

LIVING FAITH CHAPEL

How To Read the Psalms: A Mirror of the Soul

Introduction

- The appeal of the Psalter is due largely to its ability to speak to the whole person.
- They arouse our emotions, direct our wills, and inform our intellect.

The Psalms Inform Our Intellect

One of the Bible's purposes, as well as the Psalms in particular, is to inform the reader about God and his dealings with people in order that we may know God better.

Example: Ps. 139

The Psalms Arouse Our Emotions

John Calvin likened the Psalms to a mirror:

“There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.”

The Psalms, in many ways, are oriented to the emotional life of men and women

Reverence (Ps. 5:7; 8), Shame (44:9,15), Fear (56:3), Sadness (6:6-7; 13), Anger (109:8-10), Doubt (73), Love (18:1; 116:1; 26:8; 119:97)

Key Point: The Psalms can help us to discipline our emotions or teach us how to deal with them.

The Psalms Direct Our Wills

The Psalms instruct us how we should behave

Wisdom Psalms (1:1; 32:1; 119:1-8)

They lead us in a direction of behavior which is approved by God

Directing our Wills by Example (7:17; 23:4; 9:1)

Clue: Find the “I wills”

Directing our Wills by Command (47:1; 29:1-2; 103:1-2)

- As the setting for most of the psalms is worship, we often find the worship leader exhorting the people to praise God.
- Worship is not a spectator sport, but both communal and enthusiastic