



The Book of Psalms



The book of Psalms is the largest book in the Bible. There are 150 Psalms, many written by King David 3,500 years ago for use in the new temple that he was planning. David also had a team of assistants to help him (1 Chronicles 25) – men like Asaph and Heman and others who wrote psalms under David’s direction. All the men who composed the Psalms were inspired by God.

The Psalms were composed, not just to be read but to be sung. When we sing a psalm, we are singing God’s Word to God’s praise. The Psalms tell us how wonderful God is and help us to praise and worship him. The Psalms help us to pray to God – telling him about our troubles and worries. The Psalms give us comfort and guidance.

Some psalms point to the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God who came to this world to suffer and die for the sins of his people. Some Psalms tell about our sin and how the Lord has dealt with it. Other Psalms express our joy and thanksgiving.

David and the others wrote the Psalms in Hebrew. There are many different translations in English. Some of these are in verse form which means they are easier to sing. In this book we have used a new translation by a Bible scholar Alec Motyer. He uses the special Hebrew name Yahweh when speaking about the Lord God. This is a proper name (like James or William). This name Yahweh reminds us of who God is – with no beginning and no end – always constant – the same yesterday and today and forever. The Psalms are full of poetic language and imagery.

Author’s Note: Throughout this book words laid out in colour italic are words taken from Alec Motyer’s own work.

Psalm 1: 1-6: God's Teaching

Blessed is the man
who has determined not to walk
according to the advice of wicked people,
nor, to take his stand, according to the way of sinners
nor in the seat of scoffers
But indeed his pleasure is in Yahweh's teaching
and in his teaching he meditates by day and night.
Consequently, he is like a tree,
transplanted beside channels of water,
which yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither —
and whatever he does, he prospers.

Not so the wicked ones!
They are like chaff
which the wind drives about!
Therefore, the wicked ones will not rise up in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous ones,
because Yahweh knows the way of righteous ones,
and the way of the wicked ones will perish.

God wants his people to be happy and blessed. Psalm 1 describes the blessed way of life.

God gives good advice about the company we keep. Evil companions can have a bad effect on us. The happy man would not even walk casually along the road with a wicked man, nor stand about chatting and certainly not sit down to talk with those who mocked God and his word. Instead the happy man spends time reading God's word and thinking about it. This makes his life fruitful and blessed, just like a green leafy tree beside the river.

The life of a wicked person is so different – they are compared to dry useless chaff which blows away in the wind. In the end they will perish.

Reading God's word will show us the greatest blessing of all – having our sins forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 32, 1). If we trust in Him we will be truly happy.

Prayer

*Thank you for your word, the Bible
which gives me correction,
encouragement and teaching
about the Lord Jesus, our Saviour.*

Psalm 8: 1-9 Majestic God

Yahweh, our Sovereign,
how magnificent is your name
in all the earth!
You who have placed your splendour
above the heavens –
out of the mouth of babies and unweaned infants
you have founded strength,
because of your adversaries,
in order to silence the enemy and avenger!

When I look at your heavens,
the works of your fingers,
moon and stars
which you have established,
what is mere man that you remember him,
and the son of man that you visi³ him! –
You caused him to be a little less than God;
with glory and majesty you continue to crown him;

You maintain him in rule over the works of your hand;
everything you have placed under his feet:
sheep and cattle – all of them –
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds in the heavens,
and the fish in the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Yahweh, our Sovereign,
How magnificent is your name in all the earth!

Have you ever looked up to the sky on a clear starry night? When David wrote Psalm 8 he was looking at the night sky and worshipping God, its creator.

David is remembering that God is our deliverer and redeemer. He is the controller and detailed planner of his world in all its aspects and activities. He is a God who is truly God. There is no God except the God of the Bible.

It is so wonderful that such a great God concerns himself with such as you and me! He is pleased to receive praise from the weakest of people – even little babies and toddlers. God is so concerned for weak and frail people, that he sent his only son to the earth to become one of us and to live, suffer and die for us to make us right with God.

Prayer

*Help me to think about you when I see the stars
in the sky. You have made them all.*

*Thank you that you love people like me so much
that you sent your son to die for us.*

Psalm 13: God who gives Light

How long, Yahweh, will you forget me; for ever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long will I make plan after plan –
grief in my heart each day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Take notice, answer me, Yahweh my God;
enlighten my eyes, in case I sleep in death;
in case my enemy say: 'I have proved able for him';
in case my adversary delight that I have slipped.

And in your committed love I have trusted:
O let my heart delight in your salvation;
let me indeed sing to Yahweh
because he is sure to deal fully with me.



Have you ever felt really sad and down-in-the-dumps? David the Psalmist did. He felt so down that he thought God had forgotten him altogether. "Will you forget me for ever?" he asked.

By the end of the Psalm his mood was totally different – he was rejoicing and singing for joy! What made the difference?

David prayed to Yahweh, his God. He asked Him to take notice and to give light to his eyes and help him with his problems. The cure for his depression was to trust in the mercy of God and rejoicing in his salvation. He remembered that Yahweh will never forget us.

When we feel down and sad – whether it is about the sin in our own heart or problems caused by others – the best thing we can do is to pray to The Lord for help.

When He gives light to our eyes, we view life in a different way. Thinking about what God has done through Jesus Christ His Son, will lift our spirits. He showed such mercy by dying for us while we were sinners. When we think about Him and His salvation, then we will want to sing about God's kindness, rather than complain that he has forgotten us.

'The only response to our question and doubt is "I trust Him!" We should say that as each day starts and if necessary moment by moment throughout the day.'

Prayer

When I am sad, help me to pray to You. Show me what you have done for me. Thank you for your mercy and salvation.

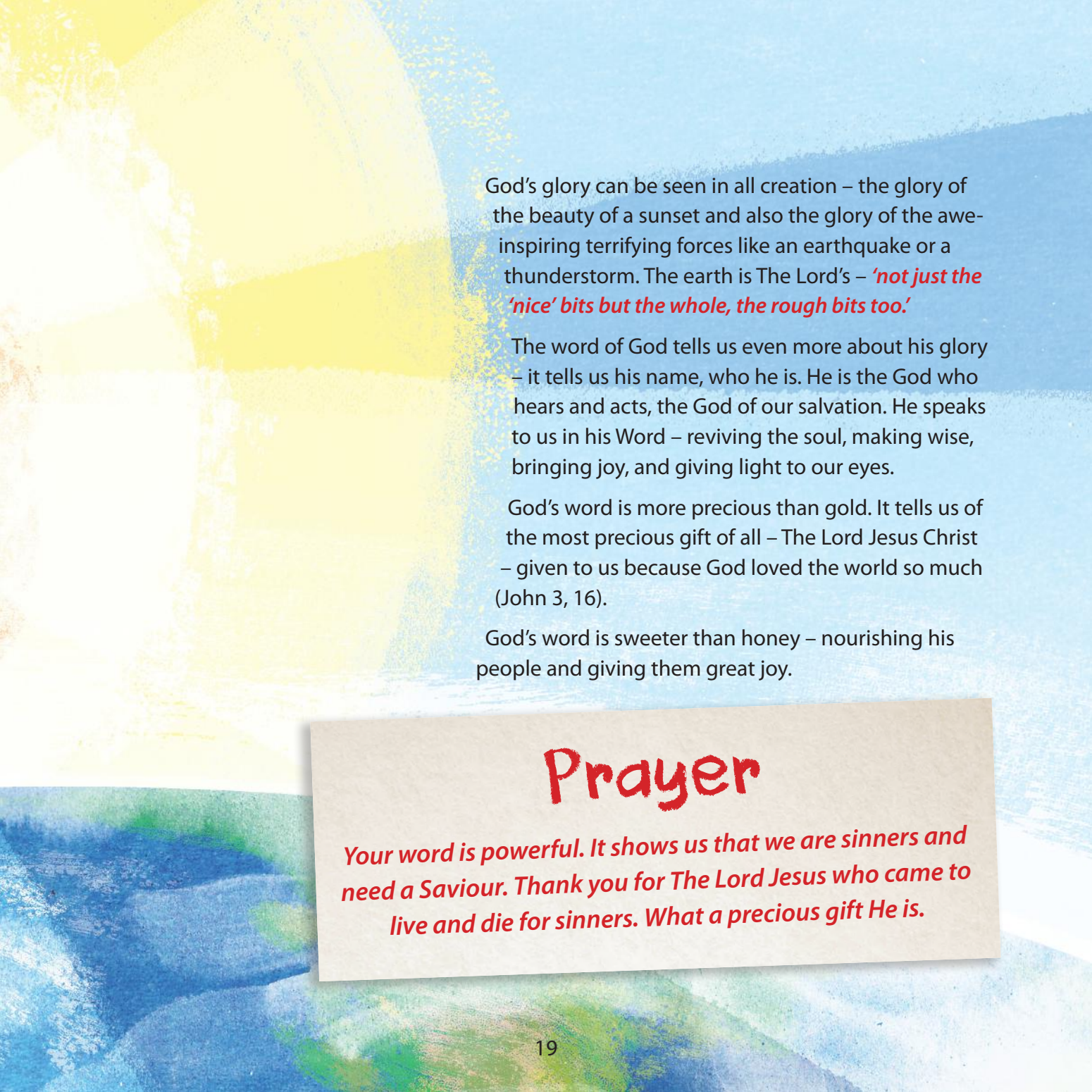
Psalm 19: 1-10 God's Word

The heavens recount the glory of God.
And the expanse of the sky declares the work of his hands.
Day after day pours out speech,
and night after night reports knowledge.
There is no speech, and there are no words:
their voice is not heard.
In all the earth their line has gone out,
and to the end of the peopled-world their utterances.

For the sun he has set a tent in them:
It, like a bridegroom, comes out from his chamber,
and like a mighty man revels in running his pathway;
from the end of the heavens is his emergence,
and his circuit is to their end,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

Yahweh's teaching is complete,
restoring the soul;
Yahweh's testimony is trustworthy,
Giving wisdom to the teachable;
Yahweh's precepts are straightforward,
giving joy to the heart;
Yahweh's command is pure,
enlightening the eyes.

The fear of Yahweh is clean,
standing for ever;
Yahweh's judgments are true;
righteous altogether!
To be desired more than gold,
than abundant fine gold!
And sweeter than honey,
even overflowing honey!



God's glory can be seen in all creation – the glory of the beauty of a sunset and also the glory of the awe-inspiring terrifying forces like an earthquake or a thunderstorm. The earth is The Lord's – *'not just the 'nice' bits but the whole, the rough bits too.'*

The word of God tells us even more about his glory – it tells us his name, who he is. He is the God who hears and acts, the God of our salvation. He speaks to us in his Word – reviving the soul, making wise, bringing joy, and giving light to our eyes.

God's word is more precious than gold. It tells us of the most precious gift of all – The Lord Jesus Christ – given to us because God loved the world so much (John 3, 16).

God's word is sweeter than honey – nourishing his people and giving them great joy.

Prayer

Your word is powerful. It shows us that we are sinners and need a Saviour. Thank you for The Lord Jesus who came to live and die for sinners. What a precious gift He is.