

# **A Study Guide of Psalms**

## **Selected From Psalms 1 through 51**

By David Webb

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### Introduction

In the Scriptures, a unique section of the inspired message is comprised of what we commonly call “poetic literature.” These inspired writings include the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastics, and the Song of Solomon, and when combined, answer every basic need of man. For example, Job offers comfort and guidance during times of intense suffering brought on by loss. Proverbs provides practical wisdom for everyday living. Ecclesiastics offers guidelines for godly living in a crooked and perverse world. Song of Solomon gives direction when facing the challenges of courtship and marriage. And the Psalms expresses the deepest spiritual and emotional needs of man, and reveals the deepest feelings of the human heart.

*John Calvin said, “This book I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties -- in short, all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed -- the Holy Ghost hath here represented to the life. The rest of Scripture contains the commands which God gave to His servants to be delivered to us; but here the prophets themselves, holding converse with God, inasmuch as they lay bare all their inmost feelings, invite or impel every one of us to self-examination, that of all the infirmities to which we are liable, and all the sins of which we are so full, none may be hidden.”*

*Albert Barnes states, “The Book of Psalms is a record of deep religious experience. It is this which, in the estimation of religious persons in general, gives it its chief value. It is the guide of young believers; and it becomes more and more the companion, the comforter, and the counselor, as the believer moves along through the varied scenes of life, and as gray hairs come upon him, and as the infirmities, which pre-intimate the approaching close of all things, press him down. A religious man is rarely, if ever, placed in circumstances where he will not find something in the Psalms appropriate to his circumstances; where he will not find that the Hebrew sacred bard has not gone before him in the depths of religious experience. Hence, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in old age, on the bed of death, the Book of Psalms becomes so invariable and so valuable a companion.”*

Psalms provide excellent insights as to how we should express the deepest needs of our hearts in a godly manner. Regardless of the emotion, and despite whatever

circumstance we may find ourselves in, Psalms teaches us how to properly express whatever may be most needful in our lives.

Jesus placed the Psalms as one of three major divisions in the Hebrew Bible, and verified their inspiration as a prayer and praise book for the nation of Israel. (See Luke 24:44)

## **Authors of the Psalms**

**David:** David is the principle writer of the Psalms, with 73 credited to him in their titles. Samuel referred to David as “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1).

**Sons of Korah:** The Sons of Korah are credited for writing 11 or 12 psalms. The Sons of Korah were Levites who held positions of prominence during the reign of David (1 Chronicles 9:19; 12:6), and continued to hold a place of honor as temple servants to the time of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 20:19).

**Asaph:** Asaph was one of the heads of David’s choir in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 6:39; 15:17-19; 16:5), and is responsible for authoring 11 psalms.

**Solomon:** David’s successor and son, Solomon, is credited for writing 2 psalms (Psalms 72 and 127).

**Heman:** Heman, the first of three Levites appointed by David to lead in the musical services (1 Chronicles 2:6; 6:33; 25:5), is credited for writing 1 psalm (Psalm 88)

**Ethan:** Ethan, a friend of Solomon and renowned for his wisdom (1 Kings 4:31; 1 Chronicles 2:6, 8; 6:39-44; 15:17, 19), wrote 1 psalm (Psalm 89).

**Moses:** Moses the Lawgiver is also credited for having written 1 psalm (Psalm 90)

**Various Anonymous Writers:** Nearly one-third of the psalms, 49 in all, were written by various anonymous writers.

## **Categories of the Psalms**

**Alphabetic or Acrostic:** Psalms in which one or more sets of letters from the Hebrew alphabet are used in order to begin verses or sentences within the psalm. Some psalms (Psalms 9, 25, 34 and 37) are incomplete alphabet psalms. Others (Psalms 111, 112 and 119) are complete acrostic psalms. (Psalm 119 is perhaps the most well-known alphabet psalm, with each eight verse segments beginning with a new letter from the Hebrew alphabet, and including all 22 letters.)

**Imprecatory:** Psalms in which the writer prays for vengeance, and for God to bring his righteous judgment upon the enemies of Jehovah. (Psalms such as 35 and 69)

**Messianic:** Psalms that in some way prophesy or pertain to the coming of the Messiah, either in part or in whole. (Including, among others, Psalms 2, 16, 22, 110, 118, etc.)

**Penitential:** Psalms that express deep remorse or repentance. (Some are Psalms 6, 32, 38, and 51)

**Ethical:** Psalms that teach certain moral or ethical principles. (Psalm 1 and 15)

**Hallelujah:** Psalms that either begin or end, or that begin *and* end, with “*praise Jehovah*” or “*Hallelujah*.” “*Jah*” is a shortened form of “*Jehovah*.” (Psalm 106)

**Prayer and Petition:** Psalms that express needs and desires of the writer, or of the people of Israel. (Psalm 3)

**Songs of Ascents or Degrees:** Fifteen psalms that were probably sung by bands of pilgrims as they ascended to the yearly feasts in Jerusalem. (Psalms 120-134)

**Other General Categories of Psalms:**

- **Historical:** Psalms that teach a lesson from reviewing the history of the people of God or of some other period of time, such as creation.
- **Suffering:** Psalms in which the writer expresses his feelings during times of severe trial.
- **Thanksgiving:** Psalms that express praise and thanksgiving to God for His greatness, or for things that He has done for His people or His creation.
- **Didactic:** Psalms of teaching, or of an instructional nature.

# Notes

# Psalm 1

## Background:

Although the writer of Psalm 1 does not identify himself, it is believed by most commentators to have been composed by David. It deals with a very simple theme, namely that God rewards righteousness and punishes wickedness. This particular psalm divides itself into two equal parts. Part one is composed of verses 1 through 3, and describes the character and blessings of the godly. Part two comprises verses 4 through 6, and details the character and ultimate destruction of the ungodly.

## Outline:

### I. The Godly Life (vs. 1-3)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### II. The Ungodly Life (vs. 4-6)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. The Godly Life (vs. 1-3)

1. What does the word “blessed” mean? (v. 1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain the following terms as they are used in verse 1:
  - a. “Walk”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. “Stand”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. “Sit”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Explain the following terms as they are used in verse 1:
  - a. “Counsel”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. “Path”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. “Seat”



4. Explain the following terms as they are used in verse 1:
  - a. "Ungodly"
  
  - b. "Sinners"
  
  - c. "Scornful"
  
5. Explain the progression illustrated in verse 1 by the words "the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."
  
  
6. Lot provides a good example of one who followed the same progression into sin as outlined in Psalm 1:1. Look up the following passages and explain the progression of Lot toward sin in light of the progression outlined in Psalm 1:1.
  - a. Genesis 13:11
  
  
  - b. Genesis 13:12-13

c. Genesis 19:1

7. Read Genesis 39:1-12 and explain how Joseph responded to sin.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Psalm 1:1 gives a promise of happiness, but verse 2 explains how we can acquire genuine happiness. Explain how real happiness is attained. (v. 2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why does David mention the Law here? What is so important about Law? (v. 2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Why does the godly person “delight” in the Law of the Lord? (v. 2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Why is it so important that the godly “meditates day and night” on the Law? (v. 2) Compare this verse with Psalm 119:97.

12. Explain how the godly person in verse 3 is like a tree:
  - a. “That is planted by the rivers of water”
  
  - b. “That brings forth its fruit”
  
  - c. “Whose leaf shall not wither”
  
  - d. “Shall prosper in whatever he does”
  
13. Compare Psalm 1:1-3 with Jeremiah 17:5-8. What similarities do you notice?:

## **II. The Ungodly Life (vs. 4-6)**

1. Psalm 1:4 marks a dramatic contrast with the preceding verses. In what ways are the ungodly “not so”?

2. What is “chaff” and how is the ungodly like chaff? (v. 4)
  
3. The Hebrew word “stand” in verse 5 is not the same as in verse 1. This word means “to stand erect, to arise.” Explain what the psalmist means with the use of this particular word in the context of verse 5.
  
4. Verse 6 explains why the ungodly and sinner will not be able to stand in judgment nor among the assembly of the righteous. Explain in your own words.

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Psalm 5

## Background:

This psalm is believed to have been written by David, although it is difficult to ascribe it to a particular period in his life with any degree of certainty. However, many believe it may have been written a short time before the revolt of his son Absalom, when David became aware of the conspiracy against him (2 Samuel 13-18). The psalm is dedicated to the Chief Musician, and is to be sung to the accompaniment of the “nahiloth,” an ancient woodwind instrument similar to a flute or oboe. The parts of this psalm fall into three main divisions. Part one is comprised of verses 1 through 3, and is a plea in the form of a prayer. Part two provides four descriptions: (1) how the psalmist describes the Lord in verses 4-6, (2) how the psalmist describes himself in verses 7 and 8, (3) how the psalmist describes his enemies in verses 9 and 10, and finally (4) how the psalmist describes the righteous in verse 11. Part three of the psalm ends with a promise to the righteous in verse 12.

## Outline:


### I. A Plea (vs. 1-3)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### II. Four Descriptions (vs. 4-11)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### III. A Promise (v. 12)


 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. A Plea (vs. 1-3)

1. Why does David seem to be repetitive, making the same request in verses 1 and 2 but with different words? Why is the writer employing “*synonymous parallelism*” here?

 **Textual Note:** A common literary technique found in Hebrew poetry is known as “*synonymous parallelism*.” Similar, or “*synonymous*,” thoughts are recorded in sequential lines for the purpose of either completing the thought of previous lines, or of creating the feeling of increased intensity.

2. What is significant about this prayer being in the “morning?” (v. 3) Compare Psalms 55:17; 59:16; 88:13; 119:147.

3. What two statements in verse 3 indicate David anticipated God's intervention?

**II. Four Descriptions (vs. 4-11)**

1. The first description is of God. (vs. 4-6) In these verses, David identifies seven things about Jehovah.

- a. List the seven attributes of God mentioned by the psalmist:

(1).

(2).

(3).

(4).

(5).

(6).

(7).

- b. In your opinion, why did David meditate on these seven attributes of God?





4. The fourth description is of the righteous. (v. 11)
  - a. What kind of attitude does the psalmist say the righteous should display when God deals with our enemies? (v. 11)

### **III. A Promise (v. 12)**

1. What is the significance of being *surrounded* with a shield? (v. 12)

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes

# Psalm 8

## Background:

This psalm is also credited to David, and there is nothing in the psalm that would indicate otherwise. This psalm is addressed “To the Chief Musician upon Gittith.” Although the etymology of this Hebrew word is in doubt, most believe it is derived from the word “Gath”, the ancient city of the Philistines. The word occurs two other places where it is also used in the titles of psalms (Psalm 81:1 and Psalm 84:1). Since we know David spent time in Gath while fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 21:10-11; 2 Samuel 15:18), the word “Gittith” is believed by many to have been a musical instrument common to the people of Gath, and one which was intended to be used as accompaniment to this psalm. Quotes from this psalm appear in the letter of Hebrews (Hebrews 2:5-9), where the writer applies part of it to man (vs. 5-8), and part of it to Jesus Christ (v. 9). This psalm falls into three main divisions. Part one is comprised of verses 1, and is an introduction of praise to God, and an explanation of the cause for such praise. Part two includes verses 3 through 8 in which the writer admires God for what He has done for mankind. This section is further divided into two sub-sections: (1) the Creator’s notice of mankind among His creation (vs. 3-4), and (2) the honor conferred on mankind (vs. 5-8). Section three is composed of verse 9 where the psalmist concludes with a repetition of the first verse -- reflecting on the greatness of the Divine name, and His majesty.

## Outline:


### I. Praise (vs. 1-2)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### II. Admiration (vs. 3-8)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### III. Conclusion (v. 9)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. Praise (vs. 1-2)

1. The psalm begins with the words, “O LORD, our Lord,” or more literally, “O Jehovah, our Adonai (master, lord, ruler and owner).” What significance do you see in the usage of the words “LORD” (Jehovah) and “Lord” (Adonai)? (v. 1)
2. How is the Lord’s name exalted “in all the earth?”
3. The word “set” in verse 1 means to “display.” How has God displayed His glory above the heavens? (Compare: Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20)
4. How is it that God has established strength and silenced His enemies “out of the mouth of babes and infants?” (v. 2) (Compare this Messianic prophecy about Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem to Matthew 21:12-16)

## **II. Admiration (vs. 3-8)**

1. Based on the words of verse 3, it is safe to assume David was writing this psalm one night while contemplating the vastness of the universe. When David viewed the heavens, what thought rushed to his mind? (v. 4)
2. The term “son of man” is used two ways in Scripture: (1) a Messianic title (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 1:13); and (2) a term signifying mankind, or that which belongs to humanity (Ezekiel is called “son of man” 40 times). How is the term being used here? (v. 4)
3. What is the significance of mankind’s rank in Creation, and how are we crowned with “glory and honor?” (v. 5)
4. Why would the psalmist be amazed at the fact that Jehovah has given mankind dominion over all the works of His hand? What conclusions can be drawn from this fact? (vs. 6-8)

## **III. Conclusion (v. 9)**

1. Why would the psalmist feel compelled to repeat the thought of verse 1?
2. The word “excellent” in verses 1 and 9 means “high, great and noble.” In what way was Jehovah’s name high, great and noble?

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Psalm 15

## Background:

This psalm of David addresses a very simple but direct question, namely, “who may abide in Your tabernacle,” or to put it another way, “who may dwell in Your holy hill?” The question deals with who will be able to enjoy a close, intimate relationship with the Lord now, and ultimately go to heaven? There is no other Old Testament passage that deals with this question in such a detailed and concise manner as Psalm 15. The psalm is naturally divided into three parts. Part one is verse 1, which contains the question. Part two is found in verses 2 through the first part of verse 5, where the answer is given to the question. And part three, which is found in the conclusion of verse 5, gives a promise to those whose lives are characterized by the content of the preceding verses.

## Outline:


### I. The Question (v. 1)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### II. The Answer (vs. 2-5a)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### III. The Promise (v. 5b)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. The Question (v. 1)

1. What did the “tabernacle” and the “holy hill” of Zion symbolize to the Jew? (v. 1) (Compare: Exodus 28:43; 29:43; 40:34; and Psalm 2:6)
  
2. By use of the words “abide (sojourn) in Your tabernacle” and “dwell in Your holy hill,” the psalmist seems to be contrasting something temporary with something permanent. What would the writer be alluding to that is only temporary versus what is permanent?



**II. The Answer (vs. 2-5a)**

1. What is meant by the following phrases in verse 2?
  - a. "He who walks upright"
  - b. "Works righteousness"
  - c. "Speaks truth in his heart"
2. Explain the character described in verse 3 by the use of these phrases:
  - a. "He who does not backbite with his tongue"
  - b. "Nor does evil to his neighbor"
  - c. "Nor takes up a reproach against a friend"

3. Describe the meaning of these phrases in verse 4:
  - a. "In whose eyes a vile person is despised"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. "He honors those who fear the Lord"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. "He swears to his own hurt and does not change"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Explain the following characteristics in verse 5:
  - a. "He does not put out his money at usury"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. "He does not take a bribe against the innocent"

### **III. The Promise (v. 5b)**

1. What is meant by the phrase “He who does these things shall never be moved?” (Compare: Daniel 6:1-4; Matthew 7:24-27)


**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes

# Psalm 23

## Background:

This psalm of David is among the best known, and reflects his own experiences as a shepherd which parallels God care over His flock Israel, and the loving care and protection Jesus gives to His flock, the church. However, one unique feature of this psalm is that it was written from the perspective of the sheep as it beholds the loving care of the shepherd. Another unique characteristic of this psalm is that it is distinctly personal. Rather than depicting the shepherd's care of the flock as a whole, this psalm reflects God's care and concern for the individual. The sheep of this psalm speaks as if it were the only one under the shepherd's care. Although there is no way of knowing for certain the period in David's life when this psalm was written, it seems to have been written during a time when he needed reassurance, and drew strength from reflecting on God's providential care for each individual sheep under His charge. In a broader sense, this psalm serves as a guideline for those men who shepherd the flock of God today (1 Peter 5:1-4), and shows the nurturing care and protection these shepherds need to give to the flock of God in their charge. The psalm can be viewed in three main parts. Part one consists of verse 1 and identifies our Shepherd. Part two is composed of verses 2 through 5 and speaks of the Shepherd's care. Part three is found in the last verse, verse 6, where the psalmist reflects on the results of the Shepherd's care.

 **Historical Note:** In the ancient east, shepherds were very close to their flocks, and would give each sheep their own name: a name which they came to know, and to which they would respond. When flocks occasionally intermingled, the shepherds would simply go to opposite sides of the flock and call their sheep, and the sheep would respond accordingly. In Palestine, most shepherds owned their sheep, and would lay down their life to defend the flock. But other shepherds, known as "hirelings," were employed for a set amount of money per day. Since hirelings were only in the business for the money, they would often flee for safety in the face of danger, leaving the flock defenseless. The shepherd's equipment was very simple. The *staff* was a long stick with a large curved hook on the end. When a nearby sheep showed signs of straying, the shepherd would reach out and gently pull it back. The *rod* was a club about three feet long. It was used to drive off wild beasts, or defend the flock against robbers who often tried to steal sheep. When trails to fertile pastures led through dark, narrow valleys where wild beasts and thieves often waited, the shepherd was constantly alert and ready to use his rod and his staff. Every evening, the shepherd would gather the flock into the fold, a large circular corral made from stones or bushes clumped together. As each sheep entered the fold, the shepherd stretched his rod across the narrow entrance, making each sheep pass "under the rod." This allowed the shepherd to quickly examine each sheep to see if it had suffered any injury during the day, and treat

them with oils if necessary. Once the flock was safely inside the fold, the shepherd would lay down across the entrance so no sheep would get out, and no threat could enter. In this way, the shepherd literally became a door.

## **Outline:**


### **I. The Shepherd (v. 1)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:


### **II. The Shepherd's Care (vs. 2-5)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### **III. The Results of the Shepherd's Care (v. 6)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. The Shepherd (v. 1)**

1. Since the LORD (Jehovah) is his Shepherd, the psalmist says, “I shall not want (lack)” for anything. (v. 1) Read the Jesus’ description of Himself as our Good Shepherd (John 10:7-18, 27-29) and answer the following:

a. What benefits are there to Jesus being “the door of the sheep?” (John 10:7-10; 27-29)

b. Contrast the Good Shepherd with the hireling. (John 10:11-13)

c. What is the significance behind the Good Shepherd knowing His sheep and being known by His sheep? (John 10:14-16)

**II. The Shepherd's Care (vs. 2-5)**

1. Explain the significance of each of the following phrases from verses 2 and 3:
  - a. "He makes me to lie down in green pastures"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. "He leads me beside the still waters"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. "He restores my soul"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake"
  
2. Shepherds were constantly on the alert, especially when leading their flocks through the narrow valleys that led to the high pasture lands. They stood ready to use their rod and staff at the first sign of danger. In light of this, explain the significance of the following phrases from verse 4:
  - a. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. "I will fear no evil; for You are with me"



c. “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me”

3. Prior to the arrival of the flock in the high pasture lands (frequently called “table lands”), the shepherd would prepare the pastures by building a sheep fold, then remove plants that might be harmful, and take special notice of tracks left by potential predators who might be watching from a distance. After the flocks arrived, the shepherd would examine each sheep every evening upon entering the fold to see if any treatment was needed. With this in mind, explain the significance of the following phrases from verse 5:

a. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”

b. “You anoint my head with oil”

c. “My cup runs over”

### **III. The Results of the Shepherd’s Care (v. 6)**

1. Explain how “goodness and mercy” will follow the Shepherd’s sheep.

2. What does it mean to “dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Psalm 26


## Background:

This psalm of David deals with a very challenging question; namely, are we truly as faithful and loyal to God as we imagine ourselves to be? There are no specific indications as to when this psalm may have been written, however it is not difficult to determine David's state of mind when the psalm was composed. The psalmist is asking God to search him and judge his heart to see if he has walked in integrity. David recalls his faithfulness to God, and the evidence that shows he is truly a friend of God. Without wavering, the psalmist served God in honesty and faithful service. But still, he wants God's evaluation of his faithfulness. He wants to approach the alter of God to worship with a pure and unblemished heart. He also wants to make certain that he is never counted with sinners or bloodthirsty men. The psalm is divided into three parts. Part one consists of verses 1 and 2, which is David's plea for God to examine his heart. Part two includes verses 3 through 8, which is a statement of the evidence David gives to prove his loyalty and friendship to God. And part three is found in verses 9 through 12 where David expresses his desire to be found among the friends of God and not among the sinners.

## Outline:


### I. The Plea (vs. 1-2)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## II. The Evidence (vs. 3-8)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## III. The Desire (vs. 9-12)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. The Plea (vs. 1-2)

1. David begins with the words “vindicate me” (other translations use the phrase “search me,” or “judge me.” In what way would this *searching* or *judging* vindicate David? (v. 1)

2. What assurance does the psalmist have for saying he “shall not slip?” (v. 1)

3. What is the difference between the psalmist’s “mind” and his “heart?” (v. 2)

**I. The Evidence (vs. 3-8)**

1. In verses 3 through 6 David offers several items of evidence in defense of his claim of being a true friend of God. In your own words, briefly give an explanation for each. (See next page.)

a. “Your lovingkindness is before my eyes”

b. “I have walked in Your truth”

c. “I have not sat with idolatrous mortals”

d. “Nor will I go in with hypocrites”

e. "I have hated the congregation of evildoers"

f. "I will not sit with the wicked"

g. "I will wash my hands in innocence"

2. David's purpose for all he has mentioned above is so that he may worship God acceptably, and do two other things. What are they? Explain each. (v. 7)

a.

b.

### **III. The Desire (vs. 9-12)**

1. What does David mean by the words "do not gather my soul together with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men?" (v. 9)

2. Explain how David describes these sinners and bloodthirsty men. (v. 10)
  - a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.
  
3. If David walked in integrity, why would he say “redeem me and be merciful to me?” (v. 11)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How does David describe where his foot “stands?” Explain. (v. 12)

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes



# Psalm 27

## Background:

This psalm deals with the theme of dependence and trust in God during times of adversity. There are no indications in this psalm as to what period of David's life it may have been written, although the Septuagint includes in the title of Psalm 27 the words, "A psalm of David before his anointing." However, many Jewish scholars believe the psalm dates to the latter part of David's life, possibly when he was delivered from death by the intervention of Abishai (2 Samuel 21:16-17). The psalm is divided into four main parts. Part one consists of verses 1 through 3, where David expresses his confidence in God's intervention and deliverance during times of danger. Part two is comprised of verses 4 through 6, which states David's desire to always dwell where God is found. Part three covers verses 7 through 12, in which the psalmist prays for God to hear him and grant his request to be saved from his enemies. And finally, part four is comprised of verses 13 and 15 in which David gives the exhortation to wait on the Lord, and for all to put their trust in Jehovah.

## Outline:


### I. David's Confidence (vs. 1-3)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### II. David's Desire (vs. 4-6)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### III. David's Prayer (vs. 7-12)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### IV. David's Exhortation (vs. 13-14)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. David's Confidence (vs. 1-3)

1. In what two ways does David describe the Lord? Explain each. (v. 1)
  - a.

b.

2. What were the benefits for David trusting in the Lord? (vs. 1-3)

## **II. David's Desire (vs. 4-6)**

1. Explain David's one desire. (vs. 4-5)

2. When trouble comes, where did David want to be? Explain. (v. 5)

3. What will be the result of God's care for the psalmist in times of trouble?  
(v. 6)

## **III. David's Prayer (vs. 7-12)**

1. What was the main point of David's prayer in these verses, especially in verse 9?

2. What does the psalmist mean by his father and mother forsaking him? Did that really happen? (v. 10)
  
3. Why was it so important for the Lord to lead David in a “smooth path?” (v. 11)
  
4. How does verse 12 apply to David and to Jesus Christ? (Compare with Psalms 2:1-2; Matthew 26:59-60; and Mark 14:56)

**IV. David’s Exhortation (vs. 13-14)**

1. What is meant by David’s statement about seeing the “goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?” (v. 13)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does it mean to “wait on the Lord.” Explain. (v. 14)

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes

# Psalm 32

## Background:

This psalm of David was composed during a time of great sorrow over the guilt of some terrible sin he had committed that alienated him from God's good favor. There is no way of knowing for certain what period of David's life this psalm refers, although many believe it is connected with the sins of David involving his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11:1-27). The psalm is divided into five parts. Part one consists of verses 1 and 2, which is a statement regarding the blessings of forgiveness. Part two, includes verses 3 and 4, and describes the state of David's mind while under the guilt of sin. Part three is found in verses 5 through 7, and shows the effects of confessed sins, and David's encouragement to others in similar circumstances. Part four is comprised of verses 8 and 9, where the psalmist instructs regarding the proper spirit for all who would benefit from God's rebuke. And part five, is composed of verses 10 and 11, where David speaks of the blessings of trusting in the Lord in times of sorrow and sin.

## Outline:


### I. The Blessings of Forgiveness (vs. 1-2)

 Key Words:

 Observation:


### II. The Mind Under Sin (vs. 3-4)

 Key Words:

 Observation:


### **III. The Effects of Confessed Sins (vs. 5-7)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### **IV. The Proper Spirit (vs. 8-9)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### **V. The Blessings of Trusting in the Lord (vs. 10-11)**

 Key Words:



 Observation:

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. The Blessings of Forgiveness (vs. 1-2)**

1. What does the word “blessed” mean in verse 1?

2. In what four ways does David describe God’s forgiveness? Explain each.  
a.

b.

c.

d.

## **II. The Mind Under Sin (vs. 3-4)**

1. What does David mean by the fact that he “kept silent?” (v. 3)
2. Describe David’s physical and emotional condition when he “kept silent?” (v. 3-4)

## **III. The Effects of Confessed Sins (vs. 5-7)**

1. To whom did David confess his sins? (v. 5)
2. What was the effect of David’s confession? (v. 5)
3. What is the “cause” for which “everyone who is godly shall pray” to God? (v. 6)
4. What does it mean to pray to God “in a time when [He] may be found?” (v. 6)

5. What does the psalmist mean by the statement, “surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him?” (v. 6)

6. What does David list in verse 7 as the ultimate benefit of confessed sins?

#### **IV. The Proper Spirit (vs. 8-9)**

1. David now offers advice and instruction to others who find themselves in a similar situation to his. What does he mean by the phrase, “I will guide you with my eye?” (v. 8)

2. In what way does David warn sinners to not be like the horse or the mule? Explain the nature of these animals. (v. 9)

3. What is the proper spirit David is alluding to in these verses? (v. 8-9)

**V. The Blessings of Trusting in the Lord (vs. 10-11)**

1. David says, “many shall be the sorrows of the wicked.” The righteous experience many sorrows as well. However, this verse suggests a key difference between “the wicked” and “he who trusts in the Lord.” (v. 10)
  
2. Why does David exhort the “righteous” and “upright in heart” to “be glad,” “rejoice,” and “shout for joy?” (v. 11)

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Psalm 38


## Background:

This psalm was one composed by David at a time when he faced bitter suffering, and was feeling the hand of God rebuking him because of sin. Although there is no way of specifically ascribing this psalm to a particular time or event in David's life, it seems to fit well with either the events surrounding his sin with Bathsheba, or more probably, the events immediately preceding the revolt led by David's son, Absalom (2 Samuel 13-18). The psalm is divided into three parts. Part one consists of verses 1 through 8, where the psalmist describes the physical and emotional anguish he feels as a result of his sin. Part two is found in verses 9 through 14, in which David describes feelings of loneliness and despair brought on from his rejection by loved ones, friends and kinsmen, and fear of his enemies plots. And part three consists of verses 15 through 22, in which David declares his sins and makes a final plea for deliverance.

## Outline:


### I. Physical and Emotional Anguish (vs. 1-8)

 Key Words:

 Observation:


### II. Loneliness, Despair and Fear (vs. 9-14)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

### **III. Declaration of Sins and Final Plea (vs. 15-22)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Physical and Emotional Anguish (vs. 1-8)**

1. What is meant by the phrase “Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down?” (v. 2)
2. Why did David say, “there is no soundness in my flesh...nor is there any health in my bones?” (v. 3)

3. What three words does David use to describe his sin in verses 3 through 5? Explain the meaning of each.

a.

b.

c.

4. David vividly describes both the physical and emotional pain he experiences as a result of his sin in verses 3 through 8. In your opinion, why are these two related?

## **II. Loneliness, Despair and Fear (vs. 9-14)**

1. What is meant by the expression, “all my desire is before You [God], and my sighing is not hidden from You?” (v. 9)





**III. Declaration of Sins and Final Plea (vs. 15-22)**

1. What was it that David needed to do to remedy his situation? (vs. 17-18)

2. What was David's final plea? (vs. 21-22)

**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes

# Psalm 51


## Background:

This psalm of David, according to the title, was written “To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” This psalm was intended be a public expression of David’s repentance for the sin he had committed against God, and against the people of Israel (2 Samuel 12:1-24). Some commentators believe this psalm was not actually written *by* David, but rather *about* David. These commentators place the writing of this psalm during the time of Israel’s Babylonian captivity, since the statement is made in verse 18, “build the walls of Jerusalem.” During the Babylonian captivity, the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins and its walls were destroyed. The walls of the city would not be rebuilt until the time of Nehemiah. However, other commentators believe the expression “build the walls of Jerusalem” could either be interpreted figuratively, or literally -- suggesting the extension of the walls around the city may not have been completed at the time David pinned this psalm. More than likely, the phrase, “build the walls of Jerusalem” is being used metaphorically, and may be David’s request for Jehovah to rebuild or restore the Divine protection for God’s people that David’s public sin had torn down. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that this psalm was written by David at the time he felt a deep need for public repentance and confession. However, this psalm was not simply intended to express David’s private feelings, but was also designed to be used in public worship. The psalm is divided into two main parts, verses 1 through 12, in which the psalmist confesses his guilt and prays for forgiveness; and verses 13 through 19, in which David shows how his life will change and what new purposes he will serve if the Lord grants forgiveness. These two main sections are further divided into two parts each. For example, in verses 1 through 4, the psalmist prays for mercy and forgiveness; and in verses 5 through 12, David pleads for restoration and renewal. Likewise, in verses 13 through 17, he speaks of what he will accomplish if he is forgiven; and finally, in verses 18 and 19, the psalmist prays for God’s blessings on the people.

## Outline:


### I. Prayer for Mercy and Forgiveness (vs. 1-4)

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## **II. Plea for Restoration and Renewal (vs. 5-12)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:


## **III. Promise if Restored (vs. 13-17)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## **IV. Prayer for God's Blessings on the People (vs. 18-19)**

 Key Words:

 Observation:

## The Exposition:

### I. Prayer for Mercy and Forgiveness (vs. 1-4)

1. According to God's mercy and lovingkindness, David asked God to do three things. Explain each.

a.

b.

c.

2. David depended on God's "lovingkindness" and His "tender mercies" to forgive his sins. (vs. 1-2) Explain the meaning of each.

a.

b.

3. What was meant by the phrase, “my sin is ever before me?” (v. 3)
4. Why did David say, “against You [God], and You only have I sinned? Didn’t David also sin against the people of Israel? Explain.
5. What did David mean when he said of God, “that You may be found just when You speak; and blameless when You judge?” (v. 4)

## **II. Plea for Restoration and Renewal (vs. 5-12)**

1. Explain verse 5 in the light of Psalm 58:2-5, and in the light of Ezekiel 18:19-20.
2. In what way were David’s “bones” broken? (v. 8)

3. What was David asking for in verse 10? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Since it is not likely that David understood the Holy Spirit to be the third member of the Godhead, what was he asking for when he said to God, “do not take Your Holy Spirit from me?” (v. 11)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What was the main thing missing from David’s life as a result of his sin? (v. 12) Explain.

**III. Promise if Restored (vs. 13-17)**

1. What was the first thing David promised to do if God granted his request for forgiveness, and how do you believe he would accomplish it? (v. 13)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was the second thing David promised to do if God granted his request for forgiveness? (vs. 14-15)

3. Explain verses 16 and 17 in the light of Micah 6:6-8.

**IV. Prayer for God's Blessings on the People (vs. 18-19)**

1. In addition to praying for the forgiveness of his own sins, why do you believe David felt a need to ask for God's blessings on Zion (a word used to represent Jerusalem and Israel)? (v. 18)
  
2. Assuming David was speaking metaphorically when he said, "build the walls of Jerusalem," what would be the reason behind this request? (v. 18)
  
3. Why would God "then" be pleased with the sacrifices and offerings of the people? (v. 19)



**Theme and Application:** (In your own words, briefly describe the general theme of this psalm, and explain how this can be applied to your life.)

# Notes