

# PSALMS

## INTRODUCTION

1. **AUTHORS** – According to the titles of the Psalms, 73 are attributed to David, two to Solomon, one each to Heman, Ethan, and Moses. The Sons of Korah and Asaph are credited with 23, and forty-nine are listed as Anonymous.
2. **FORM** – Almost all the Psalms are in the form of Hebrew poetry. This is Eastern style poetry which is more about parallelism than our poetry which is more about rhyming or rhythm.
3. **ORGANIZATION** – The Psalms are organized into five books of Chapters 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150. These may have been organized by the dates when they were compiled.
4. **CHARACTER** – "Psalms" is the Greek title for a "song to be sung to the accompaniment of a harp." The Hebrew title is simply, "Praises." Psalms are poems written primarily to be sung in praise to God.

## SUBJECTS OF THE PSALMS

This is hard to characterize and these are not exclusive but some of the subjects dealt with are:

1. **THE MESSIAH** – The Psalms are filled with prophecies of the Messiah's life and death. For example, see Psalm 22-24.
2. **TEACHING or DIDACTIC PSALMS** – such as Psalm 1, 5, 6, 15, 50, 73, 94, and 101.
3. **HISTORICAL** – dealing with God's reactions to Israel as in Psalm 78, 105, 106, and 136.
4. **PRAISE PSALMS** – Using the word "Hallelujah. See Psalm 111-113, 115-117, 146-150. "Hallelujah" means "Praise Yahweh."
5. **IMPRECATORY PSALMS** – calling a curse on the enemies of God as in Psalm 52, 58, 59, 69, 109, and 140.
6. **ASCENT PSALMS** – sung on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate feasts each year. See Psalms 120-134.
7. **PENITENTIAL or CONFESSION PSALMS** – in the confession of sin. See 6, 25, 32, 38, 39, 40, 51, 102, and 130.
8. **ALPHABET or ACROSTIC PSALMS** – based on the arrangement of the Hebrew alphabet. See 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111-112, 119, and 145.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE PSALMS

1. Psalms demonstrate that God is a God of all experiences and all emotions. The Psalms praise God from the mountaintop experiences and from the valley of death. We can move from any of life's experiences to praise God. It is beneficial sometimes to read a number Psalms at one sitting just for the "roller-coaster" of the emotions that reflect some of our days.

2. Psalms prophesy Christ so accurately that you could almost think they were written after he lived instead of up to 1000 years before His coming. See for example Psalm 22.
3. The longest Psalm, 119, stresses the value and importance of God's Word. All but two of the verses mention God's Word in some form. The form is an acrostic. Each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet is used to begin eight consecutive statements about the Word of God. Try that as an exercise sometime with just one statement for each letter of the alphabet. It forces one to not only think about but also meditate on the truths of the subject being considered. It encourages deep thinking.
4. The Psalms are quoted extensively throughout the New Testament.
5. Nowhere can a Christian find such comfort and hope as through the Psalms. Examples are Psalm 23, 32, 51, and 139.
6. There is a formula in counseling that is  $A + B = E$ . It means that an "Activating Event" plus "what one believes about God" will lead to a certain emotion. As you read the Psalms, notice the "activating events" that the psalmist describes. Sometimes they have to do with being surrounded by enemies, or another situation that would lead us to feel hopeless. Since the Psalmist believes in the presence and involvement of God in his life, note the emotions expressed. Sometimes you can observe the emotion change over the course of the Psalm as the writer is reminded of the truth about God and his relationship with him. Note the unusually harsh things the psalmist says about and to God in his frustrations with God's apparent inactivity regarding his situation. I think you will find that this gives us permission to come out honestly to God about how we feel in our situation. At the same time, I always see the psalmist being honest about times in the past when he has seen God active on his behalf. If we are going to be honest with God about how we feel, we need to also be honest about how he has provided for us in the past.
7. Two books that I recommend on the Psalms are:
  - "Cry of the Heart" by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman. This explores the relationship of our emotions to our belief in God.
  - "How To Read The Psalms" by Tremper Longman III.

## PSALMS 1-75

1 – Here is the root and the fruit of a person who is pleasing to God. They stand and sit in the godly counsel of the word of God and avoid influence of those who are not godly. V2 “His DELIGHT is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.” The reward is V6 “the Lord knows the way of the righteous.” Only Jesus fully meets this standard.

2 – The Lord will reign forever and the one he places on the throne will reign forever. No one will be able to prevent that and they will only damage themselves trying to prevent it. V6 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” Ultimately the one God places on the throne is his Son, Jesus. No thing and no person can interfere with that. How persistent people are, not only rulers but also all people, to resist the voice and ways of God! In one sense it does not matter though in that God will still accomplish his purposes.

3 – David calls for the Lord to deliver him from his enemies. In this case it is the army led by his own son, Absalom. V3 promises, “But you, O Lord are a shield about me, my glory, and lifter of my head.” So much is David’s confidence in the Lord that he is able to lay down and sleep. Let us pray that our trust in God is so great that it will affect even the way our body responds.

4 – There are many words of emotions in this psalm. There is the invitation to express anger and yet not sin. There is great joy and peace. It all comes from a trust in the Lord to do what is right. V3 “But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.” There is another reference to sleep in the confidence that the Lord is in control and will protect those who are his. Lord, grant us that kind of trust that it enables us to sleep.

5 – This is a psalm of salvation. It clearly depicts the reaction of God to sin, evil, boasting, evildoers, and the bloodthirsty and deceitful. The truth is that describes all of us. V7 is the key when it says, “But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.” It is because of God’s love that never fails that we have the opportunity to stand in his presence, cleansed. It is hard to call for the condemnation of anyone else since we deserve the same treatment by God.

6 – It seems that this is a psalm written when David’s enemies pursue him. His appeal is not based on his worthiness this time but V4 “save me for the sake of your steadfast love.” He turns from appeals to God to rescue him to appeals to his enemies to leave him alone. V9 expresses confidence when it says, “The Lord has heard my plea; for the Lord accepts my prayer.”

7 – In this psalm David seems to base his appeal on his “righteousness.” Since David knows that he is a sinner he must be talking about his righteousness in the current situation. Or it may be that he considers his righteousness in his repentance over his sin and not covering or excusing it. V11 “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.” How sinful we are and God knows that better than we do. How gracious he is to us!

8 – The majesty of the name of the Lord is in his positioning of man in the order of the creation. God’s glory is by far the highest but man’s is over the creation and created beings. Even though God created him, man is blessed in his position. In Christ, all the greatness of God’s creation of humans is restored in Jesus Christ. V3-4 “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” Here the “son of man” refers to humans, not to Jesus. It is humans that God has set only a little lower than God (see margin note).

9 – This is another psalm about the justice of God. Verses 19-20 say, “Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before you! Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men! Selah.” That is a valid prayer for us. Let us know that you are God and we are human, created by you. Remind us that any who oppose us when we stand for you are only human.

10 – One thing to note especially in the Psalms is the statements about who God is. V16 “The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.” David calls on God to judge the wicked. He describes the evil acts and thoughts of the wicked and calls God to come out of hiding to avenge the afflicted. V12 says, “Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted.”

11 – This is a powerful concept in this psalm. God is the foundation and is unmovable. V3 “The Lord is in his holy temple.” The key is to be righteous. V7 “The Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds, the upright

shall behold his face.” So when the wicked threaten those who are righteous, the key is to hold fast in our trust in the Lord. V6 “Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.”

12 – There is a contrast here between the true and reliable words of the Lord and the wicked lies of the deceitful. These are people who believe that they can control and manipulate any situation because of lying words. V4 “...those who say, ‘With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?’” In contrast we read in V6, “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”

13 – This is a very short wrestling match between the psalmist and his faith in God. He cries out in V1, “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?” But even as he presents his cries to God he is reminded, V5 “But I have trusted in your steadfast love, my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.” He concludes, V6 “I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”

14 – Any person who says, “There is no God!” is a fool. As God looks at the earth, it seems that every single person at least lives as if there is no God. V3 “They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt.” At the same time God will preserve and restore the righteous. It seems that one can only be righteous if God gives the ability.

15 – This psalmist asks the question in V1, “O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?” God answers. He describes characteristics of a person who is pleasing to him. They seek justice for others and what is best for others even at cost to themselves. The sum benefit of this lifestyle is V5. “He who does these things shall never be moved.”

16 – Not every person chooses to follow the Lord. V4 “The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.” There are many great advantages to the one who chooses the Lord over any other god. V2 “I say to the Lord, you are my lord; I have no good apart from you.” V11 “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

17 – The psalmist turns to the Lord to deal with the enemies who surround him. V13 “Arise O Lord! Confront him; subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword.” Even though it appears that the wicked prosper in this life, the psalmist states in V15, “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness.”

18 – This very lengthy psalm is repeated from 2 Samuel 22 and celebrates the victory the Lord gives his people. Note the many terms David uses to describe God. Be sure to tie these into the circumstances that he describes in this psalm. It appears that David is in battle. He sees God as his strength, rock, fortress, and deliverer. He is his shield, his horn of salvation and stronghold. No matter how bad things looked outwardly, David was confident in his relationship with God and with God’s ability to deliver him. V17 “He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me for they were too mighty for me.” V50 “Great salvation he brings to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.”

19 – There is one thrust in this psalm and that is the word of the Lord. It comes in two forms, natural through creation and supernatural through his laws. In the natural it is available in every place of the earth and everywhere the sun shines. Either way we are to respond to it by seeking it and submitting to it. Note the response to the Word of God with which the psalm closes. V13-14 “Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

20 – There are several requests/petitions that would make valid prayers in this chapter. The thrust seems to be in prayer for the king. V9 “O Lord, save the king! May he answer us when we call.” Our confidence is to only be in the Lord. V7 “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” How many other things do we trust in when we face troubles? We even trust in busyness to keep us from thinking about the trouble we are in. Lord, grant us grace to seek you and turn to you in every circumstance.

21 – All these psalms that refer to the king ultimately refer to THE king, Jesus. This is especially true of statements that refer to the reign lasting “forever.” V4 “He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever.” There is total trust between the king and God so that God will take care of the king’s enemies and establish the king’s throne forever. V1 “O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your

salvation how greatly he exults." V7 "For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved."

22 – The psalmist cries out for God to deliver him from enemies that surround him. He feels totally unable to do anything and all his emotions are dried up from stress. He feels abandoned by God. The turn is in V19. "But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid." From that point on, the praise comes forth to the God who rescued him. This psalm pictures the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. There are many parallels and references to the experience of Christ on the cross. The most obvious is the words Jesus cried from the cross, V1 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

23 – This psalm pictures the Great Shepherd caring for the sheep. V1 "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." This is very beautifully translated and very close to all other translations. Pray that we enter into this kind of feeling as we contemplate our relationship with the Lord. V5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." God does not necessarily remove our enemies but he does protect us and use us for his purposes.

24 – It is interesting to think of some of these psalms being written by the king since he recognizes God as the ultimate King. His reign is in submission to the Lord. V1 "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." His main question is what does a person need in order to be acceptable to God. The answer is clean hands, a pure heart, and truth. Can you picture the coronation parade for the king as described in V7-10? V10 "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory!" This psalm has to do with the return of the Messiah/King, Jesus. He is the only one who qualifies to reign. Can you imagine how Jesus would handle the mid-East situation that is happening now?

25 – This is a prayer for the Lord to teach his ways. V4 "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." The ways of the Lord are described as humility, steadfast love and faithfulness and yet forgiveness because, V11 "For your name sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great." There is a great prayer to go along with confession in V6-7. "Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!"

26 – V8 "O Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells." Once again, the psalmist seems to be surrounded by his enemies. He continues to turn to the Lord for rescue, but more than that, security. He offers for God to, V2 "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind."

27 – This psalm is filled with so many thoughts of trust in God. With our concentration on the Lord, we have nothing to fear. At the same time, it is right to cry out to the Lord in all ways and at all times. V10 "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in." The encouraging instruction is to V14 "Wait on the Lord." What a wonderful prayer is expressed in V4. "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple."

28 – There are many more cries out to the Lord for deliverance here. The psalmist's only hope is in the Lord. At the same time he asks for God to deal harshly with his enemies because of the work of their hands. V8-9 "The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever."

29 – This psalm is about "the voice of the Lord." Note the ways it exercises sovereignty. David invites others to V1-2 "Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness." It is a vivid description of the impact of the voice of the Lord on all aspects of creation. V4 "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

30 – The title says it is a psalm for the dedication of the temple. There is a theory that the titles are actually located at the end of the psalm. This would fit well with the previous psalm because it seems to have little to do with this psalm. There are more cries for the Lord's help in verses 2 and 8 but there is much more appeal to him for help. V8 "To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy." V4-5 "Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

31 – V5 "Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God." The psalmist trusts God completely, as did God's Son Jesus, when he died on the cross and quoted these words. The

psalm encourages us to trust in the Lord even when surrounded by enemies. V14-15 “But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors.” V23 “Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.”

32 – This psalm recounts the blessings that come to those who are forgiven of their sins. Before they confess the sense is that God is against them. V4 “For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.” There is nothing like the relief of forgiveness. V5 “I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.” It appears that the instruction in V8 is from the psalmist to the reader and it means, “Don’t be stubborn about confessing your sins. Give them to God and let him forgive you.” The only one who needed no forgiveness is Jesus.

33 – This psalm points to God as Creator of all the earth. The Psalmist then calls on the inhabitants of the earth to praise their Creator. It is the way of the Lord that will be accomplished and will last to the end. V11 “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.” Therefore we would be wise to seek the Lord in all our difficulties. The king should rely more on the Lord than on the size or strength of his army. V20 “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.” So should we.

34 – V15-16 “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.” Therefore be one of the righteous because in the end the Lord will be victorious. Who is righteous? V18 “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” V20 contains another phrase that is picked up in the crucifixion of Jesus as a prophecy. “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

35 – This is another psalm calling for God to deliver him from his enemies. V10 “All my bones shall say, ‘O Lord, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?’” The difference in this psalm is that the psalmist calls on God to repay the evildoer by putting back on him the plans that he laid for the psalmist. The term for this kind of psalm is an imprecatory psalm meaning that the psalmist calls for evil to come on his enemy. V8 “Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it! And let the net that he hid ensnare him; let him fall into it – to his destruction!” The secret of this kind of approach and prayer is that we must take God’s side. It is his enemies that we can and should call out against. God is in the right and needs to be vindicated against his enemies. We must pray for God’s honor. The psalm comes to a great end in V28. “Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long.”

36 – The first four verses are a cry against the wicked. V2 “He flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.” From V5 on it is a praise of God for his “steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, judgments and provision.” V10-11 “Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart! Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.” The secret is to turn our lives over to God and allow him to make things right.

37 – This psalm contrasts the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked and especially how those ways end up. V12-13 “The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.” Two promise verses are V3-4. “Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” V27 “Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever.” V40 “The Lord helps them and delivers them (the righteous); he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.”

38 – David writes of the impact of his sin and how he and the Lord are dealing with it. V3 “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.” The psalm contains one of the most accurate descriptions of how low and bad we should feel because of our sin. Yet for most of us this is the way we feel about other issues. V10 “My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes – it also has gone from me.” V21-22 “Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, do not be far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!”

39 – ESV titles this psalm, “What is the measure of my days?” V4 “O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am.” The psalmist admits that life, death, health, and prosperity are all out of our own control and are in the hand of the Lord. V7 is a wonderful short prayer. “And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”

40 – This is regarded as a messianic psalm since verses 6-8 are quoted in Hebrews 10 and applied to Christ. One writer writes that verses 6-7 talk of the birth of Christ. V7 “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.’” Verses 8-10 speak of the life of Christ. V8 “I desire to do your will O my God’ your law is within my heart.” V6 speaks of the death of Christ. “Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.” This is because the death of Jesus replaces those. See all the details of the offerings in Leviticus 1-5. Verses 1-3 speak of the resurrection of Jesus. V2 “He drew me up from the pit of destruction...and set my feet upon a rock.” The rest of the psalm continues as a cry to the Lord and expressions of hope in his deliverance. V13 “Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!” V17 “As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.”

41 – V9 seems to be a clear portrayal or prophecy of the betrayal of Jesus. “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” Yet the psalmist appeals to the graciousness of God in dealing with him. V12 “But you have upheld me because of my integrity.” V4 “As for me, I said, ‘O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!’” Do you notice how often the psalmist is conscious of his own sin? Do you see how he always brings it to God and appeals for mercy? Lord, grant that we may be honest about our sin and rely on you. Teach us to rely on you for everything.

42-43 – The situation appears to be that the psalmist is separated from the place of the Lord’s dwelling and of his worship. This leads to great depression. This seems to be one song of three stanzas and three choruses. Note the chorus found in V5, and 11 and 43:5. The encouragement is to continue to trust in the Lord even when things feel very down and discouraging. V9 “I say to my God, my rock: ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of my enemy?’” The chorus repeats, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”

44 – This is a strange psalm in that the first eight verses sound victorious. They recount the victories of previous generations. The tone then changes to almost a complaint against God for his treatment of his people. V23 “Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.”

45 – The title says that this is a love song. It is addressed to a king and is at the same time very official and very personal. V4 “In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds.” The princess is also honored.

46 – This sounds like a prayer and praise on behalf of the city of Jerusalem in time of attack. “The Lord is our fortress” shows that trust in him is more secure than trust in the walls of the city. V6 “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.” V10-11 “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth! The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

47 – This psalm is in celebration of the sovereignty of the Lord over all the nations of the earth, not just Israel. This shows in phrases like, “All peoples...all the earth...God reigns over the nations.” “He is highly exalted.” V7 “For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!” How comforting to know that same sovereignty is over our personal lives!

48 – This psalm recognizes and honors Jerusalem as the city of God. V3 “Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress.” See if V14 impresses you. “This is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever.” How much greater this city will be when the Son of God makes it his headquarters!

49 – Those who fear the Lord have nothing else to fear because God possesses the great equalizer, death. V5 “Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me?” V16-17 “Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.” The hope of the psalmist is our hope regarding death. V15 “But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.”

50 – We cannot impress God with our offering no matter how much or what kind it is. He already owns everything. V14-15 “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” V23 “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!”

51 – This is David’s psalm of repentance and confession. See how desperate we are in our sin. We must cry out to God for his mercy because in ourselves because of our sin we have no chance. We are sinners since

conception. We have transgressions, iniquities, and sin. We need righteousness, cleansing, and washing. God gives us his unfailing love, mercy, and restoration. He justifies us. He washed us. He cleanses us. He is the one against whom we have sinned. We need to study this more so that we will understand confession and repentance in a deeper way. V11 "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me." This is not the way we see ourselves but it is the way God sees us. Who do you think is more accurate? There would be great value in memorizing this psalm and incorporating it into our prayer times.

52 – This is a warning to those who are wicked. Wickedness is defined as one who rejects God and does not go his way. V3 "You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right." V5 "But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living." V9 "I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly."

53 – This psalm seems to point out the sinfulness of all people. That is how Paul interprets it in Romans 3. Yet it calls for Israel to be delivered and seems to say that the wicked are those who surround Israel and not those within it. V3 "They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one."

54 – Some scholars say that if you ignore the "titles" of the psalms, it will change the way you interpret the psalm. It seems to influence this psalm in that the title has to do with David hiding and the psalm is an expression of a cry for help. V1 "O God, save me, by your name, and vindicate me by your might." The assurance is in V4, "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life." At the same time the other part of his prayer is against his enemies. V5 "He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them."

55 – This is another call for the Lord's mercy to deliver from the enemy. This time the enemy is one who has betrayed the psalmist, David. V12-14 "For it is not an enemy who taunts me – then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me – then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng." They were very close friends but then the friend turned into the enemy. How much this tells us that we must trust the Lord! At the same time this pictures Judas, one of Jesus' disciples who had traveled with him for the three years of his ministry. He shared the Last Supper with Jesus. Jesus even washed his feet along with the other disciples. This is the essence of abuse. We trust someone and open ourselves up to him. Then he turns on us. Jesus experienced that so many times in his life. "He came to his own and his own people did not receive him." (John 1:11)

56 – The psalmist, and it is usually David, writes so much and in so much detail about how the enemy is against him and how much danger he feels. Yet, very often he gives testimony to his trust in the Lord in the midst of those trials and these testimonies only stand brighter in the middle of the darkness of the trial. V9b "This I know, that God is for me." V10-11 "In God whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?" V13 "For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life."

57 – This is a song psalm with two choruses, verses 5 and 11. "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" It is a two-stanza cry for help from God since only He can rescue in this situation. V3 "He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me." At the same time there is more focus on the glory of God.

58 – One of the reasons God must judge with justice is that it is the only way that this life receives justice. Those who belong to God rejoice to see the day when he and his justice will prevail. Otherwise the world looks as though the wicked get away with evil. God's justice will not allow that. V10 "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked." V11 "Mankind will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges the earth.'" Whenever we cringe at God's punishment of the wicked we diminish his holiness and righteousness. God always punishes sin. It is simply that for those in Jesus he takes out our punishment on our substitute Jesus instead of on us.

59 – Verses 9 and 17 form a chorus to this song for deliverance. "O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress. My God in his steadfast love will meet me." "O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love." It is good to see that at least one other besides Jesus had this kind of confidence in God and his ways no matter what present circumstances looked like. May God grant us that kind of real perspective on him so we have that kind of confidence that reaches our stomachs!

60 – The psalmist always acknowledges that all circumstances come from God, even the difficult ones. V2-3 “You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters. You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.” So also then deliverance must come from the Lord. V11 “Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man.” Unless God is the one in charge of the difficulty, he is not the one in charge of making it stop.

61 – It seems that many of the cries for help and deliverance come on behalf of the king. There appears to be a recognition that the king is in his place because of the choice of God. So we can take confidence in our God because he is the one who has chosen us for our relationship with him. V6 “Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations.”

62 – The distinguishing mark of this psalm seems to me to be the lack of trust in any other besides the Lord. Note V1, “For God alone, my soul waits in silence.” V2 “He only is my rock and my salvation.” V5 “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence.” V6 “He alone is my rock and my salvation.” V11-12 “Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.”

63 – V1 “O God, you are my God’ earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” This is a prayer that we would long for God in the same way we would long for water after a long walk across a desert. V3 “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.” Paraphrased this says, “because I would rather be loved by you than live, I praise you.” V8 “My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.” These psalms are so personal. We need to read them that way as if God speaks to us personally. This is valid because the psalmist is not in a unique relationship with God. He just understands his relationship with God better than we do.

64 – This seems to be a prayer against paranoia. David is concerned about secret plots of the wicked that they can plot and plan without fear because they think God does not know and cannot do anything. V5 “They talk of laying snares secretly, thinking who can see them?” But God’s answer is in V8, “They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them; all who see them will wag their heads.”

65 – The psalmist praises God and shows how God is in charge of all that happens in nature, because it is actually creation. God hears prayers and answers with righteousness and he is the same one who is involved in all aspects of creation. This includes the seas, mountains, rain, bounty, pastures, hills, meadows, and valleys. V9 “You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.” We need to look to God to meet all of our needs. What a great thought is in V3. “When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.” Our salvation and forgiveness of our sins is a greater blessing than any other that there could be.

66 – It seems that the psalmist uses language of the Exodus to describe his own experience of deliverance. What interested me about this was the combination of statements in V10-12. “For you O Lord have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.” The response of this is to pay the vows that the writer made in the middle of his trouble.

67 – This seems to be a prayer of blessing and benediction but the purpose is not just for our own blessing but so that all the nations will be blessed. Note the number of phrases of “on earth...among all nations...Let the peoples praise you...let the nations be glad.” The greater purpose though is for God to receive more glory. V2 “...that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.” V7 “God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him.” The purpose of our lives is to make God known and to bring him all glory and credit.

68 – This is a psalm of praise to the Lord. The evidence of his greatness is the way he uses the forces of nature to accomplish his purposes. His purposes stand forever. There is a picture of jealousy on the part of the nations that surround Israel in V16. It is put in the form of the other surrounding mountains that are jealous of Mount Zion because God has chosen it for his dwelling. “Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the Lord will dwell forever?” V35 “Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel – he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God.”

69 – These psalms are so effective because the authors are willing to open themselves up to all kinds of emotions and pain. They feel the danger of the enemies that surround them. They liken it to being in a deep

pit of mud slowly sinking until over one's head. At the same time, no matter what the situation, they cry out to the Lord for deliverance, no matter how far down or hopeless their situation seems. This psalm also outlines what the author wants God to do to the enemies in graphic detail. V33 "For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own people who are prisoners."

70 – This is a prayer appropriate for almost anyone and one that many people who really do trust in God would pray. Basically it says, "Hurry up, Lord! I know you will work this out for your purposes and for the good of your people but I feel like I need your timing to be sooner rather than later." V1 "Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me."

71 – This psalm expresses confidence in the Lord throughout the entire lifetime. God was the one who taught him V5 "from my youth." V18 "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me; until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come."

72 – This seems to be a prayer for God to bless and prosper his son, probably Solomon in his reign. It is both a prayer that he will do right, V4 "May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor," and that right will be done by others to him. V10 "May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts." Also there is the prayer that his kingdom will be widespread. V8 "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."

73 – When it seems like the wicked are the ones who have the better life, it is good to recall verses 16-17. "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." It is not good. There is great expression of emotion toward God in verses 25-26. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

74 – This prayer approaches God as the one who has a history of demonstrating great power. Now as the enemy surrounds, the confidence is in God's power and the prayer is that he will use it on behalf of the petitioner. The question is, "How long?" The appeal is for the glory of God's name and his reputation. V21 "Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame; let the poor and needy praise your name."

75 – This psalm speaks of the judgment of God. V2 "At the time that I appoint I will judge with equity." V7 "but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another." V10 "All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up." It includes a picture of the judgment of God as wine that the wicked must drink to the end. V8 "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed; and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs."