

An Introduction to the Psalms

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] This morning is an introductory sermon regarding the book of Psalms overall. That is not a soundproof wall, is it? It's new to hear that.

You know, I feel like as I'm getting older, terms keep getting invented faster than I can keep up with them. I've stopped trying probably 10 years ago to keep up with all the new phrases, but one of the last new ones I remember before I checked out was wingman.

Ben, has anybody, have any guys here actually been a successful wingman to a friend? Ben, have you?

Really? Okay. Jared? Okay. Jake? Okay. Cool. Cool. Congratulations. Long time ago. I feel that the main burden for this summertime is for me to help you to fall in love with the book of Psalms.

I was at the Regional Assembly of Elders with a group of pastors that I've known, many of them for 15, 20 years, and we got into a conversation about what's your favorite book of the Bible, and I think I was asked first, and I did something extremely uncouth when I responded.

[1 : 24] There is only one right answer to this. This is not a personal preference kind of thing. God has given us the Psalms as a kind of daily companion to serve a role that no other book in the Bible serves in the way that the Psalms cares for us.

So that's my broad mission is to help you if you are not a regular consumer of the Psalms, enjoyer of the Psalms, in particular, prayer of the Psalms.

I believe that I have done those things for a number of years long enough to maybe think of why it might be that you haven't yet made this your best friend in the Bible, and I hope to, not just this week, but throughout the summer, help you to overcome whatever obstacles there are that are keeping you from understanding that the only right answer to what is your favorite book of the Bible is the book of Psalms.

Today we're going to talk about three things the Psalms do to us or do for us. The first one is that they reveal the centrality of prayer in the Christian life.

A second is that the Psalms reveal the conflictual nature of the Christian life. We live a life in conflict as Christians.

[2 : 46] And the third is that the Psalms uniquely commend Christ to our conscience. So I'm going to go through those, and this is going to be somewhat informal because I'm really just speaking to some extent out of a philosophy that I've developed probably since 2007, I'd say, where I began to read the Psalms every day, five Psalms every day.

And I would absolutely, in case you're wondering, yes, I would always whip out on Psalm 119 day. I didn't read five Psalms on Psalm 119 day. I didn't even finish one Psalm on Psalm. But I read these for years.

I started reading them when I was planting a church in St. Louis. And we were doing what is known in the old days as a bootstrap plant.

We were not funded. We were raising all of the funds ourselves. And that required me to go and get a full-time job out in the business world while also planting this church.

And so every morning I would sit in my car in the parking lot of this corporate office that I worked at, and I would read through these five Psalms. And I encountered, as I started taking them seriously, some problems, some things that were keeping me from understanding them, enjoying them, applying them, and so forth.

[4 : 05] And so I want to talk about that with you guys today. The first point, this idea that the Psalms are a revealer of the centrality of prayer, comes pretty obvious if you just look at the book itself, its size, and its placement in your Bible.

So here I'd be making what is known as a teleological argument that the Psalms reveal that to God, prayer is a very big deal. Because fundamentally, what the Psalms are, they are a book of prayers, both individual and corporate.

And you can see by the fact that this is the largest book of the Bible, God put it right in the middle so that back when we held paper Bibles, if you drop your paper Bible, it almost always lands on the Psalms.

Unless you're some weird dispensationalist and it lands in Revelation. But that's your fault. Just by examining the basic nature of the Psalms, you might say, just by that alone, you can see how central the issue of prayer is in the Christian life.

The truth is, is that if we were just to look at it from that perspective, we'd say, well, God takes prayer to be a really big deal. Let me add a layer to that, a layer of argumentation to that.

[5 : 25] I do not know of another area of life where God holds our hand and sort of coaches us along with this much detail and specificity as he does in the area of prayer.

Think about what I'm saying. God didn't just call us to pray. He gave us the biggest book in the Bible that is simply full of prayers.

Like, that's what it is. When I meet with parents that are entering or considering the possibility of sending their kids to Knox, some of them don't have a lot of familiarity with what classical education is and how it works and so on and so forth.

And one of the ways I explain it to them is that there are three stages in classical education, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. And that the idea that I use is a cooking metaphor. I say that, you know, ultimately, we want our kids to learn how to cook delicious meals with whatever ingredients they have on hand.

But the very first step is something that takes a lot of parents by surprise. And that is there's just an incredible amount of memorization that is required in the first few years in that grammar phase.

[6 : 39] The kids just recently recited, I think, 160 events on a timeline that they memorized as kindergartners. And how long did that take? It took like 10 minutes, something like that, to recite.

And parents are often wondering, like, why do we spend so much time memorizing? Typically, especially in secular education, rote memorization is sort of vilified and learning, you know, and so forth.

And I explain it this way. I say, first step for these kids is we want to fill their pantry with ingredients. That's the grammar phase. That's the memorization phase. And the second step is we want to show them what other people have made with these ingredients.

And that's the logic phase. And then the final step is we want to teach them how to cook their own gourmet meals with all of the various ideas and insights throughout history, throughout the great Western conversation, so that each person has optimal agency and can cook whatever they want to cook.

My mom, she really, she denies this, but she really did tell me when I was pretty young, Chris, you're kind of annoying and you're not super handsome. You may be single for a long time.

Therefore, you need to learn how to cook.

[7 : 53] And I proved her wrong at least one of those assessments. God typically just doesn't do it this way. He doesn't usually stock our pantry for us.

That's what he's done with prayer. It's a really unique thing that he just hands you 150 prayers.

There's nothing really like this that I can see in life.

He certainly gives us careful, fatherly instruction, but he rarely holds our hands to this degree. One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 104 15, where it says, From your lofty abode you water the mountains.

The earth is satisfied from the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

Well, here is a psalm that is saying that God gives us oil and wine and bread. But, of course, that's not true in the strictest sense of the word.

[9 : 02] God gives us raw materials that we then cultivate and then, through human ingenuity, figure out how to turn grapes into wine and grain into bread and so forth.

And, of course, the whole process is God. God who wills and works according to his purpose. So we would always want to give God credit for everything, but most of life is like this.

He gives you raw materials, and through a process of ingenuity and thoughtfulness and education, tradition and culture, you assemble the raw materials yourselves into various things.

God does exactly the opposite with prayer. He fills your pantry full of prayers, and then says, you're, of course, free to come up with your own, but there will be times when you do not know how to pray. And here, here are 150 of them. There's really nothing like this in the Bible. God is so faithful to show us, through the psalms, that prayer is central to the Christian life.

[10:04] And I think if you don't know that, one reason why you might neglect the psalms is you might not know that prayer is so important. If you know that prayer is super important, you will soon find yourself thinking, I do not know how to pray.

I'm not sure what to pray. I need some help in praying. And here, God has given you just a virtually unlimited number of prayers to pray. Number two, the psalms reveal the essential conflictual nature of the Christian life.

You know, in my studies over the years, I would always see all of these men whom you know well, their names, Spurgeon, Luther, Calvin, you would always see them speak glowingly about the psalms.

I posted Calvin's introduction to his commentary on the psalms to Base Camp. And it's unusual to see John Calvin that, what I would call emotional for John Calvin, and personal as he describes his love for the psalms.

I didn't know that Abraham Lincoln loved the psalms. Abraham Lincoln wrote a friend and said, this is the best book. There is something in it for every day.

[11:10] And I started thinking about, you know, the one thing that Calvin and Luther and Spurgeon and Lincoln have in common is they were all people who were used to experiencing extreme criticism, hostility.

They lived militant, conflictual lives. They were all like that. In fact, Calvin, in his commentary introducing the psalms, he says, like, one of the reasons I love them is that the psalms teach me how to take up my cross.

And then he says something like, and for those of you who know me, you know all of the conflict and difficulty I faced as I rose up against the papacy. So I don't think you can really read the psalms without seeing this, but I do think you can read the psalms and see all of the references to enemies and all of the references to warfare.

By the way, we sang some of those today, and don't be dull in this sense. When you're saying stronghold, when you're saying refuge, when you're saying tower, when you're saying shield, when you're saying fortress, you're talking about warfare.

So there are many, many psalms that talk about enemies and foes and so forth, but there are also many psalms that simply assume that war is always going on in the Christian life and makes reference to refuge or stronghold or strength or horn.

[12:36] These are all embattled kind of terms. I think it's important, men, that you understand that I would argue that you would first maybe read the psalms and feel like they're a little too emotional, but I would just tell you, well, maybe it's not that they're too emotional, it's just that the people who are writing them are actually doing really, really hard things, and you're not.

And maybe you haven't experienced the raw nerves of battle. And I think if you have, you understand that, you know, there's sort of a little bit more emotion involved in those situations when you're actually facing real conflict.

So don't be put off by the emotion in the psalms. Remember that almost all the people who wrote these were actual killers, actual men of war, and that this book is really written by men in particular who had undergone severe tests and conflicts.

John Calvin said that we only pray when we sense our need and when we understand by faith that God is good and that his promises are true.

This idea of sensing our need, you know, we have to know that we need to pray in order to pray. And I think one of the things I see most often in my life, and I think probably in yours as well, is we often forget in this cushy American modern life that we are indeed surrounded by enemies.

[14:05] You can read the psalms. I was talking to some guys this week about this. You can read the psalms and at first feel like they have so little relevance to you because you're not actively being hunted down by Saul.

Or you're not underneath this persecution or this pressure or so forth. The truth is, is that the Bible teaches quite plainly that you are surrounded by enemies both within and without.

Your life, you were born into a holy war. And whether you see that or not at all times, I tell you, it's just dangerous when you don't. If you don't see it, it's since those are when the real dangers come is when you actually don't understand that you were born into a holy war.

So the psalms reveal this basic nature. I want to walk you through kind of how to read the enemy language in the psalms.

So one of the first things I would say is that throughout church history, when Christians encounter the final enemy, which is 1 Corinthians 15, death, all Christians instinctively run to the psalms.

[15:17] I think this tells me that we know what the psalms are for. They're for fighting. We just don't realize that we're often in a fight. And when the fight becomes undeniable, we run to the psalms instinctively.

Back in the 1400s, a little booklet was produced called *Ars Merindi*, or *The Art of Dying*. And it's really just a little booklet filled with psalms to help the saints as they die.

It contains like Psalm 31 5, into your hands I commend my spirit. It helps saints as they are passing to repent. It includes Psalm 51, Have mercy on me, O God.

Psalm 71, O come God to my assistance. Make haste to help me. Psalm 130, Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord. And so as early as the 14, well, well before this, but it became, you know, consistently published, these sort of handbooks for dying well.

And they were really just psalms. They were really just a series of psalms that people could use as they faced the final enemy. And of course, right around the time of the Puritans, one particular psalm became the dying psalm, which is?

[16:38] Come on, you know this. Psalm 23, yes. It became the central dying psalm. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I actually have a hard time reading that psalm out loud without hearing a pulse, a heart rate machine in my ear as I'm reading it because I've read that so many times to saints facing their final battle.

So I want to argue that when the chips fall and we really see that we are in a fight, we really understand that we're in a fight, we immediately, instinctively, run to the psalms and that this has been the truth in Christianity forever.

[17:55] And so maybe one reason why you're not making the psalms your best buddy in the Bible is because you don't understand that you're surrounded right now by enemies and that you are right now in a fight for your life.

And you don't certainly want to wait until you face the final boss, that is death, to develop an affinity for the psalms. At that point, they will be something true that is for you but they will not be your friend.

But I want them to be your friend. And I want them to be your faithful companion all the way through all of the conflicts that you face.

So I spent a lot of time thinking about how to help you to see and handle all of the battle and conflict language that we see in the book of the psalms and I came up with typical of me, entirely cheesy acronym that I really do think will help you but you're free to laugh at me as you use it because it is absolutely goofy.

Do y'all remember Salty, the singing song book? Do any of you remember that? That's a little bit of an old head kind of thing. But that was high quality Christian TV. I think that was before Bible Man maybe even.

[19:06] I think it goes back quite a ways. I think it was a couple invented it in like 1979 or so. So this was a staple of our childhood and it was Salty, the singing song book.

And he was in a, it was a live action deal and he was in like a, you know, a very poorly made book costume. It was blue. I remember this. So when I went to come up with an acronym to help you think through the Psalms and in particular this battle aspect, I don't know if it was my Gen X retro

vibes or what, but I immediately thought of the word salty.

And I want to suggest that if you'll use this acronym, you will understand virtually all the Psalms in a way that you did not before this acronym.

And that is simply the acronym is P, pain, caused by snakes, avenged by the Lord. Thank you. Pain caused by snakes, avenged by the Lord.

Thank you. I think you could go through pretty much every Psalm and see, ask this question. Who's the snake? Who's the bad guy? What's the pain he's causing?

[20 : 15] How do I ask God to help me with this pain? What has God promised to do for this snake or to this snake? And then there's always some kind of thank you and that thank you will often be future looking, looking forward to future grace, counting the Lord faithful, even though the snake is still slithering, David or the Psalmist, no, you will take care of me, you will kill this snake and so forth.

I believe that Genesis 3 is actually sort of the plot line for the whole Bible and that the Bible is just a recapitulation over and over and over again of problems caused by snakes that disturb our peace, our paradise, our garden, God avenging the snake through Christ in one way or another and then us rising to the new heavens and the new earth where we say thank you.

I think that's just everything that's happening in the Bible is pain caused by snakes, avenged by God with a big thank you at the end. I think that's the gospel, so on and so forth. I think as you read the Psalms, you need to bear in mind kind of a doctrine of enemies that the Bible presents holistically throughout the Bible and I just want to expose these to you now and then I'll come back in two weeks and I'll do this again in even more detail with more Psalms.

The first is is that we have three enemies classically described within Christendom as the world, the flesh, and the devil and that holds up very well across all of Scripture and it holds up well in the Psalms.

The first thing I talk about is like well there's this category of enemy in the Psalms known widely as the world and I would subdivide the world into two subdivisions and one would be just kind of generally the world like no one in particular just the world and here we have all sorts of Psalms.

[22 : 05] For instance, the book of Psalms begins, Psalm 1 with this statement, 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.

So who's the snake? I think it's the sinners, the scoffers and this is a call to preemptively kill the snake. Don't listen to the snake.

In fact, this Psalm has Edenic language in it. So the snakes here are the general world and they're scoffers and sinners and so forth. Psalm 2, more general world kind of snakes.

Psalm 2, 1 through 2. Why do the nations rage in the peoples plotted vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.

World snakes. Psalm 3, O Lord, how many are my foes? Is it a reference to a particular foe or just kind of more generally, I live in a system full of liars?

[23 : 13] Do you realize that? Do you realize that you're just surrounded by liars? That the world system, the world media and so on and so forth, the stuff you consume, like a lot of it is rooted in lies.

So you're surrounded by this kind of world enemy. And then there's a sort of world specifically.

David had specific enemies. Psalm 57, 4, when he's fleeing from Saul, he says, my soul is in the midst of lions.

I lie down amid fiery beasts. Psalm 55, 12, it is not an enemy who taunts me that I could bear it. It is not an adversary who deals insolently with me that I could hide from him.

But it is you, a man, an equal, my companion, my familiar friend. So there's one category, the world kind of has sometimes a general vibe, the nations, you know, conspirators, and then sometimes it has very specific people in mind.

The next enemy in the kind of classical Christian recipe is the world, the flesh. Now, when the Bible speaks of the flesh, I think we can think of our flesh as having two different meanings.

[24 : 23] And one is just like a general weakness that's a result of our being fallen human beings. This is where Jesus says, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

I want to lean into this one for a second and say that, and talk about something that I call emotional hygiene. I don't know how many of you know this, but you know, I probably spent 12 years or so just absolutely neglecting my health entirely.

I just didn't care. I just was too busy doing other stuff, like who cares? And so, you know, I just spent all my 30s like just doing whatever I wanted. I didn't care. And of course, that builds up a big bill, right?

And because you neglect something, you don't manage it when it's small, it gets bigger and bigger, sometimes literally. And so, then I spent my 40s trying to fix all the neglect that happened in my 30s.

Friends, I want to encourage you to understand something. I'm not a particularly emotional guy. My wife is even less so. We do not think about how we're feeling very often. I don't know that that's even good to think about how we're feeling very often.

[25 : 33] What would be ideal is to just keep good emotional hygiene where you just stay on top of what you're feeling before the disillusionment, before the depression, before everything builds to such a high level.

And if you will read the Psalms regularly and actually take them seriously, you will be encouraged by God's Word to maintain good emotional hygiene.

I encounter some people who ignore the reality of their emotions and do so for 10 years just like I ignored the reality of whatever was going on with me physically. And I was like, yeah, good luck with that because what's going to happen is that you're going to get to a point where the dragon grows so big you can no longer deny he exists.

The feelings get so big you can no longer deny he exists. The Psalms are great for keeping everything trimmed up, clean, wiped down, so forth.

I have found myself praying the Psalms and realizing this doesn't feel right to me, I don't think I've got this and then thinking but maybe I do and then like, Lord, I'm in this Psalm today, you know, maybe I do, I don't know.

[26 : 42] And just God keeping the emotional, the emotional grass trimmed before it gets out of control, goes to seed and so forth.

I think a lot of people, both men and women, don't practice emotional hygiene, they don't actually think in a godly, biblical way consistently about what's going on in their hearts and we see very opposite thing from David.

You think, is this a snake? Like, is weariness a snake? Is disillusionment a snake? Probably not, I'd call them snake eggs. If you don't deal with them, they will become a problem.

And so you see David practicing emotional hygiene. He actually isn't okay when his soul is despondent. He's willing to take the time and ask, Lord, would you please help me?

This isn't right. I don't want to live without joy. I don't want to live in disillusionment. I don't want to live with this layer of anxiety hanging on everything. And so he just consistently walks into Psalms dealing with what I would almost call like snake eggs.

[27 : 50] I'm running a little bit behind, so I'm going to skip over some of these proof texts and you'll have them in the notes. They're already actually presented on Basecamp. So another aspect of the flesh would be in addition to human weakness, a tendency to feel things wrongly, a tendency for anxiety or disillusionment to creep up.

We see sin, like the flesh. We see that as another great enemy. You know, people sometimes read the Psalms and they struggle with the violent language.

It's like, call curses down on my enemy, this or that. But did you know that the New Testament calls you to kill your sin? Did you know the New Testament calls you to die to your sin? Do you know how I learned how to pray these?

I learned how to pray them against myself first and foremost. For instance, that passage I just read, that Psalm I just read, Psalm 55, 12, I remember praying it this way.

He says, David says, for it is not an enemy who taunts me, then I could bear it. It's not an adversary who deals insolently with me, then I could hide from him, but it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.

[28 : 57] You know how I prayed that? Psalm 7, or Romans 7, 21. So I find to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

I pray that prayer, that Psalm, Psalm 55, against my close companion, against my flesh. Like, Lord, there's this thing happening to me, Romans 7, 21, when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand. I have this close companion that is annoying the crud out of me. Please crush my flesh. And I learned how to pray in precatory prayers against others, which I do.

I learned how to do that by praying against myself, which I think is the right way because Jesus says in Matthew 7 that the judgment we use on others is the judgment that will be used against us. So I've learned how to fight spiritually against others by fighting spiritually against my own sin. David will ask sometimes for the Lord to deliver him from lying tongues. I've prayed that against myself. I've said, Lord, there's a part of me that wants sin to look more glorious and beautiful than it is.

[30 : 08] There's a part of me that wants to think of you as faithless. There's a part of me that wants to think of you as distant. There's a liar inside of me, Lord. Crush the liar inside of me. Let me live without this liar inside of me, Lord.

So there's got to be a little bit of theological elasticity when you read the Psalms. Not in terms of inventing new doctrines, but just understanding the category so well that you know how to apply this language in various aspects of your life.

And then, of course, the third enemy, that Christian formulation throughout the ages, the world, the flesh, and the devil. And you'll see plenty of Psalms dealing with the spiritual.

One thing to keep in mind, and I'll point this out in two weeks, is that because we didn't live in that world, we don't know that a lot of the Psalms are actually written in defiance of existing gods.

And so there was actually some spiritual combat going on in the Psalms. You know, Paul says in Ephesians that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[31 : 19] The point is, is that you're going to read these Psalms and you're going to think, man, this is all about conflict and my life isn't that bad. It's like, no, it really is. Read the Psalms and understand the God of the universe made this book right in the middle of your Bible, the biggest one, full of conversations with enemies, not by coincidence.

Understand that he gave you that book because that is the book you need not only to pray, but in particular to pray against your many enemies, both internally and externally.

Okay, final point. The Psalms commend Christ to your conscience. Again, this seemed pretty relevant to a number of guys I talked to this week.

If you begin to take the Psalms seriously, I have very little doubt you'll get to a point and encounter a very specific problem. That problem was described by Christopher Ashe who wrote a great book on the Psalms simply by these two sentences.

He said, we must pray the Psalms and we can't pray the Psalms. And if you will get serious about the Psalms, I know you'll run into this problem and I want to warn you about it in advance.

[32 : 33] Christopher Ashe says it this way, but the moment we resolve to pray the Psalms as a whole, missing nothing, changing nothing, we come face to face with a mountain of problems. It is a useful exercise to go through a Psalm line by line making a note of which parts do not fit and cannot reasonably be made to fit your individual experience.

This will yield plenty of problems even when you make a reasonable allowance for reading poetic expressions metaphorically and so forth. Now, in the next section, he gives us the main problem I foresee you having if you suddenly got super into the Psalms.

And that is that you will be reading the Psalms and you will find what Christopher Ashe calls claims of extraordinary innocence. Okay? Some of you have already done this.

You've already seen this happen, right? Psalm 17, 3. You have tried my heart. You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you have found nothing.

I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. Psalm 26, 1. Vindicate, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

[33 : 49] Psalm 24, 3. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? 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.

I guarantee you that over the years, millions of Christians, I know this has happened to me, have been embattled, have felt scared, concerned, depressed, whatever, open up the Psalms to find

comfort and instead found an unresolvable conviction because the idea here is I have been so righteous, God, that you deserve, that I deserve your deliverance.

And you'll hit those Psalms and it's funny because the devil knows how to use the Bible too. And so you'll hit those Psalms and if you don't have what I'm about to explain, you will immediately be put off from the Psalms and what was given to you for comfort will wind up being a thing that takes away your comfort.

You've got to figure out what you're going to do with these claims of extraordinary innocence and the answer is not, you know, the answer is not to just relativize them.

We've got to figure out what we're doing here. Well, the truth is is that there is what one theologian called the deep secret of the Psalter and that is simply that these Psalms were written to be prayed by Christ and for Christ's followers to pray them in Christ and through Christ as an appeal to Christ's righteousness.

[35 : 26] One theologian put it this way, the Psalms that will not cross our lips as prayers, those that make us falter and offend us, make us suspect, here, someone else is praying.

Not we that the one who is here affirming his innocence, who is calling for God's judgment, who has come to such infinite depths of suffering is none other than Jesus Christ himself.

It is he who is praying here and not only here but in the whole Psalter. The human Jesus Christ to whom affliction, to whom no affliction, no illness, no suffering is unknown and who yet was the holy, innocent, and righteous one is praying in the Psalter through the mouth of his congregation.

The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word. I would not dare read the Psalms. It would have never become my best Bible buddy if I didn't understand the imputation of Jesus Christ's righteousness allowing me access to all of the comforts and privileges that only Jesus himself deserves.

I don't deserve to open up a book of the Bible and call curses upon my enemies based because I'm better than them. I don't deserve to appeal to my innocence and call God to act because of my innocence.

[36 : 54] The truth is is I want all of the promises of the Psalms I just don't qualify to get any of them. And so if you don't walk and stand on the gospel as you're praying the Psalms you'll quickly stop praying the Psalms or you'll just be a raging hypocrite.

One of those two things. I know most of you pretty well I don't think you would do that. I think you'd just be like this isn't for me. How can I pray this? How can I ask God for this? I am not as righteous as these Psalms proclaim.

And I would just tell you this neither was David David amongst all and you just have to at this point take my word for it David was a firm believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ as the father had revealed it to him to such an extent that even as he was praying these things he did so from a position of unmerited favor the giving of Christ's righteousness to him on his account.

After all it's David who prays in the Psalm you'll hear about next week. Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven whose sin is not counted against him.

Why is he blessed? How is he blessed? He's blessed when his sin is forgiven and declared innocent before God based on the righteousness of Jesus he can access the privileges extended to the Psalms.

[38 : 13] Otherwise he has no access to these privileges and neither do you or I. So one of the things the Psalms forces you to do is you'll get to these places you're like I really like that benefit I just don't qualify for it and what you'll be doing is you'll be strengthening your conscience with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You'll be applying the imputation the righteousness of Jesus to your conscience and saying no that is not quite the story. The truer story is I myself do not deserve it but Jesus Christ shed his precious blood to include me in the family of God so that now I'm a partaker of the divine nature completely undeserved but now I have access to all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places and this book that is Christ's prayer book is really also now my prayer book.

You actually just won't get through the Psalms without this. One author puts it perfectly reading the Psalms mindful of Jesus is not a clever way to read this book of the Bible nor is it one way to do so among others.

It is the way. It is the only way to make the Psalms meaningful in our lives is to read it seeing Christ standing before us as our true righteousness.

righteousness. Which brings us to communion. Today we just want to celebrate the fact that all of the privileges all of the promises all of the victory frankly promised in the Psalms all of the thank yous at the end of our cheesy acronym are made available to us because Jesus Christ gave his life to bring you perfect forgiveness from your many sins and to give you access into the fatherhood of God.

[39 : 57] He is eager to hear your prayers and those prayers have all been polished up by the Jesus the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So let me pray for us and then we have two tables set up so just go to the one that you're closest to grab your elements return to your seat and I'll lead us in partaking.

Father God may you bless these people this summer with a renewed joy for your mighty prayer book the prayer book of Jesus Christ given to us as Jesus Christ was given to us and only Lord it's only ours because Christ is ours.

Would you please bless this time as we partake of your blessed sacrament and fill our hearts full of faith to remember that you have made the way for us to stand before you and boldly approach the throne of grace.

We love you Lord in Jesus name we pray. Amen. Come. Come. Come. Come. Come.