

The Usefulness of the Psalms

Food for the Soul

People who know the David stories usually remember him as the “*man of action*.” David’s energy and boundless enthusiasm come to mind, whether he was fighting lions or bears or giants. Whatever the man did, David threw himself into it wholeheartedly, running, living, laughing, weeping, and yes, even sinning. But his fascinating exploits are really only half the story. These externals do not tell us why David was doing, or not doing, what he did. The man was no mechanical robot. But what was going on inside, in his spiritual life, in the hidden life of his soul, is the key to knowing David.

We happen to have David’s prayer book, called the “*Psalms*.” In this Bible book we find a wide spectrum of the human experience. In Psalm 59, David tells the Lord, what he thought when Saul sent assassins to surround his house, and thereby tells us as well.

What was David’s reaction on hearing that the priests were murdered in cold blood because they gave him bread and a weapon? David funnelled his anger, as he so often did, into prayer. Two Psalms, 7 and 52, tell us what it was that David prayed.

There is a Psalm (34) written after he miscalculated badly, tried to join the Philistines, and then feigned insanity to escape. When, as a fugitive, all David had for a home was a cave, and when the mountain people betrayed him, there are prayers (Ps 57 and 54). His acknowledgement of the shameful treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba is part of the confession of the church to this day (Ps 51). Psalm 14 reflects his dealings with a “*fool*” like Nabal. Psalm 63 reflects the years of his life he had to spend in the wilderness. Psalm 18 records his thanks when he was finally delivered from Saul and all his enemies.

It is not surprising that Jesus, “*the Son of David*”, went to His death with the words of David in His heart and on His lips (Ps 22). The Psalms of David make plain, even when his actions do not, why it was that the Lord named David “*a man after His own heart*.” No matter what your lot in life is, you will find in the Psalms words that fit as if they were written there for your own sake alone!

[By J Parcher, in July 20 1998 *Christian News*]