

Bob Kauflin

Session 1 | When Life is Troubling

I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this class is to...

1. Equip you to read the Psalms
2. Equip you to pray the psalms for different "Seasons of the Soul"
3. Pray together in class

II. AN OVERVIEW

A. Date

The psalms were most likely written over a period of more than 700 years starting with Moses (Psalm 90) through the post-Babylonian exile (Psalm 137).

B. Authorship

While the authorship of the psalms has been debated over the years, it's clear that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament thought that psalms were written, or at least influenced by the attributed authors.

1. David - 73 by superscription, 2 more from the NT (Ps 95 in Acts 4:25 and Psalm 2 in Heb. 4:7)
2. Sons of Korah - 11 (Ps. 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88)

3. Asaph - 12 (Ps. 50, 73-83)
4. Solomon 2 (Ps. 72, 127)
5. Heman – 1 (Ps. 88)
6. Ethan – 1 (Ps. 89)
7. Moses – 1 (Ps. 90)
8. Others – 50

C. Organization

O. Palmer Robertson in his book, *The Flow of the Psalms*, has summed up the books this way:

Book 1 - Confrontation

Book 2 - Communication

Book 3 - Devastation

Book 4 - Maturation

Book 5 - Consummation

Other groupings include:

Kingship Psalms (Ps. 20-24)

“The Lord is King” Psalms (Ps. 93-99)

Hallel Psalms (Ps. 113-118)

Songs of Ascents (Ps. 120-134)

Hallelujah (Ps. 146-150)

D. Genre

1. Lament (Individual/Communal) – 3,13, 22, 44, 123, 130
Includes Penitential – 6, 32, 38, 55, 102, 130 143
2. Thanksgiving – 30, 32, 116
3. Praise – 8, 33, 145-150
4. Wisdom/Teaching – 1, 37, 73
5. Royal/Kingship – 2, 56, 72
6. Zion/Temple – 46, 48, 84, 122
7. Imprecatory – 35, 69, 109
8. Trust – 23, 62, 131
9. Torah/Law – 19, 119
10. History/Remembrance – 78, 105, 106

E. Poetry

Synonymous parallelism

- “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!”
(Psalm 34:3, ESV)

Antithetic parallelism

- “for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” (Psalm 1:6, ESV)

Synthetic/progressive parallelism

- “The Lord preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.” (Psalm 116:6, ESV)

III. WHAT DO THE PSALMS TEACH US ABOUT PRAYING?

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

A. They teach us we need to be taught to pray.

“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”” (Luke 11:1, ESV)

“This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” (1 John 5:14)

B. They teach us there is freedom in prayer.

“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 any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.” (John Calvin)

C. They teach us there are guardrails in prayer.

The Psalms are meant not only to express our affections but to shape our affections.

The psalms keep us from indulging our emotions or being slaves to our own perspective.

“But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.” (Psalm 73:16–17, ESV)

They show us that despair never needs to be final, that God is always in the picture.

“I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (Psalm 27:13–14, ESV)

They show us that prayer isn’t saying anything we want, but processing our circumstances and emotions before the God who has redeemed us and brought us into his covenant love.

“For I hear the whispering of many— terror on every side!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”” (Psalm 31:13–14, ESV)

They teach us that forgiveness is never separated from a passion for holiness and a desire to obey God’s good commands.

“For your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.” (Psalm 25:11–12, ESV)

They show us prayer is communal, to be done mindful of being part of God’s covenant people. Time and time again the psalmist expands the sphere of private piety and devotion to include all of God’s people.

“Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.” (Psalm 25:22, ESV)

“And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” (Psalm 130:8, ESV)

“But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” (Psalm 79:13, ESV)

D. They stir up our affections for God.

“I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”” (Psalm 16:2, ESV)

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water...Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.” (Psalm 63:3, ESV)

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.” (Psalm 84:1–2, ESV)

“My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being!” (Psalm 108:1, ESV)

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 150:6, ESV)

IV. WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY THE PSALMS “IN CHRIST?”

A. We can't pray the psalms ourselves.

1. We aren't as righteous as the psalmists claim to be.
“You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.” (Psalm 17:3, ESV)
2. We don't always face the kind of suffering the psalmists do.
“I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (Psalm 22:17–18, ESV)
3. We aren't fighting the same level of battles as the psalmists do.
“All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!” (Psalm 118:10–11, ESV)
4. We don't live in the world of kings and kingdoms like the psalmists do.

- “I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you, who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword.” (Psalm 144:9–10, ESV)

B. The Psalms point us to a coming Davidic King.

He would be the Son of Yahweh in Psalm 2.

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” (Psalm 2:6, ESV)

He would be the conquering king of Psalm 45.

“you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;” (Psalm 45:7, ESV)

He would be the eternal king of Psalm 89.

“And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.” (Psalm 89:27–28, ESV)

He would be the righteous king of Psalm 72.

“Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!” (Psalm 72:1–2, ESV)

He would be the suffering king of Psalm 22.

“For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—” (Psalm 22:16, ESV)

He would be the ultimate king of Psalm 149 in whom God’s people would rejoice in.

“Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!” (Psalm 149:2, ESV)

C. The NT writers put many of the psalms in the mouth of Jesus.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1) Quoted in Mt. 27:46

“I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:8–11) Quoted by Peter in Acts 2:25-32

“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.” (Psalm 18:49, ESV) Quoted by Paul in Rom. 15:9

“In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”” (Psalm 40:6–8, ESV) Quoted in Heb. 10:5-7

D. Jesus prayed these psalms with us and for us.

“Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”” (Luke 24:44, ESV)

E. Jesus makes our prayers acceptable.

“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” (Psalm 24:3–5, ESV)

So each time we pray a psalm, we need to see it from 3 perspectives.

1. What did it mean for the original author to pray this?
2. What did it mean for Jesus to pray this?
3. What does it mean for me, in Christ, to pray this?

V. HOW DO WE PRAY THE PSALMS IN CHRIST?

In times of confession:

Psalm 130

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

2 O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

6 my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

8 And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

In times of confusion and doubt:

Psalm 121 (ESV)

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

WHO 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

WHEN 3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4

Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

FROM WHAT? 5 The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

FOR HOW LONG? 8 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.



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Psalms Categories

Psal m	Primary Genre	Secondary Genre
1	Wisdom/Teaching	Torah/Law
2	Royal/Kingship	Praise
3	Lament (Ind)	Trust
4	Lament (Ind)	Trust
5	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
6	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
7	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
8	Praise	Royal/Kingship
9	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
10	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
11	Trust	Wisdom/Teaching
12	Lament (Ind)	Wisdom/Teaching
13	Lament (Ind)	Trust
14	Wisdom/Teaching	Lament (Com)
15	Wisdom/Teaching	Torah/Law
16	Trust	Thanksgiving
17	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
18	Royal/Kingship	Thanksgiving
19	Praise	Torah/Law
20	Royal/Kingship	Trust
21	Royal/Kingship	Thanksgiving
22	Lament (Ind)	Trust
23	Trust	Praise
24	Praise	Zion/Temple
25	Lament (Ind)	Wisdom/Teaching
26	Lament (Ind)	Trust
27	Trust	Lament (Ind)
28	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory

29	Praise	Royal/Kingship
30	Thanksgiving	Praise
31	Lament (Ind)	Trust
32	Thanksgiving	Penitential
33	Praise	Wisdom/Teaching
34	Thanksgiving	Wisdom/Teaching
35	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)
36	Wisdom/Teaching	Praise
37	Wisdom/Teaching	Trust
38	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
39	Lament (Ind)	Wisdom/Teaching
40	Thanksgiving	Lament (Ind)
41	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
42	Lament (Ind)	Trust
43	Lament (Ind)	Trust
44	Lament (Com)	Historical
45	Royal/Kingship	Praise
46	Zion/Temple	Trust
47	Praise	Royal/Kingship
48	Zion/Temple	Praise
49	Wisdom/Teaching	Lament (Com)
50	Praise	Wisdom/Teaching
51	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
52	Imprecatory	Wisdom/Teaching
53	Wisdom/Teaching	Lament (Com)
54	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
55	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
56	Lament (Ind)	Trust
57	Lament (Ind)	Praise
58	Imprecatory	Wisdom/Teaching
59	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)

60	Lament (Com)	Royal/Kingship
61	Lament (Ind)	Trust
62	Trust	Wisdom/Teaching
63	Trust	Praise
64	Lament (Ind)	Imprecatory
65	Praise	Thanksgiving
66	Praise	Thanksgiving
67	Praise	Zion/Temple
68	Praise	Historical
69	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)
70	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)
71	Lament (Ind)	Trust
72	Royal/Kingship	Wisdom/Teaching
73	Wisdom/Teaching	Lament (Ind)
74	Lament (Com)	Zion/Temple
75	Praise	Wisdom/Teaching
76	Zion/Temple	Praise
77	Lament (Ind)	Historical
78	Historical	Wisdom/Teaching
79	Lament (Com)	lament
80	Lament (Com)	Zion/Temple
81	Praise	Historical
82	Prophetic	Wisdom/Teaching
83	Imprecatory	Lament (Com)
84	Zion/Temple	Trust
85	Lament (Com)	Trust
86	Lament (Ind)	Trust
87	Zion/Temple	Praise
88	Lament (Ind)	---
89	Royal/Kingship	Lament (Com)
90	Lament (Com)	Wisdom/Teaching

91	Trust	Wisdom/Teaching
92	Praise	---
93	Praise	Kingship
94	Imprecatory	Wisdom/Teaching
95	Praise	Royal/Kingship
96	Praise	Kingship
97	Praise	Kingship
98	Praise	Kingship
99	Praise	Zion/Temple
100	Praise	Thanksgiving
101	Royal/Kingship	Wisdom/Teaching
102	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
103	Praise	Thanksgiving
104	Praise	---
105	Historical	Praise
106	Historical	Lament (Com)
107	Thanksgiving	Praise
108	Praise	Royal/Kingship
109	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)
110	Royal/Kingship	---
111	Praise	Wisdom/Teaching
112	Wisdom/Teaching	Praise
113	Praise	Kingship
114	Historical	Praise
115	Praise	Trust
116	Thanksgiving	Trust
117	Praise	---
118	Thanksgiving	Praise
119	Torah/Law	Wisdom/Teaching
120	Lament (Ind)	Pilgrimage
121	Trust	Pilgrimage
122	Zion/Temple	Pilgrimage

123	Lament (Com)	Pilgrimage
124	Thanksgiving	Pilgrimage
125	Trust	Zion/Temple
126	Thanksgiving	Zion/Temple
127	Wisdom/Teaching	Trust
128	Wisdom/Teaching	Blessing
129	Lament (Com)	Imprecatory
130	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
131	Trust	Wisdom/Teaching
132	Zion/Temple	Royal/Kingship
133	Zion/Temple	Wisdom/Teaching
134	Praise	Zion/Temple
135	Praise	Historical
136	Praise	Historical
137	Lament (Com)	Imprecatory
138	Thanksgiving	Praise
139	Trust	Wisdom/Teaching
140	Imprecatory	Lament (Ind)
141	Lament (Ind)	Trust
142	Lament (Ind)	Trust
143	Lament (Ind)	Penitential
144	Royal/Kingship	Praise
145	Praise	Kingship
146	Praise	Trust
147	Praise	Zion/Temple
148	Praise	Creation
149	Praise	Royal/Kingship
150	Praise	---