

Introduction to the Psalms

Kate Patterson

The wine-cellar of the Holy Spirit

Bernard of Clairvaux



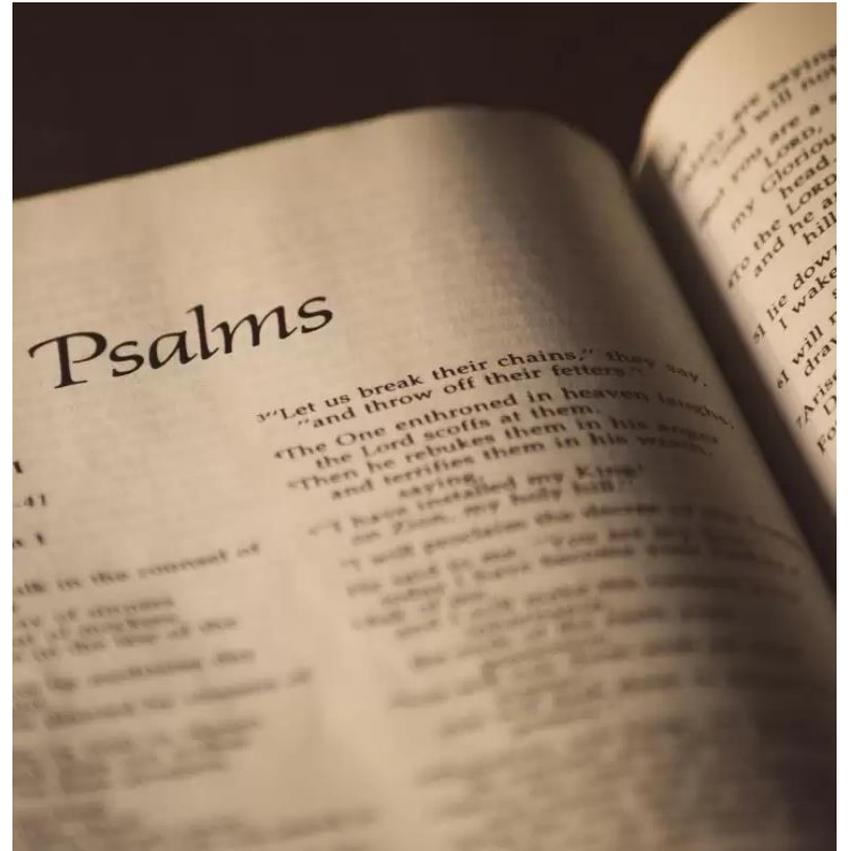
A treasured resource



- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The Prayer Book of the Bible”
- John Calvin: all we need for knowledge of eternal salvation
- Martin Luther: “a little Bible”

Commanded

- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, **singing psalms** and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. *Colossians 3:16*
- ... be filled with the Spirit, **speaking to one another with psalms**, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. *Ephesians 5:18-19*



Bless the Lord O my soul!

Bless the Lord O my soul

All that is within me, bless his holy name!" *Ps 103.1* ESV

God's breath in man returning to his birth.

Prayer (1) by George Herbert



Songs of the soul

When morning dawns and evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.

Ps 65:8



Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Ps 150:6

To Consider

- *How do you use the Psalms as a prayer book?*
- *Does it matter if we say or sing the Psalms aloud?*
- *Can you remember when a Psalm carried you into God's presence?*
- *Look at Psalms 42:1-5. Why address our own souls?*

STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

A library of 150 Psalms:

- Book 1: 1-41
- Book 2: 42-72
- Book 3: 73-89
- Book 4: 90-106
- Book 5: 107-150

120-134 Psalms of ascent
145-150 Hallelujah!

Who wrote them?

73 attributed to David

Asaph, Sons of Korah, Moses, Solomon, Heman and Ethan



Types of Psalms

Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932 : Form Criticism

- Individual laments
- Communal laments
- Songs of thanksgiving
- Hymns
- Royal Psalms (e.g. 2,72, 110). YOUR KINGDOM COME!

Sigmund Mowinkel:

- Wisdom Psalms

A literary temple

- Sigmund Mowinckel

The Psalms in Israel's Worship,
The Biblical Resource Series
(Mich:Eerdmans, 2004).



POETRY

“Poets use words to drag us into the depth of reality itself”.
Eugene Petersen

Poetic Techniques: parallelisms, inclusion, acrostic, metaphor, simile, repetition and contrast.

Psalm 1 – parellism and simile

- **A** 1-3.

Character and success of righteous
– like a tree by water



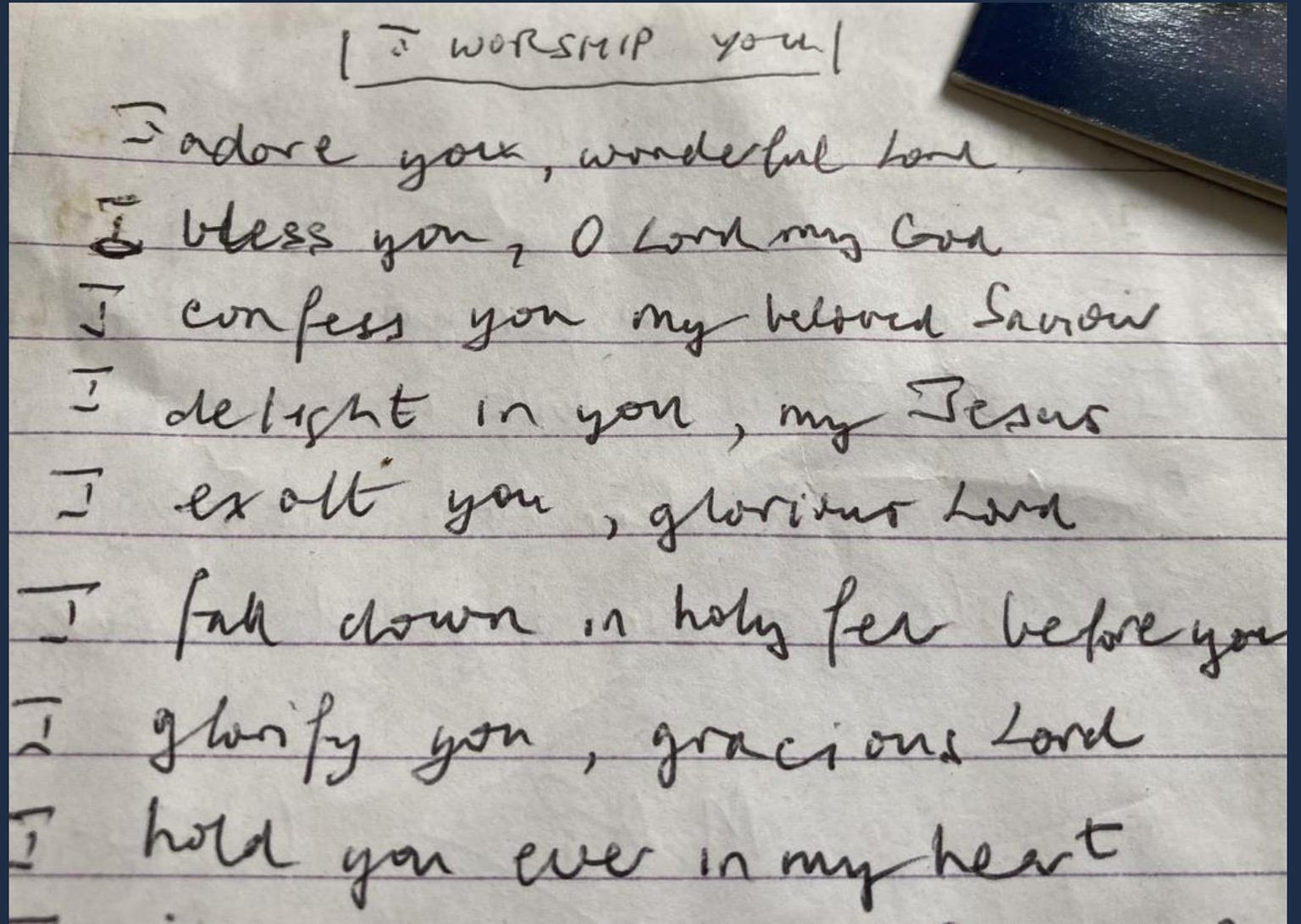
- **B** 4-5.

Character and success of wicked
- like chaff in the wind



Acrostic Psalms

- Psalms 9- 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; and 145



A photograph of a piece of lined paper with a handwritten acrostic poem. The paper is slightly aged and has a dark blue object, possibly a pen or pencil, in the top right corner. The text is written in cursive and is arranged in a list format, with each line starting with a letter that forms the word 'I adore you'.

I adore you!

- I adore you, wonderful Lord
- I bless you, O Lord my God
- I confess you my beloved Saviour
- I delight in you, my Jesus
- I exalt you, glorious Lord
- I fall down in holy fear before you
- I glorify you, gracious Lord
- I hold you ever in my heart

God our Rock

Psalm 18,28,31,40,42, 61, 62, 71, 78, 92

What does the metaphor of the rock bring to your mind?

How does this change your relationship to God and your attitude to the coming week?

Why is poetry important in the Psalms?



Key theological themes

- The Sovereignty of God.

Yahweh reigns! Let the peoples tremble. Ps 99.1

- The judgement of the wicked
- Human suffering
- Remembering the love and faithfulness of God

Lament psalms

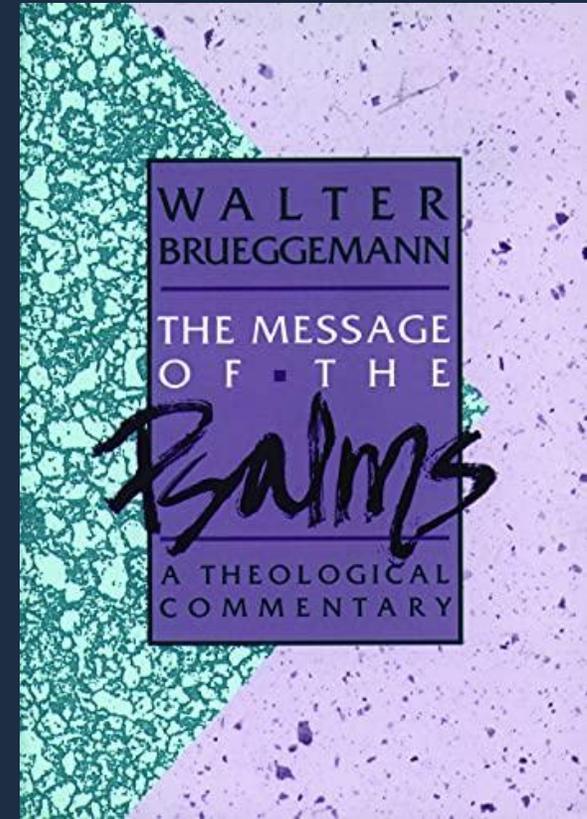
Orientation to disorientation to reorientation

Psalm 73

Surely God is good to Israel.. V1

My foot nearly slipped because I started to envy the wicked. V3

Yet *I am always with you ... V23*



Transformation

- Being known: *Ps 51, Ps 139*
- Knowing God: *Ps 46*
- Remembering what God has done: *Ps 77, Ps 78*
- Through and towards worship

Praise the Lord.
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty heavens.
Praise Him for His acts of power;
Praise Him for His surpassing greatness.
Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

To consider

- How do the Psalms help us worship authentically?
- How do the Psalms re-orientate us?
- What do you forget that you need the Psalms to remind you of?
- What struck you from this session?