

# Psalms 2023 Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 16, 2023

---

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time. Before we dismiss the Children’s Church and Nursery children and volunteers, please note:

**NOTE 1** – Thank you for the birthday celebration several weeks ago. I would be remiss if I did not take the time to say “thank you” for the card, gift, kind words, birthday cake and more. You make my pastoral role a true joy!

**NOTE 2** – Moreover, special thanks to those who carried on the work of the Lord in our absence. May the Lord bless the worship team, speaker and volunteers of “every stripe” who allowed for us to have a restful vacation!

**KEY 1** – My heart for this assembly mirrors that of the apostle Paul to the church at Philippi:

Philippians 1:3–6 (NIV)

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

**KEY 2** – DISMISSAL for Children’s Church and Nursery.

## SETTING THE STAGE

**KEY** – I have felt to dedicate the summer to an extended teaching series on the Old Testament Book of Psalms.

**NOTE 1** – In recent months I have directed an inordinate number of men and women to this ancient work—men and women who are facing either praiseworthy events or seasons of tragedy and loss. Of all the works of Scripture, few seem to be as timeless and timely as this work (i.e., as we will note at varying times in this series). Thus, a deep dive into both the structure and substance of the Book of Psalms seemed to particularly relevant!

**NOTE 2** – I must confess that I am deeply indebted to two books that have shaped me greatly on the Psalter: **a)** *How to Read the Psalms* by Tremper Longman III; and **b)** *Words of Delight* by L. Ryken. I highly recommend both.

**NOTE 3** – This morning I would like to begin with a rather simple and straightforward question! Please consider:

**Q1. Why do people tend to have a love for the Book of Psalms?**

**Q2. What is it about the Book of Psalms that people find appealing?**

**NOTE 4** – When I survey people concerning their favorite Book of the Bible, this work is their typical response!

**Q. Why is this the case? What is it about the 150 psalms that captivate us?**

## **DELVING IN: WHY THE PSALMS?**

Please allow me to put forth the following responses in reply to such questions and more:

### **1) The Artistry of the Psalms**

Not only do the scriptural psalmists present information, but their works are writings of artistic expression! The psalms exemplify such artistry in that they are characterized by beauty, craftsmanship and technique. Many students study the Word with great diligence, yet often fail to appreciate this aspect of its inspiration! God has spoken to humanity, but is there NO significance to the reality that He has done so in a beautiful way?

For instance, when David sought to exalt the “providential care” of God, He took the time to compose this ode:

#### **Psalm 23 (NKJV)**

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name’s sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Q. Who is not moved by the artistry evident in this selection?**

### **2) Connection to Prayer and Worship**

The Book of Psalms helps to inform and impact the practices of prayer and worship (i.e., public and private). The Psalter has always found connection with these aspects, etc. During the Old Testament period, the Psalms found a home in the private prayers and worship of the saints. Psalms were used in worship at the Temple, and let us not forget the Songs of Ascent (Psa. 120–134) and their ongoing utilization by the nation of Israel. This ancient association between the Book of Psalms and intimacy with God accounts, at least in part, for the appeal this work has for Christians. While Christians have always struggled to understand and apply much of the Old Testament, the psalms have always found wide use in the Church world and amidst private devotions. As a result, Psalms, more than most of the Old Testament canon, is used ongoingly amidst prayer and worship!

**Q. Has anyone found the Book of Psalms beneficial for either prayer or worship?**

### 3) Human Emotion and Experience

The psalms speaks to us in a timeless yet timely manner, as they touch upon human emotion and experience. This is a point we will cover in greater detail in the days to come, but put simply: we can all relate to the psalms. The psalms touch upon nigh every human emotion (e.g., elation and celebration to despair and despondency) and experience (e.g., lack, betrayal and opposition vs. provision, fidelity and breakthrough) with striking detail!

**QUOTE** – “What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury. I have been wont [i.e., inclined] to call this book 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.” –John Calvin

#### Psalm 91:1–2 (NIV)

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust.”

#### Psalm 22:1–2

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?
- 2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.

The Book of Psalms speaks to us where we live, which is arguably why we find its words so timeless and timely!

### 4) A Holistic Work

Lastly, the Book of Psalms appeals to the whole of the person, demanding a total response. That is, the psalms inform our intellect, arouse our emotions, stimulate our imaginations and direct our wills! When we read the Book of Psalms with faith, we come away changed versus simply informed. Of course, the whole of Scripture is profitable and life-changing (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16–17), but the psalms address the modern Christian in a more direct manner than say, the latter half of the Book of Joshua (i.e., which details the geographical boundaries of Israel)!

#### Psalm 42:1–5

- 1 As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?
- 3 My tears have been my food day and night,  
while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”
- 4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One  
with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.
- 5 Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

## **DELVING DEEPER: APPARENT DIFFICULTIES**

**KEY** – There is little wonder as to why the psalms find appeal. Yet this does not mean they are without difficulty!

**NOTE 1** – Though the psalms speak to us, they can be challenging to interpret, understand and apply at times. We should not be surprised by this per se, as we often struggle with much of the Old Testament in general. After all, the Old Testament is somehow distant and removed to us in several key areas:

### **1) Historical Distance**

The most recent psalm was penned some 2,500 years ago. The oldest was written about 3,500 years ago. Think about that for just a moment. This would be like someone from AD 5500 reading of something from 2023!

### **2) Cultural Distance**

We must also take into account matters of cultural distance and dissimilarity. Most of those reading the psalms in the United States are of the Western World (i.e., English speakers who operate w. a Western mindset). The psalms, however, were penned for a group of Near Eastern people: the ancient Israelites. While cultural dissimilarity should not be overplayed, since there remains continuity between all cultures, we can expect to run into some customs and expressions that seem strange to our modern sensibilities.

### **3) Theological Distance**

Lastly, and most significantly of all, there is great theological distance between our era and that of the Psalms. The psalms were all penned centuries before Christ was born, in the context of Temple worship and sacrifices. Though Christ is present within the Psalter, as much of it prophetically points to His Coming, Work and Reign, the dispensation of the Old Testament saints differs from our own.

**NOTE 2** – The student of Scripture must be careful to overcome such challenges and beyond . We do well to: **a)** understand the history of the Old Testament epoch; **b)** consider the culture of the ancients; and **c)** account for the theological differences between the Old and New Covenant periods.

**KEY** – Some of this we will tackle in this series; some of this you will have to navigate in a life of personal study!

## DELVING DEEPLY: AN ANATOMY OF THE SOUL

**NOTE 1** – Allow me to shift gears in our discussion of the Book of Psalms. Earlier we noted the general relatability of the psalms, as they touch upon the whole of human emotion and experience. Once again, let us consider this quotation from famed theologian, John Calvin:

**QUOTE** – “What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury. I have been wont [i.e., inclined] to call this book 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.”

**NOTE 2** – I would like to take some time to elaborate upon this with bib. Illustration:

### 1) Reverence & Awe

Have you ever felt an abiding sense of reverence for the Lord? So have the psalmists! Consider this q. selection:

#### Psalm 8 (Of David)

1 Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
in the heavens.

2 Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

5 You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their[g] feet:

7 all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## 2) Celebratory Praise

Have you ever felt the impulse to revel in the goodness of God? So have the psalmists! Let us note this selection:

### Psalm 103:1–5, 20–22a (Of David)

- 1 Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2 Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—
- 3 who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5 who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 20 Praise the Lord, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
who obey his word.
- 21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.
- 22 Praise the Lord, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion. . . .

## 3) Faith-Filled Confidence

Have you known moments of bold faith? So have the psalmists! In fact, note this beloved and enduring psalm:

### Psalm 91:1–13 (Ascribed to Moses by Tradition)

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my  
fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
- 3 Surely he will save you  
from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- 5 You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- 8 You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- 9 If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
- 10 no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.
- 11 For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;
- 12 they will lift you up in their hands,  
so ... you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- 13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

#### 4) Doubt and Uncertainty

Conversely, have you ever known the gnawing grip of doubt? If so, so have the psalmists! Note this accordingly:

##### Psalm 77:1–9 (Of Asaph)

- 1 I cried out to God for help;  
I cried out to God to hear me.
- 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;  
at night I stretched out untiring hands,  
and I would not be comforted.
- 3 I remembered you, God, and I groaned;  
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.
- 4 You kept my eyes from closing;  
I was too troubled to speak.
- 5 I thought about the former days,  
the years of long ago;
- 6 I remembered my songs in the night.  
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
- 7 “Will the Lord reject forever?  
Will he never show his favor again?
- 8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever?  
Has his promise failed for all time?
- 9 Has God forgotten to be merciful?  
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”

#### 5) Brokenness

Have you ever known moments of brokenness and ruination? So have the psalmists! Let us note the following:

##### Psalm 42:1–3, 9–10 (The Sons of Korah)

- 1 As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?
- 3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”
- 9 I say to God my Rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?”
- 10 My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

## 6) Wrathful Anger

Have you ever contended with anger at others? Have you ever known wrath? So have the psalmists! Consider:

### Psalm 109:1–15 (Of David)

- 1 My God, whom I praise,  
do not remain silent,
- 2 for people who are wicked and deceitful  
have opened their mouths against me;  
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.
- 3 With words of hatred they surround me;  
they attack me without cause.
- 4 In return for my friendship they accuse me,  
but I am a man of prayer.
- 5 They repay me evil for good,  
and hatred for my friendship.
  
- 6 Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;  
let an accuser stand at his right hand.
- 7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty,  
and may his prayers condemn him.
- 8 May his days be few;  
may another take his place of leadership.
- 9 May his children be fatherless  
and his wife a widow.
- 10 May his children be wandering beggars;  
may they be driven from their ruined homes.
- 11 May a creditor seize all he has;  
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.
- 12 May no one extend kindness to him  
or take pity on his fatherless children.
- 13 May his descendants be cut off,  
their names blotted out from the next generation.
- 14 May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord;  
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
- 15 May their sins always remain before the Lord,  
that he may blot out their name from the earth.



## 7) Humility and Repentance

Have you ever sought the Lord in a spirit of humble contrition? So have the psalmists! Consider the following:

### Psalm 51:1–10 (Of David)

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.
  
- 3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
  
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.
  
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

**KEY 1** – I agree with the testimony of Calvin, that the psalms serve as “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul.” Therefore, we can always find a psalm that corresponds to the condition of our soul or the arenas of our need! In reading the Book of Psalms, we come to see ourselves (i.e., good, bad and ugly) against the backdrop of an ever-present God. Perhaps this is why we are so easily drawn to the work!

**KEY 2** – We have much to cover in the weeks to come. Come back and/or tune in to future sessions in kind! May the Lord bless you as we prepare to go our separate ways (2 Cor. 13:14): “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” AMEN!

## CONCLUSIONS

**NOTE 1** – Feel free to give either in person or online at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org).

**NOTE 2** – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

**NOTE 3** – Membership Packets are Ready for Distribution Following Service Today (i.e., See Pastor).

**NOTE 4** – Take notice that we will be hosting our Men’s Breakfast this Saturday morning from 9–10:30am!