

"PSALMS, WALK THRU THE BIBLE, II."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Psalm 1:1-2; 16:11; 19:1-2; 27:1; 29:1; 95:1-3

Introduction.

Thirty-five years ago Stephen Covey wrote a massively popular bestseller, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in which he challenged people from mediocrity to self-improvement.

How many people really want to live a shallow, superficial, hollow kind of life? Do you desire superficial, or spiritual? And by spiritual I don't mean holier than thou, or fake, or puffed up, thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Do we desire to be a more Biblically spiritual person, the way God created and intended us to be? The Psalms give a clear picture of a truly spiritual person who is real, genuine.

Seven aspects of Biblically spiritual people.

There are seven kinds of Psalms, the seven genres that the Psalms can be broken down into. Rather than just make this an academic exercise, I want to look at the seven genres as seven aspects of a Biblically spiritual person. Praise, honesty (lament), memory, morality (Law abiding), change (penitence), trust, thanks.

First aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is praise.

A truly spiritual person praises. He is taken by God, focused on God, has real joy in God. He praises God not just for what He has done, but who He is.

Psalm 95:1-3 Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
3 For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

The word psalms means songs of praise. Poetry is a wonderful vehicle for expressing our love, joy and praise, ours is a singing faith, a joy-filled faith expressed in song for thousands of years. The psalms were Israel's hymnal, filled with songs enabling God's people to sing God's great attributes and deeds.

The psalms are all about worship, worshipping the one true living God who alone is worthy of all our worship, praise and devotion. The theme of worshipping God is present in every psalm. The primary method of expressing worship is through song. The Biblically spiritual maturing person has praise for God on his lips.

Second aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is honesty (lament).

All people suffer but a truly spiritual person knows how to suffer. They are honest about their difficulties. We have this mistaken notion that it is more spiritual to stuff our stuff down, and not express it.

The psalms of lament teach us how to be honest before God, how to deal with the pain of living in a fallen world. Over a third of the psalms express lament, sorrow, distress, personal pain. They cry out why. They help us to honestly express our emotions in a real relationship with God.

Psalm 10:1 Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 13:1-2 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

Psalm 69:3 I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

Psalm 77:7-9 Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?

8 Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?

9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?

This is real, raw honesty about difficulties. Notice how transparent he is.

The psalmist doesn't tell us not to be discouraged, not to despair, he tells us how to be discouraged, how to despair, how to be sad before the Lord and do it well. The

psalmist's honesty encourages the heartbroken among us to set aside our stiff upper lip and make genuine appeal to our Savior who loves us and cares for us.

To those who are grieving and suffering the psalmist gives us the language of lament. The laments not only give us permission to share our complaints with God; they teach us how to complain before God when we are overwhelmed by the problems of life. They are real expressions of pain from people exercising real faith in the living God.

God does not expect us to remain silent in our suffering. Come to Him, pour out your soul to Him. Remember all His loving care and provision in the past and trust Him for the future.

Third aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is thanksgiving.

There are many psalms of thanks and gratitude, especially in times of God's great deliverance. We thank Him as we would thank a father for his gifts.

Psalm 34:4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Psalm 108:3-4 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among the nations.

4 For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

A spiritually growing and mature person is one who has thanks on his lips for the abounding grace and kindness and goodness of God every day.

This is a person who realizes he has nothing that has not been given to him as a gift of God's unmerited grace and favor. This is a person who lives in an attitude of gratitude and contentment.

God is a prayer hearing and prayer answering God, He never ceases to bring glory to Himself through His faithful answers to our petitions, and often above and beyond, more than we could ask or imagine. This is cause for thanks, the Biblically spiritual person never ceases in giving it.

Fourth aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is change.

A Biblically spiritual person, a person who is maturing in their spiritual faith and love for God, is a changed and changing person.

There are at least seven penitential psalms to help us change our hearts.
Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143 (25, 101, parts of 103).

We are sinners and we sin. We sin every single day in our thoughts, words, actions, senses, attitudes and emotions. We commit sins of commission and omission, known and unknown, secret and public.

Repentance and change must be a constant, daily part of our lives, or we will become cold, hard, bitter, godless. Things go wrong when we wander from God. Godly sorrow leads us to repentance and change.

David, a man after God's own heart, teaches us again and again, how to be repent well, how to be brokenhearted over our sin, how to change our hearts before God.

Psalm 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalm 38:3-5 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.

4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness,

Psalm 51:1-4, 10-11 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

These psalms help us develop a deeper self-awareness of our sin and guilt before God, they open us up to the truth about ourselves. We don't like to talk about our

sin or our need to change. So we need help, we need words to help us give expression to what we have a hard time saying.

Mark these psalms in your Bible, cross reference them, and pray them often. Pray them until your heart grows soft toward your sin and soft toward those who have sinned against you.

This is powerful medicine for the soul. I cannot urge you enough to reflect on and pray these psalms. Let this Word of God wash over your soul, and deepen your repentance beyond just saying your are sorry.

These psalms broaden our vocabulary for prayer and are a rich gift for the cure of souls. You cannot be a Biblically spiritual person without them.

Fifth aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is morality.

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

The book of Psalms begins by setting before us two men, two lifestyles, and two destinies, but only one leads to blessing, to life, to Biblical spiritual maturity.

Two psalms, 19 and 119, are hymns celebrating the wonders of God's Law, the wisdom of God revealed and given to us as gift. By His Word, our lives are blessed and guided and delivered from folly and curse. They stir us up to aspire to love and obey God's Word more fully.

Psalm 119:1-2 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!

2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

God has revealed Himself to us and in His Law He makes known to us His perfect will. This is cause for worship and celebration.

A Biblically spiritual person doesn't live contrary to God's revealed will. A Biblically spiritual person is not a hypocrite. He lives with a sharpened God consciousness, living by God, for God, to the glory of God. He uses the Law to

guide and inform his choices and decisions. He is a man after God's own heart, following God through His Word.

Sixth aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is memory.

Spiritual amnesia is deadly, spiritual Alzheimer's is a tragedy that leads to a shallow life disconnected from God and His great deeds and works.

All of the OT is about remembering God, recalling to mind who He is and all He has done, renewing the covenant. Remember every time God commanded Israel to pile up memorial stones for the sake of remembering and retelling God's faithfulness to the next generation.

We must never forget God's hesed, God's steadfast love, His covenant kindness, His unmerited mercy. Many psalms put recalling and remembering into song.

Psalm 40:9-10 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.

10 I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;

I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;

I have not concealed your ***steadfast love*** and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Psalm 45:17 I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Psalm 78:4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation

the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

Write down, remember, pile up memorial stones, keep a journal of the steadfast love of the Lord in your life. Capture the grace sightings, the times when heaven broke in, when you saw the hand of God manifested in your life, in your home, your marriage, your kids. We are such a forgetful people.

Spiritual people need to be a people of memory, remembering what God has done, how he has acted on our behalf. Our hope in the future promises of God are watered by the past goodness and faithfulness of God.

I have shared before my journal of my life and God's grace through all the years. At the top of page one are the words of Asaph.

Psalm 77:11-12 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. 12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

"It is good to enter into the detail of God's favors and not to view them in the gross, and in each instance to observe, and own, that God's mercy endures forever."
Matthew Henry.

"Search backward into all the performances of Providence throughout your lives. ... and drink again a fresh sweetness out of them. ... Let me tell you, there is not such a pleasant history for you to read in all the world as the history of your own lives, if you would but sit down and record from the beginning hitherto what God has been to you, and done for you; what signal manifestations and outbreakings of His mercy, faithfulness and love there have been in all the conditions you have passed through. If your hearts do not melt before you have gone half through that history, they are hard hearts indeed" (John Flavel, *Mystery of Providence*).

Seventh aspect of a Biblically spiritual person is trust.

The truly spiritual life learns not to trust in himself, in this world, in this life and all its changing fortunes and circumstances. The truly spiritual life trust in One greater than himself. The true mark of the spiritual person is faith and trust and love for God. Their hope is in the Lord.

Psalm 91:1-2 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psalm 9:10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 13:5-6 I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 40:4 Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!

Psalm 56:3-4 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

Psalm 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

The Biblically spiritual person has much to gain in trusting God: peace and joy, security and love, flourishing in His presence and under His unfailing love.

God will never abandon you, He will never leave or forsake you. God will defend you, protect you in every circumstance, and be your fortress and refuge in time of trouble.

Implications and application.

How would you describe your spiritual life? Do you desire to be superficial or spiritual? Will you pray and sing to grow the seven habits of Biblically spiritual men and women?

Psalm 42:1-2 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

Psalm 63:1-2 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you;

my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Psalm 84:1-2 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.