

David the Psalm-Singer – *The Book of Psalms*

Introduction – In opening up another ten Psalms (31-40) for our study, meditation and edification, I want to consider the relevancy of singing the Psalms for every believer and in every circumstance. It is this conviction which has driven us to seek to recover the singing of the Psalms in our corporate worship and to give them to families for individual and family times of prayer.

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs (Col 3:16) – We are exhorted to *“let the word of Christ dwell in (us) richly”* and this is likened in Eph 5:18-19 to being intoxicated in our body, thoughts, words, emotions, and actions. In the speaking (chanting, singing) of the Psalms, we find the Word of Christ, for Christ walks within the psalms. The majority of the Psalms are attributed to David or during his reign, and David, we know, is a type of Christ, who is called the Son of David and is the fulfillment of the prophesy of the return of David to reign on His everlasting throne.

David the Warrior – David was a valiant warrior. Our favorite story of him is, as a young lad, taking on the great Goliath, slaying him with only one stone sent from his sling. Then he took Goliath’s sword, *“killed him, and cut off his head with it”* (1 Sam 17:51). Later, David defends himself and his people against many enemies by means of his armed forces. Many psalms reflect the militant work of this soldier (Psalm 144:1-2) and the warfare he often found himself in (Psalm 140). Paul teaches us that our weapons are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor 10:3-6). The church is to have a militant aspect to it and the Psalms provide just such a mindset.

David and Poetic Praise – Being a military man, David was no wimp; but he was not afraid of loving, writing, and singing poetry (Psalm 144:9-10). The Psalms are first for developing a life of praise, for real religion is God-centered, God-focused, transfixed and enraptured with God (Psalm 145). Hence, David was known as a “man after God’s own heart”

David the Honest Complainer – But David, and the Psalms, does not reflect a rose-colored, sappy, nothing-ever-goes-wrong approach to praise. The Psalms are full of honesty. Honest doubt, honest lament, honest cursing, full of personal and communal sorrow, disorientation, and feelings of abandonment (Psalm 10, 13, 74). We are told to sing these as well, and we learn how to pour out our fears, doubts, and complaints to God.

David the Shepherd – David had been a shepherd, and he knew what it was that the Lord was his good Shepherd (Psalm 23). And so the Psalms often sing of God’s lovingkindness, protection and provision.

David the Singer/Musician – David was a skilled musician and singer, selected to perform before King Saul. And the church is required to play skillfully before her King as well (Psalm 33:1-3). The musicians serving in the temple were among the wisest men (1 Kings 4:31, 1 Chron 15:19) and their responsibility included putting music to the texts, training up skillful musicians, choosing styles to fit the occasion of worship. The music for the psalter written during the reformation (much of which we are using in our Cantus) was developed from historic music of the church and sought to produce styles that were unique and appropriate for the church. The modern church is doing just the opposite, running after the styles of the unbelieving world. As we have said, our point in singing from the Cantus is not to stay where they were, but to recover and relearn their wisdom and mindset, and then build upon that in an ongoing reformation of music and psalm-singing, along with writing new songs.

David the Penitent – David was a type of Christ, but he was not the perfect Christ. The Psalms teach us that we do not go and get cleaned up to present ourselves to God. Rather, we come to God in honesty when we have sinned to get cleaned up (Psalm 51). Augustine is quoted somewhere as saying that Psalm 32 was his favorite for just such a reason. He knew he needed God to change him.

David and Trusting God – The Psalms sung teach us to release our trust in anything other than God. To say, “I trust in Jesus” does not save. Trusting in Jesus saves, and the Psalms paint wonderful pictures of what that looks like (Psalm 131, 62).

David and Thanking God – David was a man who was always thanking God, for everything, and he had to write songs in order to do so, to memorialize and remember *“His mercy endures forever”* (Psalm 136). A thankful heart cries out with great realization, *“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side...”* (Psalm 124).

David and Christ....and you – The Psalms speak of David’s life, but then we find that they also speak of Christ’s, and so we are instructed to find Christ in the Psalms (Psalm 22:1, Matt 27:46, Luke 24:44). The Psalms teach us that there are no Lone Ranger Christians, for so many of them require a corporate, body-wide context to understand and apply. But they also keep us from hiding in the group, for they require us to pour out our individual hearts and souls before the throne as well. The Psalms are a composite of a true spiritual person, hiding none of the work of sanctification still needed, but hiding none of the honest pursuit of God either. If that composite were drawn by an artist, would it look like you? Singing, meditating, and reflecting on the Psalms, both individually and corporately, is one of God’s means to conform us to the image of His Son.