

The Psalms

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Before we dig into Psalms itself, let's get some altitude on the OT as a whole:

I. THE BIGGER PICTURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:

1. The Old Testament Timeline Is Essentially Complete.

- Once you have read through Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, the OT chronology is basically completed. The Historical Books (Joshua through Esther) lead you through about one thousand years of the history of Israel in the land of promise. Joshua led the people into the land in 1405 BC. Nehemiah helped the third wave of Jews to return to the land of promise from their captivity around 445 BC. Everything in the middle of the Historical Section (Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles) unfolds the ups and downs of Israel (mostly the downs) while they were in the land, how they eventually lost the land of promise, and then humbly returned to the land as slaves without a king.
- You might be tempted to think that because there are many more books that follow Esther (the last book of the Historical Section), that therefore there still must be more events chronologically that occur for Israel. But that is not the case. That is not what your English OT's arrangement should incline you to think. The Prophets (Major and minor, from Isaiah to Malachi) all occur within that one thousand year history laid out in the Historical Section. They do not add essentially any new chronological events to the timeline. The same holds true for the Wisdom Books (Job to Song of Solomon) - they do not add to the chronological events of Israel's timeline.
- So again, once you have read through the Historical Books, the OT chronology for the nation of Israel is basically completed. Now, let's get a little closer to the psalmist and give thought to:

2. How the Rest of the OT Influenced the Psalmist.

The Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy).

- The Law had a profound impact on each and every psalmist. Remember, up to that point in human history with Moses, 1445-1405 BC, there had been no written revelation from God anywhere on earth. But with the writings of Moses, God's written, self-disclosure could be found on the earth. But only within one nation and within their land of promise. Israel was entrusted with the oracles of God just as Paul said in Romans 3:2. The faithful worshiper of Yahweh in

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Israel believed this about the very first words of God to the human race through Israel. The psalmist has a very high view of God's word. You'll see this from Psalm 1 to 19 to 119.

- What did God reveal in the Pentateuch specifically? What did the psalmist cast his all on within the writings of Moses? Particularly the fusing of the Abrahamic Covenant with the Mosaic Covenant. First, the Abrahamic Covenant: In the AC God promised the seed of Abraham great blessing as they believed Yahweh and He then credited it to them as righteousness. That blessing was inseparable from the land of promise. God also promised He would curse those who cursed Abraham's offspring. So, faithful Israelites were absolutely committed to God's promises in the Abrahamic Covenant - God's blessing on them, the land, the nations being blessed through Israel, and the cursing of any who cursed God's gracious offer in Abraham (Gn 12:1-3 - "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."). The psalmist expresses full faith and devotion to these things and incorporated them into his worship of Yahweh in Psalms.
- Second, the Mosaic Covenant: The psalmist also fully believed the centrality of obedience to the MC/Pentateuch/Law. The psalmist cast his all on the truth that the land of promise could indeed become the plot of land on earth where the curse of sin from the Fall could be pushed back and Yahweh's blessing abounded if only Israel obeyed.
- The psalmist expresses in his worship of Yahweh in the Psalms the conviction that the nations could leave the cursed ground of their foreign lands, come to Israel and find the blessing of Yahweh overflowing toward them through the faith of Abraham ("Let the nations be glad. . ." "Kiss the Son. . ."). He has hope for the nations who will come by faith to Yahweh, while simultaneously praying for God to judge the nations who reject Yahweh. Both of these elements fill the worship of the psalmist.

The Historical Books (Joshua to Esther).

- As you leave the Pentateuch and enter the twelve Historical Books, you have great anticipation for what could be for the human race on this sin cursed planet. Could it be that if the offspring of Abraham only believed Yahweh, and then was faithful to His Law, that God would pour out blessing on the land and the people?? Unfortunately, that one thousand year period of history was far more turbulent and

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tragic than triumphant for Israel. Israel entered the land. Most of them did not believe with the faith of Abraham. And most did not obey with the obedience the MC called for. The result could only be what God promised, and could only have been what you see through those twelve books - the slow but sure loss of the land and of God's blessing, and the ever increasing creep of the curses of Deuteronomy across the nation.

- A bright spot in it all is another unconditional promise of God made to them, specifically made to David. The Davidic Covenant. As the sons of David went, so went the people of Israel. For good, and for bad. And this made its way into the worship of the psalmist starting most of all with David himself who wrote almost half of the psalms.
- And there were other faithful Israelites during that time of decline. They painfully knew the slow but steady slip of God's blessing from their nation-family. They felt intensely the inward rebellious nature of their own sin. They felt the sting of betrayal from their own kings and countrymen who were unfaithful to Yahweh. And they felt deeply the ever increasing encroachment of the nations toward them - to conquer and destroy Israel. The faithful Israelite worshiper felt all this acutely and expressed it clearly in their heart-sincere worship of Yahweh. They longed for a better son of David to come and be faithful to Yahweh and lead them.

The Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi)

- It is important to know that in Israel, the authority over the people was not the king, but the prophet with God's word. And the prophets always called Israel back to faithfulness to God's Law in the Pentateuch, starting with the kings. The sons of David flourished when they humbled themselves under the prophets and the Pentateuch. And the sons of David languished when they arrogantly stood aloof from the prophets and the Pentateuch. The prophets offer their similar sad account of the slow demise of Israel and her kings. The psalmist, the faithful worshiper of Yahweh expresses this pain of slow loss in his worship with groanings, complaints.
- This the prior revelation the psalmist had. This reveals to you what influenced the genuine worshiper of Yahweh, and what moved him to write the worshipful expressions he wrote. It reveals to you show you what truth governed him as he wrote more truth. The more you can understand where his hopes were, where his fears lay, where he saw victories and losses, the more you will appreciate the worship of

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Yahweh he expressed in his era of redemptive history. Before we dig into Psalms specifically, let's consider the collection of five books that Psalms sits within called:

The Wisdom Literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon).

- These five books also do not advance the storyline of the history of Israel chronologically. But what they do unfold is the wisdom and the worship of Yahweh that faithful Israelites indeed exercised in their covenant relationship with Yahweh before the nations of the world.
- Again, so much went terribly wrong with Israel during the one thousand years of their history in the land in the OT. But the contribution of the wisdom literature of the OT is that in all that spiritual turbulence of Israel's history, God secured faithful believers and worshipers and equipped them with wisdom to live by and worship to sing to Him. He did not leave them to their own wisdom or self-styled worship of Him. These five books reveal that in the darkest of times, God knows how to secure His faithful people in His wisdom and His worship!
- The Wisdom Literature of the OT answers questions like these: How did faithful Israelites apply their faith and worship of Yahweh? How did they deal with doubts that inevitably arose in life during that time? How did they face afflictions and trials? How did they give voice to their rejoicing and thanksgivings? Did they know how to comfort and guide one another as the blessings slipped away and the curses of Deuteronomy overtook them? Did they know Yahweh's gift and comfort of marriage? Did they know how to skillfully navigate daily living in turbulent times? The Wisdom literature of the OT answers those questions.
- This section of your OT guided God's people through every imaginable emotion and experience life could throw at them. This important section of the OT helps complete the picture of what faithful living under Yahweh look like in Israel as Israel occupied their privileged position before the nations.
- In this collection of books, you come across true believers who are in deep struggles to make sense of life lived for Yahweh. Individually, they did not always respond faithfully to God in the upheavals of life, and they were in great need of Yahweh's mercy, grace, and wisdom.

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- The wisdom literature also reveals that music, song, poetry, and wise proverbial expressions had deep, established roots in Israel. When the temple in Jerusalem became the centralized location for worship, the proliferation of music and song occurred. At the same time, the need and prizing of wisdom occurred not just in the palace with Solomon, but more importantly in the home with godly parents (more than any other place in society). So, both the skillful and beautiful constructions of words and songs, as well as skillful living could be seen within the nation of Israel even though the nation was in steady decline. God knew how to uphold His faithful ones. He desired them to live wisely and worshipfully as they attempted to fulfill their purpose before the nations.
- *A quick summary of these five books (not in order): Psalms is the songbook for God's wise people. The wise people of Yahweh must give worshipful expression under Yahweh's kingly reign before the nations. Psalms reveals that every square inch of the believer's experiences and emotions can be directed into worship of Yahweh.*
- *There is an important relationship between Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Proverbs lays out simply and boldly the wisdom principle that God blesses the righteous and judges the wicked. God's people who follow that simple wisdom would find themselves blessed and rewarded in life. **Life was simple** with the wisdom of the Proverbs, and in that simplicity God was trustworthy. Job reveals the divine limitations that God built into the simple wisdom found in Proverbs. Life isn't always clear-cut for the righteous like the Proverbs indicate. Sometimes the righteous do suffer greatly and when they do, Job provides wisdom they desperately need. **Life was also inexplicable and mysterious** at times, and God was trustworthy. Ecclesiastes adds yet another crucial piece of wisdom for God's people. Life in this world is lived out under the frustration of the curse. This world has been bent by God so as to obstruct man's pursuit of contentment and satisfaction apart from Him. Ecclesiastes provides the wisdom desperately need for living in a world that will never satisfy. **Life is empty**, and God is still trustworthy. And finally, Song of Solomon rounds out the wisdom literature by extolling the beauty and glory in the intimacy of marriage. God's people had an amazing blessing from God to enjoy as they lived out their purpose before the nations. Solomon provides needed wisdom for husbands and wives as they enjoyed God's gift of sexual intimacy within marriage.*
- As you read the wisdom literature, you will find these books making sense of every season of your life. You can become wiser and

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become a better worshiper of your Savior as you devote yourselves to these books and meditate on them, even if an immoral society is collapsing on itself around you.

II. THE BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PSALMS:

- Psalms is a collection of songs intended to be sung with instrumental accompaniment. This was Israel's hymnbook to aid them in their worship of Yahweh. These songs enable the believer in Yahweh to shepherd his heart in worship to God in any and every season of life. This collection of God-breathed songs proclaims Yahweh's rule over everything that exists and how He is near to those who trust in Him and how He is worthy to be praised.
- Psalms has 150 different psalms within it. There are many different authors behind the songs, but David wrote by far the most (73). Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm with 176 verses, while Psalm 117 is the shortest with only two verses. Psalms is the most quoted OT book by the NT authors.
- These 150 different psalms were not all written at or near the same time. They were written between the time of Moses (who wrote Psalm 90) up to the Babylonian captivity (Psalm 137). That covers about 900 years of the 1000 years of the Historical period of Israel. *And if Daniel is the author of Psalm 119, that extends that time period beyond 900 years.*
- Psalms is divided into five smaller "books," but it should be thought of as one cohesive book. Book 1 includes Psalm 1-41. Book 2 - Psalm 42-72. Book 3 - Psalm 73-89. Book 4 - Psalm 90-106. Book 5 - Psalm 107-150. It is not clear what the rationale was behind this grouping. But you'll find your greatest benefit coming from the individual psalms rather than from a larger grouping of them. *Some propose that the five books were created to mirror the Pentateuch (calling the Psalms "David's Pentateuch").*
- What I want you to marvel at, is God's kindness to faithful Israelites in their national turbulent and tragic downward spiral. He knew true believers still must worship Him as the sinful nation ran after idols. Psalms specifically gave to them words to put into their hearts and then voice back to God in worship. The worship of the psalmist primarily revolves around the sovereign rule of Yahweh over all He has made and directs in His providence. The worship of the psalmist also anticipates the exercise of Yahweh's rule through a promised King yet to come - Messiah. That Son of David will rule over the people from the city of that great King, Zion. These are the main arteries of the heart of worship for the psalmist and for you.

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- This is your songbook for worship in every circumstance of life, from great blessing and encouragement to the sorrows of a tried and afflicted life. You will soar to heights of thrilling praise in this book. You will then plunge into the humble depths of confession of sin. No matter which life-location you find yourself in between those two ends of life, Psalms provides for you the instruction and example for true worship that you desperately need. In every circumstance you can possibly find yourself in in this world, the psalmist has already been there and done that. And he will clarify for you what genuine worship is in that moment. He will promote it. He will protect what genuine worship must continue to be.
- If the psalmist is praying, worshipfully imitate him and take up his words before the Lord in prayer. If he moans under the afflictions of his fallen flesh and the world, worshipfully moan with him. If he rejoices at the heights of a good day and welcomed providences from God, worshipfully imitate his thankfulness. If he is hopeful, worshipfully imitate his hope in God. If he is afraid and trembling under dire circumstances, trace his heart from his fear to faith in Yahweh. If he trembles under the holy majesty of Yahweh, worshipfully pattern your fear of Christ off his. Engage your heart in the psalmist's heart's practice whatever it may be.
- Again, marvel at God's shepherding care for you to not leave you to your own thoughts of how to worship Him in the trials in your life. Marvel at His Fatherly guidance that He also doesn't leave you to your own conclusions about how to worship Him in good times. Marvel at His kindness to have given Israel a book like this; to give to you the same.
- *Many of the psalms have some kind of designation that describes the psalm ("Shiggaion," Psalm 7; "Miktam," Psalm 16; etc.). There is not total clarity as to what these designations mean. Israel knew. Many of the psalms also provide another description of the historical setting out of which came the expression of worship in the psalm, Psalm 18 (these are as God-breathed as the verses to follow). Frequently, you'll come across the word "Selah." That word appears to signal (perhaps) some kind of pause for meditation on the words and/or also a musical interlude.*
- *Many have grouped the psalms into thematic categories such as "praise psalms," "penitential psalms," "lament psalms," "thanksgiving psalms," "royal psalms (kingly)," "enthronement psalms," "wisdom psalms," and "Messianic psalms."*
- *One kind of psalm that is confusing to many is what is called an "imprecatory psalm" (Psalm 109). Remember, bring forward from the Pentateuch the truths*

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and promises that the faithful Israelite banked his all on. Such “imprecatory psalms” are informed by and governed by the curses of Deuteronomy. If an apostate Israelite or a hardened foreign enemy has demonstrated he willfully chooses to live in rebellion against Yahweh, he falls under the curses of Deuteronomy (109:2-5). Consider 109:6-15. Why should that kind of judgment come upon that apostate? 19:16ff. What has David done? He has simply aligned his own desires with what Yahweh has already revealed was to be the case for such rebels within the nation and without.

- *This is not petty individual revenge. But the psalmist is gripped by Yahweh’s reputation and promises that are being rejected. These expressions come from intense devotion to and adoration of Yahweh. No petty resentment is being expressed. Rather, a worshipful love for Yahweh is giving voice to the vindication of Yahweh that will indeed come because Yahweh said it would. The psalmist simply has humbly aligned himself with what God had already stated He will do to His enemies. The psalmist is within bounds, not outside. If you have a problem with imprecatory psalms, you have a problem with the psalmist believing what God wrote in the Pentateuch.*
- *The psalmist didn’t only express desire for judgment against sinners around him. Psalm 2:10-12 - “show insight. . . take warning. . .serve Yahweh. . . rejoice. . .kiss the Son. . . how blessed are all who take refuge in Him.” Evidently the God-breathed words of the psalmist can express both sets of truths as complimentary not contradictory.*
- *Consider Revelation 6:9-11. No residual depravity in these saints. Only in a holy and flawless environment. What they express is “imprecatory” in nature. They are not rebuked for it.*
- *God’s word is deep enough, broad enough, stable enough to uphold equal truths that seem incompatible to my shallow, narrow, rickety understanding of those truths. God’s word does not contradict itself. The believer is within bounds to express both truths that feel too far apart for us to hold at the same time. Ask God to grow your love and understanding for His Justice while you never let go of His Mercy. You can do both. God’s holy word gives you guidance to express both in worship to God. By wanting mercy for sinners, you do not tie God’s hands to no longer hold that sinner accountable to judgment if he does not repent. By wanting judgment for sinners, you do not tie God’s hands so that He cannot be merciful to them to save them either.*
- *Let’s give brief thought to how Psalms will greet you on its first page. Page one will focus you on where Yahweh’s blessing can be found. Every reader of the Psalms starts by being directed in Psalm 1 to evaluate self, the*

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individual, Psalm 1:1. The individual man who is blessed is the man who keeps his life out and away from sin and delights in the law of Yahweh. The individual man who refuses that, is wicked and will be blown away in judgment. Yahweh has blessing awaiting you individually, as you cut yourself off from sin and close in on His Law.

- When you move on to Psalm 2, you are forced to enlarge your heart to think not just about your own life and how you desperately need Yahweh's word, but you must also think of the nations, peoples, kings of the earth, rulers, 2:2. And, the Son who coming to reign over them, Psalm 2:6, 12. Psalm 2:12 - Yahweh has blessing for any nation, for all who will take refuge in Him.
- And then you come to Psalm 3. Psalm 3:8 - David pleads for Yahweh's blessing on His unique people, Israel. And so there you are prepared for what you will find in the rest of the psalms - Individual expressions of worship and need and blessing from Yahweh. International appeals to come and worship and receive blessing from Yahweh. And Israel - appeals to Yahweh to bless them. Any one psalm may include one, two or all three of these priorities.

III. READING THE PSALMS:

- If you were to read the Psalms in one sitting, it would take you four hours and fifty-one minutes. If you want to get through Psalms in one week (7 days) it will take about 40 minutes of reading each day.
- *There is great benefit in reading slowly, reading meditatively, reflectively. You will gain depths of understanding that will benefit your soul before your Savior. AND, there is as much great benefit awaiting you if you will sit and turn the faucet of Psalms on and let it run past you as you read for 40 minutes at a time. There are riches awaiting you there too before your Savior.*
- *Don't pit those two different approaches to reading your Bible against each other. Don't only do on to the exclusion of the other. Incorporate a good balance between the two over the course of a week, month, your life.*

IV. FIVE WAYS THE PSALMS HELP THE CHRISTIAN:

1. Psalms will broaden your understanding of your heart.

- First, what does the Bible mean when it refers to the "heart." The heart is your inward self before God. Your heart is you inwardly speaking. Your

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heart is not a piece of you, but it IS you - but you inwardly speaking before God.

- Psalms refers to the heart about 125 times. Psalms has a lot to say about the heart of man. (This study depends on the LSB's translation choice of "heart" which differs at points from the NASB95.)
- When you come across the word "heart," try to put in your own words a simple description of what the psalmist says about the heart. Collect those simple descriptions and go through them frequently so you can have the broadest understanding of you who are inwardly speaking before your Lord and Savior.
- Psalm 9:1 - "I will give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart" - The heart (Who I am inwardly before God) can be gathered up into a whole to give thanks to God. The faithful believer doesn't want to be divided inwardly with only fractions of himself being thankful, giving thanks. Everything of who he is must course forward to Yahweh with thanksgiving.
- Psalm 10:6 - "He (the wicked/greedy, 10:3-4) says in his heart, 'I will not be shaken; from generation to generation I will not be in adversity'" - The heart (who I am inwardly before God) can engage in internal dialog about my false sense of security. Just because a man tells himself he is stable, doesn't mean he is. He's self-deceived at the heart level about how safe he is.
- Psalm 10:13 - "Why has the wicked spurned God? He has said in his heart, 'You will not require it'" - The heart (who I am inwardly before God) can engage in deceived, internal dialog about God. So, self-deception at the heart level can exist. A deceived internal dialog can take place about my own instability before God and what God is like and what He does.
- Psalm 10:17 - "O Yahweh, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will cause Your ear to give heed" - The heart (who I am inwardly before God) can be strengthened by God to endure injustices.
- Etc. God is concerned about a false sense of stability in the heart, the self-deception that can occur there, especially regarding what He is like; He is concerned about the believer's inner frailty and weakness in affliction and He personally comes to strengthen him. Psalms will broaden your understanding of your heart and more importantly, how God meets you there as your Judge or Redeemer.

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2. Psalms will deepen your appreciation of God's lovingkindness.

- "Lovingkindness" is an amazing word in the OT. "Steadfast love." It is God's covenant-keeping love towards His people. And, it was everything to the faithful Israelite. Life lived with distance from God's love was a life that was languishing. And if in a severe trial, with every creature comfort taken away, as long as the faithful believer had the lovingkindness of Yahweh, he could endure any and every loss.
- You and I recognize that covenant-keeping love in the self-giving sacrifice of Christ at the cross for us. It is in full bloom there. But back within Psalms you see the roots of that covenant-keeping love laid bare for you to nourish your heart on.
- Trace that word ("lovingkindness," or "steadfast love") through Psalms. It occurs about 127 times in the Psalms. Interestingly, in the first 4 books of Psalms (1-106) "lovingkindness" occurs 67 times (67X in 106 psalms). But in the last book of Psalms (107-150) it is a special theme running throughout, occurring 60 times (60X in 44 psalms). You will have new fuel for worship of Jesus Christ as you deepen your appreciation of God's lovingkindness. So, Psalms will broaden your understanding of your inner man, it will deepen your appreciation of God's lovingkindness, and:

3. Psalms will inspire your expression of love for God.

- This one is personal for me. As a young believer at the University of Nebraska, a godly old professor in the campus ministry I was attending always expressed his love for God when he prayed. And he pointed us young men to Psalm 18:1. I've tried to make that a regular part of my prayer life - it is one of the ways I know that God has indeed converted me even almost 40 years ago. I love Jesus Christ. That's not of my doing. And I need to persevere in my expression of that love for God. Psalms will help you do that:
- Psalm 5:11 - "May you shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You. (Jesus, I love Your name - the name above every name.)"
- Psalm 18:1 - "I love You, O Yahweh, my strength." (. . . my strength, my hope, my righteousness, my joy, etc.)
- Psalm 31:23 - "Oh, love Yahweh, all you His holy ones!" (Encourage other saints to express their love for Christ.)

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- Psalm 91:14 - GOD: "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will protect him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name." God loves to respond to your expression of love for Him!
- Psalm 97:10 - "Hate evil, you who love Yahweh, who keeps the souls of His holy ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked." (That's tangible. Love for Christ isn't just a sentimental expression. It's about holiness and hating evil.)
- Psalm 116:1 - "I love Yahweh, because He hears my voice and my supplications." (. . .because You paid my penalty, forgive me, provide my every need, etc.)
- *Psalm 119:132 - "Turn to me and be gracious to me, according to Your judgments for those who love Your name."*
- Psalm 145:20 - "Yahweh keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy." (What unspeakable, undeserved benefit is this for me as I love Jesus Christ - He keeps me, not crushes me.)
- Let these words become your words to Jesus Christ every day. Psalms helps you express the love you have for your Savior.

4. Psalms will clarify your confession of sin.

- The OT has a rich vocabulary for sin. And the psalmist is especially skilled to know how to utilize different Hebrew words for sin in his confession of it. Do you remember how King Balak took Balaam up to different vantage points to see Israel encamped in the wilderness below? Numbers 22ff. The OT's different words for sin give you different vantage points to look down on your sin that is encamped in your heart - so you can better understand what your sin is like before God.
- The top three words the psalmist uses are: "**Sin**" - is the English translation of a Hebrew word that the OT believer used when he wanted to emphasize how his sin missed the mark of God and God's standard. The psalmist used the Hebrew word "sin" when he felt the failure of the attitudes/thoughts/words/deeds to meet God's holy standard. "**Transgression**" - the English translation of a different Hebrew word the OT believer used when he wanted to emphasize the rebellious nature of his sin. The psalmist used the Hebrew word "transgression" when he felt the rebellion in his thoughts/words/attitudes/deeds (shaking a fist in the face of God). "**Iniquity**" - the English translation of another Hebrew

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word that the OT believer used when he wanted to emphasize his discovery of how twisted or perverted his sin was. The psalmist used the Hebrew word "iniquity" when he felt the perversion or twistedness of his thoughts/words/attitudes/deed done. So again, these different words for sin take you to three different vantage points to look down on your sin in the camp of your heart, so you have a better understanding of what your sin is before God and then you can confess it to Him more thoroughly, accurately.

- So what? Psalm 51:1-3 (walk through). Understanding how these words bring out different elements of your sin's nature, enables you to be more clear with God about what you understand your sin is before Him. Take up these words in your confession - they provide three different vantage points from which to look upon your sin and confess it before your Savior who is eager to forgive you when you confess (eager to blot out, to wash, to cleanse).
- Think of all you gain from this book! You can broaden your understanding of your inner self before God. You can deepen your appreciation for His love for you. You can find words to help you express your love for your Savior from this book. You can clarify your expression of confession to God because of this book. How rich are you as a believer in Jesus Christ.
- God gave this to genuine believers in Yahweh who lived in the wayward, disintegrating nation called Israel. That nation was slipping fast down a slippery slope of sin into the curses of Deuteronomy. Yet look what God secured His faithful people with! What worship they could express to Him in the midst of all that.
- What a great God we have! Do you have anything to fear as everything around you proceeds from bad to worse? God wasn't interested in leaving faithful Israelites to themselves during dark times to define what they thought worship was. He gave to them biblical worship. And Christian, He has not left you to yourself either in these darkening times. The sun is setting on us. Come to this book. Come to the God of this book to be stabilized in your worship of Jesus Christ.

5. Psalms will train you to speak truth to yourself (so you don't just listen to everything you think).

- *Paul Tripp has caught onto this truth about the human condition which is really important for us to understand. He has given a modern day description to this condition that you and I are both affected by every day. But the psalmist knew about it long before Tripp, and even better,*

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the psalmist has God-breathed words to help us persevered through this condition we are affected by.

- *What is the condition? Tripp: "You are in an unending conversation with yourself. No one talks to you more than you do." You and I do this throughout every circumstance of our day. You are constantly in an internal, heart-level conversation that influences every decision you make, every attitude you choose, every conversation you have, and every act you carry out.*

- *It is not a question of whether you talk to yourself or not. It is rather a question of how good and helpful and wise and truthful are the things you tell yourself? Here is where Psalms can help you greatly. The faithful OT believer actually incorporated his own inward dialog with himself into his worship of Yahweh from time to time.*

- *You and I need to become more aware that we are indeed doing this inward dialog all the time, and then we need to be better equipped to speak truth to ourselves at the heart level just like the psalmist did. The psalmist shepherded himself, his heart in his worship of Yahweh. So must you. So can you. Examples:*

- *Psalms 42:5, 11; 43:5. The psalmist was aware that he was in despair inwardly at the heart/soul level. Rather than just staying there and letting his despairing inner man do all the talking, he took charge and shepherded his soul. He spoke truth about God to his despairing inner man. Challenged himself: "Why?" "Why?" And he reminded himself of truth about God that he had learned before in prior seasons/circumstances of despair: God will come soon and meet him in his despair and everything will change. He just needs to wait on God. He will show up. He will deliver him. And the psalmist will praise God once again.*

- *Psalms 62:5-7. David is suffering at the hands of wicked men. First, he just openly declares to all who will listen that his soul waits in silence for God (submissive, quiet, trust). Deliverance comes from Him, 62:1-2. But then, after describing the wickedness afflicting him, 62:3-4, David needed to turn the same truth about God inward on his own soul, 62:5. Notice again the issue is waiting on God. That tells you something about where your inner struggle with yourself will most likely be - on wondering where God is or why He hasn't yet done for you what you think He should do for you. And it is in that moment you should not merely listen to your fretful soul, but most importantly, you must speak truth about God to yourself, 62:5-7.*

The Psalms

66 Books Series

- *Psalm 116:7. 116:1-4 recounts how close to death the psalmist was, and how he cried out to Yahweh to save him. That was a season of restlessness of soul for the psalmist. He says, 116:5-7. Notice first, he actually knew he was inwardly restless, and was able to calm his soul. He told himself the truth about God - how God heard his prayer (116:1), God was gracious, righteous, and compassionate (116:5), God kept him (116:6) and delivered him (116:6), and dealt bountifully with him (116:7). Because of these truths about Yahweh, there was no reason for his soul to be restless a moment longer.*

- *It is words like these in the psalms that can teach you how to assess yourself accurately, and then equip you with truth about God to stabilize your despairing, restless inner man. Parent - do you know how to do this yourself (assess yourself and then speak truth to calm your inner man)? Because if you do, you are positioned so well to help your child learn how to do it also. And when you meet with one another to care for one another, before you just start telling each other what to think and do, ask your brother to assess his own soul in the moment. Can he see what's going on there? Despair? Restless? Anxious? Fearful? Doubting? Then, when he gains perspective on himself, ask your brother what truth about God must he tell himself to recover stability and faith? Psalms is a gift from God to you to help you speak truth to yourself so that you don't just listen to everything you think.*