

NCAC Adult Sunday School  
July 31, 2022

**Learning to Love the Psalms**  
**Dr. Robert Godfrey**  
**Week 2**

**Review:** Last week we had a basic introduction to the Psalms that included the 5 Books of the Psalms, some of the difficulties in interpreting the Psalms and a helpful general rule about the middle of the Psalm often being the main point of the passage.

Book 1: Psalm 1-41, Confidence in God's Care

Book 2: Psalm 42-72, Commitment to God's Kingdom

Book 3: Psalm 73-89, Crisis over God's Promises

Book 4: Psalm 90-106, Comfort in God's Faithfulness

Book 5: Psalm 107-150, Celebration of God's Salvation

5 Interpretative Difficulties

1. The Psalms are a collection of 150 poems that at a glance do not appear to be organized, which makes it difficult to interpret in terms of the whole book.
2. The Psalms have a poetic literary form that requires us to slow down and meditate on them, contrary to our fast-paced, non-poetic age.
3. The Psalms require that we understand who is speaking to us in them.
  - a. The Psalms are God's words to us to speak back to Him, but they must be understood within their context.
  - b. Psalms like the imprecatory psalms make it difficult for Christians to understand how they relate to the context of the New Testament.
4. The Psalms must be read with an understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament in order to see their relevance.
5. The Psalms are difficult to outline.

## This Week-- Psalm 11: The Power of Poetry

Psalm 11 exhibits the powerful characteristics of Hebrew poetry typically found throughout the Psalms. In this lesson, Dr Godfrey uses Psalm 11 to provide us with an interpretive grid that we may apply to all the psalms as Hebrew poetry.

1. The first step in identifying the structure of a psalm is to read it in its entirety.
2. Psalm 11 has a clear movement from distress to a confidence in the Lord as judge and vindicator of his people.
  - a. Psalm 11 begins with the dilemma of God's king as he faces the faithless advice to flee from the wicked.
  - b. Psalm 11 ends with the response of God's king to his advisers, which points us to the middle of the psalm to discover his rationale.
3. Psalm 11:4 is the heart of the psalm, orienting our thoughts so we can make sense of what has come before and what comes after.

**The heart of Psalm 11 is "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven."**

**What do these images of God being in his temple and on his throne convey to David and to us?**

God is present in David's circumstances.

God is not only present but is reigning over the circumstances and over all people.

God is sovereign over all creation

**What do we mean when we say that God is sovereign?**

God is preeminent in power and authority.

Wayne Grudem defines God's sovereignty as "the exercise of God's power over his creation."

God's sovereignty is a natural consequence of His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

## **Remember the Wheel?**

Having established that verse 4 is the organizing principle of the psalm let's go back to the beginning of the psalm and see how this principle informs the rest of the chapter.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Spoke of the Wheel—Since the Lord is on His throne, David takes refuge in God. v.1**

**David begins the psalm by stating that “In the Lord I take refuge.” What is a refuge?**

shelter or protection from danger or distress, a place of security, a place of rest

**How is God a refuge?**

He is the One we can come to when we need shelter during trials, help through challenging situations, comfort in our loss and heartache. God is our salvation through Jesus from the curse and penalty of sin. He provides forgiveness through Jesus and peace with Him. God is our safe place.

**How do you think David's understanding of the supreme rule of God over all creation helped him to see and trust God as a refuge?**

He knew God was more powerful than any of his enemies.

God's rule gave him confidence to stay and face his enemies instead of running away and fighting his battles alone.

**How has God been a refuge to you over this past year?**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Spoke of the Wheel—David's response to his advisors' counsel is shaped by his understanding of God's sovereignty.**

David then turns his focus to the advice he was given by his advisors vv.2-3.

**What did David think of the advice of his royal counselors?**

### **What is the meaning of the phrase “Flee like a bird to your mountain”?**

Run away, protect yourself, escape danger, retreat

“for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string...” David’s enemies are poised for attack

“...to shoot in the dark at the upright at heart” **What do you think this phrase means?**

David’s enemies are working behind the scenes, in the shadows to plot against him.

“If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?”

### **What foundations are seemingly being destroyed in our culture?**

- **The necessity of God as Creator**
- **The authority of Scripture**
- **The foundation of an absolute truth**
- **The foundation of marriage**
- **The foundation of gender**
- **The foundation of the sanctity of life**

**We all have experienced receiving bad advice, but have we recognized when we have given ourselves hopeless, faithless counsel? What should we do when we realize that we are giving ourselves or others poor, unbiblical advice?**

Repent, preach the gospel to ourselves, remember God is on the throne, remind ourselves of who God is and what he has promised, review the Word, pray and phone a friend.

David does not heed the counsel against his earthly throne because he is comforted and emboldened by the reality that God is on His heavenly throne.

**Have you ever felt like God isn’t paying attention to our struggles? to your struggles?**

**The central word of the Psalm teaches us that living by faith is believing in the truthfulness of what is unseen.**

**Third Spoke of the Wheel—As Sovereign, The Lord sees and tests both the wicked and the righteous. vv 4-5**

**“...his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.” v 4**

God is an all-knowing King of Kings who perfectly understands David’s enemies and sees their hidden motives, strategies and aims. As King of the universe God is in control. Nothing escapes his notice, not even the actions of the wicked are beyond His purview.

The Hebrew word, translated test in English, means to try, prove, test, examine, search out, purify. According to the Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible lexical aids to the Old Testament, “The word denotes an investigation to determine the essential qualities of the object, especially integrity. It is used almost exclusively in the spiritual sense, attaining knowledge intuitively.” pg. 1714

**“The Lord tests the righteous...”**

Because the Lord is on the throne, he also has the right to test the righteous, but this testing is with the aim to purify and prove the integrity of the righteous, to refine their faith and deepen their love for Him. An example of this type of testing is seen with Abraham when God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22). When Abraham passes the test, God stops him from killing Isaac and says, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” Gen 22:12. In 1 Peter 1:6-7 we see this kind of testing of the righteous referred to when Peter writes,

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, **so that the tested genuineness of your faith—**

more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

### **The Fourth Spoke of the Wheel—The Lord will judge righteously. vv. 6-7**

The testing of the children of man and the testing of the righteous have very different outcomes.

For the wicked it results in the Lord hating them and bringing judgment down on their souls. For the children of man their portion will be eternal judgment pictured by David in images of fire, sulfur, and a scorching wind.

**“The Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.”**

The Lord embodies righteousness and he loves to do righteous deeds and he will make his presence and reign known to his people in their trials.

For the righteous, the testing of the Lord brings favor and ultimately beholding the face of God. For Old Testament believer and New Testament believer we have this certain hope that we shall one day behold the face of God and have a greater closeness to and relationship with Him. Hear the words of 1 John 3,

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God, and so we are... Beloved we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him, purifies himself as he is pure”

**As we close let’s remember the heart of this psalm, “The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his throne. Let’s remember**

- **God is present with us throughout every event in our lives.**
- **God is not only present but reigning over the circumstances and over all people. God is at work even though we often times can’t see his actions.**

- **As King of the universe God is control. Nothing escapes his notice or happens by chance. God has a purpose for us and in everything that he allows into our lives.**
- **God perfectly understands our enemy and all his tactics.**
- **God is your refuge and you will one day behold his face forever if you are his child by faith in Jesus Christ.**

### **O Worship the King**

O worship the King, all glorious above,  
O gratefully sing his power and his love:  
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned with splendor and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air; it shines in the light:  
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In you do we trust, nor find you to fail.  
Your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend!

**Next Week: Psalm 52 The Psalms and History**