

The Psalms

Theme: Through emotive song and prayer, the book of Psalms reveals God to His people while providing guidance for both public and private worship in any circumstance of life.

Context: The book of Psalms is a compilation of songs and prayers meant to aid God's people in worship. Authorship of the Psalms vary. King David is attributed with the writing of about half the Psalms, but there are others, too (Moses, Solomon, the sons of Korah, Asaph, and a few without named author). Likewise, certain Psalms specify historical events as their source material, while others carry particular emphases. These emphases allow for categorization of the Psalms into groups. A few of these categories are as follows: lament, praise, love of God's Law, royal (or Messianic), historical, prophetic, and confessions of sin. With multiple authors and categories, the compilers of the Psalter attempted to create a flow within the book itself. This is most easily seen in the first two and final Psalms. Psalm 1 opens the whole book with a compass for the rest of it: in righteousness there is blessing (1:1-3), in wickedness there is destruction (1:4-5), and it is God who provides both the blessing and destruction (1:6). Similarly, Psalm 2 provides the answer to how humanity can acquire such righteousness and blessing, and it is through God's Son (2:7). Surrounding this reality of God's Son are ragingly rebellious nations and kings (2:1-3) and the call to repentance, belief, and subsequent salvation through God (2:4-12). As God's people live in this world, the book of Psalms plays out (through the different categories) any given circumstance and accompanying emotion. Knowing full well that God will provide for His people, the compilers of the book of Psalms chose a fitting way to end. "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 150:6).

Connection: The book of Psalms carries broad and particular connection with the rest of Scripture. Broadly speaking, the Psalms' emphases on God's sovereignty over salvation, His Law, His covenant and covenant people, and His sole provision of true comfort go hand in hand with the rest of both Old and New Testament writings. Particularly, the book of Psalms is quoted often in the New Testament. The use of Psalms ranges from messianic prophecy like Psalm 110 (Matt. 22:44) to condemnation like Psalm 118 (Matt. 21:42) to lament in light of God's judgment like Psalm 22 (Matt. 27:46). And these are just three examples from the lips of Jesus. Many more are to be found throughout the New Testament. The Psalms embody God's people. It is in these emotive cries from God's people that deep and unique theological connection is derived with the rest of God's Word.

Solid Rock Verses Scheme*:

As is true of all Scripture, the book of Psalms in its entirety points readers to Jesus Christ. This happens overtly in certain Psalms while in others through various means (God as creator, God as judge, humanity's need for salvation in light of evil, and so on). What you will find in the solid rock section for the Psalms is a color-coded (non-exhaustive) look at some of the different categories that can be found within the Psalms. For the purposes of this handout, we'll use some of the *ESV Study Bible's* categories (found above in the context portion of the handout).

**Find the verse on the back of this handout.*

Lament	Thanksgiving	Love of God's Law
Royal (or Messianic)	Confession of Sin	Prophetic

Solid Rock Verses*:

Psalm 1—*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...*

Psalm 2—*The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you..."*

Psalm 8—*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

Psalm 19—*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul...*

Psalm 22—*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Psalm 23—*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...*

Psalm 32—*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

Psalm 51—*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*

Psalm 69—*Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck...*

Psalm 88—*O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?*

Psalm 95—*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving...*

Psalm 100—*Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!*

Psalm 103—*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us...*

Psalm 110—*The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand..."*

Psalm 118—*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...*

Psalm 119—*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...*

Psalm 122—*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"*

Psalm 127—*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain...*

Psalm 150—*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*

**To reiterate, this is a non-exhaustive example list of some of the very obvious categories to be found in the book of Psalms. Let the reader use these examples and categories to begin a more in-depth study and use of all of the God-given psalms found within this book.*