

# What I Learned From My Study of the Psalms (Part 1)

*by Bryan Gibson*

One can't help but fall in love with this great book, which is basically a hymnal. It teaches so many wonderful lessons, but with these lessons taught in the form of song or poetry, the vivid pictures created in the mind tend to stick with you longer. Here are some things I've learned from my own study. There's far too many to cover in one article, so we'll do this in three parts.

## **On the subject of prayer...**

Constantly—morning, noon, and evening (55:16-17), as long as I live (116:1-2), that's how often I should pray—when I desire to give thanks (68:19; 107:8), when I need forgiveness (32:1-5; 51:1-7), when I'm persecuted (142:5-6; 109:1-5), when I'm burdened with grief and anxiety (61:1-4; 147:3), when I'm in need of boldness and courage (138:3), etc.

Psalms confirmed for me that God has great power (33:6-9); that He has infinite knowledge, even of every single individual (147:5; 33:13-15); that He is longsuffering, compassionate, merciful, righteous, and faithful (86:15; 121:1-8; 143:1); and that He shows great lovingkindness (36:7). What I learned from studying these attributes of God is that He is both **willing** and **able** to answer prayers.

One sobering revelation, confirmed in the New Testament, is that God does NOT answer the prayers of everyone, but of the righteous (18:20-24; 34:15-18)—the prayers of those who fear Him (145:19), who call upon him in truth (145:18), and who come to Him with a broken and contrite heart (34:18).

## **On the subject of praise...**

What I learned is that I should praise God joyfully and wholeheartedly (63:5; 9:1), but with understanding (47:7); that I should do so continually (34:1; 104:33); that this praise should come from both my mouth and my conduct (50:23); and that this kind of praise is good, pleasant, and beautiful (33:1; 147:1).

What also became exceedingly clear is that my praise should be specific—that I should praise God for His marvelous works (9:1; 139:14); for His word (33:1, 4;

all of 119); for His creation (33:6-9); for the many blessings He has bestowed on me, including forgiveness (68:19; 51:13-14; 103:2-3; 130:3-4); for the promises He gives me (111:5); for answering my prayers (34:1-7); for His many wonderful attributes (see above), etc.

### **On the burden of sin and the blessedness of forgiveness...**

From some of the most descriptive language imaginable, I learned that no heavier burden exists than the burden of sin, that the greatest anguish I can experience is knowing I've sinned against God, and that His wrath is against me, even as one of His children (25:11; 31:9-10; 32:3-4; 38:3-8, 17-18; 40:12; 41:4; 51:4).

Thankfully, there is "hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption" (130:7). My anguish can be replaced with "joy and gladness" (51:8)—if my heart is broken and contrite (34:18; 51:17), if I acknowledge my sins to Him (32:1-5; 51:3-4), and if I repent (51:10-15). God is "ready to forgive" (86:5), and so what a joy it is to know that if I meet these conditions, "as far as the east is from the west" (103:12), He will remove my transgressions from me.