

Bible Study # 76
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The Writings Series—Book One—Psalms 1—41

This evening, we want to get into the book of Psalms. As I commented last time, the Psalms are divided into five books, or five sections. **We are going to cover Book One of Psalms this evening—Psalms 1—41. We will also note the correspondence with the first book of the Law, Genesis, and the first book of the Festival Scrolls, the Song of Solomon.** One of the things we will see is that each of the sections of the Psalms has its own individuality and its own character. The first two Psalms sort of set the stage for the entire book. The third Psalm serves as an introduction to the first book of Psalms.

Psalm 1 and 2 sort of introduce the entire book. The stress of the first couple of Psalms has to do with a contrast.

Psalm 1 starts out with a contrast between what is permanent and what is temporary, what is going to endure and last and what is going to be swept away.

Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

What is he going to be like?

Verse 3, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” We have a contrast. On the one hand, we have individuals who are described as delighting in God’s law. Do we delight in God’s law? Are we enjoying Christianity or merely enduring? Here is an individual who delights in God’s law and meditates on it. That individual is compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water. What is the significance of that sort of symbolism? Here is a tree that is planted by the rivers, so it is always going to be close to water. If a tree is planted in an area where the roots go down and is going to be well watered, that means it is going to be a productive, enduring, growing tree. It symbolizes permanence.

Then, on the other hand, we have the ungodly who are described like chaff, which the wind drives away (v. 4). When wheat is harvested and winnowed, the chaff is separated from the grain and the chaff is simply blown away by the wind.

So there is a contrast between those who are going to endure and those who are going to be simply swept away. One of the themes that run through the book of Psalms is the fact that there is a way of life that leads to permanence. There is a way of life that leads to life eternal—to that which will endure forever. And there is a way of life that those who follow it are simply going to be swept away. There is going to be a tide that simply sweeps them away, and they will no longer be around. So here’s an important theme that runs throughout the book.

Psalm 2 goes into another theme that runs throughout the book and it has to do with God intervening into history—God stepping into the affairs of man.

Verse 1, “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?” It describes the nations raging and the people plotting (KJV, “imagining”) a vain thing.

Verses 2-4, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” They are going to stand up and fight against the Lord and against His Anointed (the Messiah), the returning Jesus Christ. God sits in the heavens and laughs. God says, “That’s funny! Look at these puny little human beings running around down there. They think they are really going to do something.”

God is going to step into the affairs of man. The sureness of that, which we celebrate at the Feast of Trumpets, is testified throughout the Psalms.

We will get into this first section of the Psalms, which is termed Book One of Psalms—the first 41 Psalms.

In the introduction last Bible study, I pointed out that this first book of the Psalms parallels with the first book in the Festival Scrolls—the Song of Solomon—which was traditionally read at Passover/Unleavened Bread season. We are going to see that much of the message content is a parallel to the Passover season because this first book of the Psalms focuses in on the need for personal salvation. **Psalm 3 sets the stage for the first book of Psalms—a focus on the role of Christ, particularly on His first coming as the Passover Lamb. There is a focus throughout this section on personal salvation, the need for it and where it comes from. It comes from God.**

Psalm 3:1-5, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up

against me, many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.' But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me."

One of the things we are going to find, as we go through the Psalms, is that David went through a variety of circumstances and mirrored every sort of feeling and every wave of emotion. There is nothing that you can go through—no heights or depths that you can struggle with—that David did not experience. David experienced emotions from the exultation of victory, to the depths of despair and discouragement. But we see in the Psalms that David worked through and processed these feelings. He put into words things that we sometimes have a hard time expressing. Sometimes we have trouble expressing in words things we are going through. That is part of the value of the Psalms. They are written in a poetic fashion and in a way that lends them to meditation. The Psalms were written to be thought about, to be meditated upon and to be committed to memory. There are areas of the Psalms that mirror all sorts of emotions and feelings.

David wrote this third Psalm when he was fleeing from Absalom. It was a low point in his life. A lot of people were ready to desert him. You find out who your friends are, not when you are up and on top, but when you are down on the bottom. If you are on top, everybody is your friend. You can walk into a bar and say, 'The drinks are on me,' and everybody in there is your buddy. You have a room full of friends. But walk in someplace when you're "down and out." You say, 'Can anybody loan me a dollar?' You find out how quickly they can all "disappear into the woodwork."

When David was king, don't you think that everybody wanted to curry David's favor? Everybody wanted to be nice to him. Boy, David was a popular fellow. He was king. Everybody wanted to "butter him up."

When Absalom staged a coup, a lot of people thought Absalom was going to be in charge. So everybody who had ever had anything against David, as well as those who just simply wanted to play politics, were immediately on the other side. David did not want to have to fight against his own son and he did not want Jerusalem to be destroyed—so he left. He fled. That must have been a low point for David in so many ways—all of the feelings and emotions that he was going through.

It's sort of interesting. During the last attempted coup in the Soviet Union, since some obviously took the wrong side and some wanted to straddle the fence, they were conveniently sick. In fact, some of those got fired, too. All of a sudden they had—what do you call it?—the "diplomatic flu." They wanted to see which side was going to win. They didn't want to come down on the wrong side. So, all of a sudden, they didn't feel so good and thought they ought to go to bed. Just as soon as the coup was over, they started feeling better and they knew which side they were on. They were on the winning side. 'Which one won? Okay, that's the one I am for.' Do you realize how often this is the case in life? That sort of illustrated it, but it can happen on a smaller scale in our lives. It happened to David.

Psalm 3:1, he said, "Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me." All of a sudden, here were people "popping up out of the woodwork"—people who never would have voiced displeasure with David before. But since they thought he was down and out, they were going to kick him, too. People were saying, 'Yeah, he's done for.' Verse 2, "...there is no help for him in God." 'He's history. Even God can't save him now.' That was not a very smart thing to say. But David at that depth, in terms of what he was going through and struggling with, recognized that God was a shield (v. 3).

So he pleaded with God.

Verses 7-8, "Arise, O Lord; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; you have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah" David recognized, in his depths, that salvation came from God.

Psalm 4:1, "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me when I was in distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer." David understood that God is the source of help. When you are in trouble, you can go to God.

Verse 4 (KJV), "Stand in awe [be impressed with God], and do not sin. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." In other words, lie there and meditate. Don't follow and practice sin; spend some time in quiet contemplation.

Verse 5, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." See! That's the source.

Verse 8, the result of this is, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord,

make me dwell in safety.” David said he could lie down and get a good night’s sleep because he put it in God’s hands. He turned it over to Him.

Psalm 5:1, “Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.”

Verse 3, “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.” David began his day by praying to God. Here is a good indication that starting our day in prayer is something important for us to do.

Verse 4, “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with You.” God knows who’s who and He knows what’s what. We can’t fool God. We can’t play games with God. We find that God does not take sin lightly.

Verses 5-6, “The boastful [KJV, “foolish”] shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood [deceit]; The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” God takes deceit and hypocrisy very seriously. That’s a serious matter.

Verse 9, He talks about these individuals who are not faithful and truthful.

Psalm 6:1-2, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.” David goes to God and asks God to deal with him gently and mercifully. He knew that he needed God’s chastening and correction, but he asked God to please do so gently and kindly and in mercy.

Verses 4-5, “Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies’ sake! For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?”

Here’s a verse that shows the state of the dead, ‘in death there is no remembrance of God; in the grave who is going to give thanks?’ When you are dead, you are dead. David again focused in on this sort of thinking.

Before we get too far along, let me make a couple of comments on Psalm 2 because there is one thing I neglected to mention. It mentions God laughing at puny man’s silly attempt to throw off God’s rule (vv. 3-4).

Psalm 2:7-9, “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.””

God gave Christ instructions as to how to rule the nations. He said, ‘I am going to give You the nations for Your inheritance. I am going to give them to You for You to rule over.’ Then God the Father proceeded to instruct Christ as to how the nations should be ruled.

In Revelation 2, we find this quoted as Jesus is speaking to the Churches.

Revelation 2:26, ““And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.”” The Father gave Christ power over the nations, and Christ is going to give to those who are faithful and keep His works to the end power over the nations.

Verse 27, ““He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces”—as I also have received from My Father.””

We are seeing that Christ is going to govern as the Father would govern. And converted Christians who are in God’s Kingdom and have been given power over the nations will govern as Christ would govern. We will govern as Christ will govern, and Christ will govern as the Father would govern. God’s rule is going to be exercised with mercy and with power.

Psalm 7:1-2, again this theme of salvation, “O Lord my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me, lest they tear me like a lion....” Again, there is this focus on a need for personal deliverance and salvation.

Verse 17, “I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.”

Psalm 8:1, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth. You who set Your glory above the heavens!”

Verses 3-5, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.”

Verses 4-8, reading out of the Jewish translation, “What is man that You are mindful of him? The son of man that You think of him? Yet You made him but little lower than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet, sheep, oxen, yes, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the sea.”

Hebrew 2: 6-8, this section is actually quoted, "...What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him."

We find in Hebrew an emphasis that man is ultimately to be given rulership over all things. "You made him a little lower than the angels..." in that we are mortal, physical and subject to death. But God has in mind a destiny for us that far transcends any of the angels. What is man's place in the universe? Well, God has given man a very special place because He has made him to have dominion over all God has, over all the things God has created. Man has been made to have dominion.

Romans 8:17, "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..." If we are heirs of God, then that means we are going to inherit and are going to have rulership over the things that God has made. So man's place in the universe is a very special place because God has made man to share life with Him as part of His Family throughout eternity and to have a relationship with God that no other sort of being can have. David understood and expressed that.

Psalm 9:1, "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works." He talks about the greatness of God.

Verse 7, "But the Lord shall endure forever..."

Verse 8, "He shall judge the world in righteousness..."

Verse 10, "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You."

Let me comment a little bit on the expression, "Those who know Your name will put their trust in You." There have been various groups that have laid great emphasis on what they term the "sacred name." There have been those who have even gone out from the Church, and there are other groups that have built virtually their whole religion around Psalm 9:10.

Psalm 9:10, "...those who know Your name put their trust in You." They make a big deal about what they call the "sacred name," which is the Hebrew pronunciation of God's name. These groups have split into about three or four different groups because they can't agree on the pronunciation of God's name. There is The Assemblies of YHWH and The Assemblies of

YHWH, and they have about three or four groups because they can't agree whether it is YHVH or YHWH, etc. They wrangle about how it should be said.

The point that we should understand is: What does it mean to know God's name? It doesn't mean just to be able to phonetically pronounce the Hebrew. God's name is not some sort of magic word like "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp" or "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" who had the magic words, "open sesame," and it all opened up. God's name is not some sort of magic incantation or magic word that you say the name just right and this sort of opens things up. Names have meanings. A name describes and it identifies.

In the Scriptures, the names that people were given had meaning in the language that people understood what the meanings were. God's names define and describe God. The language we use depends on our native language.

Some of these "sacred-name" groups make a big issue over the fact that the letter "J" (as it is pronounced in English) didn't exist in the Greek or Hebrew alphabet. That's certainly true. There are several other letters that didn't exist. And there are letters they have that we don't have. So? You make the letter "J" and an Englishman will look at it and pronounce it as "Ja." An Englishman will pronounce Jesus, "Jesus." But you show it to a Spaniard, and that's not what he gets out of it. He will say, "Hasoos." A Frenchman will say, "Jasus."

The point is not the phonetic pronunciation that varies from language to language. The same letter has different sounds depending on the language. The phonetic sound is just the characteristic of language. It's not that God can't understand you unless you have somehow learned the language. Even in the same language, some of the pronunciation changes over a period of time. You don't have to go back and learn Hebrew as it was spoken 3,000 years ago for God to understand.

The thing about God's names is that God's names describe Him. God's names tell you that He is Eternal and Almighty. God's names tell you He is the Creator and that He is our Father. There are all sorts of descriptive terms that are characteristic of God's name. "They who know Your name" means those who understand who God is, those who understand His character and His nature because God's names describe Him. God's names tell us what He's like and that's what it means to know His name. We are to put

our trust in Him, to understand His nature, His character, His rank and His position.

Psalm 10:1-3, “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire; he blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord.” Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever wondered why doesn’t God do something? Why does it seem like God is standing way off? Why is God seemingly gone way off in a time of trouble? People are doing things they should not do and they seem to be getting by with it. They are not even trying.

Verse 4, “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”

He goes through and describes this way of thinking and the problems and the things that result from it. He describes the attitude of the wicked.

Verses 16-18, “The Lord is King forever and ever; the nations have perished out of His land. Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more.” David understood, even in the midst of seeing things that contradicted it, that God was going to intervene. In the midst of seeing things that shouldn’t be going on, David understood that God was going to judge.

Psalm 11:1, “In the Lord I put my trust....” ‘I am going to trust in God.’

Verses 3-5, “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.” God may try and test the righteous. He may test His people. He may allow us to go through trials and tests, but He will ultimately save us. God is in charge. He is in His holy temple. What can you do? Recognize that God is in charge. He knows what’s going on, and while He may allow His people to be tried and tested, God is going to take note of His people.

Here is another point in David’s life.

Psalm 12:1-2, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.” David looked around. It seemed like people who weren’t trying to do

what was right were multiplying and good people were in trouble and perishing. Good people were harder and harder to find and further and further between. David is crying out for salvation. As you go through, you find that David puts into words these feelings and things that he encountered—the trials and the tests of faith.

Verses 6-7, he worked through to realize that, “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.” God’s words are pure and true.

Have you ever felt forgotten? David did.

Psalm 13:1, “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like God isn’t listening, like God was off somewhere hiding from you? David felt like that, too.

Verse 3, so he beseeches God and he says, “Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Verses 5-6, “But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.” David, again, worked through. When he started out, his focus was on how he felt forgotten and abandoned. But as he focused in on it, he realized that God was really the source of blessings and that God really had blessed him. So, by the end of the Psalm, he started to count his blessings rather than count his troubles. That’s an important part of dealing with trials. If we sit down and make a ten-page list of our troubles and about a three-line list of our blessings, our perspective is all messed up. It is important that we focus, even in the midst of our trials, on the fact that God really provides help and blessings in so many ways.

Psalm 14:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none who does good.” God labels a fool anyone who can look around and see all the things God has made (the witness of creation) and can simply say that there is no God. God defines as a fool somebody who simply refuses to acknowledge the existence of God in the midst of all the witness to the contrary.

Psalm 15:1, “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” ‘Who’s going to be there in Your Kingdom? Who’s going to dwell there?’

Verses 2-4, “He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” –Somebody who is a man of his word or a woman of her word, an individual who means what he says.

One of the major factors of the multiplication of lawsuits and all sorts of civil suits that we have is simply because people don’t want to do what they agreed to do. They are not willing to swear to their own hurt and then not change. They make an agreement to do something, it gets inconvenient and they don’t want to do it anymore.

God says you make an agreement, you give your word and you stick to what you say.

Verse 5, “He who does not put out his money at usury....” This is not a reference to a business arrangement but to personal loans. This is a matter of making a profit off of somebody else’s troubles. It’s sort of a “loan-shark” type of an approach—if somebody’s in trouble and in dire straits, you make money off of their distress. One of the things that God does indict through the Scriptures, in terms of dealing with people, has to do with those who take advantage of somebody in trouble. Society has always had those who hover around the edges waiting to catch somebody in trouble and take advantage of that.

Verse 5, continuing, “...nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.” The way to endure (to last) is to latch on to the values that will endure.

Psalm 16:1, again a plea for salvation, “Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.”

Verses 9-10, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol [hell, the grave], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Here is a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

This is quoted in Acts 13:35 and is applied to Christ’s resurrection. The prophecy was made that the Messiah would not remain in the grave. He would not corrupt, decay and return to the earth, but would obviously be restored to life and would come forth as He did.

Psalm 17:8, “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings.” The expression “apple of your eye”—an expression

that we use in English—is actually derived from the Bible. It is an expression in Hebrew, translated into English, so it is quoted as an English proverb.

Notice a reference to the resurrection.

Verse 15, “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Here’s a reference to the fact that David knew he was going to wake up and he would see God’s face in righteousness.

Psalm 18:1-3, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised....”

It describes God’s greatness. David describes God’s greatness and power. He describes God as the deliverer. God is my Rock, my fortress, my deliverer and my strength. He is the One that we can depend on. God is the God of our salvation. He is the One we can count on. There is nothing too hard for Him. He describes these things in a very poetic way.

Verses 9-10, “He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.”

Psalm 18 is a very beautiful psalm.

Psalm 18:25-26, “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious [KJV, “froward”] You will show Yourself shrewd [KJV, “froward”].”

This term “froward” is actually translated from two different Hebrew words. When it says “with the froward,” the Hebrew word here means “crooked” or “perverse.” A totally different word is used to refer to God when it says, “You will show Yourself froward” or “You will show Yourself a hard adversary.” With those who are crooked and perverse, God will show Himself a hard adversary. With merciful people, God will be merciful. For those who are upright, just and fair, He will deal justly and fairly. With those who are pure, He will deal purely. With those who are crooked and perverse, He is going to show Himself as a hard adversary. God is described as our source, the One to whom we can look.

Verse 31, “For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” God is the One who can be counted on.

Verse 46, “The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” The glory, the power and the greatness of God are declared when you look up at what God has made. You can imagine David as he stood out there, particularly as a shepherd boy keeping watch over his father’s sheep in the field at night. There is something about being out of the city, out in an area that is clear or maybe up on a hill or an area where there is not a lot of light or anything around. It seems like the sky is just filled with stars.

I know it has impressed me several different times when I would drive to visit my mother who lives out in the country. We would get there late at night, we would step out of the car, and I would look up. It was like I had forgotten how many stars there were because you never see stars like that in Baton Rouge or Houston where we used to live. You could look up and see an odd star here and there, but there is so much diffused light that you simply don’t see many stars. Even out in the country if you have a lot of lights around, you don’t see as much. But if you get out into an area that is out away from town where there is not a lot of light around, it is just incredible. The sky is alive with stars. “The heavens declare the glory of God....” It is so impressive.

Verses 7-9, it continues and describes God’s greatness, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

God’s Law (the Torah) is perfect, converting and restoring our lives. God’s law is perfect and it points, leads and instructs us in the direction that leads to life. God’s testimonies are sure; they make wise the simple. Testimonies are the examples and illustrations that are a source of wisdom. We may not have a lot of experience, but we can read the account of God working in the lives of people—men, women, young and old. You see the things they went through, the things they experienced and the way that God viewed it and dealt with it. It is a source of experience and makes wise the simple. God’s statutes are right. His commandments are pure. God’s law, when you give thought to it, directs you. That’s what it is there for.

Psalm 20:1-2, again, a plea for salvation, “May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may

the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion.”

Psalm 21:1, “The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” –Again, a focus on salvation.

Psalm 22 is a Psalm that ties in very directly with the crucifixion of Christ. We find that the first words of Psalm 22 are the words that are recorded back in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. They are the words that Jesus spoke as He hung there.

Psalm 22:1-2, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.” If you read Psalm 22, you will realize that most of this is what Christ would have been meditating on. It was expressive of what He was going through.

Verses 28-29, “For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive.” Nobody can hang on to life. When it starts ebbing away, you can’t hold on to it. You don’t have the power to keep yourself alive.

Verses 30-31, the prophecy of Christ is, “A posterity [KJV, “seed”] shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.” “He has done this.” A preferable translation would be, “It is finished.” Or it would be better rendered, “It has been done.”

John 19:30, it ties in with the statement that Christ quoted, “It is finished!” It is quoted in the Aramaic form of the Greek. If you were to translate it back into the language that Christ spoke, it would be almost identical to the ending of Psalm 22:31. This is undoubtedly the tie-in.

Just as Psalm 22 reflects the thoughts and feelings of what Jesus went through as His life was ebbing away (paying for your sins and mine), Psalm 23 must certainly reflect the day of the wave sheaf (the day in the aftermath of His resurrection).

Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Verse 3, “He restores my soul....” ‘He restores my life.’

Verse 6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Psalms 22 and Psalm 23 go together in that sense. Psalm 22 reflects the sense of aloneness, of being forsaken; then the recognition that God is the source of salvation and the exultation is in Psalm 23.

Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” The focus is that God owns everything.

Psalm 25:1-2, “To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me.”

Verses 4-6, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and your loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old.”

Verses 8-9, “Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble [KJV, “meek”] He guides in justice, and the humble [meek] He teaches His way.” We can trust God. Again, God is the source of our salvation.

Psalm 26:1-3, “Vindicate [KJV, “Judge”] me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth.” He asks God to examine him. That’s what he is saying here in the first couple of verses. He wants God to really examine and look at him. God knows us from the inside out. God is the One who can show us our secret sins. God is the One who can help us to see what we don’t see. David was seeking to walk before God in sincerity and truth. He trusted God and he asked God to examine him, to try him and to help him to see himself.

Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Again, this is a matter of personal salvation; “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?”

Verse 9, “Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.”

Verse 11, “Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.” Again, God is the source of our deliverance, our salvation.

Psalm 28:1, “To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock: Do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.”

Psalm 29:1-2, “Give [ascribe] unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty [majesty] of holiness.”

It describes God’s power.

Verses 3-4, “The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” It describes the greatness and the power of God. Much of the symbolism of Psalm 29 is like a storm, the thunder, etc. It describes the wind and the shaking of everything.

Verses 5-8, “The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.” Here is a description of all these things.

Verse 11, then it ends up, “The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

I would like to read a comment from the *Sanseno* Jewish commentary in reference to Psalm 29. “A thrilling description of a storm, a verbal symphony in which the shadowing peels of thunder reverberating around the hills is reproduced in words with realistic effect. The Hebrew poet, however, cannot rest satisfied with a word picture. His religious genius induced him to interpret the thunderclaps as the majestic voice of God. The Psalm is included in the Sabbath liturgy. It is one of the seven Sabbath songs. [Psalm 29 is the only Sabbath Psalm in this section of Psalms; the others are all in book four of Psalms.] Furthermore, the closing note ‘peace’ coming at the end of the poem of the storm is particularly apt for the day of rest which introduces a period of calm after the storm of everyday life and conflicts.”

Psalm 29 is one of the seven Psalms that were read in the temple every Sabbath. For the others, go back to about Psalm 92 (the second of those), followed by 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99. Those are the seven Psalms that were traditionally recited in the temple at the beginning of the Sabbath. Other portions were gone through, but these seven were read every Sabbath. They came to be known as the “seven Sabbath Psalms.”

Psalm 30:1, “I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me.”

Psalm 31:1-2, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me.”

Verse 5, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Verse 15, “My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.” –Again, a reference to salvation and a reference to trust in God for deliverance.

Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile.” The most blessed state to be in is the state of being forgiven.

Verse 5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” When we do that, we can be forgiven. We don’t have to live under a cloud and a shadow.

Psalm 33:1-3, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.”

It describes the greatness of God.

Verses 16-19, “No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

The real outcome of wars and battles is determined by God—not by the size of the army, not by the implements and the technology and all of these things. Those are not the real determining factors. The real determining factor is the fact that, “the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him.”

Psalm 34:1, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

David spends a lot of time praising God. It is an important thing to understand. A very important key is brought out in Romans 1. Do you know the progression that took people away from God in the world after the flood? It is exactly the

same progression that takes young people out of the Church. Any young person who grows up in the Church and leaves the Church follows that same progression.

Romans 1:21, it says, “...although they knew God...” That’s the state of somebody who grows up in the Church. That was the state of all humanity when they got off the ark. Everybody—Noah, Mrs. Noah and the three little Noah’s and their wives—they all knew God. Nobody had the question, “Does God exist?” They had just gone through pretty dramatic evidence of that.

Romans 1:21, but it says, “...when they knew God [that was the starting point], they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful [What happened as a result of not glorifying God and being thankful?], they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” There is a progression from light to darkness, a progression from knowing God to living in spiritual darkness. The progression starts when we cease to glorify God and to be thankful and appreciative to Him for His calling.

David spent a lot of time praising and glorifying God. That’s one of the things you find that comes out in the Psalms over and over. David stood in awe of God. He was impressed with God. He thought a lot about God. He counted his blessings. Some people only count their troubles. David had troubles, too. He mentioned those troubles and talked about those troubles. There were times when things bothered him, but he did not let that become the “end-all” and all of his focus. He glorified God and he was thankful.

I think that’s one of the most important and valuable things. If a young person growing up does not learn to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, if he doesn’t learn to love God and to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, then he will ultimately treat it cheaply and become vain in his imagination. That will lead to actually losing the understanding that at one time he had.

Psalm 34:2, “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad.”

Verse 6, “This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Verses 12-15, “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” God hears those who serve Him.

Verses 17-19, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit [those who practice repentance]. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” God’s people may have many afflictions, but God will deliver.

Verse 22, “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.” God is the source of salvation. He is the source of redemption.

Psalm 35:1, “Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me....”

Notice what David did.

Verse 13, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.” How did David humble himself? He humbled himself with fasting. That’s one of the purposes of fasting. It is a means by which we humble ourselves before God and draw near to God.

Psalm 36:1, “An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.” If God was real to people and if they were really impressed with Him, they wouldn’t do some of the things they do. It describes that.

Psalm 37 is a very important Psalm. I think it is a good one to go to and meditate on when you are having trouble.

Psalm 37:1, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.” Don’t get all worked up and bothered because of people who are doing what’s wrong. Why?

Verses 2-5, “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

Verse 7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” The point is that no matter what somebody seems to be getting by with, that’s not the permanent state of things.

It is so easy sometimes to fret because of evildoers. We get all worked up because we feel somebody is getting by with something, and that’s not right. That’s not fair because maybe they are getting by with it at our expense. That always seems so unfair. If they are getting by with it at somebody else’s expense, we feel like

“that’s too bad,” but if it’s at our expense, then that becomes a matter that’s very important. What’s the joke? What’s the difference between a recession and a depression? A recession is when your neighbor has lost his job. A depression is when you have lost yours. It is a matter of perspective. We feel “that’s too bad” when it happens to our neighbor, but when it happens to us, it’s really serious. God says don’t worry about it. What’s the alternative to worrying about it?

Verses 4-5, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

What am I going to do?

Verses 7-8, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.” Why?

Verses 9-11, “For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Verse 18, “The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.”

The point is that we must put it in God’s hands. We trust Him and it is ultimately going to sort out. God knows who’s who and what’s what. It is a matter of perspective. David had to work through and come to this point of realizing that the key is getting it in perspective and realizing there is a way of life that is going to last. There is a way of life that is going to endure forever because God is going to intervene and God’s salvation is coming. But just as God is going to deliver His people, there is going to come a time of reckoning to those who aren’t His people.

Psalm 38:1, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!”

We ask God to correct us, but we look for mercy and ask God to do so gently. That’s always an important thing to include. When we ask God for correction, ask Him to please do it very gently.

Psalm 39:1, “I said, ‘I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.’” David did not want to sin with his tongue. He wanted to control what he said.

Verse 6, an interesting statement is made, “‘Surely every man walks about like a shadow

[or, “every man walks in an image”] [KJV, “in a vain show”]; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.”

Human nature is such that we seek to project this image, rather than to get down to the reality. In the midst of our fears and insecurities, in a matter of trying to impress one another, we walk in an image. We project this image that we try to measure up to and live up to. The point is that we need to get down to the reality and ask God to really help us to deal with things as they are and with ourselves as we really are.

Psalm 40:1, again, the theme is salvation, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.” “I will wait for God.”

Verses 16-17, “Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, ‘The Lord be magnified!’ But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.”

Psalm 41 ends this section of the Psalms.

Psalm 41:1-2, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive....”

When we put into practice God’s way of life, it is not enough to simply darken the door of church or to sort of walk in and warm a seat. That’s not what impresses God. Religion is not something you put on and put off like your Sabbath suit. It is not something to be taken off, put in the closet and kept there all week, then to be taken out, dusted off and worn again on the next Sabbath. Religion is to be a way of life; it is to be the way we function.

Verse 1, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; [This is someone who practices, in his everyday life, God’s attitude of mercy and concern.] the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.” The person who can look to God for help in the time of trouble is the one who is trying to live and practice God’s way day in and day out. If the only time you ever make God’s acquaintance is when you’re in trouble and you go along ignoring God all the rest of the time, then, all of a sudden, you get in a jam—it’s like, ‘Where’s God?’ We need to be looking for God and trying to practice God’s way in our day-to-day life because God takes note of that.

Verse 9 is a prophecy that is quoted in the New Testament (John 13:18) as a reference to Judas Iscariot.

Verse 13, this section ends up, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”

There is a reference that runs throughout the first section of the Psalms—Book One of Psalms—that is a reference to salvation, a reference to our need for God’s deliverance. This section, in focusing in on a need for salvation, focuses in on why we need salvation. We need God’s deliverance. We can’t deliver ourselves. We find ourselves in any number of problems and difficulties. We need God’s deliverance and God can be counted upon. God is there. God is the One who we can look to and count on to deliver us in time of adversity.

This theme of salvation that runs through the first section of Psalms corresponds with the first book of the Festival Scrolls—Song of Solomon—that was read at the Passover season. It certainly focuses in on the theme of personal salvation.

In the book of the Law, the book of Genesis is the first book of the Law. The book of Genesis introduces what? It introduces the need for individual salvation. It introduces Adam and Eve and their sin, that God promised deliverance and salvation through the Seed of woman (that’s how God was going to accomplish salvation) and the working and development of God’s promises of the Messiah through the family of Abraham. All this is developed in the book of Genesis. So there is this correspondence that we would note and a theme of salvation and of deliverance.

There is a tremendous amount. We have just sort of skimmed the high spots of these first 41 Psalms. These Psalms will give you something you can go through and focus in and meditate on. We realize there is a tremendous amount that God has packed into the Psalms that are there for us to meditate on, to think about, that can help us sort of get things into perspective when we’re going through difficulties and things in our lives. Next Bible study we will cover Book Two of Psalms—Psalms 42—72.