

# Sunday Morning Equipping Class

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**Studying Psalms**  
**Jan 8 - Feb 12**

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# At Your Table

1. What comes to mind when you think of the Psalms?
2. How important do you think they are for the life of a believer? Why?

# Quotes on the Psalms

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**Athanasius (296-373 AD):** “It seems to me that the Psalms are for every one who sings them like a mirror of the soul, in which it can recognize its movements and express its feelings. For in this book thou findest the whole life of man pictured, the moods of the heart, the movements of the thought. If thou hast need of repentance, if thou hast met trial and temptation, if thou art exposed to persecution and calumny, in all, and in every case, thou canst find here instruction, and bring thy case before God in the words of the Psalms.” (Quoted in John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, 177)

# Quotes on the Psalms

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**Ambrose (d. 397 AD):** “In the Psalms is the fruit of all [Scripture], and healing medicine for the soul. It is the praise of God, the weal [or good] of man, the voice of the Church, the best confession of faith. Through the Psalms I learn to avoid sin, and unlearn to be ashamed of repentance.” (Quoted in John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, 177)

# Quotes on the Psalms

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**Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD):** “In [the Psalms] is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible. It is really a fine...handbook. In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble Himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom or all saints, so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book.” (Martin Luther, “Preface to the Psalter – 1545 (1528),” *Bible Prefaces and Exegesis*, 26)

# Quotes on the Psalms

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**John Calvin (1509-1564 AD):** “I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;” for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror...The other parts of Scripture contain the commandments which God enjoined his servants to announce to us. But here the prophets themselves, seeing they are exhibited to us as speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call, or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particular, in order that none of the many infirmities to which we are subject, and of the many vices with which we abound, may remain concealed...In short, as calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise cannot be found elsewhere than in The Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.” (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, xxxvi–xxxvii)

# Quotes on the Psalms

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**Richard Sibbes (1577-1635 AD):** “The Psalms are, as it were, the anatomy of a holy man, which lay the inside of a truly devout man outward to the view of others. If the Scriptures be compared to a body, the Psalms may well be the heart, they are so full of sweet affections and passions. For in other portions of Scripture God speaks to us; but in the Psalms holy men speak to God and their own hearts.”  
(Richard Sibbes, *The Soul's Conflict and Victory Over Itself by Faith*, Introduction, Kindle)

# What are the Psalms?

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*The Psalms are the divinely inspired hymnbook of God's people.*

# Four things about the Psalms

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1. The Psalms are poems, and they must be read as such.

- **C.S. Lewis:** “[T]he Psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung: not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons...Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry. They must be read as poems if they are to be understood; no less than French must be read as French or English as English. Otherwise we shall miss what is in them and think we see what is not.” (C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 2-3)

# Four things about the Psalms

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2. The Psalms are primarily intended for corporate worship.

3. The Psalms are not uniform. They are united in worship of the one true God but serve diverse functions. As diverse as our experiences and emotions.

# Four things about the Psalms

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4. The Psalms serve a unique function. They not only show us how to give expression to our emotions as those living in God's story, but when sung in faith, "they actually *shape* the emotions of the godly."

- **N.T. Wright:** "Scripture is, at its heart, the great story we sing in order not just to learn it with our heads but to become part of it through and through, the story that in turn becomes part of us...And if that is true of scripture as a whole...we might say that the very heart of scripture...is the book of Psalms. Sing these songs, and they will renew you from head to toe, from heart to mind. Pray these poems, and they will sustain you on the long, hard but exhilarating road of Christian discipleship." (N.T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, 34-35)

# Psalm 103

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Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!  
<sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,<sup>5</sup> who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.  
<sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

# Psalm 103

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He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame;<sup>[a]</sup> he remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. <sup>17</sup> But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, <sup>18</sup> to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. <sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

# Psalm 103

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Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! <sup>21</sup> Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will <sup>22</sup> Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

# At Your Table

- 1. What about this Psalm makes you think this is a psalm of praise?*
- 2. According to this Psalm, what is the thing that should inspire us to praise God? Why do you think that?*
- 3. What do you think verse 2 means about forgetting God's benefits? Why?*

# Deuteronomy 8:11-17

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<sup>11</sup> “Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, <sup>12</sup> lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, <sup>15</sup> who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, <sup>16</sup> who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. <sup>17</sup> Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’

## 2 Chronicles 32:25

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<sup>25</sup> But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem.

## Psalm 103: 3-5

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<sup>3</sup> who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, <sup>5</sup> who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

# At Your Table

*1. What are the benefits he expounds in verses 3-5? What do they tell you about God?*

*2. Who is or are the recipient(s) of these benefits? How do you know?*

*3. Why should these lead your soul to bless the LORD?*

## Galatians 4:4-5

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<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

# Psalm 103:6-14

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<sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. <sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

<sup>10</sup> He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame;<sup>[a]</sup> he remembers that we are dust.

# At Your Table

- 1. In verses 6-14, who are the recipients of these benefits? How do you know?*
- 2. What are the benefits laid out? What do they tell us about ourselves? About God?*

## Psalm 103: 6-8

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<sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. <sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. <sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

# Exodus 34:6

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<sup>6</sup>The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

## Psalm 103:9

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<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

## Psalm 103: 10

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He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

# Derek Kidner

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“God, infinitely wronged, not only tempers wrath but tempers justice (10) – though at what cost to himself, only the New Testament would reveal.”  
(Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150 (TOTC)*, 399)

# Psalm 103:11-14

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<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame;<sup>[a]</sup> he remembers that we are dust.

# Psalm 103:15-19

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As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field;  
<sup>16</sup> for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.  
<sup>17</sup> But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, <sup>18</sup> to  
those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.  
<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom  
rules over all.

# At Your Table

*1. Who are the recipients of these benefits? Why do you think that?*

*2. What are the benefits? How do you receive them?*

# At Your Table

*What would remembering those benefits mean for us? How might they change how we live and engage with the world and with God?*