

PRAYER IN THE PSALMS:
THE MEANS TO INTIMATE COMMUNION IN GOD'S PRESENCE

A Paper

Presented to

Dr. Robert L. Plummer

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for 88905

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUALITY

by

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December 1, 2011

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PRAYER IN THE PSALMS:
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Introduction

Unity: Monists perplex Christians by claiming that an impersonal reality encompasses a personal deity and that we are all part of that one being. As a mechanical formula, unity seems better than a diversity of creatures in creation – after all everyone is looking for a unified theory in science. Atheism likewise seeks unity in matter. Scriptural truth, however, which provides a coherent whole matching reality, is diametrically opposed to the unity of Hinduism or Atheism or any other world system. This paper attempts to bring out how biblical prayer in the Psalms supersedes any pagan conceptions of divine union. It will hopefully correct and balance Christian appreciation of prayer as divine access to God, in an experiential rather than philosophical sense.

Spirituality: Common language often relates “spirituality” with elements of pagan mysticism. Biblical spirituality wrests that domain back to a true and genuine practice of man’s spirit in relation with God who is Spirit. This practice should be governed by God’s revelation.

Prayer: Prayer is central to the spiritual life of all Christians. In examining the practice of prayer in the Psalms, this paper will explore the connection between God and the believer. It will use the categories of religious experience from Caroline Franks Davis to focus on intimate prayer in the Psalms. Thus the non-Christian mystical impulse is contrasted against pure biblical intimacy. The goal is to isolate the legitimate, beneficial, and necessary aspects of spiritual intimacy in prayer. Such a study can elevate the enjoyment of God as much as scripture permits.

Biblical Prayer and Mysticism

Prayer: Biblical prayer is often simply defined as speaking to God. Evangelicals listen to God speaking from the scriptures and communicate with God in prayer. Common elements of prayer include adoration, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving.¹ These and other elements of prayer as communing with God will be studied from the Psalms later in this paper.

Mysticism: Teresa of Avila and other mystics wrote of their experiences with God, recalling among other things, some of the sweet joy that mystical prayer provides. These ecstatic encounters seem to surpass what most Christians would consider prayer. Some common mystical experiences are first examined in this paper, in light of what the Psalms teach us about prayer.

Mysticism and the Psalms

Mystical life is often described as ineffable: it can be experienced but not described. Here is one definition of mysticism: “Belief in union with the divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation, and belief in the power of spiritual access to ultimate reality, or to domains of knowledge closed off to ordinary thought.”² The mystical union here is skewed from a biblical understanding of spirituality. The above meaning also changes based on the context in which it is understood. Biblical meaning can flush out invalid applications and flesh it out with truth.

In defining “numinous”, Rudolf Otto tries to make the term refer to “holy” without its moral element.³ However, his purpose seems not to deny the moral, but rather to focus on the

¹Matthew Henry, *A Method For Prayer: Freedom In The Face Of God*. (Scotland. Christian Heritage, 2009), 17-120. Henry’s thoughts will be framed along with that of J. I. Packer in the second half with the Psalms.

²Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 243. Union with divine nature is antithetical to a Christian view of humanity, despite our being *like* God.

³Rudolf Otto, *The Numinous in Philosophy of Religion, An Anthology*, Ed. Charles Taliaferro and Paul J. Griffiths. (Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 147. Numinous is a good term to explore mysticism.

elemental nature of that human experience with the divine. Evelyn Underhill emphasizes: “The central fact of the mystic’s experience... is an overwhelming consciousness of God and of one’s own soul: a consciousness which absorbs or eclipses all other centers of interest.” She defines the nature of reality as God. She does not elevate union of natures, but explores our experience of communion with God. She centers on one aspect: “The attitude of selfless adoration, the single-hearted passion of the soul, [are] among the essentials of the mystic in the illuminated way.”⁴

Caroline Franks Davis categorizes religious experiences which are experienced subjectively rather than reasoned out. She uses six helpful categories to examine mysticism.⁵ These categories will now be examined through the lens of prayer. These categories can help to distinguish our subjective interactions with God. In the process, our study of prayer will weed out those unbiblical elements while adding missing or undervalued elements to these categories.

1. Interpretive experiences: The first category uses a prior religious interpretive framework to infer any given religious experience. This understanding can be either passive or active. Some Christians passively go through illness with joy because they participate in Christ’s suffering or see it as divinely ordained. Some fervent believers see all they do and experience as religiously significant in some way, either in fortune or misfortune. This can also involve active divine intervention which changes one’s experience. Experiences of answered prayer often make for fragile evidence as one’s interpretation may be real or flawed. However, even when real, this assurance is only of subjective value to the recipient. It is not necessarily convincing to another, especially when one who does not share that Christian worldview or its interpretive framework.

⁴Evelyn Underhill, *The Essentials of Mysticism and Other Essays*. 9, 26.

⁵Caroline Franks Davis, *Religious Experience in Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, Ed. Charles Taliaferro and Paul J. Griffiths. (Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 162-179. Here and in each section.

Biblically, Christians are transformed by renewing their minds. Changing their existing interpretive framework for a biblical one is a Christian mandate. The biblical framework must interpret all experiences. It is not only foundational to one's experience, but also informs all other experiences. No personal interpretation can trump the biblical validation of one's experience.

This is vitally true in prayer as well – often new Christians pray as young children do, speaking to God from within their own viewpoints. As they grow in maturity, they learn to pray from God's perspective, aligning their wills and seeing their experience in light of the scriptures.

Objective Truth: Psalm 1, verse 2 notes “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” Christian spirituality is grounded in God's Word. “Ecstatic contemplation” is not in the abstract, but in what God reveals in the Bible. The Christian listens objectively to the Spirit in the written Word and subjectively communes with the Word in prayer. God communes with man through the Word. The dichotomy between reason and experience is false. It is fostered by enlightenment elevation of reason and romantic exaltation of experience.

The Bible does not artificially divide the heart and mind. Today's rationalistic world is compensated by experiential spirituality as Soren Kierkegaard emphasizes. Yet experience and reason must work concertedly. Christian experience always interprets life in light of God's view of reality. Humans see into God's ways by biblical revelation, not by intrinsic mystical insight.

Sovereignty of God: One such insight that people can have is the knowledge of God's rule which is hidden to the world. In Psalm 2 the psalmist knows something the world does not.⁶ This passage addresses passive understanding, the first type of interpreting life. The rejection of God in the world gives no occasion for the Christian to fret. Rather, the Christian knows and

⁶Psalm 2:1,4: “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot *in vain*?... He who sits in the heavens *laughs*; the Lord holds them in derision.” (Italics added.) The Psalmist shares God's laughter at the world.

rests experientially in God's rule. His firm confidence is not just for his personal safety, but in God's global governance. This experiential knowledge fortifies the psalmist against appearances.

Personal Care: God's attention extends from universal governance to specific details the believer's life. In Psalm 3 the psalmist attributes his waking up alive to God protecting him from Absalom. God is his shield, removing any fear of the hoards arrayed against him. Divine action, the second type of interpretation, is addressed here. The psalmist prays assured of God's evident protection. It later changes from descriptive truth to a fervent plea seeking God's aid.⁷

The psalmist is pleased not just to trust God, but has an intimacy with the King that allows him to ask God for specific help, knowing that he will obtain it. His God cares and is able to save. Past favorable responses assure him now. Christians may find these physical elements of salvation confusing. It will be developed later, since God values both the spiritual and material.

2. Quasi-sensory experiences: Some experiences provide physical sensations such as visions, dreams, heat, pain, or levitation. Visions often give advice. Images from a divine being are seen as sources of religious insight to be interpreted. Julian of Norwich apparently had a divinely produced picture from which she derived religious knowledge. These visions apparently convey difficult truth. Paul's post-resurrection experiences of Christ, Philip's transportation, and Stephen's vision of Christ in martyrdom are some good examples of sensory contact with God.

Biblically, Christians either accept ongoing revelation or rely on the closed canon of scripture. Peter exhorts in 2 Peter 2:17-20 to rest firmly on scriptures, making visions obsolete.

⁷Psalm 3:1-6: "O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah But you, O LORD, are a *shield* about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he *answered* me from his holy hill. Selah I lay down and slept; I *woke* again, for the LORD *sustained* me. I will *not be afraid of many thousands* of people who have set themselves against me all around." Psalm 3:7-8: "Arise, O LORD! *Save me*, O my God! For *you strike all my enemies* on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah"

The Psalms do not necessarily have visions, but there is a tangible communication of God to the believer in diverse ways, with physically intense sensations. Psalm 4 pleads with God to relieve distress and to hear the believer's call. The request for God's favor receives an inward joy that exceeds other solid sense fulfillments like bountiful grain and wine. This assurance is not a sensory vision, but is of greater confidence than the physical, as knowledge impacts upon the believer.⁸ However, sensory signs are not experiences sought for either today or in the Psalms.

3. Revelatory experiences: Revelation here signifies sudden convictions, inspirations, or enlightenment that seems to descend out of the blue. Religious content has distinctive features: It is sudden and short, acquired immediately – not through sense or reason, poured into by an external agency, and is inexpressible. Enlightenment is a new truth that suddenly flashes into consciousness. It is described as religious new birth, mental catastrophe, or just an intellectual viewpoint. The conviction is immediate, certain, and bold. It is not inferred through mediate processes. Teresa claims that the Lord introduces into the inmost part of the soul what he wishes that soul to understand.⁹ The subject makes specific knowledge claims, like finding the content of a sermon to be indubitably true. Spiritual authorities often mistrust experience and novices are treated guilty until proven innocent. Meister Eckhart and Teresa provide such scriptural cautions.

Biblically, a very good example of this insightful experience is found in Psalm 73. The psalmist is stuck in his view of the world. The world's injustice has subjectively oppressed his thinking. This oppression was tempting him to sin by either joining injustice or by speaking

⁸ Psalm 4:1,3: "*Answer me* when I call, O God of my righteousness! *You have given me relief* when I was in distress.... But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him." Psalm 4:6-7 has the experience, "There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!" You have put *more joy in my heart* than they have when their *grain and wine abound*."

⁹Teresa of Avila. *Interior Castle: The Classic Text with a Spiritual Commentary*. Dennis Billy, commentator. (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2007), 106.

unfavorably against God's governance. However, he finds his deliverance in the temple before God. He is "inspired" by God's revelation – as his eyes open to the reality of life. He sees what he did not before. His brutish impulses are transformed by divine knowledge as he is calmed and assured of God's justice and his safety. Enlightenment is often the goal of mystical quests. Asaph was not looking for it, but his temple experience with God resulted in his life-transformation.¹⁰

However, these revelations are not so much content driven, as experiences with the divine, that drive one's convictions and actions. Sadly we read passages like Psalm 73, limiting ourselves to the propositional content of God's justice and provision. It is the God of the justice and provision, who must overwhelm the Christian in this passage.¹¹ It is not the fact of God that gives confidence but the God who overwhelms. The intensely personal God makes Asaph see himself as brutish. His temple revelation opens his eyes to God as the true King in a fallen world.

4. Regenerative experiences: Regeneration takes religion beyond its doctrines and rituals. It renews the subject's faith, improving his spiritual, moral, physical, and psychological wellbeing. Miraculous healings may convert unbelievers and often spiritually regenerate the one healed. Many healed by Jesus knew of this transformation experientially. The converted Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. Some feel guided by a being beyond ones' conscious self, as being "called" to a vocation. It can be a humble awareness of one's failing in light of God's unconditional love. Intense experiences approach the mystical where one loves everybody on the train. Less intensely a loving, comforting presence can occur daily wherein souls find rest.

¹⁰Psalm 73:2-3: "But as for me, my feet had almost *stumbled*, my steps had nearly *slipped*... For I was *envious* of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Verses 13, 15 complain, "All *in vain* have I kept my heart *clean* and washed my hands in innocence... If I had said, 'I will *speak thus*,' I would have *betrayed* the generation of your children." Verse 17 notes "until I went into the *sanctuary* of God; then I *discerned their end*."

¹¹ Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*. (Malden, MA. Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 96. This is Karl Rahner's thought to distinguish textual knowledge and experience.

Biblically, the songs of ascents often reflect this confidence in God's presence, even in adversity. Love for the Israelites is warmly expressed, asserting God's deliverance and judgment of the wicked.¹² There is overwhelming love and compassion for God's people. The psalmist experiences a spiritual renewal in the annual temple visit to Jerusalem. This regeneration can be attributed to the practical means by which communal access to God was then made available.

Through these ways ordained by God, there is communion between God and man. God reveals himself and man finds his own senses and inner life rejuvenated. This is truly a coming together of mystery, as the believer walks away from that experience, changed. He has met God and will revel in what he gained in that encounter. This transformation is either a gradual process or peaks in some momentary change. The effects last for a certain period or extend through one's lifetime. The psalmist relishes his joyful worship even when he no longer can access the temple.

One's prayers to God often reflect a sense of this effect. When one meets God, his adoration of God changes from the factual to the reverential. One no longer prays for himself, but for all his fellow-men and exults in the character and immensity of God. Prayer is a vital contact by which God transforms a believer to be ecstatic, overflowing in love, even in excruciating pain.

5. Numinous experiences: Experiencing the divine in unapproachable holiness and terrifying glory is the numinous encounter. It consists of creature-consciousness and *mysterium tremendum*. Creature-consciousness is the mortal despicableness before an eternal majesty, with a dread for God that reflexively makes the subject meek and mild. *Mysterium tremendum* is awe that can overwhelmingly erupt upon the soul or sweep in like a gentle tide. It is the dread before the uncanny, God's exceeding majesty greatly terrifying the soul. This is Isaiah undone or Job

¹²Psalm 122 notes: "Pray for the *peace of Jerusalem!* 'May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!'" The psalmist overflows with love for God, his city and people.

speechless before God. Evil can also create a similar sense of enveloping dread, but approaching God's awesome power does not terminate. It ultimately leads to bliss. It is like burning agony or love's wound for some mystics. This anguished quest for God is the energy and urgency of the *numen*. Intense devotion and yearning for God effects visions and culminates in intimate union.

Longing: Biblically, Psalms 42 and 63 reflect that intense yearning. While there is a communal separation from God's temple, the yearning for collective worship rebuts the verbal taunts of unbelievers. Desperate longing for God results in physical tears and pangs of separation. The psalmist confronts his inward dejection, with longing memory, hoping for communion from a distance. The mystery of communion with God in trials is pictured as being in deep waters. Thus the longing is satisfied by a mysterious interaction of God in the agony of the psalmist.¹³

This prayer is rich in the intense longing for God. When a believer has a relationship with God, the multifarious experiences overwhelm him in all areas. There is a richness of past joys that makes him thirst for God. This personal relationship is unlike any other with great joy in communion. Lack of communion causes the greatest grief and depression, as in a deadly wound. The encounter with God is not narrowly joyful. The psalmist's depths are open in awe before the mystery of God. Yet this encounter is not a capricious one, since the psalmist confidently hopes in God, whose nature and promise differ vastly from the impersonal terrors of mystical religions.

Sin: One other aspect causes sparks in the presence of the Christian before God. That is the conflict of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Most mystics disconnect the moral aspects

¹³Psalm 42:1b-3: "As a deer *pants* for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul *thirsts* for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" Psalm 42:5-7: "Why are you *cast down*, O my soul, and why are you *in turmoil* within me? *Hope* in God; for I shall again *praise him*, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I *remember you* from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. *Deep calls to deep* at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me." Psalm 63 continues this intense longing for God and is covered at the end of this paper.

of holiness, but that is a central aspect of the relational problem that cannot be ignored. Psalm 32 talks of God's heavy hand upon the psalmist's sin. Life becomes wearisome upon transgressing God's moral order.¹⁴ Sin destroys purity and joyful communion with God. Psalm 15 highlights this need for practical righteousness and holiness.¹⁵ Similarly Psalm 51 anticipates God's terrors in broken bones and is bothered by sins before God's grace cleanses. David prays frantically for communion which is impossible without God dealing with sin.¹⁶

Fear of God: The awe of God translates even to the wicked overwhelmed against their will. Psalm 5 talks about both this terror and of the fear of God, which peppers the scriptures and is especially repeated in the Psalms.¹⁷ God is uniquely great and deserves everyone's worship. *Mysterium tremendum* is a vital aspect of reverence. Psalm 86 shows how God must grant us this fear for a unified understanding of God.¹⁸ There is a wholesome fear of God in Psalm 90 which shows how one's life is ordered in the fear of God, adding the wrath of God to his greatness.¹⁹

¹⁴Psalm 32: 3-4: "For when I kept silent, my *bones wasted away* through my groaning all day long. For day and night *your hand was heavy* upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah"

¹⁵Psalm 15: 1-2: "A Psalm of David. O LORD, *who* shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who *walks blamelessly* and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart"

¹⁶Psalm 51: 1-3: "*Have mercy* on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy *blot out my transgressions*. *Wash me* thoroughly from my iniquity, and *cleanse me* from my sin!" Psalm 51: 8-11: "Let me hear joy and gladness; *let the bones that you have broken rejoice*. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. *Create in me a clean heart*, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."

¹⁷Psalm 5: 4-7: "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; *evil may not dwell with you*. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; *you hate all evildoers*. *You destroy* those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the *fear of you*."

¹⁸Psalm 86: 8-11: "There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; *unite my heart to fear your name*." It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God as unconverted (Heb. 10:31).

¹⁹Psalm 90:11-12: "Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the *fear of you*? So teach us to number our days that we may get a *heart of wisdom*."

Wisdom begins with fearing God. Psalm 111 beautifully explains the reason for man's fear before God. Knowing God's nature and works experientially evokes reverent, wise praise.²⁰

6. Mystical experiences: Mysticism, the culmination of sublime religious experience invokes one of the following: apprehending reality, freedom from ego, oneness, bliss, or serenity. Insights are ultimate and penetrate the heart of things. They are seen as eternally and universally true. Monists emphasize oneness with the absolute. Nature mystics seek something fundamental underlying the world. Theistic mystics see transcendent reality become imminent, experiencing union but not identity with God. This is internal oneness of personal integration. Introversive monists equate the subject with reality while theists have a beatific vision of near-perfect union just short of identity. It is called spiritual marriage, indwelling, deification, and new birth or absorption.²¹ There is freedom in apparent transcendence of space and time with dissolved ego and losing all worldly concern. Extroversive mystics lose bodily limitation while space does not exist for the introversive. Descriptions of freedom include timelessness, immortality, and total surrender to God in melting and merging of the self with the absolute, as a lump of salt in water. Jesus charges that the one loving his life loses it and the one hating his life in this world keeps it eternally. However, this meaning is vastly different between monist and theistic understandings.

Biblically, the immanence of God is present throughout the scriptures, especially Psalm 46. The Psalms are filled with the creature-Creator distinction that replaces identity or

²⁰Psalm 111: "Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. *Great are the works of the LORD*, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness." "Holy and awesome is his name! *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!"

²¹ Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*. (Malden, MA. Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 116.

unity with immanence.²² Psalm 73 provides God’s present perspective on sinful riches on earth and oppression that the Christian endures. This moral element cannot be divorced in the biblical reversal of the order of created goods – whether material or relational. God is the greater “good” that compels Christians to reprioritize all possessions as relationally, not substantially, worthless.

The humble are blessed. Humility of heart and humiliation of state are often not far apart.²³ God’s favor upon both is seen in the scriptures, especially in Psalm 149 where God takes pleasure in his people and adorns the humble with salvation. There is satisfaction in the provision and the state God has placed the Christian. Psalm 65 calls such a one as blessed – as one draws near God by his courts and is satisfied with the goodness and holiness of his temple.

Regarding intimate communion with God, Psalm 42 spoke of that mystery where Deep calls upon the deep realms of the heart. Psalm 17 revels in the likeness of God that the believer enjoys: “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.” Spiritual intimacy imaged in Psalm 23 has the Shepherd in a satisfying relationship with his sheep. The Shepherd’s care for the sheep is both intimate and complete.

Biblical language never transgresses the Creator-creature distinction that some mystics lose in their marriage analogy. In Jesus, we have a marriage picture with Christ as the head of the church, his bride. As members of the church, we experience God’s presence as Immanuel. God is intimately present, yet is distinctly God. Having examined mystical spirituality in the Psalms, we now focus on Psalms as prayer, as it provides distinctive intimacy between the believer and God.

²²Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength, *a very present help* in trouble.” “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. *God is in the midst of her*; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.” “Come, *behold the works of the LORD*, how he has brought desolations on the earth.” The LORD of hosts is with us; *the God of Jacob is our fortress*. Selah”

²³ Craig L. Blomberg. *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*. (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, IL. Apollos, Intersity Press, 1999), 128. The Psalms are listed in the appendix.

Prayer and the Psalms

In one sense, mysticism revels in the unknown – an experience that cannot be captured in words or divine communication that is experienced but not understood. While there is such an element in the Psalms, the preponderance of texts rejoices in the intimacy with God that is reasonably understood. This clarity of the mind does not minimize experiential communion with God. It rather amplifies the awe and mystery of what remains unknown. The prayers of the Psalms show how biblical prayer hugely differs from unbiblical mysticism examined thus far.

Nature of God: Prayer as communication must take stock of the nature of the God to whom one prays. While mysticism often operates with some base, it often focuses more on the mystery to be explored, rather than its movement from known verities. Each stream often arises from a monistic or theistic base. Christian prayer likewise may begin in the uncertainties of life and limited knowledge of the believer. Yet, it cannot safely progress through purely ineffable experiences. There is some base knowledge without which prayer is meaningless. Psalm 10 helps demonstrate, as it begins with an impotent plea, moves in knowledge and ends in confidence.²⁴

Personal: The God of the Bible is a person. Many mystical attempts to experience ultimate reality fail here, in misunderstanding the nature of divine reality. Human connections to an impersonal ground of being, fail before they start. The object of their experience is false. Such experiences may be spiritual – in demonic deception or flawed expressions of their fallen psyche. True spiritual encounter with God rests in a personal relationship. The Bible never presents God as an impersonal force or an immutable law. Rather God is the person from whom we receive our own personhood. God’s personality is expressed diversely in the Psalms, whether as King or as

²⁴ Psalm 10:1: “*Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*”
Psalm 10:17-18: “O LORD, *you hear* the desire of the afflicted; *you will strengthen* their heart; you will incline your ear *to do justice* to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.”

Shepherd.²⁵ God's personality is not isolated in some independent domain, but he relates to humans who belong to his kingdom as citizens and sheep. The psalmist's prayer approaches God always as the lesser addressing the greater. It begins by recognizing God as owner. Thus any attempted communication can only proceed on God's terms in reverence and humble submission.

Purposeful: God purposefully executes his will.²⁶ Mystical experience is not some dissolution into nothingness, but an alignment of our purposes to God's. This is effected through prayer. The purpose of prayer is not just some spectacular experience of God to rapture the devotee or some illumination to enlighten him. As Kierkegaard notes, it changes the one praying as the psalmist attests repeatedly. Theresa of Avila finds its purpose in loving God, a trust that grows in each Psalm.²⁷ These go together as prayer flows in the relationship between persons. As love of God grows, one communes in greater measure with the Lover.²⁸ As one's being is caught up in God, it is not just in some abstract sense of metaphysical life. It is rather the submission of one's being, consistent with one's body, soul, mind, and strength, to the will of the Lover. Thus God's purposes take on a supreme function for the Christian. To the extent that scriptures reveal them, God's character and his purposes become intensely attractive to the Christian. Christians in prayer dissolve their will in a given matter to that of God. Many Psalms attest to the change in the purpose and will of the one praying. They begin with a specific intent and finish with a God-honoring trust and confidence that testify to genuine spiritual experience, as seen in Psalm 73.

²⁵ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying: Finding Our Way Through Duty To Delight*. (Downers Grove, IL. IVP Books, 2006), 21. Psalms 23 and 24 are good examples of God as Shepherd and King.

²⁶ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 27. Directional intent of God's will is distinctly Christian.

²⁷ L. B. Brown, *The Human Side Of Prayer*. (Birmingham, AL. Religious Education Press, 1994), 14, 27. Nearly all the psalms are examples of this alignment of will and love of God. Psalms 10 and 45 are good examples.

²⁸ Creasy, William C., ed, and trans. *The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis: A New Reading of the 1441 Autograph Latin Manuscript*. 2nd ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 41-43.

Approaching God: It is vital to know who God is. It is just as important to know how one must approach God. Most mystical systems approach God on man's own terms. Spirituality is advertised as an exciting discovery where both ancient and new pathways are individually explored to reach the pinnacle of supernatural delight. Yet the Bible charts the only safe course through this quagmire of human experience. Despite the rich diversity of genuine access to God in Christ, not approaching God aright results in certain destruction rather than eternal bliss.

Methods: In the types of prayers employed to meet with God, there are valid and invalid paths – some are traveled more often than others.²⁹ We have already noted that the paths of impersonal dissolution or personal stubbornness are invalid. Commonly traveled yet valid roads bring the mundane before God, to sanctify one's view and transform it under the divine will. The road less traveled exults in the multifarious personality and character of God. It reveals one day in his power, another in his wisdom, and yet another in his wrath or love. Various paths that lead to time before the throne are seen in the Psalms, as the psalmist contemplates the divine nature or gets transported from his pressing urgent concerns. Psalm 28 shows a desperate plea turn to a confident boast in God, while Psalm 29 exults unabashedly in God's glory and power.³⁰

Mundane: It is helpful to consider why the psalmist's prayers seem boring to some mystics. Mystics often contemplate the abstract, with ascetic tendencies diminishing the value of the material to over-emphasize the spiritual.³¹ The Bible makes no such dichotomy. It does value

²⁹J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 34.

³⁰ Psalm 28 begins, "To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, *be not deaf to me*, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit." It ends, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; *my heart exults*, and with my song I give thanks to him." Psalm 29 resounds praises, ascribing glory to God, describing the splendor of the voice of God who rules in power.

³¹William Johnston, *The Wounded Stag: Christian Mysticism Today*. New York, NY. Fordham University Press, 1998), 132. Johnston sees poverty as a spiritual virtue leading to climax in death and resurrection.

God, people, and truth above material profit. Yet it does not lessen material goods for spiritual gain. The psalmist freely prays for physical protection, material restoration, and providential care. Psalm 111 balances it with justice and righteousness which outweigh material possessions.

Supplication: Asking for aid is another area where mystics pull-back. Supplication seems selfish in demanding favorable justice. Yet, when the spirit-matter dichotomy is resolved, the problem disappears. Many Psalms including Psalm 74 showcase this powerfully. It notes how God's purpose operates not just in heaven, but is active now on earth. The supplicant often aligns with God's purposes on earth and sees resistance to his purposes as direct opposition to God's own will.³² The Old Testament had made this physically explicit to Israel in national covenants.

Honesty: Complaining to God feels wrong in prayer. Even we don't like complainers. Yet several Psalms complain to God, like Psalm 55. One's responses to trials can either be stoic indifference or robust engagement to bring inequities before the just God. Being made human, pretending to be impassive or suppressing reality does not necessarily honor God. Truthfulness before God must grasp God's character and ability. Acceptable complaints are neither stubborn in pain nor forgetful of our dependence on God. Intimacy with God requires communication of joys and sorrows. This is a lifeline that transforms sorrows under God's comforts and care.³³ Yet God's consolation is not simply conjured upon each entreaty. There is a genuine confidence and hope as the heart is laid bare before God and God assures the soul. Patient faith is necessary

³² J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 147. Psalm 74: "O God, *why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?*" "How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them! *Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.*"

³³ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 180. Psalm 55: "*Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked.*" "But *I call to God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. "Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*"

while awaiting God's redemption, as a vital aspect of trust that the psalmist grows in. Psalms 40 and 130 show how the psalmist holds firmly to God even when his own strength runs dry.³⁴

Contemplation: Meditation is a vital element of contemplative prayer.³⁵ We envision a mystic as one closed off from society and contemplating God for extended periods of time. This vision is not entirely false but is often contrasted as being good over and above other responsible human functions. Biblical prayer is rather seen as continuous, where the Christian spends his waking moments in God's presence. In this context, the psalmist does willfully withdraw into his closet as it were – often to the temple – to reflect on the character of God, to let the God of truth overwhelm his mind, to transfix his will, to grieve over sin or gladden in ecstatic joy.³⁶ This does not come easy. Michael Haykin notes how prayer can be “times of exquisite delight when the struggle and duty slides over into pure joy.” This joy is based on truth. Meditation is “a dwelling upon and a ‘chewing over’ of what one has found through hard study of the Scriptures.”³⁷ D. A. Carson calls spiritual, persistent, biblically-minded prayer as foundational in knowing God.³⁸ God effects this knowledge as the Holy Spirit transforms the mind, washing it by the truth of the Word. Meditation does not empty but rather fills the mind. This mental washing surely also sanctifies the body in action. Ruminating on the truth spiritually transforms the psalmist. Psalm

³⁴ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 207. Psalm 40 begins, “*I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.*” Psalm 130:5-6 note, “*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.*”

³⁵ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 68.

³⁶ Lawrence, of the Resurrection, Brother. *The Practice of the Presence of God: Critical Edition*. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1994), 15. The simple direction of all action as devotional to God is powerful.

³⁷ Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: Introduction to Biblical Spirituality*, (Darlington, England: Webster, NY. Evangelical Press, 2007), 59, 61.

³⁸ D.A. Carson, *A Call To Spiritual Reformation*. (Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Book House, 1992), 16.

119 speaks eloquently to this truth.³⁹ Contemplation apprehends God's character and delights the soul. It then directs its will to work its implications out in daily, sanctified living.

Praise: Praise often spontaneously overflows in the psalmist's prayers. The psalmist also praises in a cogitated response when reflecting on a flawed world and a corresponding attribute of God. Praise acknowledges God's greatness and excellence. It satisfies our need to extol his majesty. Before God we recognize our lack of esteem and our great need for him. Some Psalms show how this humility shapes our praise and adoration of God while others forget our meager estate in awe-inspired grandeur that deserves the highest poetry.⁴⁰ The psalmist's bliss is not exclusively a selfish inward containment. Rather a worthless man reflecting on the greatest worth, honored by being accorded audience with bliss, responds in heartfelt worship and praise.

Examination: Prayer is very helpful as self-checkup.⁴¹ In mysticism devoid of morals, this reflective correction is lost. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge. Mystics revel in new information and experience. This is said to somehow transform the mystic's life without a conscious application of truth. The Biblical model has a more conscious approach to this change. Yes, the believer's presence before God does rake up and burn down one's flaws as one is overwhelmed by divine beauty. What is effected is a heart-change, a transformation of the will toward the cross that must be cleansed. Yet, sanctification is never automatic – the inspired

³⁹Psalm 119:1-6: "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who *keep his testimonies*, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded *your precepts to be kept diligently*. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments."

⁴⁰J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 97,102. Psalm 95: "let us make a joyful noise to him with *songs of praise!* For the LORD is a *great God*, and a *great King* above all gods." Psalm 96 calls all the earth to sing to God and declare his glory: "*great is the LORD*, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods."

⁴¹J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 120. Psalms 139, 66 and 73 lay bare the believer's life before God discerning eyes in prayer. God corrects by illumining the psalmist and transforming his will to holiness.

psalmist returns from prayer to life, energized by God. His short-term ecstasy continues onto a long-term reflective application of God's power that gradually transforms him into God's image. Psalm 66 is an overwhelming paean of God's grandeur, with redemptive pain as a path to praise.

Collective Prayers: Most mystics revel individually in God's presence. The prayers of the psalmist often exult by joining the crowds in songs, antiphons, and common worship. Written prayer captures that individual rapture which is shared among others who know this same God. They communally celebrate God's glorious heights by praying the legendary peaks of praise. These Psalms showcase that joyful joint prayer to God that proves instructive to all believers.⁴²

Entire Being: Sincere prayer is wholehearted. The Christian is consumed by the object of his prayer.⁴³ The psalmist's overarching and all-consuming abject dependence is poured out in poignant prayer.⁴⁴ This is not a loss of individuality, but a diminishing forgetfulness of all aspects of one's own well-being before the unqualified satisfaction of the soul in God. The psalmist also reflects it in supplication prayers, where God's grandeur seems veiled before an immediate need. Here, the psalmist fervently reflects God's overarching purpose and passionately seeks action.

⁴² J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 231. Psalm 34:8-11: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes *refuge in him!* Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; *I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*" The songs of ascents are another such category.

⁴³ J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*, 259. Psalm 19:14 enjoins God to find his words and meditations acceptable in his sight. Psalm 45, verse 1 bubbles: "My heart *overflows* with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe." Psalm 66:18 admonishes: "If I had *cherished iniquity* in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 73: 25-26 note: "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is *nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." In this sense the Psalmist's entire being is fallen upon God and before God.

⁴⁴ Psalm 63:1-8 shows how contingent is one's feverishly parched life, satisfied only by the bountiful God: "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me."

Intimacy in the Psalms

The Psalms capture the believer's intimate prayers with God. Inner communion with God manifests exterior changes. Kierkegaard, who championed existential life in God, struggled to relate these internal and external aspects of prayer.⁴⁵ The conjunction of intimate mysticism and outward prayer in the Psalms is not often appreciated. Psalm 3 addresses God intimately. The psalmist in his need boldly asks God his defender and rescuer. He pleads with God in Psalm 4 for audience and relief. He entreats in Psalm 5 to listen to his groaning, and in Psalm 6 begs, "How long?" The extremely personal conversation presupposes a dear friendship between two beings on opposite ends of the metaphysical spectrum. The grandeur of God, on one end, dominates the psalmist, who is overwhelmed by God's various attributes – his greatness, power, and love. The lowliness of man, on the other end, draws the psalmist in tears, sorrow, and supplication for full satisfaction in God. This operation is not predominantly mysterious, since much that is known of God raptures the psalmist in what lies veiled beyond human knowledge. Ultimately, the presence of God in prayer fills the Christian with overflowing joy. Christian prayer just verbalizes that joy.

Conclusion

Prayer is God's gift to the Christian as a foretaste of heaven. Psalms of praise spill over that pleasure. This paper revisited some common conceptions of prayer from the viewpoint of biblical fidelity in the Psalms and developed the sweetness of that communion that commonly is vaunted as mysticism. Many errors were sifted through, rejecting and trimming out unbiblical falsehoods, while sharply refocusing on the experiential dimension of joyful prayer in the Psalms.

⁴⁵ L. B. Brown, *The Human Side Of Prayer*. Birmingham, AL. Religious Education Press, 1994), 106.

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APPENDIX

All the Psalms used in this paper are listed below. These are from the ESV translation.

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2:1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 6 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." 7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 3:1 O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; 2 many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah 3 But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. 4 I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah 5 I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. 7 Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. 8 Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah

Psalm 4:1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! 2 O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah 3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. 4 Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah 5 Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. 6 There are many who say, "Who will show us some

good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!" 7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. 8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 5:1 Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. 2 Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. 5 The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. 6 You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. 7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. 8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. 9 For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. 10 Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you. 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. 12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Psalm 6:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. 2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. 3 My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD--how long? 4 Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. 5 For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? 6 I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. 7 My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. 8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. 9 The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. 10 All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

Psalm 10:1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? 2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD. 4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God." 5 His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. 6 He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity." 7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. 8 He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. 11 He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it." 12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. 13 Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"? 14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have

been the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none. 16 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. 17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear 18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

Psalm 15:1 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; 3 who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; 4 in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Psalm 17:1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! 2 From your presence let my vindication come! Let your eyes behold the right! 3 You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. 4 With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. 5 My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. 8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, 9 from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. 10 They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. 11 They have now surrounded our steps; they set their eyes to cast us to the ground. 12 He is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush. 13 Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, 14 from men by your hand, O LORD, from men of the world whose portion is in this life. You fill their womb with treasure; they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants. 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, 5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be

blameless, and innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, 2 for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. 3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. 5 He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah 7 Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! 9 Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah

Psalm 28:1 To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. 2 Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. 3 Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. 4 Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. 5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more. 6 Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. 8 The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. 9 Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 29:1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!" 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD

sits enthroned as king forever. 11 May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. 3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah 5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. 7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. 9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Psalm 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. 5 Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! 9 Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! 10 The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. 11 Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. 20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. 21 Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. 22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. 3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. 4 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! 5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. 6 In sacrifice and offering you have

not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. 7 Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: 8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." 9 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. 10 I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. 11 As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! 12 For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me. 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me! 14 Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt! 15 Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!" 16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!" 17 As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Psalm 42:1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation 6 and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. 7 Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. 8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. 9 I say to God, my rock: "Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" 10 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Psalm 45:1 My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. 2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. 3 Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! 4 In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds! 5 Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; 8 your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; 9 daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. 10 Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, 11 and the king

will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. 12 The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people. 13 All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. 14 In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. 15 With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. 16 In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. 17 I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. 14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. 18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; 19 then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 55:1 Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! 2 Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, 3 because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. 4 My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. 6 And I say,

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; 7 yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah 8 I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest." 9 Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go around it on its walls, and iniquity and trouble are within it; 11 ruin is in its midst; oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace. 12 For it is not an enemy who taunts me-- then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me-- then I could hide from him. 13 But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. 14 We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng. 15 Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart. 16 But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. 17 Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. 18 He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. 19 God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, Selah because they do not change and do not fear God. 20 My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. 21 His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. 22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. 23 But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you.

Psalm 63:1 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. 3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. 4 So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, 6 when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; 7 for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. 8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. 9 But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth; 10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword; they shall be a portion for jackals. 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall exult, for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Psalm 65:1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. 2 O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. 3 When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. 4 Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! 5 By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; 6 the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; 7 who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, 8 so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. 9 You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. 10 You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. 11 You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. 12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,

13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Psalm 66:1 Shout for joy to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! 3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 4 All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name." Selah 5 Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. 6 He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him, 7 who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations--let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah 8 Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, 9 who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. 10 For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. 11 You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; 12 you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. 13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, 14 that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah 16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. 17 I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. 18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. 19 But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

Psalm 73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. 5 They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. 7 Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. 8 They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. 9 They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. 10 Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. 11 And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. 13 All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children. 16 But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, 17 until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. 18 Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. 19 How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! 20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. 21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, 22 I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. 23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to

everyone who is unfaithful to you. 28 But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

Psalm 74:1 O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? 2 Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage! Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt. 3 Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary! 4 Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs. 5 They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees. 6 And all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers. 7 They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground. 8 They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue them"; they burned all the meeting places of God in the land. 9 We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long. 10 How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? 11 Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them! 12 Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13 You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. 15 You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams. 16 Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. 17 You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter. 18 Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy scoffs, and a foolish people reviles your name. 19 Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your poor forever. 20 Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence. 21 Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame; let the poor and needy praise your name. 22 Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day! 23 Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

Psalm 86:1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. 2 Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you--you are my God. 3 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. 4 Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. 6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. 7 In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. 8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. 9 All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. 10 For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. 11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. 12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. 13 For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. 14 O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. 15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. 17 Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Psalm 90:1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" 4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. 5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: 6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. 7 For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. 9 For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. 10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. 11 Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? 12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. 13 Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. 16 Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 95:1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."

Psalm 96:1 Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! 2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. 3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! 4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! 9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! 10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity." 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; 12 let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy 13 before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Psalm 111:1 Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. 2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. 3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. 5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; 8 they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Psalm 119:1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. 7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. 8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! 13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. 14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. 16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. 17 Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. 19 I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! 20 My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. 22 Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies. 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. 24 Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors. 25 My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. 28 My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! 29 Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. 31 I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! 32 I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart! 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! 37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. 38 Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. 39 Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. 40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life! 41 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; 42 then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word. 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. 44 I will keep your law

continually, forever and ever, 45 and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. 46 I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, 47 for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. 48 I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes. 49 Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. 50 This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. 51 The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. 52 When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. 53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. 54 Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. 55 I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. 56 This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts. 57 The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words. 58 I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. 59 When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; 60 I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. 61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. 62 At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. 63 I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. 64 The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes! 65 You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word. 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. 68 You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. 69 The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; 70 their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. 71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. 72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. 73 Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. 74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word. 75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. 76 Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight. 78 Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts. 79 Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame! 81 My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. 82 My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?" 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes. 84 How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me? 85 The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law. 86 All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me! 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. 88 In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth. 89 Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. 91 By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. 92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. 94 I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts. 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. 97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I

understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. 102 I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. 106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules. 107 I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word! 108 Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules. 109 I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. 111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. 112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end. 113 I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. 114 You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. 115 Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. 116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! 117 Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! 118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. 119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. 120 My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments. 121 I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. 122 Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. 123 My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. 124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. 125 I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! 126 It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken. 127 Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. 128 Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way. 129 Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. 130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. 131 I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. 132 Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. 133 Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. 134 Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. 135 Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. 136 My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law. 137 Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. 138 You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. 139 My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words. 140 Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it. 141 I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts. 142 Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. 143 Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight. 144 Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live. 145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes. 146 I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies. 147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. 148 My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. 149 Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O LORD, according to your justice give me life. 150 They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law. 151 But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true. 152 Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever. 153 Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. 154 Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise! 155 Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes. 156 Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life

according to your rules. 157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies. 158 I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands. 159 Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love. 160 The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever. 161 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. 162 I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. 163 I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law. 164 Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. 165 Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. 166 I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments. 167 My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. 168 I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you. 169 Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! 170 Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. 171 My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. 172 My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right. 173 Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. 174 I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. 175 Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Psalm 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" 2 Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! 3 Jerusalem--built as a city that is bound firmly together, 4 to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. 5 There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you! 7 Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" 8 For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Psalm 130:1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! 2 O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! 3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; 6 my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. 7 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. 8 And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Psalm 139:1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. 13 For you

formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. 19 Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! 20 They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain! 21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? 22 I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Psalm 149:1 Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! 2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! 3 Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. 5 Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, 7 to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, 8 to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, 9 to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!