

The Psalms and Our Unruly Wills and Affections

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- [0 : 01] Now I feel like I should start by way of apology maybe in that I know that you were anticipating that originally that I was going to speak on the Ascension, but I wasn't ready to do that.
- I think I'm going to postpone that for a year, but I do actually think, aren't you glad that Jesus didn't postpone his Ascension for a year, although maybe some people thought that it would be great if he did.
- Oh yes, well, if you really need some help in drawing your attention to the Ascension, prepare yourself for that.
- There is a picture in the back, and Jesus ascends to heaven, Acts chapter 1 verses 1 to 11. There it is back there, in between Margaret and Olaf, so there's your preparation.
- Actually, the title of this talk is called The Psalms and Our Unruly Wills and Affections. And actually, it's our Lord who is ascended into heaven, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who rules what is going on here.
- [1 : 04] He's not all that distant from us. And as you think of this subtitle of the Psalms and ruling, that is, of the order of our unruly wills and affections, it actually ties into the Ascension.
- So I won't mention the Ascension really much today other than that, but one might actually bear that in mind. And as we look at Psalm 1 and 2 and some other aspects of the Psalter, Jesus as the King who rules over all creation, ascended into heaven, is in view.
- So I want to start actually with the collect for Easter 4, which would have been said at our services last week. And if you use the prayer book throughout the week, then you would have been saying this all week as well.
- Today, though, is Rogation Sunday. It's the Sunday before Ascension on Thursday. But this was the collect for last Sunday and the whole week.
- So look at that. Follow along with me as I read this. Don't pray it with me. That will become obvious once I've done that why I didn't want you actually to say it with me.
- [2 : 14] But let me let me begin this way. Almighty God, which doth make the minds of all faithful men to be of one will, grant unto thy people that they may love the things which thou command us and desire that which thou dost promise, that still among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Good, John. Is that the prayer that you have printed there? Yes. More or less. Yes. And that's because Thomas Cramer, in the printing of or the editing of the Book of Common Prayer 1662, took out which doth make the minds of all faithful men to be of one will.
- That's what I prayed. That's what you heard, which isn't actually printed there. And he inserted who alone can't order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. Interesting, right?
- He lifted that one out, which this prayer was actually written by Leo I, and Thomas Cramer did his editing, inserting who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men.

So I think it's a lover prayer. I really appreciate the way that he's edited that. And one of the things that I really like about that is as in the prayer, the acknowledgement of who God is and what it is that he can actually do with us, we see an admission of the reality, I think, that our wills and affections are a little bit unruly, aren't they?

[3 : 53] It kind of draws to my attention, my mind, kind of the hooligans at some of the football matches in Great Britain. And sometimes, sorry about that, do you deny that?

Okay. But it can be true. Can't our wills and affections be just a little bit unruly? And that's not to say that our wills and affections are not a good thing.

I think that they are. They're gifts from God. But we have been touched and tainted and infected, affected by sin. And there's the acknowledgement here, isn't it, of Cranmer by saying sinful men, where Leo said to faithful men, which it is important that we become faithful men and women of God, but just the acknowledgement that we are sinful and that we have been affected this way and our wills and affections are a bit unruly.

I really, really appreciate that. And also these two aspects, I think, of an anthropology. I mean, we have a more complete anthropology throughout Scripture, don't we? Every Sunday when we have Holy Communion, we say to the Lord, you've got all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength, right?

Those four aspects are dynamics of the human life. But here we have two of them represented, which I think it's worth kind of pausing on. That is our wills and our affections.

[5 : 10] I won't speak much about the other two that are mentioned in the summary of the law. Well, but let's just kind of pause in this for a second in terms of our wills and affections. What are our wills and affections as we think of affections?

Well, the affections are the seat of our affections is our heart, isn't it? Our heart isn't just an organ that pumps blood, but it is the seat of our affections, I think.

And biblically, there are a number of ways to think about our heart, but there are a couple of ways that my attention has been drawn to recently, and that is just two, the temperature of our heart and the texture of our heart.

The Bible represents that, right? So our hearts can be warm towards God and to other people, but they can also be cold to God and to other people. And so to our texture, when you think of the texture of the heart, well, our hearts can be hardened actually to the Lord, or they can actually be soft to the Lord.

So when we think about our affections that are seated in the heart, this is one of the things I think that we need to be thinking about as we talk about our unruly wills and affections being ordered by God, but also, too, then, our wills.

[6 : 17] That's kind of the fourth aspect of the human life that's mentioned in those four in the summary of law. So love the Lord our God with all our strength, right?

So when we think strength, we actually think our bodies. We think physical strength. But there is another kind of strength here which I think is represented, and that is not just our bodies physically, but volitionally, our wills.

That's what Cranmer's drawing our attention to. And so these aspects, these dynamics of our life can be a bit unruly at times in need of being ordered or directed by the Lord.

So this is Cranmer's acknowledgement and admission as it starts out, but he doesn't stop there. There's a petition. He says, The petition is this, Grant unto thy people that they may love the things which thou dost command and desire that which thou dost promise.

It follows from the affections and actually the wills, right? So that we love what God commands. God commands things. That's how he brings order, actually, to our wills and affections. And he wants us to love what he commands.

[7 : 20] But then also, there are promises that God actually makes to us throughout Scripture. And as a father makes promises to his children, so too our Heavenly Father makes promises actually to his children and binds himself to us in covenant.

And so he wants us to desire those things that he promises. And so there's this desire, I think, which is representative of the strengths, not just physical strength, but this volition, this desire that he wants us to have for him.

And then after that, there's the aspiration of the prayer. That's so, among the sundry and manifold changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found. I just love how it comes down to these, where we're fixed and where we're found.

And the goal of this prayer, the aspiration, is that we might be a joyful, a rejoicing kind of people. So we start at the top, unruly wills and affections, but coming out down here with joys, or maybe it should be the other way around, down here, the unruly wills and affections, and then up here, these great joys, that's where God wants us to be.

So I want us to actually look at Psalm 1 and 2. And let me just, let me read this quote from a bishop in the late 19th century.

[8 : 35] His last name is spelled Perone, I think. No, that's not how it's spelled, it's pronounced. P-E-R-O-W-N-E. Anyone help me out? Perone. Perone. Thank you.

Thank you. Listen to what he said about this book of Psalms. He said, No single book of Scripture, unless it be the Gospels, has had so large an influence in, now listen to this, bolding the affections, sustaining the hopes, and purifying the faith of believers.

So you see in that there's this faith, hope, and love. We know about that from the Apostle Paul in three places, but especially 1 Corinthians 13, where he says faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love.

And I think of love as being a river that runs through the two banks of faith and hope. We need to actually not just have love, it's not the only thing, but we need to have this love that runs through these two banks.

And if you tell me you love somebody, I also want to know about your faith and your hope, because that's actually what should direct our love. Okay? So as we think about that, that's what Perone, how do you pronounce his name again?

[9 : 44] Perone, said actually about the Psalms, right? That it's molding, that they're sustaining, that they're purifying love, hope, and faith.

And so the Psalms have had a great influence on the church throughout the ages. It had influence on the New Testament writers, and I don't know if you know this, but the New Testament writers had 120 direct quotes from the New Testament.

There are 259 allusions in the New Testament to the Psalms. And Bonhoeffer said this about the Psalms. So he said that they were the great school of prayer. And I know it's schooling you, or teaching you, or helping you learn how to pray over the course of your life and discipleship.

But the Psalms are the place to go, as well as the prayer book, to learn how to pray, I think. They school us in our prayer life. So let's look at Psalm 1. So we think of the Psalms, I think, used in our life to order our unruly wills and affections.

Okay? And the way to that is actually through these, what I think are two posts or two banks as well. Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. And that's our entry into the Psalter and a life of prayer.

[10 : 51] So if you want to know how to pray, you've got to go through these two kind of posts or banks, as it were, or two actually towers, if you want to think of that way. But you go through, and the one is about, I think, our lives being personally ordered, but the other one is about our public life actually being ordered by the Lord.

So let's look at that. You've got Bibles. Psalm 1, turn to that. And you also have your handout. And so let's start actually with the first word of the first Psalm, which is blessed.

That word blessed just kind of jumps out at you, doesn't it? It actually, Psalm 1 begins, and then ends in Psalm 2 in the same place with what it means actually to be blessed and kind of laying that out.

But it's also been translated or rendered with different terms. Right? In other places, other translators have used the word happy. You may know that. That's pretty common and popular sometimes. But others have translated lucky.

I don't know how helpful that is. Or sometimes even fortunate. I know one author, one instructor about the Beatitudes, which begins with the word blessed too, which described it as someone who's being gospelized, which I think is actually somewhat helpful.

[12 : 00] But back to this other one, though, which is joyful. And that's where the collect actually ends with the goal or the aspiration of being a people that are joyful. And so joyful or blessed is the man.

And then there are three positions that are given. And you can get hung up on these. It's walk, stand, and sits. You see that? We don't want to spend too much time lingering with the positions because it's not so much about the position that's offered as what actually follows it.

So in contrast to the one who is blessed, the one who is blessed does not actually do these things, which is walks in the counsel of the wicked. First of all, then, what about this walks in the counsel of the wicked?

That's just someone who takes advice from those who aren't followers or believers in God. So they're getting advice or the opinion is being shared, and then they're walking in that way while the blessed person, the joyful person, actually doesn't do that sort of thing.

It doesn't mean that you're not found with those people. Maybe someone's given you counsel, but actually you don't actually take their counsel and walk actually in those sorts of ways. And so that's actually about what one thinks, the opinions that are shared with you.

[13 : 13] The second one is one does not stand in the way of sinners. When I first saw this, I thought it meant, okay, sinners, they have got their way, and the last thing you want to do is get in their way. Just let them go. Get out of their way.

Don't stand in their way. That's not what it means. Okay? Maybe you want to stand in their way. You know, I'm not my brother's keeper sort of thing, right? That's not what it says.

That's not what it means. What it means is that there is a way of sinners, and we don't collaborate with them. We don't stand with them in those ways, right? So it's actually something that we do in terms of maybe even kind of taking a stand, not standing in those ways, being like that, collaborating.

And so then the next line is, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. So it starts out with what one thinks to then what one does, and then finally scoffing what actually someone says. So we don't say those sorts of things, scoff as it were, or mock.

But eventually, what is in the heart will come out, and it will be spoken from. Or maybe it's spoken in secret, and we know from the New Testament, Jesus says it will be reclaimed from the housetops.

[14 : 16] Eventually, what is in the heart, what is in the mind, what is going on in the life will come out in what it is that we say. So the contrast is ended, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

This is drawing our attention to not just delight and meditating, which I'll get to, but the law of the Lord, that is the Torah. I know this is something I learned recently, but this is drawing our attention to the direction, I think, of our life.

And also what is actually aimed towards us. Literally, the Torah means something that's been shot or directed towards us. So God's law is purposeful and intentional and brought to bear, actually, in our lives like an arrow shot from a bow.

That's what's really important. So there's a direction to it, but there's not only this direction, but there's great delight then, isn't it? It specifically says that.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. So God's law is for something else to take great pleasure and satisfaction in. But not only that, to meditate on this.

[15 : 21] We hear a little bit about meditation and more and more in the culture in which we live in right now, which seems to be interested in meditation, doesn't it? And all kinds of that and different Eastern forms. There are Christian forms of meditation.

A great book that I came across by Ed Clowney is called Christian Meditation, written, I think, back in the 70s. Just a lovely way of thinking about and going about Christian meditation.

The neat thing about meditation, this word now literally means it's what a predator does over his prey when he's about to ingest it. It's kind of an image that sticks with you.

Now be sure about this, actually. I don't want you to think that the law of the God is something that we stand over. We stand over God's law, right? But just think about a predator and how interested he or she is in his prey.

And this is what meditation is like. It's actually the sounds that are made when one is kind of musing over, mulling over the prey. And so let me kind of submit to you just for a second here that there is no such thing as silent meditation in the Christian tradition.

[16 : 27] It doesn't mean that we can't pray silently, right, or be silent before the Lord. But when it comes to meditation, Christian meditation is actually verbalizing our prayers to God and being with God and actually talking to Him.

And it's important to know that. There is a place for science, but that's actually not what is in mind in terms of meditation. The Puritans actually advocated strongly for people in their prayer life to talk to God and to talk out loud to Him.

Talking out loud to God has never gotten easier, I think, than it is now. You'll be in your car and talk and people, you think, they're obeying the law and you're using your hands-free device when what you're doing is really just talking to God.

Or you can walk down the street with some earbuds in your ear and just talk to God and people think maybe you're singing or doing something else. It's really gotten quite easy to talk out loud to God wherever it is that you are, not just your homes.

And I commend that. Okay, so then there's the duration. How long do we do this? Well, day and night. Okay, this is God about ordering our rules, our wills and affections because that's what the Torah, that's what the law is about.

[17 : 31] It's about God using His rule, His good teaching, His instruction in our life and directing our lives. For how long do you do this? Well, day and night. And it's been said of Chrysostom that he and his contemporaries knew the Psalter by heart, the whole thing they knew by heart.

And Patrick of Ireland, anyone from Ireland here, Irish descent, said that he said all 150 psalms a day. There you have it.

Okay, on to pass the first contrast, on to the next contrast in verses 3 and 4. What is this person like in contrasting to those who are not believers or followers of the Lord well, he's like a tree planted by streams of living, streams of water that yields its fruit in due season and its leaf does not wither and all that it does, it prospers.

So, there's this image that's now evoked of creation. We have the one of the trees and the one of the chaff and this tree is actually planted by the stream of living water.

What does it do? Well, it produces fruit in good season and its leaves don't wither. Just a beautiful picture, isn't it? It's a beautiful picture of life that's offered to us here when we think about what the Lord has for those who are blessed and joyful in him.

[18 : 48] It's in contrast to the chaff, which is insubstantial. We know this. The wheat and the chaff were thrown and the chaff would blow away and the wheat would remain.

And these are these kind of two aspects of life that are contrasted. You could stop there, but I think that the great teaching that's being impressed upon us here is actually the grace of God.

How is it that the tree gets next to the stream where there's the water? It doesn't put itself there. It can't actually do that. It has to be put there by someone else.

And so too, the Lord actually puts us by those streams of water so that actually we're the ones who produce the fruit in due season and our leaves don't wither. It's because of the grace of God that's the case.

Finally then, the conclusion on verses 5 and 6. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous for the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish.

[19 : 51] There's a warning, I think, that's issued here. Our attention is drawn to two things and that is the Lord's judgment and the Lord's knowledge. There is a judgment to come being warned. No one can say, well, I didn't know there was going to be a judgment.

Well, there is and the wicked won't stand in that judgment as it says nor the sinners in the congregation of the righteous. And those who don't believe in the salvation of the Lord won't have, as it were, a leg to stand on.

They will not stand in the judgment. But, by contrast, there is a way of those who are blessed that will not perish.

And so, our attentions are drawn then. What's really important, I think, is to the Lord who actually knows. It's really important that we know God, right? Absolutely critical.

But also that the Lord actually knows us. He's the one who is all-knowing and knows. And as we're known by Him and know that, then we can actually know Him.

[20 : 53] That's what's really important, that He knows us. And He knows us personally and more intimately than even when that word was used about Adam and Eve, that Adam knew Eve.

Well, God actually knows us intensively, completely, comprehensively. He knows our lives through and through. We who have these unruly wills and affections, the one who wants to bring some direction, some delight, some order, actually, to those good wills and affections that He's given to us.

He's the one who knows us through and through. Okay, so that's Psalm 1. Let's turn to Psalm 2. I know you don't have to go too far to do that.

It's probably on the same page. Three things to note about this now. Psalm 1 was about, I think, a kind of a personal order, about the one who actually worships the Lord.

Psalm 2 is, I think, about public order, among other things, and it's about the one actually whom we worship now. So it comes, at the beginning, it starts with a warning. It's important to, I think, point out further to what I mentioned about the influence that the Psalms have had on the New Testament, but also, as we look at the New Testament, how the New Testament helps us to interpret the Psalms.

[22 : 15] And so you know from Jesus' resurrection when He was on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples, that He then explained how the book of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms actually pointed to Him.

And so, this Psalm, and particularly this one, but all the Psalms, point to who the Messiah is, who Jesus is, who the Christ is. And in fact, in Acts chapter 2, Peter's second sermon, one of his two texts for that sermon is this Psalm.

He uses this Psalm actually evangelistically to show them that Jesus is the Lord. And so, in this, we have a warning by start, by way of question.

Again, this is, why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? This isn't a question that's asking for kind of an explanation or not even an examination, but it comes more as something as kind of an accusation or even a conviction because the nations and the peoples are conspiring and they're plotting against God.

And who are these people? The Creator that have been created by the Lord who are conspiring and plotting against the Lord. And then when we get to verse 2a, it parallels actually Psalm 1 and verse 1.

[23 : 38] So the first thing that we note is that the kings of the earth set themselves. Right? This is actually their action. It is what they're doing.

They're conspiring, they're plotting, and they're taking opposition to who the Lord is. And it takes work and effort to set them against the Lord and that's what they've done.

This is related to their actions. To the next line in verse 2, it says, And the rulers take counsel together. It's the same word that's in Psalm 1.

Counsel. What are they doing? They're thinking. They're sharing their opinions, their advice. It has to do with what's kind of going on in their minds as it were. You can see them kind of being united in this but actually unruly and in opposition to the Lord.

And so, they're taking their counsel together and as it suggests in the next line, it's against the Lord and his anointing. Sorry, his anointed one. And so now, we're being pointed to the one the Lord actually has anointed as his king and ultimately that is Jesus Christ.

[24 : 45] But, it's not only their actions and their thoughts but look at verse 3. This is what this is what they say. They say, just drawing your attention to this.

So, right? What people think and what they say, I'm sorry, what people think and what the people do will eventually be spoken. It will come out. It will be said.

It will be kind of noted as it were. And what do they say? Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us. That's actually what is literally on their lips. And so, they've been given away and they think that their loyalty and obedience to the Lord, to God, now is kind of like slavery.

It's something they need to be delivered from. Right? So, they think kind of a spiritual coup d'etat is the way to live. Well, the Lord is aware and he knows this and so he sits in heaven and laughs and the Lord has them in derision.

We'll come back to that about later. But, what you can see in these first few verses is there's kind of a large-scale public, willful, unruly rebellion against the Lord and his anointed way.

[25 : 56] But the Lord actually has a way. There are two ways and the first one is the way of wrath. Right? Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury saying. So, God does respond though he is slow to anger, I think, with actually wrath that is quite purposeful.

One of the best, I think, descriptions of wrath in the Bible though this is kind of a biblical survey of it. But if you go to Romans chapter 1, there's a great kind of pattern of what God's wrath looks like and it says three things about his wrath that he gives people over to their hearts, to their minds, and to their passions.

It's kind of a handing over. Here you have it then. Okay? If you want to rebel against me, you can have it your way and see what life is like when it looks like my hands are actually off of you and you can do whatever you want.

See, kind of see what happens. But that's not his only way. Not just the way of wrath but the way of decree. And here's where the idea of order actually comes, I think, into Psalm 2.

He says, I will tell the decree of the Lord and he said to me, you are my son today I have begotten you. And so there's this picture, I think, well, okay, I'm going to use the word here of ascension.

[27 : 12] All right? The Lord puts his son on the holy hill. I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

This king, this ruler, the one who will bring order is on this holy hill. And it's a city that's separated from the rest.

It's distinct from the other ones. And this king and kingdom is real and it's elevated and it is to make people holy. It's to bring holiness and order into the life of people.

That's the first thing. The other aspect of this decree or order is then the incarnation. Verse 7, I will tell of the decree of the Lord and he said to me, you are my son today I have begotten you.

Doesn't that sound exactly like what we confess in the creed? But not only in the creed, it's in a number of places in the New Testament. And there's just a lovely kind of affirmation of the father of the son here.

[28 : 15] So there's this idea of kind of a royal order that's brought to bear through this. And so in Acts chapter 13 verse 33 or Hebrews chapter 1 verse 5 it's a quote of this verse right here.

Let me read Acts 13 33 for you. Actually, it's not 33.

Oh, yes it is. Sorry. This, sorry. This he has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus as also it is written in the second Psalm, you are my son today I have begotten you.

Right? And then it's in Hebrews 1.5 I won't go to that as well, but it's actually talking about Jesus is the high priest, but even more so in Hebrews chapter 5 verse 5.

So we have not only this royal order that's being brought as the king who rules and reigns over all creation, but also this priest actually who's interceding for us.

[29 : 17] That's the image in actually chapter 5 verse 5, this kind of priestly order that's brought into our life. So these two things, a king and now a priest, which then does lead us to the next verse, verse 8, that I think lends itself to intercession, doesn't it?

As it says, then ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possessions. This is how it brings rule and order again into the world.

We're invited to make our petitions, our intercessions, to ask. So as Jesus actually intercedes on our behalf, you know, he's the one who has made it such that that we can have access to the throne of God, this great throne of grace.

We're invited then to make our intercessions, our pleads, our petitions to the Lord. So there's those three aspects I think that God uses with his anointed one, his son, his Jesus, Christ, the Messiah, that of this ascension, the incarnation, and I think the intercessions.

And then the last part of this psalm, we learn about God's wisdom to us. Right? And there are four things that we're commended or even we're commanded these four things and that is to seek the wisdom of the Lord, to serve the Lord, to kiss the Lord, and then to take refuge in the Lord.

[30 : 43] Remember this is poetry here. But that's verse 10. Now therefore, kings be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth. There's a warning again, but also encourage to seek wisdom.

Isn't that what those of the rulers of the earth really need to have? Solomon was given the grace to ask for that wisdom and was given that and ruled well, brought order well, kind of publicly, but unfortunately, his private life was not really in very good order, was it?

But not only that, not only seeking wisdom, but to use that word in the service of the Lord, right? So serve the Lord with fear and trembling, that great reverence and honor and esteem of our Lord and so serving him with that kind of fear of the Lord.

And then finally, sorry, not finally, but second to last, kiss the Lord. This is a lovely picture of submission to our Lord, a Lord who knows what's best for us and we lay ourselves downward at his feet and kiss the Lord.

And then finally, it says, take refuge in the Lord. Now, when we hear the word refuge and it's spoken, we think of it's just a kind of a terrible thing, isn't it? These people who've actually left one place or another on a boat and trying to find a place where they can live in peace and safety and well-being.

[32 : 10] And on the one hand, it's tragic, but on the other hand, it's marvelous because maybe they will be received. You heard about that last week, didn't you? But we're all refugees. You realize that each and every one of us is a refugee who's been received actually by the Lord.

Not only are we people or a priesthood or congregations or a temple or the churches described as a body, even a kingdom at times, but we're also, we're all refugees.

As we move on to some of the other places in the Psalter kind of looking at how it gives voice to our emotions and our wills and our minds and other things.

I just want to share what Kinder said about this. I love what he said about the Psalter that's related to this. The Psalter is not so much a literary library storing up standards of literature for cultic requirements.

That was a mouthful, wasn't it? Do you want me to say that again? The Psalter is not so much a literary library storing up standard literature for cultic requirements because, right, that's how the Psalter can be used sometimes and we should use that.

[33 : 21] We say the Psalms when we worship. Morning prayer or communion, right? It's said, it's used liturgically, but it's not only for that, he's saying. It's not so much that as a hospitable house.

Think of the Psalms as this house that we come into that's hospitable to us. A hospital house well lived in where most things can be found and borrowed after some searching and whose first occupants have left on it everywhere the imprint of their experiences and the stamp of their characters.

Isn't that great? So we come into this house as they have, right? And their experiences it seems are imprinted there. You think of our wills and our affections.

Those are the experiences that we have. They're imprinted there. They're also this kind of stamp of character. So I think God uses the Psalter in our life as we pray, right?

To put, as it were, kind of a stamp on our character to direct it, to order our lives in that respect. Those wills and affections that he's given us. So in return to this about where our hearts then may be surely fixed and where true joys are to be found, Calvin said this about the Psalter.

[34 : 32] He said, There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here presented as in a mirror. There's the image that he gives that of the Psalter. It's a mirror, right?

We look into a mirror. We see ourselves, right? You look into the psalm. You listen to the psalm. You see yourself. You hear yourself in there. Or rather, he says this, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities.

You could add more to that. In short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated. Are you agitated? I'm not trying to agitate you, but let's face it.

I mean, we are at times agitated. Or we agitate others, right? Know that, okay? You know, sometimes we agitate others.

And not that I'm giving you permission to do that, but God can actually use that to help people go to where they need to with that, which is to the Lord and through the psalm. So let's look at the four aspects of the psalm.

[35 : 40] I think, and that is the way the psalms actually give voice to our emotions. And the first one is in the area of fear. There's lots of other verses in the psalms that give voice to the fear, but this one does really wear almost a kind of a terrorism.

This trembling, chapter 55, verse 5, fear and trembling come upon me and horror overwhelms me. Do you ever feel overwhelmed? The point where you're almost trembling?

It's like a terror in your life? Well, the psalms give voice to that kind of fear. Fear and trembling come upon me. What does he do with that? He gives it to the Lord and it overwhelms him.

But not only fear, but a sense of kind of sadness and hope. Those emotions, kind of unruly as they are, can be found in the psalms and the Lord can use the psalms and order our wills and our affections here.

So chapter 43, verse 5, why are you cast down on my soul and why are you in turmoil within me? That's the sadness. Cast down. That's how bad. It's kind of this physical picture, isn't it?

[36 : 43] To look into a mirror. But there's this turmoil within me. It's so kind of heavy. And then hope in God. Here's the hope. For I shall again praise him, my salvation, my God.

Then there's also shame. We heard about shame a few. Attend the 11 o'clock service a couple of weeks ago. Chapter 44, verse 15, all day long, here's the shame. My disgrace is before me.

And shame, literally, has covered my face. There's another unruly affection that's given voice in the psalms. And then, sometimes we just get mad, don't we?

Sometimes we get mad just before we're coming to church and we've gotten out of the door and then we pretend not to be mad. But it's the place to come, actually, to the Lord with our madness.

And here's lots of places in the psalms that you can turn to. But chapter 25, verse 6, I hate the assembly of evildoers and I will not sit with the wicked. There's now, it has to do with the will as well as the affections, right?

[37 : 47] But I hate. And the thing to do with our hate is actually to give it to the Lord. Actually, not to actually give it to other people and to offer it to him for him to do with it. But only he can do, I think.

And then there's doubt, isn't there? Chapter 73, verses 3 to 5, For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for they have no pangs until death. Their bodies are fat and sleek.

They are not in trouble as others are. And they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. You can just hear the kind of the doubt. He's kind of troubled by kind of what he sees, what he observes in the world.

And what does he do with that? He brings it actually to the Lord. Admits it. Confesses it, as it were. Offers it. Those are some negative emotions, aren't they?

But there's some positive emotions in the Psalter that need some direction, I think, as well. The Lord, as he orders them for the purposes of then joy. And one is reverence.

[38 : 43] Chapter 8, verses 1. You can look at 7 as well. O Lord, O Lord, our Lord. How majestic is your name in all the others. You can just hear the reverence pour out of those words, can't you?

And that Psalm begins and actually ends with that verse, the reverence of the Lord. And then there's joy. Psalm 118, two weeks ago, is where that actually came from. And so, chapter 3, verse 5.

Weeping may tarry for the night. There's an emotion. But joy comes in the morning. There's a great kind of order, isn't there? Your day may end like that, but it doesn't have to start like that the next day.

I realize it can be reversed. Our day can end with joy, and sometimes, and, and, sorry, did I say end with joy? Yeah, sometimes it can end with joy, and for some reason, you wake up a little bit disturbed.

So the pattern can be reversed a bit, but not in this verse. It's being expressed as, well, things may be really difficult at night, but there's always the next day, the new dawn. And I was reading a book once called Exuberance by Kay Redfield Jameson.

[39 : 53] She's John Hopkins in the psychiatry department. And this is what she actually said about joy. She said, this is her lead paragraph, shield your joys, sorry, shield your joyous ones, asks the Anglican prayer.

Shield your joyous ones? God more usually is asked to watch over those who are ill or in despair, as indeed the rest of our prayer asks, which is then, watch now those who weep this day, it goes, rest your weary ones, soothe your suffering ones.

The joyous tend to be left to their own devices, the exuberant even more so. Perhaps it's just as well. Well, I don't know, I think the lovely thing about the Psalms actually is that we're just not left to ourselves.

We're given way to express, I think, our joys to the Lord, the one who graces us with his word, with his ways, with his wisdom, right?

And we can express those joys to the place that they really should be expressed to our Lord. Lord. So let me actually jump over point two and point three in your outline to then our wills, thinking of our unruly wills and affections.

[41 : 16] And so the Psalms give direction to our wills, just three ways that that happens. Psalm 33, verse four, delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

There's this kind of connection between our wills and our desires. And God grants those desires that he actually places there for us. That's the way he directs us. Sorry, directs and orders our wills. There's also this relationship, isn't it, between our will and weakness and our desires?

And so chapter 10, verse 17, O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted. You will strengthen their heart. Isn't that great? There's that idea of strength with the will, right?

And our desires. He's the one who strengthens us. He's the one who hears our desires for those of us who are afflicted. And then chapter 19, verse 10, this has to do with the value, actually, and sweetness of our desires and of our wills and how the Lord orders them.

It says, more to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. There's the value of our desires, right? The desires that God gives are good desires. There are desires that are not good, right?

[42 : 23] But he gives good desires and that's what they're like, gold. gold. Something as sweet as sweeter than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. There's what the Lord has in mind for us for our desires that he gives.

So, just kind of in closing then, I think what the great thing is about the Psalms is we kind of make our way through one and two, personal and public in terms of that life, is that it does give shape to this kind of this internal life, as it were.

Our wills, our affections, our mind, our soul. You can kind of go through and look at some of the other verses that I've left there for you in relation to our thoughts and actually the soul. The word soul is mentioned 99 times in the Psalms.

99 times. Right? But here's what Luther thought about the Psalms. He treated the Psalms as kind of a companion.

Now, these are my words, but almost as a soul friend there. It was the Psalms that he began his teaching actually with. And his Psalter was described as his old and ragged Psalter.

[43 : 29] That's how familiar he was with his Psalter. Used it actually that much in his daily life. So it's kind of like a companion, a soul friend as it were. For Athanasius, he said that the Psalms were a garden with every variety of prayer like a flower that we can pick free at any time of the year.

Isn't it just the beautiful picture of the Psalter? I think that's related to our mind. You know, there was this movie called The Beautiful Mind to do with this genius. He was a mathematician, but we too can have this beautiful mind from the Lord that's shaped by the Psalter.

And it's like a garden that we can go to and pick out a flower here, here and there, that shapes our minds to think good thoughts after God, beautiful thoughts after the Lord. And then Chrysostom characterized it, I think, as kind of a habits of the will.

So if we think of our desires, the Psalter's. And Chrysostom, like his contemporaries, they knew the Psalter by heart, shaped actually their heart, the habits of the heart were formed by the Psalter.

So anyway, let me go back to the collect in closing here and read this with you the right way.

[44 : 42] Not that I think that Leo I was wrong to say which doth make the minds of all faithful men to be of one will. That's important too. But Cranmer gave us a great gift.

So let's say this prayer together. O almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto thy people that they may love the things which thou commandest and desire that which thou dost promise.

That so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Okay. Thank you for listening. Any questions?