

Introduction: Since the Psalms are “the anatomy of the soul,” (John Calvin), it is important for us to study them on a regular basis. As part of our fall Reformation sermon series, we focus on the importance of the Psalms for the Reformation, turning to select Psalms for *a foundation for further personal study and appreciation of the Psalms*.

Monday: read Psalm 1:1; 2:12; 40:4 & 41:1. In the first 22 Psalms, David teaches us about the source of real blessing in heeding God’s Word and placing our faith in the Messiah. To pay Him loving homage brings blessing, (Psalm 2:12), and to follow the pathways of God’s Law as His redeemed people brings blessing as well, (Psalm 1:1). Moreover, as if to underscore these blessings, the first section of the Book of Psalms concludes with the blessings of faith and loyalty to God in Psalm 40:4 and Psalm 41:1:

Blessed is the man who makes
the LORD his trust,
who does not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after a lie! (Ps 40:4)

Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him. (Ps 41:1)

By the way, we *know* Psalm 41 concludes the first of five divisions of the Book of Psalms because it ends with, “Amen and Amen” – just as the subsequent sections, (Psalm 42-72; 73-89; 90-106 & 107-150), all likewise end with some form of ‘Amen’. In this way, the people of Israel add their voice of concurrence to the voice of the Psalmist, as if to say to all that would read their Psalms in the future: ‘This is solid ground! This is the truth of God! Let all God’s people praise God by *agreeing to these songs of praise!*

Meditate and Pray: Let us confess the true way of blessing which the Psalms promise, using hymn # 558 in our Red Trinity hymnal:

*That man is blest who, fearing God
From sin restrains his feet,
Who will not stand with wicked men,
Who shuns the scorners’ seat.*

*Yea, blest is he who makes God’s law
His portion and delight,
And meditates upon that law
With gladness day and night.*

*That man is nourished like a tree
Set by the river’s side;
Its leaf is green, its fruit is sure,
And thus his works abide.*

*The wicked like the driven chaff
Are swept from off the land;
They shall not gather with the just,
Nor in the judgment stand.*

*The Lord will guard the righteous well,
Their way to Him is known;
The way of sinners, far from God,
Shall surely be o’erthrown.*

Tuesday: read Psalm 1:1-6. Psalm 1 is not accidentally placed at the beginning! It is not an isolated Psalm to be studied as the writing of one individual. It represents the foundational relationship with God for the people of God. In other words, there is an inspired arrangement to the book of Psalms as a whole, beginning with Psalm 1 which promises us that we can “run in the paths of God’s commands” (Ps. 119:32), and find joyful communion with Him therein.

It all begins in verses Psalm 1:1-2 with the intensified plural noun, “blessings”, literally translated, “Oh the blessing upon blessing for those who do not walk with the wicked, (but rather), make their delight and meditation on God’s Law.” The Law here is depicted as a pathway of safety and fellowship with God. To walk in the pathway of God’s commands is to walk, as verse 6 says, in the way over which God watches!

Meditate and Pray: Let us celebrate the blessing of knowing that our way is watched over by the Lord. As Job puts it in Job 23:10, “God knows the way that I take, and when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold”. What a wonderful way to begin the Psalms, by celebrating God’s personal attention to our lives! He watches over the way that we take and steers us back into the path of His commands!

Weds/Thurs: read Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 2:1-12. In the second Psalm we learn that God’s determination to bless us is deeply rooted not only in the Law, but also in **the Law-Keeper!** He desires to bless us because His holy Son, the Messiah,

has asked for us to be part of His inheritance among the nations, (Psalm 2:8). In terms of the book of Revelation, we can be counted as one among the number of the redeemed, “from every tribe and nation”, because Christ has asked that His spotless death be applied to purchase us away from sin and condemnation into an adopted, permanent status as God’s forgiven children.

Applying what Jesus did for us in the language of the original contract of Law-obedience, it is because Jesus Christ kept Psalm 1’s requirement perfectly to walk in the way of God’s commands, that He can *merit our redemption in Psalm 2:8*. Or to put the same lesson in terms of the second half of Psalm 2, it is because Jesus Christ lived and died a perfectly holy life in our place, that we can now experience the definite blessing of taking refuge in Him in Psalm 2:12! Whose heart should not melt in devotion, and “kiss the Son” in Psalm 2:12 in light of all that Christ Jesus has done to procure our salvation?

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the “Pearl of Great Price” which we have found Jesus to be for us in hymn # 696:

*I've found the Pearl of greatest price,
My heart doth sing for joy;
And sing I must, for Christ is mine;
Christ shall my song employ.*

*Christ is my Prophet, Priest and King;
A Prophet full of light,
My great High Priest before the throne,
My King of heav'nly might.*

*For He indeed is Lord of lords,
And He the King of kings;
He is the Sun of righteousness,
With healing in His wings.*

*Christ is my Peace; He died for me,
For me He gave His blood;
And as my wondrous Sacrifice,
Offered Himself to God.*

*Christ Jesus is my All in all,
My Comfort and my Love,
My Life below, and He shall be
My Joy and Crown above.*

Fri/Sat/Sun: read Psalm 2:1-6. We sang yesterday of the exceeding value which Christ proves to be for the objects of His redeeming love. He is truly “the Pearl of great price” to those whom He claims as His own! Sadly, in the world, the estimate of Christ’s value is far lower.

The vast majority vote to reject God and His Anointed Son. In terms of Psalm 2:1-3, the reason why the world seeks to “throw off the rule of God and Christ”, is because together the nations are able to persuade themselves *by their sheer numbers and their mutual counsel of war against God*, that “might equals right”. After all, is it not the “weighty rulers of the world” in verse 2 who lay their plans against God?! Many are swept up in such mob rule, rationalizing to themselves that, “if such important men in high up places rebel against God, then it must be reasonable and worthwhile to pursue such rebellious autonomy!

What then is God’s detailed response to such rebellion? To fully appreciate God’s response, you need to focus on two fundamental Divine actions God takes to stop rebels in their tracks:

- 1) In Psalm 2, God’s ultimate response is to demonstrate His absolute superiority to the world of men. He is seated on His sovereign throne in Heaven (verse 4) – in control and able to work His justice no matter what men threaten to do to Him! What an assurance for His embattled church! Compare Acts 4:24-28 and Isaiah 40:21-23!
- 2) But beyond God’s sovereign control in Psalm 2, in the first book of Psalms as a whole, God is sympathetic to how such a hostile world will persecute His people. If they hate the Messiah in Psalm 2, they are sure to hate those whom Messiah comes to save in subsequent Psalms about the persecution of God’s people – see Psalm 3-17 and Psalm 22 for evidence of the suffering of God’s redeemed on earth. Enraged by their failure to topple God on His throne, the world turns against His church!

But notice God’s response to His suffering people! He does not simply stay on His Psalm 2:4 throne! He comes down and condescends to us in our many afflictions in the Person of His Son, our Messiah! No wonder that we

see the first book of Psalms end with a very special blessing for us to claim – beyond the blessings of God’s Law in Psalm 1, and even beyond the blessing of trusting in the Messiah in Psalm 2:12! No, we shall be *especially* blessed when we esteem the “weak One” of Psalm 41:1!

In New Testament terms, when we desire to know Jesus Christ, “in the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10), and do not recoil from our Savior when the world scorns Him as “the weak One” of Psalm 41:1, then we will be blessed with amazing deliverances even in “the time of trouble” as 41:1 promises! We will experience many “resurrections” from the world’s snares, illnesses and slanders, even as Psalm 41:2-9 go on to describe! Our victory is secure with such a “weak”, “betrayed” Savior who is nevertheless not abandoned by His God in Psalm 41:10-13!

Meditate and Pray: “Lord, help us to have confidence in your Son as our Savior and guide in this hostile world. Help us to be unashamed of Him – even when His cause appears to mankind to be weak and insignificant. Sing about such an insight of faith about our lowly state in this world, using this hymn from the Scottish hymnal (F.W. Faber):

*Workman of God! O lose not heart,
But learn what God is like;
And in the darkest battlefield
Thou shalt know where to strike.*

*Thrice blest is he to whom is giv’n
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field, when He
Is most invisible.*

*Then learn to scorn the praise of men,
And learn to lose with God;
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons thee His road.*

*For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.*