

PREACHING, PERUSING AND PONDERING THE PSALMS INTRODUCTION #1:

Pastor Jose F. Maldonado
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Hillburn Drive Grace Baptist Church

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“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (150) 1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.” Psalms 1:1-3; 150:1, 2 & 6.

The book of Psalms is an ocean full of spiritual treasures, so drink from this deep well of spiritual nourishment. We will entitle our series: **Preaching, Perusing and Pondering the Psalms**. The Psalms are good for the soul. I venture to say that no book in the Bible touches the heart, soul and mind like this precious book that speaks to every need for our lives. Whether we are young or old, rich or poor, sickly or healthy, educated or illiterate a babe in Christ or a mature Christian, the Psalms speak to everyone who reads it. It is the book that I have read and re-read and continue to read, that is; I never get tired of reading the Psalms. There is always a fresh anointing to my soul when I read the Psalms. If I was marooned on an island and could only have one book of the Bible that book would be the Psalms. I guess you can tell that I love the Psalms. This book has helped me many times, whether on the mountain top rejoicing in the blessings of God or at the valley struggling through a difficult trial or affliction. May God be pleased to bless you with this precious book and give a love and a desire to read and re-read it over and over again.

It has 150 chapters full of encouragement and instruction for the child of God. You can read the longest book in the Bible in one month by reading 5 chapters a day. I not sure who came up with this reading plan, but it is a blessing. Start day 1 by reading chapters 1, 31, 61, 91 and 121, if you notice we added 30 chapters as an interval in between. Day 2 you read chapter 2, 32, 62, 92 and 122. You follow suit everyday by reading the day of the month with the same chapter to begin and just add 30 chapters. Again, for example day 17: Read chapter 17, then add chapters 47, 77, 107 and 137 all the way until day 30th where you begin reading chapter 30, then 60, 90, 120 and 150 and you have just read the entire book. Just a reminder when it's the 29th of the month you will read through the longest chapter of the Bible, Psalm 119 which has 176 verses, therefore you might need to

break it up to read at different times during the day, I only say this because I'm so used to reading the 5 chapters a day in one sitting, anyway just some FYI for you.

No doubt that the book of Psalms is the most personal and perhaps the most read book in the entire Bible. I quote the following from The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible (POSB from here on) "No book of the Bible has meant more to God's people throughout the generations. Truly, it is a "practical theology of vivid human experience." Most of us read the psalms devotionally or to secure God's help in times of personal need." No doubt that this book has been a comfort to many people since the day they were written in particular Psalm 23. This Psalm has comforted people from all walks of life, from different cultures and nationalities, it has brought consolation both to the saved and the lost because of the essence of its meaning.

I remember years ago in 1979 or 1980 as I was going through a very difficult time even to the point of contemplating thoughts of suicide, I happened to be reading through the Psalms. I had already made a profession in 1979, anyway I was a mess. I found myself one day weeping and reading though Psalm 56 and when I got to verses 8 & 9 I stopped and re-read in particular verse 8 and it so comforted my heart and soul like never before, it says; "Thou tellest my wanderings: **put thou my tears into thy bottle:** are they not in thy book? 9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: **this I know; for God is for me.**" I was like wow; would God do that for me, that is; put my tears in a bottle? I was so emotionally moved that I just happened to have a coke bottle that I had finished drinking and yes, I put it to my cheeks and let my tears roll into the bottle. I sat there and looked at the bottle with my tears in it and said, does God really take this much interest in my present situation to which I cried even more. I would put that bottle with my tears in it on my night stand and would look at it and smile and say, God really cares about me. It gave me so much comfort that I was able to wake up and face the next day and the next day until I passed through my situation, but I never forgot it. Then verse 9 became special as I read it with verse 8, "Thou tellest my wanderings: **put thou my tears into thy bottle:** are they not in thy book? 9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: **this I know; for God is for me.**" Then I knew I could face each day with; "...**this I know; for God is for me.**" Then the rest of the chapter just strengthened my soul, verse 10-13, "In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11 **In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.** 12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" There was one other verse that gave great comfort during this time and that was from Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 **For I am persuaded,** that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, **nor things present,** nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **shall**

be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Yes, those precious phrases comforted my soul in particular, “*For I am persuaded...NOR THINGS PRESENT...*” I don’t know how to explain to you that these words just leaped out of the Bible into my heart, NOR THINGS PRESENT which sustained me and kept me, knowing that what I was going through at that particular time, which was a PRESENT THING would not and could not separate me from the LOVE of God which is in Christ Jesus my LORD!

That’s just one instance where these precious Psalms have comforted my soul, my heart and my mind through the years. In early 1990 when I had just been pastor of this church for a few of months when some in the ABA sought to take the building away from us, because of our beliefs in the Sovereignty of God or if you wish the Doctrines of Grace and no doubt I was so scared, worried and filled with anxiety that they would, but again reading through the Psalms, God gave me Psalms 35 verses 1-10 as a promise that they would not be victorious over us in this issue. Please turn there and let’s read them. Along with this Psalm God also gave chapter 44:1-8 as a promise that He would secure our place here. Let read there in Psalm 44. These are just a few of the Psalms that God has used in my life to help me along the way and I am sure if I opened it up for testimony tonight for some of you to share about a particular Psalm that God has used in your life whether as an encouragement, deliverance, instruction/teaching or even conviction, you could come up and share. Maybe on Sunday night when we open it up for testimony a couple of you might share something from the Psalms. AMEN? Remember that at times I like to share another of my favorite Psalms Psalm 29:1 & 2, “*Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*” Yes, when you give testimony about God you give unto the LORD the GLORY due to His name!

My point is that as you read the Psalms you are able to secure the help and strength of God when facing all kinds of circumstances, trials, discouragements, afflictions and hardships of life. No doubt that these Psalms are a spiritual balm for our lives. Oh my dear ones read the Psalms and see how God can direct these words to your heart personally because they are suited for every need.

Now there is some discrepancy regarding the authenticity of the Psalms because of its many authors and because of the longevity of it being compiled over the period of 1,000 years and we’ll see more on this when we look at the date of the Psalms. Let me just say in passing that regardless of the critics, Christ authenticated the Psalms and that settles it for me. I care not what the scholar might say, the Bible always vindicates itself. This is why the words of Isaiah and 1 Corinthians are so important Isaiah. Isaiah 8:20 says, “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*”

Isaiah 28:10 & 13, “*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*” Isaiah 54:13, “*And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.*” Which is quoted in John 6:45. Then of course 1 Cor.2:12-14, “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” Then you have the words of Christ in Luke 24:44, “*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, **and in the psalms**, concerning me.*” This is all I need for the authority, authenticity and validity of the book of the Psalms. The Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles recognized and saw the need of the book of Psalms in our everyday lives and therefore this precious book of Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament as they referred to the Psalms more than any other book in the Old Testament.

Let us now consider some important things to help us understand the Psalms:

I. The Outline of the Book of Psalms:

The book of Psalms is easily organized. Though the book of Psalms is only one book they are also a book consisting of 5 books, that is; 5 books put into 1.

- Book 1 – 1-41
- Book 2 – 42-72
- Book 3 – 73-89
- Book 4 – 90-106
- Book 5 – 107-150

The 5 books of Psalms also correspond to the five books of Moses in the Pentateuch, that is, the first 5 books in the Bible:

- Book 1 – 1-41 correlates with Genesis
- Book 2 – 42-72 correlates with Exodus
- Book 3 – 73-89 correlates with Leviticus
- Book 4 – 90-106 correlates with Numbers
- Book 5 – 107-150 correlates with Deuteronomy

I love the way English preacher J. Sidlow Baxter who passed away in 1999; shows and

explains how these books are connected: *“The first group, corresponding with Genesis, has much to say about man. The second group corresponding with Exodus which has much to say about deliverance. The third group, corresponding with Leviticus, has its emphasis in the Asaph psalms, upon the sanctuary. The fourth group, corresponding with Numbers, and beginning with Psalm 90, the prayer of Moses, stresses the time when unrest and wandering will cease...when the nations shall bow to God’s King. The fifth group, corresponding with Deuteronomy, has much of thanksgiving for the Divine faithfulness, and lays much emphasis upon the word of the Lord as, for instance, in the longest of all the psalms, which has for its theme the written word of the Lord.”*

Psalm 1 and Psalm 150 are like the bookends to the books. Psalm 150 is a doxology and therefore closes this precious book, but Psalms 1 opens with the needful and suitable instruction which is a summary for the whole book and therefore sets forth the theme for the whole book and thus Psalm 150 ends with a concluding doxology. It is also interesting to note that each of the 5 books in Psalms also conclude with a doxology, that is; an outburst of great praise and glory to the Living and True God.

Notice the doxology at the end of each book:

- **Book I concludes with Ps.41:13**, *“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.”*
- **Book II concludes with Ps.72:18 - 20**, *“Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. 20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”*
- **Book III concludes with Ps.89:52**, *“Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.”*
- **Book IV concludes with Ps.106:48**, *“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.”*
- **Book V concludes with Ps.150:1-6**, *“Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”* Psalm 150 is placed at the conclusion of this precious book called the Psalms.

These 5 books are grouped by a particular author or by the aspect of a theme: Within each book, certain sections are grouped by author or by theme. For example Psalms 1-41 are the Psalms of David, Psalms 42-49 are Psalms of the Sons of Korah and then you have Psalms 120-134 which are called the Songs of Degrees that were sung by the Israelites as

they journeyed up to Jerusalem and the temple.

II. Types and Titles of the Book of Psalms:

Let us now consider the types and or categories of the Psalms: The following is quoted verbatim from POSB: “Scholars vary as to the categories of psalms and how the specific psalms are assigned to these categories. Many psalms fit into more than one category. Additionally, individual psalms or a small number of psalms may comprise other categories than the ones listed below. However, the great majority of the psalms fit into one of the following six categories:

- **Praise**—these psalms are hymns composed for the primary purpose of exalting God. The works and character of God are emphasized. Psalms 8, 9, 33, 92, 103, and 145 are examples of praise psalms.
- **Lament or complaint**—in these psalms, the author presents his—or his nation’s—troubles or burdens to God. At times, the author expresses frustration with God Himself. Usually, a cry for God’s help is included and confidence in God is expressed. Examples are Psalms 13, 22, 42, 60, and 69.
- **Kingdom or enthronement**—these are psalms that proclaim and celebrate the truth that the Lord reigns over the earth, its nations, and its people. Psalms 2, 47, 93, and 96 are examples.
- **Confession or penitential**—most of these psalms were written by David. Though fewer in number than the other categories, psalms of confession are especially significant because of our need to understand how to confess our sins to God. Psalms 32, 38, and 51 are examples.
- **Imprecatory or judgment**—Psalms 5, 11, 35, 69, and 109 are examples of imprecatory psalms. Many people struggle to understand and accept these psalms in which the author prays—sometimes violently and graphically—for the destruction or judgment of his enemies. How can it be right for God’s people to pray this way, especially when some of these prayers seem to be contrary to God’s law and the teachings of Christ? In reading and understanding the imprecatory psalms, it is important to remember the following:

- These are prayers for protection. In most cases when David prayed for the destruction of his enemies, they were aggressively seeking his life. In many of these psalms, they were also trying to overthrow Israel.
- The Israelites were the people of the covenant. The heathen nations that

opposed them worshipped idols. Therefore, an attack on Israel was an attack on God and His people and His purpose to send both His Son and His Holy Word to the world through Israel.

- David was God's anointed king for His covenant people. When Saul, Absalom, and others sought to destroy David, they were seeking to thwart God's will.
- These are prayers for justice, not vengeance. David and others who prayed for the destruction of their enemies were not seeking personal revenge. They desired that justice be served on evildoers. Their prayers are pleas for God to vindicate *Himself* as the Judge of the earth.
- In offering these prayers, the psalmists were obeying the command of Scripture, that no person should take vengeance against others, but rather commit all judgment to the Lord.
- The psalms are brutally honest, teaching us that we can pour our hearts out to God. This is one of the reasons the imprecatory psalms are a part of inspired Scripture. They reveal to us the emotions of the human heart against those who do evil toward us and others. Because of our strong emotions, we do not always pray as we ought. The New Testament teaches us that God's Spirit intercedes for us at such times (Ro. 8:26-27).
- The imprecatory psalms emphasize God's holiness and the severity of His judgment against sin. "When one properly understands the nature of a holy and sinless God, he, with the psalmists, must cry out against the iniquity that so terribly offends him. This does not mean that the sinner himself is to be hated, but that sin is despicable and unrepentance unforgivable. To the Old Testament mind, the distinction between the two may not have been as clear as it is this side of the cross."
- The psalmists lived before the cross and the teachings of Christ. When Jesus came, He taught us a better way to pray for our enemies (Mt. 5:44; 23:37; 1 Pe. 2:21-23). Still, the New Testament sanctions our praying for God's justice and judgment of evildoers (1 Co. 16:22; Ga. 1:8-9; 5:12; 2 Ti. 4:14; Rev. 6:10). When we, as New Testament believers, pray for the Lord to protect us and judge evildoers, we should also pray for God to bring them to repentance, and for them to come to Christ and be saved.
- Many of the imprecatory psalms are prophetic, pointing to the future day when God will judge all unrighteousness and ungodliness in men (Ro. 1:18). "There is usually a strong eschatological [end times] sense involved in the imprecatory psalms. That is, the poet is not so much

invoking and expecting the immediate judgment of God as he is looking forward to the day of the Lord when all unrepentant sinners must be dealt with according to their impiety toward God.”

f. **Thanksgiving**—these psalms offer thanks to God for deliverance, answered prayer, or some other blessing. They often include an offering or sacrifice, or the fulfilling of a vow to the Lord. Many scholars group them with the psalms of praise rather than as a distinct group. Examples of thanksgiving psalms are 21, 30, 34, 40, and 66.” (End of quote POSB)

The following are Psalms that include the word “Thanksgiving.”

- Psalms 26:7, “*That I may publish with the voice of **thanksgiving**, and tell of all thy wondrous works.*” (Verse 8: “*LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*”)
- Psalms 50:14, “*Offer unto God **thanksgiving**; and pay thy vows unto the most High.*”
- Psalms 69:30, “*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with **thanksgiving**.*”
- Psalms 95:2, “*Let us come before his presence with **thanksgiving**, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*”
- Psalms 100:4, “*Enter into his gates with **thanksgiving**, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*”
- Psalms 107:22, “*And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of **thanksgiving**, and declare his works with rejoicing.*”
- Psalms 116:17, “*I will offer to thee the sacrifice of **thanksgiving**, and will call upon the name of the LORD.*”
- Psalms 147:7, “*Sing unto the LORD with **thanksgiving**: sing praise upon the harp unto our God.*”

III. The Spiritual Application of the Book of Psalms:

One of the blessed purposes of the Psalms is for our learning and for our spiritual growth. These Psalms help us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalms will help to teach us how to pray, how to praise God, how to worship God and how to seek God for our everyday spiritual necessities. This is a very spiritual book that helps us relate to various circumstances, trials and afflictions in life by looking to God in faith to help us in time of need. God reveals Himself to us in the Psalms as He also exposes our hearts before Him. You see one of the major themes and or purposes of this book is to provide instruction for the needs of the soul for believers in Christ. For our spiritual growth this book is a means of provoking prayer, praise, worship and trust for the Living and True God. This book will affect every part of the heart as it reveals our sin, our motives, our desires and our love. This book also affects the emotions, anger, fear, anxiety, grief, sorrow, despair, discouragements, despondency and perplexities of life, but how glorious that it also affects our trust in God, our faith, our worship and love to GOD ALMIGHTY!

The Psalms are useful in spiritual growth by singing praises to God. Eph.5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in **psalms** and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Col.3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in **psalms** and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” James 5:13, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing **psalms**.” I believe that this book of Psalms also meets every need the believer will ever face in this life and helps prepare us for the next life to come. Ps.17:15, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Please understand that anytime a Psalm is written in the first person it is written to clearly set forth and to express the personal experience of every true believer. For example in Psalm 31 we see this in verses 1-6. Here we see David’s faith and trust. We see the certainty of his confidence in the 20 personal pronouns that he uses in verses 1-6. He uses such possessive language. He uses over and over I, MY, ME to authenticate and substantiate his assurance and confidence in God. Let’s read these 6 verses. Spurgeon says, “Let us therefore shun mistrust; doubt is death, trust alone is life. Let us make sure that we trust the Lord, and never take our trust on trust.” David’s confidence was in God and not in himself. This is where we fail and make our mistakes when we go through trials, we reason with our wisdom as the trial unfolds, we set our thoughts on what can I do? David never looked to himself he set his eyes and his faith in God, he boldly declares with such confidence, **“IN THEE, O LORD DO I PUT MY TRUST...”** It reminds us that everything that happens to us in this life is in the hands of God, Psalm 31:14 & 15, “But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. 15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.” One writer puts it this way, “It has been said that in the Psalms one finds “expressed the eager yearning and longing for God’s presence”. It certainly contains “prayers and songs of joyous trust and praise.” Indeed, every emotion known to man is expressed in beautiful and inspired terms (e.g., joy, anger, praise, repentance, trust, even doubt). Filled with some emotion for which you cannot find the words to express it? It is likely you will find it expressed in the book of Psalms!”

We’ll pick up next time with the date, authorship, the titles and headings of the Psalms, names of God used in the Psalms, an analysis of the book, the purpose and special features and a timeline of the Kings, prophets and history in the OT.

