

Introduction to the Psalms, Part 2.

Psalms is the book of the heart. It was meant to be sung from the well-spring of the heart. The book of Psalms expresses the depths of the heart. To illustrate this I would like to take a brief look at a passage from Proverbs. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our hearts for it is the wellspring of life

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23, NIV.¹

- I take this refer to the kind of life that engenders worship of the Lord - the only legitimate form of life. Here the reference is to a well - a facility that was life-giving in biblical times. In fact, the well was so important to the live of the citizen of biblical times that strategic plans for the defense of a city of those times included access to a well (or wells) that could not be polluted by the enemy. I think this passage is a veiled reference to this guarding of the heart. As the well gives life - so the heart gives life. It is from this wellspring that the Psalms originate. So right away we see an intimacy, a transparency of thought that the Psalms contains.

This problem of the heart is illustrated in the waters of Marah:

²³ **When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter.** Exod 15:23.¹

This Oasis was a picture of the heart of sinful man. In verse 23 the people could not drink from the well because it was polluted. And so is the heart of man before Christ. However, if we read further on we see the solution for the condition of the heart (water). A piece of wood was cast into the water and it was rendered drinkable. See [Exod 15:22-26](#). This implication is clear to me: when Christ is cast into our hearts, He makes the waters thereof drinkable - that is life-giving - a statement of the regenerated heart that is now able to give praises to the LORD.

The Various Themes of Psalms.

As one reads the psalms he becomes aware that there are several themes that are threaded throughout the book. These themes actually organize the various areas of worship that come from the heart of the psalmist. Let's take a look at these themes briefly.

Royal psalms. These can be further divided into two sub-categories - worship of the LORD and Messianic psalms where Jesus Christ is prophetically referred to. Here the true heart of the LORD is revealed especially when it comes to Jesus Christ and His redemptive role and His rule of the earth as True Sovereign. See Psalm 2, 18, 20, 21, 22, 45, 47, 68, 72, 89, 101, 110, 118, 132, 144. This is a partial list. There are more messianic psalms to be listed. I hope to add to that list as time goes on, particularly as to go through my study bibles and glean references to messianic passages that I have noted down through the decades.

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Wisdom psalms. These psalms give practical guidance for living a godly life. See Ps 1, 37, 119.

Lament psalms. These are emotionally charged psalms. They cry out to the LORD for deliverance.² See Ps. 3-7, 12-13, 22, 25-28, 35, 38-40, 42-44, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, and on.

Impeccatory psalms. Holman says these psalms are motivated by a zeal for the LORD. They *are* controversial as they often voice thoughts that are normally forbidden for the spiritual man. However, as stated in previous lessons, I feel these are entirely legitimate from the viewpoint that they have stirred from righteous indignation *and* the fact that the LORD encourages transparency from the believer's heart. If a sinner reads these psalms, his heart should be filled with fear of the wrath of God – if so, the purpose of the psalm has been fulfilled in a good way providing the sinner repents of his ways. See Ps. 7, 35, 40, 55, 58-59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 144.

Thanksgiving psalms. These psalms express gratitude for the LORD's blessings. They are abundant, of course and undeserved. These psalms are written on an individual and national basis. See Ps. 8, 18, 19, 29, 30, 32-34, 40, 41, 103-106, 111, 113, 117 and on.

Pilgrimage psalms. These are festive psalms – they show how the godly heart rejoices in the LORD. The Jewish regenerate heart has an unusually enthusiastic heart when it comes to praise of the LORD and so these psalms show such enthusiasm. See Ps. 43, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 120-134.

The Excitement of examining the Psalms.

I think it is exciting because within the book are most genuine responses of the hearts of the psalmists. If you want to see the heart of a true worshiper – read the Psalms. Reading the Psalms is most beneficial for the regenerate heart. I know that Psalm 23 is often recited by all men and women when they are going through troublesome times and this is perfectly fine. But the heart of the believer can truly identify with the image of Jesus Christ their true Shepherd. See [John 10:1-16](#). And so we enter this truly exciting, worshipful book. I pray that we will allow the Spirit of the LORD to open our hearts so that we might come closer to Him.

Amen.

(Continue to finish Psalm 96 study here).

² This list is partially taken from reading Holman Old Testament Commentary, Vol. 11, page 5.