



Psalms: God of our Emotions

Memory Verse: Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Background

The book of Psalms is the 19th book of the Bible and the second book of poetry. Psalms has long been a prayer book and hymnal of praise for God's people. The Hebrew title for the book is *Tehillim*, meaning "praise songs." Another name for the book, 'Psalter,' comes from the Greek *psalterion*, a stringed instrument because the Psalms were poems sung a cappella or to musical accompaniment. The book of Psalms has multiple authors. While David wrote over half of the psalms, Moses, Asaph, descendants of Korah, Ethan and Heman the Ezrahites, and Solomon also wrote several psalms while authorship of about 50 psalms remains anonymous.

The time span in which the Psalms was about 1,000 years. The earliest psalm is considered to be Psalm 90 credited to Moses written around 1446 BC, after Moses had led the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. The psalms written by David would have occurred between 1020-975 BC. The rest of the psalms were composed in the following centuries with the latest psalm having been written to the post-exilic community of Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah around 430 BC.

The Psalms are generally divided into five books with the possibility that these divisions correspond to the first five books of the Bible. Each of the sections ends with a doxology, having a unique character of God. The divisions are as follows: Book I: Psalms 1–41; Book II: Psalms 42–72; Book III: Psalms 73–89; Book IV: Psalms 90–106; Book V: Psalms 107–150.

The Short Story

Ancient Jewish songbook that covers a variety of topics and emotion in worship and praise to the Lord.

What's the Big Idea?

The book of Psalms was the hymnal of God's people in ancient times. The poems were often set to music and covered the gamut of emotions and topics. These emotions were not experienced in a deep void, but rather in the experiences of life and in relationship with God. Different types of psalms were written to express different feelings and thoughts of the psalmist. Psalms of lament have the author crying out to God in their painful circumstances while in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving, the author expresses admiration and thankfulness for what God has done. Pilgrim or ascent psalms were likely sung as people made their "ascent" or pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the annual feast days. Other types of psalms include wisdom psalms, Messianic psalms pointing to the coming Messiah and His characteristics, victory psalms, penitential psalms, and historical psalms. Different topics that occur regularly in psalms is trusting God, rejoicing, praising God, and God's great mercy. However, no matter the type of psalm or the topics covered in it, the theme of the entire book is worship of God.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

The Psalms allow us to see every aspect of human emotion, be it great and marvelous joy or extreme sorrow and despair. The Psalms also show the greatness and faithfulness of God as well as the truth and importance of His Word. God is so worthy of worship because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. Even though many centuries have passed since the psalms were written, God and the human heart have not changed and so the psalms can help us share our heart freely and honestly with the Lord no matter what our circumstance. God desires an intimate relationship with His children and that includes sharing our deepest emotions with Him. As we share our heart with the Lord, we will find comfort in Him and our lives will be changed. We will not be able to contain our praise and thanksgiving of Him and will cry out like the psalmist, "LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9).

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Psalms 51:10-12 “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.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

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Practical Application

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Hitting the Highpoints

8:1, “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens,”
14:1 “The fool says..., “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.
23:1 “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”
51:10 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”
119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
121:1-2 “I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord...”
133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”

Bonus Features

The Psalms are full of allusions to Jesus Christ! The “coming King” is a frequently repeated theme of these ancient Hebrew worship songs. Many specifically anticipate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the One who came centuries later at the promised Messiah. One kind of messianic psalm is call the enthronement psalm and anticipates the day when Yahweh (Jehovah) will consummate His kingdom in the person of the Messiah. The psalmists may not have understood what they were writing, but they wrote with both eyes focused on eternity.

Personal Takeaways and Notes

