

PSALLO

Psalm 89:15–29

The Psalm setting you have before you comprises the middle section of Psalm 89, the Psalm of the Davidic covenant. This division (verses 15–29) is a thematic, and not a textual division. Textually, the Psalm may be divided by the four “selah” (verses 4, 37, 44, and 48). We have chosen here, however, a thematic division. Verses 15–18 speak of the Covenant people regarding their attendant blessings and joy in Yahveh. Verses 19–28 speak of the foundation for that joy and blessedness, the work of Messiah, the rewards of His faithful obedience to His Father, and His Father’s continued help and blessing upon Him. Verse 29 returns to the topic of the blessed people of Yahveh, and of the Messiah, and them presented as the “seed of the Firstborn.” After that, verse 30 begins another theme, that of chastisement, and rather than continue overly long in this one setting, this section can be taken up in another.

The author is aware that such divisions are in some sense arbitrary, seeing that the Canonical Psalm under study has 52 verses. But the length of the Psalm itself, and its own division by the four “selah” speak to the appropriateness of some kind of division for our consideration and praise.

Psalm 89 also closes the third book of the Psalter. It will be no new datum to many that the Psalter, in the original, is divided into five books, Psalms 1–41 the first, Psalms 42–72 the second, Psalms 73–89 the third, Psalms 90–106 the fourth, and Psalms 107–150 the fifth. These divisions are marked by doxological epilogues at the end of each book, with the addition of an editorial comment at the end of Psalm 72 (See Psalm 41.13; 72.18–20; 89.52; 106.48; 150.1–6).¹

Another interesting circumstance concerning this Psalm is that it follows immediately after a Psalm that is unique in the Psalter. Psalm 88 is a plaintive Psalm, like many, but its uniqueness is found in that unlike other plaintive Psalms, there is no resolution, no turning of “mourning into dancing.” The Psalm ends with the words, “Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness” (Psalm 88.18). To those familiar with the Psalms, this raises the question of a potential connection between Psalms 88 and 89, such that Psalm 89 furnishes the worshipper with the resolution to the plaintive situation presented in Psalm 88 that remains unresolved, and when this resolution is fully fleshed out this Psalm comes to a close on the “high note” of the doxology

closing book three. While some have not been amenable to the ideal of the paring of Psalms,² others have not shied away from the suggestion that some Psalms might be considered together.³ The similarity of the Psalm titles of 88 and 89, having a uniqueness of their own, and the plaintive subject matter in the one coupled with the resolution of the other, make these two Psalms candidates for this consideration.⁴

As for the translation, we have followed the Hebrew with a minimum of portions augmented for the sake of clarity and meter. Where additions have been made to smooth the meter, italics have been used. We have followed the Hebrew text in verse 19, and translated קִדְּוֹתָי “holy ones.” Most commentators interpret these *chasideim* as the prophets of old who prophesied of Christ. Note Calvin: “Farther, although he revealed his purpose to Samuel, yet as the plural number is here used, implying, that the same oracle had been delivered to others, we may certainly conclude that it had been communicated to other prophets that they might be able, with one consent, to bear testimony that David was created king by the Divine appointment. And, indeed, as other distinguished and celebrated prophets lived at that time, it is not very probable that a matter of so great importance was concealed from them.”⁵ See also Hengstenberg: “This view of the promise, as intended for the people, is the only one that is kept before our eye throughout the whole of the Psalm; and in accordance with this, the people, as the original recipient of the revelation, are termed “thy holy ones,” and in harmony with it David, in what follows, is spoken of in the third person. All the old translators, many MSS. and editions give קִדְּוֹתָי in the plural. The singular owes its existence, as in Ps. 16:10, to an exegetical incapacity. It was felt to be impossible to reconcile the plural with the application to David or Nathan; and to one or other of these, all interpreters, without exception,

Continued on Page 285.

THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Todd L. Ruddell is pastor of Christ Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCGA) in Wylie, Texas.

1. For a good discussion of the division of the Psalter into five books see: W. Binnie, *The Psalms: Their History, Teachings, and Use* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1886) 114–132). J. A. Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, James Thin, 1864), 5–6.; W. H. Alexander, *The Book of Praises: Being the Book of Psalms, according to the Authorized Version, with Notes Original and Selected* (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1867), 6–15. For the counterpoint, see W. S. Plumer, *Studies in the Book of Psalms: Being a Critical and Expository Commentary, with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on the Entire Psalter* (Philadelphia; Edinburgh: J. B. Lippincott Company; A & C Black, 1872) 19.

2. Plumer, 20.

3. W. H. Alexander, 12–13). J. A. Alexander, 4.

4. J. A. Alexander, 369.

5. J. Calvin and J. Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948–1950; repr. 2010) 432.

Sic et Non: Views in Review. Continued from Page 187.

with a brother in Christ. But I do hope that debate produces sharpened formulation, correction, and increased proximity to the truth. I do not pretend to offer the definitive formulation of the relationship between the covenant of works and Mosaic covenant. I have tried, however, to learn from some of the Reformed tradition's greatest minds on this difficult and thorny subject.

Turretin's acknowledgment of the diversity of opinion on this question should certainly encourage all to be humble in their claims and especially careful in how they label other's views. I do hope that Venema will continue to investigate the issue. If he tires of it, then I would hope that he would moderate his claims that contemporary versions of republication are novel or that they are "remarkably similar" to Dispensationalism. Such talk, while rhetorically powerful, is destructive to the peace of the church. Given Venema's role as a respected senior churchman, people read such comments and walk away thinking that Reformed ministers in good standing are heterodox—or worse.

In the end, I hope that interested parties will engage the Scriptures in close exegesis and read many of the works I mention in my original essay as well as those cited here. I hope that all of us will wrestle and grow in our understanding of the knotty question of how Sinai relates to the covenant of works. ■

Reviews & Responses. Continued from Page 212.

These chapters are followed by an excursus about Samuel McPheeters, a contemporary of Robinson who shared many of his views, and who suffered for it. The third and fourth chapters place Robinson in his theological and ecclesial contexts. The conclusion summarizes Robinson's contribution, and so is in some sense, a fine place to start. The epilogue traces Robinson's life after the war.

The Appendix, subtitled "A Stuart Robinson Reader," presents some 85 pages of key short works by Robinson. These focus especially on the relationship between the spiritual and temporal powers. Graham's selection of this material is a particular help to the reader, because these works are not otherwise easily obtainable.

All in all, the book is a worthy contribution to the study of Robinson, who has been unduly neglected. It is also a fine addition to the subject of ecclesiology and the issues concerning the relationship between the church and the state. It is especially helpful in today's context, with the dispute over "Two Kingdom Theology." The only negative element of the book is that it was less than carefully edited. ■

Psallo. Continued from Page 213.

down even to modern times, have applied the expression, without observing that in the following part of the Psalm it is the *people* that complains that God does not appear to be keeping his promise, and that it is the *people* that prays that he *would* fulfil his promise."⁶

The Psalm itself is a wonderful recounting and explication of the temporal manifestation of the Covenant of Grace called the *Davidic Covenant*, where the Lord promises David, through the prophet Nathan, that He will build David a house, sure and steadfast, meaning that Christ will come from David's loins, and His Kingdom shall have no end. The original account of this covenant reads,

Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.⁷

Note that the word covenant is not used in the original revelation of this promise to David, but this Psalm 89 uses this word in verses 3, 28, 34, and by way of complaint in 39. It is right to note that the Psalm then is an expansion and greater interpretation of that Covenant made with David, and the Psalmist uses this covenantal promise to comfort himself, and the people of God, at a time when the outward circumstances seemed to present the demise of it, to stir up by way of praise the peoples' affection and current mind toward the faithfulness of God, and all His promises. Most properly then, this Psalm begins in verse 1 with "I will sing of the *mercies* of the Lord." The word 'mercies' translates the plural of מְרֻמִּים *chesed*, meaning *covenant faithfulness*.

6. E. W. Hengstenberg, J. Thomson, & P. Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869) 106.

7. 2 Sa 7:10–17. *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. Electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version (1995).

The author of the Psalm is called “Ethan, the Ezrahite.” There are many faithful men who identify this Ethan with one of the original chief musicians, Jeduthun. Joseph Addison Alexander states,

Maschil. By *Ethan the Ezrahite*. From the fact that Ethan and Jeduthun are both named with Asaph and Heman, but never named together, it has been inferred that they are two names of the same person, or rather that *Ethan* is the personal name, and *Jeduthun* (derived from a verb which means to *praise*) the official title. Heman and Ethan are both described as Ezrahites, *i.e.* adopted sons of Zerah, 1 Chron. 2:5, but by birth were no doubt both *Sons of Korah*, 1 Chron. 6:18, 22 (33, 37). To the lamentations and complaints of Heman in the first part of this double psalm (Ps. 88) is now added an appeal to the divine promise by Ethan in the psalm before us.⁸

This affixes the time of writing early in the monarchy, and the lamentable events described correspond perhaps to the division of the monarchy under Rehoboam, or to some other affliction that befell the nation early in his reign.⁹ The Psalm is titled a *Maschil*, meaning a didactic or instructive Psalm, and the truths contained in it are accepted by all as timeless, for all ages of the Church. Covenant promises, encouragement in times of affliction according to the faithfulness of Yahveh, hope in Christ and His work, joy and jubilation to hear the trumpet-sound of mustering for worship, praying in times of deprivation and loss, and looking with confident hope in Christ for a glorious resolution of all things are those eternal things, holy instructions, by which the people of God in all ages have offered their praise to God.

As for our portion, it is a song of praise to the Lord for His Messiah, and for the care and exaltation that Messiah procures for the people of God, who know the jubilant sound. Messiah is also given the rank of “Firstborn” and in Him a seed is blessed as well, because of His faithfulness, and because of the Covenant Mercy, the *chesed*, promised to Him. God’s own revelation, by His “holy ones” to His people is set forth as the hope of God’s own, the seed of Messiah. Finally, in the repeated blessing of the Father upon His Son, we are reminded that all our hope is in Christ, for all the blessings of God are poured out upon Him who is the Anointed, the Firstborn, and who enjoys the benevolent hand, arm, and favor of His Father. We look away from ourselves, and to Christ as our only

8. J. A. Alexander, 369. See also C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 583–584.

9. Keil and Delitzsch, 584.

hope in this inspired praise. We hope you are instructed and encouraged in Christ as you take this Psalm upon your lips.

Todd L. RUDELL ■

Antiquary. Continued from Page 275.

5. Joseph Hall supposed the deceit of the Gibeonites freed Joshua from the oath (409), but Gillespie answers that the violation of the oath was afterwards punished (2 Sam. 21). There was no caveat qualifying the oath. A substantial error releases from the bond of an oath, but not a circumstantial error (409–410).

6. The Bishop of Edinburgh alleged from the Scots Confession of Faith that an order in ceremonies cannot be appointed for all, therefore the oath does not bind in relation to ceremonies (410). Gillespie answers that the article only speaks of alterable circumstances: Those devised by men, and those that foster superstition rather than edification. Neither are true of sitting to receive the Lord’s supper.

7. The Bishop argued that the oath did not bind to maintain alterable things, but only what is unchangeable and commanded in the Word (410–411). Gillespie replies: [1] This contradicts the former argument (411). [2] The discipline prior to the Articles of Perth was well grounded on the Word and therefore unalterable. [3] It is unlawful to be bound by oath to future ordinances because an oath requires judgment of the matter (Jer. 4:2). One should not swear to what he cannot examine. [4] The oath does not oblige to what shall be ordained afterwards, because: {1} It relates to what was used in the church at the time of the oath. The promise is not of things future but of things present when the assertory part of the oath was made (411–412). {2} As the doctrine refers to what was openly professed, there is no reason to think the discipline was otherwise (412). {3} The word “continuing” in the oath requires obedience to something already begun. {4} The schoolmen and the canon law confirm that an oath does not oblige to future ordinances.

8. Lindsay also argued that the contended points of discipline were not contained in the matter of the oath. Gillespie counters that, [1] In the matter of an oath the safest course is to be taken, and it is not certain that these points are omitted (412–413). [2] “Discipline” is to be taken in its widest extent for the whole policy of the church. This is clear from the two Books of Discipline; the oath comprises all church requirements under the heads of doctrine or discipline (413).

9. Bishop Lindsay made three further objections. [1] That the doctrine and discipline is limited to that revealed by the Gospel. [2] It is limited to what is received by many notable churches. [3.] It is particularly expressed in the Confession of Faith. To all these Gillespie replies that the formalist misapplied the words of the oath, for it does not mention discipline

Psalm 89:15-29

Ashrey Ha'Am

Todd L. Ruddell

15 O Bless - ed is the peo - ple, the jub' - lant sound that know
 17 Be - cause thou art the glo - ry, in which their strength re - sides,
 19 Then thou didst in a vi - sion, speak to thy ho - ly ones,
 21 With whom my hand is 'stab - lish'd, my arm shall be his strength
 24 My stead - fast cov' - nant mer - cy, shall *al - ways* be with him
 26 He shall him - self cry to me, my Fa - ther, *sure*, Thou art,
 28 For - ev - er - more keep will I, my mer - cy un - to him,

In fa - vor of thy face Lord, they walk - ing on shall go.
 And our horn in thy fa - vor, it shall be lift - ed high.
 And saidst I have laid suc - cor, up - on a might - y one!
 22 The en' - my no ill to him, nor wick - ed son af - flict.
 His horn ex - alt - ed *great - ly*, it shall be in my name
 My God; and of sal - va - tion, Thou *on - ly* art my Rock.
 And ev - er with him al - ways, my Cov - e - nant shall stand

16 And in thy Name re - joic - ing, shall they be all the day,
 18 A shield to us the Lord is, *to us he'll safe - ty bring,*
 Ex - alt - ed I've my cho - sen, from th' peo - ple 20 Dav'd I've found
 23 And all of those be - fore him, I'll through - ly crush and will,
 25 His hand *ev'n his great pow - er* shall be up - on the sea,
 27 And I be - stow - ing on him, *the ti - tle* "My First - born"
 29 Es - tab - lish - ed for - ev - er, his seed un - to him sure,

And in thy right - eous - ness shall they be lift - ed high.
 The Ho - ly One of Is - ra - el, He is our king.
 My ser - vant I've a - noint - ed with my ho - ly oil.
 Se - vere - ly chas - ten those who bear him ha - tred still.
 Ex - alt - ed his right hand, shall in the riv - ers be.
 To kings of earth com - par'd, high - er he'll be a - dor'd.
 and as the days of heav'n, his throne it shall en - dure.