

## The Poetry of Life Psalms of Trust

The Psalms of Trust can be divided into two categories, *Individual Psalms of Trust* and *Community Psalms of Trust*. As their names imply, the former category demonstrates the individual's trust in the Lord, while the latter category focuses more on the community.

While there are many psalms that speak of trusting in God, those that have the idea of trust in God dominating their content are:

- **Individual:** 4, 16, 23, 27, 62, 73, 121
- **Community:** 90, 115, 123-126

### What is going on in the Psalms of Trust?

There is a problem lurking, the poets have struggled through something in their life, and God has helped deliver them through the great difficulty. Therefore the authors declare their trust in God, expressing the sure confidence in God's goodness that only someone who has experienced God's deliverance and help time and again can declare. Unlike Psalms of Lament, the focus is not on the problem but rather the psalmist is expressing his/her **faith** in God's ability and desire to be with and deliver His children.

There are several elements in the Psalms of Trust, described below. *Keep in mind you will not find every element in each psalm.* Remember, the Psalms are poetry, not algebra, made by artists, not mathematicians. Do not try to place the individual artists and psalms into a box. They were likely composed over centuries for different reasons, giving them their own personal touch and unique take on God's goodness and help. I doubt the author of any psalm ever thought, "I am now going to compose a Psalm of Trust/Lament/Praise/etc." These were expressions pouring out of the heart and soul of a person who had experienced God and were so moved that they composed these hymns/poems that have resonated with others for centuries.

### Elements of the Psalms of Trust

- *Declaration of Trust:* Can be anywhere in the psalm, in the case of Psalm 27 these are in every petition. (ex. 4:3, 8; 23:1-3; 62:1-2, 5-7, 11-12; 90:1-2, 115:1, 9b, 10b; 124:6)
- *Invitation to Trust:* In both the Individual and Community Psalms of Trust, the author calls on others to trust in God, encouraging others to trust that God is acting/will act, just as the author is sure He will. (ex. 4:4-5; 27:14; 62:8, 10; 115:9a, 10b, 11b)
- *Basis for Trust:* This can either be an experience of the author/community, a spiritual principle observed, or knowledge about God's character. (ex. 4:7, 23:1; 62:11-12a, 124:8)
- *Petition:* The author/poet knows God can and will act to help his people, thus in faith the author calls on God to act again. (ex. 16:1a; 27: 4, 7, 9, 11; 90:12-15; 123:3; 125:4-5)
- *Vow/Promise to Praise the Lord:* Knowing that God will indeed act, the author promises to praise the Lord. (ex. 16:7; 27:6b; 115:17-18)
- *Interior Lament:* In almost all of these psalms, the author makes mention of some struggle of the past, which God has delivered (or is delivering) the author through and thus the poet has learned to trust in God. (ex. 4:1-2; 23:4-5; 62:3-4; 90:3-11; 123:3b-4)

### For further Reading:

Lewis, C.S. *Reflections on the Psalms*. (various publishers)

Bullock, C. *Encountering the Book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Dillard, R., & T. Longman. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Davidson, R. *The Vitality of Worship-A Commentary on the Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.