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GREATER THAN **GOLD**
BIBLE STUDY SERIES

69 – Psalms I

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Written in the United States of America

PSALMS I

INTRODUCTION

The book of Psalms is especially dear to the heart of every believer. This is the book which uniquely expresses the inner communion, the daily intimate living together, of God and His people.

The 150 psalms are attributed to nine authors. The following is a listing of the generally recognized authors and the number of psalms ascribed to each.

David	73	Heman	1 (#88)
Asaph	12	Ethan	1 (#89)
Korah	10 or 11	Moses	1 (#90)
Solomon	2	Ezra	1 (#119)
Hezekiah	10	anonymous	39

The psalms are as varied in kind as our experiences with God are varied. For purposes of study, we are following this outline:

PSALMS I

- PART 1. Characteristics of Hebrew poetry
- PART 2. Psalms of devotion
- PART 3. Imprecatory psalms

PSALMS II

- PART 4. Messianic psalms

PSALMS III

- PART 5. Penitential psalms
- PART 6. Psalms of worship, praise and adoration
- PART 7. Historical psalms

This study is an introduction to the psalms, not a comprehensive treatment. Our intention is for the student to learn to understand some of the main themes of the psalms and some of the different ways a psalm works so that he may continue in fruitful personal study.

PART 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY

Hebrew poetry is lyrical. It was composed to be sung, originally to the accompaniment of a lyre. It is a poetry of rhythm rather than rhyme. Characteristically, it is a poetry of ideas: that is, the dynamic of the individual psalm is the relationship between the ideas expressed. Although it is impossible to capture the rhythm of Hebrew in translation, the poetry of ideas is eminently translatable into any language. Ideas are developed rhythmically, through repetition, contrast and synthesis. This rhythmic repetition of ideas is called **parallelism**.

Synonymous Parallelism is the commonest of the three basic kinds of parallelism found in the psalms. In synonymous parallelism, a thought is repeated in different words, the second part reinforcing the first. In verse 5 of Psalm 1 we see:

- (a) Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, [statement]
- (b) Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. [parallel statement]

The meaning of the first idea is emphasized and clarified by the parallel statement.

1. Write out the two parts of synonymous parallelism in Psalm 127:3.

a. _____

b. _____

2. Write out the two parts of synonymous parallelism in Psalm 101:7.

a. _____

b. _____

Synonymous parallelism is used throughout the Old Testament to effectively restate and emphasize.

3. Write out the two parts of synonymous parallelism in Isaiah 14:27.

a. _____

b. _____

In **antithetical parallelism** the first thought is contrasted with an opposite idea, as in Psalm 145:20:

- (a) The Lord preserves all them that love Him: [statement]
- (b) But all the wicked He will destroy. [parallel statement]

4. Write out the two parts of antithetical parallelism in Psalm 32:10.

a. _____

b. _____

5. Write out the two parts of antithetical parallelism in Psalm 119:113.

a. _____

b. _____

In **synthetic parallelism**, the second element serves to explain or amplify the first statement made. The whole statement is not repeated or paralleled, but one part of it is expanded upon. In Psalm 19:7a, the second part of the parallelism tells in what way the first statement is true:

- (a) The Law of the Lord is perfect, [statement]
- (b) converting the soul [parallel element]

This same pattern is repeated 5 times in verses 7 through 9.

6. In Psalm 72:6 the second element repeats part of the opening statement, presenting the idea from a different perspective. Write out the two parallel elements in this verse.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
7. In Psalm 50:5 the second element expands a single word, “saints”. This amplification greatly intensifies the meaning of the first statement. Write out the two parts of this parallelism.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
8. Identify which kind of parallelism is used in these three verses:
 - a. Psalm 118:18 _____
 - b. Psalm 139:23 _____
 - c. Psalm 12:6 _____

Our study of the Psalms will be enriched if we keep in mind these basic characteristics of Hebrew poetry: (1) It is lyrical: it is the expression of the heart of man as he relates to God; and (2) It is a poetry of pattern: the individual statements, the unique expressions of the heart, are developed through repetition and patterns of repetition into deeper and larger statements.

PART 2. PSALMS OF DEVOTION

Our lives are full of motion and commotion. In the Psalms David shows us a place of devotion we can have in the midst of our demanding activities.

1. What two aspects of the believer were found in David?
 - a. II Samuel 17:8: What kind of a man was David, the father of Absalom? _____

 - b. II Samuel 23:1: What kind of a man was David, the one who wrote psalms? _____
Psalm 84 may have been written when David fled from Jerusalem during Absalom’s rebellion.
2. Read Psalm 84 and then select one verse which expresses the believer’s hunger for communion and worship in the temple of the Lord. (Indicate the Verse selected: _____) _____

3. Why was David never able to build a permanent house of worship in Jerusalem? I Kings 5:3

4. What kind of structure did David prepare for the Ark? I Chronicles 16:1 _____

This tent was a reflection of the simple and intimate place the Lord had in David’s life, in the tent of his flesh.

Although we usually do have places of worship in which to congregate, we do not live in them continuously. Moreover, we experience daily strivings and pressures that would distract us from our communion with God.

5. How does Paul describe the stresses he had to cope with in Macedonia? II Corinthians 7:5 _____

Even minor distractions and busyness can rob us of the awareness of God that we desire to maintain. In response to these conditions, David built an house of the Lord **in himself**.

6. Paul says that we have this same house of God in ourselves. Write here, I Corinthians 3:16.

Psalms 26, 27 and 29 could be called “Tabernacle Psalms.” In these Psalms we can experience with the Psalmist in the building and upkeep of the house of God in the heart. Psalm 26 speaks of a place of personal purity and consecration where we may stand before God.

Read **Psalm 26** and then put an X in this box [] before answering the following four questions.

7. Why is the psalmist in a sure place with God — a place from which he shall not slide? v. 1

8. What words in verses 1 and 3 speak of living a godly life in every situation? See Ephesians 4:1 for a similar usage. _____

9. What two places are contrasted in verses 5 and 8? a. _____

b. _____

“The habitation of Your house” and “the place where Your honor dwells” are in synonymous parallelism here, revealing that essentially they are the same place. As most of the psalm is speaking of the believer’s everyday personal and social life, the place where God’s honor dwells may be located wherever the believer is.

10. As he is walking before God through his daily life (v. 11), what kind of footing does he find? v. 12

There is a place of refuge, peace and strength always available to the believer. In Psalm 27, this private place is identified with the tabernacle of the Lord. It is clear that this is a place **in the Lord** experienced by the believer in the midst of life’s battles.

Before answering the following questions, read **Psalm 27**; then put an X in this box. []

11. In verse 1 the Lord is three things for the believer. What are they?

a. _____ b. _____

c. _____

12. What two things does the psalmist want to do while dwelling in the house of the Lord? v. 4

a. _____

b. _____

13. Because of his relationship with the Lord, the believer has a hiding place in time of trouble. Where is this place? v. 5 a. _____

b. _____ c. _____

14. Set upon the Rock Christ Jesus, where is the believer in relation to his enemies? v. 6 _____

We see a reciprocal relation being developed here between the believer's experience of God in His temple proper (v. 4) and his experience of Him in the temple of his heart (v. 5).

15. In appreciation of the pavilion God provides for him in the midst of his enemies where does the psalmist go to offer sacrifices and praises to the Lord? v. 6 _____

Our personal pavilion, the secret of His tabernacle in us, is not to take the place of congregational worship, but each is a seed and fruit of the other.

After reading **Psalm 29**, put an X in this box []. Note the different places mentioned in this psalm where "the voice of the Lord" is heard.

16. List some of these places. a. v. 3 _____

b. v. 5 _____ c. v. 8 _____

These are places where the Lord is praised by the very elements in creation. These locations of praise are His temple (dwelling).

17. Verse 9 summarizes that every one of these things speaks of His glory in what location? _____

18. Verse 2 contains the same thought. Where are we to worship the Lord? _____

Another reading for this phrase is "in His glorious sanctuary."

Wherever there is a heart in tune with the Lord there is a tabernacle, a place where the believer meets with his God, communes with Him and enjoys His benefits. There is a place of worship in the midst of work, a place of peace in the midst of pressure. In the psalms which we call devotional we see the stirring of the soul to maintain that vital touch with God whereby present events are perceived in the light of eternity.

19. Write out II Corinthians 4:18 _____

It is God Who calls us to communion, to prayer, to obedience, to victory. We will look at three psalms in which we see the soul of the believer responding to God's call through devotion to Him.

Psalm 7. Through Trial to Triumph

Read Psalm 7 with this outline in mind.

- I. Pressure of outward struggle (vv. 1-2)
- II. Inner seeking (vv. 3-5)
- III. Inner fortress (vv. 6-10)
- IV. Assurance of victory (vv. 11-17)

- 20. From whom does the psalmist want deliverance? v. 1 _____
- 21. Of what is his soul in danger? v. 2 _____
- 22. Who is there to help him? v. 2 _____
- 23. Who does he think may be the cause of the problem? vv. 3,4 _____
- 24. Is he willing to take the responsibility if this is the case? v. 5 _____
- 25. According to what standards does he ask God to judge him? v. 8
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

By "integrity" and "righteousness" is meant a right standing based on a right relationship to God. The psalmist is saying to God, "I am right before you according to what you require."

- 26. According to Psalm 51:17, what does the Lord desire in His people? a. _____
b. _____
- 27. What kind of heart does the psalmist have in verse 10 of Psalm 7? _____
- 28. The psalmist has freely committed himself to "the righteous God"; how does He deal with men? v. 9 _____
- 29. What is God's attitude toward the wicked? v. 11 _____
- 30. The psalmist realizes that if God is his defense, God is the one Who will take care of his enemies. What three "instruments of death" has the Lord prepared in verses 12 and 13?
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
- 31. In verses 14 through 16, the psalmist sees that the wicked are their own worst enemy. Write out two of the three statements of this truth from these verses. a. _____

b. _____

In Psalm 7, a time of the psalmist's personal devotion, the writer has moved from a foundation of trust (see verse 1a) through a crisis of trial. As he approached his God in fear, with an awareness of his critical need, he recommitted himself into the hands of God. He realized God's active undertaking for him and saw the weakness of the ungodly enemy. His faith has been strengthened and completed through this trial.

32. In verse 17 what does the psalmist say he will do? _____

33. Comparing verses 1 and 17, describe the progressive steps to victory in the psalmist's time of personal devotion. _____

The trial pressed the psalmist into that inner place of devotion where he discovered his triumph in the Lord.

Psalm 27. Peace in the Pavilion

As you read this psalm through, notice that here we have a description of that inner place of devotion which is always available to us. In the first four verses we see four doors of entrance into that place.

34. Verse 1: The door of praise. Write out the two parallel statements of praise.

a. _____

b. _____

35. Verse 2: The door of testimony. What happened to his enemies as they came to attack him?

36. Verse 3: The door of assurance in God. What was the psalmist's attitude even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds? He declared it twice in parallel statements.

a. _____

b. _____

37. Verse 4: The door of full commitment to God. Out of all the many things a person might ask of the Lord, the psalmist asks only “one thing.” What is that? _____

38. He states that he has desired one thing. How will he obtain it? v. 4 _____
This is the “one thing” that a believer always needs: a place of fellowship with God (see Luke 10:38-42).

39. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus states that we must seek first the Kingdom of God; if this done what will happen? _____

40. Since we have access to His pavilion, what two things can the Lord do for us there in time of trouble? v. 5 a. _____ b. _____

41. Even when his enemies surround him, he is safe in his tabernacle. What does he do there? v. 6b

42. The parallel construction in verse 6 serves to teach us how we can offer sacrifices of joy. How does he say he will do it? v. 6c _____

43. When we stand at the door of the Lord’s pavilion and cry for entrance with words of praise, testimony, assurance, or commitment, what three things do we want the Lord to do? v. 7
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

44. Verse 8 says that we seek the Lord with what part of our being? _____

45. From verses 9 through 12, write out the words which describe what it means to be in His pavilion.
a. In the open presence of the Lord. v. 9 _____
b. Free from the wrath and condemnation of God. v. 9 _____

c. Assured of the Lord’s care and assistance in the past. v. 9 _____

d. Calling upon God to continue His close and faithful attention. v. 9 _____

e. Trusting in the Lord’s care when earthly ties fail. v. 10 _____

f. Believing God to reveal His ways of blessedness and keep us in them even in the face of apparent danger. v. 11 _____

g. Sure of the power of God to preserve us in safety. v. 12 _____

46. What would have become of the psalmist if he did not believe he could find this place in the Lord in the midst of everyday life (“in the land of the living”)? v. 13 _____

47. What is the psalmist’s final admonition for those who would seek to enter and remain in this place? v. 14 _____

Psalm 35. Moving in Victory

Just as there is a place of peace and rest in the midst of a warrior’s strife, so there is the assurance for every warrior that he goes not in his own strength but in the power of the arm of the Lord.

48. According to II Chronicles 16:9, what is the Lord looking to do in behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him? _____

As you read through **Psalm 35**, notice that David the warrior goes beyond just looking to God to aid his own efforts. He asks the Lord to wreak a greater devastation on his enemies than David could ever do in himself. David is aware that he can move in the power and victory of the Lord. Here we see David winning his battle in prayer by turning it over to “the captain of the host of the Lord”. (Joshua 5:14)

49. In verses 1 through 3 David asks the Lord to fight for him. What three weapons does he ask the Lord to wield for him? a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

50. Lastly he takes the word of God and applies it to himself; what did he ask the Lord to say to his soul? v. 3 _____

51. This is the last piece of spiritual armor that Paul admonishes the Christian to put on. Write out Ephesians 6:17. _____

52. In verses 4 through 8, he asks God to take matters into his own hands. Whom does he expect to do battle on his behalf? vv. 5, 6 _____

53. In what trap might the enemy be caught? v. 8 _____

54. David rejoices in the victory he expects from God in verses 9 and 10. From whom does the Lord deliver the poor? v. 10 _____

55. How did David’s enemies treat him? v. 12 _____

56. How did David treat his enemies? v. 14 _____

57. How should we treat our enemies? Matthew 5:44 _____

David wanted justice done. He wanted the Lord to perform it. He is therefore careful to examine and judge his own actions and motives.

58. David said his enemies rejoiced in his trouble (v. 15). What did they do with their teeth? v. 16

59. David becomes importunate in his pleading. What did he ask the Lord? v. 17 _____

60. He said: (You know my cause is right, Lord. v. 22) What did he want God to do in his behalf? v. 23

61. Whom does David say will be magnified in this victory? v. 27 _____

62. And what shall David's part be all the day long? v. 28 _____

A victory that God wins for us becomes a perpetual praise. A life of moving in his victory is a life of showing forth His praises. (See I Peter 2:9). In the psalms of devotion we see that a deeply devotional life is not a withdrawn or defensive way of life. It is a life which draws from an intimacy with God the peace and power and victory of God Himself.

PART 3. IMPRECATORY PSALMS

You may have noticed a peculiar and perhaps disturbing element in Psalm 35. In verses 3-6, 8 and 26 the psalmist curses his enemies. Psalms which contain this kind of curse are called imprecatory psalms. An imprecation is a curse, a cry for vengeance, a cry for judgment on the ungodly.

These are good examples of imprecatory psalms: 5, 10, 18, 28, 31, 35, 40, 55, 58, 59, 68, 69, 79, 83, 109, 137.

1. After you have read all the above psalms, put an X in this box: []

We will look at the imprecatory portions of three psalms.

Psalms 55:15

2. Write out the curses put upon the wicked and deceitful friend. v. 15 _____

Psalm 58:6-9

3. What is the curse in verse 6? _____
4. What two curses do we see in verse 7? a. _____

- b. _____
5. To what two things does the psalmist compare the devastated state of his enemy? v. 8 a. _____
_____ b. _____

Psalm 69:22-25, 27-28

6. List five curses directed toward David's persecutors in verses 22-25.
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
7. What is the ultimate curse as expressed in verse 28? _____

The apparent problem with the imprecatory psalms is the spirit of revenge, the spirit of cherished malice and implacableness. Read through Psalm 58.

8. Is there any glimmer of hope offered to those cursed in this psalm? _____ If there is, in what verse does it appear? _____

Furthermore, these expressions are not presented as the unfortunate howlings of a backslider. They are prominent in this part of the scripture. They are numerous. They are composed to be sung in public worship. They are presented as part of the consciousness of the people of God, and of God Himself. As is evident in Psalm 18, these expressions of malice are not empty words, but they are backed up with deeds of destruction. As a man of war David was not satisfied until his enemies were "consumed."

9. What is David's testimony of how he treated his foes in battle? Psalm 18:37-43 a. v. 37 _____

- b. v. 38 _____

- c. v. 42 _____

These statements of malice are difficult for us today because the judgment upon sin is past, completed at the cross of Calvary. The judgment upon sinners is yet to come at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-12). Imprecations are conspicuously absent from the New Testament. We do not call down curses upon our enemies because we know that God will judge righteous judgment.

10. Write out Romans 12:19. _____

In David's time, as God was clearly demonstrating his dominion and sovereignty through the testimony of Israel, curses upon the enemies were appropriate.

11. In Psalm 79:6 what reason is given for God's venting His wrath on the heathen?

12. Why are these nations worthy of destruction? Psalm 79:12 _____

There is one way in which the cry for vengeance and judgment is right, proper and perfectly appropriate for us today. Like David, we should be people of (spiritual) warfare. But no man is our enemy.

13. Write out Ephesians 6:12. _____

The only proper object for our imprecation is our adversary, the devil. For us the imprecatory psalms express the cherished malice and implacable hatred for that one enemy of our souls. Furthermore, the imprecations we cast at our enemy serve the same purpose as in David's day. They are weapons of our spiritual warfare.

14. Write out James 4:7. _____

15. Our heart speaks in unison with David's heart in Psalm 68:1-3. Write out these verses. _____

This concludes Part I of the study in the book of Psalms. Parts II and III are a continuation and should be completed in sequence. We encourage you to begin Part II as soon as possible to maintain the proper flow of study.

I have answered all questions to the best of my ability.

Name _____ Address _____

Date _____

Please indicate the version of the Bible you used: _____