

# The Singing of Psalms

*The Doctrine of Scripture*

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**Bible Text:** 2 Chronicles 29:30  
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Please take your Bibles and turn with me in the Holy Scriptures to the Old Testament book of 2 Chronicles. Our text this evening is 2 Chronicles 29 and verse 30. 2 Chronicles 29:30. This is during the reformation that took place under King Hezekiah. There was a recovery, and a return, and a reviving, a going back to the ways of God and the restoration of the pure worship that God had ordained. 2 Chronicles 29:30.

29 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

We find ourselves this evening in a series of sermons on the doctrine of Scripture, and we come this evening to this theme, the singing of Psalms. Of late, in the most recent portions of this series, we have considered the reading of Scripture followed by a sermon on the preaching of Scripture and this evening we come to the singing of Scripture. This follows the pattern that you will discover in Westminster Confession Chapter 21 verse 3 which speaks of the reading of Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word and obedience unto God, and the singing of Psalms with grace in the heart. So, we are coming to the singing of Psalms and really, I believe that there is no better place, no better place, for us to take up the biblical basis for the necessity of singing the Psalms of God exclusively in worship.

I have been your minister for over seven years, and, if my recollection is correct, we have never taken up a whole sermon on this particular topic. But this is perhaps the most suitable possible place for us to take up the centerpiece of the argument pertaining to what we believe is an absolute necessity of restricting our song praise and worship to God to the book of Psalms. And I think it's crucial to connect all that we have said about Scripture to this question regarding the content of praise. You will notice in your outline on the back of the order of worship the three points are inspired Psalms, canonical Psalms, and sufficient Psalms.

Now, each of the beginning of each point, that first word, you will recognize includes material that we have covered in this series: the inspiration of Scripture, the canonicity of

Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture. That is deliberate. These points are very deliberately chosen, because I think they are the heart of, in fact, the biblical argument for the singing of Psalms. The fact is that many, can we say, almost most of those who have written in recent years in defense of exclusive Psalmody seem to me to start their argument on the wrong foot. They tend to go immediately to Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 and to then from those texts build the case for exclusive Psalmody, rather than beginning with the very heart of the argument, which is what our intention this evening is, beginning with the very heart of the argument. And then one goes, after having established all of that, then one can go, if you will, to Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 to shut the final escape hatch and to show that even from those texts we see reinforced the biblical obligation to sing Psalms.

Now, I'll say just in passing here that we are presupposing that you have an acquaintance with what Reformed people call the regulative principle of worship, and looking across the congregation I am, in fact, certain that everyone here is acquainted with that biblical principle, one that we have taught, and preached, and discussed at length on other occasions. The Bible teaches a law of worship which says that the only acts, the only actions, the only ordinances of worship that are permitted into the worship of God are those which are appointed, or prescribed, or sanctioned, commanded by God himself in his Word. And so we have to have warrant in the Bible for any ordinance, any action of worship. We have to have warrant in the Scriptures, and this is universally held by all Reformed people in various stripes and forms.

So let's then turn our attention to what I believe is the essentials of understanding this very important doctrine which is a part of the testimony of our own congregation. We find ourselves in 2 Chronicles 29:30 and our first point is inspired Psalms. First of all, inspired Psalms. So here is our first principle which you must clearly have fixed in your mind: inspiration is a necessary qualification for writing worship song. Inspiration is a necessary qualification for writing worship song and I intend to prove that unequivocally from the Scriptures in what follows. The Bible specifies a source of worship song. It tells us that inspiration is the norm, is what is required for this particular ordinance of singing. In fact, as you will see, the Scripture is universally and unequivocally, the whole Bible, clear on this fundamental principle that inspiration is a necessary qualification for writing worship song. And what I want you to see is this, that there is a biblical connection between prophecy and praise. There is a biblical connection between prophecy and praise. A writer of worship song must possess biblically the gift of prophecy.

Now if you look at the passage here you are going to see this brought out. "Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer." I am going to go on to show you that both of these men are prophets, and the songs that are being commended are written by prophets. But let me, first of all, state the case negatively. There is no warrant, you can circle, and underline, and highlight the word "no," there is no warrant in Scripture for the use of uninspired human compositions in singing of God's praise in worship. Zero. You can search to your heart's content. No warrant in Scripture for the use of uninspired human compositions in the singing of God's praise and worship. The fact is that those

who wrote songs to be employed in worship knew that they were prophets and knew, were self-conscious, that as prophets they were providing inspired words to be sung. They knew that they were writing inspired songs and this can be seen in a multitude of ways. The fact is I am going to inundate you a little this evening on Scripture references, and consequently this is going to be heavily didactic. But let me say I have restricted myself to probably one fifth of the passages that I want to dump on you, but in burdening you too much with passages of Scripture it can become counterproductive and so we are going to limit ourselves to a few clear passages.

So let's look first of all at 2 Samuel 23:1-3. "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake by me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Now the word that is used here "and the man who was raised up on high" actually includes the Hebrew word for "oracle," and that Hebrew word sometimes translated "oracle" refers to revelatory utterances of Jehovah. But here David is saying, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me." It's God's word that was in my tongue. He is self-conscious of this, the sweet psalmist of Israel is. And so it doesn't surprise us that the New Testament calls David on several occasions a prophet.

He is referred to as a prophet. For example Acts 2:29 and following. Acts 2:29. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins," and so on and so forth. So he is referred to as a prophet. Now there are several other places in the New Testament where David is referred to as a prophet. We also see, for example, in the previous chapter, Acts 1, one of the many occasions in the New Testament where we are told that David spoke by the Holy Spirit. So Acts 1:16, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas." This is familiar language in the New Testament.

You look at the passage here that we started with in 2 Chronicles. Here is a reformation. The church had been in a time of spiritual degradation and backsliding. There is a recovery, a spiritual revival, a reformation, and Hezekiah, as well as the reformation under Jehovah, they're concerned to bring the people back to the book. And chiefly, in both the reformations of Hezekiah and Josiah, they're chiefly concerned about restoring biblical worship, which included, as you see here, the song texts given by God through the prophets for that public worship. You see it here in 2 Chronicles 29:30. Ten other places could be cited where we see the same thing.

Here we note that not only David is appointed, but others, specifically in our text Asaph the seer. But then there are others. Jeduthunn in Psalm 39, 62, 77. We see him referred to as a seer in 2 Chronicles 35. Heman in 1 Chronicles referred to as a seer and so on. Now, what's this seer? Well some of you will remember from our study of 1 Samuel. A seer is synonymous with prophet. Look back at 1 Samuel 9. Some of you may even recall it

when we were preaching through this book. 1 Samuel 9:9 which says, “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.” And so if you look as well in that same chapter at verse 19. “And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer.” Samuel is of course a prophet. “Go up before me unto the high place.” And so several along with David are also appointed by God as prophets who are commissioned to give the Word of God and produce revelation, specifically they are men who are prophets ordained by God to produce revelation for worship song. The same thing can be seen in 2 Kings, 2 Samuel, and elsewhere.

If you look 1 Chronicles 25, this is another important text, verses 1 to 7. You see that worship song was produced by prophecy. And I will just draw your attention to a few. We will skip down through. 1 Chronicles 25:1. “Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals,” and so on. Verse 2, “which prophesied according to the order of the king.” Verse 3, “who prophesied.” Again going down to verse 5, “All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer,” or prophet, “in the words of God, to lift up the horn,” and so on. Down to verse 7, “So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.” And so you see prophecy producing these worship praises.

We see the same thing everywhere else. Let me just give this to you in a cursory fashion. Moses, who was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, one of his songs is found of course in the Psalter, Psalm 90. He, as a prophet, was commissioned by God to provide a song for the people to sing. Deuteronomy 31:19. “Now therefore,” God speaking to Moses, “write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.” God is using Moses the prophet to provide a song for the people of God. Some of you will remember in our study of Samuel the band of prophets with Samuel how they came down the hill, remember, prophesying with music and song. And even Saul joins them, and they say, “Is Saul,” you know he is sitting there singing with them, “Is Saul now among the prophets?” What about Deborah? Deborah we are told in Judges 4:4 is a prophetess. And she gives a song in Judges 5. Miriam is described as a prophetess, and she too produces a song. And we could go on and on. The point is, and it is unequivocal, the point is inspiration is a necessary qualification for writing songs for worship and it belonged to the prophetic office. There is no warrant in Scripture for the use of uninspired human compositions in the worship of God.

Such criteria that we have just covered briefly carried forward as the standard, as the expectation into the New Testament. You look at the New Testament. No other songs are provided except for perhaps one exception would be 1 Corinthians 14, and there you have revelatory prophecy, which all the Reformed commentators are pretty clear on, like the Old Testament being given in charismatic, ecstatic utterances. So there is a reference to them in addition as a form of prophesying in tongues, they would give these ecstatic utterances of song. But the point is, just as we would expect, it's revelatory and it's in

connection with the New Testament prophecy. But of course that was temporary, those charismata, that charismatic gifts were temporary and put away.

The church is not now able to produce inspired texts. Subsequent to the putting away of the office of prophet, the church now has no ability to produce inspired texts. It's interesting that we get a quote from Edwards that I have here. Jonathan Edwards who said this, "And such worship as hath not a warrant from divine institution cannot be offered up in faith, because faith has no foundation where there is no divine appointment. Men have no warrant to hope for God's acceptance in that which is not of his appointment, and in that to which he hath not promised his acceptance." You can't do something in faith unless there is a provision in Scripture upon which to base that faith. Owen says something similar that applies to not singing hymns with faith without warrant in the Scripture when he says, "When in every ordinance we consider his appointment of it, and submit our souls and consciences unto his authority therein, this is the first thing that faith regards in divine worship. It discerns that God hath commanded, and therein lies his authority as he required it."

We turn to the New Testament. Let me just say very briefly there are those who want to point to so called hymn fragments embedded in the Gospel of Luke and elsewhere. Mary, Zacharias, Simeon, and so on. Let me just say briefly this is pure conjecture. In other words, there is no biblical warrant. The Bible doesn't refer to them as songs. It's conjecture. In fact, it says, "Mary said the following," not "Mary sang the following." And so there is no Scriptural warrant. It's conjecture to say, "Well, this sounds rather poetic. It must be some sort of hymn fragment." And there is no biblical warrant for concluding such.

We should also note with regards to the inspiration of the Psalms, inspired Psalms, this, my friends, is a tremendous remedy in part to the shattered, and dismantled, and fragmented state of the present church. Every church has its own uninspired hymnbook. And you open it up to one hymn, and you look to the bottom or the top of the page, and it gives you the author, and it gives you the name of the church. The Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, whoever, they have their own hymns and they are all reflecting that sort of segmented segregated thing.

We come to the book of Psalms. At the bottom of every hymn is what? The name of the Holy Spirit. This is an inspired text, which no matter what church you belong to, every Christian in every age in every denomination can sing. It's an expressive not of schismatic isolation. It's actually a move in the direction of a biblical catholicity and unity of the church. Well, our point here in this first point is that the temporary office of prophet has expired, and the production of inspired texts has ceased, and there are no gifts at present for writing worship song, and there is no command in the Bible for new songs to be produced, and there is no provision for additional songs.

We have no more warrant to substitute the canonical text in singing than we do in reading. That's the facts. We have no more warrant to substitute the canonical text in singing than we do in reading. Let me give you a quotation from William Romaine. He's

English. He's not Scottish. And he's not even Presbyterian. But listen to what he says at the end of the 1700's. He's writing in 1796. I'll just say in passing, Isaac Watts probably did more than anyone else to remove the inspired praise from the public assembly, and he had his problems. It's not to say that he didn't write sound things that could be edifying. We wouldn't deny that. But he also was heterox. He was unorthodox in his doctrine of the Trinity, and he was dubious in the way in which he presented his songs to the church.

And so here is Romaine writing after that. And listen to these words. This is an Englishman, not a Presbyterian, but he says the following, "I want a name for that man who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough. He wants no addition. It is perfect, as its author, and not capable of any improvement. Why in such a case would any man in this world take into his head to write hymns for the use of the church? It is just the same as if he was to write a new Bible not only better than the Old, but so much better that the Old may be thrown aside. What a blasphemous attempt. And yet our hymn mongers, inadvertently I hope, have come very near to this blasphemy, for they shut out the Psalms, introduce their own verses into the church, sing them with great delight, and as they fancy with great profit, although the whole practice be in direct opposition to the command of God, and therefore cannot possibly be accompanied with the blessing of God." Strong words.

So our first point is inspired Psalms. Secondly, canonical Psalms. Second principle, which I think is so fundamental unto the heart of this issue, is that Scripture provides, and we possess, a deposit of inspired songs in the canon and directs us to use that text in worship. Therefore, the Book of Psalms has a unique and authoritative status. We are restricted to what God made available in the Bible. I think this has been far too easily overlooked. The canonical argument. These are canonical Psalms. The fact that God has provided an inspired hymnbook in the middle of the canon and told us that we are to use it as a text in worship itself brings with it restriction, just as he has provided us a text for reading in the 66 books in the canon, and therefore restricts our authoritative reading of God's Word in the public assembly in the same way. God has supplied us with a text of worship songs in the Psalter, and the Bible tells us that it's for singing in worship.

We see it here in 2 Chronicles 29:30. "Use these songs in the worship of God." We see it within the canonical book itself. The Book of Psalms itself tells us that it is intended for the worship of God. And so there is a divine, listen, a divine provision of a collection of inspired songs in the canon constitutes prescription. The provision of a collection of inspired songs in the canon, a book in the canon, constitutes prescription. This is a very basic concept that is overwhelmingly authoritative in terms of the power in which it comes to us. The mere existence of the Psalter in the canon proves that it is a distinct and distinctive element for the worship of God.

We have canonical materials for worship songs, just like we have canonical materials for the reading of Scripture in worship. This is not a false or fanciful analogy. The Bible's own provision of a canonical text proves the parallel. The Bible's own provision of a canonical text for reading and a canonical text for singing is irrefutably connected to one another. You turn to the New Testament, there is no collection of worship songs within

the New Testament canon. You look at the Psalter itself, it includes, as we have noted, directions that it be used as worship songs. The title in Hebrew is “Tehillim” which means “Praises.” It is a book of praises, inspired praises, and we sang together from Psalm 95, “Sing praises unto him.” Psalm 105 in a few minutes, “Sing Psalms unto him.” We have the same words that are being employed. God instituted worship song as a permanent ordinance in the church.

So the inclusion of Psalms, the Book of Psalms in the canon, demonstrates the provision of a text for this ordinance. Divinely intended function of the canon. Think, for example, of a parallel. We have 66 books of the Bible. Rome says we have more. We have the Apocrypha. They’re wrong! These are not inspired texts, and they are not to be brought into the public worship of God as a form of reading of Scripture. And yet, we have the church of England, which is not a part of the Roman Catholic Church, aping Rome. When they, though they acknowledge that the Apocrypha is not inspired Scripture, the church of England nevertheless innovates. They appoint that the Apocryphal books be read in the worship of God, and if you can grasp that rather obvious infraction, then you should be able to see the parallel with regards to the canonical book of songs that God has given to us.

One of the most popular pieces, pamphlets, booklets written, I think it came out right before I went into seminary, so probably the early 90’s, written by what was at least then an OPC minister, incredibly popular, one of the most popular supposed critiques of exclusive psalmody. The essence of the argument of that booklet is this: Scripture commands that we sing, but Scripture does not provide us with a text, therefore, we can sing whatever we want. That’s the heart of the argument of this book. This is deplorable. This is really deplorable. It’s almost take your breath away deplorable this sort of argument. It ignores places like 2 Chronicles 29:30 and many others, where we are told that these songs are appointed for worship. So there is an obvious refutation of the argument. But more importantly, it overlooks the canonicity of the Book of Psalms. That by itself is a profound argument and refutation. This is one of the most popular critiques of exclusive psalmody. We have very little to worry about. In fact one of the most persuasive ways of bringing someone to see the biblical basis for singing the Psalms in worship is to give them the literature which critiques it.

It is so pathetic for those who are going to dig and think that it by itself will persuade you of the biblical basis of what we’re speaking of. If you were to enter into a church to worship, coming to a public worship service, and they hand you a book, and it says, “Worship Songs” on it, you would recognize, “Duh, the purpose is for me to sing this as I go in to worship.” That’s what God has done. God has handed you a book that says, “Worship Songs” and called you to use it as you go to worship him. This is the canonical argument. Christ himself inhabits the praises of his people. He does so because it’s his own word. And it is a word that is full of him. As Luke 24:44 says, “Jesus preached to them himself including from the Psalms.”

These songs, the Book of Psalms, were historically gathered together under the direction and providence of God. You’ll find other songs like Hezekiah who is a prophet, and like

some of these others, all of which are inspired, all of which were produced by prophets, fragments of those are gathered together into the permanent canonical book, the manual of praise that God gives. So in the narratives, some of those songs are taken, and boom, cut and paste whole into the Book of Psalms. Some of the songs inspired by prophets in the prophets, fragments of those are gathered and implanted within the Psalter as well.

And so you look at all of this. When you come having thought about the principle of inspiration that inspired prophecy was a prerequisite for writing the songs, the provision of a canonical book of songs, you come then to places like Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 and the story is over before we even get there almost. It says, “Be filled with the Spirit,” Ephesians 5. Sing the songs of the Spirit. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” Colossians 3. Sing the songs of the Spirit. “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” That word spiritual, which can apply either to the songs or to all three words is used 25 times in the New Testament, and whenever it refers to a text is used in terms of inspiration. Singing these inspired Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We can come back to that more in a moment.

There are those who say, “Well, in prayer, we are not confined to Scripture. Therefore, in singing we are not confined to Scripture.” But this is a ridiculous argument, because when God gives us an ordinance, he, not we, define the content for that ordinance. He is the one who decides. We have no inspired prayer book. The New Testament says, “I have given you the Holy Spirit,” as we saw this last Sabbath morning. You pray in the Spirit. The Spirit helps you pray. You pray according to God’s will as it is revealed in the Word. That’s the content. God tells us what the content is. The same with preaching. We don’t have a book of sermons to read to the congregation. He says, “I have given a permanent office called the ministry, pastors, which does continue unlike the prophets to the end of time, and they with the help of the Holy Spirit are to take the sense of what the Bible says and explain it.” Old Testament. New Testament. And the ordinance of preaching is there.

We come to singing, just like when we come to the reading of Scripture, we have canonical book of praise provided for us and a canonical book for reading that is provided for us. It is a bad analogy. It sidesteps the very center of the issue. Likewise, there are those who say, “Well, in preaching you use uninspired words, so in singing we should use uninspired words. After all we are told that we are instructing one another in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 when we sing. And we are instructing people when we preach.” Well, the problem is when you get sloppy like this, rather than looking at each ordinance using the regulative principle to recognize each ordinance has to be appointed by God, provided by God, and the parameters defined by God, when you begin just kind of blending in this big soup, then if you’re consistent, you would say, “Women can sing, and it’s instructing one another, therefore women can preach when we are instructing one another.” Well, no. God has specifically ordained the parameters for preaching, just as he has for singing.

So we have this canonical Psalms. One other, well, two more things quickly before we move on. There are people who say, “Well, all of the songs in Scripture are necessarily inspired because the Bible is inspired, and the Bible is recording these songs.” This

actually is published as a main paper against exclusive psalmody in the '40's. You see the point. Well, of course, any song you read about in the Bible is inspired, because the Bible is inspired. But the fact is that the Bible gives us an inspired, accurate record of devils lying. And it gives us an inspired record of the words of false prophets. And it gives us the inspired words of conversations between men who did not have the gift of prophecy. The point is God declares song text is to be inspired by prophets and therefore, this argument is really a dead end street.

Some have said, "Well, we have no obligation to use them." Just to make sure you're getting it. This is a book of songs that forms a book within the canon; its presence in the canon constitutes a command. Its presence in the canon constitutes, apart from all of the other commands to sing it, that by itself constitutes a command to sing it. We're commanded to sing the Book of Psalms. We are not commanded anywhere to sing uninspired songs. If you want to sing uninspired songs, the crushing burden of proof lies with you.

Thirdly, we have sufficient Psalms. So now we're taking the sufficiency of Scripture and applying it to the Psalms. You can follow, just as we saw in our study of the Bible as a whole, inspiration, canonicity, all of this leads to sufficiency. It all leads to sufficiency. The character of this Book of Psalms as a permanent manual of praise is full of sufficiency, and putting these three things together results in the need for a new book to sing vanishes. You combine inspired requirement, canonical requirement, sufficiency, it precludes supplementation. It's a slam dunk at this point. I say it in all sincerity, humbly. I think the humble thing is to come under the authority of God, and to submit to him, and to say, "We, O Lord, will bow down before you and receive, and use, and do what you have required of us."

The early church recognized this. You have some of the best stuff written is from the early church. Athenasius, Bazel, others. For example, the piece by Athenasius who lived the end of the 200's and the first part of the 300's, his piece on the Psalms is just magnificent, easily available online. Let me give you one quote from Athenasius. "I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms, for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, the emotions of his soul. To praise and glorify God he can select a Psalm suited to every occasion, and thus will find that they were written for him." Athenasius is saying, "This is sufficient for us." Bazel says the same thing, same century. "The Book of Psalms is a compend of all divinity, a common store of medicine for the soul, a universal magazine of good doctrines profitable to everyone in all conditions."

The Book of Psalms was the soundtrack of the Reformation. It was the soundtrack of the Reformation. There was a recovery, the centrality of the singing of the Psalms, and it was sustained for some time following the Reformation. The Westminster Assembly saw it as so significant, not only did they produce the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, the Westminster Confession, a Directory for Worship, a Form of Church Government, a Directory for Family Worship, they commissioned the production of a metrical Psalter. That's how serious and how significant it was for them. They say, "Singing Psalms is an

element of worship” in the Confession. In the Directory for Public Worship they give an Appendix to it, but most of all they appoint that a metrical Psalter be produced for the use in the churches.

There are those who say, “We think that these Psalms are insufficient. They are not sufficient. They are Old Testament. We are New Testament. The Old Testament book is inadequate for New Testament worship. There is a progression of revelation.” This is the Dispensational argument, or the Marcion argument, that says the Old Testament book is inadequate. But it ignores, notice, it ignores the biblical requirement of an inspired text. You can’t just set aside these criterion and say, “We have warrant to go outside the canon.” You can’t do that. That’s the very point that you’re obligated to prove. And what’s interesting is by saying, “The Book of Psalms isn’t good enough for us,” it is in fact a denial of the sufficiency. It’s undermining the sufficiency of Scripture. When we say that the Bible’s canonical songbook must be supplemented from materials outside of the canon, that the canon itself doesn’t provide for what we need, we’re saying, “It’s not sufficient. The Bible is not sufficient to provide what we need. We’ve got to go elsewhere to get it on our own.”

This canonical Psalter is used in light of a completed New Testament canon, and that completed New Testament canon casts light on the fullness of the meaning of the Book of Psalms. We sing the Psalms with all of the light of the New Testament shining upon them. The New Testament quotes the Book of Psalms more than any other book. On average the Book of Psalms is quoted once every 19 verses in the New Testament. And when the New Testament wants to establish things, well, the most Christocentric chapters in the New Testament, what would they be? Colossians 1. Hebrews 1. These would be two of the most Christocentric chapters in the whole New Testament. You go to Hebrews 1, that brief very Christocentric chapter quotes the Psalms 7 times. It quotes the Psalms 7 times to establish the glory of Christ, the surpassing glory of Jesus.

The fact is that these are the songs of Jesus. These are the songs that he sang everyday all day, that he was brimming and full of. These are the songs that the Apostles were immersed in. These are the songs that when the Arians were producing their uninspired songs to propagate their heresies, Athanasius and the orthodox church were still singing with vibrancy the Psalms of David. This is what was central in the Reformation church as well. The fact is it is doctrine. It is sufficient. It is doctrinally sufficient. Every conceivable doctrine is to be found in the Book of Psalms, at times in exquisite detail.

It is Christocentric. We know more about the internal experience of Jesus on the cross from the Book of Psalms than we would ever know from the four Gospels. We are given a window into the experience of Christ on the cross in the Book of Psalms in a way that is never shown to us in the four Gospels. It’s a Christocentric book. All of the offices of Christ, the humiliation, the exaltation, all the states of Christ, all of the various functions and aspects of his redemption, it is all there. There is nothing missing. God knew what he was doing when he provided this permanent manual of praise. Everything. Nothing is left unturned.

There are those who will say, “Well, you can’t sing the name of Jesus,” as if this trumps everything. Well let’s be clear. When they were walking in Jesus’ ministry, they were speaking Aramaic, not Greek. And number two, though Jesus’ name is used five hundred times in the New Testament, there is like once that he is ever addressed by that name. The name that he is normally addressed by is Lord along with others. But we know from the Bible that a name is its meaning in Hebrew. And all of the names of God are to be found in the Book of Psalms. Jesus means Jehovah saves. And we have reference to God our Savior, God our salvation, there, the equivalent of the name of Jesus, along with all of the other names and displays of God’s character and attributes found in the Book of Psalms. Bar none. But let’s remember when people say, “You can’t sing the name of Jesus,” God is the one who determines what we need. And God is the one who determines what is acceptable to him. Not us. Keep that in mind when this alleged objection is raised.

It’s not only Christocentric, it’s experientially sufficient. It gives us every facet of Christian experience, and it does so in proportions that you will never find in an uninspired hymnbook. Ever. You know, Carl Truman, professor at Westminster Seminary wrote a couple of marvelous articles. One is called “The Marcions Have Landed.” And he is critiquing the objection to the Psalter as God’s manual of praise and saying it’s like a Marcion argument. The other one is something like “Songs That Sad Christians Can Sing.” And he says, “Do you notice that in the uninspired hymnbooks you never find anything like you do in the Book of Psalms? In the Book of Psalms the broken, the destitute, the dark, bleak, horrific state of your soul, in those darkest moments God puts a song in your mouth that expresses with his own Word exactly where you are in your Christian experience. You’ll never find that sort of thing in the same way with any uninspired books of hymns.”

The same thing can be said with regards with imprecation. Where is this whole aspect of God’s glory? This whole aspect of God’s righteous indignation, and his justice, and his holiness displayed on his enemies? There is no such thing as an imprecatory uninspired hymn. People wouldn’t have the audacity to do it. But God does. Who determines whether the Psalms are sufficient? God does. God has given to us a sufficient Word. He has told us that this is the Word that we need.

Now I have not taken time. There is so much material that deals with the objections surrounding Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 elsewhere that you can easily read that. But I will give you a brief survey in terms of New Testament sufficiency.

We have reference to words like “hymn” in Matthew 26:30. “They went out into the night and sang a hymn.” Everyone, it doesn’t matter what your views are on sung praise, agree that this is the Hallel Psalm, Psalm 113-118, which they sang after the Lord’s Supper. You have in Psalm 16:25 a reference to hymns. The only other place that word is used is in Hebrews 2:12 when Psalm 22 is being quoted. It’s a Psalm that’s quoted in reference to that hymn.

James 5 when we are told to sing Psalms, the only other place that word is used is in Romans 15. Where? Psalm 18 is being quoted. The Psalms are provided for permanent use. The New Testament use of the Psalms verifies that. No gift given in the New Testament for inspired praise. No command to compose it. No evidence of new songs in the New Testament, inspired or uninspired. No command to write uninspired praise. Only the ones ordained as God's song, the songs of Zion, the Lord's song.

Well, what about Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3? The fact is, this only strengthens our position. I am tempted to delve into this, but we probably don't have the time. When it says, "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," it's not talking about the Psalms of David, the hymns of Fanny Crosby, and the modern-day charismatic choruses, okay? That is what we call eisegesis. We take our ideas and read them into the text rather than exegesis where we're getting the meaning out of the text itself. How does the Bible use those three words including the Greek translation of the Old Testament? And the fact is that it uses them in reference to the Psalms. So in the titles of the Psalms, which are inspired, you know there at the beginning of some of the Psalms, sixty-seven times the word psalm is used. Six times the word hymn is used. Thirty-six times the Greek word for song is used, and twelve Psalms we have both psalms and song used. In two we have the word psalm and hymn used in the title. And in one, Psalm seventy-six, we have all three, psalm, hymn, and song used.

In addition, within the Psalms themselves, I have a list of a dozen texts here, the word hymn is used in a dozen different Psalms in reference to itself in the text of the Psalms. The same thing could be said with the word songs. The same thing could be said, for example, in 2 Chronicles 29:30, the word hymnos, that's what's being used here in our text in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Why three terms in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3? Scripture does that. In Exodus 34 we have iniquity, transgression, and sin, all three used at once. Deuteronomy 5 we have commandments, statutes, and judgments, all three used at once. In Acts 2 we have miracles, wonders, and signs. This is a typical pattern. The Lord here uses Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in reference to the same thing. Notice the word spiritual on the end. This can apply, as I said, to the word song or to all three words. Just like we might say beautiful flowers and plants. We might mean beautiful flowers and plants, or we might mean beautiful flowers and beautiful plants. It's the same in the Greek.

The context of being filled with the Spirit and singing the songs of the Spirit and the fact that this word is used in reference to inspiration almost uniformly in reference to texts in the New Testament makes it clear. You have places like Hebrews 3:7 where it is quoting Psalm 95, and it says, "The Holy Spirit says." That's a pattern that's often found. I could give you a lot more on that particular point, but there is, as I said, most of the literature that's being produced is actually on this point. I think it's a bit misplaced, but it's still valuable material that you can read about.

So, all I am saying is we need to use what God has provided. Sixty-six books for reading. No argument from that. Ministerial gifts for preaching. We need the Holy Spirit and the Word as a pattern for prayer. He has given us water for baptism. He has given us wine

and bread for the Lord's Supper, and he has given us a canonical and inspired book of Psalms for singing. And so the Confession is right. It's the reading, preaching, and singing of Psalms. It's the appointed ordinance that God has given to us as his people.

In Chronicles 29:30 we have an Old Testament reformation and that was a return to God's appointed forms of worship, including the text of worship song. Fast forward to the Protestant Reformation. We have a return to God's appointed forms for worship, including the text of worship song. The fact is we live in a day of spiritual darkness and degradation. Doctrinally, in terms of holiness, of life, in terms of worship we are in a backslidden and bleak state in American Christendom. The way to answer questions like this is not to lift up your nose and count heads in a day of declension. The fact is if you want to count heads it will be to your pleasant surprise when you discover that rather than being in a restricted minority as we are today, the best and brightest in the past actually asserted as strongly as we do, these very points. But we aren't concerned about the praise of men or counting the noses of men, even godly men of the past. We are concerned about submitting ourselves humbly to the Word of God and to its full demands and that requires us to affirm this important doctrine of singing God's songs.

I will close with a quote from Calvin. These words, which are found in his 1543 epistle, this was included in several of the reissues of the Genevan Psalter. Here's what Calvin said. Listen. Don't close up your mind yet. I'm not finished. Stick with me. One last quote. Here is what Calvin urges regarding the appropriate text for worship song. He says, "Now what Saint Augustine says is true that no one is able to sing things worthy of God unless he has received them from him. Wherefore, when we have looked thoroughly everywhere and searched high and low, we shall find no better songs nor more appropriate to the purpose than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit made and spoke through him. And furthermore, when we sing them we are certain that God puts the words in our mouths as if he were singing in us to exalt his glory."

Let's stand together for prayer.

*O mighty God in heaven, we come thankful for the songs of Zion, for what you yourself have termed the Lord's song. We thank you, O Lord, for providing us with an inspired and canonical text sufficient for our every need. You have placed in our mouth these wonderful words, the words of God, to raise as a great praise to your Holy name. We confess, O Lord, that we must subject ourselves to your will and Word, to bring ourselves under the authority of the demands of your Word, to take our place in the dust with humility, and we pray that you would cause us, even in asserting this particular doctrine found in your Scripture, that we would do so with that humility, not looking at ourselves as those who have arrived at something, but as those who must cast ourselves in the dust at your feet and merely lip what you yourself have given and to return glory to you for the grace bestowed. Do give us, O Lord, a love for these songs. We pray that our children would grasp something of the principles we've spoken of. And grant, Lord, that it would be deeply embedded in their own hearts and minds, that their convictions would be quickened, that they would be setting down their roots in your Word, and they would not be toppled, or deceived, or led off from these truths which their parents have*

*faithfully taught them. We pray, O Lord, not for our own name, our own good, not even for our own comfort, but for your own glory. We pray that you would hasten the day which we know for certain is yet to come when you will revive the cause of Zion in the earth, when you will pour out from heaven windows of great blessing of the Holy Spirit and bringing again days of reformation, and grant that you would hasten, O Lord, these days, and that there would be a great return to your Word. And we plead all of these things for Jesus' sake in whose name we ask it, Amen.*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013  
**ORDER OF WORSHIP**  
PRAYER MEETING

**SERMON OUTLINE**  
"THE SINGING OF PSALMS"  
2 CHRONICLES 29:30  
**DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE**  
PART 14

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**Call to Worship**

I. Inspired Psalms

**Singing of God's Word**

Psalm 95:1-6  
Tune: *Dunfermline*, #51

\* Prayer

**Reading of God's Word**

1 Samuel 26

II. Canonical Psalms

\* Prayer

**Reading of God's Word**

Revelation 16

**Preaching of God's Word**

"The Singing of Psalms"  
2 Chronicles 29:30

III. Sufficient Psalms

\* Prayer

**Singing of God's Word**

Psalm 105:1-4  
Tune: *Colchester*, #41

\* **Benediction**

\* Congregation Standing