

PREACHING  
THE  
PSALMS

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UNLOCKING THE UNSEARCHABLE  
RICHES OF DAVID'S TREASURY

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# PREPARE THE HEART

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*Humble yourself before God,  
who illumines the mind and ignites the heart*

**M**artyn Lloyd-Jones, the noted expositor of Westminster Chapel in London, was correct when he stated, “The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”<sup>1</sup> This *is* true, not because there is anything special about the messenger, but because there is everything glorious about the Sovereign Lord who summons and sends forth His messengers to preach the Word. Because the Bible is what it claims to be, namely, the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God,

the call to proclaim the Word is the highest calling known to man. As heralds of the sacred Scripture, expositors have been entrusted with the greatest responsibility of all, being mouthpieces through whom God has chosen to speak. Therefore, all who preach must be firmly committed to rightly interpreting and properly applying His Word.

As the expositor approaches the Psalms, he is like a mountain climber, poised at the base of a towering summit, ready to scale its lofty heights. The formidable challenge that lies ahead is daunting. But the demanding ascent is well worth the effort. The book of Psalms is the Mount Everest of Scripture, the largest book in the Bible. Despite this challenge, it is my personal conviction that an average preacher becomes a good preacher, and a good preacher becomes a great preacher, when he learns to preach this book. The fact is that he becomes, I believe, a better preacher of other books in the Bible when he learns to preach the Psalms. The expositor's skills are, arguably, significantly enhanced when he digs deep into these transcendent truths, magnificent literature, and vivid language.

### **THE PLACE TO BEGIN**

The specific focus of this book is upon how to preach the Psalms. Where do we begin such a monumental study? We start at the most basic level — with the preacher himself. A strategic grasp of the Psalms commences *before* the expositor even opens this inspired Psalter. Before the man of God launches his exegesis and sermon preparation, some initial steps must be taken in ordering his own life so that his journey arrives at the right destination. Regarding the personal life of the preacher, the place to begin is with the following requirements.

### **PERSONALLY CONVERTED**

First, those who would preach the Psalms must be personally

converted to Jesus Christ. The primary prerequisite for preaching the Word is the saving knowledge of Christ. The preacher must be regenerated by God's Spirit in order to be effectively used by God in His service. He must be one who has truly believed upon Jesus Christ. Before he can call others to repent and believe, he himself must have done the same. The apostle Paul told Timothy, 'Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you' (1 Tim. 4:16). In other words, every preacher *must* first pay attention to his own salvation and be assured of his right standing before God.

### GRACE IN THE SOUL

In his classic work *The Reformed Pastor*, the Puritan Richard Baxter addressed the ministers of his day in seventeenth-century England, many of whom were unconverted.<sup>2</sup> Baxter began his urgent appeal by calling his fellow pastors to make certain that they are born again:

See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim to the world the necessity of a Saviour, your own hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of an interest in Him and His saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish, while you call upon others to take heed of perishing.<sup>3</sup>

In this quote, Baxter is warning that an unconverted minister is the ultimate hypocrite. Such a man calls others to the springs of living water, yet he himself never drinks. He invites others to eat of the bread of life, but he himself never partakes. He attempts to share what he himself does not possess. He tries to lead people where he himself has not gone. Tragically, an unconverted preacher endeavors to teach that which he has not experienced. He preaches