

1. Psalm 1

Discuss: *Why do you think the Psalms have been such a blessing to countless Christians? What's so attractive about them? Discuss.*

We shall consider the first psalm. It stands as "head" of the psalms; and for good reason. Why? For one reason, it states there's only two ways to live, and urges us to live God's way (cf. Jer 6:16).

Read Psalm 1

The Blessed Person (vv. 1-3)

What does it mean to be "blessed"? (v.1)

It means to be in a state of lasting joy from experiencing the blessings and goodness of God.

The one blessed of God is described both by what they do and don't do. What don't they do? (v.1)

They don't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand with sinners or sit with scoffers; ie, they don't listen to worldly wisdom and ungodly counsel, and become comfortable with worldly and sinful ways.

What does the blessed person do instead? (v.2)

They seek the wise and true counsel of the Lord, by delighting in and walking in His Word and ways. Their joy is meditating on God's Word, day and night, and building their life on what they read.

What does the Psalmist compare the "blessed" person to? (v.3)

They are like a flourishing, healthy tree, planted by streams of water, bearing its fruit and being full of life. (NB: In our Australian outback, we often see a line of big trees near a water course—what a picture)

In the picture of a tree besides water, what's the spiritual picture being painted of a blessed person?

They produce fruit – the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). They don't wither spiritually but are full of spiritual life (John 10:10b). They prosper spiritually and their life counts for eternity (Rom 8:28-30).

Spiritually, what do the streams of water symbolise? (cf. John 7:37-39)

Jesus taught us about the Holy Spirit. When we trust in Christ we have the Spirit to water our soul and to give us life. The Spirit especially does this through God's Word (cf. John 16:13).

What does the word "planted" imply?

Someone planted the tree, owns it, cultivates it and looks after it. In our case, it is the Lord. By His choosing, He has "planted" us and enabled us to be "trees of righteousness" (cf. Isa 61:3; Matt 15:13).

The Wicked/Ungodly Person (vv. 4-6)

What are the wicked/ungodly compared to? (v.4)

They are like chaff – of no use, dead, without substance or lasting value. The wind drives it away – ie, death comes quickly and unexpectedly, leaving nothing of value (cf. Psa 37:35-36).

Why won't the wicked stand in the judgment? (cf. Rev 20:11-15)

Since they have rejected God's ways in this life, they will face God's judgment. On that day, they will "fall" before Him and be condemned to eternal punishment in hell. They will not stand with the righteous.

When will the wicked be separated from the righteous? (v.5)

At present, the unsaved sinner still lives among the righteous. God currently permits the tares to grow amongst the wheat (cf. Matt 13:30). In glory, this will not be so. Unsaved sinners will not live in heaven.

The Two Ways

What assurance does v.6 give the righteous (ie, those who walk in the way of the Lord)?

The Lord knows (literally, "is knowing") the way of the righteous. He constantly looks upon them and directs their steps, even when they go through challenging times. Cf. Matt 10:29-31; Job 23:10.

What warning does v.6 give to the ungodly (ie, to those who reject God's ways)?

They will perish and so will their paths (Psa 37:20, 38). Even the memory of them will be forgotten.

Why might this contrast between the "righteous" and "ungodly" stand at the head of the psalms?

Sometimes life appears to be the other way around - the ungodly prosper while the righteous suffer (Psa 73:1-3). In order to live wisely, we need to live life from God's perspective.

Application

God wants us to choose the way of the "righteous" person. For us, in the light of Christ, this is the one who trusts in Jesus, who has been washed in the blood of Jesus and been made alive by the Holy Spirit, and chooses to walk in Christ's ways and follow Him. Such a person has a new heart that longs for God and His Word; meditating upon it and doing what it says (cf. Matt 7:24-27).

Summary: The Lord blesses the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

2. Psalm 2

Discuss: *Why do we see such wickedness and rebellion in our society today? Discuss.*

In this study, we will consider how God views this rebellion and what He is doing about it.

The Nations Rebel (vv. 1-3)

Read Psa 2:1-3. Who are the nations roaring or raging against? Why is this surprising?

They are raging against the Lord God; who is all powerful and through whom we have life and breath. This is such a vain thing to do, for we cannot overcome or overthrow the eternal and omnipotent One.

Consider our current world situation. Is this “raging” against God what we observe? Discuss.

In every society, whether it be at the individual level, or through other religions, secularism or political ideologies, we see a raging against the true God; a desire to be free of Him and His rules (v.3). Cf. the laws that have been passed permitting, for example, same-sex marriage, gender transitioning, etc.

The nations have not just rebelled against God. Who else have they rebelled against? (v.2)

They have rebelled against the Anointed One (*Messiah* in the Hebrew). In the OT, the anointed one was considered to be the kings of the line of David. But the real and ultimate Messiah is Jesus Christ the Lord. The world opposes Him and does not want Him to rule over them (cf. Luke 19:14; Acts 4:25-27).

The Lord responds (vv. 4-6)

How does God view this rebellion and rage of humanity against Himself and His Son? (v.4)

He sits in the heavens and laughs at them. He knows how futile their plotting is against Him and His Anointed. Their efforts to stand against the omnipotent God who rules over all will ultimately be in vain.

What action does God take against the revolt by the world’s leaders? (vv.5-6)

God’s anger is aroused, and He speaks through prophecy and carries out His will to establish the rule of the Messiah. The immediate context was probably a Davidic King, but the fulfilment is Jesus who now reigns over everything at God’s right hand (Acts 2:32-36; Eph 1:18-23).

Do we really see God instilling terror in those who rebel against Him? (v.5)

Many times we may not see this terror, but a day is coming when there will be great terror before the Lord’s anointed, our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider what happens at His return (Matt 24:29-30).

The King announces His role (vv.7-9)

What is the relationship of the Anointed One to the Lord? (v.7)

He is declared to be God’s Son. Their relationship is like a father who brings forth (or begets) a son (2 Sam 7:14). The ultimate fulfilment of this is in God’s perfect Son (Matt 17:5; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5).

What is the scope of the Anointed One’s rule and possession (v.8)? (cf. also Dan 7:13-14)

The Lord’s Anointed has been given the right to rule the whole world. He only needs to ask, and God will give everything into His hand. The nations are His inheritance, and the whole earth His possession.

What picture does v.9 give us about how Jesus will ultimately respond to the world’s rebellion?

God has given His King the power to rule and conquer. Although the nations combine their power and take their stand against the Lord, it will amount to no more than a brittle clay pot being struck by an iron bar - their rebellion will be shattered. (Cf. Rev 19:11-16)

The warning to submit to the Lord’s Anointed (vv.10-12)

What counsel is given to those rebelling against God and His Anointed One? (vv.10-12)

- 1) Show discernment (v.10) – act wisely by submitting to God and His Anointed (cf. Phil 2:9-11).
- 2) Worship and serve the true and living God with reverence and joy; with fear and delight.
- 3) “Kiss (pay homage to) the Son” – that is, submit to Him, as well as love and worship Him. The invitation is to come under His Lordship so that we will not perish nor face His righteous wrath.

What promise is given to those who obey the warning and submit to God’s Anointed? (v.12)

Those who take refuge in Him (submit to Him) will be blessed; ie, experience God’s favour and grace.

Note: Psalm 1 begins and Psalm 2 ends with a reference to the blessed. *Who are the blessed? Discuss.*

Concluding thoughts:

Although the people in the OT would have assumed God’s anointed to be a Davidic king, the Anointed in Psalm 2 is Christ. He alone is God’s eternal Son, whom God has anointed to be the ruler over all. In a world that opposes Him and our God, we are assured that those who submit to the Son and make Him their refuge will not perish but be blessed; everyone else will perish and face His just wrath.

Summary: We need not fear those who oppose God and us. Ultimately the Son will triumph.

3. Psalm 3

Discuss: *When facing trials, or when people give you a hard time, how do you cope? **Discuss.***

In this study, we will consider how David responded when facing very difficult and frightening trials.

Many rise up against me (vv.1-2)

What is the setting of this psalm of David? (read the prelude – which is part of the original text)

David wrote this psalm when Absalom his son had risen to take the kingship from him. He even sought David's life, causing him to flee Jerusalem. During this time many turned on David; many of the people, his good friend and counsellor Ahithophel, and Shimei even cursed him (2 Sam 15:12-14; 16:5-8).

In the light of the conspiracy and his son's plotting, what did David express in vv.1-2?

David felt so overwhelmed by the many who had turned on him and sided with Absalom. Not only did they support his overthrow and death, but David heard their hurtful taunts. They were saying that God had rejected him and would not deliver him – they were declaring that God was against him too.

The taunts of the enemy (v.2) were all lies. What was the aim of them?

They hoped to shake David's confidence in God so that he might drop his head, take his eyes off the Lord, and be left discouraged and crushed in spirit.

*We may experience taunts from those around us, questioning our trust in Him. **[Discuss]***

Do these first two verses remind you of anyone who experienced the rise of enemies and the taunts of those who opposed Him? (Matt 27:41-43) How did He cope? (1 Pet 2:21-23)

Jesus entrusted Himself to the care of His Father. He didn't retaliate. He prayed for them (Luke 23:34).

At the end of v.2 we have the Hebrew word "selah". What was the purpose of this Hebrew word?

It is believed to indicate a pause for us to reflect on what has just been read/sung (a musical interlude); in this case, to reflect on enemies rising up against us, and seeking to undermine our confidence in God.

*How good it is to have "selah's" as we read God's word, and sing His praises, and live life. **[Discuss]***

You lift up my head (vv.3-4)

David could have felt shattered, but what did he express instead? (v.3)

He expressed confidence in the Lord who is his shield (his protector), his glory (his delight); and who lifts up his head if he should ever be downcast. What confidence in a caring and compassionate God.

With confidence in the Lord, what did this result in David doing? (v.4)

He cried to the Lord for help. He didn't rely on his own plans or strength to resist his enemies, but instead he turned to the Lord. He even expressed how God **had** answered him. Such was his confidence.

With the "selah" after verse 4, what should we reflect on?

Although we may feel surrounded by troubles and trials, the reality is we are surrounded by God. He is a shield about us. He is such a faithful friend, protecting, keeping us, and never abandoning us.

We have wonderful promises in the NT about Jesus being with us and keeping us. Reflect on the following verses: John 6:37; John 10:27-28; Heb 13:5-6; 1 Pet 2:24-25)

I will not be afraid (vv.5-6)

When we put our confidence (trust) in the Lord, what blessings do we enjoy? (vv.5-6)

We experience peace from the Lord because of how He sustains us. We can sleep peacefully and have the confidence to see a new day; and not live in fear, despite the imminent threat of our enemies.

What promises do we have in 1 John 5:18, John 14:27 and Phil 4:6-7 if we trust in Christ?

It is the Lord Jesus who keeps us (sustains and protects us) from the evil one. We are also assured of His peace filling our hearts and settling us so that we are not shaken.

*What causes you to be fearful and anxious and lay awake at night? What can you do? **[Discuss]***

Salvation belongs to the Lord (vv.7-8)

In these concluding verses, what does David do? (vv.7-8)

David calls on the Lord for deliverance knowing that salvation belongs to Him alone. Just as God had delivered him in the past (v.7b), he now again calls on the Lord to help him (v.7a). David's confidence was in the Lord's salvation, and His blessing on His people; ie, those who take refuge in Him (Psa 2:12).

We are to call on the Lord too. Read Rom 10:13 & Matt 14:26-31. Why are we to call on the Lord?

We are to call on the Lord for salvation from sin, but also in delivering in life from trouble (Psa 50:15).

Concluding thoughts:

As we come to the final "selah" (end of v.8), let's reflect on our need to call on the Lord, and to put our full confidence (trust) in Him. Our lack of peace directly relates to our lack of trust. (cf. 1 Pet 5:6-7).

Summary: Salvation belongs to the Lord – let us trust in Him and not be afraid.

4. Psalm 4

Discuss: *With all that you've been through (even the bad times) what have you learnt? Discuss.*

In this study, we will consider David's heart, in the midst of trial, from his experiences with God.

The Call (vv.1-2)

In this psalm, what was David dealing with? (v.2)

As in Psalm 3, David was dealing with unbelieving people, who were seeking to turn people against him, and convince him that God would not help him (cf. Psa 3:2). These are things Jesus endured more so.

In the midst of the distress, what did David do? (v.1) Why?

David called out to God, because he knew the Lord would not abandon him and was with him – hearing his prayer. He knew this because he had experienced God hearing him and answering his prayer for help in the past; and he knew, despite his sins and the taunt of people, that God was gracious & loving.

What special phrase did David call God in v.1? What's so significant about this?

David called God the "God of **MY** righteousness". He knew he had no righteousness of his own. He had been made righteous through faith (Gen 15:6) and lived righteously through God's help (cf. Psa 23:3).

In Christ, how is God the "God of My righteousness"? (cf. Jer 23:6. 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 3:21-24)

Fulfilling prophecy (Jer 23:6), Jesus came and died for us, washing away our sins, and clothing us with His righteousness, through faith in Him. We are endowed with God's righteousness (Rom 3:21-24).

The Chosen (v.3)

In v.3, despite the insults and reproaches of people about him, what did David treasure?

He treasured how God had set him apart, because he had chosen to be a godly man. Being set apart by God for Himself, meant David had a special relationship with God; He was blessed with God's grace.

David refers to the "godly man". But who is godly? (cf. Rom 3:10-12, 23)

No one is godly in their own right – not even David. We only become godly when God chooses us and sets us apart for Himself (cf. Jesus' words in John 6:44-45). What a joy being "the chosen" (Eph 1:3-4).

In the NT, we can relate to what David penned in v.3. Consider Col 3:12 and 1 Peter 2:9. [Discuss]

We have been chosen by God to be His. We have been set apart (made holy) for Him and are dearly loved. By God's choice, we have become His special people to proclaim His holy name.

When we know who we are, chosen of God and dearly loved, what does it result in? (cf. v.3b)

We call on God and we know that He answers us. Jesus emphasised this so much (cf. Matt 7:7-11).

The Composed (vv.4-5)

Read v.4. For those set apart for the Lord, and who are trusting in Him, what is their life like?

Despite trials and troubles, they are composed. They revere God and seek not to sin; even when they are tempted to "lash out" at those who insult them. They are still, meditating on God through prayer and the Word. They are settled and composed because of their relationship with God. **[Selah]**

In v.5, what did David practice and what did he command for all those who trust in God?

He urged us to offer righteous sacrifices to God and to trust in the Lord – no matter what.

What does v.5 look like for a believer in Jesus today? (Heb 13:15)

We are no longer to offer animal sacrifices to God at a temple, but we are to offer the "sacrifice of praise" (worship) to God, giving thanks to Him. And we are to trust in Christ (cf. John 14:1, 6).

The Countenance (vv.6-8)

In v.6a what question does the psalmist ask? Why is this such a pertinent question?

The question is: "Who will show us any good?" As we live in a fallen world and amongst broken people, we experience betrayal and hurt. Being shown "any good" can be lacking in many people's lives.

But in v.6b, what does the psalmist positively affirm? (cf. also Psa 27:13)

The Lord shows us good – without His goodness we would despair. In the psalmist's language "the Lord lifts up the light of His countenance" on those who trust in Him – He smiles on them and blesses them.

God's countenance is a beautiful thing. Consider the Aaronic blessing in Num 6:24-26. [Discuss]

Read vv.7-8. What special things does the psalmist affirm for those who trust in God?

The godly person, set apart for God, and who trusts in Him, is blessed with gladness & joy, with peace & sleep, with protection & safety. The Lord looks after His own really well. We do not have to fear.

How are we to appreciate vv.6-8 in the light of the NT? [Discuss]

In Jesus we are blessed with God's countenance (cf. Luke 2:14) smiling on us, with gladness and joy (1 Peter 1:8; John 15:11), with peace (John 14:27; Phil 4:6-7), and with protection (John 10:27-30). Amen!

Summary: As we trust in the Lord we are so blessed. He hears us, shows us good and fills us with joy.

5. Psalm 5

Discuss: *What is your first response when you face something challenging and confronting? Discuss.*

In this study we will consider David, who would seek God first when he faced various troubles.

Godly Prayer (vv. 1-3)

As David began a new day, what would he do? (vv.1-3)

He would pray. He even tells the Lord that “in the morning You **will** hear my voice”. *Can the Lord be sure that He will hear our voice in the morning at the start of a new day? If not, why not? Discuss.*

What words does David use to describe “praying” in vv.1-3? What do we learn?

His prayers consisted of groanings and cries. They were heart prayers. He also “ordered” his prayer before God; he prayed with structure (ie, with adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication - A.C.T.S.). *Do you pray to the Lord like this; heart prayers and ordered prayers? Discuss.*

What do you notice about the way David prayed in v.3?

He prayed in faith, believing that God hears him, and that God would answer his prayer. As a result, David eagerly waited for God’s answer. *Do we pray like this, by faith, watching and waiting? Discuss.*

Another thing about David’s prayer is how he addressed God. What words did he use?

He called God “O Yahweh (“I Am who I Am”)", as well as “my King” and “my God”. David knew who God was, His awesome eternal power, and he knew Him personally; “my king, my God”.

In the NT, in the light of Christ, what are we to call God now? Why?

We are to call God “Father” (Matt 6:9). This is to reflect how, through faith in Christ, we have been reconciled to God and been adopted into God’s beloved family – his sons and daughters.

What can we learn about praying better from David’s godly example in Psa 5:1-3? Discuss.

The God David Prayed to (vv. 4-7)

Many people pray, but what “god” do they pray to? Who do we pray to? (vv.4-7)

We pray to the One who is holy and righteous, who sees all things and acts against the boastful and sinful, and those who speak lies and act deceitfully. We also pray to the One who abounds in lovingkindness. It is our joy to come and pray to Him with reverence and joy.

In the NT, what do learn about coming before God in prayer? (cf. Heb 4:15, 10:19-23; 12:28-29)

Through being in Christ, we come before a “throne of grace”; before One who grants us mercy and who seeks to help us. We also are invited to come boldly and confidentially, knowing that God hears us and accepts us. But we are to come with reverence and in holiness – for our God is a “consuming fire”.

The Heart of David’s Prayer (vv. 8-10)

In v.8 and v.10 we have the heart and substance of David’s prayer. What is it?

David wants God to lead him in His righteous paths. This is because it is easy for enemies to unsettle us and to cause us to become ungodly. He also wants God to deal with his enemies – God, and not him.

What can we learn from David’s prayer requests?

We need to entrust those who oppose us to the Lord (cf. 1 Pet 2:23), and not take things into our own hands (Rom 12:19). Also, we need God’s help us be godly before our enemies (cf. Psa 23:3; Matt 6:13).

A section of v.9 is quoted in the NT by Paul in Rom 3:13. Read Rom 3:10-18. What do we learn?

Romans 3:10-18 reminds us that there is “no one good, no not one”. Unless we repent of our sins and turn to Jesus, and have Him save us and transform us, then we will be like the ungodly too – using our tongues wrongly, committing sin, and turning from God and His good paths.

The Blessings of Godly Prayer (vv. 11-12)

Near the end of this psalm, how does David described the “blessed” person? (vv.11-12)

The Lord is their refuge – the One they look to, to protect and keep them (v.11). They love the Lord’s name, honouring Him (v.11). They also seek to be righteous and holy (v.12). *Does this describe you?*

As we pray and love the Lord and make Him our “refuge”, what blessings can we expect? (v.11)

We can expect to have gladness, with a song of joy exalting our God, and God’s protection over us. This is also affirmed for those in Christ in the NT – John 15:11; Eph 5:17-20; 1 John 5:18

Why is God so good to those who turn to Him and trust in Him, even as David discovered? (v.12)

It is all because of God’s lovingkindness! God is such a good and gracious God, and He loves to bless the righteous and to surround His loved ones with favour. This is true for us who have turned to Christ and trusted in Him. Consider the words of praise by Paul in Eph 1:3-12. **Discuss.**

Summary: The Lord hears our prayers and cares for us – may we pray to Him each morning.