God’s holiness.
 - Such multiplied references look at the totality of sin and its absolute wickedness.
- **v. 3 “my sin is ever before me”**
 - The natural consequences of sin are pervasive and often permanent.
 - Many times the effects are exhibited in one’s own family.
- **v. 4 “Against You, You only”**
 - Sin, by definition and nature, is anti-God.
 - Even when the wickedness is perpetrated against someone else, the act is rebellion against God’s commands. Cp. Leviticus 5:21.
 - See 2 Samuel 12:13.
- **v. 5 “in sin my mother conceived me”**
 - Verse 5 speaks of the psalmist’s sin nature, not about his mother’s morality.
 - This is the biblical foundation for the doctrine of original sin.
 - David confesses that he has been a sinner since conception.
 - *What implications does this have for the abortion debate?*
- **v. 7 “hyssop”**
 - Hyssop was a small plant that grew in rocky crevices in Palestine.
 - Perhaps the Syrian marjoram (*Origanum syriacum*), a fragrant grey-leaved wiry-stemmed herb, 7–12 inches high, with small white flowers.
 - The plant was employed like a brush in various purification ceremonies in the OT:
 - Exodus 12:22
 - Leviticus 14:4–6
 - Numbers 19:18
- **v. 10 “Create in me a clean heart”**
 - “Create” is the same verb used in Genesis 1:1.
 - The reference could be to creating out of nothing (creation *ex nihilo*). Cp. Romans 7:18.
 - However, it might be a reference to the miraculous nature of what God must do in David’s heart.
- **v. 11 “do not take Your Holy Spirit from me”**
 - Is this a reference to the loss of salvation?
 - David might have been thinking of what he and Saul had experienced when the Spirit had come upon David, but had departed from Saul (1 Sam 16:13–14).
 - For David to pray this way would indicate that he was aware that God had not taken the Holy Spirit from him in spite of his grievous sins.

- Verse 12 should be conclusive: “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.” David does not pray for the restoration of his salvation.
- **vv. 13–17**
 - “The proof of the forgiveness described in Psalm 32:7–9 is found in the altered heart attitudes depicted in [Psalm 51] verses 13–17.
“This changed attitude is evident in verses 18–19, too.”
—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:436.
- **v. 13** “I will teach transgressors Your ways”
 - Psalm 32 may have been a partial fulfillment of David’s vow.
 - Even those believers who, like David, were adulterers and murderers might have a writing ministry or deal with people one-on-one in order to help others escape the shackles of sinful living.
- **vv. 18–19** David’s Intercession
 - David recognized the effects that his sins had on his own nation.
 - He prays for the nation and for God’s blessing.
 - Intercession is another ministry that every restored sinner can and must do.

Thursday

9:00–10:00 PM

Psalms 87 and 89

Psalm 87 — O, Zion!

1.0 Introducing Psalm 87

- Psalm 87 picks up the prophecy of 86:9 that “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You.”
- This psalm interprets Psalms 46 and 48 (also by “the sons of Korah”).
✓ Consider the verbal similarities:

Psalm 87	Psalms 46–48
“in the holy mountains” (v. 1)	“His holy mountain” (48:1)
“dwelling places of Jacob” (v. 2)	“the holy dwelling places” (46:4)
“city of God” (v.3)	“the city of God” (46:4) “the city of our God” (48:1, 8)
“those who know me” (v. 4)	“know that I am God” (46:10)
“the Most High” (v. 5)	“the Most High” (46:4)
“Himself will establish her” (v. 5)	“God will establish her” (48:8)
“my springs of joy are in you” (v. 7)	“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God” (46:4)

- Augustine chose verse 3 for the theme and title of *The City of God*.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 87

2.1 Outline

- I. Zion’s Sovereign Selection (vv. 1–3)
- II. Zion’s Selected Citizens (vv. 4–6)

III. Zion's Celebrating Citizens (v. 7)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** "His foundation"
 - God is the founder of the city of Zion. See verse 5 and Isaiah 14:32.
 - "In the holy mountains": God selected and sanctified the range of hills/mountains upon which Jerusalem sits, that it might be the residence of His Presence, His Shekinah glory. See Psalms 125:2 and 133:3.
- **v. 2** "The LORD loves the gates of Zion"
 - Ancient rabbinic exposition on the Psalms observes that, "The king has a palace in every province, but which palace is best loved by him? The palace which is in his own province. Hence *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion*. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I love the synagogues and houses of study. But what do I love even more? Zion, for it is my own palace" (*Midrash Tehillim* 87.4).
 - See Deuteronomy 7:7–8. God loves and chooses on the basis of His divine purposes, not on the basis of merit.
- **v. 2** "dwelling places of Jacob"
 - The psalmist uses this poetic expression to refer either to all the other cities of Israel or to the previous locations where the Ark of the Covenant had resided (Gilgal [Joshua 4–5; Judges 2:1], Shiloh [Joshua 18:1, 10; Psalm 78:60], Nob [1 Samuel 21:1–9], and Gibeon [1 Kings 3:4–5; 1 Chronicles 16:39]).
- **v. 3** "Glorious things"
 - The Hebrew word occurs only here in the OT.
 - ✓ Compare the use of "glorious" in Isaiah 9:1 and 60:13.
 - ✓ Psalm 48:1–2 reveals the kind of things spoken about Zion.
 - Those who say these things are left unidentified—they might be Israelites, Gentiles, angels, or even God Himself.
 - ✓ Often a passive verb is a way to refer to God indirectly—a so-called "divine passive." E.g., "Moab was subdued" (Judg 3:30).
- **vv. 4–6** All Nations Worshipping God
 - See Psalms 22:27–28; 48:9–10; Isaiah 2:2–4 (//Micah 4:1–2); 19:23–25; 45:22; 56:6–7; Zechariah 2:10–11; 8:22–23; 14:16–19; Malachi 1:11; Ephesians 3:4–7; Philippians 2:9–11; Revelation 7:9–10.
- **v. 4** "Rahab"
 - Rahab is a poetic name for the nation of Egypt (see Isa 30:7).
- **v. 5** "Zion"
 - The Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT two centuries before Christ): "Mother Zion." Compare Galatians 4:26.
 - Believing Israel's numbers shall be augmented by believing Gentiles, so that the offspring of long barren Jerusalem will be more than she formerly possessed (cf. Isa 54:1–3; 66:7–14).
- **v. 6** "This one was born there"
 - Some interpreters conclude that such phrases refer to the Jews in the Diaspora—they have been born in various nations around the world.

- One Jewish commentator writes: “the chief lesson that emerges from the psalm is that Zion is the birthplace of all those who come to it to serve God there, even if they are non-Jews and even if they come from very far-off lands.”—Amos Hakham, *Psalms*, 3 vols., Koschitzky Edition (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 2:300.
- This birth is not the natural birth, but the supernatural birth. Compare John 3:10 and 4:19–24.
- For registering the birth, compare Daniel 12:1; Isaiah 4:3–5.
- **v. 6** “All my springs *of joy* are in you”
 - “Just as natural springs were essential for the life of many a village and town, so Jerusalem, the city of God, is here being depicted as the source of all that is essential to the God-centered life, a life bubbling over with all the good things that God gives.”—Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 289.
- **v. 7** “play the flutes”
 - Preferably, “dance” (see the marginal note in NAU).
- **Musical Subscription:** “A Psalm of the sons of Korah”
 - Note how this psalm begins with its Superscription.
- **Musical Subscription:** “Mahalath Leannoth”
 - Since Psalm 88 is perhaps the most mournful and gloomy of all the psalms, this tune hardly seems fitting.
 - The meaning could be “to be sung at a dance.” If so, it fits Psalm 87, due to its reference to “dance” (v. 7) and its exuberance and joy.

Friday
6:00–7:30 PM
Psalms 103 and 104

Psalm 103 — David’s Doxology: The Sum of the Psalter

1.0 Introducing Psalm 103

- Book 4 of the Psalter concludes with four psalms calling God’s people to bless, thank, and praise Him. Note the way that these four psalms begin and end:

Psalm	103	104	105	106
Beginning	Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, <i>bless</i> His holy name. (v. 1)	Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, (v. 1)	Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. (v. 1)	Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. (v. 1)
Ending	Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul! (v. 22)	Let sinners be consumed from the earth And let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD! (v. 35)	So that they might keep His statutes And observe His laws, Praise the LORD! (v. 45)	Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, “Amen.” Praise the LORD! (v. 48)

- Book 4 contains only two psalms attributed to David (Psalms 101 and 103).
- Song writers have based a number of popular hymns on Psalm 103:
 - ✓ “My Soul, Now Praise Thy Maker” (Johann Graumann, 1525).
 - ✓ “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation” (Joachim Neander, 1680).
 - ✓ “O Bless the Lord, My Soul” and “Bless, O My Soul! The Living God” (Isaac Watts, 1719).
 - ✓ “O Bless the Lord, My Soul” (James Montgomery, 1819).
 - ✓ “Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven” (Henry F. Lyte, 1834). Use “Angels from the Realms of Glory” as the tune.

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;
To His feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore His praises sing:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.

- ✓ “Count Your Blessings” (Johnson Oatman, Jr., 1897).

2.0 Understanding Psalm 103

2.1 Outline

- I. An Individual Call to Praise (vv. 1–5)
- II. Israel’s Cause for Praise (vv. 6–18)
- III. A Universal Call to Praise (vv. 19–22)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Bless the LORD, O my soul”
 - “Bless” means to acknowledge the LORD in His position of power with all the respect due Him.

- “Soul” in such a context refers to the individual’s total being: mind, heart, and will.
- **v. 2** “His benefits”
 - What are they?
 - ✓ Pardoned and healed (v. 3), redeemed and crowned (v. 4), satisfied and renewed (v. 5).
 - Compare Deuteronomy 8:11–18; 2 Chronicles 32:25; Psalm 116:12–14; Romans 6:22 (“benefit” is literally “fruit”).
- **v. 3** “Who heals all your diseases”
 - “This verse has played an important but unwarranted role in some systems of theology that stress what is called ‘healing in the atonement,’ meaning that if we have been saved from sin by Christ, we have been healed or have a right to be healed of any physical affliction too. This is bad theology, because it is simply not true that those who have been forgiven for sin are spared or have a right to be spared all diseases. Believers do get sick, and many passages teach that God has his purposes in the sicknesses.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:834.
 - ✓ Justin Peters (see <http://www.justinpeters.org/seminar.htm>) provides a superb response to the so-called “Word of Faith” movement characterized by Benny Hinn, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, and others.
- **v. 4** “redeems your life from the pit”
 - The text most likely speaks of resurrection to eternal life.
 - Compare Psalms 16:9–11 and 49:7–9, 14–15.
- **v. 5** “your years”
 - The Hebrew text says “your ornament.” Some modern Bible versions tend to translate it as “you” (ESV, NRSV), because the translators understood “ornament” as another way to speak about one’s soul or self. This is the most likely meaning, similar to the use of “my glory” in Psalms 7:5; 16:9; 30:12; and 57:8.
 - Other translations use “your desires” (NIV) and “your mouth” (NKJV). Thinking of the body as an individual’s ornamentation, some Jewish commentators translate as “your body.”
- **vv. 8–10** Echo of Exodus 34:6–7
 - David’s quote of Exodus 34:6–7 is one of several in the OT.
 - ✓ Nehemiah 9:17
 - ✓ Psalms 86:15; 145:8
 - ✓ Joel 2:13
 - ✓ Jonah 4:2
 - Such citations provide evidence that the Israelites accepted Moses’ writings as authoritative Scripture long before the closing of the OT canon around 400 B.C.
- **v. 10** “He has not dealt with us”
 - This verse is a marvelous explanation of what God’s grace is all about. We cannot earn forgiveness for our sins—it is God’s gift.
 - As sinners we deserve death (Romans 6:23) and the most extreme of punishments because we have rebelled against God and acted as His enemies (Romans 5:10).

- **v. 12** “has He removed our transgressions”
 - As in verse 3, God exhibits His loyal love primarily through forgiveness.
- **vv. 14–16** Flesh is a Fading Flower
 - “For” in verse 14 might better be translated “Indeed”—emphatic.
 - We do not base our assurance on our character, but on God’s character. He is eternal and unchanging, while we are transitory and changing.
 - Cp. Job 7:6–7, 10; 8:18; 14:1–2; 20:9; Psalm 90:5–6; Isaiah 40:6–8.
- **v. 15** “As for man”
 - For “man” here the Hebrew uses *’enosh*, which often carries with it the concept of mortality, weakness, or even sickness. It is a fitting word in this context.
 - ✓ See Job 25:6; Isaiah 13:12; 51:12.
- **vv. 17–18** Recipients of God’s Unfailing Love
 - “those who fear Him” = believers
 - “those who keep His covenant” = faithful believers
 - “[those who] remember His precepts to do them” = obedient believers
 - Compare James 2:17–18.
- **v. 17** “from everlasting to everlasting”
 - See Psalm 90:2. Both psalms speak of the ephemeral nature of man in contrast with the eternal and unchanging nature of God.
- **v. 19** “His sovereignty rules over all”
 - See David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:12—“You rule over all.”
- **vv. 20–21** Angelology
 - Angels are:
 - ✓ “Messengers” (literal meaning of “angels”).
 - ✓ “Mighty ones” (literal translation of “mighty”).
 - ✓ Obedient to the Lord’s word.
 - ✓ An organized army (“hosts,” cf. Psalm 148:2).
 - ✓ “Ministers” (= “who serve”), serving God (cf. Psalm 104:4).
- **v. 22** “all you works of His”
 - This psalm began with one person (vv. 1–5), expands to the people of Israel (vv. 6–18), then envelopes all creation (vv. 19–22). The soloist summons all creation to be part of the choir of praise.
 - One person devoted to God can impact the whole world.
 - God’s praiseworthiness is so great that even all of His works are inadequate to proclaim His praise.

Psalm 104 — Praise for the Creator

1.0 Introducing Psalm 104

- Book 4 of the Psalter concludes with four psalms calling on God’s people to bless or praise Him. For their similar beginnings and endings, see the chart in “Introducing Psalm 103.”
- Psalm 104 might be considered an expanded commentary on Psalm 19:1, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”

- It echoes Psalm 8 with its focus on the glory of God and His providential care for mankind. The Creator is in control and He cares.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 104

2.1 Outline

- I. The Creator's Praise (vv. 1–4)
- II. The Creator's Preparation of the Earth (vv. 5–13)
- III. The Creator's Provision for Mankind (vv. 14–23)
- IV. The Creator's Possessions on the Earth (vv. 24–30)
- V. The Creator's Praise (vv. 31–35)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”
 - Such similarities with Psalm 103 do not necessarily indicate that they both have the same author. The similarities may have caused the editor of Psalms to place them back-to-back.
- **v. 3** “His chariot . . . He walks”
 - Some commentators believe that the psalmist borrowed his description of the theophany (= appearance of God) from Canaanite literature about the god Baal.
 - ✓ The same commentators also tie verses 6–7 to mythology. They associate “the deep” (Hebrew, *tehom*) with either the Canaanite (Ugaritic) sea god Yam or the Babylonian goddess Tiamat. Both rebelled against a superior god and were defeated in battle: Baal defeated Yam and Marduk defeated Tiamat.
 - ✓ These myths represent the conquest of chaos. Thus, some biblical commentators, appropriating extrabiblical mythology, see in the Genesis creation account a similar motif. The more evangelical of these commentators claim that Moses (in Genesis) and the psalmist (in Psalm 104) were employing familiar myths either for purely descriptive purposes (ideas the average Israelite would understand) or to highlight the contrast between the myth and the biblical account. It does not mean that the biblical writer believed the myths.
 - ✓ However, it is not necessary to accept this association of the biblical text with myths. *Tehom* is not the exact equivalent of either Tiamat or Yam as a word, much less in its immediate reference (which is quite literally deep water). As an analogy, think about this: If a man refers to his wife as “Babe,” it is not evidence that he is saying that she is a blue ox—nor does he intend any association whatsoever with the mythical Paul Bunyan.
 - ✓ Many scholars also identify parallels between Psalm 104 and an Egyptian hymn to Aten in the time of Pharaoh Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV; early 14th century B.C.). Compare the following excerpt with verses 28–30:

<Those on> earth come from your hand as you made them,
When you have dawned they live,
When you set they die;
You yourself are lifetime, one lives by you.
All eyes are <on your> beauty until you set,
All labor ceases when you rest in the west;
When you rise you stir [everyone] for the King,

It is probably best to understand the apparent parallels as indicating similar concepts and themes common to all ancient near eastern cultures, rather than any direct dependence or relationship.
- **v. 4** “makes”

- The Hebrew root word that forms the basis for “make” and “works” occurs in strategic verses that divide the psalm into stanzas.
- **v. 7 “At Your rebuke”**
 - “Rebuke” seems to indicate that verses 7–9 refer to the Flood. The English translation and the Hebrew seem disharmonious with the Creation account, since the verb often implies anger (Isa 51:20; cp. 54:9). A speaker intends the rebuke to instill fear in the hearer (Isa 30:17).
 - ✓ Some scholars think that “rebuke” is actually a war cry and refer to the Babylonian and Canaanite chaos myth (see comments on v. 3).
 - ✓ Other psalms employ the same verb in contexts dealing with the parting of the Red Sea’s waters (Pss 18:15; 106:9; cp. Nahum 1:4), resulting in judgment upon the Egyptians and deliverance or safety for the Israelites.
 - See, also, Luke 8:24 when Christ stilled the stormy Sea of Galilee.
- **v. 8 “The mountains rose; the valleys sank down”**
 - This verse “is to be understood in terms of disorganized movement helter-skelter, back and forth, as they [the waters] leave the mountains (v 7).”—Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 27.
 - Does this verse refer to Creation or to the Flood?
 - ✓ *Creation* — The order of created entities in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 appears to be the same:
 - Day 1:* light (Gen 1:3; Ps 104:2)
 - Day 2:* heavenly waters (Gen 1:7; Ps 104:3)
 - Day 3:* draining water off the earth and appearance of landforms (Gen 1:9; Ps 104:7–8), vegetation (Gen 1:11; Ps 104:14)
 - Day 4:* sun and moon (Gen 1:14–16; Ps 104:19)
 - Day 5:* sea creatures (Gen 1:21; Ps 104:25–26)
 - Day 6:* provision of food (Gen 1:29; Ps 104:27).

In addition, the description of boundaries for the waters is reminiscent of Job 38:4–11.
 - ✓ *Flood* — Psalm 104:9 seems to echo Genesis 7:20, 9:21–22, and 10:12–15: “You set a boundary that they may not pass over, So that they will not return to cover the earth.” The apparent creation order in Psalm 104 ignores the disharmonies in the psalm:
 - “Light” (v. 2) covers God rather than illuminating the earth.
 - God creates the earth (v. 5; cp. Gen 1:1) after the light (v. 2; cp. Gen 1:3).
 - Light exists before waters cover the earth (v. 6; cp. Gen 1:2).
 - Birds (v. 12; cp. Gen 1:20) precede vegetation (v. 14; cp. Gen 1:11) and the sun and moon (v. 19; cp. Gen 1:14–16).
 - Wild donkeys (v. 11; cp. Gen 1:24–25) precede birds.
 - Mankind appears (v. 14) before the sun and moon.

Nearly every scholar who denies a reference to the Flood in verse 9 depicts the waters at creation as chaotic, raging, and dangerous—waters needing to be tamed—thereby making a clear association with Canaanite mythology.
 - ✓ *Both* — Clearly, Creation is a major theme in Psalm 104. However, it also seems clear that verse 9 refers to the Noachic Flood (David Barker, Boice, Travers, VanGemen).
- **v. 9 “a boundary that they may not pass over”**
 - The parallel reference in Jeremiah 5:22 is in a context (vv. 18–25) echoing phrases and concepts from Genesis 8:20–9:17.

- Although clearly referring to Creation, Job 38:10–11 uses totally different terms in the Hebrew.
- **v. 15** “wine . . . oil . . . food”
 - Since the Hebrew for “food” is literally “bread,” this is a potential reference to the three staples of the ancient Israelite economy: wine, olive oil, and grain (wheat, barley, and rye). See Deuteronomy 7:13.
- **v. 26** “Leviathan”
 - Leslie Allen writes, “Leviathan functions here not as the Canaanite chaos monster, not even as a captive prisoner, but simply in a demythologized capacity as a created being, a marine creature . . . , perhaps a whale.”—*Psalms 101–150*, 27.
- **v. 30** “You send forth Your Spirit”
 - The same Spirit of God active at creation (Gen 1:2) continues to be active in sustaining life on the earth.
 - Some scholars translate “Spirit” as “breath,” since the same word is translated “breath” in verse 29. Some do so because they do not believe that the OT clearly speaks of the Spirit of God.
 - ✓ See Genesis 6:3; Exodus 31:3; Numbers 24:2; Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:14; 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalms 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 63:10–11, 14; Joel 2:28–29; Ezekiel 37:1; Nehemiah 9:30.
 - ✓ Compare Job 33:4.
 - ✓ The Father sends the Spirit in John 14:26; 15:26; and 20:22.
- **v. 31** “Let the LORD be glad”
 - The Lord’s joy with His creation is echoed in the psalmist’s own emphatic declaration in verse 34: “As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.” Thus, the joy is mutual.
- **v. 32** “it trembles . . . they smoke”
 - Earthquake and volcanic activity often accompany theophany in the OT (cp. Exod 19:18; Ps 144:5).
- **v. 35** “Praise the LORD!”
 - Literally, “Hallelujah!”—the first in the Psalter.
 - Cp. Revelation 19:1–6—likewise associated with judgment of sinners.

Friday

7:45–8:45 PM

Psalm 119

Psalm 119 — The Great Alphabet Psalm

1.0 Introducing Psalm 119

- Acrostic (= alphabetical) psalms include Psalms 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; and 145. These psalms use the Hebrew alphabet which contains 22 letters.

- The main theme of Psalm 119 is the Word of God, which is mentioned in 169 of its 176 verses. The psalmist utilizes 8 basic terms which occur 175 times in 176 verses — at least once in all except verses 3, 37, 84, 90, 121, 122, and 132:
 1. **“law”** (*torah*; v. 1), 25x; this word begins with the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 2. **“testimonies”** (*‘edut, ‘edot*; v. 2, singular in v. 88), 23x.
 3. **“precepts”** (*piqqudim*, v. 4), 21x.
 4. **“statutes”** (*huqqim, huqqot*; v. 5, feminine in v. 16), 22x.
 5. **“commandments”** (*mitswah, mitswot*; v. 6, singular in v. 96), 22x.
 6. **“judgments”/“ordinances”** (*mishpat, mishpatim*; vv. 7, 13, singular in v. 160), 20x; see problem of translating verses 84 and 132.
 7. **“word”** (*davar, devarim*; v. 9, plural in vv. 57, 130, 139, 147, 161), 23x.
 8. **“word”** (*‘imrah*; v. 11, not actually plural in v. 103), 19x; this word begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- ✓ All 8 words occur one time in 8 verses of a stanza only at verses 57–64 (*heth*), 73–80 (*yodh*), and 81–88 (*kaph*). Verses 41–48 (*waw*) also contain all 8 words, one each per verse, but verse 43 contains two words, repeating “word” (*davar*) that already occurs in verse 42.
- ✓ Occurrences of “law” and “word” (*‘imrah*) total 44 (2 x 22).
- ✓ Occurrences of “testimonies” and “precepts” total 44 (2 x 22).
- ✓ Both “statutes” and “commandments” occur 22x each.
- ✓ Occurrences of “judgments”/“ordinances” and “word” (*davar*) total 43x — but see above.
- ✓ Should “ways” (vv. 3, 37) be included as a synonym for “law” or “word”?
- “LORD” (*Yahweh*) appears 24x; “God” only once (v. 115). However, “Your” occurs 211x. God Himself is the central theme of the psalm.
- The afflictions of the psalmist form a backdrop for this psalm (vv. 8, 20, 22, 23, 25, 28, 39, 42, 50, 51, 53, 61, 67, 69, 71, 75, 78, 81–87, 92, 94, 95, 107, 110, 115, 121–23, 134, 136, 141, 143, 145–47, 149, 150, 153, 154, 157, 161, 170, 176).

2.0 Understanding Psalm 119

Outline

- I. Abiding by Yahweh’s Law (vv. 1–8)
- II. Behaving According to Yahweh’s Word (vv. 9–16)
- III. Contemplating Yahweh’s Commandments (vv. 17–24)
- IV. Directing One’s Way by Yahweh’s Precepts (vv. 25–32)
- V. Educating a Believer in Yahweh’s Law (vv. 33–40)
- VI. Freeing a Believer by Yahweh’s Word (vv. 41–48)
- VII. Generating a Memory of Yahweh’s Law (vv. 49–56)
- VIII. Hastening to Keep Yahweh’s Word (vv. 57–64)
- IX. Increasing Good by Yahweh’s Word (vv. 65–72)
- X. Judging Situations by Yahweh’s Word (vv. 73–80)
- XI. Keeping Oriented According to Yahweh’s Word (vv. 81–88)
- XII. Living through Yahweh’s Precepts (vv. 89–96)
- XIII. Mastering Understanding through Yahweh’s Precepts (vv. 97–104)
- XIV. Negating Affliction by Yahweh’s Ordinances (vv. 105–112)
- XV. Obtaining Comfort through Yahweh’s Statutes (vv. 113–120)
- XVI. Praying in accord with Yahweh’s Word (vv. 121–128)
- XVII. Quenching One’s Thirst with Yahweh’s Word (vv. 129–136)
- XVIII. Revealing Yahweh’s Righteousness by His Word (vv. 137–144)
- XIX. Seeking Yahweh’s Help According to His Word (vv. 145–152)
- XX. Tossing Oneself on Yahweh’s Mercy by His Word (vv. 153–160)
- XXI. Uniting Hope with Love for Yahweh’s Word (vv. 161–168)
- XXII. Voicing One’s Plea According to Yahweh’s Word (vv. 169–176)

Notes

I. Abiding by Yahweh's Law (vv. 1–8) [*Aleph*]

Key verse: v. 2

- **vv. 1, 2** “blessed”
 - This is the first Hebrew word in these two verses. The word begins with the Hebrew alphabet's first letter. It is the same Hebrew word as the first word of the entire Psalter (1:1).
 - It is the Word of God in the believer's life that produces the life of blessing.
- **v. 2** “with all *their* heart”
 - This phraseology occurs 6 times in Psalm 119. See verses 10, 34, 58, 69, and 145.
 - Compare Deuteronomy 4:29; 5:29; **6:5**; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; 32:46. This is just one of many phrases and themes that the psalmist draws from the Book of Deuteronomy.
- **v. 3** “His ways”
 - God's “ways” (Hebrew, *derek*) involve who God is with regard to His character. God desires His people to reflect His character in how they live. Compare 1 Peter 1:14–16.
 - Psalm 119 focuses on living the Word by obeying it, not just knowing it. Compare James 1:22.

II. Behaving According to Yahweh's Word (vv. 9–16) [*Beth*]

Key verses: vv. 11, 12

- **v. 9** “his way”
 - In Hebrew the word is distinct from the term used in verse 3. This word (Hebrew, *'orach*) refers more specifically to a course, journey, or pilgrimage. See Psalms 19:5; 119:15, 101, 104, 128.
- **v. 11** “Your word I have treasured in my heart”
 - The Hebrew letter *beth* is a word that also means “house.” This verse focuses on making the Word of God a home in our heart.
 - The heart (mentioned in vv. 10 and 11) is where purity must begin (see v. 9). God's Word in our heart will enable us to live without constantly sinning.
✓ Compare Matthew 5:28; 12:34.
 - How to live for God through His Word:
 1. Obey the Word of God (v. 9).
 2. Seek God wholeheartedly (v. 10).
 3. Memorize the Word of God (v. 11).
 4. Be taught by God from His Word (v. 12).
 5. Teach the Word to others (v. 13).
 6. Rejoice in living the Word of God (v. 14).
 7. Meditate on the Word of God (v. 15).
 8. Delight in the Word of God (v. 16).

III. Contemplating Yahweh's Commandments (vv. 17–24) [*Gimel*]

Key verse: v. 18

- **v. 17** “Your servant”
 - “Servant” in Hebrew has a wide range of meanings that can include “slave,” “bond slave,” “servant,” “workman,” and “worshipper.” Context determines the meaning.
 - When the psalmist identifies himself as the Lord’s “servant,” he indicates that he is submitting himself to the Lord’s sovereign lordship. In the Psalms, the phrase involves the following:
 - ✓ Dependence upon God and His Word to preserve him from sin (Psalm 19:11–13).
 - ✓ Redeemed by the Lord (Psalm 19:14).
 - ✓ Dependence upon God to deliver him from danger, disaster, and death (Psalms 27:9; 31:16; 69:17; 86:2; 119:84, 122, 176; 143:12).
 - ✓ Trust in the Lord (Psalm 86:2).
 - ✓ Dependence upon the Lord for grace, gladness, good, and forgiveness, strength, mercy, hope, and loyal love (Psalms 86:3–5, 16; 119:49, 124).
 - ✓ Freed from bondage by the Lord (Psalm 116:16).
 - ✓ Being taught by the Lord through His Word (Psalm 119:124, 125, 135)
- **v. 18** “Open my eyes”
 - Like the prayer that God might “teach” him (vv. 12, 26, 33), this does not eliminate Bible study.
 - The Holy Spirit’s teaching ministry makes our Bible study more effective. Compare John 14:26.
- **v. 19** “I am a stranger”
 - In this stanza the psalmist reveals the extent of his sufferings.
 - ✓ He is not at home on this earth — he feels out of place (v. 19).
 - ✓ Others are slandering him (vv. 22–23).
 - ✓ The powerful are against him (v. 23).
 - Note the psalmist’s response to his sufferings. He does not sink into despair and depression; he becomes all the more determined to hold on to God’s written promises.

IV. Directing One’s Way by Yahweh’s Precepts (vv. 25–32) [*Daleth*]

Key verse: v. 27

- **vv. 26, 27** “ways . . . way”
 - One of these two forms is the first Hebrew word in verses 26, 27, 29, 30, 32. It begins with the Hebrew alphabet’s fourth letter. The Hebrew word is *derek*, the source for the English name Derek.
 - See the note on verse 3 with regard to the meaning of “way(s).”
- **vv. 29, 30** “false way . . . faithful way”
 - “False” and “faithful” relate to the covenant relationship the psalmist has with God.
 - The two paths are characteristic of wisdom literature in the OT.
 - Our path in life is not automatic. We must
 - ✓ choose the right path (v. 30),
 - ✓ cling to the Word (v. 31), and
 - ✓ run vigorously in God’s path (v. 32).
- **v. 31** “cling”
 - In Hebrew this verb is the first word in both verse 25 (“cleaves”) and here. It acts as an inclusio, bracketing verses 25–31.

V. Educating a Believer in Yahweh's Law (vv. 33–40) [*He*]

Key verse: v. 34

- **v. 33** “Teach me the way”
 - By employing the key word from the preceding stanza, the psalmist transitions to a prayer in verse 26 of that stanza. However, he uses a different word for “teach” — this one related more to the giving of instruction and pointing the way. *Torah* (“law”) is derived from the same root.
 - The first seven verses of this stanza use causative verbs as the first word in each verse. These verbs reveal the psalmist's main prayers:
 - ✓ “Teach me” (v. 33).
 - ✓ “Give me understanding” (v. 34).
 - ✓ “Make me walk” (v. 35).
 - ✓ “Incline my heart” (v. 36).
 - ✓ “Turn away my eyes” (v. 37).
 - ✓ “Establish Your word” (v. 38).
 - ✓ “Turn away my reproach” (v. 39).
- **v. 35** “path”
 - This is the third Hebrew word (*nathiv*) employed in Psalm 119 for the concept of “way” or “path.” It refers to a visible path due to either a wake behind something in water (Job 41:24) or to the fact that it was a well-worn path (Job 18:10; Jer 6:16, “ancient paths”).

VI. Freeing a Believer by Yahweh's Word (vv. 41–48) [*Waw*]

Key verse: v. 41

- **v. 41** “lovingkindnesses”
 - First occurrence of *hesed* in Psalm 119 (7 times: vv. 41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159). Verse 41 associates the Lord's “loyal love” with deliverance (“salvation”) “according to Your word [*'imrah*].”
 - Note the plural — God repeatedly shows Himself loyal in His covenant love for His people by delivering them from various distresses.
- **v. 42** “So I will have an answer”
 - The letter *waw* is the conjunction (“and”) in Hebrew and is always attached to the following word. In this stanza NAU translated it with “also,” “so,” and “and.” Once it remains untranslated (v. 47).
 - Eight times in this stanza the *waw* introduces first person statements: “I will have an answer” (v. 42), “I will keep” (v. 44), “I will walk” (v. 45), “I will speak” (v. 46), “I shall delight” (v. 47), “I shall lift up” (v. 48a), and “I will meditate” (v. 48b).
- **vv. 47, 48** “Which I love”
 - This dual reference to the psalmist's love for God's Word are the first references out of eleven in this psalm. Once (v. 132) he speaks of love for God's name.

VII. Generating a Memory of Yahweh's Law (vv. 49–56) [*Zayin*]

Key verse: v. 55

- **v. 49** “Remember”

- This is the first Hebrew word in verses 49, 52, and 55. It begins with *zayin*. Remembrance characterizes this stanza and this is the stanza's only prayer. Since God never forgets, "remember" means something more like "pay attention to" or "fulfill."
 - The covenant relationship is two-sided:
 - ✓ The psalmist prays that God would act in a fashion consistent with His verbal commitment (v. 49).
 - ✓ For his part, the psalmist professes a long dependence upon God's Word (v. 52).
 - For the psalmist to keep God's Word he must focus on God's "name" (v. 55) — who and what God is.
- **v. 50** "my comfort in my affliction"
 - As he faced affliction, the psalmist turned to the Word of God.
 - The Hebrew word for "comfort" occurs only here and in Job 6:10 ("consolation"). Its meaning involves encouragement, not merely consolation. See Psalms 23:4; 86:17; and 119:52 for related verbs.

VIII. Hastening to Keep Yahweh's Word (vv. 57–64) [*Heth*]

Key verse: v. 57

- **v. 57** "my portion"
 - Having a closer relationship to God (see comments on v. 49) means possessing God Himself. Like the Levites, individual believers must not tie themselves to this world, but to God alone (cp. Num 18:20).
 - How do we make God our "portion"?
 - ✓ Seek His favor wholeheartedly (v. 58).
 - ✓ Follow His Word (v. 59).
 - ✓ Don't delay obedience to His Word (v. 60).
 - ✓ Don't forget God's Word (v. 61).
 - ✓ Thank God for His Word (v. 62).
 - ✓ Seek the right companions — obedient believers (v. 63).
 - ✓ Pray for God to teach you more of His Word (v. 64).
- **v. 59** Four Aspects of Obedience (Phillips, *Exploring Psalms*, 2:315–16)
 - *Deliberation*: "I considered . . ." — Stop and think.
 - *Destination*: "I considered my ways" — Where am I headed?
 - *Determination*: "And turned my feet . . ." — Deciding to obey God.
 - *Discrimination*: "And turned my feet to Your testimonies." — I am going to follow God's ways rather than mine or another person's.
- **v. 64** "Your lovingkindness"
 - This stanza began with the theologically significant term "portion" (*heleq*) and now concludes with yet another such term, "lovingkindness" (*hesed*).
 - It is actually a surprise not to see either or both of these terms employed more often to begin this stanza's verses. Utilizing these two words to bracket the stanza, the psalmist signals the intensely personal nature of this stanza and the psalmist's relationship to God.

IX. Increasing Good by Yahweh's Word (vv. 65–72) [*Teth*]

Key verse: v. 71

- **v. 65** “well”
 - “Well” is the Hebrew word “good” (*tob*) which begins with the letter *teth*. It is the first word in verses 65, 66 (*tub*), 68, 71, and 72. Obviously, it is a key theme in this ninth stanza of Psalm 119.
 - ✓ Note how the first two and the last two verses begin with a form of *tob* to bracket the stanza and how the other occurrence (v. 68) is near the middle and includes both the adjective and verb forms of the word.
 - ✓ This central verse is then itself sandwiched between two references to the psalmist's affliction (v. 67) and his afflictors (vv. 69–70).
 - As the key verse (v. 71) indicates, God determined good for the psalmist in and through his afflictions. God's purposes in afflictions are the following:
 - ✓ To dispense good through His dealings (v. 65).
 - ✓ To give discernment and knowledge (v. 66).
 - ✓ To recover from straying (v. 67).
 - ✓ To make God Himself the best end — He Himself is good (v. 68).
 - ✓ To bring about wholehearted obedience (v. 69).
 - ✓ To cause delight in His Word (v. 70).
 - ✓ To cause the learning of His Word (v. 71).
 - ✓ To cause the prizing of God's Word (v. 72).

X. Judging Situations by Yahweh's Word (vv. 73–80) [*Yodh*]

Key verse: v. 75

- **v. 73** “Your hands”
 - The Hebrew word for “hand” (*yadh*) sounds almost like the name of the first letter for each verse in this stanza: *yodh*. Verses 73 and 74 (“those who fear You”) are the only verses in this stanza not to commence with a verb.
 - God's hands are all-powerful. The One who made the psalmist can give him understanding.
- **v. 74** “May”
 - In English translations of this stanza “May” or “Let” are employed 6 times as a means of expressing the psalmist's supplications. In the Hebrew the *yodh* is the prefix letter on 3rd person verbs presenting requests. These verbs are the first words in five verses (vv. 76–80).
 - One commentator counts 70 prayer requests in Psalm 119. — W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms*, 4 vols. in 1 (1948; reprint, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973), 3/178.
 - Consider the prayers of the psalmist in this stanza:
 - ✓ *He prays for fellow believers* to be glad that he waits for (has hope in) God's Word (v. 74) and that his faith will encourage them to follow his example (v. 79).
 - ✓ *He prays for evil doers* to be put to shame (v. 78).
 - ✓ *He prays for himself* that God's loyal love will comfort him (v. 76), that he will experience God's life-sustaining compassion (v. 77), and that his heart will be blameless in keeping God's Word (v. 80).

XI. Keeping Oriented According to Yahweh's Word (vv. 81–88) [*Kaph*]

Key verse: v. 88

- **v. 81** “languishes”
 - In the Hebrew this is the first word in the verse and it begins with the letter *kaph*. A form of *kalah* occurs again as the first word in verse 82 (“fails”) and as the second word in verse 87. A similar sounding word “all” (*kol*) is the first word of verse 86.
 - *Kalah* means “come to an end,” “stop,” or “be finished,” then to “vanish away” or “perish.” When we say, “I’m finished,” to mean that we are done in, destroyed, or dying, it is very similar. Since this word characterizes the stanza’s tone, we can sense the psalmist’s dire circumstances.
- **v. 84** The Psalmist’s Complaint
 - This verse is the first in Psalm 119 not to include mention of God’s Word. Such an omission highlights the psalmist’s circumstances.
 - ✓ “Judgment” in this verse is not a reference to God’s Word, although some commentators count it as such.
 - “How many are the days of Your servant” expresses an implied answer that his days are indeed few. If God does not act quickly to deal with the psalmist’s persecutors, it will be too late.
 - In this stanza, near the center of Psalm 119, the distressed psalmist pours out his prayer for deliverance from his dire circumstances.
 - ✓ His soul languishes (v. 81).
 - ✓ His eyes fail (v. 82).
 - ✓ His body ages like a wineskin hanging in smoke (v. 83).
 - ✓ His life is quickly slipping away (v. 84).
 - ✓ His life is threatened by the traps of the arrogant (v. 85).
 - ✓ His persecutors wield lies against him (v. 86).
 - ✓ His life has almost been destroyed (v. 87).

XII. Living through Yahweh's Precepts (vv. 89–96) [*Lamedh*]

Key verse: v. 89

- **v. 89** “Forever”
 - “Forever” is the first word of this stanza.
 - Hounded by unanswered questions (cp. vv. 82 and 84 in the preceding stanza) and unrelieved persecution (cp. vv. 84–87), the psalmist seeks stability. He finds it in the eternal Word of God.
- **v. 90** “Your faithfulness”
 - Some commentators include this term among those referring to God’s Word. However, this verse is actually the second verse in Psalm 119 not to have a direct reference to the Word of God.
 - “Faithfulness” is one of God’s eternal attributes — He is always faithful and true. The Hebrew word is related to “Amen.”
- **v. 90** “throughout all generations”
 - This phrase starts with a *lamedh* and begins this verse. Two verses in a row focus on the concept of infinity.
 - With such phraseology the psalmist continues to depict permanence — first with reference to God’s Word and then to God’s faithfulness.

- By contrast, the psalmist himself might have quickly perished without that permanence (v. 92).
- **v. 93** “never”
 - This is the exact same Hebrew word that is translated “Forever” in verse 89. In this verse it is also the first word. In this fashion the two verses introduce the two halves of the stanza.
 - The two uses of this Hebrew word are counterparts: the psalmist is determined that God’s Word will be settled permanently in his heart and mind, just as God has settled His Word permanently in heaven.
- **v. 96** “a limit to all perfection”
 - The Hebrew word for “perfection” occurs only here. It has two potential meanings:
 - ✓ Completeness of knowledge — meaning that the psalmist’s understanding is limited as compared to God’s Word.
 - ✓ Completeness which is perfection — meaning that everything apart from God is finite, limited, incomplete.
 - The second meaning is preferable since verse 96 probably echoes the concept expressed in the first verses of the stanza (vv. 89–91). The “all” could be a reference to “all things” in God’s created universe (see v. 91). As marvelous as God’s creation is, its perfection is superseded by His Word.

XIII. Mastering Understanding through Yahweh’s Precepts (vv. 97–104) [*Mem*] Key verse: v. 97

- **v. 97** “O how I love Your law!”
 - This stanza of the psalm has been described as “a quiet interlude without petition, meditating on the Torah as the source of true wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–25) and singing its praises.” — Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 143.
 - It focuses upon what God’s Word accomplishes for believers:
 - ✓ It attracts their love and gives them delight, resulting in their meditation upon it (vv. 97, 103).
 - ✓ It instills wisdom (v. 98).
 - ✓ It gives insight and understanding (vv. 99–100, 104).
 - ✓ It provides direction, resulting in restraining them from sin (vv. 101–102).
 - ✓ It initiates a personal relationship with God Himself (v. 102).
 - This stanza teaches that there is no higher education than what the Word of God imparts:
 - ✓ A Higher Love: Scripture Provides a Grand Object (v. 97).
 - ✓ A Higher Learning: Scripture Provides Greater Wisdom (vv. 98–100).
 - ✓ A Higher Leading: Scripture Provides a Greater Way (vv. 101–102).
 - ✓ A Higher Loathing: Scripture Provides a Grand Obsession (vv. 103–104).
- **v. 98** “wiser than my enemies”
 - What is biblical wisdom? It is right thinking leading to right believing, resulting in right living.
- **v. 104** “I hate every false way”
 - This stanza began with a declaration of love for God’s Word and concludes with a declaration of hatred for every evil path (see comment on v. 9 for *’orach*; cp. v. 29).

XIV. Negating Affliction by Yahweh's Ordinances (vv. 105–112) [*Nun*]

Key verse: v. 105

- **v. 105** “lamp”
 - In most Israelite households the lamp consisted of a small clay dish like receptacle filled with olive oil. Normally the dish was pinched at one end to form a kind of spout into which they inserted a wick. Sometimes lamps would possess as many as four different spouts to multiply the burning wicks and the light they provided. A one-wick lamp produces as much light as one candle.
- **v. 109** “My life is continually in my hand”
 - English may have borrowed this phraseology from the Bible. It appears to have arisen from the concept that what we carry in our hand can easily slip from our grasp. In other words, the psalmist thinks that his life is at risk and his situation precarious. Verse 110 confirms the peril.
 - This stanza began with the psalmist's feet (v. 105), continues to his mouth (v. 108), then his hands (v. 109), and concludes with his heart (vv. 111, 112).

XV. Obtaining Comfort through Yahweh's Statutes (vv. 113–120) [*s, Samekh*]

Key verse: v. 116

- **v. 113** “those who are double-minded”
 - “Double-minded” is a Hebrew word used only here in the OT. It means “divided” or “disunited,” incapable being wholly committed.
 - Note the characteristics of the wicked in this stanza:
 - ✓ They are double-minded (v. 113).
 - ✓ They are doers of evil (v. 115).
- **v. 113** “I love Your law”
 - This stanza is nearly bracketed by the psalmist's declaration of love for God's Word (vv. 113 and 119).
 - Note the contrast between hatred for evil and love for the Word (cp. v. 104). The psalmist knows that what we love determines what we hate.
- **v. 116** “Sustain me . . . my hope”
 - “Sustain” (“support” or “help”) is from the same Hebrew root as the name of the Hebrew letter employed as the first letter in each verse of this stanza.
 - “My hope” employs a rare word for “hope,” which occurs only here and in Psalm 146:5. The word possesses an air of an expectancy that anticipates proof or evidence that the hope is realizable.
- **v. 120** “My flesh trembles for fear of You”
 - “My flesh trembles” depicts what we refer to as “goose bumps” or as “my flesh creeps.” In Job 4:15 the term is used of making the hair stand on end or bristle because of fear.
 - Love for the Lord's Word is the topic at the beginning of this stanza. The psalmist fears the judgment of the God Who is his protection and security.
 - Placing loving God alongside fearing Him “is a healthy recognition that to be committed to God brings with it awesome responsibilities which must never be taken lightly. God asks for an exclusive loyalty” — Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 400.

XVI. Praying in accord with Yahweh's Word (vv. 121–128) [*Ayin*]

Key verse: v. 123

- **vv. 121–122** No word for the Word
 - Some commentators choose to take “justice” in verse 121 as a reference to the Word. However, like verse 84, the overall statement makes it clear that it is not. All commentators recognize that a reference to the Word is absent in verse 122.
 - The absence of references to the Word in the first two verses of the stanza sets the stage for the psalmist's expressive statement in verse 123.
- **v. 122** “Your servant”
 - This phrase is key to this stanza (vv. 122, 124, 125). See comment on verse 17.
 - What characteristics of servanthood does this stanza reveal?
 - ✓ Acting with justice and righteousness (v. 121a).
 - ✓ Depending upon his Lord (vv. 121b, 122, 126).
 - ✓ Longing for his Lord's work and word (v. 123).
 - ✓ Being taught by his Lord (vv. 124–125).
 - ✓ Loving His Lord's Word (vv. 127–128a).
 - ✓ Hating anything contrary to His Lord and His Word (v. 128b).
- **v. 123** “My eyes fail”
 - “My eyes” is the first word in the verse and “eye” is the meaning of the Hebrew letter's name (‘*ayin*). As in verse 116, the psalmist cleverly employs the pertinent Hebrew letter's root or name to introduce the key verse in its stanza.

XVII. Quenching One's Thirst with Yahweh's Word (vv. 129–136) [*Pe*]

Key verse: v. 131

- **v. 130** “The unfolding of Your words”
 - Literally, “the opening” or “the door.” In ancient Israelite homes there were few windows. If they lived in tents, their situation was basically the same. Most interior illumination during the day came from the light entering the open door.
 - Compare verse 18 with verses 129–130.
- **v. 132** “Turn to me and be gracious to me”
 - Verses 132–135 express a series of prayer requests:
 - ✓ Give me Your gracious favor (v. 132; cp. 25:16, an acrostic at the same Hebrew letter; 86:16).
 - ✓ Guide and stabilize me — steady my steps (v. 133a).
 - ✓ Preserve me from iniquity (v. 133b; cp. 19:13).
 - ✓ Deliver me from oppression (v. 134).
 - ✓ Give me Your blessing (v. 135a).
 - ✓ Teach me (v. 135b).

XVIII. Revealing Yahweh's Righteousness by His Word (vv. 137–144) [*Tsadhe*]

Key verse: v. 137

- **v. 137** “Righteous”
 - The very first word of this stanza establishes the theme of divine righteousness (vv. 137, 138, 142, 144). Scripture reflects the character of its ultimate Author.

- **v. 137** “upright”
 - God’s Word possesses a number of attributes that the psalmist identifies in this stanza:
 - ✓ It is “upright” — meaning “right,” “straight,” “honest” (v. 137).
 - ✓ It is righteous (vv. 138a, 144).
 - ✓ It is faithful (v. 138b).
 - ✓ It is “pure” — referring to its lack of any impurities, “refined” or “tested” (v. 140).
 - ✓ It is “truth” (v. 142).

XIX. Seeking Yahweh’s Help According to His Word (vv. 145–152) [*Qoph*]

Key verse: v. 149

- **v. 145** “I cried with all my heart”
 - Verses 145 and 146 begin with “I cried” (Hebrew, *qara’ti*). In a similar vein, verse 149 commences with “voice” (Hebrew, *qol*).
 - **Prayer should be earnest, wholehearted.** If we doubt that God will answer our prayer, we will not “receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6–8).
- **v. 146** “save me”
 - Earnest prayer is often pithy rather than prolonged, vital rather than verbose. Simple prayers get directly to the heart of the matter.
- **v. 147** “I rise before dawn”
 - Verses 147, 148, and 152 all start with some form of the Hebrew root *qdm*.
 - **Prayer must be continual as well as earnest.** The psalmist took every opportunity to pray — whether in the quiet before dawn at the beginning of his day or in the silent hours of the night before he fell asleep.
 - *What times of the day can you reclaim for praying?*

XX. Tossing Oneself on Yahweh’s Mercy by His Word (vv. 153–160) [*Resh*]

Key verse: v. 156

- **v. 153** “Look”
 - Five rapid fire imperatives dominate the start of this stanza, stressing the psalmist’s sense of urgency:
 - ✓ *Regard* (v. 153a, “Look”)
 - ✓ *Rescue* (v. 153b)
 - ✓ *Redress* (v. 154a, “Plead”)
 - ✓ *Redeem* (v. 154a)
 - ✓ *Revive* (v. 154b)
 - The *Resh* stanza depicts God in the following roles:
 - ✓ Caretaker (v. 153a)
 - ✓ Savior (v. 153b)
 - ✓ Law Giver (v. 153b)
 - ✓ Advocate (v. 154a)
 - ✓ Kinsman-Redeemer (v. 154a)
 - ✓ Life Giver (vv. 154b, 156b, 159b)
 - ✓ Judge (v. 156b, “ordinances”)
 - ✓ Mercy Giver (v. 156a)
 - ✓ Covenant Keeper (“LORD,” vv. 156, 159)
 - ✓ Teacher (v. 159, “Your precepts”)
 - ✓ Loyal Lord (v. 159, “Your lovingkindness”)
 - ✓ Truth Speaker (v. 160)

- **v. 153** “my affliction”
 - As the psalmist’s prayers become more urgent, he draws some contrasts in this stanza between **His situation** and **the Lord’s supply**:
 - ✓ “my affliction” (v. 153) “Your mercies” (v. 156)
 - ✓ “my cause” (v. 154) “Your lovingkindness” (v. 159)
 - ✓ “my persecutors” (v. 157) “Your word is truth” (v. 160)
 - Our troubles will never transcend God’s treasures.
- **v. 154** “Plead my cause and redeem me”
 - First the psalmist requests that God act as his defense attorney in a figurative court setting. The phraseology identifies a lawsuit intended to enforce covenant stipulations and terms.
 - “Redeem” is the verb (*ga’al*) related to the noun “kinsman-redeemer” (*go’el*; Ruth 2:20; 3:12; 4:4–6, 9–14). Such redemption involves a close relationship, not just the payment of a redemption price (a commercial concept represented by a different Hebrew word, *padah*, in v. 134).
- **v. 154** “Revive me”
 - The three occurrences of this prayer act almost like a refrain within this stanza (vv. 154, 156, 159; cp. vv. 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149).
 - “Revive” means to “keep alive” or to “give life.”
 - Who or what threatens the psalmist’s life and well-being?
 - ✓ affliction (v. 153)
 - ✓ the wicked (v. 155)
 - ✓ persecutors and adversaries (v. 157)
 - ✓ treacherous people (v. 158)
 - Consider a potential chiasmic structure in this stanza:

Look, and give me life (vv. 153–154)!

The wicked care nothing for your word (v. 155);
yet there are many compassions,
so give me life (v. 156)!

Still, there are many foes (v. 157);
the faithless care nothing for your word (v. 158);
look, and give me life (vv. 159–160).

— Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 73–150*, 216
- **v. 156** “Great are Your mercies”
 - Literally, “Many are Your mercies” — note the plural. “Many” at the start of verse 157 is the same Hebrew word translated “great” here.
- **v. 160** “The sum of Your word”
 - Literally, “the beginning of Your word.” In this way the psalmist conveys the concept of “from start (to finish)” — that is, “all.”
 - Psalm 139:17 employs the same phraseology: “How vast is the sum of them!” (lit., “How vast is the head of them”).

XXI. Uniting Hope with Love for Yahweh’s Word (vv. 161–168) [*Shin/Sin*]

Key verse: v. 166

- **v. 161** “Princes persecute me”
 - This reference to “princes” (cp. v. 23) reveals the source of some of the psalmist’s sufferings. It is difficult to understand how this might fit David (if he

is the psalmist), unless it is a reference to Saul pursuing him (1 Sam 20–26) or to his exile because of Absalom (2 Sam 15–17).

■ Several pictures of the psalmist occur in this stanza:

- ✓ He is a *persecuted* man (v. 161).
- ✓ He is a *praising* man (vv. 162–164).
- ✓ He is a *peaceful* man (v. 165).
- ✓ He is a *patient* man (v. 166).
- ✓ He is a *passionate* man (v. 167).
- ✓ He is a *perfect* man (v. 168).

— Phillips, *Exploring Psalms*, 2:411

• **v. 161** “my heart stands in awe”

- Literally, “my heart is terrified” or “my heart trembles” or “my heart is startled (with horror).”
- Note the psalmist’s responses to God’s Word:
 - ✓ He trembles at the Word (v. 161).
 - ✓ He rejoices at the Word (v. 162).
 - ✓ He loves the Word (vv. 163, 167b).
 - ✓ He obeys the Word (vv. 166, 167a, 168).

• **v. 165** “great peace”

- Literally, “abundant peace” or “abundant well-being.” See comment on verse 156. Compare Psalm 37:11 (“abundant prosperity”).
- Such a statement reminds current readers of Philippians 4:7.

• **vv. 167–168** “keeps . . . keep”

- At the close of the stanza the psalmist stresses obedience to the Word of God.

XXII. Voicing One’s Plea According to Yahweh’s Word (vv. 169–176) [*Taw*]

Key verse: v. 174

• **v. 169** “Let my cry come before You”

- Literally, “come near before You” — compare 1 Kings 8:59.
 - ✓ The preceding stanza closes with a reference to God’s presence (v. 168, “all my ways are before You”). The psalmist opens his final stanza with that same sense of divine presence (vv. 169–170).
 - ✓ The two phrases employed in these three consecutive verses occur nowhere else in Psalm 119.
- In this final stanza the psalmist voices several prayers:
 - ✓ LORD, hear me (vv. 169a, 170a).
 - ✓ LORD, give me understanding (v. 169b).
 - ✓ LORD, deliver me (v. 170b; the only occurrence of this specific prayer in the Hebrew of Ps 119).
 - ✓ LORD, let me praise You (vv. 171–172).
 - ✓ LORD, help me (vv. 173, 175b).
 - ✓ LORD, revive me (v. 175a).
 - ✓ LORD, seek me (v. 176).
- This stanza summarizes the whole of the psalm, reverberating with previous prayers and pronouncements.
 - ✓ Praying for understanding (v. 169; cf. vv. 27, 34, 73, 125, 144).
 - ✓ “according to Your word” (v. 169; cf. vv. 9, 25, 28, 65, 107).
 - ✓ “according to Your word” (v. 170, a different Hebrew word than that used in v. 169; cf. vv. 41, 58, 76, 116).

- ✓ Reference to divine teaching (v. 171; cf. vv. 7, 12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 71, 73, 99, 108, 124, 135).
 - ✓ “Your statutes” (v. 171, masculine form; cf. vv. 5, 8, 12, 26, 33, 54, 64, 68, 71, 83, 112, 135, 145, 155) — a phrase occurring only in Psalm 119 and 1 Chronicles 29:19 in the OT.
 - ✓ “all Your commandments” (v. 172; cf. vv. 6, 86).
 - ✓ “are righteous” (v. 172; cf. vv. 75, 138, 144).
 - ✓ “help” (vv. 173, 175; cf. v. 86).
 - ✓ “I have chosen” (v. 173; cf. v. 30).
 - ✓ “I long” (v. 174; cf. v. 40).
 - ✓ “for Your salvation” (v. 174; cf. vv. 123, 166).
 - ✓ “Your law is my delight” (v. 174; cf. vv. 77, 92; cp. vv. 24, 143).
 - ✓ “my soul” (v. 175; cf. vv. 20, 25, 28, 81, 109, 129, 167).
 - ✓ “live” (v. 175; cf. vv. 17, 25, 37, 40, 50, 77, 88, 93, 107, 116, 144, 149, 154, 156, 159).
 - ✓ “praise You” (v. 175; cf. v. 164).
 - ✓ “gone astray” (v. 176; cf. v. 110).
 - ✓ “lost” (v. 176; cf. vv. 92 [“perished”], 95 [“destroy”]).
 - ✓ “Your servant” (v. 176; cf. vv. 16, 17, 23, 65, 84, 122, 124, 125).
 - ✓ “I do not forget Your” Word (v. 176; cf. vv. 61, 83, 109, 141, 153).
- **v. 173** “I have chosen Your precepts”
 - Choosing God’s Word and God’s way over all others reveals the true heart of the psalmist. See comments on verses 29, 30.
 - *What choices did you make this week?*
 - **v. 176** “I have gone astray like a lost sheep”
 - Compare Isaiah 53:6 and Luke 15:1–7.
 - “In what sense can one who has so repeatedly declared his love of God’s word, who has asserted that he has kept God’s precepts, make this confession?” — Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:367.
 - “This could be the psalmist’s confession of a sense of failure in keeping all of God’s law. Or the metaphor may depict defenselessness, that like a lost sheep, the writer needs the protection of the shepherd (Ps 23; Isa 53:6; Jer 50:6; Ezek 34:16). Yet the final word is not that of failure, but the affirmation of loyalty of intention and purpose: *I do not forget your commandments!*” — Waltner, *Psalms*, 586.
 - Psalm 119 ends on a note of humility and hope.
 - Psalm 119 began with believers wholeheartedly seeking God (v. 2) and concludes with a prayer that God would seek one of His servants.

Friday
 9:00–10:00 PM
Psalms of Ascents

The Psalms of Ascents — A Journey of Faith

1.0 Introducing the Psalms of Ascents (Psalms 120–134)

- “One aspect of *world* that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by thirty-second commercials. Our sense of reality has been flattened by thirty-page abridgements.
 “It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to have been born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.
 “Religion in our time has been captured by the tourist mindset. Religion is understood as a visit to an attractive site to be made when we have adequate leisure. For some it is a weekly jaunt to church. For others, occasional visits to special services. Some, with a bent for religious entertainment and sacred diversion, plan their lives around special events like retreats, rallies and conferences. We go to see a new personality, to hear a new truth, to get a new experience and so, somehow, expand our otherwise humdrum lives. . . . We’ll try anything—until something else comes along.” — Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 11–12.

2.0 Understanding the Psalms of Ascents

Notes

- The psalm heading (“Song of ascents”) provides, at minimum, a glimpse at the ultimate use to which Israelite worship appointed the psalm.
 - Some interpreters, like Luther, believe that “ascents” refers to a higher key in which musicians were to play and sing them. Others refer to an increasing volume, starting softly and growing louder.
 - Lightfoot, Thirtle, Bullinger, Scroggie, and Phillips associate these psalms with the sun drawing back ten degrees on the sundial when God granted Hezekiah a 15-year extension of life (Isaiah 38).
 - ✓ “These fifteen ‘Songs of Degrees’ correspond to the number of years added to Hezekiah’s life. He himself wrote ten of them (corresponding to the number of degrees the shadow went back on the sundial); the other five were selected from extant hymns of David and Solomon and added to the collection. . . . A study of the incidents recorded by the Holy Spirit reveals many points of comparison (*The Companion Bible* lists fifteen) between Hezekiah’s experience and the theme of these songs.” — John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms: An Expository Commentary*, 2 vols., John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 2:428.
 - Within Psalms 120–134 some scholars identify a poetic steplike parallelism wherein a term in one line is echoed in the following line. They associate the psalms’ heading (“Song of Ascents”) with that phenomenon.

- ✓ Some of these psalms lack this type of parallelism and it is found in psalms outside this collection of fifteen.
 - Other interpreters associate these psalms with the exiles' return to Judah from Babylon (cf. Ezra 7:9, "For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon").
 - ✓ However, some of the psalm headings themselves appear to discourage associating these songs solely with the return from Babylon (e.g., 122; 124; 127; 131; 133).
 - One scholar parallels these fifteen psalms with the fifteen Hebrew words of the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24–26. He takes the Psalms of Ascents as an elaboration of the benediction's key terms. According to Jewish tradition, worshippers would pronounce the Aaronic blessing on the steps of the Temple porch. Leon J. Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and Priestly Blessing," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955): 33–36.
 - ✓ The tradition is much later than the biblical psalms in this collection.
 - In Jewish tradition Levites sang the fifteen songs of ascent on the fifteen steps leading from the Temple's Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites.
 - ✓ The existence of the fifteen steps is hypothetical and unproven.
 - ✓ Although pilgrims may have employed these psalms while ascending to the Temple, some of the psalms obviously were not composed specifically for that purpose.
 - Most commentators, however, are of the opinion that pilgrims to the annual festivals in Jerusalem sang these psalms as they ascended to Jerusalem and the Temple (cp. 2 Kgs 23:2; Neh 12:37; Pss 42:4; 122:1–2; 132:7).
 - ✓ The feasts of Passover (Unleavened Bread and barley harvest, 14 Nisan), Pentecost (Weeks/First Fruits and wheat harvest, 6 Sivan), and Booths (Ingathering and fruit harvest, 15 Tishri). See Exodus 23:14–17 and Deuteronomy 16:16. See, also, David G. Barker, "'The Lord Watches over You': A Pilgrimage Reading of Psalm 121," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 606 (April 1995): 164.
 - ✓ Michael Wilcock observes that the feast of Tabernacles in 445 BC, presided over by Ezra and Nehemiah, might provide an event significant to the Psalms of Ascents: "The incident of Nehemiah 13:15–22 could date from the three or four Sabbaths between the setting up of Jerusalem's new gates (7:1–3; 13:19) and the beginning of Tabernacles. Both the people and their leaders were responsible for the sabbath-breaking that it describes. The whole community needed cleansing. But *full redemption* covers the unrighteousness of all, repeated backsliding, and every sin." — Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 73–150*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 239.
- One-third of the Psalms of Ascents include a reference to authorship in their headings (David in 122, 124, 131, and 133; and Solomon in 127).
 - Common elements shared by the Psalms of Ascents:
 - Brevity (except for Ps 132).
 - Preoccupation with Zion, Jerusalem, and the Temple.
 - Frequent references to Israel.
 - Focus on the topic of blessing (128:4, 5; 129:8; 132:15; 133:3; 134:3), peace (120:6, 7; 122:6–8; 125:5; 128:6), and good (122:9; 125:4; 128:5; 133:1).
 - Organization of the Psalms of Ascents:
 - Wilcock believes that the songs form five sets of three psalms each focusing on a theme of *distress* in the first, *power* in the second, and *security* in the third (*The Message of Psalms 73–150*, 220).

- ✓ Phillips agrees in principle, indicating that the first in each triad deals with *trouble*, the second with *trust*, and the third with *triumph* (*Exploring Psalms*, 2:428).

	I	II	III	IV	V
<i>Trouble – Problem</i>	Psalm 120 Anonymous	Psalm 123 Anonymous	Psalm 126 Anonymous Zion	Psalm 129 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Zion Blessing	Psalm 132 Anonymous Zion Blessing
<i>Trust – Power</i>	Psalm 121 Anonymous <u>Israel</u>	Psalm 124 David <u>Israel</u>	Psalm 127 Solomon Blessing	Psalm 130 Anonymous <u>Israel</u>	Psalm 133 David Zion Blessing
<i>Triumph – Protection</i>	Psalm 122 David <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem “house of the LORD”	Psalm 125 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem Zion	Psalm 128 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem Zion Blessing	Psalm 131 David <u>Israel</u>	Psalm 134 Anonymous Zion “house of the LORD” Blessing

Saturday
9:00–10:30 AM
Psalms 130 and 139

Psalm 130 — Hoping for the Morning

1.0 Introducing Psalm 130

- On the afternoon of May 1738 John Wesley had listened to and had been moved by the singing of Psalm 130 at the vespers in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. That very evening he attended a reading of Martin Luther's preface to Romans in a meeting house at Aldersgate. Unable to continue his resistance against divine revelation, Wesley believed the gospel of Jesus Christ and was wonderfully converted.
- Martin Luther had classified Psalm 130 among what he called the "Pauline Psalms," because of their emphasis on forgiveness of sins through God's grace.
- Both Psalms 130 and 131 conclude with the same exhortation, instructing Israel to "hope in the LORD" (Pss 130:7; 131:3). Both psalms also use the same poetic style in repeating their main imagery, thereby creating a greater emphasis upon the main themes and providing a potential connection between the two in terms of their arrangement within the psalms (cp. 130:6, "more than watchmen do for the morning" [twice] and 131:2, "like a young child" [twice]).
- In the Psalms of Ascents' five sets of three psalms each focusing on a theme of distress in the first, power in the second, and security in the third, Psalm 130 speaks of power. Power appears to conflict with the theme of hope, which is evident from the repetition of terms for hope in Psalm 130. However, it is hope that provides the pilgrim with power.
- Theme of Psalm 130: *Troubled travelers place their hope in God for forgiveness.*

2.0 Understanding Psalm 130

2.1 Outline

Psalm Heading (v. 1a)

- I. A Prayer for Gracious Forgiveness (vv. 1b–6)
- II. A Promise of Abundant Redemption (vv. 7–8)

2.2 Notes

vv. 1–2 *The Psalmist's Petition*

Verse 1 depicts the psalmist floundering in deep water (cf. Ps 69:1–2, 14–15). Terror and despair grip his heart as he anticipates a death that he can only associate with death by drowning. His circumstances are serious, but their identity remains unspecified. Over his head in trouble, he cries out to the Lord and pleads for grace (v. 2). Since God is sovereign over all circumstances, He is able to answer the psalmist's petition for unmerited divine favor.

- **v. 1** "Out of the depths"
 - The opening words, "out of the depths," point to the valleys of life that sooner or later we all pass through because of our occasional sinful behavior.
 - The psalmist feels pressed down, afflicted, oppressed. His circumstances are demoralizing and debilitating. He is on the borders of life, far from the safe haven of comfort and rest.

- The paradox is that no matter how lonely and empty the psalmist feels, he knows that God is not far away, because he has already experienced His mercy and forgiveness in the past.
- These kinds of experiences often mean that we trudge on, waiting in hope for God to forgive us again.
- It's sometimes like whiling away the endless hours of a long night, ever hoping for the darkness to end and the sun of healing to arise.
- **vv. 1, 2 "LORD . . . Lord"**
 - The psalmist employs three pairs of the divine names "LORD" (*Yahweh*) and "Lord" (*Adonai*). Each of the three pairs occur in the same order (vv. 1b, 2a, 3, 5a, 6a).
 - Following these three pairs, verse 7 closes the psalm's patterned usage of divine names by repeating "LORD" twice, signaling the psalm's climax.
 - Verses 1b–2a contains two parallel lines that mirror each other in inverse order:

A	Out of the depths		B	I have cried to You,		C	O LORD.
						C'	Lord,
			B'	hear			
	A'	my voice!					
 - In this kind of mirror structure focus is on the central elements. Thus a God-centered theme is apparent (C and C'). Two divine titles draw attention to the twin facts that God has a covenant relationship to His people ("LORD") and that He is master of His creation ("Lord").
- **v. 2 "voice"**
 - At the ends of the two lines of verse 2 the repetition of "voice" might indicate that the psalmist verbalized his pleading, rather than praying silently.

vv. 3–4 *The Psalmist's Peril*

Assurance of deliverance or forgiveness is not part of the psalmist's thinking at this point in the psalm. He is convinced that God knows all and will not overlook his sins. God will hold him accountable; his sin will not go unpunished.

- **v. 3 "iniquities"**
 - Verses 3–4 focus primarily on the problem of sin, while verses 5–8 proclaim the psalmist's trust in the Lord to resolve this serious spiritual issue.
 - The Lord's solution includes forgiveness of sins (vv. 3–4) and the granting of mercy (vv. 7–8; cp. v. 2).
 - The repetition of "iniquities" (vv. 3 and 8) brackets verses 3–8 in a way that provides cohesion for that section of the psalm.
- **v. 4 "there is forgiveness with You"**
 - This is the only occurrence in Psalms of the Hebrew noun "forgiveness," although the corresponding Hebrew verb ("forgive" or "pardon") appears in 25:11, 86:5, and 103:3.
 - Many of us expect confession of sin to be painless and forgiveness instantaneous. We seem not to realize that sin may have lasting natural consequences.
 - Indeed, we tend to forget that sin can be so offensive that the offended party needs to hear more than a few words of confession.

- ✓ Consider a child who disobeys his father and throws a ball in the house, only to shatter the front picture window or break an antique lamp. “Hey, Dad, I’m sorry” probably will not be sufficient to appease the judge in this family court.
- Psalm 130 focuses on the concept of forgiveness, because it is the basis upon which even physical deliverance occurs.
 - ✓ A temporary deliverance from present danger has no lasting value if the individual has not established a spiritual relationship lasting far beyond this world’s circumstances.
- **v. 4** “That You may be feared”
 - On the human side of things, forgiveness is the ultimate goal for which the psalmist hopes and waits.
 - On the divine side, however, the ultimate aim is that God might be feared.

vv. 5–6 *The Psalmist’s Proclamation*

Because he has not yet experienced either the Lord’s forgiveness for the sin(s) that resulted in his current distress or deliverance from it, the psalmist waits expectantly for any word from God that might indicate an answer to prayer (v. 5; cp. 40:1).

- **v. 5** “I wait . . . wait”
 - Rapid repetition of this word (twice in the space of three Hebrew words) draws attention to the concept as a key theme in Psalm 130.
 - In this psalm two themes run side by side: waiting and forgiveness. The psalmist’s point is worthy of thoughtful consideration.
 - ✓ How and under what circumstances does God forgive?
 - ✓ Might He delay forgiveness while we learn the lesson of our sinfulness?
 - ✓ Does He desire more from us than mere words of confession?
- **v. 5** “hope”
 - “Hope” (vv. 5c, 7a) is virtually synonymous with the term translated “wait.” These words provide a fourfold emphasis on the concept of hope or expectation, making “wait” or “hope” a theme in the psalm.
- **v. 6** “More than the watchmen for the morning”
 - This might indicate “that the petitioner sang the song at night” while “waiting for Yahweh’s intervention, which . . . occurs mostly in the early morning.” — Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. by Hilton C. Oswald, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 465.
 - His night of waiting seems unending, but he knows that morning will come.
 - ✓ Actually, the waiting might be for days upon end, even months. Solutions for the messes our sinful behavior causes are rarely quick and easy. But, when we give ourselves into God’s keeping, He will bring about our deliverance in His perfect timing. He is a forgiving and merciful God.
 - Watchmen stand guard duty for a certain portion of the night. They are aware of the passing of time; citizens might even ask them the hour (cf. Isa 21:11–12). When the light of dawn finally comes, the watchman realizes that the time of real danger has passed and that another will come to replace him. Anyone who has stood guard duty in the last hours of the night knows the sweet relief that morning light brings. The psalmist awaits deliverance with the same expectant hope.
 - ✓ Repetition displays unity within the psalm. This appears to be the reason that “watchmen” occurs twice (v. 6) — in order to echo the first use of the same Hebrew

root word translated as “mark” in verse 3. This helps unify the psalm for the original audience and perhaps provides an aid for remembering the psalm’s wording.

vv. 7–8 *The Psalmist’s Paranesis and Prophecy*

Israel must wait for the Lord, because He exercises “lovingkindness” (= “loyal love”) toward His people (v. 7a–b). God has not abandoned them, nor will He neglect to fulfill His covenant with them. Indeed, He will deliver Israel completely from their sins (v. 8). Just as He will deliver the psalmist from his physical distress, the covenant Lord will deliver His people from their greater spiritual distress.

- **v. 7 “O Israel, hope in the LORD”**
 - The psalmist exhorts the community to wait for the Lord. He has worked through his problem, understood the divine solution (which includes waiting), and exhorts Israel to follow his example.
 - They must be willing to wait patiently until their circumstances turn for the better.
 - ✓ The wilderness wanderings lasted for two generations.
 - ✓ The exile in Babylon lasted for seventy years.
 - ✓ Many Israelites never saw the time of inheritance or the time of restoration.
 - Confession of sin did not bring about immediate possession of the land nor restoration to the land. Complete deliverance is yet to come.
 - Meanwhile the believer must focus on his or her Deliverer — rely on Him (v. 5), wait for Him (v. 5), yearn for Him (v. 6), and hope in Him (v. 7).
- **v. 7 “with Him is abundant redemption”**
 - Psalm 130’s key interpretive issue involves the understanding of “redemption/redeem” (vv. 7, 8).
 - ✓ Are the psalmist’s statements merely references to divine rescue from earthly troubles, or does the psalmist intend that his readers understand them as indications of spiritual salvation—forgiveness of sins?
 - ✓ This Hebrew term for “redeem” has a commercial background (namely, making a ransom payment or providing a redemption price). Here it implies deliverance by means of a payment. The psalm includes no identification of the form of payment, who paid it, or to whom it was paid.
 - ✓ “Abundant” or even “plenteous redemption.” The Hebrew noun is somewhat rare in Scripture, occurring only here, Psalm 111:9; Exodus 8:19; and Isaiah 50:2.
 - ✓ The double occurrence of “redeem” brings the psalm to a close with a focus on the deliverance “From all his iniquities.” This prepositional phrase makes it clear that the psalmist does not intend that his readers think only of deliverance from physical circumstances and conditions. This is a spiritual matter involving all of Israel’s iniquities or guilt.
 - ✓ Such a focus is the basis for the synagogue’s selection of Psalm 130 as a reading for the Day of Atonement.
 - The Hebrew noun “redemption” is somewhat rare in Scripture, occurring only here, Psalm 111:9; Exodus 8:19; and Isaiah 50:2.
- **v. 7 “abundant redemption”**
 - “The expression ‘full redemption’ relates his favor to many different circumstances as well as the many objects of his grace.” — Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:802.
 - “Coverdale’s beautiful expression, *plenteous redemption*, adopted by AV, RV, has been happily retained in RSV; it shines very brightly against the darkness of

the psalm's beginning." — Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: A Commentary on Books III–V of the Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 447.

- Even the ancient Jewish Targum employs “plenteous redemption” as the translation.
- **v. 8 “He will redeem Israel”**
 - Is the declaration historical (“He has redeemed”), prophetic (“He will *soon* redeem”), or eschatological (“He will *ultimately* redeem”)?
 - ✓ The historical viewpoint might point to the people of Israel coming to the Temple to praise the Lord for their deliverance from the Babylonian captivity.
 - ✓ The prophetic interpretation might represent Israel as performing an annual pilgrimage. At that time, they would be hoping for deliverance to come from some unidentified enemy or catastrophe (such as a locust plague or famine).
 - ✓ The eschatological view would best apply to a distant expectation that God will ultimately fulfill all of His covenant promises for a permanent state of peace and righteousness. Such a state could only come about under the benevolent and just reign of King Messiah.
 - “The declaration has an eschatological reach unusual in the Old Testament. Psalm 25:22 prays for the LORD ‘to redeem Israel from all its troubles,’ a prayer that in its similarity with the declaration reminds us that redemption includes liberation not only from guilt but also from the whole imprisoning network of sin’s effects on life.” — James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 407.
 - Psalm 130 might look to more than one reference or setting.
 - ✓ First, the psalmist speaks of his immediate distress (unspecified circumstances) that is the consequence of his sinful behavior.
 - ✓ Second, the psalmist might speak of Israel’s eventual deliverance from the Babylonian exile.
 - ✓ Lastly, such deliverances might be the springboard to consideration of an eschatological deliverance in the distant future.

Psalm 139 — Neither Wings of Light nor Cloak of Night Can Separate Me from God

1.0 Introducing Psalm 139

- Ibn Ezra (Jewish rabbi in the Middle Ages) declared that Psalm 139 is the crown of all the Psalms, being unequalled in the five books of the Psalter.
- Psalm 139 is the second of the Psalter’s last eight psalms by David (Pss 138–145).
- Compare Psalm 138:6 with 139:2 and 138:7 with 139:10.
- David’s intimate relationship to God reveals his complete trust in the God who is everywhere, is all-knowing, is all-powerful, and who created him in his mother’s womb.
- “How can a God so immense be so immanent? Such is the mind-boggling yet soul-comforting reality about our infinite yet intimate God.” — Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 76–150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006), 333.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 139

2.1 Outline

- I. Deeds I Used to Do, I No Longer Do (vv. 1–6)
- II. Places I Used to Go, I No Longer Go (vv. 7–12)

III. Thoughts I Used to Think, I No Longer Think (vv. 13–18)

IV. Companions I Used to Have, I No Longer Have (vv. 19–24)

Each of the 4 sections of the psalm include 4 verses of description and 2 verses of reflection (vv. 1–4 and 5–6; vv. 7–10 and 11–12; vv. 13–16 and 17–18; vv. 19–22 and 23–24).

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “You have searched me and known *me*”
 - “Why would someone speak of Yhwh’s knowing everything about them? Jeremiah does so when under attack from people, in the conviction that Yhwh knows he is faithful and will therefore act against his attackers (Jer. 11:20; 12:3). Psalm 17:3 speaks in similar terms of a confidence that Yhwh will find the suppliant truly committed, which is part of the basis for an appeal for Yhwh’s deliverance from attackers (cf. 26:2–3; 44:21).” — John Goldingay, *Psalms: Volume 3, Psalms 90–150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 629.
 - See Psalm 11:4–5; Job 7:17–18; Jeremiah 17:9–10.
 - Writers use this same language elsewhere in Scripture in pleas of innocence, confession of sin, and as an expression of trust (cp. Pss 44:20–21; 69:5; 142:3).
- **v. 2** “You know”
 - Emphatic personal pronoun: “You, yes, You” or “You alone.”
 - The same construction occurs again in verse 13.
- **vv. 2–4** Divine Omniscience
 - God knows the psalmist’s thoughts, ways, and words.
 - “Omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence are often used as expository language for the three sections of part one [vv. 1–18]. But it must be done with care lest this conceptualization becomes a knowing about God without a being known, accompanied, created, and sustained by God.” — James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 427.
- **v. 3** “scrutinize”
 - Literally, “winnow” or “sift.” God can discern between the wheat and chaff in our lives.
- **v. 6** “It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it”
 - “What he is saying is this: ‘I thank you that I have a Master whom I cannot comprehend.’ . . . What he is speaking of here is God’s omnipresence; and he is showing that this is the very thing that he does not understand, namely, how God is present everywhere.” — Chrysostom, “Against the Anomoeans,” 1.24–25, cited in Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, ed., *Psalms 51–150*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 385.
- **vv. 7–10** Divine Omnipresence
 - David is not really attempting to flee from God. He does not fear God’s presence—he finds comfort in knowing that God knows everything about him and is everywhere he goes.
 - Some, however, rightly fear a God who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.
 - Compare Proverbs 15:11; Jeremiah 23:24; Amos 9:2–4; Obadiah 4; and Hebrews 4:12–13.

- **v. 9** “take the wings of the dawn”
 - “Though one should fly with the speed of light, he could find no recess where he would be beyond the reach of divine power.” — John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 5 vols. (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948–49), 5:212.
 - Even moving at the speed of light to a far corner of the universe, the believer never leaves the perception, presence, power, or provision of God. God never leads where He cannot keep.
- **v. 12** “Darkness and light”
 - See Job 34:22 and John 3:19–21.
- **vv. 13–16** How do these verses relate to abortion?
 - David is not talking about abortion, but the truths in these verses have everything to do with how a believer ought to view abortion.
 - Compare Job 10:8–12.
- **v. 13** “You formed my inward parts”
 - Even in David’s time, people could no longer identify clearly with the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and their preservation in the wilderness. But, just as all of us today, they could identify with the wonder of birth.
 - No wonder God knows me—He made me!
- **v. 14** “I am fearfully and wonderfully made”
 - Literally, “for I am fearfully wonderful.” The concise language demonstrates the emphatic declaration of wonder.
- **v. 16** “all”
 - Literally, “all of them.” The psalmist refers either to all the parts of the fetus as it is being formed in the womb or to the “days” in the next part of the verse.
 - ✓ Since “my unformed substance” (“my *golem*”) is singular and since “days” is placed first in the second half of the verse, the most likely antecedent is “days.”
 - ✓ God knows all of our days (their beginning, their number, their end, and their accomplishments)—He knew them even at the time of our conception and development within our mother’s womb.
- **v. 17** “to me”
 - Better translated as “As for me” and placed at the beginning of the verse (where it occurs in the Hebrew for emphasis).
- **v. 18** “When I awake”
 - According to one commentator, the psalmist falls asleep counting God’s thoughts concerning him. When he wakes up, he is still totally absorbed in his contemplation of God. — Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3 vols., trans. by Francis Bolton, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, F. Delitzsch and C. F. Keil (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 3:352.
 - Whether the psalmist is asleep or awake, his thoughts are occupied with his great God, his Creator, his Judge.
- **vv. 19–22** Final Thoughts
 - “[I]n the thought world of the psalms, this section is not incoherent at all, no more, for instance, than the wish for the elimination of the wicked at the end of Psalm 104 or the references to the enemies in the midst of Psalm 23’s calm expression of trust.” — Mays, *Psalms*, 428.

- See Psalm 101 for the same basic message of identification with the Lord rather than with the unrighteous.
- It is staggering to realize that some people actually hate such a wonderful and marvelous God.
- **v. 22** “I hate them with the utmost hatred”
 - The rhetorical question in verse 21 is another way of making this same declaration with equal force.
 - Read Ephesians 5:1–21 in the light of Psalm 139.
- **vv. 23–24** Back to the Beginning
 - Verses 1 and 23 form an inclusio enwrapping the entire psalm.
 - The psalmist directs his last words at himself, not at his enemies and God’s enemies. He prays that God would examine his thoughts and motives. He wants nothing in common with God’s enemies—whether in thought or in deed.
 - He prays for God to lead him “in the everlasting way” (a phrase found only here in the Bible).
 - ✓ It is the “everlasting way” because it will not be brought to an end. In contrast, the way of the wicked will come to a disastrous end.

Saturday

10:45 AM–12:00 PM

Psalms 145 and 150

Psalm 145 — David’s Final Words

1.0 Introducing Psalm 145

- A Jewish rabbi once declared that reciting this psalm three times each day guarantees a person entry into the world to come based upon the promise of God’s grace in verse 16.
 - ✓ Therefore, Psalm 145 occurs three times in the Jewish daily liturgy.
- Psalm 145 represents the final psalm attributed to David and the last of the alphabetic (acrostic) psalms in which each verse begins with consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - ✓ The 14th letter (*nun*) is missing. Some ancient versions include a verse for it.
 - ✓ Several English versions insert that verse from the ancient versions as the second half of verse 13 (NIV, ESV, RSV, NRSV, HCSB).
 - ✓ “The psalm offers praise from A to Z to God described from A to Z.”—John Goldingay, *Psalms: Volume 3, Psalms 90–150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 695.
- The Lord’s Prayer echoes a number of Psalm 145’s themes.
- Most commentators consider Psalm 145 the introduction to the *Final Hallel* (Pss 146–150).
 - ✓ “Praise” occurs only here in a psalm heading. This could be the reason why the Jews refer to the Psalter as “Praises” (*T’hillim*).
 - ✓ In Judaism commentators refer to Psalms 145–150 as “The Everyday Hallel.”—Amos Hakham, *Psalms*, 3 vols., Koschitzky Edition (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 3:450.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 145

2.1 Outline

- I.** The Psalmist Devotes Himself to Praise (vv. 1–3)
- II.** The People Devote Themselves to Praise (vv. 4–9)
- III.** The Creation Devotes Itself to Praise (vv. 10–20)

IV. The Psalmist Devotes Himself to Praise (v. 21)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “O King”
 - The LORD’s sovereignty provides the initial reason for offering Him our praise.
 - *Why does God’s kingship form a basis for our praise and worship?*
- **v. 2** “Every day . . . forever and ever”
 - Daily praise throughout all time marks biblical worship.
 - Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18.
- **v. 3** “Great . . . greatness”
 - The magnitude of God’s person and of His works determines the magnitude of His greatness.
 - *What divine deeds define God’s greatness?*
- **v. 4** “One generation . . . to another”
 - Passing praise from one generation to another presents our only opportunity to perpetuate daily and continuous praise to God.
 - *What can we do to pass praise on to future generations?*
- **v. 5** “I will meditate”
 - The Hebrew verb refers to either loud, enthusiastic, and emotionally laden speech or to quiet contemplation or meditation. This context favors the former.
 - This phrase and “I will tell” (v. 6) reveal David’s role in passing praise to the next generation.
- **v. 7** “eagerly utter”
 - The verb depicts gushing speech, like water pouring forth from a spring. Their praise is spontaneous, abundant, and continuous.
- **v. 8** Compare Exodus 34:6.
 - OT psalmists and prophets quote this text from the Law over and over again. It describes the character and works of the LORD.
 - The frequency of its citation demonstrates its significance to the OT believer’s faith as well as witnessing to Israel’s acceptance of the authority of the Book of Exodus long before the final establishment of the canon of OT Scripture.
- **v. 10** “And Your godly ones shall bless You”
 - Verse 10 serves as a focal point of Psalm 145. It echoes the phraseology of verses 1 and 21, that bracket the psalm.
 - Note the progression:
 - “I will bless your name forever and ever” (v. 1)
 - “**Your godly ones** shall bless You” (v. 10)
 - “**all flesh** will bless His holy name forever and ever” (v. 21)
- **v. 11** “Your kingdom”
 - The psalm opened with a reference to God as “the King” (v. 1). Verses 11–13 repeatedly refer to His kingdom or dominion.
 - The LORD’s kingdom, in these verses, refers to His universal and continuous reign over all creation. He never loses control over His creation.

- **vv. 14–20** God the Provider
 - A series of actions characteristic of the LORD reveals how He exercises His supreme rulership in merciful and gracious deeds:
 1. God helps the inadequate (v. 14).
 2. God gives food to all His creatures (vv. 15–16).
 3. God answers those who pray (vv. 18–19).
 4. God protects those who are His people (v. 20).

— Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 482.
- **v. 14** “all”
 - From here through the remainder of the psalm, “all” appears over and over again. Stress falls on the all-inclusive nature of the worship (praise) of God: all His deeds, all His attributes, through all time, and throughout all creation.
 - David commits himself to continuous praise and informs his readers that they, too, must make the same commitment.
- **v. 17** “The LORD is righteous . . . And kind”
 - The NAU translates the same Hebrew word here as “kind” that it translates “godly” in verse 10.
 - The term refers to God’s steadfast covenant loyalty—His faithfulness. He is never disloyal
- **vv. 18–20** Who are God’s people?
 - “all who call upon Him”—those who pray (v. 18).
 - “those who fear Him” (v. 19).
 - “all who love Him” (v. 20).
- **vv. 18–20** What does God do for His people?
 - “He is near”—ready to answer prayer (v. 18).
 - He will fulfill their desire (v. 19a).
 - He will hear and save them (v. 19b).
 - He preserves them (v. 20).
- **v. 21** Closing Commitment to Praise
 - David returns to his own personal commitment (cp. vv. 1–2, 5, 6).
 - David returns to the same word for “praise” as in the psalm heading.
 - David closes with a global and timeless declaration (see comment on v. 10).
 - Compare Psalm 150:6.

Psalm 150 — The Final Hallel’s Doxology

1.0 Introducing Psalm 150

- The Psalter’s “Final Hallel” consists of five psalms (Pss 146–150) that each begin and end with “Hallelujah” (= “Praise the LORD”).
- As the final psalm, Psalm 150 serves as the closing doxology for Book 5 as well as for the entire Psalter.
- Psalm 150 commands praise for God thirteen times.
- This psalm appears to elaborate on Psalm 145:21,
 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,

And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.

- According to the Jerusalem Talmud (*Bikkurim* 3:2), the celebrants bringing the first fruits to Jerusalem would recite Psalm 150 during their procession.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 150

2.1 Outline

- I. **Where** to Praise the LORD (v. 1)
- II. **Why** Praise the LORD (v. 2)
- III. **How** to Praise the LORD (vv. 3–5)
- IV. **Who** to Praise the LORD (v. 6)

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “in His sanctuary”
 - Although “sanctuary” could refer to God’s “holiness,” the parallel (“mighty expanse,” cp. Ps 19:1) indicates a place rather than an attribute.
 - Since the parallel is the expanse of heaven, “His sanctuary” might indicate the heavenly sanctuary, God’s abode.
 - This interpretation does not exclude praise by mankind on earth, since the angels in heaven model the praise mankind should imitate (Rev 14:6–7; 19:10; 22:9).
- **v. 2** “His mighty deeds”
 - See Psalms 106:2, 145:4, and 12.
 - These deeds include creation and the deliverance of Israel.
- **v. 3** “with trumpet”
 - Note the variety of musical instruments that the psalmist directs in praise:
 - ✓ Wind instruments:
 - “trumpet” (*shofar*)—the ram’s horn blown on the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9) and other special occasions (Ps 81:3; Joel 2:15). David employed it in worship (2 Sam 6:15).
 - “pipe” (*‘ugav*)—perhaps something like a panpipe. Appearances include Genesis 4:21, Job 21:12 and 30:31, and here. Sometimes translated “flute.”
 - ✓ Stringed instruments:
 - “harp” (*nevel*)—perhaps with a slanting yoke—one type, at least, has 10 strings (Pss 33:2; 144:9). See 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 15:16; 16:5
 - “lyre” (*kinnor*)—perhaps with a sounding box. First mentioned in Genesis 4:21. It is David’s instrument (1 Sam 16:16, 23). Psalmists used it in singing praise to God (Pss 43:4; 71:22).
 - “stringed instruments” (*minnim*)—Appears only here and in Psalm 45:8.
 - ✓ Percussion instruments:
 - “timbrel” (*tof*)—the tambourine, which women play as they dance (Exod 15:20). It accompanies assemblages of instruments used by prophets (1 Sam 10:5), those bringing the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:5), and in singing praise to God (Pss 81:1–2; 149:3).
 - “cymbals” (*tsiltsilim*, 2x)—two metal plates (usually copper) banged together to make a clanging sound; the text might refer to two kinds of cymbals. This word for cymbals occurs only here and in 2 Samuel 6:5. A related word appears 11x in Chronicles and also in Ezra 3:10 and Nehemiah 12:27.
- **v. 4** “dance”
 - See notes on Psalm 149:3.

- **v. 5** “loud . . . resounding”
 - Worship at the Tabernacle and in the Temple was not always quiet or subdued in tone.
 - The OT does not depict worship music as entertainment. It did not matter which instruments were employed, but how they were used and why.
- **v. 6** “everything that has breath”
 - The psalmist calls on all living creatures to praise the Lord—both mankind and animal life.
 - The same phrase occurs in Joshua 10:40 (cp. Gen 2:7; 7:22).
- **v. 6** “Praise the LORD!”
 - “Hallelujah!”—“This is the message of the Psalms in one breath.”—Rosscup, *Exposition on Prayer in the Bible*, 1001.

Saturday

1:00–2:15 PM

Preaching and Teaching Psalms

A Sample Psalm Sermon Outline

by William D. Barrick

Title: “Let’s Thirst for God”

Text: Psalm 42

Sermon Proposition: When we face life’s trials, we must hope in God and express our worship and praise to Him.

Introduction

- Psalms 42 and 43 might actually comprise but one psalm, because of the refrain occurring in 42:5, 11, and 43:5.
- Psalm 42 is the first of the psalms in the Psalter composed by “the sons of Korah.” The sons of Korah are descendants of the Korah who rebelled against Moses (Num 16). Numbers 26:11 reveals that the sons of Korah did not die with him when the ground swallowed him. They experienced God’s grace and continued to testify of His grace throughout all their generations. David appointed those descendants to the ministry of song in the Tabernacle and Temple.

I. Vv. 1–5: We must confront our emotional pain with a deep desire for God.

- A.** Our desire for God must include a desire to come before Him in corporate worship (vv. 1–2).
- B.** We ought to be pained when we must be absent from the people of God (vv. 3–4).
- C.** We must counter our despair with hope in God as our help (v. 5).

Application:

What are the symptoms of depression?

- Sleeplessness or too much sleep.
- Sluggishness.
- Sense of hopelessness or abandonment.
- Focusing on bad times and hurtful memories.

How does one cure depression?

- Talk to yourself more than your troubles talk to you—rehearse to yourself what God has done for you.
- Pray and hope in the Lord alone.
- Read the Word and meditate (vocally) upon it.
- Maintain regular exercise and a good balanced diet.

II. Vv. 6–11: We must respond to hurtful circumstances by singing God’s praise and praying to Him for help.

- A.** We must remember God’s loyal love and His presence (vv. 6–8).
- B.** We must take our complaints to Him (vv. 9–10).
- C.** We must counter our despair with hope in God as our help (v. 11).

Application:

What thoughts do you have of God when you are in the mountains or in a beautiful natural setting in His wonderful creation?

What life experiences make you feel like you are drowning?

What does Psalm 42 teach you about handling such experiences?

Conclusion

- Hope “is the grace that swims, though the waves roar.”—Charles Haddon Spurgeon
- “In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, and the lilies of approaching peace.”—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Saturday
2:30–4:00 PM
Final Q & A