

THE BOOK OF PRAISES
Psalms 1, 150

Intro: The Hebrew title for this, the longest book of the Bible, is, the Book of praises. It is the Greek translation of the Psalms which gives us the title, the Psalms-- which is from a verb meaning to play an instrument. It appears from several passages in the OT that David even invented instruments to be used in singing the praises of God.

Our Lord confirmed two things about the Psalms in Luke 24:44:

- 1) One, they are the Word of God. The Poetic Section of the OT was called by the name of this Book because it was by far the largest.
- 2) But He also spoke of the fact that they had to do with Himself. This would not necessarily mean every Psalm, but it meant that it was an outstanding characteristic of the Psalms as a whole.

The Psalms had a threefold use among the Jews:

- 1) It was their hymnal. They sang these Psalms.
- 2) It was their prayerbook. Remember that the Chinese used to say, "If you want to learn how to talk to God, read the Psalms."
- 3) Along the line with both of the above, "it was also a manual for the nurture of the spiritual life in private as well as public worship" (Sampey, J. R., ISBE, IV, 2487).

A good habit for any Christian to form is the reading of at least one Psalm every day--and, if possible, read it several times a day. A person who would do this faithfully could not help but profit tremendously in a spiritual way.

The Hebrew text is divided into five parts:

- 1) Psa. 1-41.
- 2) Psa. 42-72.
- 3) Psa. 73-89.
- 4) Psa. 90-106.
- 5) Psa. 107-150.

Just when these division were made, we do not know, but the first four end with doxologies, and the last Psalm is entirely a Psalm of praise to God. Most devout students of the Psalms believe that the Holy Spirit guided in the arrangement of the Psalms as well as in their composition.

Every kind of prayer is found in this Book, and all varieties of experience through which the people of God pass in this world. We need the Psalms when we are in trouble, but it is a shame if that is the only time that we consult the Psalms. They are meant to uplift our spirits and to draw us near to God.

Tonight I want to briefly consider the first and the last

Psalms: 1 and 150. The first speaks of God blessing man; the last speaks of man blessing God. (See Clarke, p. 14 and Dabney in ISBE, IV, 2487.) This is really divine order.

I. PSALM 1: GOD BLESSING MAN.

God in creating us has given all of us a desire to be happy. This is God's desire for us, too. The Word of God makes this very clear throughout. The Lord emphasized it again in what we call the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. There are many beatitudes in the Psalms. There are Psalms in which the Psalmist has plunged to the depths of discouragement and depression, but the desire is always to get out.

Our problem is sin. This is why Psalm 1 begins as it does. Man is inclined to think that he will be happy if he can only do what he wants to do. The problem is that he wants to do the wrong things. And so the Psalmist begins by telling us where we will NEVER find true, lasting joy. There may be a temporary sense of pleasure in sin, but it lasts for such a short time that it is not worth it.

How we ought to praise God daily that He has given us His Word to warn us against sin!

But where is happiness? ("Blessed" in the original is in the plural, showing that the Lord had in mind an abundant happiness, overflowing happiness, a cup running over with happiness.)

Happiness is found in the person who delights in the Word of God. To delight in anything is to find great pleasure in it. And this is seen in the fact that he does not just read it, or listen to it read, but he thinks about it, going over over it in his mind "day and night." It speaks of a man whose heart is full of the Word of God.

What happens?

Some changes begin to take place. Look at v. 3.

Do you know what is the most discouraging thing to me in the ministry? It is when you see people sit under the ministry of the Word for 5, or 10, or 20 years, sometimes longer, and yet they still are basically the same kind of people--with the same dispositions, the same problems, the same sins. There seems to be little or no progress. What is the problem? I am always concerned that there is failure in the teaching, but Psalm 1 gives us another answer.

The rest of the Psalm completes the picture for us, contrasting the ungodly sinner with the righteous. The one

leads to eternal life; the other, to eternal death.

The Psalmist here was writing a little bit like John did in his first Epistle. He is talking about how people walk, how they live.

Don't let the Devil get you away from the Word of God in your times of discouragement. He will do it if he can. He will try to convince you that the Word is doing you no good, and that you ought to give it up. The truth is that you need to give it more time and more attention.

(Read what Thomas Brooks wrote about meditation: Vol. I, p. 291.)

Perhaps I should say that you should not go any farther into the Psalms until you learn the lesson that the Spirit of God is teaching here. Spurgeon called it "THE PREFACE PSALM, having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book" (The Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 1).

One thing about this Psalm which we should never forget: the One Who proves this Psalm most completely is our Lord Jesus Christ. Is He not the tree? Was His life not one of continually bearing fruit to God.

But let us jump from this Psalm over to the last.

II. PSALM 150: MAN BLESSING GOD.

The first Psalm has to do with the earth; the last Psalm has to do with heaven. Some say that it is millennial. But it can find its realization right now in the lives of those of us who know the Lord. IT UNDOUBTEDLY IS MEANT TO SHOW THE EFFECT THAT THE BOOK OF PSALMS WILL HAVE ON US IF THE TRUTH OF THE PSALMS REALLY GETS INTO OUR SOULS. Oh, pray that it will!

It begins with "Hallelujah"; it ends with "Hallelujah."

V. 1 tells us WHERE we are to praise the Lord.

V. 2 tells us WHY we are to praise the Lord.

Vv. 3-5 tell us HOW we are to praise the Lord. Amos 6:5 tells us that David invented musical instruments with which to praise the Lord--probably because the instruments of the day were too perverted in their use to be satisfactorily used for the Lord.

V. 6 tells us WHO is to praise the Lord.

You see, such a Psalm is not only the result of digesting the Book of Psalms, but it is the cry of a heart which has learned a little about the greatness of God, and he cannot be satisfied until the universe literally rings with the praises of God. Thank God, that day is coming.

Illus: a great voice like that of Pavoratti. It was never given to him for his own glory, but for the glory of God.

Concl: Will you come with me as we look together into the Psalms? Will you read and meditate and pray until the truths here really become yours? Will you be looking for the Lord Jesus Christ? According to His own word He is here!

Pray that the Lord will give us a great time together dwelling upon the great riches that are to be ours in this marvelous portion of the Word of God.