

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

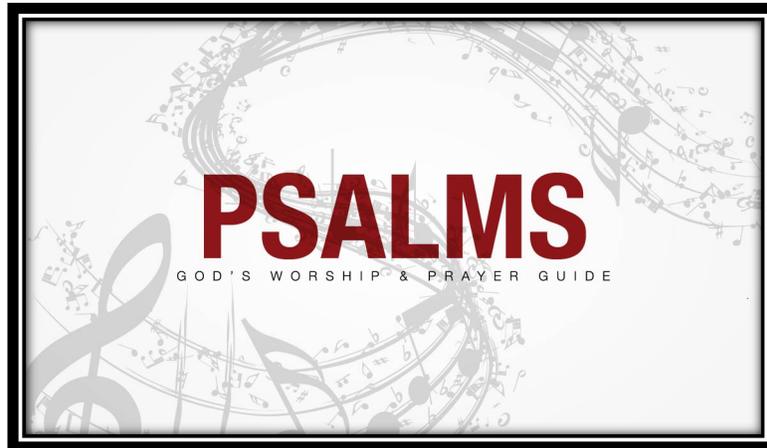
The Hope of the Holy One

Selected Texts

Written By

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Several years ago Liz and I headed over to George Mason for a Chris Tomlin concert . . . slash . . . awesome worship service. Think we were excited? You bet. Spending some time with Chris and Lou behind the stage after the concert was a chance of a lifetime as well; however, nothing could top the anointed music. What believer could not be moved by the songs we all know so well:

- Good Good Father
- Our God
- Indescribable
- Everlasting God
- How Can I Keep From Singing

What believer could not be ushered into the presence of the resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ, with the lyrics of . . .

- At The Cross (Love Ran Red)

Believe me, the whole evening could not have been more spiritually uplifting, worshipful, and moving.

King David, the harpist of Israel, probably wrote more worship songs in his lifetime than Christ ever thought of. Thousands of worshippers sang his songs, which we now know as the Psalms in the Bible. Millions since then still study the lyrics of those pieces and benefit from them

for they originated in the heart of a man who knew, like Chris Tomlin years later, how to create great worship, coupled with how to properly challenge worshippers to prepare themselves for said worship.

Psalm 24 is one of those insightful, instructive songs of David which not only helps us worship the living God, it tells us David's hope for would-be worshippers. Written from the perspective of God's people anticipating a worship service in the holy Tabernacle in light of a victory God just gave them as a people, David made sure that each of them understood his hope, which really is God's hope, for the saints as they walk excitedly into God's presence to adore Him. As such, this ancient psalm serves, in my pastoral view, as the perfect foundational scriptural passage for our first worship service in this wonderful new house of worship.

God has given us, too, numerous victories over the last several years as we have collectively prayed, planned, worked, and given of our time and talents to build this edifice to His eternal glory. Whether it was a record seventy days of rain when our construction team attempted to dig the basement, or thorny issues we encountered with our final inspections, God has given us victory after victory. We now turn to praise Him and dedicate this house of worship to Him, and we are mindful to do it in the spirit of Psalm 24. And just what is that spirit? What is that divinely inscribed motif?

Divine Victories Should Be Met With Worship Grounded With Hope (Psalm 24)

As David reflects on a divine victory now lost to us some three thousand years later, he shares his hope for those saints who desire to worship the God of the victory. His hope is most certainly a timeless hope which is still applicable to saints like us who live to see the hand of God move in profound fashion. All in all, David presents four types of hope he, as the Chris Tomlin of his day, challenges God's worshippers to consider as they enter the worship chamber of God, the true King of Kings.

From verses 1 and 2 of this Davidic psalm/song, we encounter the songwriter's first word about hope as it relates to worshipping the God who gives victories to His people:

Hope #1: That We'd Be A People Who Know God God's Character (Psalm 24:1-2)

To read all the Psalms David wrote is to see the heart of a man of God who thought much about the character of the Almighty. This tune is certainly no exception:

¹ A Psalm of David. **The earth is the LORD'S**, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. ² For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

According to Jesus, the first great commandment for believers is clear: to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." To love Him, of course, it to know Him, to study Him, and constantly grow in your understanding of His vast, magnificent character. David obviously studied God's character quite often, and that pursuit moved Him to understand why He should worship the One who gave him spiritual and physical victories as he lived in a sin-stained world. Do you study God? Do you read the Scriptures, analyzing how He

responds to various situations here on earth? Do you read systematic theologies which explain His immense, lofty character?

David, like any good worship leader, did not just want worshippers to enjoy the worship songs. No. He wanted the worshippers to always grow in their understanding of God's character so that knowledge would strengthen their faith and energize their worship. Pay, therefore, careful attention to David's heart of hope in these opening verses as they relate to calling us to realize who God is.

The opening phrase "*The earth is the LORD'S*" is purposefully made emphatic in the Hebrew text by means of starting the sentence with a prepositional phrase wedded to the noun, the LORD (לַיְהוָה הָאֲרֶץ). A verb should be placed at the head of the sentence, and since it is not we have a divinely designed emphasis. This emphasis is ramped up by the absence of the copula, viz., is. The ellipsis, or omission, of the verbal makes the sentence stilted, forcing the worshipper to think hard about who God is. Amazing.

And just who is the God David mentions? He is Yahweh, the great covenantal God, and the eternal God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush as the I AM (Ex. 3:14-15). He, the God who exists outside of time and space, who dwells in His multi-dimensional world beyond our dimensional limitations, who is the uncaused One who set in motion our cause/effect world/cosmos, He, and He alone, is the LORD of the earth . . . it belongs to Him, along with the rest of the universe. It does not belong to politicians, nations, the wealthy, corporations, ideological groups, protestors, armies or the like. This is His world and He will, as we know from the rest of Scripture, one day definitively defeat sin and Satan and reclaim the earth/cosmos for Himself (Rev. 4-5). In the meantime, because the world is His we can rest assured His eye is on us.

Not only does the planet belong to God, He is the One who made "*all its fullness.*" The Hebrew for fullness, *melo* (מָלֵא), can be translated "abundance." Applied to the created order, David says worshippers should pause and consider how God blessed us with a super-abundance of everything. Instead of one type of bird, he fashioned over 9,000 species. Instead of one type of tree, He has blessed us with a huge variety: ash, oak, sycamore, weeping will, birch, etc. Instead of one kind of dog, He showered us with our pick (of the litter) of a plethora of types. Go to dogtime.com, type in dog breeds, and sit back and be shocked at the lengthy alphabetical listing of the breeds available to us. Is God not great, and highly creative? Indeed. He has blessed us with absolute fullness for our wonder, amazement, and enjoyment. Makes one wonder what heaven will be like since this old earth is but a reflection of what is to come. Makes one also thank God for being a God of rational order. This, of course, makes all our disciplines from zoology to microbiology possible. How great He is toward us.

David reminds us that "*those who dwell*" on the earth also belong to Him by definition God being the Creator. As such, we will all give account to Him for how we took care of this place, in addition to whether we lived for Him or not (Ecc. 12:13-14). He did not just create us to enjoy the planet, but to stand in awe of Him and to worship Him (Psalm 33:8). And we should be humbled by who He is because He is the omnipotent God who "*founded it [the earth] upon the seas, and established it upon the waters*" (Psalm 24). God did create our habitable land out of the seas. The seas comprise seventy-percent of our earth's surface, but from this massive amount of water God brought forth the seven (or eight) continents for us to dwell on (North American, South American, African, European, Asian, Australian, Antarctica). He did this all on Day 3 of creation (Gen. 1:9-13) by the powerful word of His mouth! Imagine the jaw-dropping, eye-popping power displayed when the Creator called for the massive tectonic plates to move at His will to cause all land masses to arise up from the watery depths! We get a small taste of this when an active underwater volcano

creates a new island in the ocean as red-hot lava builds on the sea floor. God did not do this in just one location, but He unleashed His creative power all over the planet. Jaw-dropping.

Why did David start with this description of God's character? Simple. A God who is this creative, thoughtful, and powerful is worthy of our worship and adoration, especially when we live to see Him move in our lives to give us a victory. Oh, that we might be a people who study and meditate on the character of God for this contemplation always sets the tone for worthy, soul-moving, and rejuvenating worship. Oh, that we might be a people who never think our worship is about being entertained but is focused on being entwined with the fathomless character of the living God who goes before us to give us victories.

Contemplating who God is, which is what worship is all about, leads logically to David's second hope for would-be worshippers.

Hope #2: That We'd Be A People Who Are Sensitive To Our Sin (Psalm 24:3-5)

Two Socratic-type questions cause saints to pause and consider who, in fact, may come into this God's presence and actually give Him worship.

³ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

Ascending the hill speaks of heading up the surrounding hills of Jerusalem to worship the Lord on His chosen holy hill, Mount Moriah. The "holy place," of course, is just a Hebrew code word for the Tabernacle of God, which in David's day stood as a precursor to the Temple his son, Solomon would build. The word "holy" serves to remind us that not just anyone can waltz into God's presence for He is, above all things, holy (Lev. 20:26; 21:8; 1 Sam. 2:2; Ezra 8:28). The Hebrew word "holy," *qodesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) means so sacred you are cut off from that which is profane, evil, and/or wicked.

Who, then, is capable of coming before God in worship? David's words could not be clearer:

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

From a New Testament revelatory perspective, we could safely say that David is talking here about practical holiness we gain through our daily obedience to the Word and ways of God as articulated in Scripture. Positionally, we are all born sinners, cut-off from God, and under His holy wrath (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-21). However, at the wonderful moment of faith in the person and work of Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven, declared righteous, and we receive His positional holiness. Many texts support this truth:

³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God-- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--(1 Cor. 1)

¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10).

What love. The same God who created all things, who gave mankind a freewill to either worship or reject Him, came down here as the God-man to bear our sin so we, in turn, at the moment of faith could secure and be covered by His holiness . . . so we could have a relationship with Him now and into eternity. This is the wonder of positional holiness.

What David speaks about, conversely, deals with practical holiness. Again, the Scriptures remind God's redeemed people they have a perpetual obligation to make sure they use their free wills to serve God, not their old slave master sin (Rom. 6:1-19). Here is a great verse in this regard:

¹ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7).

Cleansing ourselves comes as we identify sins in our lives (by the Spirit's conviction, John 14, 16), and confess those sins to the Lord who is qualified to wash them away so we can walk in newness of life.

In Psalm 24, verses 3 through 4, David mention some key areas where sin typically trips us up as we seek to worship God:

- *Clean hands* speak about what we do with our hands. Do we use them for evil or good? Only the saint who confesses to God the wrong use of his hands is ready of entering God's holy presence.
- *Pure heart* speaks of a person's inward motives for why they do what they do. Unlike the Pharisees in Christ's day, who said one thing and did another, a person with a pure heart has pure motives as they move through life. They are not seeking to manipulate, undermine, or destroy people in any way, but are known for how honorable they live. Those worshippers who have dealt with their unclean motives at the foot of the cross of Christ are, ipso facto, ready to worship and praise God.
- *Idol worship* is simply reducing God to a manageable form, of placing something or someone as the sole focus of your life adoration.
- *Lying* is denoted by someone saying one thing in an oath while never intending to fulfill said oath. D.C. would probably not know how to function if truth-telling became the order of the day, right?

David's list is, as we know, far from exhaustive. What he is merely saying is this: When you realize who God is, when you understand His character, you will quickly learn that you cannot worship Him if you come to Him with known sin in your life. His hope is for worshippers to understand this pivotal worship premise so they can, and will, do something about it so their worship is everything God wants it to be.

Talk about a divine principle which transcends time. Oh, that we might not only be worshippers who are constantly growing in our knowledge of God's character, but who are super-sensitive to our sin first and foremost. We are big on isolating the sin of everyone else around us, while paying little attention to our own. David says we must turn this around to the proper order if we desire to have great, moving, and memorable worship of God. May there never, then, be a

Sunday, when you enter this house of worship that you do not first stop and say, “Lord, show me my sin so I can get right with you and be properly prepared to worship you, you who have given me so many victories in life.”

Those who worship in this fashion get a special promise from God.

⁵ He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

What kind of blessing? God does not say. It could be spiritual, emotional, physical, or otherwise, or all of the above. God leaves us open-ended so you can be pleasantly surprised when the blessing shows up. The last clause, however, might give us a little clue about God’s blessing. It might be, first and foremost, related to receiving some divine justice and righteousness in an area of your life where there has been none because of what the wicked are doing to you. Seen in this light, God is saying, “When you worship me by getting spiritually clean, I will, in turn, bring some justice to that area of your life where injustice as reigned.” Interesting. Perhaps the issue you are having at work, or in your marriage, or with your parents is directly related to you getting right with God as you come to worship. So, make it your commitment here on out to get cleaned up before you offer up your worship to God. Do this and get ready for His blessing to fall on you like rain.

A third hope is embedded in David’s words of verse 6.

Hope #3: That We’d Be A People Who Would Intently Seek God (Psalm 24:6)

We all know the stats. Americans are turning from worshipping God and attending church more than ever. Millennials, Generation X, and Generation Z are, as we all know, leading the way. And we have probably all heard their reasons: They don’t like the absolute doctrines of the Church, they think Christians are hypocrites, they think that all religions are true . . . not just Christianity . . . , they think you can be saved by being good people and doing good works to name a few. Departing from the worship of God is, sadly, nothing new. Man has been doing it since his fall in the Garden. People even pulled away from worshipping God in David’s day, opting to worship anything or anyone else but the God David mentions in verses 1 through 2.

What is David’s wise counsel to those saints who might be tempted to water down their worship, to pull back from God? One verse sums up his answer:

⁶ This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah

David says/sings, “Might my generation be known as the ones who are in hot pursuit of God.” Could there be an more noble, important endeavor in life? No. The man who seeks God shall find him. The man who seeks God shall gain wisdom for life and living others do no possess. The man who seeks God will be equipped by God to know how to guide others toward Him. The man who seeks God will see the evidences for God’s existence and presence all over the place. The man who seeks God will have a peace which passes understanding. Need I go on?

What’s wrong with our world, our culture? They seek not God but themselves. They live for their ways, not His ways. They pursue their version of watered down wisdom, not His perfect wisdom. They worship their knowledge, while failing to worship the God of all knowledge. They call darkness light and light darkness, forgetting there is a God of all light and truth. The result is chaos and mayhem at all cultural levels.

Oh, that we, apart from our culture would be known as a people who seek God like a laser missile with lock-on. Oh, that we might be like the Apostle Paul when he said, ¹⁰ *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,* (Phil. 3). David's hope is most certainly my hope for myself and for you as we think about this new worship environment. May there never be a service here where it is not clearly evident to each of us that we are here to seek and know God more intimately and authentically than anyone or anything else. A church with this focus will be a powerful tool in the hands of the living God. A church with this focus will impact lives for eternity, and turn a culture back to God. May this be us. What a hope for would-be worshippers in any age.

Fourth, David built his list of hopes to a crescendo in verses seven through ten, which form the heart of this beautiful worship psalm.

Hope #4: That We'd Be A People Who Want To See God's Glory (Psalm 24:7-10)

I will let David lay the hope out as only he can:

⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. ⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory Selah (Ps. 24).

Here David contemplates God as the King of glory who is the Lord over heavenly armies of angels. He, and He alone, is the One who goes before His people with His army working in the heavenly sphere to bring victories over sin and Satan. Think of when the Syrian army surrounded the prophet Elisha. His servant, Ghazi,¹ saw the soldiers, armament and chariots and he trembled in fear. Elisha, a man of worship like David, prayed,

¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Ki. 6).

Behind man's formidable chariots were the chariots of the angels of the God of glory. Because of their presence, the battle that day belonged to the Elisha and the Lord he faithfully served.

Again, David addressed an unknown event where that God of glory came down and saved Israel. In light of that truth, David did what is natural for a growing, maturing Christian to do: He called for the Tabernacle to get prepared for the arrival of God's magnificent glory. Put differently, David prayed for the spectacular, blinding glory of God, which is most certainly wedded to His utter holiness, to show up in a profound fashion.

That brilliant glory showed up when Moses dedicated the tabernacle . . . so much so Moses could not approach the Tabernacle because of the thick cloud bank pulsating with the light of God's presence (Ex. 40:34-35). That brilliant glory showed up when Moses instituted the priestly

¹ Scholars do not know if this is Gehazi or not. The book of Second Kings does not necessarily follow a chronological flow. Hence, this could be Gehazi before he contracted leprosy. If so, chapter 5 chronologically follows chapter six. If not, then this is a servant who replaced the diseased former servant.

ministry of intercession (Lev. 9:6-23). That brilliant glory showed up when Solomon, David's son, finished the Temple after his father's death (1 Kings 8:11). Once again, when God showed up worshippers had to back up. His presence was just too much to bear.

Oh, that that glory might descend on our worship in this place from this day forward. Might God come down and fill our worship with His presence. Might we know as we come into this house of worship that the glory of God is here. Oh, God, bring your glory to this place. It is only logical for us to ask this of Him for when God gives you a noted victory, it is, as David says, most natural to ask Him to come down so His people can thank Him. So, today, at this moment in time, we, who have seen the victory of God in bringing this house of worship to fruition, ask one thing from God: Bring us your glory. Show us your glory. Fill this house of worship with your glory, not ours, and we will praise your mighty name.

