

Sermon October 4, 2020

Back to School with the Psalms Part 4: God's Word to Us and from Us

(Pastor's note: I spent a large amount of my time this week with members and other matters. Therefore this sermon is shorter than usual because I have not yet completely fleshed it out with all the details I have planned. Hopefully what I do have ready to send out will be of some value to you. God bless.)

So far in this series I have covered the Psalms as words of wisdom, the nature of the Psalms as poetry, and how the psalm writers experienced the same ups and downs, inspirational moments and times of let down and betrayal as we do in the 21st century. Part 4 will now deal with the nature of the Psalms as both *God's word to us* and also as *our words to God*.

The Psalms as God's Word to Us

The Psalms do impart divine truth, knowledge, wisdom, and instruction from God. Paul has this in mind when he writes in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell within you, with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In 1 Chronicles chapter 25, the work of those who were appointed to lead the singing and music in the temple was described as prophesying. This meant their work was proclaiming the word of the Lord to the people. Even Jesus speaks about the nature of the Psalms as God's word to us in Luke 24, where he says, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Again, you will find St. Paul frequently quoting Psalms in support of his teaching and admonitions. Given this authoritative role as God's word of truth, the Psalms work like a mirror in shaping our spiritual development. They teach us about God, faith, and how we can live as God's children in all situations, both good and bad.

The Psalms as Our Words to God.

Psalms also serve as our words to God when we pray them and sing them. When we use the Psalms privately, they serve devotional and meditational purposes. When the Psalms are read and sung in corporate worship, they serve more in the role of praising God and pointing to him as the one upon whom our worship is focused. Just as a young child learns how to talk by listening to parents and then

repeating their words, so we listen to the Psalms as our Father's words to us, and then we start to say them back to him as we learn and grow. We do this in our own times of prayer and in worship together.

The Psalms were not written in isolation from the outside world. They are not words coming from just one writer's point of view of life. Other parts of the Old Testament of the Bible provide the stage upon which the Psalmists stand and the backdrop from which they write. There is the creation of the universe, the world, and men and women in the image of God. There was the flood, Babel, and the calling of Abraham. There was slavery in Egypt and the Exodus through the Red Sea. Mount Sinai and Israel's sojourn in the wilderness were formative for their thought and teachings. There were the conquests and kings – especially David – to whom the divine promise was made that his throne would endure through all generations. This background provided the world view, the mindset, and the hopes and dreams of the Psalm's writers.

How important it is to point out that this background is also our background. We are recipients of the same words, promises, and blessings as they received. We have the same hope for the deliverance of God's people from all his and our enemies. We also wonder why it is taking God so long and why it so often looks like his enemies hold the upper hand. We also understand that Jesus Christ is the only truly obedient Son of God who is therefore promised the rich inheritance of the Kingdom, and both those who receive their identity and hope in Jesus through the Old Testament and New cling to the same words and promises of God. This makes the Psalms the lesson book, the hymn book, and the prayer book for the people of God throughout all generations until the end of the age. Pick up the Psalms and read them with the new eyes of faith.

Now that I have finished something of an (re)orientation to the Psalms, I plan to take several Psalms and take a closer look at them using the approach I have outlined over these last four weeks. God bless us as we plunge into the poetic wisdom of God's word that is the Psalms.

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