

A woefully ignorant Christian Education Director once disdainfully categorized the Psalms as “just ancient Hebrew poetry,” tacitly declaring them to be of no consequence to those in the Church age.

Between Heaven and Earth 2

It is an old argument that should no longer be entertained, for within the Psalms themselves is the declarative response to such nonsense:

Remember the word to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me.

Psalm 119:49-50

God has graciously included this “ancient Hebrew poetry” in His eternal word so that believers might know His heart, know how attentive He is to our needs, our aspirations, our desire for Him. No other portion of Scripture so accurately portrays the songs of a soul pursuing intimate communion with its Hope, its Solace, its Wonder and Strength.

Still in Charge

There are times in our walk with Christ that we want answers—we want reassurance. Sometimes we are a bit shaky on our feet; there are times when the unsteadiness of flesh overwhelms, and we just want to

know that God is still in charge. We cry out in our confusion—even, at times, desperation—to our heavenly Father. He has been silent (at least to *our* hearing) and we have lost sight of the power we supposed Him to have.

Does He still care? Does He still hold power over this small world? Is He still sovereign? The sons of Korah wrote a song for such an occasion.

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth
should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;
Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.

Selah.

There is a river whose streams make glad the
city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Selah.

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;

He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
“Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted
in the earth.”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Selah.

Psalm 46

Wisdom

There are days when we need nothing less than clear, unvarnished instruction. Living in this place and time it is easy for the deceitful yet attractive ways of the world to build up insulation that numbs us to the ways of God. We can lose our “saltiness,” becoming too comfortable in the enemy’s camp. Or we can permit the ways of the world to unnecessarily trouble us, forgetting, if even for a moment, who is really in charge.

We know that King David wrote the 37th Psalm during his later years, but we do not know the occasion for which it was penned. Nonetheless, because the song bears a tone that is echoed in Solomon’s Proverbs, it is easy to hear in this psalm the aging King David giving sage advice to his

son and heir.

Regardless the audience for which it was written, this psalm contains timeless truth for anyone who wishes to live God's way in a world gone mad.

Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.
For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.
Trust in the Lord and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.
Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.
Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.
Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.
For evildoers will be cut off,
But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land.
Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.
But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.
The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.
Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken...
The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
And He delights in his way.
When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.
I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.
All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.

Psalms 37: 1-15, 23-26

Tears of Joy

Not all yearnings in the Psalms are for solace, forgiveness, or justice. Just as in "real life," there are times in our communion with the Father when our heart is not pained or sorrowed or melancholy, but bursting with joy over His presence. At such times, the pleasure of His company is so sweet—yet so powerful, so overwhelming—that we feel we must explode if the praise is not let out. Somehow what we are experiencing goes beyond praise or worship, dwelling in the supernatural vapors that remain unseen to pitiful flesh. There

*Lo, God is here! Let us adore,
And own how dreadful is this place;
Let all within us feel His power,
And silent bow before His face;
Who knows His power, His grace who prove,
Serve Him with awe, with reverence love.*

*Lo, God is here! Him day and night
United choirs of angels sing;
To Him, enthroned above all height,
Heaven's host their noblest praises bring;
Disdain not, Lord, our meaner song,
Who praise Thee with a stammering tongue.*

*Being of beings, may our praise
Thy courts with grateful fragrance fill;
Still may we stand before Thy face,
Still hear and do Thy sovereign will;
To Thee may all our thoughts arise,
Ceaseless, accepted sacrifice.*

Gerhard Tersteegen



are no words in the dictionary for what we are feeling; the beauty and hunger glowing in our soul would only be dimmed by setting it to human language.

Yet, surprisingly, in Psalm 104 David—though the psalm is unattributed, it seems clearly to be a continuation of 103, which is attributed to David—finds words that bridge the distance between heaven and earth.

Imagine the writer, standing on a hilltop, his arms uplifted in exaltation to God. His heart is full. Tears of joy course down his cheeks as he lifts his beaming face up to his God.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,
Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.
He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;
He makes the clouds His chariot;
He walks upon the wings of the wind;
He makes the winds His messengers,
Flaming fire His ministers.

Psalms 104:1-4

After our simple, direct declaration of love and devotion to God, the essence of worship and praise is the declaration of *who God is*, and what He has done for us. This psalm continues, itemizing the cre-

ative power and might the Lord holds over the earth. It may seem pedantic, at first, but reminding ourselves of God's sovereign might over everything that is, is the very heart of praise. Here the writer lowers his gaze. He scans the surrounding countryside, reminding himself of all the Lord has done in the world around him.

Then the psalmist wraps up his chronicle of God's works with a closing reprise of adoration. Again he lifts his face heavenward and exults in his Lord with unfettered joy.

Let the glory of the Lord endure forever;
Let the Lord be glad in His works;
He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
He touches the mountains, and they smoke.
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
As for me, I shall be glad in the Lord.
Let sinners be consumed from the earth
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!

Psalms 104:31-35