

# The Story Behind The Psalms

by Pastor Jack Hyles

(Loyal Pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana for over 42 years)

## PREFACE

There are three books in the Bible from which I read every day—the **Psalms**, the **Proverbs** and the book of **Acts**. I read the **Psalms** for love, the **Proverbs** for wisdom and the book of **Acts** for power. These three things—love, wisdom and power have for years been on the top of my prayer list.

One day while meditating on one of the **Psalms**, I found myself wondering where the author was when he wrote it, what the circumstances were surrounding its writing and what exactly prompted the author to compose such a masterpiece. I fled to the library of my memory and the refuge of my commentaries until my temporary search became long research. This venture was so enjoyable that I traveled the historical path of another Psalm, then another, then another, which soon led to a series of Bible studies at the First Baptist Church of Hammond on the conditions and circumstances surrounding the writing of each of the **Psalms**. It makes our study richer as we stand beside the author as he writes and as we feel his heartbeat, watch his tears, enjoy his laughter and join in his praise.

May the author beg scholastic mercy of the reader. The following words were not penned to be examined by the microscope of the scholar but rather to be enjoyed by the study of the saint.

With loving kindness, a prayerful spirit and a desire to bless let me lead you into the **Psalms**, the songbook of Israel, that we together may enjoy the stories behind the Psalms.

# PSALM 1

AUTHOR: Solomon

There is no definite evidence to his authorship of this Psalm, but there are strong grounds for suspicioning such. Even the casual reader will note a strong similarity between the **Proverbs** and the **first Psalm**.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The father is talking to his son. Perhaps this father is Solomon. Perhaps the son is Rehoboam, who succeeded him on the throne. Solomon is teaching Rehoboam the way to blessedness and is warning him about the destruction of those who follow evil. In some ways it may be regarded as a preface to the rest of the **Psalms**. Perhaps it is a summary of what is to come later, for is it not true that all of the **Psalms** teach us the blessedness of living a holy and righteous life and the danger of living a life for self and sin.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews used the **first Psalm** as instruction to children in family worship. It was memorized by each child and quoted and sung over and over again. Wise parents teach this Psalm to their children unto this day. Fathers gather the family together and explain the beautiful recipe for success given in this Psalm, as follows: Walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, plus standing not in the way of sinners, plus sitting not in the seat of the scornful, plus delighting in the law of the Lord, plus meditating in the Word of God day and night equals success.

It is interesting to note that the word "**blessed**" in **verse 1** is a plural word in the original. It means that there are a multiplicity of blessings which rest upon the person who observes the five conditions for prosperity and success. The Psalm should be read with a mental picture of a father talking with his son, counseling with him and advising him about life. Emphasis should be placed upon seeking counsel only from the saved, running with the right crowd, not developing a critical tongue, enjoying the Word of God and meditating therein. Then, a warning should be given concerning the instability and tragic results of sin.

# PSALM 2

AUTHOR: David

This is beautifully verified in **Acts 4:25** where David is specifically mentioned as the author of the **second Psalm**.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David's son, Absalom, rebelled against his father. He gathered an army and a following and led in an attempt to overthrow David and to make himself the king. Notice this implication in **verse 2**. When the civil war began, David refused to fight against his son. He fled the city to a place called Mahanaim and there watched the dust of battle rise, realizing that his own son had marshalled an army against the king. Notice his unwillingness to retaliate. He left revenge to the Lord, and the Lord adequately took care of this duty.

Victory did come to David, but it was accompanied by tragedy, for his son was killed in the battle. You will find the victory mentioned in **verses 6, 8 and 9**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used by the Jewish people when seeing the wicked prosper. They turned to it when good seemed to turn out bad and bad seemed to turn out good. Every Christian has faced such times. There are occasions when it seems that no matter how sincere one is or how hard he works for God, those who live unrighteous lives seem to be on the mountaintop while we are in the valley. When such feelings arise, what a comfort it is to have the second Psalm to which to flee. When you are living righteously in poverty, want, illness, etc. and your neighbor is living a sinful life midst plenty, pleasure and fortune take refuge in the **second Psalm**. Right will turn out right, and right is its own reward. Victory will come if we will wait on the Lord and not take matters into our own hands.

Once an unsaved farmer came to the preacher and said, "Reverend, this year I plowed my field on Sunday, I planted seed on Sunday, I chopped weeds on Sunday, and I harvested my crop on Sunday, and this October 1 had the best crop I have ever had. What do you say to that, Reverend?"

The preacher quietly, confidently replied, "God does not always pay off in October."

While reading this Psalm, picture David with tear-stained cheeks and a broken heart enduring a rebellion led by his own son. With that mental image, read the Psalm.

# PSALM 3

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This is a perpetuation of the events of **Psalm 2**. In the second Psalm, David has learned of the rebellion. In the **third Psalm** he is running from Absalom. He has left Jerusalem and the palace, and in perhaps the darkest hour of his life, he is fleeing to Mahanaim. This Psalm was probably written as he fled. As you read it, picture a brokenhearted father and a sad king who, after having stepped down from the throne, flees the battle rather than engage in warfare with his own son.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews would find pavilion in this Psalm when they were completely bewildered and confused. When the way ahead was foggy and they could not see clearly the path that God had for them, they would find great comfort in the words of David when he faced a similar fate.

A new word is introduced in this Psalm. The word is "***Selah.***" You will find it at the conclusion of **verse 2, verse 4 and verse 8**. It is a word that is used as a musical term, much like our musical term, "rest." How beautiful it is to know that when we are perplexed, when friends betray us and family disappoints us, there is still a rest in our God.

# PSALM 4

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The events of **Psalms 2 and 3** continue to progress. In **Psalm 4** David is at Mahanaim. He has been forsaken by his son and many of his friends and subjects. A few of his followers are with him, such as faithful Ittai and a band of Philistine bodyguards. As the Psalm is read, the Christian should picture in his mind a saddened father sitting at Mahanaim looking back at Jerusalem and watching the dust of battle rise. One of the miracles of this Psalm is found in **verses 7 and 8**. It is marvelous how the Christian can have gladness, peace, sleep and assurance of safety in such an hour of trial.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was sung at night by the Jews. It was especially used by people who had a problem sleeping or going to sleep. Note **verse 8**. It was a tranquilizer in the dark hours of the night. So it can be for us when we face the darkness of battle or loneliness, or for that matter, even when we are unable to sleep in the nighttime.

**Verse 4** should be examined carefully. The words, "*Stand in awe, and sin not,*" could be translated, "When angry, sin not." No doubt David is reminding himself not to be angry at his son or at the other rebels. When anger does come, however, we are not to give vent to it. It is often said that it is just as bad to do it as to think it. This is not so. David is saying here, "When you think it, don't do it."

# PSALM 5

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is agreed that these words were written during one of the dark hours of David's life. The darkest hours of his life were no doubt during two self-imposed exiles. One of these was his exile to Mahanaim during Absaloin's rebellion, and the other was his constant fleeing from Saul when Saul had become jealous and made a constant attempt to kill David. However, **verse 7** reminds us that David was not in exile at the writing of this Psalm. We then find in **verse 8** that he did have bitter enemies at this time. So the Psalm was probably written before Absalom's rebellion. Absalom was stirring the people against David and very coyly rallying them to himself. David could see the cloud rising and no doubt realized that a battle was inevitable. It was no doubt written in the morning time. Note **verse 3**, as David was seeking grace and strength to face a new day in the midst of tremendous burdens.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews used this Psalm in the early morning hours. They used it as a prayer for help (**verses 7 and 8**). When in adversity, they used it as a plea for joy (**verses 11 and 12**). When beset by enemies, they would plead for God to destroy their enemies (**verses 9 and 10**).

Notice also that there are three things the Jews would do in the morning time, as is found in **verse 3**. First, they would let God hear their voices. Maybe they would read the Psalm aloud; perhaps they would sing the Psalm. They directed a prayer to God. In other words, they petitioned God for His help to supply their needs. Third, they would look up. Ah, here are three wonderful things to do in the morning hours. Let God hear us sing and praise; then let us present our petitions to Him and then look up. For many years now the first thing I do in the morning upon arising is to pull the curtain and look to the sky and tell Jesus I would love for Him to come today. The wise Christian spends time with God in the morning, and especially so when he faces a battle or heavy burdens.

# PSALM 6

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had committed his sin concerning Uriah and Bathsheba. At the writing of this Psalm, Bathsheba had given birth to a baby. The baby was near death. David was heartbroken and penitent. He is praying and asking forgiveness.

This is the first of the penitential Psalms. This, like **Psalm 51** and some others, is a Psalm of seeking forgiveness and begging restoration. The Psalm was sung with stringed accompaniment and was serious music. **Psalm 6** is no victory shout; it is the mourn and wail of a sinner seeking forgiveness as he pays the price for his sin.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews would use this Psalm when wanting forgiveness. It was used after a time of backsliding when a vow had been made to God to return to His will and His work. Notice the groanings of **verse 3**, the need for restoration found in **verse 2** and the desire for forgiveness found in **verse 4**. Perhaps some reader has wandered from his God. Read this Psalm. Picture David pleading for restoration at the bedside of a dying son whose brief life was soon to be ended. Then call to God for forgiveness and restoration.

# PSALM 7

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Saul was the king of Israel. David had become a national hero after his slaying of Goliath. The ladies began to sing, "*Saul hath slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands.*" This made Saul to see David as a threat for his throne. Hence, he vowed to kill him and spent many days pursuing David in an attempt to slay him. David fled from Saul, not because he was afraid to fight or felt he could not be victorious, but because David refused to lift up his hand against God's anointed, and because David realized that vengeance belonged to God and not to him. At the writing of this Psalm David was in a cave fleeing for his life. He was lonely, frightened and perhaps disillusioned. He was a young man. He had been used of God to save his nation. Honor should have come from the king, but in its place came jealousy. As the Psalm is read, the reader should picture David in the cave, a young man, discouraged and lonely.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

God's people would use this Psalm when they were in deep trouble. It often seems that God's people are in deep trouble most of the time. Peter reminds us that we are as gold refined by the fire. Sometimes it is difficult to ascertain the purpose of God when we have to stay in the fire so long and so often, but God has His way of purifying us, and this is by placing us in the refiner's fire.

One day while a refiner was looking at his gold in the fire, a passerby asked him how long he kept the gold in the fire.

He said, "Until it is purified."

The passerby then asked, "How do you know when the gold is purified?"

The refiner answered, "I know it is purified when I can see the reflection of my face in it."

This is why Jesus puts us through the fire. He wants the reflection of His face to be seen in us.

The Jews would also read and sing the **seventh Psalm** when they were tempted to seek revenge or to retaliate. Let it be remembered that revenge and vengeance is a work of God for us, not a work for us to do for ourselves.

# PSALM 8

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written during the harvest time. It is obvious that David was looking up into the sky during the nighttime and feeling his insignificance and God's greatness. Notice **verse 4**. The word "*man*" in this verse comes from a Hebrew word which means "weak, insignificant man." David could not imagine how a God so mighty and so wonderful and so powerful could condescend to fellowship with sinful, weak, insignificant flesh.

Then notice in **verse 1** the words, "*Who hath set Thy glory above the heavens.*" In this verse God is likened unto an actor who comes to a platform to perform. That platform is the world, but the world is not big enough for His performance, so the platform is built in the heavens. Then the heavens are found too small for this performer, so a new platform is built above the heavens. Our God is so great that His platform cannot be contained by the heavens themselves. The marvelous thing about this is found in **verse 2** when God says He is interested in the little baby and the suckling child. Here is a God so great that He must have a platform above the heavens, and yet, so tender and so personal He is concerned about the whimper and the cry of an infant.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When a dedicated Jew was feeling proud of himself, he would run to the shelter of humility found in the **eighth Psalm**. When he felt superior, he would go in the field in the nighttime and quote or sing this Psalm.

Perhaps when we become proud we could find in the **eighth Psalm** a place of humbling as we view the greatness of our God and His handiwork and the weakness of human flesh. Then we can shout, "Hosanna!" because such perfection desires to visit and fellowship with such weakness.

# PSALM 9

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

In the **sixth Psalm** we found David penitent and saddened because of the fatal illness of his infant son. Now in **Psalm 9** that son has passed away and David is reflecting upon the abbreviated life of the little one and his sin that caused it. Ah, 'tis sad that such tragedy has to come in our lives to make us aware of the importance of our staying in the will of God.

Years ago when I was pastoring in Garland, Texas, a young man came down the aisle in response to the message during the invitation time. He said that God had called him to preach but he could not do it. He could not afford to do it because he had a good job and his wife was opposed to his entering the ministry. He simply could not preach, he said.

It wasn't long until a beautiful baby left their home for Heaven. Could I ever forget the day when I stood beside a little casket at the Williams Funeral Home in Garland, Texas! Friends and family had passed by to view the body and then with trembling hands, a broken heart and moistened eyes came the young parents. The father reached down into the casket and lifted the little baby's body into his arms and shouted through tears, "I can preach now! I can preach now! I can preach now!"

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It is not difficult to discern the use of this Psalm by the people of God. It was used in times of bereavement at the loss of a loved one. Has someone very dear to you passed away? Then take refuge under the wings of **Psalm 9**.

# PSALM 10

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The **tenth Psalm** is a continuation of the **ninth Psalm**. Some have suggested they should be combined into one, but that is not important. It does, however, deal with the same subject and was written perhaps at the same time under the same circumstances.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This also was a Psalm used in times of bereavement. Through the years when I have been bereaved, I have taken refuge in **Psalms 9 and 10**. On December 13, 1950, at 3:00 in the afternoon on Mother's Day, I stood at the casket of my father. My heart was broken for many reasons, when suddenly I felt a hand on my arm. It was holding me tightly. I thought perhaps some friend had grasped my arm in an effort to comfort me and give me strength. I turned to see who the friend was and could see no one. Then suddenly it dawned upon me that the Friend of friends had touched me with His hand. I could feel it not only in my heart, but I could feel it on my arm.

A mother had been taken from a home. After the funeral service the grief-stricken father and son returned for their first night at home without their wife and mother. During the night the little boy began to whimper. His dad asked him if he could help, whereupon the little boy replied through the darkness, "Daddy, is your face turned toward me?"

The father reached his big hand out and held the son's and said, "Yes, son, my face is turned toward You." When we are bereaved we may look to our Heavenly Father and ask, "Father, is Your face turned toward me?" The answer is always in the affirmative. His face IS truly turned toward us, especially in hours of bereavement.

# PSALM 11

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

For a time, David lived in the court of Saul. It was a time of testing, for David and his friends were in a definite minority. Anarchy and sin were so prevalent that David and his friends could not participate in much of the activity of the court. Because of this, they had to build their own little community within the court. They met periodically for fellowship and strength. They were hated by many, persecuted by others, and disliked by most. They were not understood, for they believed in living righteously. So in this sinful kingdom they built within the confines of the court a little righteous community where they could fellowship one with the other. We too live in a sinful age. Black has become so black and white has become so white that it has become almost impossible for the Christian to find any kind of secular organization or fellowship in which he may participate. Because of this, God has given us a little community called the New Testament church where we may have an empire within an empire, a kingdom within a kingdom, a city within a city, a community within a community. Here God's people meet. They fellowship, they sing, they give, they preach, they teach, they learn, and in a sense, build their lives around this community. The wise father will see to it that his family is built around the church. Our children should be able to choose their friends from church children. They should be able to fellowship within the church, date within the church and, yes, even marry within this amazing little community called the New Testament church.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used by God's people when they were in a minority. Notice **verse 3**, "***If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?***" The answer is very simple—the righteous can flee to that institution, that only institution, whose foundation can never be destroyed, even our Saviour, the Rock of Ages.

# PSALM 12

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The conditions surrounding the writing of this Psalm were the same as **Psalm 11**. David was living in the court of Saul. The people of Saul were wicked. Notice in **verse 8** the words, "*The wicked walk on every side.*" This was the case in the writing of the **eleventh and twelfth Psalms**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When God's people were in a minority, they used **Psalms 11 and 12** for their strength. These would certainly be splendid ways to gain strength for someone who works in an office and is surrounded by unrighteous people. Maybe there is a young person in school who has to stand alone, or at best has few to stand with him, who could find a haven in this Psalm. Or, how about a serviceman or a factory worker or a Christian family surrounded by unholy neighbors in a community?

Note the words, "*Help, Lord,*" in **verse 1**. This is an unusually vehement cry for help from God. Also notice in **verse 8** the call that is given to rich and well known people to remember their responsibility. 'Tis true, this world is not our home; our citizenship is in Heaven. We are pilgrims passing through on our way to the holy city. Though we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. Thank God for New Testament churches, thank God for Christian schools, thank God for youth departments, thank God for that community within a community called the New Testament church. Let us center on it and build our lives around it.

# PSALM 13

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was being hunted in the mountains by Saul. Saul's jealousy had prompted him to make a vow to take the life of David. David flees for his life and while in the mountains, he writes **Psalm 13**. Now with this picture in mind, read the Psalm. Notice especially the words, "**How long?**" This question is repeated four times. It speaks of a very intense desire for deliverance, and this desire soon bordered on impatience. Yet through it all David says in verse 6 that he will sing unto the Lord. His faith kept him singing in the midst of heavy trials.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used by God's people during prolonged suffering. They would sing it during a prolonged illness or prolonged famine. Many of God's people have an incurable disease or have been under the chastening or refining hand of God for a long time. Such people should sit beside David in the mountains and sing the **thirteenth Psalm**.

One day an old man was hitchhiking. Over his shoulder rested a bag of potatoes. Soon a driver stopped his car to offer a ride. The old man got in, sat down and yet kept the bag of potatoes over his shoulder.

The driver of the car looked at him and said, "Sir, put the sack of potatoes on the floor," whereupon the old man replied, "Sir, it's asking enough for you to carry me. It's asking too much for you to have to carry the potatoes too."

The driver said, "Sir, I'm already carrying the potatoes. There's no need in both of us bearing the weight. Put your load down."

Ah, how many of us go through life carrying our own load when the great Bearer of burdens is with us constantly.

# PSALM 14

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

We come back to the story of David and Absalom and Absalom's rebellion against his father. It is probable that this Psalm was written as David fled from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion. It is akin to **Psalm 3**, so it was written in the darkest hour of David's life after having been forsaken by family and friends.

The dedication to this Psalm, "*To the chief musician by David*," stands at the head of 53 Psalms. What this means is that these Psalms were intended not merely for private use but that they were also to be sung by the official appointed choir at great assemblies. In other words, these Psalms were to be used for public worship as well as private meditation and praise. The ancient church practiced the singing of these Psalms at public worship.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was sung by the people when they had been forsaken by family and/or friends. When this time comes, the Christian must be reminded that there is One Who will never forsake him. Someone has said that there are 366 promises in the Bible that God is with us and will not leave us. Ah, what great comfort this is! There are 365 days in a year. Think of it—a promise for every day. "But," reminds one, "there are 366 promises." Ah, yes, but is there not a leap year when we have 366 days? God promises to be with us every day, not even omitting one. God reminds us that He will never leave us or forsake us. In this passage there are five negatives. Now in the English language a double negative is bad grammar, but in the Greek, added negatives are given to increase emphasis. God gives us five negatives. The promise could be translated something like this, "No, I will not never leave thee nor not never forsake thee."

# PSALM 15

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box. It was in the holy of holies in the tabernacle. Its top was the mercy seat overlaid with gold over which the shekinah glory, representing God's presence, hovered. The ark had been captured by the Philistines, and when it was retaken by the Jews it was not brought immediately to Jerusalem. David had vowed to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Ah, 'twas a happy day in his life when the ark returned. He was so happy that he danced around the ark singing praises. His wife, Michal, looked from the window and saw David demonstrating such ecstasy. It disgusted her and she rebuked him for it, but even the rebuke of his sullen wife did not dampen his joy. The ark was back home! David had succeeded in bringing it back! Perhaps it was then that David wrote the **fifteenth Psalm**. With the reclaiming of the ark fresh in his mind and with the words of rebuke from Michal still ringing in his ears, he pens the five verses of this Psalm.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jew used this Psalm before going to Jerusalem. Three times a year the Jews were to make a trek toward the city of Jerusalem for the three main feasts. Before embarking on such a journey, it was their habit to sing the **fifteenth Psalm**.

It was also a Psalm sung and read before prayer. It was the kind of a Psalm that was to prepare the heart for prayer. Notice **verse 1**, "*Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?*" Before the child of God lifts his heart to prayer to ascend the holy hill of intercession or the tabernacle of fellowship with his God, he must realize that the access is found in this Psalm. God will not answer our prayers nor honor our intercession unless we come to Him by way of the prerequisites listed in **Psalm 15**. Notice some of them: We must walk uprightly, work righteousness, seek the truth, and refuse to gossip or do evil against our neighbor. There are others that form the stair steps of access to God. Read it before you pray. Read it before you go to church on Sunday. It will prepare your heart.

# PSALM 16

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm finds David running from Saul. He comes to the mountain of Maon. He is on one side of the mountain. He finds that Saul is on the other side. Bear in mind that Saul is attempting to kill David. Soon Saul's forces encircled David until he thought that death was inevitable. Just when it appeared that escape was impossible a messenger came and shouted to Saul, "*Philistines have invaded the land.*" This diverted Saul's attention and David was spared once again. During this time of tension David penned the words of Psalm 16. Notice the prayer in **verse 1**, "*Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust.*" Even in this time of adversity and fear David could rejoice. Look at **verse 9** where David said, "*Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.*" The pleasures of the world may take one's mind from his troubles, but the Lord Jesus can give us joy in our troubles. Of course, deliverance from trouble brings joy and happiness, but our wonderful Saviour gives us joy in our troubles.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews learned to use this Psalm when facing death. Perhaps a dread disease had overtaken one of God's children and death was inevitable. He would flee to **Psalm 16**. When one of God's people had a loved one or friend who was facing death, he would read or sing this Psalm to his friend. Rush these verses to the terminal cancer patient. Speed them to his loved ones. What comfort, help and strength they will find!

# **PSALM 17**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

The story is the same as **Psalm 16**.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

Also the use is the same as **Psalm 16**. Perhaps the reader has already noticed the trend. God has what we need in every occasion. There is no condition in which the Christian can find himself or need that he can require that is not beautifully satisfied by the Psalms.

# PSALM 18

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written after David had won a victory over Goliath's family. It is a Psalm of joy, a Psalm of victory, a Psalm of exaltation. The Psalm is also found in **2 Samuel 22**.

It is noteworthy that though this was a wonderful victory, it was a needless battle. Goliath and his family should not have even been alive. God had told Joshua and his people to destroy and drive out the heathen in the land of Canaan. Among these people to be driven out and destroyed were the Anakites. These were giant people, the ones that the spies mentioned upon returning to the promised land to report to the children of Israel. Joshua, however, did not destroy all of the Anakites but let some live in Gaza, in Gath and in Ashdod. Because of Joshua's incomplete obedience, much grief was brought to the people of God by the descendants of Anak. It is never right to obey our God partially. We must completely obey Him, for those things that we fail to crucify in our lives will return to haunt us in the future.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was sung and read after deliverance from a great struggle. The Jew would sing it after he had recovered from an illness or after he had won a great battle. It was also a Psalm that was used on Thanksgiving Day or during the Thanksgiving season. Has God recently given to you a great victory? Have you recently recovered from a serious illness? Join David in his shout of victory in **Psalm 18**.

# PSALM 19

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

These words were written by David when he was anointed as a boy to become king. Samuel had come to the house of Jesse to anoint one of his sons as king. Jesse never thought of David. When all the other sons had been rejected by Samuel, then Jesse was reminded that David was in the fields. He reluctantly, and with some embarrassment, told Samuel of young David. Samuel went to David and anointed him to become the king. Picture David in the wilderness caring for the sheep writing this, one of the most beautiful of all the Psalms. What beautiful imagery is found in **verses 1-6!** What logic is found in **verses 7-11!** What an amazing warning is found in **verse 13!** What a tremendous secret to the Christian life is given in **verse 14!** David is seeking God's help as he assumes this amazing new responsibility. One of the most important prayers that he prays is in **verse 12**, "*Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*" The term "*secret faults*" means more than faults that are hidden from other people; it means faults that are hidden from David himself. There are certain faults that we have that we do not know that we have. David is asking God to reveal to him his faults and then cleanse him from those when they are revealed.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used at the nighttime. It was basically used when the Jew felt pride coming his way. It is akin to **Psalm 8** in this respect. It was for the developing of humility.

It is interesting to note the three places the Christian is to look in this Psalm. In **verses 1-6** he is to look UP. In **verses 7-11** he is to look AT. In **verses 12-14** he is to look IN. He looks up to God in **verses 1-6**; he looks at the Word of God in **verses 7-11** and looks inside his own heart in **verses 12-14**.

# PSALM 20

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm is akin to **Psalm 15**. It deals with the bringing of the ark back to Jerusalem. At this time there was a war with the Syrians. Before going to war, David writes the **twentieth Psalm**. You will find this mentioned in **verse 1** when he speaks of the Lord *"hearing him in the day of trouble."* Then in **verse 2** he seeks help from the sanctuary and from Zion. He reminds God in **verse 6** that *"He saveth His anointed,"* and then in that amazing **verse 7**, he speaks of the foolishness *"of trusting in chariots and horses"* (which were used in battle) and in *"the wisdom of trusting in the name of our Lord for battle."* How wise he was to claim the blessing and power of God and victory through this power before fighting a battle! Picture David waiting for the battle, girding himself for the conflict, and writing this Psalm as a part of that preparation.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When the Jew was facing a time of testing, he would read **Psalm 20**. When the general was facing battle, he would read and sing the **twentieth Psalm**. It was to be read and sung BEFORE the battle or the testing. Are you facing some serious battle? Are you awaiting surgery? Is there a testing just ahead of you? Then **Psalm 20** is for you as it was for David.

# PSALM 21

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is the same as Psalm 20.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The use is the same as Psalm 20. There is a wonderful comforting statement in verse 3. Notice the words, "*for Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.*" The word "*preventest*" had a different meaning in David's time. It meant "to go before and prepare the way." Before the Jew would enter battle, testing or adversity, he would remind himself by reading Psalm 21 that God was before him in the battle.

These words are being written while aboard a DC-10 jet flying from Chicago to San Francisco. Our daughter, Linda, is now in the hospital. She has been in labor and travail for 24 hours. I just called the hospital before boarding the plane. The flight will last for four hours. I do not know how it is with her. She is even now undergoing testing and, in some sense, her father is in a battle also. What a comfort to know that the Lord goes before us in these battles, in times of testing, and prepares the way! Praise His name!

# PSALM 22

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is not clear as to whether this Psalm was written while running from Saul, when Saul was trying to kill him, or when he was running from Absalom because of his unwillingness to fight against Absalom's forces. Nevertheless, it was a time of tragic heartache for David. He was without a helper in **verse 11**. He was stripped in **verse 17**. He was pierced in **verse 16**. He was made a gazing-stock in **verse 17**. His garments were parted in **verse 18**.

This is what we call a Messianic Psalm. It has a twofold meaning. It describes David in his sorrow, but it is also a beautiful description of Jesus on Calvary. Notice the words of Calvary in **verse 1**. Notice the parting of the garments of Calvary in **verse 18**. Read it carefully. It will make you appreciate your Saviour and the sufferings of the cross.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews never knew exactly when to sing the **22nd Psalm**. They rarely did. It was a holy of holies for them. They entered into it only occasionally and seldom sang it.

# PSALM 23

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is rather difficult to ascertain the exact occasion of the writing of the **23rd Psalm**. There are those who feel that the Psalm was written when David was a lad tending the sheep, because it is a shepherd's psalm. However, there is evidence that this is not true. For example, in **verse 5**, he was old enough to have enemies. In **verse 4** he was facing the danger of death. In **verse 3** he was experiencing rest, and in **verse 5** he was experiencing prosperity. These things all point to an older person, or at least one who had reached maturity or adulthood. Probably the **23rd Psalm** was written while David was at Mahanaim wondering how the battle was between his forces and those of his son, Absalom, during the civil war caused by Absalom's rebellion. Of course, David was grief-stricken and heartbroken. It may have been the darkest hour of his life and this is where he penned the beautiful words, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* I wonder how many people have been comforted and strengthened in times of sorrow, bereavement and heartache through these immortal words.

I was on an airplane flying from Cleveland, Ohio, to Chicago. I was reading the Bible. A lady beside me, to whom I had briefly spoken, noticed that I was reading the Bible. She said to me timidly, "Mister, when you finish with that Bible, could I read it?"

I said, "Why, of course, you may." Then I noticed tears in her eyes. I asked her if she had a heartache, whereupon she informed me that she was going to Houston, Texas, to see her dying father. She didn't expect to arrive before his death. I asked her what part of the Bible she would like for me to read. She said, "Please read the **23rd Psalm**." I read audibly these great verses.

There are some things worth noticing in this beautiful Psalm. Notice in **verse 2**, *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."* The key word here is the word *"maketh."* Sometimes the shepherd *"MAKETH"* the lamb to lie down in green pastures. Oftentimes a lamb would not stay in the fold. He would leave only to be sought and brought back to the fold by the shepherd. Again he would leave, and again he would not stay. Finally, for the lamb's own good, the shepherd would take his leg and gently break it, forcing the lamb to lie down in green pastures. Now the lamb cannot stray; he must stay close to the fold and to the shepherd. How often God does the same thing to us! He wants us close to Himself. We stray. He pleads with us to return. We stray again. Finally, to keep us close to Him, He has to break our leg or to cause some sorrow or heartache to come to our lives. What is He doing? He is MAKING us *"to lie down in green pastures."*

Notice the words in **verse 4**, *"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."* The shepherd's rod had on one end a point and on the other end, a fork. The point on one end was used as a goad to prod the sheep when it would not move and obey. On the other end it had a fork that was used to place over the neck of the serpent in order to protect the lamb from reptiles. 'Twas the same stick—one end was used for protection and comfort; the other end was used for chastening. Ah, God has a rod—the blessed Word of God. It is comfort, it is chastening—it is that sharp, two edged sword. Thank God for its truths!

The last verse is beautiful. A famous preacher had a lady in his church who was not quite mentally normal. She kept coming to him and saying, "Pastor, two men are following me." The pastor would assure her that no one was behind her. Again she would say, "Pastor, two men are following me." He tried to reassure her. She kept coming again and again until finally one day the pastor said to her, "Yes, I know there are two men following you, and I know their names."

She said, "Oh, you do?"

"Yes," he said. "Their names are Goodness and Mercy," and he turned to **Psalm 23:6** and showed her that goodness and mercy shall follow her all the days of her life and she shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. She was so pleased to know the names of the men who were following her, and she never again caused her pastor any trouble. Praise the Lord! Goodness and mercy are following me too, and they will all the days of my life.

### **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

The **23rd Psalm** was used in the deepest of sorrows. It was that Psalm which was reserved until the worst tragedy came. Many of the Psalms were used in times of trial and adversity, but this one was the most potent of all, reserved for the lowest valley and darkest midnight, for the densest fog and for the sharpest pain.

# PSALM 24

AUTHOR: DAVID

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The rebellion is over. David returns to Jerusalem, to the palace and to the house of God. His son, Absalom, has been killed in the battle. David's forces have been victorious. It was a victory for David, but a hollow victory it was because he lost his son. But now he returns to the palace and writes the **24th Psalm**. Picture him as he has returned home as you read the Psalm.

This Psalm, however, goes far beyond David. The **22nd, 23rd and 24th Psalms** picture the Lord Jesus Christ. The **22nd Psalm** beautifully pictures His death, the **23rd Psalm** pictures Him as the resurrected one during this age shepherding His sheep and supplying our needs. The **24th Psalm** presents Him as the King in the kingdom age, as the Messiah. Hence, David becomes a picture of Jesus; His suffering in the city of Jerusalem and leaving the city pictures death and burial. His love for Absalom while he is away from the city pictures Jesus' love for us now, and his returning to the city to claim the victory pictures Jesus coming to the earth again. His ruling on the throne after the victory pictures the Lord Jesus coming back to earth to rule and reign for 1000 years during the millennial kingdom.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jewish people longed for the Messiah. They looked for Him and prayed for Him. When this longing would arrive at its zenith and their hunger for the Messiah's return would reach its peak, they would read and sing the **24th Psalm**. When you get hungry for Jesus to return, read the **24th Psalm** and pray that He soon will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

# PSALM 25

**AUTHOR: Unknown**

The authorship of this Psalm is often attributed to David, but it seems there is not quite enough evidence to substantiate this position.

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

I have a strong feeling that this Psalm was written during the Babylonian exile. By way of review, Israel became a nation while in Egypt. She was delivered from Egypt by Moses, and he was the nation's first leader. Following Moses came Joshua. Following Joshua came the time of the judges, which was a dark period in the life of Israel when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. It was a time of anarchy and spiritual darkness. Israel clamored for a king, and God gave her one. His name was Saul. Following Saul was David and following David was his son, Solomon. Following Solomon was Rehoboam. Under Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. After many years, both Judah and Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity. For 70 years or more the people of God were there in captivity. This Psalm perhaps was written during that period of 70 years. Notice that the Psalm closes with a plea for God to redeem Israel out of all its troubles. No doubt this is a prayer asking for God to deliver Israel from bondage and back to her land.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

The Jews would turn to this Psalm when in prison or in bondage. It is a Psalm of deliverance, a Psalm asking for God's grace while in bondage and captivity. Is there a prisoner reading these words? Turn to this Psalm in your hour of bondage, and have faith and believe that God will help you.

# PSALM 26

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David has now brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. How happy he is! How sweet were his shouts! How joyful was his dancing around the ark as it came back to its home! In appreciation to God and in gratitude for God's blessings in allowing the ark to return to Jerusalem, David goes to the altar to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Notice **verses 6-8**. In **verse 6** he approaches the altar. In **verse 7** he tells why he is offering the sacrifice and in **verse 8** he rejoices because of his love for the house of God and, no doubt, because of his happiness in that the ark is back. David first prayed that the ark would return. He then put feet to his prayers and worked to bring about its return. He then rejoiced and praised God when it returned, and now he remembers to be thankful because it has returned. The house of God was just not the same without the Ark of the Covenant because over that ark rested the shekinah glory which was symbolic of God's presence and power with His people.

This turns our attention back to the time when the Ark of the Covenant left Israel. The Philistines noticed that there was a power that rested upon this ark and that God's blessings always accompanied its presence. Thinking that it would help them also, they captured the ark and took it to their own land. It caused them nothing but trouble because they were not God's people, and they were glad to have it brought back. 'Twas a sad day in the life of Israel when the ark left. Eli was the high priest. He was an aged man. One of his son's wives was expecting a baby. When Eli found that the ark had gone, he did not want to live. He fell, broke his neck and died. His son's wife went into premature labor and brought forth a son whose name was "*Ichabod*," which means, "*the glory has departed*." 'Tis a sad time in the life of the house of God when the glory has departed. More than we need carpet, more than we need chandeliers, more than we need buildings, more than we need padded pews, more than we need an educated clergy, more than we need money, do we need the power and glory of God! Oh, think of the churches across the land over whose doors could be written, "*Ichabod*," the glory has departed. Once there was a breath of God. Once there was the power of the Holy Spirit, but now gone maybe forever is this glory. How we should pray for our churches that the freshness of the dew of Heaven will rest upon pulpit and the pew!

The old country preacher in the South was praying, "Dear Lord, give me the unction, give me the unction, give me the unction."

Someone came and said, "Reverend, what is the unction?"

The old preacher cried, "I don't know what it is, but I know what it ain't!"

Oh, for the breath of God that Moody received on Wall Street that day! Oh, for the power of God that Wesley received after an all-night prayer meeting with 60 other preachers! Oh, for the breath of Heaven that came on George Whitfield when he was ordained and Bishop Benson laid his hands of dedication upon him! Oh, for the power of God that settled on Savonarola as he waited in his pulpit five hours refusing to preach!

Oh, for the power of God that came upon Billy Sunday, Charles G. Finney and Jonathan Edwards and the other mighty men of God! Let us pray that "*Ichabod*" will not be written over the doors of our churches and that those who have that sad history will somehow bring the ark back to the house of God and the power of God shall rest once again upon the preacher and people, and the altar shall be filled with sinners and the cry of newborn babes coming to Christ!

### **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

The Jews would use this Psalm before offering a sacrifice. They would also use it before coming to the house of God. As they would come to the house of God, they would turn to this Psalm and read it and sing it.

# PSALM 27

AUTHOR: DAVID

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had heard of Absalom's death and of his victory. Naturally he was pleased because he was still the king. He was heartbroken because his son had been killed in battle. Hence, he had a dual feeling when he wrote this Psalm. It is called a "composite" Psalm. **Verses 1-6** were sung to a jubilant, double beat. **Verses 7-14** were sung to a mournful and slow beat. This was called a "double expression." It was written thusly because David was both jubilant and mournful. Read **verses 1-6** and enjoy David's jubilation. Read **verses 7-14** and mourn with him because of his sorrow.

In a real sense this is the way all of us should be all the time. We should rejoice that our names are written in Heaven and yet mourn because the names of others are not there. We should rejoice because there is a Heaven and mourn because some will be lost forever in the fires of Hell. We should rejoice because of God's goodness to us and yet mourn because of sin on every side.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was sung after great victories. Bear in mind that every great battle that was won also carried with it the loss of life. Those of us who have lived through wars have learned that even in a war that is won, there is also sorrow. I think of those friends of mine who gave their lives in World War II—the first baseman on our softball team, the pitcher on our baseball team, the fellow who had the paper route down the street from me, my tennis doubles partner, not to mention my buddies with whom I trained in the infantry and paratroopers. Has there been a victory in your life which also brought with it lamentation and sorrow? You will find a kindred spirit in the one who wrote the **27th Psalm**.

# PSALM 28

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Here we have another "composite" Psalm. It is, however, a reverse of the preceding one. This one starts off sad and meditative in **verses 1-5** and then leaps to joy and rejoicing in **verses 6-9**.

This composite Psalm was written by David during Absalom's rebellion while he was at Mahanaim. He was rejoicing in God's goodness to him and yet was brokenhearted because of the circumstances caused by his son's rebellion. Picture him as he is outside the city, his own forces are fighting with those of his son, his son has turned against him. However, God is good, and so David is sad and mournful for a few verses and then he leaps into praise for the next few.

This Psalm is one in which David pleads and begs.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Psalm 28** was used during times of intercession when God's people fasted, prayed and pleaded for God to hear and answer them. They would sing and read this Psalm. Is there something that has caused you to turn to fasting and praying? Is there something for which you are pleading now? Are you praying day and night and calling unto God? Then enter into the agony and, yes, even the joy of David in the **28th Psalm**.

# PSALM 29

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is not clear concerning the conditions surrounding the writing of **the Psalm**. It is strongly suggested that David was watching a storm rise and subside. This is the only hint we have concerning the background of the Psalm. **Verse 5** reminds us that the Lord breaketh the cedars. Then in **verse 7** he obviously makes reference to lightning. Verse 8 may have to do with a mild quake or at least a heavy rumbling storm. **Verse 10** talks about the floods. The Psalmist is seeing the Lord even in the destruction of a bad storm.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jewish people sang the **29th Psalm** on the first day of the feast of pentecost which was a harvest feast. This was 50 days after the passover. They also sang this Psalm when they wanted to be cheered. When the Jew was melancholy or somewhat sad, he would often give himself the recipe of taking the **29th Psalm**.

# PSALM 30

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had committed a sin. He had numbered the people. Now when a leader numbered the people, this was to prepare them for war. God was not in this numbering and offered David three choices of punishment: (1) seven years of famine, (2) three months of defeat, or (3) three days of pestilence or sickness. David chose the latter, whereupon 70,000 people died. David himself became ill. He built an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah (perhaps this was the same spot as was Mt. Moriah where Abraham offered Isaac, and some even think it was the location of Calvary). There at the altar David is forgiven for his sin. He dedicates this altar and writes the **30th Psalm**. The **30th Psalm** is a Psalm of dedication of the altar built on the threshing floor of Araunah. Can you imagine David with the blood of 70,000 people on his hands begging God for forgiveness? With this image in your mind read the **30th Psalm**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The Jews used this Psalm for dedication services of synagogues and other important buildings. It was also used at what was called the feast of dedication, which was a feast corresponding with our early December and lasting for eight days during which the people purged the temple. This Psalm was used while eating and singing at this feast and purging.

# PSALM 31

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

As was mentioned in the comments about the 30th Psalm, David chose the punishment of three days of pestilence. During this time he became severely ill, and while he was ill, he wrote the **31st Psalm**. Throughout **the Psalm** you will find statements concerning the severity of his illness. As **the Psalm** is read, the reader should picture David in tremendous suffering for his sin of numbering the people.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This is **the Psalm** to which God's people turned when they had an illness. This would be good for any age as people turn to God for healing and health.

# PSALM 32

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

When David was healed of the illness mentioned previously, he then wrote the **32nd Psalm**. It is a penitential Psalm, which means that David was repenting of his sin. He was also praising God for forgiveness and for healing.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Obviously the **32nd Psalm** was used by the Israelites after healing and after forgiveness. Feel the pathos, the joy and the thrill of forgiveness and healing as the **32nd Psalm** is read.

Those who have slipped into sin and left God's perfect plan should kneel now and come back to God. He will forgive, and a sweet peace of heart will flood the soul of the penitent one, and he may feel the incomparable joy of being right with his God and forgiven of his sins.

# **PSALM 33**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

The story is the same as Psalm 32.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

The use is the same as Psalm 32.

# PSALM 34

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was running from Saul, and Saul had vowed to kill him because of jealousy. David ran to Gath and to King Achish. He wanted to seek refuge in Gath. However, some of the king's servants knew David and began to sing the song, "*Saul hath slain his thousands, but David has slain his tens of thousands.*" David realized that he was recognized. Because of fear he feigned madness. He put spittle on his beard and grasped for the gate like an insane man. He told them that he had come to join the army, but he purposely failed the test. He marked on the gate and roamed and staggered as a mad man would. Because of this, he was refused admittance to the army as he had planned, and was delivered. Upon this deliverance, he wrote the **34th Psalm**. Though David's antics were questionable, he nevertheless did give God the praise for his deliverance and wrote a song concerning it.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Israel used this Psalm to sing and read when alone among enemies. When one was captured in battle, he would lean heavily upon the **34th Psalm**. A summary of this would be found in **verses 6 and 7**. Notice **verse 6**, "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*" Then read that classic **verse 7**, "*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.*"

How good God is! He has so much more for us than we could ever ask or think, and even in our folly, He cares for us. Once, a little boy went with his mother to the grocery store. He saw a big barrel of candy. While looking at it longingly, he was noticed by the grocery man who said, "Go ahead, Johnny, get a handful free." Johnny didn't move. "Go ahead," said the grocery man, "it's yours. Get you a handful. It won't cost you a cent." Johnny still didn't move his hand. Finally the grocer reached down and got a handful and gave it to Johnny. Johnny smiled, put it in his pocket, and on the way home was asked by his mother, "Johnny, when the grocery man asked you to get a handful, why didn't you do it? Why did you wait until he could get it for you?"

Johnny smiled and said, "Mama, 'cause his hand is bigger than mine!"

Yes, God's hand is bigger than mine and yours, and that hand is dedicated to our protection and our defense.

# PSALM 35

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written in connection with one of the most noble times in David's life. The story is found in **1 Samuel 24**. David was asleep in a cave. This was during the time that he was running for his life from Saul. Saul's pursuits were dedicated to the murder of David. One night David rested inside a cave. When he awoke the next morning, he found Saul asleep on the outside of the cave. Here was David's chance. Saul had pledged to kill David, and now Saul lies sleeping at the mercy of David. Will David kill Saul? Would he seek revenge? He draws his sword, cuts off a little piece of the skirt of Saul's garment but does no more. He is asked why he does not seek revenge and kill Saul. He replies that he cannot lift up his hand against God's anointed. Saul was not what he should have been, but he was God's anointed. Saul was not perfect, but he was God's anointed. David will not seek revenge.

How often we want to seek revenge and vengeance against those who have wronged us! Let us with David realize that this is God's department, not ours.

We should also join David in refraining from lifting our hands against God's anointed. Oh, pray for God's men, love God's men, be loyal to God's men, stand beside God's men, hold high the hands of God's men. For years I've tried to help preachers. I've loved them, prayed for them, preached to them, come to their rescue and stood beside them. I love preachers. They are the hope of America. In many ways, they are the most lonely men in the world, but they hold in their hands the hope of the world. I once heard about a fellow who had ten sons. He said, "The first was a lawyer and the second was a liar too. The third was a banker and the fourth was a crook too. The fifth was a school teacher and the sixth was at a state institution too. The eighth was a doctor and the eighth stayed up all night too. The ninth was a preacher and the tenth didn't work for a living either." Of course, this is humorous, but it should not be true. God's men should be the hardest working men and the best men in the world, and God's people should hold them before the throne of grace in prayer, love and support.

## The Way It Was Used By God's People

When a Jew was tempted to seek revenge, he often turned to the **35th Psalm**, read it and sung it. It gave him strength as he saw an example in David.

# PSALM 36

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written after David's victory over Goliath's four sons. One of these sons was named Ishbibenob. He had a spear that weighed 300 shekels. There was another brother whose name was Saph. There was another who had six fingers and toes. Of course, these were all giants because they came from the children of Anak. Upon winning the victory over these giants, David wrote **Psalm 36**. This Psalm is akin to the **18th Psalm**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used after a victory, especially a great victory. There were many Psalms used after winning a victory, but the 36th was a special one used after conquering a mighty foe.

# PSALM 37

**AUTHOR:** Probably Solomon

Some will dispute this, but there appears to be so much like Solomon in **verses 10, 12, 13, 18, 23, 25, 37 and 38**. Read these verses carefully and see if there is not a proverb flavor in them.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

As was the case in **Psalm 1**, no doubt the author, probably Solomon, is teaching his son, probably Rehoboam, some things about life, righteousness, sin and God's will and plan. As the Psalm is read, it is not difficult to picture a wise father talking to his son instructing him about life. We have one boy. He is now grown and a preacher, Dr. David Hyles. When he was growing up, I taught him every night that I was home. I taught him about life, about manners, about girls, about athletics, about honesty, about integrity, about decency, about propriety. Hundreds and hundreds of hours, yea, even thousands of hours were spent teaching and teaching and teaching. As the **37th Psalm** is read, one should keep a mental image of a father and his son together in a time of instruction.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used for family instruction. Notice especially the amazing instruction given in **verses 3-8**. These are among the classic verses of the Bible.

When David was a little boy, he started riding to church with me. We would go early in the morning and come home late at night. The rest of the family would go later and come back earlier, but David always wanted to be with Dad, and it mattered not how long I counseled after the service, Dave would wait for me. When he first started riding to church with me, he could barely talk plainly. One morning coming home from Sunday school and church I asked him what the Sunday school lesson was about. He looked through his big brown eyes and said, "It was about God."

I then asked, "What did you learn about God?" whereupon he replied, "I learned that God loves me more than anyone else loves me, but that when I do wrong God spans me, and, boy, does He spank! But after God spans me, He then hugs me and tells me that it hurt. . . Him. . . worse than it. . . hurt. . . me. . . Hey, Dad, . . . are you God?"

I looked at him through tears and said, "No, son, I'm not God, but I'm glad that you think I am, and I hope that after you've left our home, when you are grown, you will still think the old man is a little bit like God." From that moment on, I resolved to teach Dave about life. This I did and this every father should do. It is the heritage deserved by every son.

# PSALM 38

AUTHOR: Job

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Read carefully **Job 42:1-6**; then read the **38th Psalm**. You will find an amazing similarity. Job had stood the test. God had allowed Satan to try him, and Job did not turn his back upon God. In one of the most marvelous displays of loyalty ever known, Job stood the test and kept his promise that even if God should slay him, he would still trust Him. However, when Job had stood the test and God had given him twice as much as he had before, Job became proud. How tragic it is that even in our highest hour, we are tempted to sin, and even in the holiest of duties, we stoop to human deeds! Job became proud of himself and God rebuked him severely. This drives Job to the ash heap to repent as is found in **Job 42:1-6**. Of course, God forgives him, and Job's temporary lapse does not tarnish our faith in him. It simply reminds us that he is human. I think that God places such a sin in the Bible to show us that all of us are human and potential backsliders. Abraham lied about Sarah. Paul took a Jewish vow. Noah was drunken. Moses lost his temper and smote the rock twice and numbered the people and was forbidden to enter into the promise land. Peter cursed and swore and denied that he belonged to the Saviour. David had his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. God is reminding us that the best of men are men at best.

There is something very sweet in the story of Job. After Job had lost his sheep, his asses, his camels, his oxen and his children and, yea, all that he had, he stood the test and did not charge the Lord. After he had proved himself, God gave him back twice as many asses and twice as many sheep and twice as many camels and twice as many oxen, but He gave him the same number of children that he had before—ten. This used to bother me until one day it dawned on me. Job did have twice as many children as he had before. When an ox dies, it's dead. When an ass dies, it's dead. When a camel dies, it's dead. When a sheep dies, it's dead. When a child dies, it is not dead. Job did have twice as many children—he simply had ten on earth and ten in Heaven. Praise God!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When a Hebrew sought repentance, he would often come to the **38th Psalm**. It would lead him to repent of his sin. This is another of the penitential Psalms.

# PSALM 39

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This is one of David's earlier Psalms, written perhaps as he was a boy tending sheep. He had talked in haste and said something that he should not have said, and in this Psalm he is correcting himself. After David had spoken that which he should not have said, he then, realizing his error, became quiet. Notice **verses 1 and 2**. Then in **verse 8** he asks forgiveness and shows that after he made his mistake, he did not speak.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used as instruction to children concerning the tongue and saying things that should be said. If our tongues are to be controlled properly, our minds must be clean and pure, for the Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and what we are on the inside will eventually come out.

At a carnival or county fair or some similar type event, a barker was holding a handful of balloons. Each balloon was filled with helium. There were many colors among them. For a quarter or so a child could purchase a balloon. His name could be written on a card and attached to the balloon and then the balloon would be let up in the air. Of course, the hope was that someone would find the card many miles away and return it to the child. A little white boy came up and bought a white balloon. His name was put on the card, and the balloon went into space. A little Chinese boy rushed up and bought a yellow balloon. His name was placed on the card, the card was attached to the balloon, and the balloon soared into the sky. A little Indian boy came and purchased a red balloon. His name was placed on a card, and the card was attached to the balloon, and the balloon was let go. It too disappeared into the heavens. Then a little brown boy did the same thing. Standing timidly at a distance was a little black boy. He noticed among the many balloons there was only one black one. He tiptoed shyly up to the barker and said, "Sir, will the black balloon go up in the sky too?"

The man put the black boy's name on the balloon and then let it soar into the sky. Then he patted the little black boy on the head and said, "Son, it's what's on the inside that counts."

Let us keep the inside clear so we can look to the Lord and say, ***"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight."***

# PSALM 40

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The war with Absalom is over. Absalom, of course, has been killed. David has come back to the palace and is now sitting on the throne. From the throne he writes the **40th Psalm**. Read with interest the first four verses and picture the king back on the throne after an absence. Ah, here is a beautiful picture. Jesus was crucified, and in this old sin-cursed world He is now the object of hatred, ridicule and anamosity. But one day, bless God, He will be back on the throne.

One day a little boy was reading a book. He got to the middle of the book and the villain was winning the battle. The hero was just about to lose. At that very moment the boy's mother commissioned him to come and dry the dishes. He begged for a postponement so he could finish the book. The mother was not in the postponing mood, and she said, "Son, you come and do these dishes now!"

The boy said, "But Mama, the hero is getting defeated and the villain is winning. I've got to stay and see how it comes out." The mother was not in a mood to comply and she said, "Johnny, you come in here now and do these dishes!"

Johnny quickly turned over to the last chapter and read it, and running to the kitchen to do the dishes he shouted, "Ah, villain, you are having a good time in the middle of the book, but you're in for the surprise of your life when you get to the last chapter."

Yes, Satan is the god of this world, and he is having a good time now, but I turned over to the end of the Book and read the last chapter! I read where Satan will someday be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. I read where "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journies run. His kingdom shall spread from shore to shore, 'til moons shall wax and wane no more." I read about a New Jerusalem, the foundations of precious jewels, gates of pearl and streets of gold. I read the last chapter where God's people shall reign with Him. I read the last chapter where it tells about the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I read the last chapter which tells us of a place where we shall live forever, where no crepe will darken the door, no palsy shall tremble the hand, no cancer shall remove the breast, and no grave will be like an open earthquake receiving its prey. Yes, I read the last chapter! Satan, old boy, you are in for the surprise of your life when you get there!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm, as were many others, was used in singing after a great victory.

# PSALM 41

Author: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had a long-time trusted friend named Ahithophel. Ahithophel grew up with David. He was the grandfather of Bathsheba. David trusted him. Ahithophel was David's familiar friend. When Absalom rebelled against his father, he persuaded Ahithophel to go with him. Ahithophel then became Absalom's counselor. When David left the city, Ahithophel advised Absalom to go in pursuit of David. His advice was rejected and because of this, Ahithophel went and hanged himself. The 41st Psalm was written at Ahithophel's betrayal of David. Read verses 5-9 especially and you will feel something of David's heart when his friend betrayed him.

There is a little fact here worth noting. It gives us a little insight as to why Ahithophel forsook David. David had stolen Bathsheba. Now when Absalom rebelled, Ahithophel followed him. No doubt he did so because Bathsheba was his granddaughter, and David was reaping the result of his sin.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Have you known the bitter taste of a friend's betrayal? When such a taste came to one of the Israelites, he would often find strength in the **41st Psalm**, especially in **verse 12** where David is rejoicing in the fact that there is one true Friend Who will never turn His face from us, ***"And as for me, Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before Thy face for ever."***

# PSALM 42

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

One of the loveliest little stories in the Bible pertains to a man named Barzillai. When David had fled the city of Jerusalem because of Absalom's rebellion, numbers of people had forsaken him. Included in these numbers were his own son, his trusted servant Shimei, the cripple Mephibosheth whom David had befriended in such a beautiful way, and David's close beloved lifetime friend, Ahithophel. When David got to Mahanaim, he was discouraged, lonely and heartbroken. An 80-year-old man named Barzillai came to David and brought him some victuals. He brought him food necessary for his sustenance. Upon receiving the food and the love of this wonderful old man, David wrote the 42nd Psalm. In **verses 1 and 2** you will find how hungry he was to get back to the house of God. Notice **verse 1**, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.*" David was so hungry to get back to the house of God and the place where God had put him. In **verse 7** David says, "*Deep calleth unto deep.*" This meant that one problem came right after another. How refreshed he must have been to find one old friend who cared! While meditating upon this sweet friendship, David writes this beautiful Psalm.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was especially dear to the Jewish people when they were in Babylonian captivity. They would especially read **verses 5 and 11** and pray, long, and hope for deliverance from captivity back to their beloved homeland. They found strength in the fact that God provided for David while he was away from Jerusalem and that God restored him. This gave them hope that perhaps the same fortune could be theirs.

# PSALM 43

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is the same as Psalm 42.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The use is the same as Psalm 42. Notice that verse 5 in this Psalm is the same as verses 5 and 11 in the 42nd Psalm.

# PSALM 44

## AUTHOR

Several possibilities have been projected. It is obviously a captivity Psalm. Because of this, its author could have been Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah or any one of a number of men. It was obviously written by someone who was in the captivity in Babylon.

### The Story Behind the Psalm

As was mentioned in an earlier comment about one of **the Psalms**, the nation of Israel had been taken to captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, where they spent over 70 years. It was while in that captivity, 500 miles from home, that this Psalm was written. Notice the sad statement in verses **1 and 2**. The people in bondage could say only that they had heard with their ears, their fathers had told them the great things God had done. They themselves, however, had never seen much miracles or victories. In **verses 9-14**, you will find mention of their captivity, and you will see the deplorable condition in **verse 22**. Oh, how the people longed to return home! How they longed to see the beloved city, to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the walls around the city and to be a part once again of their wonderful homeland! But, there they sit 500 miles from home lamenting their predicament and longing for restoration.

### The Way It Was Used by God's People

These words were sung by the Jews while in Babylon and in succeeding years by others who were away from home and were seized by homesickness. This would be a good Psalm for servicemen to read, for college students and for others who find it necessary to be away from their beloved homes and find a hunger of heart to return.

# **PSALM 45**

**AUTHOR: Solomon**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

Solomon's serious weakness and ultimate downfall was his enchantment with heathen women. As all Bible students know, he had a thousand wives and concubines. On one occasion he married a beautiful Egyptian princess and for that marriage this Psalm was composed and sung.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

This Psalm was sung at weddings, especially at weddings we would consider unholy ones. Tradition says that it was sung at the wedding of Ahab and Jezebel and also at the wedding of Jehoram and Athaliah. Wise parents will constantly warn their children concerning the dangers of marrying unconverted people, and if such a marriage is unwise, then such a courtship is unwise. Let this Psalm remind us to train our children not to stand in the way of sinners, not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, but to make their friends, yea, all of their friends and ultimately their husbands and wives only from God's people.

# PSALM 46

AUTHOR: Moses

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The Israelites had just crossed the Red Sea. The waters had parted for them and had returned to drown the pursuing Egyptian armies, after God's people had crossed. Can you imagine the joy in the heart of the leader, Moses, upon this marvelous deliverance? He then wrote the **46th Psalm**. No wonder he said in **verse 1**, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."* Notice in **verse 2** his mention of the sea. In **verse 3** you find again the mention of the waters being troubled. In **verse 6** you have the heathen raging, referring to the Egyptian armies that had just been defeated.

This Psalm and the 47th, 48th and 49th were for the sons of Korah and were to be sung in public services.

Picture Moses on the safe side of the Red Sea with the enemies destroyed, writing and singing the **46th Psalm**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This beautiful song was sung every year on the anniversary of the crossing of the Red Sea. It was also sung upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which was on the exact date of the crossing of the Red Sea, just as the crucifixion of Christ was on the same day as the passover. When the enemy has been defeated, the victory has come, and God has raised one from seeming destruction and/or death, the **46th Psalm** would be very appropriate reading.

# PSALM 47

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David has come to the end of his reign. He looks back with thanksgiving and shouts, "*O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*" With a marvelous reign behind him he shouts in verse 6, "*Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.*" 'Ah, what a God! What a King! What a Saviour! Such a shout of praise can be on the lips of each of us if we will but live our lives and serve our God all the days of our lives. Imagine the pageantry of an old king handing the reigns and the throne to his son and looking back with thanksgiving to God for all that God had done and penning and singing the words of Psalm 47.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Psalm 47 was sung at the anointing of Solomon and at his ascension to the throne. It was a congregational Psalm. It was sung by all the people together. It was also sung at thanksgiving feasts and at the anointing of all kings.

Have you ended a successful life? Are you coming to the close of the rearing of your children? Are you about to retire after years of service and hard work? Are you coming to the close of a pastorate where God has blessed? Then read Psalm 47 and join with the sweet singer of Israel, David, as he rejoices because of God's blessings. Ah, what a Psalm for senior citizens and those who are coming to the sunset years of life!

# PSALM 48

AUTHOR: Jehoshaphat

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Jehoshaphat was king of Judah. Moab and Ammon, two heathen nations, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. It must be remembered that the kingdom of Moab and the kingdom of Ammon came from two illegitimate boys who were sons of Lot. Lot had fled the city of Sodom upon its destruction. His wife had looked back and turned to a pillar of salt. He and his two daughters fled to a city called Zoar and there his daughters made him drunken, and he committed incest with each of them. One bore him a son whose name was Moab, and the other bore a son whose name was Ammon. These little boys born in incest became fathers of some great antagonistic nations. Now these nations come to battle against Jehoshaphat.

The first thing that Jehoshaphat did was to fear God and to seek the Lord and proclaim a fast throughout Judah. Judah gathered together to ask help of the Lord. God did give help and reminded them that the battle was not theirs but His. God through His prophet told them they would not need to fight. All they would have to do is stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. (This entire story can be read in **2 Chronicles 20**.) The people of God simply began to sing and praise the Lord. Soon the Moabites and Ammonites began to quarrel with each other and began to kill each other, and God gave the victory to Jehoshaphat and his people. The people of God then came to Tekoa singing and shouting praise to the Lord. Then they returned with psalteries and harps to the temple, and Jehoshaphat wrote the **48th Psalm**. Picture this marvelous victory where God Himself and by Himself had won the battles and set at naught the enemy. See these people saved from the brink of disaster singing Jehoshaphat's **48th Psalm**. Hear them as they sing, "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.*" Hear them as they relive the assembling of the kings and nations against them in **verse 4**. Hear them sing of the beauty of the holy city and Mt. Zion in **verses 1 and 2**. See them as they have the great thanksgiving service in the temple in **verses 9-14**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The **48th Psalm** was one of the favorites upon celebrating a victory. Especially was this Psalm used when this victory was obviously of God and not through the might of man or armies.

# PSALM 49

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The author was watching the righteous suffer and the sinful prosper. He was perplexed. How often we doubt to some extent the goodness of God when we see our neighbors prospering though they live in sin and we ourselves seem to suffer when we try to live righteously! Such was the case in the Psalmist's life. The key verse is **verse 17**, "*For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.*" The Psalmist is reminding us not to fret because of evildoers and their prosperity, for all the good that an unrighteous man will ever enjoy is on this earth and all the bad that righteous people ever endure is on this earth. The day of reckoning is coming. Let us not fret because some appear to enjoy the luxuries of life more than we.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was read when one of God's people felt that his life was not being fair to him. From this Psalm he would gain strength that the Lord is good and that eventually in this life or in the life to come justice will be meted out.

# PSALM 50

**AUTHOR: Asaph**

Asaph was the choir leader of Israel during David's reign. He could be called David's song leader. He was a chief of the Levites. Song was a very important thing in the life of God's people. Song has a great place in the Bible. **Ephesians 5:18** reminds us that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and immediately singing follows. Heartfelt singing is always a part of any great revival and is a vital part in the life of the spiritual Christian or nation. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea they sang a song. When God gave the victory to Deborah and Barak, it was followed by a song. The Psalms themselves were Israel's songbook. Our Lord Jesus sang a song after the last supper before going out to the mount of Olives. Practically every great event and every great victory in the Bible was accompanied by singing.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Asaph is reproving the wicked for their sinful lives and is pronouncing judgment on them. He also praises the righteous for their righteous lives and pronounces ultimate victory for them. It appears that perhaps Asaph in **Psalm 50** is carrying out the theme of **Psalm 49** and assuring justice. In **verses 1-7** of **Psalm 50**, he pronounces vindication upon evildoers. He will not see to that vindication, but he reminds us that God will.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used after vindication. When God vindicated His people for a stand or for a position they would sing **Psalm 50**.

# PSALM 51

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind The Psalm

After David committed his sin concerning the death of Uriah and his unholy relationship with Bathsheba and after the death of their boy, a prophet named Nathan came to David and lovingly but sharply rebuked him for his sin. David was convicted, and he repented. He came to God and sought forgiveness in one of the most moving times of his life. He was forgiven. **Psalm 51** is a penitential Psalm. It is David's prayer for forgiveness after his sin. In **verses 1-4** he seeks forgiveness. In **verses 5-12** he pleads for restoration. In **verses 13-17** we find his promise to do better, and in **verses 18 and 19** he asks God not to make his people suffer for his sin. Oh, the emotion that filled such statements as found in **verse 1**, *"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."* Then in **verse 2**, *"Cleanse me from my sin."* In **verse 3**, *"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."* Feel his heartbreak in **verse 4**, *"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."* Then notice the appeal in **verse 7**, *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."* See his appeal for restoration of joy in **verse 12**. Notice his promise to be a soul winner in **verse 13**. Have you drifted from God? Have you committed sin? Are you living in iniquity? Then flee to **Psalm 51**. Read it; make it your prayer.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It is obvious that this is a penitential Psalm, and this is the Psalm that was read and sung by the Jews when they were truly sorry for their sin, either individually or nationally.

# PSALM 52

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is much like that of **Psalm 34**. David was running from Saul. He came to Ahimelech, the priest. He asked for bread. The priest had none but holy bread and asked if David's men were clean. When David replied that they were, he received the bread. David then asked him if he had a sword or a spear. He said he had none but Goliath's. From there David went to Achish, king of Gath. He was recognized, and because he was recognized he acted like a madman. A man named Doeg saw David and told Saul where David was. Marvelously once again David was delivered and upon the deliverance he wrote the **52nd Psalm**.

It is amazing how experiences that are dangerous and that break our hearts help to make us. So many of God's choicest servants have endured heartaches and been through the fire. Dr. and Mrs. Lee Roberson lost a little girl named Joy. Dr. and Mrs. Bill Rice had a little girl become deaf. Dr. John Rice lost his mother when he was six. Dr. Monroe Parker's wife was killed in a tragic car wreck. Dr. Harold Sightler lost a little nine-year-old girl to the hands of a drunken driver. Charles Hadden Spurgeon lost seven of his church members in a fire which was such a tragedy that he rarely ever forgot it. Those who lead us have been tested by the fire.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When slandered or criticized, the Jew would often turn to the **52nd Psalm**. Few among us have not been slandered or been the object of fierce gossip. Perhaps huge doses of the **52nd Psalm** should be administered at such times.

# PSALM 53

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm is the same as Psalm 14, at least in the English. There is one difference, however. The word for God is different in the two Psalms. The two words used are the words, "*Jehovah*" and "*Elohim*." In other words, the Psalmist is saying, "*The fool has said in his heart there is no Jehovah.*" Then he says, "*The fool has said in his heart there is no Elohim.*" Now the word "*God*" when "*Jehovah*" is used means, "God of grace, dwelling with His people." It is the personal Saviour name of God. The word "*Elohim*" means "creator." Here we have two looks at one God. He is the creator, the mighty God of the universe, the sustainer of all creation, and yet at the same time He is my personal Saviour, my personal God Who knows my name, counts the hairs of my head and is interested in the minutest detail of my life. Perhaps David is showing us the two relationships of God, or maybe David is maturing some and he grows in grace to see God in an added light. Ah, 'tis a wonderful thing to have a great creator, a majestic, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent King of kings and Lord of lords looking over me. 'Tis even more wonderful to realize that that great God loves me personally and watches over me to supply my needs.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was especially appropriate to a person who was afraid. Ah, what comfort was received as the humble Jew realized the greatness of his God, as well as the tenderness and compassion of His personality!

# PSALM 54

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was running from Saul. He came to Ziph. The Ziphims came and said to Saul, "*Doth not David hide himself with us?*" Once again, David was barely spared, but he was spared. This Psalm, as well as others, was used by David as he looked back over his life and praised the Lord for sparing him during this time of betrayal by Saul.

When Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. was in his last days, he stayed in a small room in the hospital area of Bob Jones University. My daughter, Becky, who was just a little girl at the time, and I went to see him. I remember how he was praising the Lord for how good God had been. His days were numbered, and yet he was looking back with thanksgiving to all the good things that God had done. I asked him if he would pray for me. The old warrior placed his hand on my head and lifted his heart to God and prayed for my ministry. Suddenly I thought I could hear the marching of a mighty army, an army of soldiers of the cross that had gone out from Bob Jones University to cover the globe, an army of converts marching toward the holy city because of the ministry of Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. What a time of fellowship, what a time of dedication as the old soldier looked back on his battles and thanked the Commanding General for His protection!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This is another one of the Psalms that was used at times of betrayal. Many a lonely, forsaken and betrayed Israelite claimed the victory by reading and singing **Psalm 54**.

# PSALM 55

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is very easy to discern the circumstances surrounding the writing of this Psalm. In **verses 9-11** we find that David was in Jerusalem. In **verses 6-8** he wanted to leave. In **verses 12-14 and 20** we find it was perhaps Absalom who was against him. In **verses 16-18** we find that battle starting and David being delivered from the battle. Read this Psalm carefully and you will find something of the heart of a father forsaken by his son, the brokenness of a friend forsaken by his best friend, the sadness of a king leaving his throne, a patriot leaving the kingdom and a warrior leaving the battle.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was a very popular one for God's people when they were betrayed by friends. Are you disappointed in a friend? Is your heart broken because someone near to you has disappointed you? Then David's spirit will bear witness with yours in this Psalm of pathos.

# PSALM 56

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had fled to Gath, a town of Philistines. Saul did not pursue. David asked Achish, the king, if he had a country town where David could hide. He was given Ziklag, where he lived for one year and four months. After a time, the Philistines decided to fight Israel. King Saul saw the host of the Philistines and trembled. David was living with the Philistines and had to fight, whereupon the Philistine princes rebelled and said that David would betray them. Because of this they sent him back. Ziklag was destroyed by the Amelakites, and their wives and children were taken captive. The story is much longer than this, but again David was protected by God.

It is amazing how God takes care of His men. Years ago in the heat of the battle, God gave to me **Isaiah 54:17**, *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."*

Then there is that marvelous promise in the Revelation that reminds us that God holds His preachers in His right hand.

How sweet is that truth concerning the Levites! When the Israelites came to the promised land, each of the 11 tribes received an inheritance of the land. The Levites received no such inheritance. God said to them, *"I am thy portion."* Ah, what a portion! What a protecting God!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was especially effective in ministering to God's people when they were away from home, especially when danger arose.

# **PSALM 57**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

This story is the same as **Psalm 56**.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

Its use is the same as **Psalm 56**.

# PSALM 58

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written during his early reign. He was very interested in justice, and in the Psalm he is condemning bad judges. Notice the words in verse 1, "*Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?*" As a young king he was demanding that his judges be just.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

For some reason that is somewhat difficult to understand, this Psalm was used by the Jews while they were in captivity in Babylon.

# **PSALM 59**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

Saul sent messengers to watch the house of David and commanded them to kill David. Michal, David's wife, who was the daughter of Saul, warned David. David escaped out a window, and an image of goat's hair was left on David's bed. Saul was told that David was sick, whereupon he commanded his servant to bring the bed and all to get David. However, David had escaped again. He wrote this Psalm in acknowledging his escape and God's protection.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

It was used by the Jews when they were afraid.

# PSALM 60

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was anointed king three times. In **1 Samuel 16:13** he was a lad tending sheep when Samuel anointed him. In **2 Samuel 2:4** he was anointed when he became king over part of Judah. In **2 Samuel 5:3** he was anointed when he became king over all Israel. It was after this third anointing when David had taken the entire kingdom that he wrote the **60th Psalm**. Its words were penned on the occasion when David was at the zenith of his power.

This is why David could say in **Psalm 92:10**, *"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."* This is what the people of God need, this is what the churches need, this is what the pulpit needs—an anointing of fresh oil. In **Judges 6:34** we find, *"But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon."* In **Judges 14:6**, *"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him (Samson)."* In **1 Samuel 11:6**, *"The Spirit of God came upon Saul."* In **1 Samuel 16:13**, *"The Spirit of the Lord came upon David."* In **Acts 9:17** we find Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost. In **Luke 4:1** It is said of Jesus that He *"being full of the Holy Ghost...."* I burn as I read **Luke 3:16**, *"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire,"* and **Acts 1:4** where it speaks of *"the promise of the Father."* In **Luke 24:49** this same power is called *"the enduement of power,"* and in **Acts 1:8** we find the words, *"after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."* In **Acts 2:17** we find that pouring out of the Holy Ghost, and in **Ephesians 5:18** we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. Ah, for that supernatural power of God that causes men to come to Christ and that gives us power with God and power with men!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used at times of anointing of kings. It was also used in the midst of great victorious battles.

# PSALM 61

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is unknown.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a Psalm sung at matins, which means it was a morning Psalm. It was sung and recited as a morning prayer, and the word "matins" comes from the word "maturus" which means "ripe" or "mature." From this word "matins" we get our word "daytime" and the word "matinee," which means a daytime performance. This Psalm was sung at the dawn of a new day. Its reading would certainly improve the start of a new day for any of God's children. God wants the first things. He wants first place in our lives. He wants the first day of the week, the first tithe of the income. He wants the first hour of the day. How sweet to meet Him in the morning before we have met another! How sweet to speak first to Him before we have spoken to another! How sweet to walk with Him before we have walked with another!

# PSALM 62

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Absalom's rebellion began as all rebellion begins— with gossip and talk. It starts innocently enough, and then it spreads. Absalom was talking about the inefficiencies of his dad and how that he would judge the people better. He even insinuated that his dad was becoming senile. David, of course, began to hear bits of this gossip as it returned to him. Critical statements would leak back to David. It was while this talk was going around that David wrote the **62nd Psalm**. Who is there among us that has not felt the sharp dagger and the piercing sabre of talk that we are unable to answer and verbal attacks against which we are unable to defend ourselves? As a preacher of the Gospel for over a third of a century, I have felt the hurt and pain of untrue statements and unjust criticism. In my early days I tried to trace it down, defend myself and explain my side, but this just widens the wound. All we can do is do our best to be sincere, to love God and serve Him with all the heart, mind, body and soul and let Him take care of our vindication.

It is always difficult when such verbal attacks are leveled against us. It is more difficult when they come from those whom we love. It is even more difficult when they come from our dearest friends, and it seems unbearable when they come from those who are flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood and bone of our bone. Imagine David's heartbreak as the first echoes of his son's criticism and gossip leaked his way. 'Twas then that he penned the **62nd Psalm**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It is obvious that this Psalm was used, read and sung when one was unjustly criticized.

# PSALM 63

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Once again this Psalm deals with David leaving the city upon Absalom's rebellion. This particular Psalm deals with David saying good-bye to the temple. Perhaps he went to the temple before he left; perhaps he left by way of the temple, or maybe his mind was just dwelling on God's sacred house. At any rate, though the temple of Solomon had not been finished, there nevertheless was a house of God, and David hated to leave. This Psalm deals with his heartbreak because he had to leave the house of God. Notice especially **verses 1 and 2** and picture David leaving the house of God on his journey away from the city to avoid a confrontation with his son.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Any time a Jew was away from the temple, he would read, among other Psalms, the 63rd. This Psalm was especially used while the Israelites were in captivity, over 500 miles from home with no temple. For their 70 years of captivity, they longed for a house of God and as they did they turned to the **63rd Psalm**. There are many who cannot go to God's house because of illness, because of being shut-in, etc. Perhaps they with David can explore the strength received in **Psalm 63**.

# PSALM 64

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Read this Psalm and decide for yourself the circumstances involved in its writing. Notice in **verse 1** the words, "*Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.*" Notice in **verse 2** the words, "*Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.*" Notice In **verse 3**, "*Who whet their tongue like a sword.*" Continue to read the Psalm and you will easily find that this is another of the **Psalms** written by David when his son was busy spreading untruths and gathering an army with which to conquer the kingdom and ascend the throne. The criticism of his son and his dear friends was almost more than he could take.

In a certain church there was a lady who would spread wicked rumors about the church and the preacher. One day she repented of this evil, came to the pastor and sought his forgiveness. He was not as jubilant about her decision as she thought he should be and she asked him why. He then suggested that she take a feather pillow to the top of the church steeple, cut a hole in the pillow, shake it and let the feathers be blown all over the neighborhood. Then he requested her to go over the entire city, pick up every feather, put each one back into the pillow case and bring it to him. She was stunned and said, "Pastor, there is no way in the world I could find all those feathers no matter how hard I try," whereupon he said, "And there's no way in the world that you can bring back all the harm that you have done through your gossip no matter how much you repent!"

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When criticized by those who were loved the most, the people read **Psalm 64**.

# PSALM 65

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The author was praising God for a bountiful harvest, and as the harvest was being gathered, he wrote the Psalm.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Psalm 65** was sung at the three great feasts. It was sung at the feast of the passover during the barley harvest and during the offering of the thank offering for the harvest.

It was then sung at the feast of pentecost 50 days later. At that time the wheat was ripe and the people sang the **65th Psalm** as they thanked God for the ripened wheat. It was then sung at the final harvest at the feast of the tabernacles.

In the Bible the resurrection of the dead is likened to a harvest. There were three parts to the harvest of Israel. First came the firstfruits, then came the main harvest, then later came the gleanings or the leftovers. The resurrection in the Bible is called a harvest. (**1 Corinthians 15:21**) Jesus is called the firstfruits, so His resurrection is the firstfruit of the harvest. At the rapture, when the dead in Christ rise and the living who are saved are caught up to meet the Lord in the air with the dead in Christ, comes the main harvest. At the end of the tribulation period those who are saved during the tribulation period will be raptured, and this is the gleanings. Ah, let us read **Psalm 65** thanking God for the earthly harvests and for the firstfruits, that is, the resurrection of Christ, and looking forward to the day when the main harvest shall take place. All of us who are born again shall rise and meet the Lord in the air and we shall ever be with the Lord!

# PSALM 66

AUTHOR: Hezekiah

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Hezekiah was about to die. Isaiah the prophet had told him to set his house in order. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and yet he decided to turn to the Lord instead of physicians. He begged God for added years, and God gave him 15 more years. It was then that Hezekiah wrote **Psalm 66**. Picture a man who had been given up to die and who had given himself up to die now being granted a 15-year reprieve as he pens this beautiful Psalm.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was a very popular Psalm for those who were sick unto death. Bear in mind that the Jews knew many of the stories behind the Psalms, and when a certain Psalm was written for a certain purpose, they would use it for the same purpose in their lives as the need would arise.

# PSALM 67

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Very little is known about **Psalm 67**. It supposedly was to the chief musicians of Neginoth, and we know that the Psalmist was looking to the coming kingdom, even the millennial age. We are admonished in the model prayer to pray, "*Thy kingdom come.*" When the Jew prayed this, he was praying for the kingdom to come on earth when righteousness and peace would reign. We too can pray for this kingdom, for one day Jesus will come to establish a kingdom for 1000 years, and we shall be priests of God and rule and reign with Him for that 1000 years.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This along with other Psalms was sung when the Jew's heart was turned toward the coming kingdom age and he longed for the Messiah and His kingdom.

Many of our hearts beat for that day when Jesus shall come, the mount of Olives shall cleave in twain, He shall rule from Mount Zion, men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, wild animals shall be tamed and serpents will be harmless, the earth shall be restored to its Garden of Eden splendor, each of us shall observe the feast of the tabernacles every year and every person will be required to go to the Holy Land annually, the world's capital will not be Washington, Moscow, London, Paris or Rome, but the Holy City itself; and the ruler will not be a Hitler, a Kaiser Wilhelm, a Jimmy Carter, a Churchill or a Roosevelt, but the lowly Man of Galilee Who once rode to Jerusalem on the foal of an ass will come on a white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords and He shall rule the world in justice! Even so come, Lord Jesus! Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as It is in Heaven.

# PSALM 68

AUTHOR: Ezra

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This is a post-captivity Psalm written perhaps by Ezra, probably after the Jews (at least many of them) had arrived back in Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the house of God. Ah, 'twas a happy time, and yet it was a time of persecution. While the main body of the Jews had been away in captivity, a remnant of poor Jews was left in the land. The land was invaded by Assyrians who intermarried with these Jews and a new people rose up called the Samaritans. These Samaritans, under Sanballat and Tobiah persecuted the remnant of Jews who had returned to rebuild the temple. It was during this persecution that Ezra wrote the 68th Psalm.

How happy were these Jews when they returned to their land! They set out with determination to build, yea, to rebuild the temple; but the enemies discouraged them and they wrote letters back to the king of Persia and soon the work was stopped. After several years of cessation, God raised up two prophets. Read **Ezra 5:1**. One of these was a young prophet named Zechariah and another was an older man named Haggai. Zechariah was a brilliant young man and Haggai was a simple, steady, wise older man. These two men joined in inspiring the remnant of Jews who had returned from Babylon to return to work and finish the temple. The temple was finished, but ah, the persecution and trouble that they received from the Samaritans and Sanballat and Tobiah were innumerable.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was chosen to be sung by martyrs. In fact, through the generations martyrs have chosen these words to be sung. It was a favorite of the Huguenots. It was also chosen by Savonarola and the monks who died with him as they marched to the stake to give their lives for Christ.

# PSALM 69

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David had a son whose name was Adonijah. He was a handsome young man. He had a tremendous personality. In fact, he was David's second favorite son. He was the fourth son of David and had eyes on the throne. Solomon had become the king, and through a series of events and seeking special favors, Adonijah attempted rebellion and a takeover of the government. He was executed by Solomon. It was here that David wrote the **69th Psalm**. Think of the heartache that came to David's family through the years. God had told David that the sword would not depart from his house. He had a baby boy born dead; his son Absalom was killed in a battle of rebellion and insurrection against his father; Absalom had previously killed another brother, Amnon because Amnon had raped his sister; now Solomon had Adonijah put to death. Think of it: a son born dead, a son rapes a daughter, a son kills a son, a son is killed in battle against his father, another son puts his brother to death. Oh, the consequences of sin!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used by the Israelites when there was rebellion in the household. Adonijah was not the last rebellious son. Perhaps you have known rebellion within your own household. Then sit with David and read and sing **Psalm 69**.

# PSALM 70

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David is back on the throne after Absalom's rebellion and death. It is a Psalm to bring remembrance. David is remembering his trip to Mahanaim, his loneliness, his flight from Jerusalem, his hearing for the first time of the death of his son, his trip back to the palace to the city and to the throne. As he remembers, he writes the **70th Psalm**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Psalm 70** was a memorial Psalm used as the people of God would relive victories and, yes, victories that included some defeat, as was the case in David's hollow victory over his son.

# PSALM 71

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm was written during the rebellion of Adonijah. Please refer to **Psalm 69** and the comments. David was not a young man when he wrote this Psalm. Adonijah was not a son of his youth.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a Psalm that was used especially by the aged. Notice in **verse 14**, *"and will yet praise Thee more and more."* This is a true fact in David's life as it is in the life of anyone who has walked with God for years. We can praise Him more and more because of the wonderful experiences we have enjoyed with Him. We can praise Him more and more because of the many sins that He has forgiven, because of His patience and longsuffering, His kindness, His mercies. Look back over David's life to the ups and downs, and it's easy to understand that when he is older he can praise the Lord more and more. Now look at **verses 17 and 18**. Notice in **verse 17** the words, *"O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth,"* and in **verse 18**, *"Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not."* Picture the old man David looking back over his mistakes, his defeats and his victories, and you will be blessed as you read this Psalm. This will be especially true if you have lived more years than the rest of us.

# PSALM 72

AUTHOR: Solomon

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Solomon had just become king. God gave him one request. This is found in **1 Kings 3:5-12**. (Read it now.) God gave to Solomon one request. Solomon replied to God that he was but like a child and he knew not how to come out and go in. His request was that God give him wisdom and an understanding heart so he would know how to judge properly. It was here that Solomon probably wrote the **72nd Psalm**. Read especially **verses 1-4**. **Verse 1** especially bears out Solomon's request when he says, "*Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.*" Solomon was both the king and the king's son, and here he is asking in song what he had asked in **1 Kings 3:5-12**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a very popular Psalm for God's people when one or more of them would face a new task.

# PSALM 73

AUTHOR: Asaph

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Asaph was David's choir director, or better still, his song leader. An interesting thing about Asaph's Psalms is that he uses the word "*Elohim*" instead of the word "Jehovah" when he refers to God. Asaph had not known the mercies and blessings and forgiveness of God as had David. Not as many tears had stained his cheeks. Perhaps God was not as personal to him. Then too it is sometimes the temptation of the musician to be a little less personal. At any rate, for some reason Asaph used the word "*Elohim*" whereas David usually used the word "Jehovah," which is the intimate, saving name of God.

The theme of this Psalm deals with Asaph's wondering why the wicked prosper. He simply could not understand why wicked men would prosper when righteous men did not. **Verses 17-20**, however, seem to find the light dawning on Asaph concerning why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Each of us must remember that all the good things that happen to the wicked will happen on earth and all the bad things that will happen to the righteous will happen on earth.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

The knowledgeable Jew knew the theme of Asaph's Psalm, and he knew to turn to it and sing it when he was disturbed about the wicked prospering.

# **PSALM 74**

**AUTHOR: Asaph**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

Asaph was discouraged because of an invasion by Shishak, who was the third Pharaoh. This invasion came after the dividing of the kingdom under Rehoboam. In fact, the story of this invasion are to this day on the walls of the temple ruins at Karnak in Egypt. During this invasion Shishak took away treasures of gold. Asaph was very discouraged and wrote this Psalm.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

This was one of the Psalms that the Jews used when they were discouraged. They realized the conditions under which Asaph wrote it and, no doubt, realized that God gave it to them to be used in their discouragement.

# PSALMS 75-83

AUTHOR: Asaph

## The Story Behind the Psalms

These Psalms formed a little book of Psalms. They were written by Asaph upon God's people being delivered from an enemy. We do not know exactly what deliverance this was. These were just general songs. They were used for congregational purposes. They were songs of praise thanking God for deliverance.

## The Way They Were Used by God's People

They were used for public worship and praise. What a vital part congregational singing has in the service of the Lord! How it prepares the heart! Think of the blessedness of the choir specials, solos, duets, trios, quartets, sextets, singing groups, and of the congregational singing. Think of the pastors whose hearts have been prepared to preach and of the people in the congregation who have been prepared for the message by Spirit-filled singing. Thank God for the Asaphs who write music and for the Asaphs who direct it.

From a child I have been reared in church. I do not know how many hundreds of songs I know by memory. Oh, the sweetness of "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine," "How Firm a Foundation," "My Jesus, I Love Thee," "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound," "Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned," "When We All Get to Heaven," "At Calvary" and "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." Praise God for the influence of the songs that we use day after day, week after week, year after year, songs that we sing sometimes too carelessly, songs whose meanings we overlook as we sing them. Just as the aforementioned songs and hundreds of others have blessed us, even so these Psalms were a similar blessing to the people of Israel.

# **PSALMS 84, 85 and 87**

(For Psalm 86, turn to next page.)

**AUTHOR: Unknown**

## **The Story Behind the Psalms**

These Psalms were written for the sons of Korah, who were Levites. The Levites formed one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Each of the twelve tribes was given a portion of the land of Canaan, except for the tribe of Levi. The other eleven tribes were to bring tithes of their increase to a storehouse. From the storehouse the Levites gathered their necessities.

Now there were three families in the tribe of Levi. There was the family of Gershon, which became the Gershonites, whose job it was to carry the tent itself; that is, the tabernacle. Then there was the family of Kohath, which carried the furniture. Then the family of Merari carried the boards and the bars.

Kohath had a son whose name was Korah. (By the way, Moses and Aaron both came from the family of Kohath.) The family of Korah formed the singers and they were known as the sons of Korah. It was their job to praise the Lord, and from them David organized a great choir. These Psalms are choir specials sung by the sons of Korah and written for their use.

## **The Way They Were Used by God's People**

These Psalms were especially dear to the Jews while in captivity in Babylon.

# PSALM 86

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It is not definite when David wrote this Psalm, and there are no clues that lead us to find the answer. **Verse 17** makes an interesting statement, "*Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.*" David is asking God to show his enemies that God loves him. What enemies he is talking about is not clear, but one thing is clear: David needs some reassurance of God's love and care, and he wants this reassurance to manifest itself in God making others aware of David's relationship with Him.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Its use is unknown.

# PSALM 88

AUTHOR: Heman

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Here perhaps is the saddest of all the Psalms. It was written at the time of the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam. The theme of the Psalm and perhaps the key word would be the word "*dark.*" Notice **verses 6, 12 and 18**. Heman was one of the wise men that Rehoboam had rejected. Solomon, Rehoboam's father, had burdened the people with taxes. Rehoboam was asked to lighten the load. He asked for three days in which to make up his mind. He first sought advice from the older men. They advised him to lighten the tax load. He then sought the younger men's advice. They advised him to make the tax load even heavier. Heman was one of the wise old men whose advice was shunned. Though Rehoboam had been taught by his father, he nevertheless reached adulthood without much character. When one becomes an adult and is void of character, it becomes exceedingly difficult to acquire it. In such cases, the wise man will borrow it. Rehoboam not only was void of character, but he was void of enough wisdom to accept the advice of the wise old men. One of the wise old men, Heman, wrote the **88th Psalm** when rejected because of the plight of a divided kingdom. This Psalm is almost a lamentation as the case seems hopeless.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was reserved to be used when God's people were at the very bottom. When the blackest midnight would come, the wise Israelite fled to the **88th Psalm**.

# PSALM 89

AUTHOR: Eihan

Ethan was perhaps the brother of Heman and no doubt was one of the wise men whose advice Rehoboam rejected.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Basically the story is the same as **Psalm 88**, with one exception. In **Psalm 88** Heman was praying in the dark. In **Psalm 89** Ethan is singing in the dark. **Psalm 89** is not as mournful as **Psalm 88**. Actually, both men were looking at the same tragedy. Both were heartbroken. Heman lamented; Ethan sang.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was also used when God's people were at the very bottom. However, it was used for them that they might see the bright side during a calamity such as a division of the kingdom.

It might be worth noting to remind ourselves that Rehoboam, though the son of Solomon, was also the son of an Ammonitess woman. The careful Bible student traces the Ammonites back to Ammon, who was the son of Lot by one of his daughters. When Lot and his family had fled Sodom, his wife looked back and became a pillar of salt, and his daughters fled with him to a little city called Zoar. While there, Lot was made drunken by his daughters and he committed incest with each of them. From this unholy union came two boys—one named Moab and one named Ammon. From these boys came godless races of people. Solomon should not have taken one of them to be his wife, but he did, and no doubt Rehoboam's wickedness was caused at least in part because of Solomon's disobedience in marriage, because of the general wickedness of the Ammonite people.

# PSALMS 90 and 91

AUTHOR: Moses

## The Story Behind the Psalms

The Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years. They had crossed the Red Sea. They had marched toward the land of promise. They had come to the very door and sent out twelve spies. These spies came back with glowing reports about the land, but negative reports concerning their power to conquer it. The people were frightened because of the spies reporting that there were giants in the land, and they chose not to enter into the land of promise. Because of this they were cast into the wilderness for 40 years. Sometime during that 40-year period, Moses wrote these two Psalms. Notice that they start basically the same way, dealing with God being their habitation. They had no permanent place to live; they lived in tents and were tossed to and fro and wandered from place to place. Hence, God was their home. His presence was their habitation. Not only did they live because of Him and by Him and through Him, they lived with Him.

One of the more interesting things of Psalm 91 is the statement in verse 1, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*" Now the secret place of the most High was the holy of holies inside the tabernacle. Next to the tabernacle, therefore, next to the secret place, and in the center of the camp was the tent of Moses. It was Moses who dwelt in the secret place of the most High. The shadow of the Almighty was the shadow of the pillar of cloud by day that hovered over the tabernacle; that is, the secret place of the most High. So Moses was talking about his own habitation and rejoicing that he dwelt in the secret place of the most High and that he himself was under the shadow of the Almighty. The enemy had to break through rank after rank to get there. Ah, here is the danger of living on the fringe. The closer one lives to God the nearer to the heart of God one walks, the safer he is. The danger is at the fringe of the camp, not in the center. When one lives in the center of God's will, there is a safety that none other can know.

In Psalm 91 there are many different names used for God. For example, He is called the "*most High.*" This means He sees all. One of David's favorite names for God was the "*high tower.*"

Then he is called the "*Almighty.*" This means He does everything and can prepare the way for His people while in the wilderness.

Then He is called "*Jehovah,*" the intimate God. He is very personal. He is the high tower that looks ahead, He is the Almighty that prepares the way, and He is Jehovah Who personally loves His people.

Then the words, "*my God,*" are used. This word is "Elohim." This is the great, mighty God Who is the object of worship. Moses has known God in all these aspects, as the most High Who oversees all, as the Almighty Who can do all, as Jehovah Who loves intimately His own and as Elohim Who is all powerful. Notice the first two of these, most High and Almighty, are impersonal. The second two, Jehovah and Elohim, are personal.

## **The Way They Were Used by God's People**

These Psalms were used when the Jews were in trouble, especially in times of war. They were also very popular Psalms while the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, for in some sense the Jews were in captivity in the wilderness. They were not held there by a heathen nation or a king such as Nebuchadnezzar, but they were held there by God Himself as chastening for their lack of faith in entering into the promised land.

# PSALM 92

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is unknown.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a Psalm that was read every Sabbath day at home by every devout Jewish family. It was also popular in the homes of devout Jews, and it was read every morning and evening.

It was also read on the second day of the feast of tabernacles. This Psalm is what was often called a daily Psalm or a family Psalm. It was not one to be used as much at the house of God as it was at the family circle. Perhaps the key verse would be **verse 2, "To shew forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night."** This could be a theme Psalm for family altar or even for private devotion. It is a good Psalm with which to start the day or end the day. It is a very durable one in that it wears well and is always blessed.

**Verse 10** is noteworthy. David says, **"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."** Of course, this anointing is symbolic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Daily we should seek this fresh oil. This enduement of power comes only from God, and without it we are powerless, fruitless and barren.

# PSALMS 93-99

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalms

These are Psalms that deal with the second coming of Jesus Christ. Notice that **Psalms 93, 97 and 99** begin with the words, "*The Lord reigneth,*" or better still, "The Lord is become King." David was a king, and he looked forward to the day when Jesus would be the King. The millennial throne is called David's throne. The Bible teaches that Jesus will someday rule and reign on the throne of David. Jesus is called the root and offspring of David. These Psalms dealing with the Lord's reign on earth were sung as a series of psalms in the temple. In some cases they are placed together as one Psalm. The **95th Psalm** is still used in the synagogues on Friday in the order of prayer.

When the Christian gets a little hungry for Jesus to come and his mouth begins to water for the millennium, he can find it a very wise choice to turn to these Psalms.

Many years ago I went to the bank to borrow some money. I knew the banker well. I had borrowed money from him before. He asked me how much I wanted, and I replied, "\$5,000." He asked what security I had, and I said I had my word as security. He said, "No, reverend, what collateral can you offer us?"

I said, "I can offer you my signature."

He said, "Reverend, it would be difficult for us to let you borrow \$5000 on your word and/or your signature; that is, unless you have sufficient collateral."

Suddenly I said to him, "Sir, if I don't walk out that door with \$5000, when I take over this bank, you will starve."

He, the president of the bank, looked at me with interest, stood behind his desk, put his fingers on the desk as he asked, "And, reverend, just when do you plan to take over this bank?"

I replied, "During the millennium! That's when."

"During the what?" he said.

I said, "During the millennium! That's when."

He said, "Reverend, what in the world is the millennium?"

I said, "Sir, if you will give me a few minutes to talk to you and your workers I will explain to you something you ought to know."

The president, vice presidents, secretaries and bank executives were summoned to gather in the conference room, and I sat at the head of the table explaining to them all about the millennium. I said to the bankers, "In the millennium men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their

spears into pruning hooks. Little children shall lead wild beasts down the street and they shall play at the hold of the serpent. The deadly serpent will not be poisonous and the wild beasts will be tamed. When a man dies at the age of 100, it will be as an infant dying." I told them that during this kingdom age Jesus would rule from Mount Zion and that Christians would rule with Him. I reminded the president that some Christians would rule over 10 cities and some over 5 cities and that I was asking God to let me rule over 1 city, and that was Hammond. I said, "Sir, when I rule the city of Hammond, I plan to take over this bank. You will come to me asking if you can borrow some money. I will ask how much you need and you will say, '\$5,000.' I will ask what security you have and you will say, 'My word.' I will then ask what collateral you have and you will say, 'My signature,' and I will say, "Sir, neither your word nor your signature will do." Then I pointed my finger at the banker and said, "Sir, when I take over this bank during the millennium, you will starve! That's what!" He jumped to his feet, pointed to his secretary and said, "Quick, write Reverend Hyles a check for \$5,000."

Yes, beloved, there is a millennium. There will be a kingdom. Jesus will reign. Let us read these Psalms and become excited about this marvelous expectation.

### **The Way They Were Used by God's People**

The dedicated Jew would use these Psalms when discouraged. These words would give him hope for a better day to come.

# PSALM 100

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was simply excited about going to God's house, and one day perhaps as he went or as he entered, he penned these beautiful words. Most Sunday school children are required to memorize sometime in their early years **Psalm 100**.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was chanted on the way into the temple. Notice **verse 4**, "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.*"

This is a processional Psalm. Often the Jews would march in a procession and chant this Psalm as they did. Of course, this processional ended at the house of God, for this is a Psalm to be sung as one goes to and enters into the house of God.

This would be a good Psalm for a family to chant or even sing as they drive to church on Sunday.

It is interesting that there is not one mournful note in this Psalm. It is totally happy as should every Christian be as he enters into the courts of the Lord.

# **PSALM 101**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

When David was sworn in as the king, it is supposed that he wrote this Psalm. He had been anointed as king over all of Israel, and as he was sworn in, this Psalm was probably penned.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

It was used by God's people when one of them would assume a new responsibility or start a new job. It was also used at the anointing and swearing in of kings.

# PSALM 102

**AUTHOR:** Perhaps Daniel

Some attribute the authorship to David, but it seems to be a captivity Psalm, which means it was written by Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah or some leader in captivity. Probably the words were penned by Daniel.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Read it carefully, especially **verse 13**. It was obviously written at the close of the captivity; that is, at the close of the 70 years of captivity in Babylon. Notice especially **verse 13**, *"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come."* The time had come for deliverance of God's people. Though we have no evidence that Daniel returned to the land, we nevertheless feel that whoever wrote this Psalm (probably Daniel) was signaling the end of the captivity.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used when sorrow was ending or a bad time was coming to an end. Perhaps a Jew was nearing the end of a serious illness or a time of crisis in his life. During such times this Psalm was very dear.

# PSALM 103

AUTHOR: Daniel

## The Story Behind the Psalm

When Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews into captivity, he took the very rich and middle class or craftsmen. However, he left the very poor in the land of Canaan. God gave to each of these three groups a prophet. Daniel was the prophet for the very rich who went into captivity, Ezekiel went into captivity to be the prophet for the craftsmen or middle class, and Jeremiah stayed with the very poor.

This Psalm was supposedly written either while the remnant of Jews was preparing to return to Palestine or as they returned. Now if Daniel was the author, it was probably written while they were still in the land making preparation to return. Regardless, this Psalm was no doubt written at the very end of the captivity for the remnant that returned to rebuild the temple. Because of this, there are some who believe that Ezra wrote the Psalm and some even attribute its authorship to Zerubbabel.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a thanksgiving Psalm used at all thanksgiving seasons and even at thank offerings.

Notice the happiness here. Notice how the Psalmist is blessing the Lord and for what he is blessing the Lord. The first few verses are among the most popular verses of all the Psalms. They are quoted often in churches across the land and around the world. I can still hear the church of my childhood saying, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."* Then notice why the Psalmist blessed the Lord— because his sins were forgiven, because his diseases were healed, because his life was useful and redeemed from destruction, because of His loving kindness and tender mercies, and because of His provisions of food, not only which is healthy but which is delightful to the taste. He then praises Him for strength. When times of great thanksgiving come, by all means the **103rd Psalm** should be included.

# PSALMS 104, 105, 106, 111, 112, 113, 135, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150

## AUTHORS:

These Psalms were written by various authors, predominately David.

## The Story Behind the Psalms

These form a new group of Psalms called the "Hallelujah Psalms." Hallelujah means "Praise ye Jah," or "Praise ye Jehovah." An interesting thing about the word "hallelujah" is that it is the same in every language. It is the one word in all languages that becomes the common denominator. We cannot all speak the same language about most subjects, but when it comes to praising the Lord, we all speak the same language.

These Psalms are divided into three groups—group one ends with hallelujah. In this group are **Psalms 104 and 105**. Group two begins with hallelujah. This includes **Psalms 111 and 112**. Group three both begins and ends with hallelujah. Included are **Psalms 106, 113, 135, and 146 through 150**.

It is interesting that with the passing of the years David's praise becomes greater. The term, **"Praise ye the Lord,"** is included more and more in the Psalms written near the end of David's life. He once said, **"I will praise Him more and more,"** and so he did. As these Psalms are read, the reader should picture an aged David lifting his hands and voice Heaven-ward thanking God for His grace, for His mercy, for His loving kindness and for His faithfulness.

## The Way They Were Used by God's People

The Jews would use these as doxology Psalms when they wanted to praise the Lord. They were used at any time. They were much like our songs, "Praise Him, Praise Him, Jesus Our Blessed Redeemer," "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," etc. In other words, they were general songs of praise used at any occasion the heart leaped with joy.

# **PSALM 107**

**AUTHOR: Probably Ezra**

## **The Story Behind the Psalms**

Ezra was helping Zerubbabel rebuild the temple. When the foundations were laid, Ezra wrote this Psalm.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

When the foundations of any building were laid, this Psalm might be sung. The foundations of a house, the foundations of a synagogue or even a public building often were poured to the singing of **Psalm 107**.

# PSALM 108

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It was no doubt written after a national victory, though we do not know which victory. We cannot help but notice how similar it is to **Psalm 57:7-11** and **Psalm 60:5-12**. This means that the Holy Spirit thought these words important enough to stress them greatly. Because of this they deserve our added attention.

This is also the warrior's morning song, during which he adores God and strengthens himself before entering into the busy day. We have the setting up of the Messiah on the holy hill of Zion, and that Messiah is described as a conqueror when the battle is won.

The Psalm is divided into two parts. The first part is a thanksgiving of faith and a promise to praise the Lord. The second part is a prayer for preservation of God's people.

One of the most beautiful parts of the Psalm is in **verse 1**. Note the words, ***"My heart is fixed."*** In the Hebrew, these words mean, "My heart is ready or prepared," and then, ***"my heart is fixed."*** Before a stake is driven into the ground and fixed, it must be prepared and sharpened. David says, ***"My heart is prepared, and because it is prepared, it is fixed!"***

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

For strength in the morning time, especially when a busy day or a conflict was ahead, this Psalm was used.

# PSALM 109

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Ahithophel had been David's best friend, and in David's darkest hour, Ahithophel forsook him. Because of this, he is often called the Judas Iscariot of David's life. As Judas walked with Jesus during His earthly life, so did Ahithophel walk with David. As Judas claimed to be one of Jesus' closest friends, so Ahithophel claimed to be David's closest friend. As Judas sat with Jesus at the table, time and time again so did Ahithophel sit with David in like times.

We know this Psalm refers to Judas, for Peter quoted this Psalm. It is called by some the most mysterious of the Psalms and it is by far the most harsh in its words.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

You will notice it is *"To the chief musician."* This means it was intended to be sung and especially to be sung in the temple service. The chief musician was given permission to set it to music and to use it in the highest of services.

# PSALM 110

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Though we do not know exactly the circumstances surrounding its writing, we do know that it is perhaps the most important of the Psalms. Martin Luther said that it is worthy to be overlaid with precious jewels. It has been called "the crown of all the Psalms," "the sun of our faith," and "the treasure of Holy Writ." It is amazing how this Psalm reaches out and embraces almost every doctrine of the Bible. It starts off with the trinity, "*The Lord said unto my Lord.*" We have the incarnation of Christ in the words, "*my Lord.*" In fact, Jesus Himself expounds this in **Matthew 22:42 and 45**. We have the sufferings of Christ in **verse 4** to offer Himself once and for all and to drink of the "*brook in the way.*" We have the completed work of Christ in a victory over all His enemies. We have His resurrection in the words, "*He shall lift up the head.*" We have the ascension and intercession in the words, "*Sit Thou at My right hand.*" We have the resurrection of the body in the words, "*subdue all enemies under His feet until the last enemy to be destroyed is death.*" His priesthood is mentioned in the words, "*Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,*" and we even have the fact that Jesus sits on the right hand of God.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used in looking for the coming Messiah and especially in studying for His coming.

**For Psalm 111 - 113 see Psalm 104**

# **PSALM 114**

**AUTHOR: Unknown**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

It was written concerning the journey back from Jerusalem after the feast. The theme of the Psalm is reminiscing about being delivered from Egypt and how God protected His people through the Passover, crossing of the Red Sea, pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, the manna from heaven, the water from the rock, etc.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

This Psalm was used when in trial and suffering.

# PSALM 115

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

**Psalm 115** was a choir number. The choir was divided into two parts, and it was sung with each part of the choir singing a portion and the leader singing a portion. One part of the choir would sing **verses 1-8**, the leader would sing **verses 9-11**, the other half of the choir would sing **verses 12 and 13**. The leader would sing **verses 14-16** and then all would join together in singing **verses 17 and 18**. It was written specifically for choir use.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used in public worship as a choir special number.

# PSALM 116

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

It was written at a time of thanksgiving for congregational singing. Just as **Psalm 115** was a choir number, so **Psalm 116** was written for all to sing. The power of singing is limitless. Once a famous atheist was speaking to a crowd of several thousand people in a giant auditorium. He disproved to his own satisfaction and to the satisfaction of many that there was no God, that the Bible was not true and that Heaven and Hell were both myths. When he finished the address, he then looked on the lower floor, then to the first balcony, then to the second balcony, and challenged anyone to disprove what he had spoken. Not a noise could be heard until out of the stillness of the quiet came a lovely soprano voice from out of the top balcony as a teenage girl arose to sing, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross! Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss. From victory unto victory, His army shall He lead, 'til every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed." Soon other people in the second balcony had joined in the singing. Then the entire upper balcony and the first balcony and then the lower floor people joined until all the people rose and sang together that wonderful song, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey. Forth to the mighty conflict in this His glorious day." It is said that there was not a dry eye in the house. When the song was finished someone noticed the atheist had left the platform. The congregational song had not only turned many to faith but caused the atheist to flee!

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Psalm 116** was used for congregational singing.

# **PSALM 117**

**AUTHOR: Unknown**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

It was written to be a chorus. Just like we have choir arrangements, congregational songs and choruses, this, the shortest chapter in the Bible and the shortest of the Psalms, was sung like we sing our choruses.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

It was used around the family circle and in informal gatherings as well as occasionally in a public worship in just the same manner that we would use choruses today.

# **PSALM 118**

**AUTHOR: Unknown**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

This is an antiphonal Psalm, which means that it was sung responsively by two groups of singers. It was used by a divided choir. It was sometimes used by a divided congregation, and at other times it was used as responsive singing between the congregation and the choir. It was written for this specific purpose.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

Obviously it was used mainly for public worship, though it could be used by a large family divided into two groups.

# PSALM 119

AUTHOR: Unknown

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This is an alphabetical Psalm. It is composed of 2 stanzas of 8 verses each. Each stanza is headed by different letter from the alphabet and each verse of each stanza begins with this letter.

In the Psalm the writer is magnifying the Word of God. He uses nine synonyms about the Bible: (1) law (2) testimony, (3) judgments, (4) statutes, (5) words, (6) precepts, (7) commandments, (8) promises, and (9) way. The first eight are used over 20 times each. The ninth is used four times.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for the Word of God. It is significant that this is the longest of all the Psalms and is the longest chapter in the Bible. How appropriate this is that the foundation of all we believe controls the longest chapter of all!

The Christian will become more appreciative of the Bible if he will study carefully this Psalm. First, go through the Psalm finding all the things the Bible will do for the Christian. Second, go through the Psalm listing all the things the Christian is supposed to do with his Bible. Third, explore the different things the Bible is like; for example, it is like a lamp unto the feet and light unto the path.

# PSALMS 120-134

**AUTHORS:** Mainly David and Solomon

## The Story Behind the Psalms

These are called "Psalms of ascension." They were basically travel Psalms. They were used specifically for the three annual feasts. As the Jews would march to Jerusalem for the feast, they would sing these Psalms of ascension. From anywhere in the promised land, it was always "up" to Jerusalem, for Jerusalem was the highest point in the land. So as the people would ascend to Jerusalem, they would sing these songs one after another.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they would go to the temple. These Psalms were sung on the steps of the temple. **Psalm 120** would be sung on the first step, **Psalm 121** on the second step, etc. until each Psalm had been sung. Since these were sung going up the steps, they were called "Psalms of ascension." As they are read it should be kept in mind that these were travelers going to the holy city for a feast. Read carefully **Psalm 128** and imagine a great group of pilgrims journeying for a time of worship in the beloved city.

## The Way They Were Used by God's People

Not only were they used for trips to the feasts and to Jerusalem, these were Psalms used for any journey. What a tremendous thing it would be for a Christian family to claim **Psalm 128** as they leave on vacation or for a Christian businessman to claim its promises as he leaves for a business trip! In these days of advanced travel, these Psalms should be used over and over again as we journey to and fro.

**For Psalm 135 see Psalm 104**

# PSALM 136

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Perhaps this Psalm was used at the returning of the ark to Jerusalem. David perhaps wrote it at the time when he danced around the ark for joy and when he was so severely criticized by his wife, Michal. This was a happy time for David. Picture him going to his room, penning this beautiful Psalm upon realizing that the ark had returned to its home. This was the Ark of the Covenant; that little piece of furniture that rested in the holy of holies over which God's presence dwelt with His people. It was a sacred piece of furniture. It always preceded the Israelites into battle. As they marched from Egypt to the promised land, it preceded them on their journeys. Read **1 Chronicles 16:41**.

Twenty-six times do we find the statement, *"His mercy endureth forever."* The word *"mercy"* is worth note. It means "pity in action." The word *"endureth"* means "abideth as Heaven." In other words, God's pity in action abideth as long as Heaven abideth and is as beautiful to the believer as are the golden streets of the Holy City.

This Psalm was used when the ark was brought into the temple in **2 Chronicles 5:13**. It was used when the foundations were laid in the new temple in **Ezra 3:11**. In **Jeremiah 33:11**, Jeremiah used it while he was in prison and saw the kingdom age.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Psalm 136** was a chant. It was also sung responsively. The priests and the choir would join in responsive singing; or the choir and the people would do so, or the choir and another choir would sing it. It was sung at any and many joyous occasions.

# PSALM 137

## AUTHOR

We know from **verse 1** that whoever wrote the **137th Psalm** had been in Babylon. We know from **verse 2** that he was, at the time of the writing, in Palestine. We know from **verse 3** that he was old. Hence, we must choose between Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Zerubbabel. More than likely the Psalm was written by Ezra.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

God's people were a singing people. They had become famous throughout the world for their singing. The Babylonian people, no doubt, looked forward with delight to hearing the Jews sing. When the Jews arrived as captives in Babylon, they were requested to sing. However, they refused, as is shown in this Psalm. They complained, *"How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"* So they placed their harps on the willow trees and did not sing. This is sad, for if ever there is a time when God's people should sing it is when we are in the presence of unsaved people. The people of Babylon need to hear the song of God. It is one thing to sing in the promised land when only God's people can hear; it is another thing to sing in Babylon where those who are not God's people need to hear.

So Ezra (or whoever wrote the Psalm) is recounting the experience of the harps being placed on the willow trees and the Jews refusing to sing.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used when in the presence of strangers. Devout Jews would use it as a reminder that they should sing so that those who are not God's people may hear.

# PSALM 138

**AUTHOR:** David

Some feel that David could not have written **Psalm 138** because of the mention of the temple. David, however, mentioned the temple elsewhere in Psalms that are definitely attributed to him.

## The Story Behind the Psalm

**Psalms 138 through 145** form a cluster of Psalms, all written by David. They follow after the fifteen ascension Psalms, and the devout Israelite used them as a manual of private prayer and praise. These eight Psalms were composed in the first person and this particular Psalm, as well as one or more of the others, has to do with the promise made to David in **2 Samuel 7** which should be read along with this Psalm. Picture David meditating on the great Messianic promise in **2 Samuel 7** as he pens this Psalm as a pattern for the private prayer life of God's people.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

**Some** of the Psalms were used for public praise. Some were used for congregational singing. Some were used for choir singing. Some were used for special numbers in the worship of Jehovah. This particular Psalm was used during an Israelite's private prayer time or during what we would commonly call private devotions.

# PSALM 139

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The Psalm title is, "*To the chief musician.*" The last time we found these words, used as a title of a Psalm, was in the **119th Psalm**, which means that this Psalm was worthy to be used by the best of singers. It was dedicated to the leader of the temple choir to be set to music, and it was sung in the worship of Jehovah. Aben Ezra says that this is the most glorious and excellent Psalm of them all. It is divided into four stanzas of six verses each. **Verses 1-6** deal with the omniscience of God; **verses 7-12** speak of His omnipresence; **verses 13-18** deal with His omnipotence, and then **verses 19-24** deal with the prayer of David.

Many scholars, such as Rogers and others, believe that David composed this Psalm when a shepherd boy. It is not difficult to envision David watching over his flock in the wilderness thinking of God's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence and penning these beautiful words.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used primarily in private devotions and was repeated every morning and evening by the devout Israelite. It was also used for public worship as aforementioned.

# PSALM 140

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

David was being hunted like a deer on the mountains. He seldom rested. Here we have a pathetic appeal asking for God's protection and God's destruction of his foes.

Notice this Psalm is also "*To the chief musician,*" which means the writer wished that this Psalm be under the care of one of the great masters of song that it might be sung properly. Perhaps David's life was endangered when he came in contact with Saul and Doeg. At any rate, he was running on the mountains and wrote this, one of the more beautiful of the Psalms. Notice in **verses 1-5** he is threatened by bitter enemies. In **verses 1, 4 and 6** he asks God for help and yet all at the same time he praises God for his protection in the past.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

Notice the word "*Selah*" is used, which means it is a Psalm to be sung quietly, slowly and restfully. Someone has said that the word "*Selah*" bids us pause over the dark colors of a Psalm. Hence, God's people used this Psalm in times of melancholy and loneliness.

# PSALM 141

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This is what some call a memorial Psalm. It was written perhaps years after the particular event in memory of that event. The event that David was calling to mind here was perhaps the one recorded in **1 Samuel 24** which should be read as **Psalm 141** is read. David had opportunity to put Saul to death at the cave of Engedi, yet he spared the life of his bitter enemy, only cutting off his skirt and not allowing his friends to touch Saul.

The title says that this was a prayer composed by David when he was in the cave. Perhaps more accurately the title could say, "This is a prayer composed by David about the time that he was in the cave, or concerning that experience." So the wise student will picture David as he sits with nostalgia and remembers this experience. David had been slandered. He had been censored. His life was endangered. In this Psalm he relives one of those experiences.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

It was used by the Israelites as they were remembering a great deliverance from their God, especially deliverance in battle.

# PSALM 142

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

Notice the title, "**Maschil of David.**" This means it was a Psalm written for instruction. The instruction he is giving us here is concerning how to word our prayer in times of dire distress. David was in the cave, either the cave of En-gedi, Adullam, or some other lonely cavern where he could hide from Saul and Saul's bloodhounds. Probably David was in the cave of Adullam. **1 Samuel 22:1, 2** should be read in connection with this Psalm.

The interesting and important thing is that David was in a cave. Someone has said that caves make good prayer closets, and if David had prayed as much in the palace as he did in the cave, he might have turned out better. Picture David in a cave hiding from Saul as he pens this, one of the most famous of the Psalms.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was very popular for the prayer closet. It was used by God's people during private devotional time.

# PSALM 143

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

This Psalm is one of the seven penitential Psalms. They are sometimes also called the "special" Psalms. Someone has suggested that these Psalms are directed against the seven deadly sins; for example, **Psalm 6** is directed against wrath, **Psalm 32** against pride, **Psalm 38** against gluttony, **Psalm 51** against impurity, **Psalm 102** against covetousness, **Psalm 130** against envy and **Psalm 143** against indifference.

Since it is a penitential Psalm, it is a Psalm where David is asking for forgiveness. Picture the sweet psalmist after having sinned seeking God's forgiveness and mercy.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

This was used for years for Ash Wednesday observances, but more important than that, it was used by the Jews when confessing sins and seeking God's forgiveness.

# PSALM 144

AUTHOR: David

## The Story Behind the Psalm

The first part of **Psalm 144** is very similar to **Psalm 18**. Unknown are the conditions under which David wrote the Psalm, but it does fall into a beautiful outline. **Verses 1 and 2** find the psalmist singing to God because of God's strength. In **verses 3 and 4** he wonders at the Lord's regard for insignificant man. In **verses 5-8** he reminds us of God's blessings in the hour of battle. In fact, God is called a Man of war. In **verses 9-11** he again blesses God and extols His greatness. In the remainder of the Psalm God's people are congratulated because they have such a wonderful God.

The Psalm also bears a strong resemblance to David's last song in **2 Samuel 22**.

The best conjecture is that this Psalm refers to the slaying of Goliath by the young stripling, David.

## The Way It Was Used by God's People

When an Israelite felt extremely insignificant and wanted to praise the virtues of his great God, he would read and sing **Psalm 144**.

# **PSALM 145**

**AUTHOR: David**

## **The Story Behind the Psalm**

Probably it was written upon conquering Goliath. It is an alphabetical Psalm. It is David's favorite. It is a Psalm of praise, and the praise was always pitched in a high key. It is called David's "crown jewel of praise." It was designated as a "tehillah~' or a "Psalm of praise."

It outlines beautifully as it concerns the righteousness and goodness of God: first, to the men in general; second, to his own people; and third, to those who suffer.

Picture David as a lad having conquered Goliath composing this Psalm and then envision him in years to come singing it and remembering his marvelous victory.

## **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

Of course, they used it when they wanted to praise the Lord. It is one of the greatest of the Psalms of praise and as was aforementioned, it was David's favorite.

The ancient Jews when very, very happy uttered this Psalm three times a day with the mouth, with the harp and with the tongue.

This is one of the Psalms that the Jews liked to memorize. It was easier for them to memorize an alphabetical Psalm; that is, one in which different sections were preceded by different letters of the alphabet.

**For Psalms 146 - 150 see Psalm 104**