

# Introduction to the Psalms

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Kate Patterson

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*The wine-cellar of the Holy Spirit*

Bernard of Clairvaux



# A treasured resource

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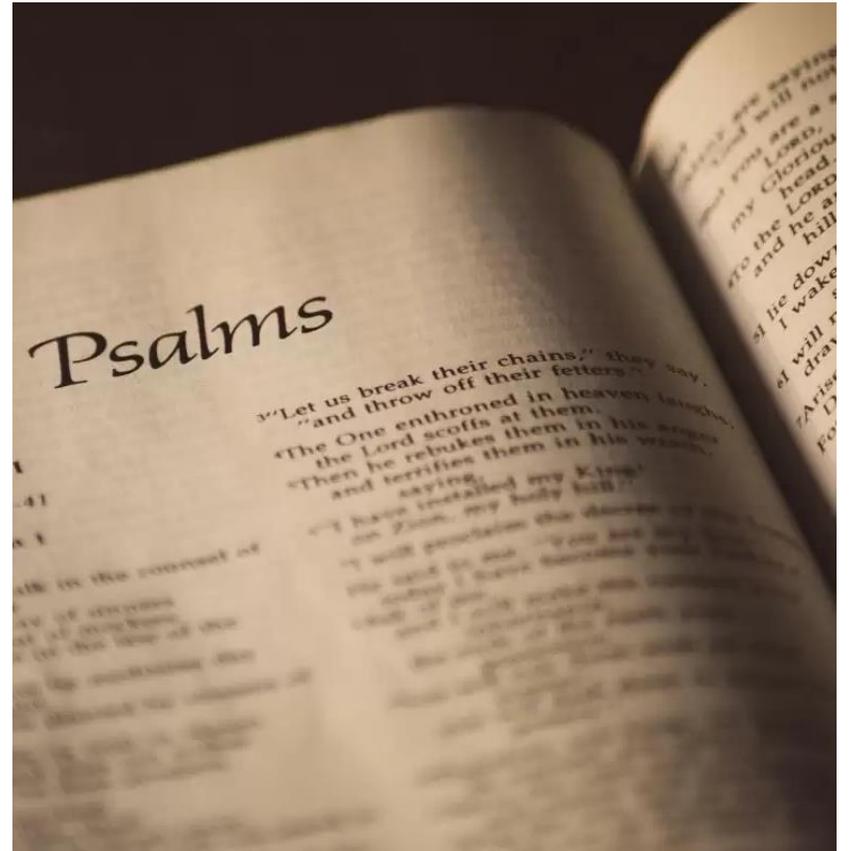


- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The Prayer Book of the Bible”
- John Calvin: all we need for knowledge of eternal salvation
- Martin Luther: “a little Bible”

# Commanded

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- 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!

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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

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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

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- *In Colossians, we are commanded to sing Psalms. Why does it matter to use our physical being to praise God?*
- *Look at Psalms 42:1-5. Why address our own souls? Have you ever done this?*

# STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

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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

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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

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“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

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- **A** 1-3.

Character and success of righteous  
– like a tree by water



- **B** 4-5.

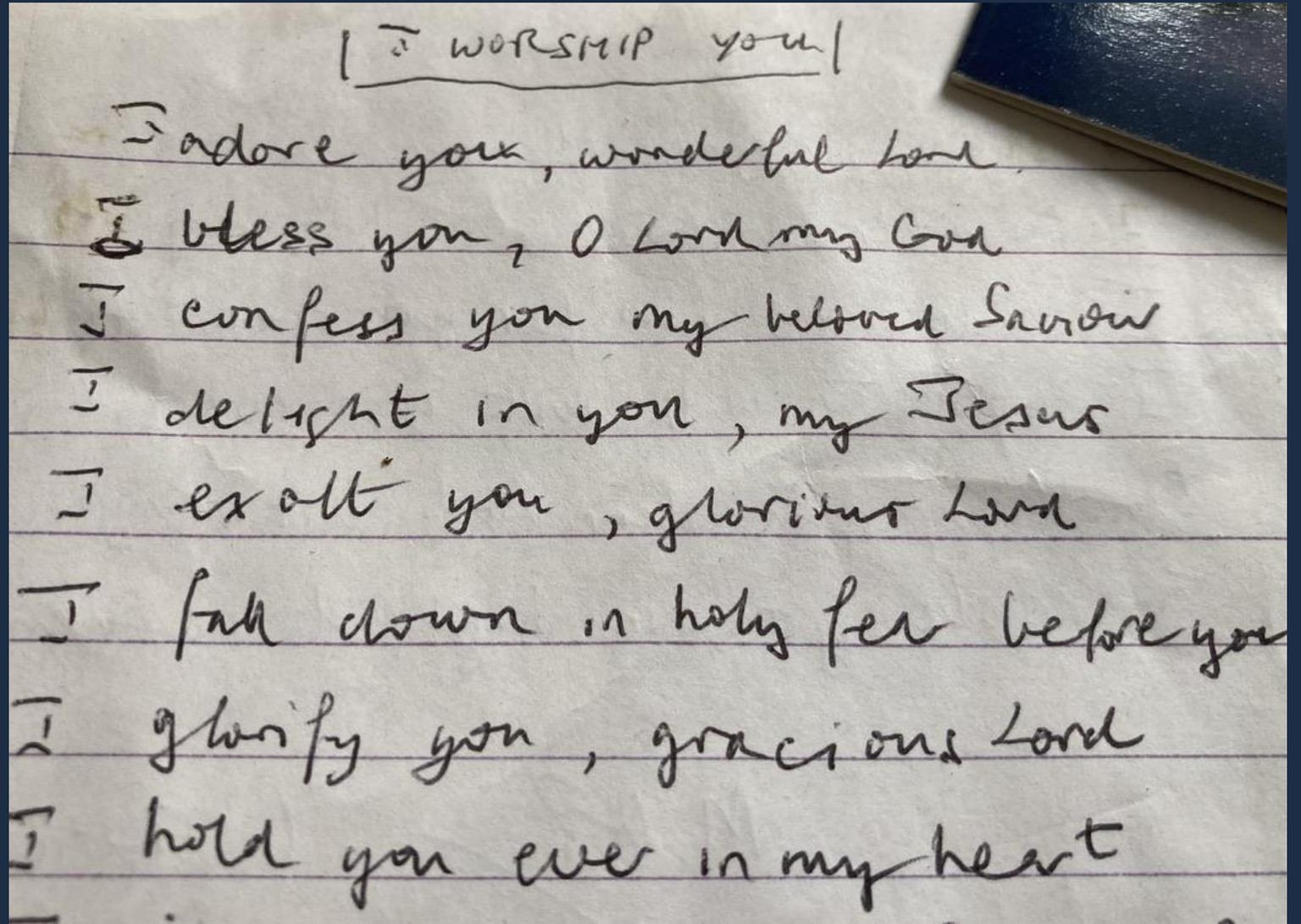
Character and success of wicked  
- like chaff in the wind



# Acrostic Psalms

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



I worship 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

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- 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

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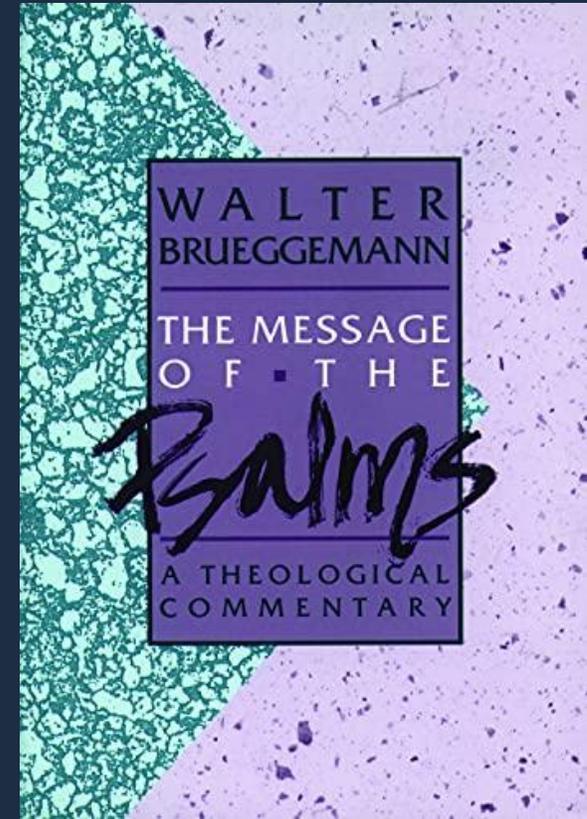
Orientation to disorientation to reorientation

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

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- 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?