



THE
LIGHT
OF THE
PSALMS

Deepening your faith with every Psalm

Michael F. Ross

CHRISTIAN FOCUS





DEDICATION

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Mentor, Friend, Lover of the Psalms and of Christ.

*“Mark the blameless and behold the upright,
for there is a future for the man of peace” (Ps. 37:37).*

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This book began back in 2001 when Archie Parrish and I discussed the possibility of forty days of prayer for the Presbyterian Church in America, prior to our annual general assembly. With Archie's encouragement and influence, Jim Bland of Mission to North America and Charles Dunahoo of Christian Education and Publications, both of the PCA, approved and funded the project. The plan soon became fifty days of prayer, beginning each year on America's National Day of Prayer (first Thursday in May) and ending at the close of the general assembly.

In 2002, 2003, and 2004, we published the Psalter devotions; fifty psalms per year. Thanks to Archie, Jim, and Charles, and to their wonderful staff at MNA and CEP in publishing these prayer guides.

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It is the prayer of both author and publisher that these Psalms and devotions bless your soul as much as they have enriched us who have prepared them. “*I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me*” (*Ps. 13:6*).





FOREWORD

“There is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise.” Thus wrote John Calvin. The book that he had in mind, of course, was the Book of Psalms – the praise book of the people of God.

According to Calvin, the psalms teach us to rejoice by declaring what God has done for us. He has showered us with many generous blessings. He has performed mighty deeds of salvation. He has cared for us with a father’s tender love. For these and all his other gifts he deserves our everlasting praise. As Calvin explained in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms:

There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendations, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances, nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us, are celebrated with such splendour of diction, and yet with the strictest adherence to truth; in short, there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up the performance of this religious exercise.

Calvin’s words provide a fitting introduction to this devotional guide because they focus on God’s praise, which is the theme of all the psalms. The guide itself was written by my friend and colleague Mike Ross, who serves as senior minister of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. It is organized thematically rather than canonically. It is also divided into three parts, each of which gives special honor to one of the Three Persons in the Godhead.





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“God Our Refuge” focuses on psalms that prove God the Father’s protective care in times of danger and distress. “God Our Redeemer” is a celebration of God the Son for his redemptive work and headship over the church. “God Our Rejoicing” worships God for his being and work in the Holy Spirit. The psalms in this section include the famous “Songs of Ascent” (Pss. 120–134) that pilgrims used to sing on their way up to the temple in Jerusalem, as well as the very last psalms in the Bible – the triumphant hymns that close the Psalter with a crescendo of praise. Pastor Ross thus ends his series of devotionals the way the Psalms end, and the way our lives will end: with high praise to the Triune God for his glory and grace.

These studies in the psalms have been a great help to my soul, and I pray that they will also be a blessing to you. Although the devotionals are short enough to fit into even the busiest schedule, they are rich in their biblical, theological, and practical content. Each chapter explains the context and structure of a biblical psalm. Often there are historical illustrations or contemporary connections that help explain what the psalm means. Along the way, Pastor Ross also shows how each psalm relates to Christ and the Christian life. Many of his devotionals have a personal quality that reflects the spiritual experience of their author. So as you read this booklet, you will come under the warm spiritual care of an experienced pastor.

The best way to use this book for daily devotions is to begin by praying for the Holy Spirit to help you understand the Scriptures and to have fellowship with Jesus Christ through prayer. Then read the psalm itself. As helpful as these devotions are, the greatest blessing comes from God’s own Word. When you are finished reading the psalm and studying the devotional, take time to pray for the kingdom of God, for your local church, for the people you love, and for your own personal concerns.

This book has been prepared as a stimulus for prayer, so be sure to pray! And in your prayers, do not forget to give high praise to God. One good way to do this is to pray through each psalm. As you pray over the words of Scripture, the Holy Spirit will





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make them the song of your heart, and God himself – who is your
Refuge and your Redeemer – will become your Rejoicing.

Philip Graham Ryken
Senior Minister, Tenth Presbyterian Church,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania







PREFACE

These Psalms for devotion, meditation and prayer are in three sections, and were originally used for three years during the Presbyterian Church in America's fifty days of prayer, beginning on the American National Day of Prayer and following through its General Assembly. The sections gather and group the Psalms by themes and collections within the Psalter itself and focus them on the three Divine Persons of the Trinity. They are now published for wider use by the Christian church in many denominations.

Part One is entitled *God Our Refuge: Celebrating God the Father – Jehovah*, and focuses on the First Person of the Trinity. The Psalms that make up our devotional guide for this section include the Songs of Zion, the Enthronement Psalms, the Imprecatory Psalms, the Wisdom Psalms, the Royal Psalms, the Seven Penitential Psalms and the Psalms of Restoration and Revival. These Psalms and devotions called us to repentance, surrender and rest in God, our Father in Heaven.

Part Two is entitled *God Our Redeemer: Celebrating God the Son – Jesus Christ*, and focuses on the Second Person of the Trinity. These devotions help us to pray through the truths surrounding Christ's redemptive work and headship over the Church. These Psalms include the Prayers for the Sick, the Golden Chain of Trust (Pss. 3–10), the Fugitive Psalms, the Psalms of Trust, a collection entitled "Psalms for a Nation in Decline" (Pss. 77, 78, 88, 42 and 43, 44, 50 and 74), the Psalms of Petition, Prayers of Lament and Five Psalms of Thanksgiving.

Part Three is entitled *God Our Rejoicing: Celebrating God the Holy Spirit – The Paraclete*. These fifty Psalms call us to worship, work and witness in the power of the Spirit. These fifty devotions are divided into seven collections: Three Songs for the Nation Under God, Psalms of Revelation, the Pilgrim Psalms (the Songs of Ascents),





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the Hallel Psalms, Psalms for Times of Trouble, Seven Songs of Wonderment and the Psalms of Pure Praise (Pss. 145–150).

As we work our way through these Psalms of the Spirit let us not forget that we pray them and sing them not alone. We join with those throughout the world who are using this book as a guide to the psalms, or who are meditating on the psalms in other ways. We pray these Psalms “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses,” on earth and in heaven, who have used and still use the Psalter as, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “the prayer book of the Bible.” Finally we follow the lead of Jesus Christ our Lord who “always lives to make intercession for us,” and who, no doubt, prays the Word of God to God for us. St. Augustine reminded us that “Christ Himself is the singer of the Psalms.” Therefore, in a very real sense, these hymns to God, sung by Christ and composed by the Spirit are a privileged look into the intimate conversation of the Trinity concerning the kingdom of God – God our Refuge, God our Redeemer and God our Rejoicing – praying for us, preaching the Gospel and praising one another for their great works of grace and glory. So let us rejoice in God our Rejoicing! And let us do what the Spirit commands us to do: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!” (Ps. 150:6, the last verse of the Psalter).

