

# What Do We Sing? - The Sufficiency of the Biblical Psalter sermonaudio.com

*Principles & Parts of Worship*

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**Bible Text:** Hebrews 1; Psalm 1-150

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Last Lord's Day, we made the case that the church should sing only the inspired biblical Psalms that are given to us in God's word. We began to reason from the regulative principle which is rooted in scripture and teaches us that everything we do in worship must have a positive warrant in God's word. It is not enough to say it's not forbidden therefore it's allowed; God does not merely allow worship, he commands it and we are duty-bound to give it.

We showed, therefore, that throughout the whole of the Old Testament the church used only inspired worship songs in their praise, and moving into the New Testament, if that were to change, we would expect God to specifically tell us. We can't find warrant for that anywhere in the New Testament. Though many claim Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16 gives us warrant to compose our own New Testament praise songs, we demonstrated that the three terms used there, "psalms, hymns and songs," are all found in the titles and in the text of the book of Psalms. Therefore there is no warrant whatsoever to think that God is telling us in these words to compose new and inspired worship songs.

We looked at a number of objections, the first of which was that New Testament revelation is more full than Old Testament revelation, and the songs of the New Testament church should therefore reflect this. We said that it's a very understandable objection and many of us have had to wrestle with that ourselves, but yet the word of God does not give any additional songs in the New Testament for the worship of the church, nor does it command us to compose such songs. Therefore we rest with what God has clearly prescribed and though we may have questions, our questions do not constitute warrant for bringing something into the worship of God.

What we'll do today is go a little further still dealing, in a sense, with this objection but not only answering the objection, strengthening ourselves in the use of the Psalms and, God willing, even strengthening those who aren't with us with the exclusive use of the Psalms to enable them to see the glorious provision God has given us in the biblical psalter because at the root of every objection against exclusive psalmody is this: the Old Testament psalter is deficient for the use of the New Testament church. That's ultimately the assumption that is made. Why else would anyone dare to add to the biblical psalter if

they didn't believe that the biblical psalter is deficient for the use of the New Testament church? On the contrary, therefore, we want to make the case this morning for the sufficiency of the biblical psalter which is, of course, linked inextricably to the exclusive use of that psalter in the church.

What I want to do, first of all, is look at two important features of the Psalms themselves, and then after that we'll move to consider five doctrinal and practical points to show the sufficiency of the psalter. So first of all, two important features of the Psalms. The first is the psalter is historically nonspecific. The psalter is historically nonspecific and by that I mean though it was written in the Old Testament, it is not historically bound. Other parts of the Old Testament are very much historically bound. You can read the book of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the whole accounts there are historical narrative set in a particular context and the knowledge of that context is essential for a proper interpretation of those passages. But the Psalms are different. Indeed, the Psalms only contain a few specific historical references. Sometimes you'll get it in the title locating a Psalm at a particular period in the life of David, or Psalm 78, Psalm 105, historical Psalms that are looking back at God's covenant dealings with his church, but most of the Psalms are personal accounts of the psalmist's experience and they are applicable to the personal experience of God's people in every age. Take for example, Psalm 1. "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." You don't need to know the historical context in which that Psalm was written. It's the personal experience of a child of God.

Something else that is of interest here is that when the Psalms prophesy of Christ, they don't merely do it in the future tense but they predominantly do it in the present tense and even in the past tense. Turn, please, to Psalm 22. Psalm 22 and look there at verse 7. Psalm 22 does not say, "All they that will see me will laugh me to scorn; they will shoot out the lip, they shall shake the head saying," it says, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying." And likewise in verse 12 and following, "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." A prophecy of Christ a thousand years before his coming written in the present and in the past tense as it had been already completed.

We will say more about that later but for now I simply want you to acknowledge that the assumption that these Psalms are so time-bound to an Old Testament historical context is a very hasty conclusion to make. The psalter is historically nonspecific. Secondly, the prevalence of the psalter in the New Testament. Now remember the objection, we need a New Testament songbook to express the greater revelation of the New Testament. But what do we find when we read the New Testament but that the New Testament is so often an explanation of the Old Testament scriptures and, in particular, the book of Psalms. So Jesus says, "Search the scriptures, in these you think you have eternal life but they are they which testify of me." The Old Testament scriptures. On the road to Emmaus, he speaks to those who were confused about the death and resurrection of Christ and

beginning at Moses and working through the law and the prophet and the psalms, he opened up things concerning himself.

Indeed, in the ministry of Christ and the apostles, we have a fullness of quotation and allusion from the biblical psalter so that the book of Psalms is the most often quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament, over 300 direct quotes and particular allusions to the book of Psalms. That's why we read earlier in Hebrews 1. Make a study of it when you go home, Hebrews 1 and chapter 2, as the gospel is being opened up, the writer quotes from Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 22, Psalm 45, Psalm 89, Psalm 102, 103, 104, 110. Nine Psalms with one purpose, to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They used the Psalms to expound Christ because the gospel was revealed in those Psalms long ago and so we have the prevalence of the psalter in the New Testament.

So keep these two truths in mind, they're very significant, that the psalter is historically nonspecific therefore fitted for the use of the church in every age, and the book of Psalms is prevalent in the New Testament by way of quotation and allusion. What we want to do now is move on to establish this case for the sufficiency of the psalter by looking at five points concerning the doctrinal and practical sufficiency of the Psalms. Now we are going to be covering a lot of ground very quickly. We can thank the Lord for modern means of technology where these things can be recorded because I'm going to assault you with biblical texts like rapid machine-gun fire and it's very likely we're not going to be able to take it all in. You have notes given to you and you will be able to listen again to the points that we're making.

First of all, the doctrine of God in the Psalms. The doctrine of God in the Psalms. Our Shorter Catechism asks the question, "What is God?" God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. So what we want to do is simply take that outline and go to the book of Psalms and give you a few sample texts to prove that these things are revealed to you in the Psalms. The attributes of God.

God is a spirit, Psalm 139:7 and 8, he is an omnipresent spirit, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" And this omnipresent spirit sets himself against idols and gods that are physical, made by the hands of men. Psalm 135, Psalm 115.

God is infinite, Psalm 147:5, his understanding is infinite, and if that is so, then he is essentially infinite.

He is eternal, Psalm 90:2, "from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

He is unchangeable. Turn, please, in your Bible to Psalm 102 and look there at verse 27. This is one of the texts that is quoted in Hebrews 1. Psalm 102:27, God is unchangeable. "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Set against the idea that everything in the world is going to change, God is going to change the created universe the way men change their clothes, but there's no change in God.

We have the wisdom of God, Psalm 136:5, "To him that by wisdom made the heavens," this glorious system that he has created and upholds.

We have the power of God, Psalm 62:11, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." He is free and sovereign in the exercise of that power.

God is holy in the Psalms. He has a holy place. He has a holy throne. He has a holy name. He is the holy one of Israel. Psalm 22:3, "thou art holy, thou who inhabitest the praises of Israel." A concept that deeply needs to be recovered by the contemporary church in her praise.

God is just, Psalm 89:14, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." He is just and he will judge all men justly according to their works.

And God is good, Psalm 145:9, "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." And that term "goodness" in which all of the sub-categories of goodness are also to be found, love, grace, mercy, longsuffering, compassion, the book of Psalms is full of references to these things as they pertain unto God.

God is also a God of truth, Psalm 31:15, "O Lord God of truth, one who sets himself against all falsehood and error and deceit."

So you see here that the attributes of God are clearly revealed in the book of Psalms and that's but a tiny sample of all the texts that we could consider but then we have the Trinity of God in the Psalms, not just the attributes of God. This is one of the chief criticisms against the use of the book of Psalms in praise today, that the Trinity is not as explicitly revealed in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. But one of the chief contributors to the doctrine of the Trinity in church history, one of the Cappadocian fathers, has said this, "When I say God, I mean Trinity. When I say God, I mean Trinity." Well, you would imagine that when he reads "God" in the Psalms that he perceives exactly the same thing. When he reads "God," he reads "Trinity."

But the Psalms take us further than that. We don't just take a Trinitarian understanding and put it into the word "God" in the Old Testament psalter, we discover that the Trinity is to be found in the psalter. We have, for example, the Father and the Son referred to in Psalm 89:26 and verse 27 as the Lord is opening unto us the eternal covenant of redemption in the covenant of David, typifying it back to that eternal covenant whereby God purposed to save us from our sins. Psalm 89:26 says, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him."

The Father is speaking of the Son but then elsewhere the Father is speaking directly to the Son. Psalm 2, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Psalm 110, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

And our Lord Jesus Christ takes that text up himself before the Pharisees and he says, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" He's not just the son of David, he's the Son of God. There are, of course, other references but we need to move on.

The Spirit is not absent in the Psalms either. Psalm 139, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" Psalm 143, "thy spirit is good; lead me to the land of uprightness."

In all this, I want you to see that the book of Psalms reveals the doctrine of God as God truly and really is, and that's very important not as we think God is or God should be, but as God really is. So there's no liberalism in the book of Psalms. There is no Arminianism in the book of Psalms. There's no Unitarianism in the book of Psalms. But we sing to the one true and living God who is infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being and all of his attributes and who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The irony here is so many hymnwriters were themselves heretics, Cardinal Newman, to name one. The great champion of the evangelicals, Isaac Watts, who seemed to make it his life's goal to replace the biblical psalter. Watts himself was unorthodox in the doctrine of the Trinity. Now you say, "Well, here's a psalm-singer and he's using an ad hominem argument. He's wanting to discredit Isaac Watts." I was at a conference in London two years ago full of hymn-singers and there was a paper on Isaac Watts and the man who presented it and everyone in the discussion had to admit that they would likely not have admitted Watts into membership of their church because he denied the great creeds of the church. He couldn't see how God was one in essence and yet three in persons. And you say, "Well, his hymns are full of declarations that Christ is God." Yes, but what did he mean by that? He couldn't distinguish in his mind Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was a kind of modalist. These people who would deny him membership have allowed the church to be shaped by the hymns that he wrote. Well, you don't have that problem with the book of Psalms, it goes without saying.

Secondly, the doctrine of Christ in the psalter. The doctrine of Christ in the psalter. One of the chief objections to Psalm-singing is the idea that we're not singing about Christ or that we're terribly limited in what we are singing about Christ but our Lord Jesus Christ himself sang these Psalms and when he did, he knew that he was singing about himself. When somebody comes to you with that objection, please invite them to have a closer look and I believe that they will come to a different perspective. We, of course, have messianic Psalms, most people know about those, Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Psalm 45, would be examples of this, but further than that, every Psalm in our psalter is revelatory of Christ. As I said a moment ago, when he sang them, he sang of himself.

Well, we want to build this case, first of all, by looking at the names of Christ in the psalter. Now this is the chief part of the chief objection and you will have heard it ad nauseum. You say, "We sing the Psalms in worship. Why do you do that? I could never do that because I wouldn't be able to sing the name of Jesus." I recall about 20 years ago back in Northern Ireland there was a public debate on this point and the Psalm-singer was making the case that we do actually sing the name of Jesus, and the debate got so hot, a man jumped up from his chair and started shouting, quoting the words of a hymn, "Jesus,

the name high over all in heaven and earth and sky." He couldn't see that that was in the Psalms, wouldn't accept that it was in the Psalms. That is a very sad conclusion and a terribly simplistic conclusion to draw because this book of Psalms reveals to us the Lord Jesus Christ.

How so? Well, first of all, he is Lord. He is Lord. The Greek word "kurios" meaning "Lord," in the New Testament translates the Old Testament "Jehovah" being "Lord," and that is the same in the Greek version of the Old Testament Psalms. So a New Testament Bible reader who spoke Greek would immediately make the connection that "Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. So when we sing these Psalms and we use the word "Lord," we cannot divorce that from Christ. It's not like it was something else in the Old Testament now to what it is in the New Testament. We understand more, I grant, but we're still singing of our Lord, and the significance of that is strengthened when you think of how Jesus was actually addressed by his people in the New Testament. What is the predominant way they spoke of him or to him? Lord. Master. It doesn't seem that they were going around in their addresses and using the word Jesus the way we think that they may have been. Take, for example, Saul on the road to Damascus. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." "Jesus, what would thou have me to do?" No, he doesn't say that, he says, "Lord, what would thou have me to do?"

Well, the point is simple. This is in the book of Psalms, we sing of the Lord who is our Savior, but then he's also Jesus. Maybe some people are saying, "We want to hear this. This one is going to be a stretch." He's also Jesus. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." If you said this in some places, you might get people stand up and give the similar objection to what I described earlier, that Jesus is not really called Jesus. Jesus is not really called Jesus. Jesus is an English translation of a Greek rendering of a Hebrew name. His name was Yeshua. The English rendering of that directly, not going via Greek, would be Joshua and Joshua means "Jehovah is salvation." Jehovah is salvation.

Now I said to you a moment ago we sing Jesus in the Psalms, of course we do. How many times do we sing that, "The Lord is my salvation"? The Lord is my salvation, that's like saying, "Here's my Jesus." Psalm 18, Psalm 24, Psalm 25, Psalm 27. The Lord is my life, light and my salvation. Psalm 62, Psalm 79. This is the name that our Savior bears. Thou shalt call his name Jesus because he is this Savior.

And then he is also Christ because Christ is the English translation of a Greek word that renders the Hebrew word "Messiah." And when we come to the book of Psalms, Psalm 2:2, "Why rage the heathen and vain things? Why do the people mind? Kings of the earth do set themselves and princes are combined to plot against the LORD and his Christ." That's the word. You could as easily put "Christ" into that as "anointed" because that's what it means. Psalm 2, Psalm 45, Psalm 84, Psalm 89. In all of them we sing of Messiah.

Repeatedly in various ways, we praise the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the names of our Redeemer are in the Psalms, but so are the works of our Redeemer. We'll say more in a moment when we come to consider his offices but think of those chief acts of the Lord

Jesus Christ and they're all there in the psalter. Was he incarnated into this world? Well, the Psalms speak of it. Psalm 40, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." Hebrews 2 takes it up and refers to the verse before that, "A body hast thou prepared me." It has to do with the incarnation, Jesus taking our nature to save us from our sins.

The crucifixion of Christ is in the Psalms. The whole of Psalm 22, and in the middle of it we're told, "They pierced my hands and feet." The resurrection of Christ is in the Psalms. Psalm 16 which incidentally Peter chose as his text to preach on that most significant of days, on the day of Pentecost. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption." The exaltation of Christ, "Ye gates, lift up your heads on high, ye doors that last be lifted up that so the king of glory enter may." Psalm 68, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men." Paul takes up his pen and writes in Ephesians 4, that this is the exaltation of Christ. Then we have the present reign of Christ. Psalm 22:28, "the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. "

The names of Christ, the works of Christ, the offices of Christ. Is Christ our prophet? Then the Psalms reveal the prophetic office of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 40 again, this time verse 9 and following, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." Christ our prophet. "I will declare my name unto my brethren in the midst of the church while I sing praises unto thee."

Is Christ our priest? Well, then Psalm 110:4, the verse most often quoted in the New Testament from the Old says, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." And as our priest, he offers himself for our salvation and the book of Psalms like no other book open unto us the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me simply read to you from Psalm 69, another of those Psalms that takes us to the cross. Psalm 69:20 and verse 21, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Nowhere else in the whole of the Bible – listen to me – nowhere else in the whole of the Bible are the soul sufferings of Christ revealed to us as clearly than in the Old Testament book of Psalms.

You say, "Well, the New Testament has given us a fuller revelation." Not at this point. "What do you mean? It's the New Testament that tells us that Jesus was crucified." And it does and it records it as an historical fact, and then the epistles explain the doctrinal significance of it and tells us that above his head it was written in three languages, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." It tells us what the Roman centurion and his band of crucifixion soldiers did to Jesus. It tells us what the people did beside the cross. It simply says, "There they crucified him."

You read in the book of Luke when Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane and being in agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. It records the event. It tells us what is going on in the surface but it is the book of Psalms that take us under the surface with the Lord Jesus Christ so that whereas the New Testament records Jesus crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surface level. We sink with Christ in Psalm 22 and we discover depths that the New Testament simply does not show us. Oh, the New Testament sheds light upon the Old but with regard to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, it is the Old Testament that sheds light upon the New Testament.

Bushell in his book, "Singing the Songs of Zion," he makes a reference at one point about Handel's Messiah. He says everybody goes in December and sings away and listens to Handel's Messiah, and he says what is the proportion of that piece that is rooted in the Old Testament? The majority of it. The Old Testament. It shouldn't surprise you, brethren. At this point, the Old Testament is shedding its light upon the New. If people walked in here today and they weren't used to Psalm singing and we were singing Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 to our solemn tunes, they would be thinking, "What's going on here?" And the answer to the question is what is going on, we're going to the Old Testament to open up the New Testament to us.

Christ is our priest. Christ is our King. He is seen both as the King of the church and the King of nations. In Psalm 2, the Father sets him upon the holy hill of Zion and commands that he rules there in the midst of his enemies. Psalm 45, he's the King wooing the church unto himself. Psalm 72, he's the King taking the nations of the earth unto himself. You get the point, I trust. The Psalms are quite literally full of Christ and his names and his work and his offices, and if in points the New Testament gives us more light than the Old Testament, then we do what Jesus and the apostles teach us to do, we take that greater light to the book of Psalms.

When I was a Bible student and before I was settled in this conviction, one of my lecturers knew the direction I was going and he did his best to try and pull me back from the brink, as he saw it. And in class one time, he quoted Isaac Watts and his rationale for writing hymns and he said Watts complained that people were sitting in congregations and there wasn't 1 in 20 of them who understood these dark mysterious songs of the Old Testament and so he gave them songs that they could understand, songs from the New Testament. When he made the point, I asked him a question, I said, "Sir, and do you think that Watts's proposal has made the situation any better?" Because now there's not 1 in 200 have an idea of what's going on in the book of Psalms. Christians have been terribly impoverished as a result.

Brethren, the truth of this matter is this: we, today, can sing the Psalm far better than the Old Testament church could ever sing them. They come into their own in the New Testament. It's not a time for getting rid of them, it's a time for seeing that God is opening them up for the church in a way that the Old Testament church could only grope out in the dark. The Psalms are full of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Thirdly, the application of redemption in the psalter. The application of redemption in the psalter. God accomplishes our salvation in Christ and then this salvation is applied to us by the Holy Spirit and the book of Psalms, like the rest of scripture, root this in God's gracious covenant dealings with men, and so we have God's covenant, his salvation and the benefits that we receive of it. So let's think about that with regard to the application of that salvation to us. Does God call sinners to himself sovereignly? Well, then the book of Psalms tells us that powerfully and effectively. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father and he makes his people willing in the day of his power when the gospel goes forth. Does he convict sinners of their sins? Well, then the book of Psalms again is full of examples of this. Psalm 32, when he didn't confess his sin, his soul dried up and he was found in a condition of bondage. "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD," he says.

Must we have repentance and faith to lay hold of the blessings of God's covenant? The answer is, yes. The Psalms are full of examples of this as well. Psalm 51, "Be merciful unto me according to thy lovingkindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities."

Does he justify sinners freely by his grace? Then the book of Psalms tells us that he does. Psalm 32:1 and 2 which Paul takes up in Romans 4 to teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ.

Does he adopt repenting and believing sinners into his family? Well, then the book of Psalms tells us about that as well. Psalm 103, he "removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west, and as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him."

We have forgiveness, we have adoption, we have sanctification. It's throughout the Psalms. I'm not even going to make an attempt to prove that. It's obvious. Sanctification in the life of God's people. But then the end of that being glorification again is revealed to us in the Psalms. Psalm 17:15, "I will be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." It's the desire of the sanctified heart, you see, growing in holiness but restless until we are clothed upon with the perfection of our glorification.

These are biblical experiences. They're not New Testament experiences over against Old Testament experiences. They are the graces received by God's people in every generation and therefore the book of Psalms is well-fitted for the church to sing today. That same lecturer told me that we should sing Psalms in worship but we should never never sing them in a gospel service. I nearly fell off my seat when he said it. Never sing them in a gospel service. So they would have a gospel service on a Sunday evening but it would always be preaching the gospel. No, you never want to sing a Psalm there. Why? Well, obviously to his mind the gospel wasn't in it but yet the Psalms are full of Christ, the Psalms are full of the application of our redemption. Remember that.

Fourthly, the balanced biblical piety of the psalter. Calhoun sums this up when he advocates for the use of the Psalms in Geneva. He writes in the preface of the psalter, "I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, an anatomy of all

parts of the soul, for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." And then he goes on to list those emotions. But Calhoun was really only echoing Athanasius and the church fathers. Athanasius says there's nothing as glorious as the book of Psalms, "they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, the motions of his soul."

The same cannot be said of uninspired hymnbooks, and if you were to take any hymnbook and compare it for balance over against the book that God gave us to sing, you would find on every occasion that the hymnbook is imbalanced when it comes to biblical piety. Let's consider this in a few ways. First of all, there's a balance in instruction. A balance in instruction. We've been looking at the doctrine that is revealed in the book of Psalms but think of the law and the ethical nature of the book of Psalms as well. It's my experience and I daresay it's your experience as well, that if you are familiar with hymnbooks at all, that you don't really find in them the kind of songs like Psalm 15, do you? "Who shall abide in your presence and in your holy place?" And then it gives us a list of ethical requirements. "The man who doesn't exploit his brother, his coin puts not to usury, if he swears he keeps his word."

You quite simply don't find songs like that in modern hymnbooks nor do you get Psalms with or songs with the emphasis upon social justice that you find in the book of Psalms and that's an interesting one in our day and age of liberalism. But the book of Psalms, you'll find this frequently, like Psalm 41, "Blessed is he who considers the poor." That was given by God to be used in the praise of the church. "Blessed is he who considers the poor," and other like Psalms. Nor do you get the personal issues that you have revealed in the Psalms like the use of the tongue, like lying, like giving rebuke and receiving rebuke. Psalm 141:5, "Let him that righteous is me smite. It shall a kindness be. Let him reprove. I shall account the precious oil to me."

You don't get these things, yet this is what the Spirit of God, this is what the Spirit of God revealed to the church to sing. I say to you again there's a wonderful balance in the instruction that we receive in the Psalms, but then there's a balance in devotion and affection. Indeed, the Psalms is a perfect book of biblical devotion, including all of the experiences that God's people go through where the Spirit of God collects these songs and shows us how we do feel at times and also how we ought to feel at times. When we sing them, we get much benefit. We also remember that Jesus himself sang these things and they are expressive of how he felt at times.

So in the book of Psalms we can ascend the heights of joy, giving thanks to God for his wonderful goodness and his works that are done to the children of men, and then we can plumb the depths of sorrow, watering our bed with our tears as in Psalm 6. That Psalm and others like it, would not pass the editorial committees of modern-day hymnbooks, books that leave sorrowing, broken Christians with nothing to sing. But God doesn't do that. We can express confusion when dealing with our doubt and seeking God yet not being able to find him. Psalm 88. And then we can express confidence that we are the Lord's. We can say, "I am thine," Psalm 116. "I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid." We can know assurance in our hearts that the gracious thoughts of God

toward us are beyond number. We can say, "If thou were to mark iniquity, who can stand?" And yet we can assure ourselves that there's forgiveness with God that he may be feared.

We can sing of the growth of the church and the salvation of the nations. "Lord, bless and pity us. Shine on us with thy face that the earth, thy ways and nations all may know thy saving grace." And then we can sing of the destruction of the church's enemies. Christians go apoplectic over this today. Biblical scholars tell us these Psalms are not for the New Testament church because apparently God must have changed and his justice must have changed because they're for the Old Testament church, they're also for heaven, but they're not for the New Testament church even though the New Testament church pronounces anathemas upon people like in the book of Galatians? Now we can sing the destruction of our enemies. Psalm 7, Psalm 83, Psalm 137. The objection here is really man telling God what is praiseworthy rather than man receiving from God what is praiseworthy.

The point I would apply to your hearts here is that when the church abandoned the book of Psalms, she lost the biblical balance of the piety that is revealed in them, and she has left herself with her own truncated, man-defined spirituality instead. But yet the word of God and the vast majority of the history of the Christian church is against her because these Psalms have been the staple of the Old Testament church, and the New Testament church for 1,800 years of her life teaching her about God, enabling her to stand in the face of terrible persecution, in these words she poured her heart out unto God in praise and prayer and God with these same words filled her mind and heart with confidence and with hope.

And that brings us to our last point: the glorious eschatology of the Psalms. When I was preparing this message, I thought, "What are you doing? You're going to have to preach five sermons on this subject, one for each point." And when I got to this one, I was particularly frustrated that I could say so little about it but the Psalms are tremendously positive, tremendously positive in outlook for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and her growth unto the end. Positive for the Old Testament saint who sang them, and even more so for us today when we've seen so much fulfillment over the last 3,000 years. But in the book of Psalms you sing of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 96, Psalm 98, Psalm 50:4, "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous."

And when he comes, he's going to set his throne for judgment and he's going to cast the wicked and all those that forgot God into hell. He's going to rain down Psalm 11, fire, brimstone, furious storms upon sinners. We sing of the return of Christ and the judgment of the wicked but then we also remember that he shall come not only to judge the wicked but to gather his saints together. Psalm 50 again, verse 4 and 5, "Let my saints unto me gathered be, those that by sacrifice have made a covenant with me."

And until that day, Christ will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against her. Oh, they will try like they did with Israel, "Oft have they vexed, have they

vexed me from my youth." Now Israel may say that they will not triumph. Now Israel may say in that truly, "If that the Lord had not our cause maintained, if that the Lord had not our rights sustained when cruel men who us desire to slay, rose up in wrath to make of us their prey. Even as a bird out of the fowler's snare escapes away, so is our soul set free. Rent thou their nets and thus escape their way." Therefore our help is in the Lord's great name who heaven and earth by his great power did freely.

Kings are going to kiss the Son. God is going to bless us and the ends of the earth are going to fear him. His name shall endure forever. His name shall continue as long as the sun and men shall be blessed in him and all nations shall call him blessed, and we reply unto that, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Amen and amen.

We have said much and there is much more that could be said, but I hope I have demonstrated this point that the psalter is a sufficient manual of praise to be used as God's hymnbook for the New Testament church, sufficient in its doctrine of God, sufficient in its doctrine of Christ and salvation and Christian experience and eschatology, a book that was sufficient for Christ and the apostles, for the early church, for the Reformed and the Puritan forefathers, for the Covenanters, and for the French Huguenots who died singing them. Indeed, their persecutors cut their tongues out and stuffed the pages of their Psalm books in their mouths because they wouldn't stop singing the Psalms of God.

God put these Psalms in the Bible and through them he puts his word in our minds, and we have songs to live with and songs to die with, and songs to rejoice with and songs to suffer with, and no other songs that are written by men, however poetic or however eloquent, have the power to do this. If we think that the psalter is inadequate, the inadequacy is not with the psalter, it is with ourselves. And I think we've learned that because most of us have come to this position and we've had to wrestle with all of these difficulties and objections, and perhaps the greatest defense of Psalm singing was simply picking up the book of the Lord and starting to sing. They argue for themselves, brethren.

I close with a story from Northern Ireland. Henry Cooke, great defender of the Trinity against Unitarians in the 1800s, he routed the Unitarians out of the Synod of Ulster. Later in that sanctuary, there was a debate on introducing hymns to the church and Henry Cooke was in favor of doing that and the Lord, in providence, laid him on his sickbed and through that period of time, he began to realize that day after day it was to the book of Psalms that the Lord was taking him. He thought about it a little bit more and he switched his view. Indeed, he came out of it in defense of exclusive psalmody and he wrote a preface to a book that you may know, "The True Psalmody," and in it he said this of his afflictions, that he discovered that the most celebrated hymns of uninspired men were, like Job's friends, miserable comforters when compared with the experience of Christ in the days of his humiliation of which the book of Psalms is the true prophetic picture.

It's no surprise, brethren. We can gladly restrict ourselves to using the Psalms that God has given us in worship because they do not in any way restrict our praise of God. He has

given to the church an all-sufficient manual of praise. May God bless his word to all of our hearts.

Let's stand for prayer.