

Cultivate - PSALMS

PSALM 26:

Have you ever had to endure a false accusation? David did. Unpacking this psalm a bit, it appears that David was accused of living unfaithfully (v.3b), of being yoked with corrupt men (vs.4,5), and of great insincerity in his faith (vs.6-8). But David here proclaims before the Lord that, as to these matters, his conscience is clear (vs.1,11,12). And as he invites God to inspect and test his life (v.2), he also prays for God to take action on his behalf (v.1a,9,10).

Psalm 26 is another "Psalm of Petition," as was Psalm 25. But note the heart of this petition: it is a fully absorbed love for the presence and the house of God (vs.6-8). Does David's love for God make our love look "faint"? C.S. Lewis: *"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*

The source of David's great joy is his treasured yet costly allegiance to the Lord. Let that kind of joy give voice to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Lord has given you the Psalter so that you might worship him with all of your heart, in every single circumstance of life.

PSALM 27:

Just look at the vocabulary of this Psalm: evildoers, adversaries, foes, the day of trouble, enemies, enemies again, etc. And yet, at the heart of everything: *"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple"* (v.4). Is that our heart, in the midst of great trial and tribulation?

Psalm 27 is a "Psalm of Trust," as were 16 and 23. Reading the three of them together is quite fortifying during times of restless anxiety. As verse 1 asks: *"Whom shall I fear?... Of whom shall I be afraid?"*... indeed! Consider the wisdom of C.H. Spurgeon: *"Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strengths."*

The protection of the Lord, the joy of being in his presence, the implicit loyalty and trust of his servants... let these themes fashion your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise"* (Psalm 138.1).

PSALM 28:

In v.2, David asks the Lord to hear the voice of his pleas for mercy. And in v.6, he blesses the Lord, *"for he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy."* And that's a significant theme of this Psalm. In vs.1 & 2, David is begging the Lord to hear him. In vs.3-5, David is reflecting on the fate of the wicked (those who do not repent of their sins), and asking the Lord to keep him from that fate. In vs.6 & 7, David gives praise to the Lord, for the Lord has heard David's cry. And then the Psalm ends (vs.8 & 9) with David praying for the Lord to do this for *all* of his people.

Psalm 28 is a "Psalm of Lament," bringing before the Lord this fear of being reckoned with the wicked and cast away. Have you ever known that fear? Here the answer from the Lord is clear, and David immediately begins praying this way for all of God's people.

I love the last line of this Psalm: "Be their shepherd and carry them forever." See Isaiah 40.11; 46.3-4; 63.9 to enjoy more of that theme. Let that joy brighten your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word"* (Psalm 138.2).

PSALM 29:

I love the way that one author (the very recently deceased J.A. Motyer) revels in this Psalm: *"It is best simply to let the wonder and awesomeness of this psalm sweep and swirl around us until we are so possessed in spirit by the majesty of the Lord that we too cry 'Glory.'"*

Psalm 29 is a "Psalm of Revelation," powerfully declaring to us the *"wonder and awesomeness"* of our God. Do you see his majesty in heaven (vs.1,2)? Do you hear his mighty voice crashing over the sea, through Lebanon and Sirion, and into the wilderness of Kadesh (vs.3-9)? Can we try to comprehend the one who is enthroned over the universe right now, giving strength, blessing, and peace to his people (vs.10,11)?

This is a vigorous Psalm, attempting to more fully express just who the Lord is, using his name (*Yahweh*, "the LORD") no less than 18 times! Let that vigor breathe life into your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased"* (Psalm 138.3).

PSALM 30:

The title says that David wrote this Psalm for the dedication of the Temple. The Temple is the Lord's "house" (see 2 Samuel 7.5; 1 Kings 6.1). This is what was prayed and sung on the day of its dedication. What if we used these same themes in praying over our church today? What if each of us used these same themes in praying over and dedicating our own personal "house" to the Lord and to his praise?

Psalm 30 is a "Psalm for Times of Trouble," and there is much trouble that is referenced therein. But note that the Psalmist has also now seen restoration, salvation, and healing. And his delight, joy, thanksgiving, and praise shine beautifully through every verse. Mourning has been turned into dancing (v.11).

There's an interesting confession of a foolish, over-confident boast in vs.6-10. That kind of carelessness reminds one of Proverbs 1.32,33: *"the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."* Perhaps that manner of confession should be brought into your prayers this week? We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord, for they have*

heard the words of your mouth, and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord" (Psalm 138.4,5).

PSALM 31:

How do you typically meet a crisis in your life? There are several less-than-helpful ways to meet a crisis. But in prayerfully submitting ourselves to this Psalm this week, let's seek to grow into a faithful response to our crises. Note here how David turns to the Lord in his crisis, with prayer and renewed commitment. And notice how the Lord hears and shows steadfast love (vs.21,22). And notice how David now calls upon *us* to learn this way of meeting crises in our lives (vs.23,24).

Psalm 30 is a "Psalm of God's Faithfulness," reminding us that our times are in God's hand (v.15). And the rest of the Bible shows us how useful this Psalm is to our faith. Jonah drew upon v.6, Jeremiah drew upon v.13, and Jesus Himself drew upon v.5. Everyone has crises from time to time, don't they?

Explore how this Psalm, in some ways, covers the same ground twice: vs.1-8 and then again in vs.9-24. And let that doubled-down emphasis leave its mark on your own prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me"* (Psalm 138.7).

PSALM 32:

Before jumping into Psalm 32, I encourage you to review the shameful episode in King David's life that is recounted in 2 Samuel 11. And then read 2 Samuel 12, noting especially the astonishing verse 13: *"David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.'" Is that not remarkable? As soon as David acknowledges his sin, stops covering his iniquity, and confesses his transgression, he is forgiven. Now turn to and savor the goodness of Psalm 32, especially v.5.*

Psalm 32 is a "Penitential Psalm," taking us deeper into the confession of our sin. And notice what the first word of this Psalm is—the first word of a Psalm leading us back into restored fellowship with God. It is "Blessed." To be reconciled to God is true and lasting happiness.

That blessed happiness is expressed here both positively and negatively (by recalling the miseries of what it's like to have lost fellowship with God). Let the blessed joy of forgiveness shine through your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. *"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands"* (Psalm 138.8).

PSALM 33:

The "steadfast love" of God is the big theme of Psalm 33; you can see that theme in vs.5, 18, and 22. Here's a little experiment to see how closely your understanding of God's steadfast love reflects how the Bible celebrates that beautiful and eternal reality. Take out a pen and paper and list 20 things that reflect and bear witness to God's steadfast love here on earth. And

then—*after you've made your own list of 20 things*—go verse by verse in Psalm 33, making a list of how *this Psalm* describes and celebrates the steadfast love of God. How similar are the two lists?

Psalm 33 is simply a Psalm that celebrates God. It is pure praise, both for *who* he is and for *what* he has done. A friend recently told me that he's really good at the confession and thanksgiving part of prayer, because confession and thanksgiving are all about him. But he's not so good at adoration, because that is about God. Want to grow in adoration? Psalm 33 is the place to hang your hat for a while.

Some great themes found here: the honor of God as Creator, Sovereign, Judge, and Savior, and our declaration of trust in him. Let those themes lift up the chin of your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. To see Jesus in this Psalm (*he is in all of them!*), take each verse as a reference to him. And then imagine him praying/singing each verse.

PSALM 34:

The title for this Psalm tells us that the background can be found in 1 Samuel 21.10-14. If you only read the background story, this episode seems like an example of David being very clever and outsmarting his enemies. But when we read Psalm 34, we see the true story: David sought the Lord in the midst of a crisis, and the Lord heard him. And then the Lord delivered him from all of his fears; the Lord saved him out of all of his troubles (see vs.4,6).

Psalm 34 is a "Psalm of Revelation." Taste and see that the Lord is good (v.8)! The first 10 verses can be read as David's testimony from this crisis, and the conclusions that need to be drawn from it. Verses 11-22 contains the teaching and the wisdom that the child of God can learn from King David's experience. May we sit at the feet of Psalm 34 and learn deeply and well!

Read 1 Peter 2 & 3 to see how later generations benefited from this Psalm. Seek to echo that same benefit in your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Old and New Testaments make up one covenant of grace between God and his people, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christian, this Psalm was written for your use today.

PSALM 35:

As in the previous Psalm, David is in the midst of a crisis here. And it's the particularly distressing crisis of *undeserved* suffering. This Psalm may feel like a bit of a ramble (which prayer sometimes is!), but it can be divided into three sections. Each section ends with promises of great praise, in response to the Lord's gracious deliverance: vs.9-10, v.18, vs.27-28.

Psalm 34 is an "Imprecatory Psalm," praying for God's judgment to fall on God's enemies. The boldness of this kind of Psalm is a shock to us sometimes. But note that righteous anger is possible (see Mark 3.5; Revelation 6.9-10; Ephesians 4.26), and note also that David is not acting out his own judgement against these enemies... he's leaving it all to the Lord (see Romans 12.19).

Note again (as we said in the first paragraph, above) how each plea ends with words of praise and hope. Let that confidence shape your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember: ultimately it is Jesus who sings and prays the Psalter (Matthew 26.30; Mark 14.26; Hebrews 2.12); these words are His.

PSALM 36:

There is a choice that each of us has to make, and that choice will determine what sort of life we will have in this world and what future awaits us in the next. The choice is how we will respond to the revelation of God. We can reject the revelation of God, in favor of submitting to our own hearts. Or we can embrace the revelation of God. Both of these paths are described in this Psalm.

Psalm 36 is a "Psalm of God's Faithfulness," and its outline shows the fullness of God's faithfulness by way of a powerful contrast: v.1: the philosophy of the wicked... vs.2-4: the wicked are characterized... vs.5-8: the Lord is characterized... vs.9-11: the path of those who know the Lord... vs.12: the fate of the wicked.

One way of life is empty and without value and menacing. The other way of life knows the joy of life, light, provision, and protection. Let that joy guide your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. "All the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Corinthians 1.20).

PSALM 37:

There are four sections to this Psalm. The opening section begins with "Fret not yourself because of evildoers" (v.1). The second section begins with "The wicked plots" (v.12). The third begins with "The wicked borrows" (v.21). And the final section begins with "The wicked watches" (v.32). So. That tells us a lot about what this Psalm's theme may be, doesn't it? God knows that we need to be taught the futility of wickedness... especially when it *seems* to be prospering in this world.

Psalm 37 is a "Wisdom Psalm," as were Psalm 1 & 15 before it. If you want to study other Psalms in this category, see 49, 90, 112, & 139. Together they give us a wonderful opportunity to sit at the feet of wisdom and ask life's most important questions. The heart of this particular wisdom Psalm may be verse 11... from which Jesus seems to draw in Matthew 5.5.

In a world full of wickedness, where is your security? Psalm 37 guides you to a wise answer. Let that guidance shape your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember the rule of thumb if you want to deepen your understanding of any Psalm: ask yourself, "how is this Psalm teaching me more about Jesus?"

PSALM 38:

To get a feel for the trajectory of this Psalm, read the first verse and then the last. And in between those two bookends, see how this Psalm is faithfully warning us about the menacing hazards of sin. Think of sin as a monster that, in the words of J.A. Moyter, "*offends the Lord*

and burdens the sinner, replaces wellbeing by wounds, induces lowspiritedness, with pain of body and disquiet of heart (1-8). It saddens and devitalizes, isolates us from friends, and excites enmity (9-12); it leaves us without excuse (13,14). But it does not close the door of prayer, nor exclude us from the place of repentance (15-18)."

Psalm 38 is one of the seven classic "Penitential Psalms." (The others are 6, 23, 51, 102, 130, 143.)

The next time you feel the yucky burden of guilt, flee to these Psalms for prayer and freedom. Let that freedom lift up your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. No wonder Jesus and his apostles quote the Psalter more than any other Old Testament book in their sermons and writings!

PSALM 39:

This life is precious. Just because eternity is promised to the people of God does not remove grief over death, nor does it nullify sadness at the brevity of life. The Bible bears this testimony everywhere: *"Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow"* (Philippians 2.27). In 2 Samuel 12 David deeply lamented the loss of his little boy, even if he did know that he would see him again in presence of God. And here in Psalm 39, David laments the possible abbreviation of his own life.

Psalm 39 is one of three "Prayers for the Sick," and they all come in a row, for ease of location. Note that this is a prayer of strong faith, even in the midst of trial: *"And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you"*(v.7).

It takes a strong faith to look the reality of v.4 in the face without fear. Pray for that manner of faith to be found in you this week! It's so true, isn't it? The Psalms really do cover all of life. Which is why Jesus turned to the Psalter for words to express what was in his heart, again and again.

PSALM 40:

In the previous three Psalms, David was prayerfully waiting. And now, in the first three verses of this Psalm, it seems that the waiting is finally over! David's trust in the Lord has been vindicated (vs.4-5), and the renewed disposition of David's heart towards the Lord is then described in the next few verses. But then, at the end of the Psalm (vs.11-17)... we're back to waiting on the Lord again. This is how life is, isn't it? The next trouble is never very far away.

Psalm 40 is the second of three "Prayers for the Sick" in a row. But take note of the joy that lies underneath these verses. Even in difficult circumstances David can be encouraged, for his eyes are not focused on himself.

Also take note of the declaration David makes in verses 7 & 8. Ultimately, of course, it's the Greater David, the Messiah, Jesus, who brings these words to their fullest expression. But nonetheless, like David before us, express something of it in *your* prayers this week. We'll pray

it together on Sunday. To increase your love for the Psalter, take note of these other Psalms that Jesus quoted at key moments of his ministry: 8.2; 22.1; 31.5; 37.11.

PSALM 41:

Before getting into Psalm 41, take a quick look at the big title in your Bible before Psalm 42. It says "BOOK TWO." There are actually five books of the Psalter, and each book ends with a beautiful doxology. Psalm 41 is the final Psalm in BOOK ONE, and the doxology comes in v.13: *"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen."*

Psalm 41 is final installment of the three "Prayers for the Sick" that come in a row. And by the end of these three Psalms, it seems that the ordeal is finally over. Take a look at all the thankfulness at the end of 41.

But take a look at the opening & the middle of the Psalm as well. Perhaps even try to develop an outline of it... maybe that will be of assistance to us the next time we find ourselves in need of a Psalm like this. Let the themes of this Psalm deepen your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. There are all kinds of important truths taught in the Psalms, truths that we need to internalize well if we want to live well. What truths do you find here?

PSALM 42:

The church family we were a part of in St. Louis would sing the Psalms, and 42 was a congregational favorite. And it's a powerful Psalm / song to have committed to memory. The opening metaphor of a drought (vs.1,2) expresses a deep longing for God. The storm metaphor (v.7) pictures the distresses and afflictions in life, but faith learns to see God in the storm: "your waterfalls... your breakers... your waves." His love remains (v.8). God is still "my rock" (v.9).

Let's call Psalm 42 a "Hope in God" Psalm (see vs.5,11). In the midst of the storm, the world says, "Where is your God?" (v.3). My feelings may be tempted to say, "Why have you forgotten me?" (v.9). But faith says, "my rock" (v.9). *To which voice will I listen?* "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God" (vs.5,11).

42 has been called one of the most "sadly beautiful" poems in the Psalter. Invest some time and effort in knowing it well. Let that sad beauty enrich your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember: this is the book of the Bible Jesus turned to most... even when he wanted to teach things like his divinity, his physical lineage from King David, his transcendence over David, his identity as the Son of Man, the judgment of God upon those who would reject the Messiah, the unbreakable nature of the Scripture (even with reference to his own betrayal)... and also his hope and trust in his Father, in the midst of the storm—even when that storm was his own harrowing death by crucifixion.

PSALM 43:

This Psalm is closely connected with last week's Psalm (42). See the refrain found in 42.6, 42.11, and 43.5: *"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 and my God."* Think of v.3 in terms

of a Divine Search Party, and pray that you will be found by it each and every day this week.

Since 43 is the completed thought of 42, we'll stick with calling both of these "Hope in God" Psalms (see the end of v.5). Certainly there are expressions of a downcast soul in a "Hope in God" Psalm (see vs.2b & 5a), but overall the prayer becomes increasingly bright, assured, confident, and hopeful. This is often the result of praying the Search Party Prayer in v.3: God sends out his light and truth, and they lead you home.

Perhaps we should all memorize v.3? For surely that is the best way through the wildernesses and valleys of life: to live in God's light and to cherish his truth. Let God's light and truth illumine your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Keep in mind as you learn how to pray the Psalms: Jesus taught us to understand the whole of the Old Testament, including the Psalms, to be about him.

PSALM 44:

Do you ever feel that life is unfair? 44 is for you. Do you wonder sometimes if God is asleep? 44 is for you. Do you love hearing responsive prayer among God's people, called out strongly in worship, back and forth? 44 is for you. Do you need to stop praying weak prayers and learn how to pray bold prayers? 44 is for you. Do you want to see what a "national day of prayer" could *really* look like? 44 is for you. Do the afflictions of this life sometimes overwhelm you, so that you just want to fly to God? 44 is for you.

Psalm 44 is a "Psalm for a People in Decline." The church of the Lord Jesus Christ lives its entire life (in this world) against the backdrop of spiritual warfare. There will be times when it needs to bring this Psalm out and pray it with uplifted hearts and strong voices. And if we do not, we are defrauding and cheating ourselves. God gave us this Psalm, and he gave it to us for a reason.

Take a look at how Psalm 44:22 is used in the context of Romans 8:31-39. This Psalm foreshadows the persecuted church, and yet the promised future is victory, not defeat. Let that confidence fill your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember the mystery of Jesus and the Psalms: *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.... Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:27,44).*

PSALM 45:

"My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king"... what a grand and graceful beginning! And indeed, the theme of this song is both pleasing and noble: it was composed for a royal wedding. The king is taking a bride, and that is an event worthy of song and celebration! But—like all the "royal" Psalms—this Psalm is actually bigger than itself. It transcends what any earthly king can be... it takes wings and flies directly to the hoped-for Messiah, in whom all these glories ring true. And who is the beautiful bride of the Messiah, the Christ? The church (see 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 14:4; 19:7; 21:9).

Psalm 45 is a "Royal Messianic Psalm." Every line speaks to the splendor of this occasion and what it means for the Groom, for the bride, and for the future of the kingdom.

Remember Paul's words in Ephesians 5? *"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."* Let that mystery enhance your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. This Messiah is first introduced in the Psalter back in Psalm 2: he is the Lord's "Anointed," established as king on God's holy hill... and all are invited to "kiss" him, to take refuge in him.

PSALM 46:

Consider the Lord's crushing victory over Egypt in the book of Exodus. Contemplate God's triumph over Sennacherib in Isaiah 36 & 37. Reflect on the Messiah's kingship over all the earth, and how all who oppose him will be utterly defeated on the final and climactic Day of the Lord. Now imagine this Psalm as invitation to survey and study those conquests: *"Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth..."* (v.8).

Psalm 46 is part of a collection of strong and robust Psalms called "The Songs of Zion." Martin Luther's hymn *"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"* takes its starting point from this Psalm. That song was called "The Battle Hymn of the Reformation," and for good reason.

There is a certain indomitable spirit and defiant tone to this Psalm, and today's church needs to recapture that way of singing and praying, for God's promises are certain and absolute. Let that certainty color the spirit and tone of your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Do you hear the voice of Jesus, leading your praise, in every line of this Psalm?

PSALM 47:

Last week's Psalm (46) spoke of the Lord's final victory over the earth: *"Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire"* (46.8,9). And that, of course, will be the decisive blow of light and truth to those who have chosen to live in darkness and lies. That will not be a good day for them, because it will finally be clear that the One they have ignored and denied is, in fact, the King of this World. But what will be the response for the rest of the world? **JOY!** Hence... Psalm 47.

Psalm 47 is one of seven "Enthronement Psalms," all of which will affirm and respond to the KINGDOM of God. He's not just a nice, kindly grandfather figure; he's *"a great king over all the earth"* (v.2). In fact, he's ***"the King of all the earth"*** (v.7). He is surely to be feared, he subdues people and nations, he chooses your heritage, he reigns, he sits on his holy throne, the shields of the earth belong to him, he is highly exalted... just revel in each and every line of this Psalm if you want to understand his kingly glory more fully.

47 is more than mere poetry. It is prophecy. And one day this prophecy will be irrefutably, unassailably fulfilled. Let that certain hope give new heart to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Are we starting to see Christ in the Psalter more clearly?

PSALM 48:

There's been a building theme and story in the last couple of Psalms. In 46, the evil was removed from this world. In 47, we tasted the Lord's purposes of grace for his people in this great overthrow. And here, in 48, the high jubilation continues! Note, in vs.12 and 13, that the city of our God seems to be unscathed after this war. In the moment of warfare, it seemed to be in great danger; but ultimately, it was not so.

Psalm 48 is another "Song of Zion," as was 46. The great city of our God, Zion, has been delivered! Here we enter into the proper response to so great a salvation.

In the fullness of the Bible, though, Zion points to more than just the local capitol of God's people in much of Old Testament. The struggle of Zion eventually concerns the whole of the earth and all of time. Let that fuller vision of Zion give direction to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. In Acts 2.25-31 the Apostle Peter said that King David was a "prophet," speaking about the resurrection of the Christ (commenting on Psalm 16.8-11). This is the way we should read all the Psalms.

PSALM 49:

The last words of last week's Psalm (48) were: "this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever." But, will he guide us even on the other side of death? Can he truly guide us through the way of death and out the other side? See the answer in v.15: "But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me." Psalm 49 shows us both sides of death. There is a death without hope (vs.13,14), a death like the beasts (v.12). But there is also a death full of hope (v.15), a death with understanding (v.20).

Psalm 49 is a "Wisdom Psalm," seeking the solution to one of life's great riddles (see vs.1-4). One of the great purposes of the Wisdom Psalms is to instruct God's people. Let's sit at its feet together and learn the wisdom that is offered to us here.

In the New Testament the words "But God" often turn the whole discussion around (see, for example, in Ephesians 2.1-10). Well, we see the same thing in Psalm 49.15. Let that dramatic turn to hope and promise and faith give light to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Lord Christ is the Father's only begotten Son (Psalm 2.7); he is the one sent out to conquer death itself, on your behalf.

PSALM 50:

The Scriptures call us to examine ourselves in many different places. And Psalm 50 is a wonderful curriculum for doing so! This is a preview of Judgment Day: "The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting (v.1). And it's the covenant people of God who are especially called unto judgment (vs.4-6). Some love religious rites, but they neglect thankfulness, obedience, and prayer (vs.8,14,15). Others recite the law, but do not keep it (vs.16-21). The Psalm ends (vs.22-23) by calling all to repentance and faith.

Psalm 50 is a "Psalm For A People In Decline." It draws all eyes to the Lord God, and it

assures all that His eyes are on us. Take note, as mentioned above, that this Psalm is not for "the world." It's for the covenant people of God, specifically. 1 Peter 4.17: "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

The intention of this Psalm seems to be to give us a sharp breath of ultimate reality: the one with whom we are dealing is the Living God. Let that breath bring new life to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Lord's throne is forever and ever; his scepter is a scepter of uprightness; he loves righteousness; he hates wickedness. Therefore, he's given you a Savior (Psalm 45:6,7).