

Psalms of Praise

As we have been discussing, there are many different sub-genres or types of psalms. We begin by looking at the type of psalm known as a “lament” psalm. Today, we will be looking at the praise type of psalm. Psalms of praise focus on who God is and what He has done. Praise means to express admiration, respect, or acknowledgement. In the psalms, praise relates to worship. Patterns of praise obviously appear throughout the Bible and even in various psalm types. There is, however, a type of psalm whose overall structure and content is focused on praise. While not as frequent as the psalms of lament, the psalms of praise are very common. Interestingly, the psalms of praise are infrequent in Book 1 and then become increasingly common as we move through the Psalter.

Book	# of Total Psalms	# of Praise Psalms	% of Overall
ONE 1&2 + (3-41)	41	3	7%
TWO (42-72)	30	3	10%
THREE (73-89)	16	3	19%
FOUR (90-106)	16	10	63%
FIVE (107-149) + 150	42	14	33%

We will look at the overall structure of the Psalter later in the class but the placement of the psalms of praise show a progression in the entire collection of psalms toward worship. Although percentage drops between book 4 and 5 that is a more of a function of the size of the book than of a lack of praise psalms. In fact, there are more praise psalms in Book 5 than any other book and Book 5 ends with a series of 5 consecutive praise psalms (145-149) before reaching the finally in Psalm 150, also a praise psalm which concludes the entire Psalter.

Again, it is important to remember that when reading the psalms that you are working with poetic literature so don't expect cookie cutter patterns. The structure of the psalms of praise, however, are straightforward.

1. **Call to Praise:** This can be an expression of direct praise or an encouragement for praise to be brought.
2. **Reason for Praise:** The basis for the call to praise. They will sometimes include a specific recounting of the rationale and other times it can be a general truth about God.
3. **Repeated Call for Praise:** This can be an expression of direct praise or an encouragement for praise to be brought.

These various elements are sometimes repeated and/or implied rather than expressed. There is a wide variety in how they appear, but the psalms of praise will contain at least a call to praise and a reason. The repeated is often present but may not be as explicit.

Let's look at a few examples. I will walk you through 2 examples and then we will do one together. You will then do one on your own as homework. I have highlighted the various elements in our example according to the following key:

1. **Call to Praise** = Bold
2. Reason for Praise = Underlined
3. Repeated Call for Praise = ***Bold Italic***

Psalms of Praise

8 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1** O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2** Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
- 4** what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
- 5** Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
- 6** You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
- 7** all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- 8** the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- 9** O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

- 95** Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the
rock of our salvation!
- 2** Let us come into his presence with
thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him
with songs of praise!
- 3** For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
- 4** In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his
also.
- 5** The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
- 6** Oh come, let us worship and bow
down;

*let us kneel before the LORD, our
Maker!*

- 7** For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice,
- 8** do not harden your hearts, as at
Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the
wilderness,
- 9** when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they
had seen my work.
- 10** For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people who go
astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways."
- 11** Therefore I swore in my wrath,
"They shall not enter my rest."

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Like laments, there are specialized types of praise psalms that are sometimes classified more specifically. Examples include songs of Zion, enthronement psalms, and covenant psalms. A psalm like Psalm 46 for example, is often considered a praise psalm with the subtype Song or Hymn of Zion. If you look carefully at that psalm you will see it is offering praise but the specific call to praise is not present and the structural elements of praise are implied rather than expressed.

HOMEWORK

Like the homework for laments I want you to choose another praise psalm and see if you can identify the elements on your own. Please choose one of the following:¹

29, 33, 47, 48, 84, 93, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 111, 113, 117, 134, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149

Then...

Considering our lesson and discussion select one of the example psalms from above or the one you chose for the first homework assignment and pray that psalm throughout the week using the following approaches. Try to use each approach at least once during the week.

Each time read the entire psalm and then proceed with one of the following.

1. Offer the actual words of the psalm as a prayer.
2. Use the organization of your psalm to structure a prayer mostly in your own words.
3. Use the organization of your psalm to structure a prayer for someone else (call them to praise).
4. Use the organization of your psalm to structure a prayer for the Church.

*Please be sure to post any questions on the discussion board while working through the homework. I am here to help you and others may benefit from your question as well. Don't worry about getting everything right, just do your best to get a feel for the flow of the psalm you are working with and how it "works".

ADDITIONAL

This is not part of the homework but for those who want additional practice and a bit more of a challenge look at psalm 46 and see if you can figure out why it is often categorized as a psalm of praise. Also, look at psalm 150, observe its structure and think about why this would have been selected as the final psalm.

¹ These are not all the psalms of praise.