

## LIVING FAITH CHAPEL

### How To Read the Psalms: The Heart of the Old Testament

#### Introduction

- The Psalms are the heart of the message of the Old Testament
- Athanasius called the Psalms “an epitome of the whole Scriptures.”
- J. Anderson, a 19<sup>th</sup> century translator of Calvin’s commentary on the Psalms said that they “include illustrations of every religious truth which it is necessary for us to know.”

#### God’s Covenant Relationship with Israel

- The central theological concept behind the Psalms is God’s covenant with His people.
- The core of a covenant idea is a relationship: “I will be your God and you will be my people.”

Covenant was similar to the ancient Near East treaties:

1. Identification of the parties making the treaty (cf. Ps. 47; 93)
2. Historical prologue (cf. Ps. 136)
3. Law (cf. Ps. 15:1-2; 19; 119)
4. Blessings and curses (cf. Ps. 1)
5. Witnesses
6. Deposit of treaty text

Examples in Scripture: Ex. 20, Deuteronomy, Josh.24, 1 Sam. 12.

#### The Psalms as a Covenant Book

We cannot ignore the fact that the psalmists speak out of the context of covenant. These are people who speak to God and about God on the basis of being in a covenant relationship with him. Thus, covenant is a concept which ties together many strands of the theology of the Psalms.

#### Forgiveness

God’s covenant involves forgiveness and there are a group of psalms that speak about it (e.g. Ps. 51).

#### Conclusion

The psalmist’s purpose is to confess a profound faith in and love toward God. They cry out to God from the context of their intimate covenant relationship with God and they call on others who know God’s love to do the same.