

PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE PSALMS

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I. Introductory remarks:

A. You will hear many strange things about the Psalms:

- some Christians sing them
- others may relate them to the old dispensation
- but nearly all Christians use them and the favorite Bible verses of a host of people come from the Psalms.
- it is appropriate therefore that we use them for our strengthening and development.

B. Basically:

The Psalms speak of the experience of life and they grow out of the lives of godly persons and speak of what they learned of life by the grace of God. As such they are close to the heart. They are experience that is at the same time personal and universal. The Scripture has many types of literature; historic, from which we learn what God has done; narrative, from which we see how the redemptive pattern unfolds; didactic, where we are directly taught what our responsibilities and duties are; and devotional in which we see our stand and position before God and others. The Psalms include all these types of literature and all these aspects of life may be gleaned from them. But in an unique way the Psalms speak for themselves and since they are born of the heart and experience of life, they provide eminent practical lessons both in precept and example.

C. The Psalms are usually divided into five Books or parts. The historic reason for this division is not known exactly and the division is not really a matter of inspiration. Most writers outline the parts thus:

Book I...Psalms 1-41
Book II..Psalms 42-72
Book III.Psalms 73-89
Book IV..Psalms 90-106
Book V...Psalms 107-150

D. In addition to these divisions, the Psalms are classified by type. The following types are plain through the thinking of the present writer and they are listed, not in order of importance but simply as I think of them:

Devotional (Psalm 150)
Historic (Psalm 78)
Messianic (Psalm 22)--predictive in character
Imprecatory (Psalm 109)
Situation (Psalm 122, ff)