



In our review of the Bible we have reached Job and Psalms

Job and Psalms — Reaching the parts others seldom do

by Llewellyn Edwards*

Once there was a lady who sued a local church — she cleaned it out of every penny it had. I will spare the details but her case was so unjust and the little flock so unjustly treated that my imagination stumbled across the idea of wishing her to fall under a bus and get her comeuppance. Christian of me? Maybe not, but biblical — Yes! See Psalm 137:8-9: 'O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us — he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.'

That's what I like about the poetical books of the Bible — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Lamentations (especially Job and Psalms) — they are so honest. Job calls God to account, David confesses it all, the choirs get ecstatic and the Babylonian exiles vent their anger. And our wonderful God sits back, making sure it is recorded, as if to say to each of us reading today: 'That is OK! Your capacity for moods and deep emotions are part of my creation. Now learn to place them in the context of trust.' Where better for the parts we often hide to be reached than in books like Job and Psalms?

In this short article I intend to revel in just a few of the parts that cause my inner spirit to soar. But let me begin with what I think is one of the first keys to loving these poetic sections of Scripture — parallelism.

We are used to the joy of rhyme. 'Jesus loves me! This I **know**, For the Bible tells me **so**. Little ones to him **belong**; They are weak, but he is **strong**.'

The Hebrews loved parallelism — where the first line is repeated in a different way in the second line — and there are so many variations of it. Here are some examples:

Psalm 104:5-7:
'He set the earth on its foundations;
it can never be moved.
You covered it with the deep as with a
garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.'

Or Job 4:17:
'Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?'

And it's not just repeating something with

different words. Parallelism can be contrasting, like . . .

Psalm 1:6:
'For the LORD watches over the way of the
righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.'

Or Psalm 37:9:
'For evil men will be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD will inherit
the land.'

Parallelism can be of the expanding type — by the second line saying the same but adding more information to the first line. An example is Psalm 25:14:

'The LORD confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.'

Look out for parallelism as you read and see which lines 'speak' to you. It's as if God, knowing that we are all emotionally different, made these poets write to make sure we 'hear' through the words meanings that speak to each of us — reaching the parts others seldom reach. And rhyme would not have translated very well into other languages.

But let me list a few of those parts that have touched me so deeply.

My understanding of the great controversy is awed when I read Job 1 and 2 along with Psalm 82.

Read not just the words of Psalm 23 but its colours and scenes and sounds, and let the LORD refresh and unstress your heart.

When I am angry I sense the spirit of Psalm 58, but I beg the Lord Jesus to make me follow the way of the Cross. Take me back to Psalm 51 to face my impure heart.

And, oh, the prophetic mystery of Psalm 22! You felt forsaken, David? There is One who will yet go further — for us.

Then there is the lest-we-forget-the-way-he-has-led-in-the-past Psalm 105. How often have we been there and forgotten his caring hand!

And those praise, hallelujah and thanksgiving psalms (like 136 and 150). It's like listening to Handel's *Messiah* — they make you want to stand up!

That's what books like Job and Psalms do; they touch the inner parts — the heart. When our hearts are sad or lonely or empty or hateful or filled to bursting with joy, God wants us to be

honest with him. So tell him and let him be the glory and the lifter of your head. (Ps. 3:3.)

Maybe that is why Psalms appears to be Jesus' favourite book — he quotes it more than any other. As he leaves the upper room on his way to Gethsemane and then the Cross, the book *Desire of Ages* (p. 672) tells us:

'Before leaving the upper chamber, the Saviour led His disciples in a song of praise. His voice was heard, not in the strains of some mournful lament, but in the joyful notes of the Passover hallel:

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
Praise Him, all ye people.
For His merciful kindness is great toward us:
And the truth of the Lord endureth forever.
Praise ye the Lord." Psalm 117.'

* Pastor Llewellyn Edwards has been president of the Scottish Mission for some years. As you read his article you can imagine Llew and his wife Karin packing for a move to Egypt, where Llew is to be president of the Union. With me, you will pray for God's guidance and protection.

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