

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - November 10, 2022

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Title: Introduction to The Book of Psalms - Part VI

I. Introduction

A. This lesson will introduction you to two more of the five principal communicative purposes of the psalms and that will be Psalms of Instruction (i.e., Teaching), and Profession of Trust.

B. I pray that you are being blessed as we go through this series of lessons and your times of prayer and Bible study are even more meaningful. It is my desire to take you a little deeper into the Word of God, a little at a time.

C. Before we delve into this lesson, let's do a very quick review.

1. List the numerical sequence of the Books or Divisions of the Psalter.

<u>Books</u>	<u>Numerical Sequence</u>
I	
II	
III	
IV	
V	

2. List the five principal communicative purposes of the psalms.

- 1.
- 2.

3.

4.

5.

3. What are the two main types of Petition Psalms?

1.

2.

D. Okay, lets get started with Part VI of our Introduction to the Book of Psalms.

## **II. Psalms of Instruction (Teaching)**

A. The main purpose of the instructional, didactic (i.e., teaching), or catechetical psalms, is to teach the faithful believers how they might lead a life that is pleasing to Yahweh their king (Ps. 78:1-8).

B. Believers do this by committing their lives to His service - more specifically by obeying the terms of His gracious covenant as set forth in the Torah.

**Comment:** Notice that this Hebrew term, **Torah**, so often translated into English by the word "**law**," literally means "instruction" or "teachings."

C. In contrast to the strong emotions, positive and negative, that are expressed in the psalms of petition and praise, the psalms of instruction are typically more restrained, meditative, or devotional in style.

D. God's Torah includes everything He wished to make known concerning the Israelites' daily lives, both religious and secular (which were not separated in the Hebrew way of thinking).

E. This instruction also includes all of God's merciful promises of

blessing and deliverance for those who remain faithful to Him.

F. There are three psalms which focus especially upon the Torah, they are Psalm 1, 119 (the longest psalm), and 19:7-14 (the "summary" of Psalm 119).

G. There are other didactic (teaching) psalms that have more to do with life in general and how the believer ought to follow the holy will of Yahweh and flee what is evil or contrary to His commands.

H. These instructional prayers are frequently called wisdom psalms. They teach what "true wisdom" is from God's point of view. They emphasize what constitutes acting with care and concern about God-pleasing behavior and include strong warnings to avoid the destructive ways of the wicked.

I. The word "**blessed**" is frequently used to describe the wise person who lives to please God (e.g., Psalm 34:8).

J. "Walking in the fear of the **LORD**" is another expression commonly used to describe those who honor and obey God (e.g., Psalm 34:9, 11).

K. The blessedness of believers who live to glorify God is frequently taught, contrasting them in strong terms with the many wicked who surround them (e.g., Psalm 34:21).

L. Several of the teaching prayers sound like the debate in Job concerning the question of why evil persons often seem to prosper in this life (e.g., Psalm 37 and 49). The LORD, however, sees and will finally judge the wicked according to their works (e.g., Psalm 34:15-16, 21; 37:28-38).

M. In addition to a sharp contrast, other stylistic features

characteristic of Hebrew poetic wisdom literature are **comparative sayings** (e.g., Psalm 37:16), **warnings** (e.g., Psalm 32:9), **general admonitions to listen** (e.g., Psalm 49:1-2), **picturesque similes** (e.g., Psalm 128:3), **rhetorical questions** (e.g., Psalm 25:12), and **representative direct speech of the wicked** (e.g., Psalm 73:11).

N. The following psalms, or significant portions of them, all fit into the wisdom category: Psalm 14, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 49, 73, 78, 92, 94, 111, 112, 127, 128, 133, and 147.

**Note:** Many of the passages found in the above listed psalms, sound similar to sayings found in the Book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.

O. The pairs of parallel lines in these psalms are often stated in the form of "general truths" and comparisons which apply to the lives of people who seek to follow the teachings of the LORD, in contrast to those who live contrary to the divinely established way.

P. A typical contrastive pair can be seen in Psalm 112:1, 10:

[v1] Praise ye the Lord  
Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,  
That delighteth greatly in his commandments.

[v10] The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;  
He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:  
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

### III. Paired Psalms (Parallel Psalms)

**Note:** I am inserting the following information on Paired Psalms at this point because, I would like for you apply this information in the Exercise/Application under Section V of this lesson.

A. Psalms are linked to one another by means of the repetition of key ideas or similar words and phrases. It is almost as if the prominent Hebrew poetic feature of two parallel lines has been extended to the level of complete psalms. Here is what I mean; One of the clearest instances of "parallel psalms" are Psalms 42 and 43.

B. First, we notice that Psalm 43 does not have a title, just as Psalm 42 does not (although we see a superscription above Psalm 42). This would suggest that the composition of Psalm 42 is meant to cover the contents of both Psalms 42 and 43.

C. Second, we notice the repeated "**refrain**" in both psalms in which the chorus, or congregation, encourages the singer with an exhortation to "**hope thou in God**" (Ps. 42:5) and "**hope in God**" (Ps. 43:5).

D. Additionally, the two psalms are "framed." That is, they are enclosed by a strong expression of the desire to "come and appear before God" (Ps. 42:2) and a corresponding vow to "go unto the altar of God" (Ps. 43:4).

E. Because of these and other more detailed connections (e.g., the references of well-known mountains in 42:6 and "holy hill" (i.e., Jerusalem) [43:3]), it is clear that this psalmic "parallel pair" was meant to be read, chanted, or sung together - and likewise interpreted together as a single composition.

#### **IV. Profession of Trust**

A. In the Psalms of Trust, the psalmist expresses his complete reliance upon the LORD as the Savior and protector of his life.

**Comment:** It is not always easy to distinguish these psalms as a separate category.

B. Most of these psalms could easily be classified as either a petition, a song of thanksgiving, or even a teaching psalm. Yet, in each of these Psalms of **Profession** the main emphasis is on the speaker's unshakable confidence in the LORD.

C. The psalmist speaks clearly, concretely, and publicly testifies to his God-centered faith to all who are willing to listen.

D. These are sometimes called "**creedal**" psalms because there is a special focus upon testimony to the faithfulness of the LORD to His covenant with His people (basically the same as the Profession stage of an Individual Petition Psalm).

E. In other words, the psalmist does not ask for deliverance from his enemies, nor does he thank God for having already saved him. Rather, he expresses his faith that the LORD continually saves him.

F. As in Psalms of Instruction, the temporal focus is neither on past times nor the future, but it is timeless.

G. Normally, God is referred to in the third person, except when He is being quoted, as in Psalm 46:10-11.

"Be still, and know that I am God

I will be exalted among the heathen, ...

(**first person** for direct speech)

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

(**third person** for faith profession)

H. The reason the psalmist fears nothing and no one is that he firmly believes that God is ever present to protect and deliver him.

I. Psalm 23 is no doubt the most familiar of the Psalms of Trust, and it is a good illustration of the difference between this group (i.e., Profession of Trust Psalms) and those of a didactic (i.e., teaching) nature, such as Psalm 1.

J. The emphasis in Psalm 23 is more upon the confident attitude of the believer's heart than upon his righteous actions in the world, as in Psalm 1.

K. Other Psalms of Trust are: 11, 16, 26, 27, 31, 46, 52, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131, and 139.

**Comment:** In some of these, only a part of the psalm is a profession of trust.

## V. Exercise [Application]

A. Please answer the following questions, applying the information covered in this lesson.

1. Read Psalm 1. What are some of the features that show this is a good example of a didactic (i.e., a teaching) or wisdom psalm?
2. Examine Psalms 37, 49, 73, and 112. Select a verse from each one that calls attention to a special "wisdom" or "teaching," for example the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Write these verses out along with their verse numbers. Try to summarize the specific teaching that is emphasized in each passage.
3. Psalms 111 and 112 are two teaching psalms that have been placed next to one another in the Psalter. Write down the main similarities that link this pair together as "parallel

psalms.”

4. Read Psalms 26, 31, 46, and 52. Find a verse in each one that clearly expresses a solid trust in the Lord and write it out.
5. What kind of psalm is Psalm 22?
6. Psalm 27 is a good example of a psalm of mixed genres; it is a prayer of petition woven together with a profession of trust. Which specific verses belong to each of these two categories?

I pray that this lesson has been a blessing to you, and you are encouraged to continue reading, studying, and meditating upon the Word of God.

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Pastor Austin