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# **Paul and the Psalms:**

## **Paul's Hermeneutic and Worldview**

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## **Abstract**

This research examines the role of the Psalms in the development of Paul's understanding. There were many worldviews in Paul's day, but Paul draws his inspiration from the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, which he states were "written down for our instruction". Three citations from the Psalms are examined in detail. In each of these cases, it becomes clear that their full contribution to Paul's argument is only obtained by viewing the quotation in the context of the whole Psalm, and its place in the Psalter.

This is followed by looking at Paul's references to the Psalms in three critical aspects of the Christian worldview: Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology. In common with other New Testament writers, Psalm 110 is applied to Christ, but so are many other Psalms, where the referent in the original was to God. The righteousness of God and the power of God for salvation celebrated in the Psalms are proclaimed to all nations in the gospel. The hope of the Psalmists that all peoples will worship the God of Israel becomes a reality, when Jew and Gentile become one, in Christ Jesus.

In one context, when citing a Psalm, Paul claims to have the same spirit of faith. There is a clear case for saying that that attitude infuses all his references to the Psalms, and that the Psalms have informed his worldview. In this, Paul is a model for Christian believers everywhere.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to pay a tribute to my late wife, Edna. She encouraged me to begin this study, and I had just started when she took ill, very suddenly. All work had to be suspended. Five months later, the time of her departure had come. She had fought the good fight, she had finished the race, she had kept the faith. I also wish to pay tribute to the children whom God has given me, and whose support, through all that has happened, has been a source of strength and encouragement.

A great debt of gratitude is also owed to my Professor and Supervisor John Angus MacLeod. His advice and guidance have been an invaluable asset. His patience has been exemplary, while still gently ensuring that we kept to agreed timescales. He also kept my focus on the subject, pointing out that many of the avenues I wanted to explore may have had merit, but were not germane to this particular study.

An expression of thanks is also particularly due to my church family, Olivet Evangelical Church in Falkirk. They took great interest in my studies, and ceaselessly prayed for me. I am also thankful to Edinburgh Theological Seminary for the excellent resources available, and for making this long process as enjoyable as possible.

# Paul and the Psalms: His Hermeneutic and Worldview

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## 1. Paul's use of the Psalms

### 1.1. Introduction

Extensive work has been carried out on the importance of understanding the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> This research narrows the topic down

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992); Don A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, *It is Written: Scripture citing Scripture: Essays in honour of Barnabas Lindars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 – reprinted 2008); Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, (London: Fontana, 1952); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003 – previously published by Baker House, 1981); Craig A Evans and James A. Sanders, *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 1993 – republished by Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture on the Letters of Paul*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); S. Lewis Johnson, Jr *The Old Testament in the New: An argument for Biblical Inspiration*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, (Chicago: Moody, 1985); Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic*, (London: SCM Press, 1961); Richard N. Longenecker *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 12975); David P. Moessner, Daniel Marguerat,

to reviewing the use of the book of Psalms by the Apostle Paul. How did the Psalms, expressions of Old Testament piety, come to form such a distinctive place in the thinking of the early church? How did Paul, who would have grown up knowing the Psalms and understanding them in the context of Second Temple Judaism, re-orientate his understanding in the light of Jesus Christ? The essential pillars for the transformation of Paul's worldview were all in place on the Damascus Road and in the days immediately following.<sup>2</sup> Were the Psalms instrumental in developing and shaping Paul's new worldview?<sup>3</sup>

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Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael Wolter, *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul's Claim upon Israel's Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*, (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2012); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New*, (London: Continuum, 2001); Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New*, (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Steve Moyise, *Paul and Scripture*, (London: SPCK: 2010).

<sup>2</sup> His belief in who Jesus was, changed totally when he said "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). The God of Israel was the Christian God: "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth" (Acts 22:14). He received his commission: "you will be his witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). The gospel was for all people: "a witness for him to everyone" (Acts 22:15). The people of God were those who called on the name of Jesus: "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

<sup>3</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, (Downers Grove; IVP Academic, 2004), 43 quoting David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 260: "Worldview" in a Christian perspective implies the objective

Paul insists that what changed him was not research nor reasoning, nor even contact with the apostles. It was, instead, the revelation of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Writing to the Galatians, he stresses: “nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus” (Gal.1:17).<sup>5</sup> Even though the Christophany changed his understanding of the Scriptures, these Scriptures in turn developed and shaped his understanding of his faith.<sup>6</sup> Paul

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existence of the Trinitarian God whose essential character establishes the moral order of the universe and whose word, wisdom and law define and govern all aspects of created existence.

<sup>4</sup> Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, (Eugene: Wipf, 2007 – previously published by Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 55-56: Paul considers this Christophany to be of the same kind as the appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples, and therefore he reckons himself among the witnesses to Christ's resurrection (1 Cor.15:5-11) ... This objective, external event had a soul-stirring effect on the very centre of Paul's being (2 Cor.4.6; Gal.1.16). It was for Paul an experience of an inner illumination (2 Cor.4.6) and of receiving God's judgment upon his righteousness attained by the law ... However, the Damascus experience was not just a matter of Paul's private conversion. As frequently observed, in fact, Paul speaks of it in terms of an apostolic commission rather than a conversion.

<sup>5</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 34: He produces a series of three alibis to prove that he did not spend time in Jerusalem, having his gospel shaped by the other apostles.

<sup>6</sup> The Scriptures here, refer to the “Old Testament”. Paul alludes to the Apocrypha (UBS, *The Greek New Testament* and Nestle Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* contain lists of New Testament allusions and verbal parallels to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha). At Athens



frequently proves or illustrates his point by reasoning from the Scriptures,<sup>7</sup> sometimes by explicit citation, but in others by echo and allusion. He makes reference to all parts of the Old Testament – the Torah, the Former Prophets, the Latter Prophets and the writings.

This research works on the presupposition that the thirteen letters which claim Pauline authorship are from Paul, and that the speeches, as recorded in Acts, even if they are summaries rather than verbatim accounts, are a true record of what was said.<sup>8</sup>

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(Acts 17:28), he quotes secular poets. Nowhere, however, does he quote, as authority, with an introductory formula as the Word of God, anything other than the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 17:2-3 in Thessalonica: And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures ... “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ”.

1 Cor.15:3-4: For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures ...

<sup>8</sup> For Ephesians: Clinton E. Arnold, Letter to the Ephesians, in *Dictionary of Paul and his ...Letters*, 242.

For Colossians: Peter T. O’Brien, Letter to the Colossians, in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, 152.

For the pastorals: Earle E. Ellis, Pastoral Letters, in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, 661.

For the speeches in Acts: Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 116-123. Brian Janeway, *CTSJ* 5.2 (April

Paul's letters are addressed to those who are already believers. In contrast, Paul's speeches in Acts address four distinct audiences.<sup>9</sup>

This research seeks to review Paul's use of the Psalms, focussing on contextual issues, rather than textual problems. This is done, first, by seeking to gain an understanding of Paul's hermeneutical approach; and in the light of that, assessing how the Psalms had shaped his worldview as seen in three major areas of Christian doctrine. The rationale behind the study is not so much to analyse Paul's sources, but to study the use he made of them, and learn appropriate lessons for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **1.2. What is a Worldview?**

Firstly, we establish our understanding of what a worldview is.

Sire defines a worldview as "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which

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1999), 75. David G. Petersen, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> In Acts 13:16-41, Paul speaks to Jews in the synagogue. In Acts 14:15-17 Paul talks to pagans, in Lystra. In Acts 17:2-31, Paul addresses an intellectual, but pagan, audience in Athens. In Acts 20, a short account is given of Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Miletus. Finally, there are Paul's apologetic speeches to hostile Jews (Acts 22:3-21), to the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-6), to Felix and Festus (Acts 24:10-21, Acts 25:8-11), to Agrippa (Acts 26:2-29) and to Roman Jews (Acts 28:23-28).

may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being”.<sup>10</sup>

A worldview is more than a matter of the mind alone, although intellect and language are surely involved. It is a matter of the soul, and is represented more as a spiritual orientation. Sire suggests Psalm 62:1-2 as illustrative. Corresponding verses from Paul could be 1 Corinthians 8:6, Philippians 1:21.<sup>11</sup>

There were many worldviews in Paul’s time: pagan, Greek, Platonic, Stoic, Jewish. There are many today: secularism, modernism, post-modernism as well as theism. Within the Christian faith, there are conflicting worldviews including feminist, liberationist, liberal, Roman Catholic, evangelical. Would Paul fit into any of these?

Westerholm describes how Paul’s worldview has impacted every generation in the past two millennia:

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<sup>10</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a concept*, 122-123.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 62:1-2 For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

1 Corinthians 8:6: for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Philippians 1:21: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Even casual readers of his letters sense that Paul was a man completely captivated by a particular way of looking at life; those who met him must have been similarly struck. Indeed, for many, Paul's captivity proved contagious: the vision of life that Paul communicated gave new direction and significance to their lives as well ... In the two millennia since then, Paul's letters have played essentially the same role for millions of readers: they have proved to be a compelling, illuminating, and treasured guide to life ... Contemporary readers of Paul, however, soon encounter difficulties. Many do not share the assumptions that underlie Paul's vision of life; and to make sense of his train of thought without grasping its premises is no easy matter.<sup>12</sup>

Kuyper identifies "three fundamental relations of all human existence":

For our relation *to God*: an immediate fellowship of man with the Eternal, independently of priest or church. For the relation of man *to man*: the recognition in each person of human worth, which is by virtue of his creation after the divine likeness, and therefore of the equality of all men before God and his magistrate. And for the relation *to the world*: the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honoured in its independence, and that we must, in every domain,

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Paul: The early Christian Worldview of the Letter to the Romans: Second Edition*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 10-11.

discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and in human life.<sup>13#</sup>

A worldview, therefore, begins with what a person believes is true, not what they wish were true. It goes beyond believing what is true, however, to what a person believes to be important. C. S. Lewis wrote: “One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of *no* importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important”.<sup>14</sup> Paul was in no doubt that Christianity was of infinite importance. He did not wrestle with questions such as “Is there a God?”, “Is there a purpose to life?”. These were presuppositions, and the answer “No” to either of these questions would have been unthinkable to him. Nothing was more true, and nothing was more important for Paul than that Jesus Christ was Lord, image of the invisible God, in whom all things were created, head of the church, making peace and proclaimed in the gospel (Colossians 1:15-23).

### **1.3. Paul’s Hermeneutic Approach**

To gain an understanding of Paul’s hermeneutical approach to the Psalms, Chapter 2 focuses on three different occasions when Paul explicitly cited the Psalms in his letters. In each case, the full significance of his citation is not immediately apparent. Questions arise such as: “Why did Paul use this Psalm in this particular context?”

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<sup>13</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 31.

<sup>14</sup> C. S. Lewis, “Christian Apologetics” in *God in the Dock*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970),

“How has he adapted it for the point he is making?” “How does it develop his argument?”

The first quotation is from Psalm 32, a psalm attributed to David. Paul introduces a quotation from David in Romans 4, in the midst of an extensive argument where he is using Abraham as his object lesson. Hays sees this as an example of *g'zerah shawah*,<sup>15</sup> but Scott considers that the “Davidic trajectory (of the Psalm) is out of sympathy with Paul’s own”.<sup>16</sup> Does Paul properly use David’s voice in Psalm 32, or is David circumscribed and his voice over-ridden by Paul’s?

The second quotation reviewed in detail is from Psalm 44, which is attributed to the sons of Korah. In Paul’s triumphant conclusion to his description of life in the Spirit in Romans 8, where believers are described as “more than conquerors”, why does he invoke this quotation from Psalm 44, which *prima facie* seems to imply defeat and rejection by God?

The third quotation is from Psalm 116, which Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 4. The quotation appears to follow the LXX rather than the Hebrew; it is very brief and had it not been for the introductory formula, may not have been easily identified as an Old

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<sup>15</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul: An Intertextual Enquiry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 46.

Testament quotation. Does Paul do justice to the context? How much of the content of Psalm 116 does Paul expect his Corinthian readers to comprehend?

In each case, the Psalm is considered first, in the context of the Psalter. If Paul used his citations with no regard to context, simply “borrowing language”, then the context would be of no significance. However, if Paul was using the Psalm to teach a lesson, then every aspect of the Psalm is potentially important. The New Testament passage, where the Psalm is quoted, is then considered in the context of Paul’s writings. What is Paul doing in this section? Is he trying to refute error, or simply encourage his readers? Finally, the use of the Psalm in the New Testament passage is reviewed: “How has it contributed to Paul’s argument?”

#### **1.4. Paul’s Worldview**

A comprehensive study of Paul’s worldview would perforce include theology, anthropology, hamartiology, missiology, eschatology, as well as more explicitly “earthly” subjects such as ecology, sociology, politics, ethics and morality. Space does not permit such an exhaustive study.

Jesus Christ was central to Paul’s worldview. Chapter 3, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of the Psalms on Paul’s understanding of three fundamental questions arising: Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

Moyise writes: “if David is an inspired prophet, Paul is an inspired listener, who discerns the ‘prayers of the Messiah’ *among* the words of David”.<sup>17</sup> To what extent did Paul use the Psalms to understand Christ as the promised Messiah, and as the Son of God?

Paul described the gospel as “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom.1:16), and wrote that “in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed” (Rom.1:17). How is the power, the salvation and the righteousness of God, that is celebrated in the Psalms, related to the gospel?

Then there is the question of the community of the people of God. Who are they? What are their characteristics? What is their hope? What is the extent of continuity or discontinuity between the “people of God” in the Old and New Testaments?

To assess how Paul’s understanding of these three Christian doctrines was impacted by the Psalms, it is necessary to look at a broad range of Psalms. This is done in the light of the lessons learned regarding Paul’s hermeneutic, from the Psalms which are reviewed in Chapter 2.

## **1.5. An insight into Paul’s worldview based on his use of the Psalms**

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<sup>17</sup> Steve Moyise, *Paul and Scripture*, 100.



Paul, himself, directs the reader's attention to what was paramount, when he wrote to the Philippians: "For to me, to live is Christ".<sup>18</sup> Many factors could have influenced Paul to live this way, not least his Damascus Road experience. He could have buttressed this by using the Scriptures atomistically, or using eisegesis to read "into" them what he wanted to find. Before reviewing the wider range of Psalms that Paul refers to, it is essential, therefore, to examine Paul's use of the Psalms, and the depth of meaning behind his quotations. This is the task of Chapter 2.

## **2. Paul's and the Psalms: His Hermeneutic Approach**

This chapter begins the study into the impact of the Psalms on Paul's understanding of the Psalms. As will become apparent, there is a view that the Psalmist's voice is over-ridden by Paul. If this were the case, then the argument would be: to what extent does Paul impose his worldview on the Psalms, rather than: to what extent do the Psalms influence Paul? The three case-studies below, however, confirm that Paul did, indeed, listen to the Psalmist's voice, and he thought through their implications in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ.

### **2.1. Psalm 32 in Romans 4**

#### **2.1.1. Psalm 32 – in its Old Testament context**

##### ***a) Introduction to Psalm 32***

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<sup>18</sup> Phil.1:21

Psalms 32 is one of the best loved Psalms, with exultant and infectious joy fervently expressed in the opening verses. Craigie recounts that it was Augustine's favourite psalm,<sup>19</sup> and that before he died he had its words inscribed on the wall by his sickbed.

It is, however, more than a shout of joy. It contains profound soteriological truths, and is used by the Apostle Paul at a key point in his letter to the Romans to establish the truth of his gospel.

The structure suggested by Van Gemeren is as follows:<sup>20</sup>

A Blessing of forgiveness (vv.1-2)

B Lesson from experience (vv.3-5)

C God's protection (vv.6-7)

D Promise of wisdom (v.8)

B<sup>1</sup> Lesson from experience (v.9)

C<sup>1</sup> God's protection (v.10)

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<sup>19</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 19: Psalms 1-50*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 68.

<sup>20</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition, Volume 5: Psalms*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 311.

A<sup>1</sup> Rejoicing in forgiveness (v.11)

**b)     *The genre of Psalm 32***

Psalm 32 is traditionally known as one of the seven “penitential psalms”. This classification has a long history in the Christian Church. Nasuti traces it back to Cassiodorus in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but Cassiodorus, in turn, refers to it in the context of reminding his audience of an established tradition. Nasuti concludes from circumstantial evidence that the tradition may go back to Augustine.<sup>21</sup> The penitential Psalms are traditionally identified as 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143, but there are problems with this grouping into a distinctive genre. Whilst Psalms 51, 38 and 130 are clearly characterized by penitence, Psalm 102 is an individual lament. Other Psalms not included in this grouping also contain confession of sin.<sup>22</sup> Three of the seven “penitential Psalms” contain references to the wrath of God,<sup>23</sup> a topic which features significantly in the early chapters of Romans.<sup>24</sup> The other four are also all

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<sup>21</sup> Harry P. Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs – Genre, Tradition and the Post-Critical Interpretation of the Psalms*, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 33-34.

<sup>22</sup> Examples of confession of sin: Psalm 25:11: pardon my guilt, for it is great., Psalm 31:10: my strength fails because of my iniquity, Psalm 40:12: my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head;, Psalm 41:4: As for me, I said, “O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!”

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 6:1, 38:1-3, 102:10.

<sup>24</sup> Rom.1:18, 2:5, 2:8, 3:5.

referenced in the early chapters of Romans.<sup>25</sup> There is no suggestion that these seven Psalms were linked together in a special category, either by Second Temple Judaism or by Paul. Could it be that the seven Psalms were chosen to be recognised as the “Penitential Psalms”, because of the references to them in early chapters of Romans?

Closer reading of Psalm 32 indicates that the term ‘penitential’ may be inappropriate. The Psalmist has been restored to a state of true blessedness, as a forgiven sinner. He looks back to the time before he confessed his sin to God. He kept silent, and his bones wasted away, but now it is different. God is his hiding-place and is preserving him from trouble. The Psalmist in turn provides wisdom and instruction to others. Mays describes this psalm as “not itself a penitential prayer in which confession of sin is made ... instead, a psalm in which the practice of penitence is taught as a lesson”.<sup>26</sup>

Brueggemann includes the penitential psalms in his category of ‘Psalms of Disorientation’. Perhaps Psalm 32 would fit better into his category of ‘Psalms of New Orientation’.<sup>27</sup> From the start, Psalm 32 describes one who is “surprised by

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<sup>25</sup> Psalm 32:1-2 in Rom.4:7-8, Psalm 51:4 in Rom.3:4, Psalm 130:7 is echoed in Rom.3:24, and Psalm 143:2 is alluded to in Rom.3:20.

<sup>26</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 145.

<sup>27</sup> Keesmaat consider Psalm 32 to be a Psalm of reorientation – Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, (ed. Steve Moyise & Maarten J. J. Menken; London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 148.

grace”, in whom there “emerges in present life, a new possibility that is inexplicable, neither derived nor extrapolated, but wrought by the inscrutable power and goodness of God”.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the ‘blessed man’ of Psalm 1 is righteous in thought, deed and association, rather than a forgiven man whose sin is covered.

Craigie points out that although Psalm 32 is frequently classified as an *individual psalm of thanksgiving*, this “classification of the psalm is not entirely satisfactory”,<sup>29</sup> and considers the psalm to be “a literary composition, in which a basic thanksgiving psalm has been given literary adaptation according to the wisdom tradition”. Verse 11, where the addressee changes from singular to plural, may “either be original to the literary composition, or may reflect a development in the psalm’s history, when it moved from the sphere of literary creation to that of cultic usage”.<sup>30</sup>

Kraus also sees Psalm 32 as “moulded by prudential wisdom ... as a *todah*<sup>31</sup> in intention, and with a formal point is strongly permeated with the wisdom

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<sup>28</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms – A Theological Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 124.

<sup>29</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 19: Psalms 1-50*, 265

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, 265.

<sup>31</sup> *Todah* is a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

characteristics of didactic poetry ... In no case, will we be able to think of the prayer song as a penitential psalm”.<sup>32</sup>

Scott, whose views are discussed in detail below, states:

(The psalm) consists in one genre framed by a second. The open and close of the psalm is cut from sapiential cloth, as though this were a psalm of instruction, while the mid-section (vv.3-7) weaves a conventional narrative of deliverance suited to a psalm of thanksgiving, whose theme is the experience of forgiveness consequent on repentance ... The Psalmist adopts the subjectivity of prayer as the divine addressee assumes second person (vv.3-7). This subject's gaze upon the world is not propositional but narrative, not given to instruction but confession ... Granting that Psalm 31<sup>33</sup> is quilted from disparate generic cloth, we may look with particular interest at the seams.<sup>34</sup>

Scott produces strong arguments to back up his conclusion. However, his approach over-emphasises the significance of the switch of genre within the psalm. Verse 3 opens with *šrṭi* ( *שְׂרַטִּי* ) which indicates his prayer in verses 3 to 7 is an example of the wisdom demonstrated in verses 1 and 2, and the Psalmist is now looking back on this

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<sup>32</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Continental Commentary*, (trans. Hilton C. Oswald from the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *Psalmen 1-59* published by Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978 in *Biblicher Kommentar Series*: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 368.

<sup>33</sup> Scott normally uses LXX numbering.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul*, 43.

experience and this confession. This is significant when Paul uses Psalm 32 in Romans 4.

It would be more accurate, therefore, to focus on the sapiential nature of the psalm in the context of a song of praise or prayer of thanksgiving than as a penitential psalm.<sup>35</sup>

### **c)     *The date and author of Psalm 32***

In common with 37 of the 41 psalms of Book 1, this psalm is attributed to David (דָּוִד). Whether this necessitates that it was composed ‘by’ David, or ‘for’ David, or ‘dedicated to’ David is discussed in the opening section of most commentaries on the Psalms.

Mays considers that the Psalm “belongs to the late phase of psalmody, when the pedagogical role of worship became more significant”, and “supports the pre-eminence of penitential prayer in the post-exilic period (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9; Daniel 9)”. He also considers that the person “whose experience is cited as the basis of instruction is far more than a single private individual; the Psalmist is a paradigmatic figure whose example incorporates and expresses Israel’s experience of God’s way

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<sup>35</sup> The heading for the Psalm says it is a maskil (מִשְׁכִּיל). The significance of this is debated, but one of the most likely meanings it is related to the root *skl*, (“be wise” or “instruct”) suggesting that it was seen from early times as rooted in the wisdom tradition. See Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 66; Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*, 264.

through judgment to restoration”.<sup>36</sup> Taking each point in turn, the fact that a parallel can be drawn with post-exilic penitential prayers proves the relevance of the psalm for these times, but it does not follow that it was composed then. The Biblical narratives recount repeated falling away and restoration, exile and return.<sup>37</sup> That the Psalmist’s experience became paradigmatic for Israel corporately is also true,<sup>38</sup> but in the first instance the Psalmist was speaking of personal affliction: “My bones wasted away”. The confessions in Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel are for national sins; Psalms 51 and 32 relate to personal sins.

The Psalmist is patently a great poet, with spiritual sensitivity, one who can instruct others, and in verse 11 has the authority to call on corporate Israel to worship, but he had also committed a terrible sin. He sees no need to elaborate on what the sin was. Was it already public knowledge? There is much therefore, that points to David as

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<sup>36</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation*, 145-146.

<sup>37</sup> Examples of exile and return are seen in expulsion from the Garden with its rivers and from the tree of life in Genesis 3 with the climax of Scripture seen in Revelation 22 with the trees on either side of the river including the tree of life; also seen in the fall in Adam but restoration in Christ. Other macro examples are the journey to Egypt then the Exodus and occupation of the Promised Land in the Pentateuch and Joshua; the exile to Babylon and return under Ezra and Nehemiah. “Micro” examples are seen in the life of Jacob, fleeing from Esau (Gen.27:42-25), returning to his father (Gen.35:27), and in the Book of Ruth, the family leaving Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1), Naomi and Ruth coming to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19).

<sup>38</sup> If this was doubted, the call to the whole community in verse 11 would be conclusive.



the author of this psalm (as the heading states) and nothing to negate it. If we view Psalm 51 as also a Davidic composition written closer to the time of his adultery with Bathsheba, when he made the promise, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways”, Psalm 32 could well be the fulfilling of that promise. Paul considered Psalm 32 to have come from David and for many this would be conclusive, even if we allow Craigie’s suggestion<sup>39</sup> that verse 11 may have been a later addition.

Taking the heading to indicate Davidic authorship, as Paul does when he uses this Psalm in Romans 4, demonstrates three fundamental lessons; first, David the man after God’s own heart needed salvation; second, David the great sinner was able to obtain salvation; third, David the forgiven sinner was able to teach others.

**d)     *The significance of Psalm 32 towards the close of Book 1***

Towards the close of Book 1, the threat of sin destroying the Psalmist’s relationship to God is a recurring theme. In Psalm 30, the Psalmist had known God’s anger. However, it lasted for a moment and his favour would last a lifetime. In Psalm 31, the Psalmist laments that his strength fails because of his iniquity (verse 10), and he is concerned lest he was cut off from God’s sight (verse 22). Psalm 32 brings these themes into sharper focus. Psalm 33 starts (“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous!”) as Psalm 32 finishes (“shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”), and along with Psalm 34 continues the theme of blessedness.<sup>40</sup> However, the theme of

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<sup>39</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*, 265.

<sup>40</sup> Psalm 32:1-2: Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,

sin returns to trouble the Psalmist – even the forgiven sinner still wrestles with sin.

Psalms 35-37 focus on the sins of others: Psalm 35 those who are his enemies without cause; Psalm 36 addresses the fate of these evildoers; Psalm 37 gives counsel not to fret. Psalms 38-41 focus on the Psalmist's own sin: Psalm 38 with David's sin and God's wrath; Psalm 39, about sinning with his tongue, and the distress that comes from keeping silent instead of confessing to God (v.2-3); in Psalm 40, David is overwhelmed with his iniquities: and in Psalm 41, he links his sickness with his sin.<sup>41</sup>

There is a contrast between the wicked who never confesses his sin to God, and those who have a tender conscience such as David, anticipating what Luther would say two and a half thousand years later: "Simul iustus et peccator" (at the same time, righteous and a sinner). Psalm 32 stands at the head of these psalms with the clear

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and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Psalm 33:12: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.

Psalm 34:8: Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

The exuberance and joy of Psalm 33 continues in Psalm 34:5: Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

<sup>41</sup> Psalm 38:1: LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath!

Psalm 39:1: I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue.

Psalm 40:12: my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see;

Psalm 41:4: "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!"

message of sin confessed, transgression forgiven and the sinner being counted righteous.

**e)     *The place of Psalm 32 in the Psalter***

Psalm 32 has a distinctive place among the beatitudes of the Psalms. Taking a representative sample of these, we find the two opening Psalms form an inclusio of beatitudes.<sup>42</sup> The trilogy of Psalms 32, 33, 34, all contain beatitudes. Most other references in the Psalms describe the blessed as one who is doing what is commendable.<sup>43</sup> Psalm 32 stands out as the one where blessedness has been forfeited, but restored. The theme of forgiveness is consistent with the remainder of

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<sup>42</sup> Psalm 1:1: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.

Psalm 2:12: Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

<sup>43</sup> Psalm 40:4: Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.

Psalm 41:1: Blessed is the one who considers the poor!

Psalm 65:4: Blessed is the one you choose and bring near.

Psalm 94:12: Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord.

Psalm 106:3: Blessed are they who observe justice.

Psalm 112:1: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord.

Psalm 119:1-2: Blessed are those, whose way is blameless ... Blessed are those who keep his testimonies.

Psalm 128:1: Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord.

the Psalter.<sup>44</sup> Forgiveness is a divine prerogative, but is not withheld from one who casts himself on the mercy of God.

**f) *Literary Characteristics of Psalm 32***

Psalm 32 is characterised by several doublets and triplets, as though to emphasise the intensity of the message.

First, there is the double beatitude: “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven”, and “Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity” (Psalm 32:1-2). Then there is a three-fold description of the blessing of forgiveness: “whose transgression is forgiven” (32:1a), “whose sin is covered” (32:1b) and “against whom the LORD counts no iniquity” (32:2a). The confession has a threefold description, “I acknowledged” (32:5a), “I did not cover” (32:5b), and “I said, I will confess” (32:5c). There are three words used for sin: sin (חַטָּאת- offense, sin – 32:5a), iniquity (רָעָה – activity that is crooked or wrong – 32:5b), transgressions (עֲוֹנוֹת – rebellion or revolt - 32:5c). God’s protection has a three-fold description: “You are a hiding place for me” (32:7a), “you preserve me” (32:7b), and “you surround me” (32:7c). Three words are then used for divine guidance: “I will instruct you” (32:8a), “teach you” (32:8b) and “I will counsel you with my eye upon you” (32:8c). Finally,

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<sup>44</sup> Examples of forgiveness in the Psalter: Psalm 25:18: “Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins”.

Psalm 51:9: “Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities”.

Psalm 103:3: “Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases”.

Psalm 130:4: “But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared”.

in the summons to praise the Lord in verse 11, three words are again used, “Be glad in the LORD” (32:11a), “rejoice” (32:11b), and “shout for joy” (32:11c).

Whilst this may be a literary device on the part of the Psalmist, the richness of the vocabulary conveys that he has thought seriously about sin, about forgiveness, and about the implications for the forgiven sinner.

#### **g)     *The main themes of Psalm 32***

##### **The blessedness of the forgiven sinner**

This underpins all other blessings. The Psalms leave the reader in no doubt that no one is righteous,<sup>45</sup> but the one who is blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is a forgiven sinner. Forgiveness is known when God no longer imputes or reckons (חָשַׁב) the sin as chargeable to the sinner. The LXX translates this into λογίζομαι (Psalm 32:2a) – a key term in Romans.<sup>46</sup> The Psalmist had the assurance of forgiveness even although he could not know the basis on which it would be based.

##### **The need for integrity and for confession**

The proof of forgiveness is evident in the forgiven sinner’s life. Paul will argue, when he writes Romans, that the forgiven sinner cannot continue in sin and claim that

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<sup>45</sup> Psalm 14:1: “there is none who does good”, Psalm 143:2: “for no one living is righteous before you”.

<sup>46</sup> λογίζομαι occurs 40 times in the New Testament – of which 34 are by Paul, 19 in Romans – and 11 in Romans 4; e.g. Rom.4:3: “It was counted (ἐλογίσθη) to him as righteousness”.

the Lord is not reckoning sin against him.<sup>47</sup> Divine forgiveness and ‘no deceit’ belong together.

### **Full confession, full forgiveness, full protection**

The Psalmist could have argued that the Lord knows everything already, so why confess to God? Confession is not to tell God what he already knows, but to face up to reality with God. The Psalmist introduces a note of urgency, not because of the limitations of God’s mercy but because of the limitations of time: “let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found”.<sup>48</sup>

### **Wisdom and instruction**

In verse 8, the phrase introduced with the personal pronoun “I” is almost certainly a word from God - reassurance that God’s forgiveness and salvation was not merely a transaction, but the beginning of a new relationship – a promise from God to counsel, guide, and watch over. Verse 9 expands on that – God has no desire to curb his saints with bit and bridle, but to give “godly freedom”<sup>49</sup> on the highway. Verse 10 may have been a piece of conventional wisdom at the time, but the effect is to contrast the blessedness of the confessing sinner, with the misery of the wicked.

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<sup>47</sup> Rom.6:1: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!

<sup>48</sup> cf. Is. 55:6: “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near”.

<sup>49</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 315.

Another evidence of forgiveness is the desire to teach others, and to testify of God's goodness.

### **2.1.2. Romans 4:7-8**

#### **a) *Romans 4:1-8 in the context of the Epistle to the Romans***

After his initial greeting at the beginning of his letter to the Romans, Paul announces that he is "not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom.1:16). From then on, in Romans 1:18 through to Romans 3:20, Paul substantiates that everyone needed the gospel, both Jews and Gentiles, concluding that section of his letter with a devastating critique of human sinfulness through a concatenation of quotations, mostly from the Psalms, in Romans 3:10-18.

Paul turns his attention, in Romans 3:21 - 4:25, to how God can forgive and still be righteous. Paul establishes that the righteousness of God is for all who believe, a gift from God made possible because God is propitiated, and God is just in justifying those who have faith in Jesus. He covers this ground in the tightly-packed argument from Romans 3:21-26.

In chapter 4, Paul demonstrates that what he is saying is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. He does this primarily through Abraham in 4:1-8 contrasting faith and works, in 4:9-12 contrasting faith and circumcision, in 4:13-16 contrasting faith and law, and then in 4:17-22 affirming that Abraham believed the promise, and this faith was counted to him as righteousness. What was said about Abraham applies to all who believe (4:23-25). However, within this exposition of his thought, Paul introduces a second example, David, by quoting from Psalm 32. This raises the question of a believer who has sinned grievously. Do their sins not still count against

them? Paul affirms that sins forgiven are no longer counted by God against the sinner.

**b)     *Introduction to Romans 4:1-8***

Paul's quotation from Psalm 32 must be seen in the context of his argument about faith and works in the whole paragraph. Paul had affirmed at the close of chapter 3 that righteousness is by faith, and that this applies to all people. He negates all attempts to achieve righteousness by keeping "law". The Jewish "boundary markers" is part of that, but it is not the whole story – the Jew could not plead his advantage, the Gentile could not plead his ignorance.

Schreiner develops this argument by demonstrating the difference between Paul's approach to Abraham's righteousness by faith, and Jewish literature emphasising the works' element. Schreiner concludes: "To brand the emphasis on the works of Abraham in Jewish literature as legalistic would be misleading ... Nonetheless, the emphasis on the works of Abraham in Jewish literature could easily lead to a synergism that is lacking in Pauline theology".<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 1998), 215-216. Examples are 1 Maccabees 2:52: "Was not Abraham found faithful in testing, and it was counted to him as righteousness?" Sirach: 44:20: "When he was tested he was found faithful. Therefore, the Lord assured him by an oath".



When Paul uses David as his second illustration, works righteousness becomes even more untenable. Whether the allusion in Psalm 32 is to David's adultery with Bathsheba, or to another sin, he approaches Psalm 32 as a forgiven sinner, and it is because God is "merciful and gracious" (Ex.34:6) that his sin has been forgiven.

**c) The quotation from Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:7-8**

The full wording of Romans 4:7-8 with a verbatim translation:

μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι

Blessed of whom (plural) were forgiven the lawlessnesses, and of whom (plural) were covered the sins;

μακάριος ἀνὴρ οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσσεται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν

Blessed a man (singular) of whom not not (not ever) would reckon Lord sin.

Paul's quotation is identical to the LXX, but differs from the MT.

The full wording of Psalm 32:1-2 in the MT:

לְאִשְׁרֵי גְשׁוּי־פֶשַׁע כְּסוּי חַטָּא

Blessed / one being forgiven / transgression / one being covered of / sin

אִשְׁרֵי אָדָם לֹא יִחְשַׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֲוֹן וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רָמְיָהּ:

Blessed / man / not / he reckons / Yahweh / towards him / Iniquity /

The Hebrew singular has been changed to the plural in both the LXX and Paul. This would point to the man in Psalm 32 being taken as a paradigm for later application, even although in the first instance it was a reference by the Psalmist to an individual. Paul's change from singular to plural made no difference to the underlying meaning.

### **2.1.3. The use of Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:7-8**

#### **a) *Why does Paul use this psalm in this particular context?***

Paul has demonstrated the universality and the sinfulness of sin. Anselm is quoted as saying: "you have not yet considered how heavy the weight of sin is"<sup>51</sup> and Romans 1:18-3:20 answers that fully. Paul does not do so here by referring to himself as the "chief of sinners".<sup>52</sup> Instead, he delineates the guilt of those who denied God's eternal power and divine nature, while giving vent to dishonourable passions (Rom.1:18-30). Then he addresses the moralisers who had the law, but still broke its commands (Rom.2:12-29).

In Romans 3:21, in one of the most significant 'buts' of Scripture, he says that the righteousness of God had been manifested apart from the law. This is not just an abstract doctrine. Paul required concrete examples.

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<sup>51</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, "Why God became Man" *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 305. This is also known as *Cur Deus Homo*, Book I Ch. XXI.

<sup>52</sup> *cf.* 1 Tim.1:15 - on the assumption that Paul is the author of the Pastorals.

First, Paul invoked Abraham as an example of one who was justified by faith. The Jews believed that Abraham and others were justified but Jewish literature emphasised it was based on faithfulness.<sup>53</sup> Even within the Christian church, James establishes his argument by referring to Abraham's works (James 2:21-24), although he is careful to stipulate that it was because "Abraham believed God" that "it was counted to him as righteousness". Paul could have drawn attention to Abraham's shortcomings,<sup>54</sup> but Abraham was validly seen by the Jews as faithful and he does not challenge this. To establish conclusively that righteousness is a gift from God rather than the result of human effort, it was essential to bring in another example. Paul uses David – a man "after his (God's) own heart" (1 Sam.13:14), but who had fallen prey to the intoxication of power as well as of lust. David's sin shared many of the characteristics of the sin described in Romans 1:18-30: a dishonourable passion, which gave way to "envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness". When Nathan rebuked him, rather than quoting law, he used a parable that demonstrated natural

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<sup>53</sup> For example, 1 Maccabees 2:51-60 lists Abraham, Joseph, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Daniel and his three friends. Sirach 44:19 says no one has been found like Abraham in glory: "he kept the law of the Most High".

<sup>54</sup> Shortcomings on Abraham's part are often quoted as (1) a delay in obeying God's command to get out of Ur of the Chaldeans (although this depends on a particular reading of the verb 'had said' in Gen.12:1); (2) less controversially, in his descent to Egypt and denying that Sarai was his wife (Gen.12:10-20); (3) trying to pre-empt God in having a son through Hagar (Gen.16).

justice, which every responsible person should recognise. David knew it was wrong, as did those who knew the law, as per Romans 2, and still broke it.

Secondly, Paul had opened his letter describing Jesus as God's Son as "descended from David according to the flesh". This privilege was not enough to save David – he had to get right with God.

Thirdly, for any Jewish members of the Roman congregation who may still have thought there was safety in belonging to the people of Israel, Paul made it clear that David had to confess his sin. Every person stands before God accountable for their own deeds.

David, therefore, stands condemned from every angle. When Paul then says, "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law" (Rom.3:21), David is an example of someone whose sin was inexcusable but who has found peace with God. By using the Psalm rather than the narrative, Paul has used the confessional material of the person who has been forgiven.

What Paul says, however, is liable to misinterpretation. He addresses this in Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" In his reference to Psalm 32, Paul has already answered this question. Psalm 32 avers that the sinner can arrive at the condition where God does not reckon his iniquity against him, but it also makes clear that it is necessary to confess sin, and to turn away from it without deceit. The rest of the psalm enlarges on the evidence of forgiveness: the need for confession (verse 5), the dependence on God in the face of forces beyond his control (verses 6-7), and the need for instruction (verse 8).

**b) How has Paul adapted the citation for the point he is making?**

The essential difference between Psalm 32 and Romans 4 is that Paul articulates the basis on which the confessing sinner can be forgiven. According to Romans 3:24-25 those who have sinned and fallen short “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith”.

It may be argued that Paul has quoted Psalm 32 because of the commonality of the words used in relation to Abraham in Genesis 15:6: “וַיִּחְשַׁבֶּהָ לְוָ צַדִּיקָהּ:”, the key verb being “חָשַׁב” – “reckoned” and in the LXX, “ἐλογίσθη” from “λογίζομαι”, meaning “it was reckoned”. In Psalm 32:2 we have the same verb “חָשַׁב” in “אֲשֶׁר־אָזַם לֹא יִחְשַׁב”, “λογίσται” from “λογίζομαι” in the LXX, meaning “iniquity was not reckoned”. Cranfield states: “That we have here a conscious application of the Rabbinic exegetical principle of *g<sup>e</sup>zerah shawah* is very probable”.<sup>55</sup> Likewise Dunn states: “Paul clearly regards all these phrases as synonyms: reckon righteous = forgive acts of lawlessness = cover sins = not reckon sins. In what was a very proper

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<sup>55</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8: International Critical Commentary*, (London: T & T Clark Publishing, 1975), 232-233.

Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Anchor Yale Bible: Romans*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 376

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 55: It has long been recognized that this is a very rabbinic-sounding piece of exegesis, employing the device *g<sup>e</sup>zerah shawah* (catchword linkage).

hermeneutical method Paul has cited Psalm 32:1-2 because it used the same key word (λογίσηται) in a similar context (the so-called second rule of Hillel ... equal category)”.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, Paul has gone much further than simply bringing in another Scripture using the same word; he has developed his thesis by explicitly using another example which complements the example of Abraham. It was impossible to argue that David was righteous because of his works.

Paul is careful in his quotation, as was David in his Psalm. Had he become inherently righteous because God did not count his sin against him? Did his confession itself constitute a ‘work’ which worked synergistically with what God had done?<sup>57</sup> Does God infuse righteousness into us, or does he impute it to us? Stott outlines the position:

The Reformers were surely right that when God justifies sinners he does not make them righteous (for that is the consequent process of sanctification), but he pronounces them righteous or imputes righteousness to them, reckoning them to be, and treating them as (legally) righteous. C. H. Hodge clarifies this for us. ‘To impute sin is to lay sin to the charge of anyone, and to treat him accordingly’. Similarly, ‘to impute righteousness is to set righteousness to one’s account and to treat him accordingly’ ... What Paul affirms is “that it

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<sup>56</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 38: Rom.1-8*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1988), 207.

<sup>57</sup> Confession itself would be a sin if it was accompanied by deceit.

was by means of faith that Abraham came to be treated as righteous, and not that faith was taken in lieu of perfect obedience”.<sup>58</sup>

Paul develops the theme of Christ as our righteousness. Stott highlights three quotations.<sup>59</sup> First, when Christ was made sin for us, “in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor.5:21), second, “who became to us ... righteousness” (1 Cor.1:30) and third, we have “in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Phil.3:9). The basis for this is laid out in Romans 4.

**c)     *How does the citation develop his argument?***

By quoting Psalm 32, Paul has put his finger on the key question for the believer: what is my standing before God? It is not: what defence can someone muster on my behalf? Psalm 32 is a prime example of what Paul describes in Romans 3:25: “in his divine forbearance he (God) had passed over former sins”. Hospers addresses the question: does passing over of former sins in the forbearance of God mean that sins in the Old Testament were only forgiven retroactively?

To Him the Lamb is the slain one from the foundation of the world. What He then does to every believer, to the Old Testament saints as well as to the New, is to impute that righteousness of His Son as eternal fact.

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<sup>58</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: Good News for the World*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 127.

<sup>59</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: Good News for the World*, 128.

Now this text also says something valuable on the chronological side of the matter. It refers to the time when the historical deed of redemption was “manifested” to the world; when God “set him forth” a propitiation. He was in the divine regard a propitiation from the beginning of the world; but he was “manifested” as such on Calvary to human observation. God, then, did not justify retroactively.<sup>60</sup>

David, by faith, has the assurance that his sin is not counted against him, even if he could not have explained the basis of his forgiveness. God was just in passing over former sins, because he anticipated the cross, and Jesus Christ becoming propitiation. Between Psalm 32 and Romans 4, God had not changed, nor had the basis of forgiveness changed, but what David grasped at, tentatively, is now boldly proclaimed: God can and will declare that he is not counting sins against anyone who has accepted the gift of redemption that is in Christ Jesus. David’s response to Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:13 applies: “I have sinned against the Lord”, and Nathan’s reply: “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die”. There remained certain consequences for David – the child died, but God had put away his sin. After the child died, David went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. Later another child was born whom David named “Jedidiah”, meaning “beloved of the Lord”.

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<sup>60</sup> Hospers, Gerrit H “The Doctrine of Justification by Faith and the Old Testament”,

*Bibliotheca Sacra* 085:340 (1928): 443-4



Psalm 32 follows the same sequence. David is clear about the enormity of his sin, but he accepts that he has been forgiven, and goes on and calls on others to worship the Lord. Similarly, in Romans 4, Paul anticipates that those who have been with him through Romans 1:18 - 3:20 acknowledge their guilt, accept the righteousness that is available through Jesus Christ, and will go on to “walk in newness of life” (Rom.6:4).

**d)     *An alternative view considered – Scott, Stanley***

In *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Hays argues that Paul makes use of the trope *metalepsis*:

When a literary echo links the text in which it occurs to an earlier text, the figurative effect of the echo can lie in the unstated or suppressed (transumed) points of resonance between the two texts ... This sort of metaleptic configuration is the antitheses of the metaphysical conceit, in which the poet’s imagination seizes a metaphor and explicitly wrings out of it all manner of unforeseeable significations. Metalepsis by contrast places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated consequences.<sup>61</sup>

In Romans 4:6, Paul explicitly refers to David, so it may be argued that this is not in the realm of whispered or unstated consequences. However, if the argument developed above is correct, the whole experience of David in Psalm 32 is invoked by a metaleptic echo of the remainder of the Psalm. In contrast, Scott considers that Paul has deliberately only quoted Psalm 32 vv.1-2a and consciously excluded 2b:

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<sup>61</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 1989, 20.

It is this clause<sup>62</sup> which forges a link for the reader between the gnomic statements of blessing of vv.1-2 and the narrative of forgiveness of vv.3-7 ... By omitting the final clause in quotation, Paul has severed the strongest link between David's sapiential pronouncements and the Davidic penitent.<sup>63</sup>

Scott asks "Why is David circumscribed? The penitent denied" and states:

The makarisms that precede construct a subject of benefaction, the possessor only of ἀνομίαι and ἁμαρτίαι, apparently without agency. But to be identified in terms of δόλος in one's mouth, as in v.2b, is to be constructed as a moral agent characterised by effective speech, false or true ... This Davidic trajectory is out of sympathy with Paul's own. As he will shortly assert (5:6), it is for the ungodly (ὕπὲρ ἁσεβῶν) that Christ died, and that at the right time (κατὰ καιρὸν) of God's choosing, not consequent on the confession of a knowing subject.<sup>64</sup>

David's witness in: Rom.4:6-8 plays a significant role in debates over Paul's investment in forgiveness, and in the machinery of forgiveness – repentance, confession – as constituent within an account of justification. The matter cannot be decided with recourse only to the quoted words: for while Psalm 31:1 speaks twice in terms that suggest forgiveness and evoke the possibility

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<sup>62</sup> i.e. Psalm 32:2b.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul*, 44.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*, 45-46.

of due process, v.2a turns on the “hook-word” λογίζομαι – thereby asserting its importance in Paul’s midrashic argument; and the sense of μὴ λογίσῃται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν can be argued to bypass most of what signifies in talk of forgiveness.<sup>65</sup>

In sum, it appears that Paul intends not only to distance his programme from that of the Psalmist, but subtly to exclude the instrumentality of penitence – and of its speech acts – as the mode of a salvation which comes Τῷ ... μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ: Abraham’s righteousness is of another kind, and David is forced to agree.<sup>66</sup>

The first question arising is: does David really consider the reckoning of no iniquity in v.2a divorced from moral agency? There has been a moral process of repentance and confession preceding this psalm. The two psalms appear to be linked in Paul’s mind in that he quoted Psalm 51:4 in Romans 3, before quoting Psalm 32 in Romans 4. The initiative to send Nathan to David was God’s. David had no part in that, but when Nathan rebuked David there was a moral response in David. Until there had been a moral response and repentance in David, it cannot be said that God imputed no guilt to David.

Secondly, is David making a conscious change from the expression “blessed” apparently without agency in verses 1 and 2a to moral agency in v.2b? Such a

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*, 47.

change of approach mid-distich is not impossible, but would be unusual. It is better to see v.2b as the evidence of v.2a – the Lord reckons no iniquity because the sinner is penitent and has responded to divine forgiveness.

Third, Scott asks a valid question: why does Paul terminate the quotation mid-verse? As far as it is possible to read Paul's mind, it may simply be because he has used the key word λογίζομαι which links the account of Abraham with the account of David, and he has made his point. In verse 6, Paul opens with καθάπερ (in the same way) – a deliberate parallel between the experience of Abraham and that of David. When Abraham was counted righteous, there was no record of outstanding sin, although he had not yet carried out the command of circumcision. When David was counted righteous, the undeserving sinner had been rebuked and repented.

The word λογίζομαι may well have been instrumental in Paul choosing to use Psalm 32, but that does not mean it was apart from David becoming a penitent, and confessing his sin. It is not possible, therefore, to concur with Scott: “the author takes out rhetorical insurance against the possibility of metalepsis”.<sup>67</sup> The whole structure of Romans 1-8 runs sympathetically with Psalm 32 – the sinner gets right with God, is considered righteous, and goes on to demonstrate the change effected in him: “We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Rom.6:1).

Christopher Stanley also concludes that Paul has made a “limited selection”, that the “first three lines of the Psalm fit well with Paul's stress in Rom.4 on the mercy of

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, 48.

Yahweh in forgiving human sin, but with the fourth line, the usefulness of the passage ends”.<sup>68</sup> This view, however, eliminates all the blessings of forgiveness, which the Psalmist speaks of in Psalm 32. “It is the forgiveness of sins, which effects all the benefits that Ps.32 describes”.<sup>69</sup> Paul had pointed to the Psalm, not just the corresponding narrative. He may not have expected every newly converted Gentile in the church at Rome to be fully conversant with the full Psalm. However, he would have expected those who had the gift of teaching (Rom.12:7) to explain its significance, and having turned to Psalm 32, their interest in the whole Psalm would have been aroused. As Dodd says, “particular verses or sentences were quoted from them as pointers to the whole context than as constituting testimonies in and for themselves”.<sup>70</sup>

#### **2.1.4. How has Psalm 32 shaped Paul’s thinking?**

Paul remained conscious that he had been the “foremost of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). On the one hand, there are people whose past continues to haunt them, never shaking off the feeling of guilt, while there are those who have forgotten they were cleansed from their former sins (2 Pet. 1:9). Psalm 32 would be an example to Paul after his

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<sup>68</sup> Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the language of scripture: Citation technique in the Pauline Epistles and contemporary literature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 101.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Seifrid in “Romans” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 624.

<sup>70</sup> Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 126

Damascus Road experience where he turned to Christ and learned the blessedness of sins forgiven.<sup>71</sup> Every step recounted in Psalm 32 would have been shared by Paul in conscious experience..

Paul goes on to outline the blessings that follow on from forgiveness of sins, through to glorification.<sup>72</sup> The foundation for this must be well-established, and in setting out to define what he means by the gospel as the power of God for salvation, Psalm 32 provides a comprehensive description of forgiveness. First, sin is forgiven (ἀφίημι – meaning “let go”). Secondly, it is covered (ἐπικαλύπτω), bringing home to Paul, perhaps, the significance of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34). Third, it was not reckoned (οὐ μὴ λογίσσεται), suggesting to Paul the debt had been cleared. Paul saw that fulfilled in Christ. Pagan religion and Jewish religion were void.

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<sup>71</sup> Paul’s testimony of the words of Ananias in Acts 22:12-16 repeats many themes of Psalm 32. Both were physically afflicted, Paul with blindness, Psalmist with his bones wasting away. Both knew physical healing as well as spiritual. Both impetuous men received a message from God and instruction sent through an emissary – Paul from Ananias, and David from Nathan. Both were conscious of complete cleansing from sin: Paul had his sins washed away, David knew he was forgiven. Both called on the name of the Lord. Both were completely broken when the extent of their sin was exposed. Both went on to witness for God – Paul as instructed by Ananias and David praying “at a time” when God may be found.

<sup>72</sup> In Rom.5-8, Paul describes new life in Christ – peace with God, dead to sin but alive in Christ, freedom from the law, life in the Spirit, culminating in the great sequence in Rom.8:29:30: foreknown, conformed ... predestined, called, justified, glorified.

## **2.2. Psalm 44 in Romans 8**

### **2.2.1. Psalm 44 – in its Old Testament context**

#### **a) *Introduction to Psalm 44***

Psalm 44 stands almost at the head of the collection of psalms known as Book 2 of the canonical Psalter. It has a very clear structure, described by Van Gemeren as:

A: God's Past Acts of Deliverance (vv.1-3)

B: Confidence in God (vv.4-8)

C: Suffering and disgrace (vv.9-16)

D: Claim of Innocence (vv.17-22)

E: Prayer for Deliverance (vv.23-26)<sup>73</sup>

The psalm raises questions about the suffering of God's people. It also conveys a timeless message about the sovereignty of God. God is not obliged to explain "Why". However, his people can, and must, trust him.

#### **b) *The genre of Psalm 44***

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<sup>73</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 389.

Psalm 44 is a Community Lament.<sup>74</sup> It begins by celebrating God's goodness, but breaks into lament after a break (𐤅𐤋) in verse 9. The constituent parts of this lament begin, therefore, with a statement of trust in God. Verses 1-3 appeal to God's mighty acts in history, to what the Psalmist had heard from previous generations that God had done. Verses 4-8 allude to current experience of the people, when God had saved them from their foes. Verse 8 vows to give thanks to God's name for ever and ever. Then there is a sudden change of tone in verse 9: "But you have rejected us". The leader of the community, possibly the King,<sup>75</sup> takes the shame personally in

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<sup>74</sup> Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, (trans. by Ralph D. Gehrke from *Der Psalter*, 1967; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 29 points out that there are not many Community Psalms of Lament, listing only 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, while others contain "motifs or reminiscences of the CL Psalm", and in page 35 gives the essential elements of the structure of the Community Lament but adds "each individual Psalm is an entirely unique, unrepeatable composition".

C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 146, adds to Westermann's list of Community Psalms of Lament: 77, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 137.

<sup>75</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*, 331-332. However, Geoffrey W. Grogan, *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary: Psalms*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 97-98, thinks the 'I' speaker is a Levitical Worship leader, and Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 389, considers the interchange of singular and plural as a literary convention rather a liturgical altercation between people and king.



verses 15-16: “All day long my disgrace is before me”. Verses 17-22 contain a strongly worded defence of the people: “All this has come upon us though we have not forgotten you”, and conclude with a strongly worded petition “Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered”. This may have sounded like a petulant complaint, but it is the turning point: ready to be regarded as sheep to be slaughtered, if that is God’s will.

The Psalmist knew that it was not his own strength that had helped him: “for not in my bow do I trust” (v.6). At the end of the psalm, he does not merely affirm his belief and trust in God; he makes an impassioned plea “Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?” (v.23). In the last four verses, there is a communal prayer of people who are in distress, but aware that the only solution is God’s covenant love (תְּפִלָּה).

### **c)     *The date and author of Psalm 44***

Psalm 44 belongs to a collection of eight Psalms (42 to 49) attributed to the “Sons of Korah”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> In addition, Psalms 84, 85, 87 and 88 are also attributed to the Sons of Korah. Psalm 43 is not specifically attributed, but is almost universally recognised as originally part of the same composition as Psalm 42.

There are several people named Korah in the Old Testament.<sup>77</sup> The ancestor of these Sons of Korah is the Korah who revolted against Moses (Num. 16:1-35). The wives and children of Korah's co-rebels were destroyed (Num. 16:27), but the descendants of Korah were spared. They formed a distinct clan and were put in charge of the service of song (1 Chron. 6:31-48), as gatekeepers by David (1 Chron. 26:19),<sup>78</sup> to form a choir in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:19), and still identified as gatekeepers after the exile (1 Chron. 9:19).

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<sup>77</sup> Esau had a son named Korah (Gen.36:5, 14, 16; 1 Chron. 1:35). A descendant of Judah through Tamar was called Korah (1 Chron. 2:43). There were Korahites named among David's mighty men (1 Chron. 12:6). The best known, Korah, however, is the rebel of Numbers 16. He was a descendant of Kohath, son of Levi (Numbers 16:1), and his descendants, some believe, are the authors of these Psalms. Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 395 relates the dramatic incident in Numbers 16, the Korahites listed as a major levitical family in Numbers 26:58, but as a sub-group of the Kohathites in 1 Chronicles 6:22, 31-37; 9:19. Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 63 states that the sons of Korah were descendants of Kohath. See also Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 1-72*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 35; Philip Eveson, *Psalms: from Suffering to Glory Volume 1: Psalms 1-72 The Servant King* (Darlington, Evangelical Press, 2014), 269; Allan Harman, *Psalms: A Mentor Commentary*, (Tain: Mentor, 2011), 349; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 438

<sup>78</sup> An occupation celebrated in one of the Psalms of the Sons of Korah (Psalm 84:10).

With this history, which spans several centuries, there is no external indication which generation, or generations, composed these psalms. Some of the Psalms focus triumphantly on Jerusalem,<sup>79</sup> in others the procession to the house of God was but a memory (Psalm 42:4). Possibly the psalms were composed at different times, and brought together, canonically, later. Although the Psalmist speaks of the people being scattered among the nations, the 'I' speaker in verses 4, 6, 15-16 appears to be the king. The psalm is most likely, therefore, to have been written during the monarchy, although no one has produced a convincing argument to link the Psalm to any specific king or battle.<sup>80</sup>

The king in Psalm 44 may, therefore, be fulfilling his obligation to provide leadership for the people, to accept that what has happened is God's will, and to reaffirm their trust in God. Granted that the Sons of Korah were never kings themselves, it could

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<sup>79</sup> Psalm 46:4-5: the city of God ... she shall not be moved, 48:2: the joy of all the earth.

Mount Zion ... the city of the great King, 87:3: glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God.

<sup>80</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*, 332 says: The recent attempt by Parker ... unconsciously demonstrates the impossibility of finding hard evidence to date the Psalm.

John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms: Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 37, suggests 2 Kings 15, 2 Kings 18 (Hezekiah), 1 Macc.1-9, Joel 1 illustrate the context in which it might be prayed.

be that the Sons of Korah provided the words for the king to express, when he was appealing to God on behalf of the people.

**d)     *The relationship between Psalm 44 and the collection of Sons of Korah psalms***

This collection of psalms begins with the individual lament of Psalms 42 and 43. Psalm 44, which has extensive literary links to Psalm 42-43,<sup>81</sup> takes up the lament theme, but makes it communal, (though in verses 4, 6, 15, 16 there is a first person singular speaker, who speaks on behalf of the people). Psalm 44 concludes with a passionate prayer to God, to come to the help of his people, and to redeem them for the sake of his covenant love (v.26). From that point forward, the psalms move forward with confidence. Psalms 45-48 “offer a response to these laments by providing perspectives on kingship – both human and divine”.<sup>82</sup> Psalm 45 is a wedding psalm, but the bridegroom king is a great warrior, and the closing verses of the psalm anticipate future generations. Psalms 46 and 48 are Zion psalms, with confidence that “God is in the midst of her”. Psalm 47 celebrates the universal kingship of God. Psalm 49 gives a glimpse of what is beyond death, as the Psalmist declares his confidence that God will ransom his soul from the power of Sheol. In

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<sup>81</sup> J. Clinton McCann Jr, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter” in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 101 – Table 3. McCann highlights 9 literary links between Psalms 42-43 and Psalm 44.

<sup>82</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 381.

this pilgrimage from despair, through to one of the clearest statements about “life after death” in the Old Testament, Psalm 44 is the fulcrum.

The lessons of Psalm 44 would be relevant for Israel at any time of defeat, whether during the monarchy or during the exile, but ultimately the lessons of trusting in God’s steadfast love remain the same.

### **e)     *The place of Psalm 44 in the Psalter***

McCann argues that this collection of psalms must be seen in the light of exile and dispersion.<sup>83</sup> No doubt these psalms would have been a great strength to the exiles. Nevertheless, after the laments of Psalms 42-44, they evoke a strong sense of confidence in God, in the king and in his sons (Psalm 45:16), in Zion and God’s defence of her (Psalm 46:5): language which would have seemed out of place in an exilic composition. Although Psalm 44:11 describes the people “scattered among the nations”, the defeat does not carry the overtones of destruction that are in Book 3.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> J. Clinton McCann Jr, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter” *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 102: In order to survive the crisis of exile and dispersion, Israel had to profess that God was, in some sense, still its ‘strength and refuge’.

<sup>84</sup> For example: Psalm 74:7: “They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground”.

Psalm 79:1: “O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins”.

Books 2 and 3 open with a Levitical collection<sup>85</sup> – Sons of Korah in Book 2 and Asaph in Book 3: the first psalm in each is an individual lament, followed by a communal lament which concludes with a call on God.<sup>86</sup>

McCann's conclusion is that the editorial purpose of Books 1, 2 and 3 of the Psalter "was to address the problem posed by exile and dispersion, namely, the apparent failure of the traditional Davidic/Zion covenant theology".<sup>87</sup> He defends this argument with careful textual analysis, and the relevance of these psalms to the exiles is beyond dispute. Nevertheless, the strong confident language about Zion in Psalms 45 to 49 indicate that they were composed during the monarchy. Psalms 44 and 60 are the only Communal Laments identified by Westermann or Bullock in the first two books,<sup>88</sup> but Bullock identifies 6 out of 17 psalms in Book 3 as Communal Laments.<sup>89</sup> Of the Communal Laments, Psalm 44 has the strongest protestation of righteousness.

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<sup>85</sup> J. Clinton McCann Jr, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter" *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 101.

<sup>86</sup> Note: this reasoning counts Psalms 42 and 43 as one; God is called to "Awake", "Rouse yourself", "Rise up" in Psalm 44, and "Arise", "defend", "Remember" in Psalm 74.

<sup>87</sup> J. Clinton McCann Jr, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter" *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 104.

<sup>88</sup> Claus Westermann: *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, 29; C. Hassell Bullock: *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 146.

<sup>89</sup> Communal laments in Book 3: Psalms 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85.

After the exile, in the light of Jeremiah's ministry, such a protestation would have been impossible.

Psalms 44 says that suffering and defeat and apparent rejection by God may be the lot of God's people, not just of an individual as in Psalm 22. God is not obliged to explain himself. The only consolation of God's people is God himself.

**f)      *The main themes of Psalm 44***

**Affirming the mighty deeds of God – verses 1-7**

The opening three verses of this psalm present a strong awareness of what God had done for their forefathers. By being taught about the past,<sup>90</sup> they have confidence looking forward. The Psalmist recounts that God has also done marvelous things for the current generation. Past successes were God's work: an antidote to presumption; God is still working: an antidote to defeatism.

**The vow to worship God – verse 8**

The upbeat section of the psalm concludes with a vow to "give thanks to God's name forever". "The recollection of the past and the confession of the present are ways of actualizing and activating the reality of their content, a liturgical invocation of the work of God that is in such bitter and bewildering contrast with the present".<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Responsibility of one generation to teach the next is ordained in Deut.6:20-25.

<sup>91</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation*, 177.

### **The present calamity is also the work of God – verses 9-16**

The Psalmist does not hide behind second causes. He accepts the difficult truth that the disgrace that has fallen on them is God's work: each verse begins saying to God: "this is what you have done".

### **Protestation of innocence: no answer to 'Why?' – verses 17-22**

It is easier conceptually to say that calamity has fallen because they deserved it. The Psalmist may have concluded there was hidden sin. Instead, he takes the more difficult path, of affirming that the people had been faithful to God's covenant, and still suffered.

### **Suffering may be God's will for his people – verse 22**

On its own, verse 22 might have seemed a petulant cry. "Yet for your sake" (כִּי־עֲלֶיךָ) contains no words of apparent deep theological significance. Suffering is never easy and the struggle is palpable. Yet the Psalmist has not revoked his vow from verse 8.

Whilst the lessons here are similar to what Job had to learn, and, later, the righteous servant in Isaiah 53,<sup>92</sup> the Psalmist is speaking not for an individual, but for the people collectively. He does not come up with a satisfying answer, but grapples with the problem, recognizing that what has happened was the will of God.

### **God will be faithful to his covenant - verses 23-26**

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<sup>92</sup> Especially Is. 53:10: Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.



Expressions are used which, taken out of context, may seem disrespectful. How can anyone ask God if he is sleeping? If the first upbeat eight verses concluded with a vow to keep thanking God, the remaining eighteen verses conclude with confidence that God's covenant love (ἔλεος) will not fail.

The entire Psalm has, therefore, gone a long way to provide the basis for a theodicy and a theology of suffering.

### **2.2.2. Romans 8:31–39**

#### **a) *Romans 8:31-39 in the context of the Epistle to the Romans***

This well-known passage from Romans 8 concludes the section of the epistle where Paul sets out his understanding of the Gospel, before he turns to the question of God's dealings with Israel. From Romans 3:21, Paul has been describing the grace of God in the gospel - God's righteousness (3:21-4:25), union with Christ (5:1-6:23), release from the law (7:1-25), life in the Spirit (8:1-11), fellow heirs with Christ (8:12-8:17) and future glory (8:18-8:29). He has also made a few references to suffering.

In Romans 5, Paul reminds believers that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God: "More than that, we rejoice in sufferings" (or tribulations: θλίψις).<sup>93</sup> Suffering is not a cloud to dim the gospel blessings, but a blessing because "suffering produces

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<sup>93</sup> This is the same word that Jesus uses in his Olivet discourse in Matt.24:9: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation", and in John 16:33: "In the world you will have tribulation". It is also used to describe what happened after the martyrdom of Stephen: Acts 11:19: "the persecution that arose over Stephen".

endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope”

(Rom.5:3-4). In Romans 8:16-17, Paul tells the believers that they are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, “provided we suffer with him”. The verb used is συμπάσχω - to suffer with,<sup>94</sup> cognate with πάσχω which is used to describe Christ’s sufferings: “The Son of Man is going to suffer” (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).<sup>95</sup>

Schreiner comments: “Believers must suffer in order to experience future glorification. By “suffering”, Paul does not mean suffering in God’s sight or in baptism but actual suffering. Suffering is the path to future glorification”.<sup>96</sup>

Paul then contrasts “the sufferings of this present time” with “the glory that is to be revealed”. In this second reference to suffering in Romans 8, Paul does not make a conditional link between suffering and glory as he did in v.17, but assumes a sequential link. “Suffering is the dark backdrop against which the glorious future promised to the Christian shines with bright intensity”.<sup>97</sup> References to creation and “ourselves groaning (στενάζω) inwardly” in v.23 also imply suffering. Keesmaat

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<sup>94</sup> This compound verb is used only by Paul in the New Testament: here in Rom.8, sharing with Christ in his suffering, and 1 Cor.12:26: if one part (of the body) suffers, every part suffers with it.

<sup>95</sup> See also 1 Peter 2:20-25; 3:8-22; 4:12-19; Matt.5:10; John 15:20; Phil.1:29; 2 Tim.3:12

<sup>96</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 1998, 428.

<sup>97</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 508-509.

argues that these are “the groans of those living in the shadow of empire ... reflected in the groaning of creation (v.22), believers (v.23), and God’s very Spirit (v.26)”.<sup>98</sup> She takes the word ἀσθενεία in v.26 to mean “persecutions”,<sup>99</sup> even though it is normally translated “weakness” or “infirmity”, and renders v.26: “The Spirit helps us in our persecutions”. In contrast, Stott takes the view that this refers to “the incompleteness of our salvation, as we share with the creation in the frustration, the bondage to decay and the pain ... our physical frailty and mortality”<sup>100</sup> rather than to “suffering”, as in the earlier references. This reading would make the groaning in 8:23 distinct from the forms of suffering in 8:35-36.

Paul then asks in v.31: “What then shall we say to these things?” Stott draws a parallel between the five affirmations of vv.29-30 and the five questions of vv.31-35.<sup>101</sup> It appears best to take “these things” not just as a reference to the previous

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<sup>98</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 149.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid*, 150, where she references Michael Barre who has argued this is the Septuagint and intertestamental usage of the word.

<sup>100</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: Good News for the World*, 1994, 242.

<sup>101</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: Good News for the World*, 1994, 248-260.

The five affirmations: (1) God foreknew (2) those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (3) those whom he predestined he also called (4) those whom he called he also justified (5) those whom he justified he also glorified.

The five questions: (1) if God is for us, who can be against us? (2) Will he not also with him

verses or to suffering, but as Paul's intention to cap his "many-sided discussion of Christian assurance in chaps.5-8 as a whole".<sup>102</sup> He achieves this by contrasting the tribulations of this life with the blessings and the assurance of blessings that come from the gospel.

**b) Introduction to Romans 8:31-39**

This paragraph asks a series of questions. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" does not mean there will be no opposition, but in the words of Chrysostom: "The world is against us, but ... in spite of itself it has become the source of endless blessings for us. So in reality nobody is against us".<sup>103</sup> Verse 32 explains how God is "for us" – he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up "for us all". "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" introduces a forensic scene in a court of law. Many would try to bring a charge: our own consciences, Satan, human enemies. Moo, Dunn and Schreiner all suggest that the future tense focuses our attention on the

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graciously give us all things? (3) Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? (4) Who is to condemn? (5) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

<sup>102</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, 538.

<sup>103</sup> Chrysostom referenced by Gerald Bray, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament VI: Romans*, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 238. Also known as Chrysostom "Homilies on Romans 15".

last judgment.<sup>104</sup> This may well be true, but the believer is already justified and there is, even today, “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). That will remain true through to the final judgment. Verse 34 amplifies the court room scene by stating that Christ is interceding (ἐντυγχάνω) for us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul lists seven hazards and sufferings he had himself experienced, and quotes Psalm 44: “As it is written, “For your sake, we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered”. He follows this up with: “in all these things we are more than conquerors” (ὑπερνικάω – “super-triumph”).

Ostensibly, Paul’s approach seems to be a world away from the anguished emotions of Psalm 44, but the list of hazards and sufferings Paul gives are his own experience. “Regarded as sheep to be slaughtered” was, for Paul, no hyperbole. Nothing will be able to separate him “from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”. The verb Paul uses (πείθω) suggests he has become convinced of this. It is not theoretical, or part of the tradition; it was experiential.

### **c)     *The quotation from Psalm 44:22 in Romans 8:36***

The full wording of Romans 8:36 is, with a verbatim translation:

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<sup>104</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, 541; James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 38: Romans 1-8*, 502; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 462.

καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι ἕνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν  
ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς

Just as it is written, “Since on account of you (sing.) we are put to death all  
the day; we were accounted (aorist passive) as sheep for slaughter (genitive).

Neither UBS nor Nestle-Aland indicate any textual variations, and this follows the  
LXX for Psalm 44:22

The MT for Psalm 44:22 is also very close:

כִּי־עָלֵינוּ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְהָיִינוּ כְּצֹאן טְבָחָהּ:

For because of you, we are killed all the day and we are to be thought like  
sheep slaughtered.

The introductory formula, καθὼς γέγραπται, is standard, and indicates a direct  
citation. The questions that arise, therefore, are not with Paul’s use of the text, but  
with the context.

### **2.2.3. The use of Psalm 44:22 in Romans 8:36**

#### **a) *Why does Paul use this psalm in this particular context?***

Paul draws his great exposition of the gospel to a climax. In layer upon layer, he has  
explained what it means to be a Christian – to be justified and declared righteous by  
God, to have inherited the promises given to Abraham, to have peace with God, to  
have eternal life, to be united to Christ, to have died to the law, to be free of  
condemnation, to walk according to the Spirit, to be a son of God, to be an heir and

fellow heir with Christ, and to anticipate a glorious future. Paul has alluded to sufferings, but with the assurance that these are as nothing compared with the blessings. He builds up to his climax with strong rhetorical questions, using terms such as “super-triumph” (more than conquerors). Why, then, select a verse from a communal lament of a defeated Israel?<sup>105</sup> Schreiner responds: “Paul’s interpretation of Psalm 44 may ultimately seem to contradict its message since he envisions victory through and in spite of afflictions. But this understanding of the psalm is valid. The Psalmist prays that God will vindicate his people and bring them victory in the midst of their sufferings, and the implication of the psalm is that this petition will be answered”.<sup>106</sup>

This needs further unpacking. When the Psalmist says to God: ‘On account of you’, does he mean ‘It is God’s fault so many have been put to death’, or does he mean ‘It is because we are faithful to God that others have counted us as fit for death’? Throughout his whole complaint from verse 9 through to 16, the Psalmist was explicit in saying that it is God who actively “rejected us” (v.9), “made us turn back from the foe” (v.10), “made us like sheep for slaughter” (v.11), “broken us in the place of jackals” (v.19). So, the complaint in v.22 supports the startling interpretation that it is God himself who has regarded his people as “sheep to be

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<sup>105</sup> There are several allusions to the Old Testament in Rom.5, Rom.7 and earlier in Rom.8, but the last occasion Paul used an introductory formula was Rom.4:18 (κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον).

<sup>106</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 464.

slaughtered”. Seifrid expresses it: “It is God who so ‘reckons’ and in this effective reckoning God gives his people over to death”.<sup>107</sup>

Does it also bear the alternative interpretation that it is the enemies who have despised God’s people and counted them as “sheep to be slaughtered”? If the language of Goliath to David is any guide (1 Sam.17:44), that is what Israel’s enemies thought. The text can carry both applications. In v.32, he has said that God ‘delivered’ (παράδιδωμι) Christ up for us all, but the same word is used of Pilate in Matthew 27:26: he ‘delivered up’ Christ to be crucified, and of the men of Israel in Peter’s preaching in Acts 3:13: “whom you delivered over”. Similarly, it is God and it is the enemies, who have delivered up the people as sheep to be slaughtered.

The Psalmist says: “we are killed”. It would have been literally true after the battle that the slaughter would go on all day. By the time that Paul wrote to the Romans, there had been martyrs: Stephen – Acts 7:54-60; James – Acts 12:1-2, though mass persecutions still lay in the future. Paul himself was “always carrying in the body, the death of Jesus”,<sup>108</sup> and as well as having been chosen to preach the gospel, he had been chosen to suffer.<sup>109</sup> Romans 8 quoting Psalm 44 is about the people suffering,

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<sup>107</sup> Mark Seifrid, “Romans” *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 637.

<sup>108</sup> See whole section, 2 Cor.4:7-18.

<sup>109</sup> Acts 9:16: I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.



not just one individual. Although these words had yet to be penned, Paul was already convinced: “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim.3:12).

The concept of the innocent sufferer was well-known in the Old Testament: the book of Job, Psalms such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. Psalm 44, however, is distinct in that it sees the community, faithful yet still suffering. Pastoral imagery is invoked twice in Psalm 44. In v.11: “like sheep for slaughter” and in v.22: “regarded as sheep to be slaughtered”. The use of the sheep being led to the slaughter, based on Isaiah 53, goes back to the earliest days of the church.<sup>110</sup> The early Christians knew that they were sharing in Christ’s sufferings.

Finally, the function of Psalm 44 within the sub-collection of the psalms of the Sons of Korah is also applicable. Psalm 44 seems to be the lowest point, but in fact is the turning point. In Psalm 45, they would be reminded of their majestic bridegroom king, then in Psalms 46 and 48 of the mystery of God’s presence among them in Zion, in Psalm 47 of God as King over all the earth, and in Psalm 49 that their soul would be ransomed from the power of Sheol. For Christian believers, Paul is saying

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<sup>110</sup> John the Baptist had identified Jesus as the Lamb of God; Philip used it to explain the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch; Peter would soon write: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps ... When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly”.

that they should see beyond the immediate suffering to Christ as the bridegroom, to the awesome reality of the presence of God with his people, to a sovereign God, and to eternity.

**b)     *How has he adapted it for the point he is making?***

Moo suggests that this quotation “is something of an interruption in the flow of thought, and one that is typical of Paul”.<sup>111</sup> This is true: if Paul had omitted v.36, we would easily have taken his conclusion in vv.37-39 as a direct answer to the question posed in v.35: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” We would not have detected a missing verse. Paul has included it deliberately. Three reasons:

First, it is no surprise that Christians experience suffering. Moo quotes Calvin saying that it is no new thing for the Lord to permit his saints to be undeservedly exposed to the cruelty of the ungodly.<sup>112</sup>

Secondly, persecution is not easy to handle, even if the Christian can ultimately rejoice in sufferings. By pointing his readers back to the Psalm, they would learn that discouragement does not mean disqualification.

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<sup>111</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, 543.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*, 544.

Third, Paul has just referred to God's Son not being spared. Psalm 44 is from the other side of Calvary. Psalm 44 concludes with "Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love"; by Romans 8 the believer can say, "Yes, I have been redeemed".<sup>113</sup>

**c)     *How does it develop his argument?***

Paul was aware that he was liable to be misquoted or misinterpreted.<sup>114</sup> Paul's opponents might have said about the closing verses in Romans 8, "Paul is just being triumphalist". By invoking Psalm 44, Paul says: "What I am saying is rooted in real experience". The apostle does not want the Christians in Rome, or elsewhere, to have any illusions. The riches of God's grace in the gospel are without compare. This quotation asks the question: "If the price is martyrdom, is it still worth it?" Paul may also have anticipated the day when many of those, to whom he was writing, would be put to the test. In every century since, this has been repeated.

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<sup>113</sup> He can reflect on the words of Jesus in Mark 10:45: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (λύτρον) for many".

See also Paul's words in Romans 3:24: "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption (ἀπολυτρόσεως) that is in Christ Jesus", or Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:18: "you were ransomed (ἐλυτρώθητε) ... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ".

<sup>114</sup> Rom.3:8: And why not do evil that good may come? - as some people slanderously charge us with saying.

Rom.6:1: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!

N. T. Wright says that Paul, quoting verse 22, appears to have had the larger context of the Psalm in mind all along.<sup>115</sup> In the Psalm, they look back to God's mighty acts of redemption, claiming God as 'king'. It was God's right hand that had saved the people (v.3), and at the end of the Psalm, they call on God to rouse (ἐξεγείρω) himself. In Romans 8, it is Christ who has been raised (ἐγείρω) who is at the right hand of God. Wright translates Romans 8:34 as "It is the Messiah, Jesus, who has died, or rather has been raised; who is at God's right hand". This translation, which is perfectly valid, emphasises more clearly than most, not only who the Messiah is (Jesus), but also that it is the Messiah who died and was raised. Seifrid makes a similar point: "The very form of the lament, which remembers and anticipates the experience of God's goodness, signals that trial is not the end of the story ... Paul likewise immediately points beyond present suffering to overwhelming triumph."<sup>116</sup>

#### **2.2.4. How has Psalm 44 shaped Paul's thinking?**

From his conversion, Paul was called upon to suffer. Most people, on being told they were about to suffer, instinctively wonder, "Will I stand when the pressure comes?" Paul may have pondered this himself: "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" (2 Cor.11:29). Yet Paul was steeped in knowledge of the Scriptures. In the first

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<sup>115</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God; Vol.2* (London: SPCK, 2013), 635.

<sup>116</sup> Mark Seifrid in "Romans" in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 637.

century, there were many cults, some of whom presumed to be able to deal with the reality of suffering. Paul would have given consideration to the stoic philosophy of self-control and fortitude; he would have observed Roman military discipline. Then he would turn to the Scriptures and read about the righteous sufferer in Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and Job, and realise that they, not the stoics or the Roman military, were his models. At the climax of what is, arguably, his greatest celebration of what it is to be a Christian, Psalm 44 has come to mind. This suggests that Psalm 44 had been a great asset to Paul as he anticipated, and then endured, suffering. He identified with the emotions of the Psalmist. After quoting Psalm 44 in Romans 8:38, Paul says, “For I am sure” (Πέπεισμαι) – it was a conclusion he had reached. Psalm 44 had helped him reach it.

However, Paul saw that Psalm 44 also showed a pattern for the people of God. God had demonstrated through the cross that his weakness is stronger than men (1 Cor.1:25). This was seen in Jesus, continued in Paul, and would be the portion for God’s people. The principle laid out has remained true for the Christian church, somewhere in the world, ever since. Suffering is not an exception, but an assurance, that nothing can separate the believer from the love of Christ.

## **2.3. Psalm 116 in 2 Corinthians 4**

### **2.3.1. Psalm 116 – in its Old Testament context**

#### **a) *Introduction to Psalm 116***

Psalm 116 is a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having heard the Psalmist’s voice and his cry for mercy. The memory of recent anguish, an affliction that had

overwhelmed him and threatened his life, is still fresh in his mind. Details are not given, but the Psalmist<sup>117</sup> had been deeply affected emotionally, and possibly caught by surprise: “The LORD preserves the simple” (פְּתָאִים)– v.6, a word suggesting naïveté.<sup>118</sup> In these circumstances, he called on the name of the LORD, and the Lord “inclined his ear” to him, and “delivered” his soul. His gratitude pours out in a cascade of adjectives and corresponding phrases: חַנּוּן (gracious), צַדִּיק (righteous), מְרַחֵם (merciful), שֹׁמֵר פְּתָאִים (preserves the simple), and זָמַל עֲלָיָי (has dealt bountifully). In all his troubles, he kept his faith, as he says that he believed, even when he spoke (v.10) in his wretched, pitiful condition (אֲנִי עֲגִיתִי מְאֹד), but concluded all mankind were liars.

His thoughts turn to repaying the Lord for “all his benefits” (v.12). How can the finite repay the infinite? The tokens of his gratitude are a thank-offering, and a fulfillment of his vows. Verse 15: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” is frequently taken to mean “It is something precious to the Lord”.

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<sup>117</sup> A variety of words are used in verse 3 to describe his pain. ) מִקְדָּרֵי לֵבִי (cords of death) is an expression used by Peter in Acts 2:24 (τὰς ὁδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου) saying God loosed them for Jesus of Nazareth – death personified keeping its victims entrapped. ) שְׂאֻלֵּי שָׁאוֹל (pangs of Sheol) would suggest that life had become like hell for him. צָרָה and יְגוֹנָה (‘trouble’ and ‘sorrow’) are both recorded of Jacob: Gen.35:3 – “God who answers me in the day of my distress” looking back on some of his lowest points, and Gen.42:38 – “you would bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol” overwhelmed at the possibility of losing Benjamin.

<sup>118</sup> In Psalm 19:7, the testimony of the LORD makes wise the ‘simple’, but in Prov. 7:7, the ‘simple’ is seduced by the adulteress, and in Prov. 14:15, the ‘simple’ believes everything.

However, the context suggests “costly” rather than “precious”, as the Psalmist is giving thanks for being delivered from death, which is seen here as an enemy.<sup>119</sup> Although the affliction had been the Psalmist’s individual experience, the vows will be offered publicly “in the presence of all his people” (v18).

**b)     *The Genre of Psalm 116***

Using Westermann’s classifications, the Psalm is a declarative Psalm of praise,<sup>120</sup> with all the constituent parts: the proclamation in verse 1a (“I love the Lord), leading to the introductory summary in 1b and 2 (“because he has heard my voice”), looking back to his time of need in verse 3 (“the snares of death encompassed me”), a report of deliverance in verse 8 (“delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling”), and a multiplex vow of praise in verses 12 to 14, 17 and 18 (beginning “what shall I render to the Lord”) and descriptive praise in verse 16 (“O LORD, I am your servant”).

Westermann points out the inadequacy of the word ‘thank’. “What could be the significance of a vow of thanks at the end of a Psalm of thanks? ... That praise which arises out of the moment of deliverance does not come to an end when the

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<sup>119</sup> This would be confirmed by reference to the previous Psalm (115:17): “The dead do not praise the Lord”.

<sup>120</sup> Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. by Keith R Crim and Richard N Soulen from *Lob und Klagen in der Psalm en*, 1965; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 102 Note 55.

deliverance has been reported once ... Praise cannot be silent but must be continually expressed".<sup>121</sup>

Mays identifies Psalm 116 as a thanksgiving song for the individual,<sup>122</sup> with the elements of reporting the LORD's response on hearing (v.1), summons to the community (v.14, 18, 19), and presentation of sacrifice (v.17). Dahood,<sup>123</sup> Eaton,<sup>124</sup> and Allen<sup>125</sup> also describe this Psalm as thanksgiving of the individual.

There is no strong reason for differing from this conclusion.

### **c)     *The author and date of Psalm 116***

Psalm 116 is not attributed to any author, and there is no consensus about the date of the psalm. Grogan points out that it contains some Aramaisms, suggesting a post-

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<sup>121</sup> Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 110.

<sup>122</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation*, 368.

<sup>123</sup> Mitchell Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms III – 101-150*, (New York: Doubleday and Co, 1968), 145.

<sup>124</sup> John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation*, London: Continuum, 2005), 400.

<sup>125</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 21: Psalms 101-150* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 113.



exilic date,<sup>126</sup> but the author had probably nourished his life on the Davidic psalms. See, for example, the similarity between this opening of the Psalm and Psalm 18, which is ascribed to David. Dahood, on the other hand, says: “Critics tend to assign this poem to the post-exilic period, but (*various grammatical features*) bespeak a much earlier period of composition”.<sup>127</sup> Eaton thinks the person concerned “seems to be a leading figure and quite possibly a king” and states “Arguments for a post-exilic date ... are hardly valid”.<sup>128</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to draw any firm conclusion about either the author or the date of composition.

The author has drawn extensively from two other psalms. Verses 1-7, with expressions about the snares of death encompassing him, and the Lord hearing his voice, derive from Psalm 18:1-7. Verses 8-9 are reminiscent of Psalm 56:13, about being delivered from death and walking before the Lord in the land of the living. The vows of v.13-14 echo Psalm 56:12. These two Psalms are both explicitly

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<sup>126</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms*, 191.

<sup>127</sup> Mitchell Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms III – 101-150*, 145. Dahood defines these grammatical features as follows: “the dense syntax of several verses (1, 8, 12), frequent enjambment (vss. 1, 9, 12, 14, 15, 18), the use of *yqtl* verbs to describe completed past action (vss. 1, 3, 4, 6), rare forms such as energetic *-na* in vss. 14, 18, double-duty particles in vss. 10, 17, bespeak a much earlier period of composition. The Qumran poems, for instance, show scant familiarity with these poetic devices”.

<sup>128</sup> John Eaton, *The Psalms*, 400.

Davidic, and therefore much of the content comes from David, although another party have been responsible for the final format.

#### **d)     *The Place of Psalm 116 in the Psalter***

Psalm 116 is the fourth of the “Egyptian Hallel”, psalms which were an integral part of the Passover liturgy.<sup>129</sup> In this liturgy, Psalms 113 and 114 preceded the festival meal<sup>130</sup> – Psalm 113 celebrates the fact that God is above all the nations but he cares for the poor and needy, and Psalm 114 that he is still the God of the Exodus. The next four Psalms, (115 to 118), were recited or sung after the meal<sup>131</sup> – Psalm 115

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<sup>129</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, (Trans. by D. R. Ap-Thomas from Offersang og sangoffer; 1962; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 3: The so-called Egyptian Hallel, i.e. Psalms 113-118, was sung both at the slaying of the Paschal lamb (Mishna Pesachim V 7, Tosephta Pesachim III 11) and at the Feast of Tabernacles (Mishna Sukka IV), and according to other sources also at the feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and at the feast of Dedication (Tosephta Sukka III 2).

<sup>130</sup> F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament – Volume 5: Psalms* (trans. by Francis Bolton; Reprinted from the English edition originally published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh: 1866-91; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2011), 704: referencing the tractate *Sofrim*, xviii §2: Psalm 113, 114 being sung before the repast, before the emptying of the second festal cup, and the other half, Psalm 115-118, after the repast, after the filling of the fourth cup.

<sup>131</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation*, 371: According to the Mishna (*Pesachim* 10:1-9) reporting on the way the meal was ordered, four cups were raised and blessed in its progress.

insists “Not to us”, but to God’s name give glory, and contrasts the God of Israel with the impotent idols of the nations; Psalm 116 shows the reality of this God in delivering the Psalmist from death, in contrast to the deaf idols of the nations; Psalm 117 comes to the logical conclusion that all nations should therefore, praise the LORD; and Psalm 118 celebrates the Lord’s doing, so that “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”.

In the LXX and Vulgate, the Psalm is rendered as two Psalms – verses 1 to 9 are LXX Psalm 114, and verses 10 to 19 are LXX Psalm 115. The theme in verses 1 to 11 is of thanksgiving to God, moving on in verses 12 to 20 to vows of thanksgiving to God. The two sections complement each other, and together provide a satisfying unity to the whole Psalm.<sup>132</sup> With the Hebrew text indicating the Psalm as a unity, and evidence that it was recited as part of a group of Psalms at key festivals, it would

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Psalms 115-118 were recited in connection with the fourth cup, which supplied a ritual reference for “the cup of salvation”.

<sup>132</sup> John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms: Psalms Volume 3: Psalms. 90-150* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 338 suggests the Psalm may have been split because vv.1-9 and vv.10-19 are broadly parallel. Both begin with a recollection of what the worshipper went through, following through to confidence in the future. The first section focussing more on YHWH’s action and the second more on the worshipper’s response.

Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 21: Psalms 101-150*, 114 and Willem A. Van Gemeren, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 844 however, think that the structure is not at all obvious.

suggest that the ancient Israelite community kept the two halves together in their thinking even when using the LXX. They had a well-rounded theology of affliction that was particularly relevant when they cried to God and God delivered them; and then they paid their vows to the Lord.

#### **e)     *The Main Themes of Psalm 116***

##### **Thanksgiving and praise**

Thanksgiving songs of the individual are less frequent in the Psalter than prayers for help. However, many psalms include more than one genre, and thanksgiving overlaps with other types – e.g. Psalm 40, 116, and laments can suddenly change in genre and conclude with ascription of praise. Mays says: “The dominance of prayers in the book more likely is a result of the needs of the community for which the prayer books of David were assembled. The presence of the thanksgiving songs in the Psalter is nonetheless a canonical witness that the cycle of trouble, prayer and help is not complete without specific and public acts of gratitude”.<sup>133</sup>

Brueggemann classes thanksgiving songs as “Psalms of New Orientation”: “The speaker and the community of faith are often surprised by grace, when there emerges in present life a new possibility that is inexplicable, neither derived nor extrapolated, but wrought by the inscrutable power and goodness of God ... (In thanksgiving songs), the speaker is now on the other side of a lament or complaint”.<sup>134</sup> Psalm 116

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<sup>133</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms Interpretation*, 24.

<sup>134</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 123-134.

typifies this – before any part of the Psalm was composed, God had already heard the cry of the Psalmist, and delivered him.

The thanksgiving is first because the LORD heard him – to know that his cry was heard by God was all-important to the Psalmist. It is not that the Psalmist was materialistic in his calculations, but he is responding to the divine favour that “inclined his ear” to him. The Psalm concludes with the Psalmist going public and testifying of what God had done “in the presence of all his people”. The thanksgiving expressed the Psalmist’s commitment from this time forward.

#### **God as deliverer – v.4-6, 8-11, 15-16**

God as deliverer is a theme which draws together all parts of the Psalm. In verses 4 to 6, the Psalmist focuses on the perfections of God, that he is gracious, righteous and merciful, in contrast to the recipients of his mercy, “the simple”. In verses 8 to 11, the focus is on comprehensive deliverance – his soul from death, his eyes from tears, his feet from stumbling, in language reminiscent of a Davidic psalm – Psalm 56:13. In verses 15, the people who may have seemed the “simple” in verse 6 are now God’s saints.

#### **Death**

The theme of death is repeated in the Psalm – verses 3, 8, 15 - not in the light of resurrection, but as a threat, unlike Paul, who can write: “All things are yours ... life or death” (1 Cor.3:21-22). Depending on the interpretation of verse 15, if the death of his saints is “precious” to God, there is a hint that the Psalmist sees the saint as being rescued from the final death. The tone of the Psalm, nevertheless, suggests

that the Psalmist sees the death of the saints as “grievous” to God – seeing death in the same light as Psalm 88.<sup>135</sup>

### **Public thanksgiving and vows**

The psalm opens with a great testimony of love for the Lord, and in the first 11 verses, the Psalmist develops his reasons for loving the Lord. Yet, this is insufficient. He feels compelled to say his thanksgiving in the presence of all the people.

### **Calling on the name of the Lord**

A key expression used in the Psalm is calling on the name of the Lord before and after his deliverance. This gives a chiasmic structure to the psalm.<sup>136</sup>

I call on him through all my days (vv.1-2)

Snared by death I call on him (vv.3-4)

To his goodness, I testify (vv.5-7)

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<sup>135</sup> Psalm 88:10-12<sup>135</sup>: “Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? ... Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?”

<sup>136</sup> Michael Wilcock, *The Message of the Psalms 1-72: Songs for the People of God*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 185.

A bright prospect (vv.8-9)

A sober retrospect (vv.10-11)

To his goodness, I respond (vv.12-14)

Freed from death, I call on him (vv.15-16)

I call on him among all his people (vv.17-19)

The theme of calling on the name of the Lord is seen elsewhere in the Old Testament in David's celebration when the ark is brought to Jerusalem. At this key point in the history of Israel, David gives a song of thanks to God which begins "O give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name", but the song consists of a collation of Psalms, none of which are attributed to David in the Psalter.<sup>137</sup> Although many other Psalms and Scriptures refer to calling on the Lord,<sup>138</sup> no other passage of Scripture uses the full formula "call upon the name of the Lord" with the same frequency as Psalm 116.

### **2.3.2. 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10**

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<sup>137</sup> 1 Chron.16:8-36 is comprised thus: vv8-22 - Psalm 105:1-15; vv23-33 - Psalm 96:1-13; vv34-36 - Psalm 106:1, 47, 48.

<sup>138</sup> See Psalms. 4:3, 14:4, 18:3, 28:1, 31:17, 41:2, 55:16, 86:5, 88:9, 99:6, 105:1. Joel also uses the expression: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" Joel 2:32. It is part of the Peter's Pentecost preaching in Acts 2:21, Paul's gospel in Rom.10:13, and his identification of true church members in 1 Cor.1:2.

**a) Introduction to 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10**

Paul opens this section with the metaphor ‘jars of clay’, to describe those who are bring the message of the gospel. Jars of clay are “fragile, inferior and expendable”.<sup>139</sup> God’s chosen vessels were considered weak, lowly and despised (1 Cor.1:27-28).

Paul employs a literary device of the day called *res gestae* or “catalogue of deeds” to demonstrate that the power had to be from God, not from himself.<sup>140</sup> This literary device has been found in Cynic-Stoic diatribe, Jewish apocalyptic, the OT and Jewish concept of “the afflictions of the righteous”, or the Greco-Roman depiction of the Stoic sage.<sup>141</sup> Paul lists the trials in 4:8-9, and then in 4:10, gives the interpretation that he was “carrying about in the body the death of Jesus”. The expression used τῇ

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<sup>139</sup> David E. Garland, *The New American Commentary, 2 Corinthians*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 220: “The fragility is required to show that the power belongs to God, not to the evangelists; the inferiority of the jars of clay compared to say a Grecian urn, a bronze vessel or a goblet demonstrates that the priceless treasure value is the message brought, not the one who brings it; the expendability means that a broken vessel could be discarded and others used – God was not dependent on the vessel”.

<sup>140</sup> Linda L. Belleville, *The New IVP New Testament Commentary Series: 2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press Academic), 120-121.

<sup>141</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 341.



νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (death of Jesus) depicts a process rather than an event,<sup>142</sup> but this is to show the life of Jesus being manifest, so the “believer’s identification with Jesus in his sufferings is to provide an opportunity for the display of Jesus’ risen life”. Paul reinforces this message in 4:11: “being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh”, and summarises the whole section in 4:12: “Death is at work in us, but life in you”.

Paul claims affinity with the Psalmist who composed Psalm 116, not that his sufferings were identical, but that he shared the same spirit of faith. Does this expression refer to Paul’s own disposition or to the Holy Spirit? Garland presents both arguments:

The “same spirit of faith” may refer to (1) the same spirit of robust, enduring faith that motivated the Psalmist ... The Psalmist was also beset by travail and trusted in God, who delivered him. Therefore, he spoke words that made evident his salvation. (2) the phrase may also refer to the Holy Spirit who engenders faith ... The same Spirit that generated the Psalmist’s faith and imbued his speech (see Acts 1:16) also works through Paul.

The first option seems the best since Paul repeats the psalm in the second half of the verse but changes it into the present tense and the first person plural, adding καὶ (“also”) twice for emphasis. “We also believe, wherefore we also speak” ...

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<sup>142</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 346.

The content of Paul's faith, however, is different from the Psalmist's because it is founded on the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>143</sup>

It seems best to take the reference to "same spirit" as Paul's disposition, while remembering that this disposition was dependent on the Holy Spirit.

He takes care to use an introductory formula: κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον (according to what has been written). The words he quotes from the LXX are quite truncated: ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (I believed, and so I spoke), and omits the actual cry: ἐγὼ δὲ ἐταπεινώθην σφόδρα (I am greatly afflicted). In his sufferings he spoke boldly about what he believed, and that his boldness and spirit of faith were strengthened in the crucible of experience.

Paul repeats the gospel message that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead, and believes that because of this he too would be raised, as part of the harvest of which Jesus' resurrection was the first-fruits. This could indicate that Paul expected he would die before the *parousia* but was agnostic as to whether those to whom he was writing would still be alive then. The prospect for all was to be brought into the presence of God. The perspectives that Paul had on his afflictions is summarised in verse 15: it was for the sake of the Corinthians; more and more people would be brought in; but above all, for the glory of God.

Having put his sufferings into context, he says in verse 16, "So we do not lose heart"; then progressively reviews it to "our outer self is wasting away", "momentary and

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<sup>143</sup> David E. Garland, *The New American Commentary, 2 Corinthians*, 235.

light affliction”, “transient”, while the positive side is revised ‘upwards’ from “inner self being renewed”, “eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” to “things that are unseen but eternal” (2 Cor.4:17-18).

In 5:1-10, Paul develops the theme of what happens when the believer dies. Harris summarises Paul’s argument here by pointing out three sources of divine comfort as this reality is faced. First, he will become possessor of a superior form of habitation (a building from God – v.1). Second, he has the Spirit as guarantee that God will complete the work of renewal he has begun (v.5). Third, departing to be with Christ will be to walk in the “realm of sight” (v.7-8). Harris says: “The passage witnesses not to the confusion, but to the profusion, of Paul’s thought when he was faced with the probability of his not surviving to witness the Second Advent in person”.<sup>144</sup>

In his concluding comments before going on to speak of the ministry of reconciliation, in verse 10 Paul remembers: “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”. This is both salutary as it emphasises accountability, but encouraging in the context of suffering for Christ.

**b) 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10 in context of the whole epistle**

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<sup>144</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 365-366.

Throughout much of 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his apostolic ministry,<sup>145</sup> but interwoven with this are constant references to his suffering.<sup>146</sup> Harris places this section where Paul invokes Psalm 116 in context when he writes: “In 2:14-4:6 Paul has described the consummate privilege of being a minister of the new covenant, whose glory far exceeds that of the Mosaic economy. Now he proceeds to show that the exercise of this glorious ministry of communicating the good news takes place, paradoxically, in circumstances that are anything but glorious”.<sup>147</sup> The stress on the humiliating circumstances of his ministry pervades the whole epistle.

**c)     *The quotation from Psalm 116:10 in 2 Corinthians 4:13***

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<sup>145</sup> Paul defends his ministry against accusations of fickleness for his change of plans (1:12-2:4), the need for forgiveness of the sinner (2:5-2:11), the Corinthians as Paul’s own letter of commendation (3:2), renouncing underhand ways (4:2), as ambassadors for Christ (5:20), through the open-ness of his ministry (6:11-13, 7:2-4), because of his letter which grieved them (7:8-7:14), in respect of the monetary gift he was carrying (8:20), and against those who claimed to be super-apostles (chs.10-13). Alongside these negative attacks, he speaks of the glory of his ministry as a minister of the New Covenant (3:1-4:6).

<sup>146</sup> For example, in 1:8-10, he speaks of God who had delivered him from deadly peril; in 4:7-14, of being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down; in 6:4-10, he details some of the specific sufferings; in 7:5, fighting without and fear within; in 11:21-29, he feels he is talking like a madman; in 11:30-32, he speaks of things that show his weakness; and in 12:1-20, he speaks of his thorn in the flesh.

<sup>147</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 338.

The full wording of 2 Cor.4:13 is:

Ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον· ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα, καὶ ἡμεῖς πιστεύομεν, διὸ καὶ λαλοῦμεν

Having but the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, I believed, wherefore I spoke. We also believe, wherefore also we speak.

UBS quotes no textual variations. Nestle-Aland indicates that some texts have καὶ within the actual quotation, so that it reads: ἐπίστευσα, διὸ καὶ ἐλάλησα. Williams considers that this is likely to be a scribal assimilation to the interpretive comment that follows.<sup>148</sup> The introductory formula, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον, is unique in Paul's writings, but not substantively different from the formula in 8:15 and 9:9, καθὼς γέγραπται.

The quotation itself is very short: ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα, and makes no direct mention of the affliction the Psalmist had endured in Psalm 116, nor does he give the actual words – he emphasizes only that the Psalmist spoke. The normal form of the quotation (without the additional καὶ) matches the LXX exactly, and is substantially the same as the MT, with the qualification that there is some doubt over the best translation of the Hebrew in the MT. Balla points out the difference in translation

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<sup>148</sup> H. H. Drake Williams III, "The Psalms in 1 and 2 Corinthians," in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 174.

between the RSV and the KJV.<sup>149</sup> This variation in interpretation continues through other translations – NRSV, CEB, ESV have variations of ‘I kept my faith, even when I spoke’, whereas KJV, NIV and others have variations of ‘I believed, therefore, I spoke’. Whether the Psalmist kept his faith in God *in spite of* his afflictions, or *because of* his afflictions, is not a matter of textual variation, but interpretation. Paul in keeping with the LXX inclines towards the interpretation that it was “*because of*” his afflictions, that he kept his faith, and spoke out.

### **2.3.3. The use Psalm 116 in 2 Corinthians 4**

#### **a) *Why did Paul use this Psalm in this particular context?***

There are many occasions for giving thanks through the book of Psalms,<sup>150</sup> but few go further than Psalm 116 in putting the affliction behind, and reaffirming confidence in God. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul does not say his problems are behind him – he uses the present participle to describe his situation (θλιβόμενοι, ἀπορούμενοι, διωκόμενοι, καταβαλλόμενοι) but he affirms that he believes in the one who raised the Lord Jesus.

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<sup>149</sup> Peter Balla, “2 Corinthians,” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 764.

<sup>150</sup> For instance, Psalm 30:11: You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

Psalm 34:1: I will bless the Lord at all times.

Psalm 40:2: [He] set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

Psalm 138:1: I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart.

Paul links his speaking with his belief, and his belief with his suffering. He feels a kindred spirit with the Psalmist. Paul draws attention to his sufferings as evidence of his apostleship. This becomes more explicit later in the epistle, when he feels a fool in boasting. In chapter 4, however, Paul is conscious of two things – the surpassing power is from God (4:7), and what he is enduring is somehow working “life” in the Corinthians (4:12). Paul had written about his ministry as a minister of the New Covenant (from 2:12 to 3:18). He was “the aroma of Christ to God” (2:15), to those who are being saved a fragrance from life to life, and to those who are perishing a fragrance from death to death (2:16). Now, in chapter 4, he is hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down (4:8). The citation of Psalm 116 demonstrates that “he stands in the line of the suffering righteous from the past”.<sup>151</sup> Adversity and proclamation are inextricably bound. This was not the understanding of the super-apostles, or of the Corinthians, who looked for eloquence and worldly wisdom. The adversity, however, redounds to the glory of God, either as in the case of the Psalmist, by deliverance, or as in the case of Paul, that grace may extend to more and more people.

In both cases, the affliction had been life-threatening, perplexing and could have caused them to stumble. Although 2 Corinthians was almost certainly written before the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul could have drawn on the same traditions as Hebrews 11 to demonstrate the extent of suffering. In Psalm 116, Paul finds a kindred spirit,

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<sup>151</sup> H. H. Drake Williams III, “The Psalms in 1 and 2 Corinthians”, 175.

who does not only speak freely about his suffering, but who is full of thanksgiving for deliverance.

**b)     *How has he adapted it for the point he is making?***

There are some differences between Paul and the Psalmist.

When Paul writes, the resurrection of Jesus is a past event. Whatever the Psalmist believed about afterlife, he betrays no evidence here of resurrection.<sup>152</sup> Paul describes positively, both dying (νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ), and beyond death “he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus” (2 Cor.4:14).

Secondly, although identifying himself with the Psalmist, Paul has taken care not to repeat his exact words. The Psalmist recollects what he said before his deliverance “I am greatly afflicted” and “All mankind are liars”. Paul’s affliction is still current.

Third, the Psalmist’s affliction was for the good of the community. His composition would be used for centuries afterwards. Paul’s affliction was for the sake of the Corinthians even when it was still on-going.

Paul was standing as next in a line of righteous sufferers. The Corinthians knew about his sufferings, but they misunderstood their significance.

**c)     *The Christological view***

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<sup>152</sup> Psalm 115:17 explicitly states: The dead do not praise the LORD.



Harris draws attention to the view of some that the other figure in Paul's comparison is the Messiah and that in Paul's view it is of the Messiah that the Psalmist is speaking.<sup>153</sup> In this view Psalm 116:3-4 portrays Gethsemane, and 116:5-9 Easter. Hays develops this line of reasoning:

The whole passage (2 Cor.4:7-15) is a description of Paul's apostolic ministry and sufferings as an embodiment of the sufferings of Christ ... If we read Paul's citation of Psalm 116:10 (= 115:1 LXX) as an utterance of Christ, then the pattern plays itself through fully:

Jesus	Paul
Died so that others might have life,	Suffers so that others have life, and
trusted and spoke	trusts and speaks
God raised him from the dead	Will be raised with Jesus

... It seems probable, therefore, that 2 Cor.4:13 should be added to the list of passages in which the New Testament writers hears Christ praying in the psalm text. In this passage, as in the others we have noted, Paul makes no attempt to explain or defend his Christological reading; it is treated as *selbstverständlich*.<sup>154</sup>

Scott reviews Hays' treatment of the Psalm as "part of a larger claim for Christological psalmody centred on texts in Rom.15, a claim with which this study is

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<sup>153</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 351 n.83.

<sup>154</sup> Richard B. Hays 2005, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 108.

in qualified sympathy ... The words we are to hear as Christ's are, it appears: "I trusted and spoke".<sup>155</sup> He concludes that the arguments for a Christological narrative underpinning Paul's own have not proved overly rewarding. "This is not to say that Paul is not significantly conformed to Christ; just that notice of that confirmation is found not in hinted narrative categories in 2 Cor. 4, but in the explicit imbrication of Jesus' νέκρωσις with the body's suffering".<sup>156</sup>

Paul writes to the Colossians: "in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col.1:24). This would suggest that he did see a Christological narrative underpinning his own sufferings.

**d)     *How does it develop his argument?***

Paul's concern for the Corinthians in this letter is lest they would be "led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (11:3). This could happen if someone proclaimed, "another Jesus", or they "received a different spirit", or they "accepted a different gospel". Some take the view that the canonical 2 Corinthians is a collage of extracts from multiple letters.<sup>157</sup> This research takes the view that it is one letter.

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<sup>155</sup> Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul*, 141.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid*, 148.

<sup>157</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 23-32 outlines the pros and cons of the argument – the seams, apparent interpolation at 6:14-7:1, the duplication of theme in chapters 8 and 9, the change in tone in chapter 10, but concludes in page 32 in favour of the "unity of the book".

The concern which he expressed passionately in chapter 11 is already with him even, when he writes chapter 4. This reference to Psalm 116 highlights that the Jesus, whom he is preaching and emulating in his own sufferings, is the authentic Jesus. It confirms that the spirit that drove Paul was the same spirit that was in the Psalmist centuries before and in the line of faith through the whole of the Old Testament. Any gospel that failed to make suffering central was a false gospel.

Another issue with the Corinthians was that they considered Paul's speaking to be weak: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak" (10:10). Paul points out that what was important was not rhetoric, but speaking what he believed and what he had experienced.

As already argued, "the same spirit" in 2 Cor.4:13 can be interpreted as Paul's own robust faith, or the Holy Spirit, but is probably best taken as alluding, in the first instance, to Paul's own disposition. The greatest Psalmist of all knew what it was to be a fugitive from King Saul and others, but maintained a robust spirit of faith.<sup>158</sup> The same spirit imbued the Psalmist here, and Paul is empathetic. The term 'faith' (πίστις) probably alludes to 'trust', rather than a creedal statement. Scott takes the view; "precisely because Paul's quotation from Psalm 115:2 is unmarked, it betokens

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<sup>158</sup> For example, Psalms 35 and 56 with their headings.

the extent to which the apostle has internalised these verses of the psalm (the distich 115:1-2)”.<sup>159</sup>

#### **2.3.4. How has Psalm 116 shaped Paul’s thinking?**

Paul would have been familiar with Psalm 116 from childhood, from its recital at every Passover, but he makes no apparent attempt to invoke that tradition.

However, Elizabeth Hayes suggests that the “Egyptian Hallel is a unit when considered through the methods and techniques of discourse analysis”.<sup>160</sup> Psalm 117 is the high point in this structure. Psalm 113 has praised God for looking down from the heavens and raising the poor; Psalm 114 has celebrated the rescue of Israel from Egypt; Psalm 115 has contrasted God in heaven with the useless idols of the nations; Psalm 116 is the Psalmist’s personal experience of Yahweh and his saving

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<sup>159</sup> Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul*, 161 – note Scott nearly always uses LXX numbering for the Psalms.

<sup>160</sup> Elizabeth Hayes “Unity of the Egyptian Hallel: Psalms 113-18”, 145-156 suggests several lexical features mark the internal cohesion of Psalms 113-118, the most significant being an extremely high repetition rate of explicit names for God. There are also significant deictic features – temporal aspects include the repeated phrase “now and forever” Psalm 113:2, Psalm 115:18, Psalm 118:1, 2, 3, 29. Locative aspects include God high above the nations Psalm 113:4, 5, 6, Psalm 115:2 but reaching down to his people to raise them up Psalm 113:7, Psalm 116:2, while the dead go down to the silence Psalm 115:17. There are also social aspects: poor and needy and barren whom God settles in Psalm 113, Israel and house of Jacob who were rescued in Psalm 114, the small and great who will be blessed in Psalm 115, and the Psalmist himself who has been rescued in Psalm 116.

activity. Psalm 116 is therefore, not just a one-off poem which contains some expressions Paul can relate to, but part of his understanding of who and what God is. Psalm 117 gives a universal call to praise Yahweh. This is the goal of the discourse, the memorable thought. After this climax, Psalm 118 issues another four-fold cause to praise, and asks “What can mortals do to me?” (v.6b). God will rescue. He concludes with a vow to praise and a celebration of God’s covenant love.

Paul knew from the Damascus Road that he was called upon to suffer. Robert Plummer<sup>161</sup> points out that in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul thinks suffering not only accompanies the apostles’ proclamation of the gospel, but *is* a proclamation of the gospel. This fact is made clear by Paul’s metaphorical descriptions of his afflictions as “carrying in [his own] body the death of Jesus” (4:10). Paul views his sufferings as picturing, in some sense, Jesus’ death. When the apostle suffers in his proclamation of the gospel before potential converts, he puts on a “Passion play” in his own body.<sup>162</sup> Psalm 116 is instrumental in leading Paul to this understanding. As the Psalmist used his sufferings as a springboard to call on the people to fulfil their vows and call on the name of the Lord, so Paul sees his own suffering working life in the Corinthians (2 Cor.4:12).

Paul had expressed spontaneous praise to God in adversity. More important than being delivered from adversity is that God hears. On the Damascus Road, he called

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<sup>161</sup> Robert Plummer, “The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul and the Mission of the Church”, 6-15.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*, 11.

on the name of the LORD for the first time as a follower of Jesus, and this Psalm taught him the importance of calling on the name of the LORD in every circumstance.

Paul had also shown that adversity should engender a stronger faith. What he said he believed was not a concept thought out in an ivory tower, but in the crucible of experience. Once proven in adversity, the sufferer carries his own credentials. If Paul had only Psalm 1 to go on, he may have wondered why the Lord's servant had to face so many setbacks; Psalm 116 enabled him to see these as preparation for "an eternal weight of glory".

The sufferer is not the only one to gain from the experience. Thanksgiving is Godward, but also public. What is said to the people, "in the courts of the house of the LORD", is also said before God. The sufferer does not draw attention to himself but to God. Deliverance from adversity, either through change of circumstances or special grace for the circumstances, is the work of God. The Psalmist does not attribute any part of his deliverance to himself. Whether the deliverance came about through trusted friends letting Paul down in a basket (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor.11:33), or through a message from his sister's son (Acts 23:16-22), the deliverance is God's work.

## **2.4. Conclusion: Paul and the Psalms: His Hermeneutic**

### **2.4.1. Psalms explicitly quoted**

Moyise asks the question: “Does Paul respect the context of his quotations?”<sup>163</sup> He has five conclusions.<sup>164</sup>

First, if “respect for context” means absolute fidelity to the language of the original, then “Paul does not always respect the context of his quotations”. This may or may not be true. Although Paul’s quotations are closer to the LXX than the Hebrew, he may well have had access to versions of the LXX now unavailable to us.

Second, Moyise says that if “respect for context” means relating his interpretations to the *historical* situation of the original authors, then “Paul does not always (or even often, perhaps) respect the context of his quotations”. In the Psalm quotations reviewed, however, Paul takes full account of the historical situation, but sees it from the other side of the cross. He has an even greater appreciation of the wonder of forgiveness than David in Psalm 32, but the full story of David’s sin provides greater depth to the point Paul is making. When he quotes Psalm 44 in Romans 8, he can speak experientially about being like sheep for slaughter. When he thinks of the suffering of the Psalmist in Psalm 116, he sees that fulfilled in himself, but given added poignancy because in his own sufferings, he is carrying about in his body the death of Jesus.

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<sup>163</sup> Steve Moyise, “Does Paul respect the context of his quotations?” in *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation* (ed. Christopher D. Stanley; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 97-115.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*, 112-113.

Moyise' third point is that Paul does not always draw on the surrounding verses of the quotations. In the examples reviewed in this chapter, the opposite is claimed: the surrounding verses in the original context are needed to fully appreciate Paul's quotation in the New Testament context.

Moyise recognises that Paul sometimes (or often) makes serious engagement with the actual words of the quotation and relates them to similar texts elsewhere in Scripture, and he discerns the meaning of a quotation by relating it to the main contours of Scripture.

In contrast to Moyise' fairly grudging and heavily qualified endorsement of Paul's use of the Old Testament, the samples studied here demonstrate a mind saturated with the Old Testament, such that he was able to reason "from the Scriptures, explaining and proving" (Acts 17:3) what he needed to establish. Quoting from the Psalms, he could do more than if he had been quoting from narrative, by entering the feelings and emotions of the Psalmist and then conveying that to his readers. He fully respects the context.

The three quotations from the Psalms which have been reviewed are used differently by Paul in his letters. When he quoted Psalm 32 in Romans 4, it was essential to prove his argument that people are justified by faith. When he quoted Psalm 44 in Romans 8, he used it to show to his readers that their sufferings were consistent with the sufferings of God's people over many generations, and to place their sufferings in perspective with their coming glory. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul uses Psalm 116 to help prove the validity of his own apostleship. Despite these differences, however, there is commonality in Paul's approach. The "narrow quotation" may well be sufficient



on its own to prove a point, but in each case the context of the Psalm adds fullness to Paul's meaning.

It is not explicit in the heading that Psalm 32 was written after David's sin with Bathsheba, but, using that as a paradigm, it shows David fully restored to relationship with God. He deserved death. His only recourse the mercy of God. The seriousness of sin, and the complexity of the issues it raises, is underlined strongly in the opening chapters of Romans. David shared this understanding, and covers the question of sin repeatedly in the collection of Psalms from 30 to 41, but supremely in Psalm 32. Psalm 32 is, therefore, integral to Paul's understanding of the gospel of the grace of God. God has not changed; his abhorrence of sin has not changed; the basis for forgiveness has not changed. What has changed is that Paul can now demonstrate, because of Calvary, how God can forgive and still be righteous.

The quotation from Psalm 44 in Romans 8 brings with it much more than the verse quoted. The Psalmist had rejoiced in what God had done long ago, and in what he had done in his own generation, but now he was having to compare the present sufferings and public humiliation, with the glory of having God as his God and the confidence God would come to his aid. Paul's readers were reminded that God had already come to their aid, and nothing could separate them from the love of Christ. In this case, Paul speaks from experience, while addressing pastorally the needs of the Christians. Whatever persecutions his first readers were already suffering, or perhaps anticipating, his use of Psalm 44 has resounded through the centuries.

In Paul's terse quote from Psalm 116 in 2 Corinthians 4, he demonstrates the validity of his apostleship by his suffering: he is following in a long line of God's servants

who have been rejected and suffered.<sup>165</sup> Paul, however, also experienced the converse. His suffering was taken as a reason for rejection, and proof that he was not a real apostle.<sup>166</sup> In a Psalm that he would have associated from boyhood with the Passover, he would have remembered that salvation is assured. As Paul grapples with his own privations and persecutions, Psalm 116 helps to develop a theology of suffering, an apologetic issue that remains alive down to the present day.

#### **2.4.2. Paul's use of rhetoric**

Christopher Stanley states that there has been a series of important studies that have broadened our understanding of Paul's exegetical and hermeneutical techniques and perspectives. "But something is missing here ... scholars have had little to say about the *rhetorical* aspects of Paul's biblical quotations".<sup>167</sup> Stanley questions many of the assumptions that underlie the studies that scholars have made.

First, did Paul's audiences acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures?<sup>168</sup> Paul had opponents, some of whom were judaizers who would have claimed the Old Testament belonged to them, and would not have accepted Paul's hermeneutic.

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<sup>165</sup> This applies to many of the psalms, particularly the laments, and to the prophets, particularly Jeremiah.

<sup>166</sup> See Paul's defence of his ministry against the "super-apostles" in 2 Cor.10-12.

<sup>167</sup> Christopher Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul*, (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 11.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid*, 40.

Paul, however, writes with conscious apostolic authority, and expects those who accepted his gospel to accept his use of the Old Testament.

Second, Stanley considers it highly unlikely that the members of Paul's churches had access to a full complement of "Septuagint" scrolls in the middle of the first century.<sup>169</sup> This may well be so. However, Luke commends the Bereans for "examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11) and Paul reminds Timothy that from childhood he had been "acquainted with the sacred writings".<sup>170</sup> Whether Paul sometimes quoted from memory, or from a notebook into which he had copied key verses, or from a Septuagint scroll, or a Hebrew scroll, he writes with confidence when he quotes the Old Testament, and, by his constant references, implicitly encouraged his readers to study of the Old Testament, as much as they could, for themselves. If they were unfamiliar with the reference, they should follow the example of the Bereans. Stanley also asserts that Paul often quotes from Scripture in a way that bears little evident relation to the apparent sense of the original passage.<sup>171</sup> We have already seen that Moyise comes to a similar conclusion, and our reservations outlined there, apply here also. Any suggestion that Paul is unsure of

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<sup>169</sup> *ibid*, 40-42.

<sup>170</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15 – granted that Paul does not say that Timothy had access to the whole of the Old Testament, it is clear Timothy has a wide knowledge of the sacred writings – enough to make him "wise for salvation".

<sup>171</sup> *ibid*, 53.

his texts<sup>172</sup> would suggest that Paul is being presumptuous, or less than transparent, when he introduces quotations with formula such as “καθὼς γέγραπται” or “καὶ πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει”. Paul’s respect for Scripture is very “high”. It would be inconceivable, therefore, that Paul would use Scripture in any way unless he was assured, in his own mind at least, that his use was consistent with the original inspiration (2 Tim.3:16).

There is no doubt that Paul used rhetoric: he was writing into various situations where he had to encourage faithful followers, convince doubters, refute opponents, instruct the ignorant. The difference in tone between say, Galatians and Thessalonians, or between Corinthians and Philippians, reflects a different “historical urgency”, and that “Paul crafted a response that he believed would persuade the audience to see things as he did”.<sup>173</sup> He did, however, seek to maintain a good conscience in everything he wrote.

More recently, Gregory Beale has published a *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. He concurs with C. H. Dodd’s observations that the NT does not focus on OT verses independent of their contexts. The NT writers’ selection of OT texts was not random or capricious or out of line with the original OT meaning,

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid*, 53.

<sup>173</sup> Christopher Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, 171.

but determined by this wider, overriding perspective, which views redemptive history as unified by an omnipotent and wise design.<sup>174</sup>

Whatever anyone's outlook on Paul's hermeneutic and methodology, it is only reasonable to credit him with thorough knowledge of the Old Testament, which he had studied all his life,<sup>175</sup> and a conviction that he was faithful to it when he quoted from it. Some of Paul's early readers found much "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16), but the early church identified that Paul's writings were to be viewed as "Scripture", and that his writings were not to be "twisted" (2 Peter 3:16). They must have accepted Paul's appropriation of the Old Testament.

Earle Ellis says that the Old Testament was not only, for Paul, the Word of God, but also his thought of mode and speech.<sup>176</sup>

#### **2.4.3. Testimonials, or "Testimony Book"**

As far back as 1889, E. Hatch wrote of the "contemporary (Jewish) habit of making collections of *excerpta*" suggesting that "some of these manuals would consist of extracts from the OT". "It remained, however, for the versatile mind of Rendel

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<sup>174</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 98-99.

<sup>175</sup> Note that amongst all the things Paul counted loss in Phil.3, he does not mention the Scriptures. They remained sacred (2 Tim.3:15-16).

<sup>176</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 10.

Harris to bring the testimony hypothesis into its own”.<sup>177</sup> C. H. Dodd concluded that “his (Harris’) theory outruns the evidence”.<sup>178</sup> Christopher Stanley points to “a more adequate solution” from Dietrich-Alex Koch: “Paul’s primary interaction with the biblical text would have taken place not in the moment of dictation ... but in his own private study in his ancestral Scriptures. The letters offer clear evidence that Paul engaged in a regular and persistent study of Scripture throughout his missionary travels”.<sup>179</sup> <sup>180</sup> Ellis concludes: “He (Paul) probably possessed some rolls of Scripture (2 Tim.4:13) and had access to texts in the synagogues”.<sup>181</sup>

Debate continues regarding Paul’s exact sources, whether there was a Testimony Book, or Paul had written his own notes, or how many scrolls Paul had access to in different writing situations, or to what extent he may, on occasion, have relied on memory. The extent of Paul’s quotations, drawn from across every part of the Old Testament is evidence of a mind saturated in the Old Testament, viewing it

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<sup>177</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 98-99.

<sup>178</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 26.

<sup>179</sup> Christopher Stanley, *Paul and the language of scripture*, 73.

<sup>180</sup> Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums*. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 99 – private translation: “In the course of his own work with Scripture, Paul went on systematically collecting suitable passages which he could then fall back on when writing his own letters”.

<sup>181</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Pauls Use of the Old Testament*, 19n5.

unconditionally as the Word of God, convinced of its importance for his readers. If, on occasion, Paul quoted from memory, but did not quote the Septuagint (or any variation of the Septuagint) verbatim, that would not be of any greater significance than that there were multiple versions of the Septuagint, provided his interpretation was faithful to the original meaning.<sup>182</sup> Paul gives no reason to believe anything other than that he understood the context and was applying the Scriptures accordingly.

In a survey of literacy in the first century, Stanley Porter concludes: “the evidence suggests that there was a book culture that cut across all of the various cultural and ethnic groups of the first century. The result was that there was an abundance of written material to be read. Some of this was in the form, of whole works, while other documents attest to a process of selection and anthologizing”.<sup>183</sup> This does not remove the problems associated with “the cumbersome nature of rolls, the lack of ease in navigation, the cost of ownership, and the sheer size of many ancient

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<sup>182</sup> As today, when there are multiple English translations, it is not materially important which translation is used, or whether the translators used formal or dynamic equivalence, provided the translation is faithful to the original, within the limits of what can be conveyed when translating into a different language, from potentially a different culture.

<sup>183</sup> Stanley E. Porter, “Paul and his Bible: His education and Access to the Scriptures of Israel” Pages 97-124 in *As it is written: Studying Paul’s Use of Scripture*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 115.

books”.<sup>184</sup> However, “Paul was born in a city that was one of the leading cities in providing education, especially for its native youths ... Paul would have been literate and capable not only of reading and writing but also of composing, before he left Tarsus ... his continued education in Jerusalem ... as a student of Gamaliel, he would have studied both the written and the oral Torah and learned enough about disputing points of law to become a Pharisee”.<sup>185</sup> The evidence therefore points to Paul, not only knowing the Old Testament, but encouraging others to study it for themselves.

#### **2.4.4. Sensus plenior?**

There are still numerous occasions when Paul uses the Old Testament to bring out meanings, which may not have been part of the original author’s intention. The expression used to describe this is *sensus plenior*, “fuller sense”. This concept is contested. Walter Kaiser takes the view that where there was an apologetic reason for the appearance of an NT citation of the OT, that idea had been anticipated in the OT when judged by any fair interpretation of the OT grammar and syntax ... the NT did not find, nor did they attach new or different meanings to the OT verses they used.<sup>186</sup> Moo, however, does not believe that the approach advocated by Kaiser can

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<sup>184</sup> *ibid*, 111.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid*, 119-120.

<sup>186</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 2.



solve every “problem text” with which we are confronted in the New Testament.<sup>187</sup>

“The New Testament authors have read the text against the background of the whole scope of revelation, preserved in the developing canon”.<sup>188</sup> Packer explains it thus:

“Though God may have more to say to us from each text than its human writer had in mind, God’s meaning is never less than his. What he meant, God meant; and God’s further meaning ... is simply extension, development and application of what the writer was consciously expressing”.<sup>189</sup>

To some extent, this is reflected in the three Psalms under consideration, above. In Romans 4, Paul quoted Psalm 32, but Paul had been able to explain in 3:25, “God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins”. This was more than the Psalmist had been able to understand. In Romans 8, Paul quoted Psalm 44, but the Psalmist knew nothing of Jesus Christ interceding at the right hand of God. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul had quoted Psalm 116 sharing the same spirit of faith, but the Psalmist would not have been able to speak of the one who

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<sup>187</sup> Douglas J. Moo, in “The Problem of Sensus Plenior” in *Hermeneutics, canon and Authority*, edited by D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 199.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid*, 210.

<sup>189</sup> James I. Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics” in *Scripture and Truth*, edited by D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995, previously published by Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 350.

raised Jesus and would also raise him and take him into his presence. In each case, Paul extended the Psalmists' meaning; he never changed it.

#### **2.4.5. The wider impact of the Psalms on Paul's theology**

The above analysis has claimed that in these explicit quotations from the Psalms, Paul has taken full account of the context of the Psalm and has applied them to subjects as disparate as forgiveness, persecution, and suffering. These are not isolated examples of Paul's use of the Psalms. Sometimes Paul quotes explicitly, but in others while not explicitly alerting his readers to the fact that he is referring to an Old Testament Scripture, he makes strong allusions expecting the reader to identify the reference.<sup>190</sup> At other times it simply appears that he uses "Psalm language", perhaps not always deliberately to express his thoughts. Was this simply a carry-over from his pre-

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<sup>190</sup> Tables listing Paul's quotations and allusions from the Old Testament can be found in books such as:

E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Quotations: Appendix IA, 150-152; Allusions and Parallels: Appendix IB, 153-154; Texts of Old Testament Citations: Appendix II, 155-185; Combined and Chain Quotations: appendix III, 186; Parallel Quotations: Appendix IV, 187;

Steve Moyise and Martin J. J. Menken *The Psalms in the New Testament*: Index of Quotations and Allusions – New Testament order, 247-248; Index of Quotations and Allusions – Psalm order (MT), 249-250;

Steve Moyise *Paul and Scripture*, 131-132.

Damascus Road days, or had he a completely new understanding of the Psalms in the light of his experience in meeting the risen and ascended Jesus?

#### **2.4.6. Depth and breadth**

Having established that Paul was listening to the Psalmist's voice, whether the Psalmist was David or another composer, and understood the Psalmist's meaning in depth, the question then arises: did Paul draw heavily from a few proof texts, or from the full scope of the Psalter? Chapter 3 addresses this question, looking at three doctrines that were foundational to Paul: his Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

### 3. Paul and the Psalms: His Worldview

Paul's worldview was turned upside down by the revelation of Jesus Christ; the man who had been "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples"<sup>191</sup> now recognised that same Jesus as Lord. What before seemed wrong, was right, and what seemed right was wrong<sup>192</sup>. How did he arrive at a coherent and consistent worldview? He continued to read the same Scriptures, but now he read them differently. How could someone who had read the Psalms from his youth find meaning in them, that he had been blind to, for so long?

#### 3.1. Christology

##### 3.1.1. Christ

###### *a. Paul and Jewish monotheism*

Bauckham points out in *Jesus and the God of Israel* that Jewish monotheism insisted on God as the sole creator of the universe, its sovereign ruler, and that YHWH alone was to be worshipped.<sup>193</sup> This worship allows for no 'intermediary' figures, no advisor to help in creation. Nevertheless, the Psalms describe God using both

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<sup>191</sup> Acts 9:1

<sup>192</sup> Apologies to *Les Misérables*

<sup>193</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel; God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 7-13.

“Wisdom” and “the Word” in creation.<sup>194</sup> Bauckham concludes that “the Word and the Wisdom of God are intrinsic to the unique divine identity, as understood in Jewish monotheism”.<sup>195</sup> In the New Testament, when Jesus is seen as instrumental in creation, and exalted to the throne of God (Heb.1:1-4), this is “recognition of his inclusion in the divine identity, himself decisively distinguished, as God himself is, from any exalted heavenly servant of God”.<sup>196</sup> Bauckham then proceeds to evaluate the role of Psalm 110:1 in early Christology.<sup>197</sup>

**b. Christ at God’s right hand: Psalm 110:1**

The Old Testament text most quoted or alluded to in the New Testament is Psalm 110:1.<sup>198</sup> Use of this verse goes back to Jesus himself, as recorded in the gospels. It is quoted by Peter in Acts and in his epistle; it is echoed by Stephen; and it is used

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<sup>194</sup> Compare Is. 40:13: “Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?” with Psalm 104:24: “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom, have you made them all;” and Psalm 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made”.

<sup>195</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 17.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid*, 21.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid*, 21-23.

<sup>198</sup> Psalm 110:1: The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

extensively in Hebrews.<sup>199</sup> Paul makes reference to Psalm 110 four times (as discussed below).

Bauckham suggests that by itself this Psalm does not necessarily mean that “my Lord” has to be seated on the divine throne.<sup>200</sup> It could simply mean that the Messiah is given a position of honour beside the divine throne. However, early Christology frequently combined Psalm 110:1 with Psalm 8:6.<sup>201</sup> In other words, the early Christians saw Jesus placed “on the divine throne itself, exercising God’s own rule over all things”.<sup>202</sup> Bauckham points out that though Psalm 110:1 is the most quoted text in the New Testament, “in the whole of the literature of Second Temple Judaism, there is only one probable allusion to the verse ... it had no importance for them”.<sup>203</sup> Ciampa and Rosner also claim that “a messianic interpretation of Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 is not evident in the Jewish literature”.<sup>204</sup> Seeing Jesus on the heavenly throne is

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<sup>199</sup> Matt.22:44, Matt.26:64, Mark 12:36, Mark 14:62, Luke 20:42-43, Luke 22:69 Acts 2:33-35, Acts 5:31, 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 7:55-56; Heb.1:3, 13, Heb.8:1, Heb.10:12-13, Heb.12:2.

<sup>200</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 21-22.

<sup>201</sup> 1 Cor.15:25, Eph.1:22, Heb.2:5-8, 1 Peter 3:22.

<sup>202</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 22.

<sup>203</sup> *ibid*, 22.

<sup>204</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 745.

a significant pointer to how the earliest Christians viewed Jesus, beginning from Peter at Pentecost.

When Paul makes his four references to Psalm 110:1, his readers have already applied this verse to Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 15:25-27: All things under Christ's feet, Christ at God's right hand<sup>205</sup>**

1 Corinthians 15:25-27 brings together Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6. Williams considers the reference to Psalm 110 to be an allusion rather than a citation.<sup>206</sup> There is no introductory formula, and only the words 'enemy' and 'foot' correspond directly to Psalm 110:1. "God's right hand" is not mentioned explicitly. Psalm 8 is more clearly a citation. It is followed by the comment: "Now when it says", although once again there are textual differences between Psalm 8:6 and 1 Corinthians 15:27.

The sequence of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 is that Christ was raised, and then those who belong to Christ are raised (15.23). This will signify the end (εἴτα τὸ τέλος): every rule, power and authority will be destroyed (15.24), and Christ hands

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<sup>205</sup> 1 Cor.15:25-27: For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet". But when it says, "all things are put in subjection", it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him".

<sup>206</sup> H. H. Drake Williams III in "The Psalms in 1 and 2 Corinthians" in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 170.

over the kingdom to God the Father. Paul then alludes to Psalm 110, where every enemy is subjected to the Lord. Fee says that Paul adapts the Psalm to his own grammar, and the subject here is Christ, rather than God<sup>207</sup> – so it is Christ who must reign (15:25). Morris describes it thus: “He is speaking about what God has determined and therefore there is no shadow of doubt about it. No matter how strong the powers of earth and hell may seem, no matter how much that the Christian may fear that the wicked will triumph, at the climax of history it is Christ and none other who reigns and *must* reign”.<sup>208</sup> “He has put” is aorist – suggesting an act of subjugation, but later in the verse “everything has been put under him” is perfect tense, indicating a permanent state of subjection. “Paul’s point, then, is that God the Father has given to the Son unlimited sovereignty over all creation ... without any infringement on the Father’s own sovereignty.”<sup>209</sup> Ciampa and Rosner see these two references as being another example of *g<sup>e</sup>zerah shavah*. Paul interprets Psalm 8 as

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<sup>207</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 756.

<sup>208</sup> Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 212.

<sup>209</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 213.



applying to the Messiah.<sup>210</sup> Christ, the Last Adam, has retrieved the situation that the first Adam lost.

Psalm 110 has two references to sitting at the right hand of God (v.1, 5);<sup>211</sup> rule and power are associated with the one sitting at the right hand (v.2, 3, 6), in a seat of great privilege and authority (cf. Psalm 2:4). Every dominion, power and authority, and even death itself will be subjected to Christ in the future. Psalm 8 speaks of the authority of God over all creation, but God will make humankind master over the works of his hands. The conflation of Psalm 110:1 with Psalm 8:6 suggests the scope of Christ's authority. In Psalm 110, the Lord defeats his enemies, secures the

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<sup>210</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner in 1 Corinthians *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 745-746.

<sup>211</sup> A close reading of Psalm 110, however, suggests that the right hand in 110:1 is God's, and in 110:5 it is the King's. Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Psalms 73-150* (Leicester: IVP, 1973), 396, says "There is no need to seek consistency between Yahweh's 'right hand' in verse 1 and the King's in verse 5. The scene has changed from throne to battlefield, to present this new aspect of the partnership".

loyalty of his own, and is master of the universe<sup>212</sup>. In Psalm 8, his majesty in all the earth is confirmed, and extended to the whole cosmos and to everything in creation<sup>213</sup>.

However, someone may point out that in Psalm 8:6, the “man” who is given dominion, is man in his original created state, rather than divine. How can Paul apply it to Christ? Douglas Moo addresses this in his essay on *sensus plenior*.<sup>214</sup> Is Paul simply using the language of the Psalm to make a point or is he adducing proof from the Psalm, or is this a typological or prophetic interpretation of Psalm 8? Moo suggests it is better to recognize the significance of the Adam-Christ comparison in Paul’s theology. Paul views Christ as the perfect man, the ideal not realized by Adam, but now embodied in the “last Adam”. Paul is, therefore, attributing language about the “ideal man” to Christ. Moo concludes: “His is not an appeal to a meaning

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<sup>212</sup> 110:2: Rule in the midst of your enemies ... 110:3: Your people will offer themselves freely ... 110:6: He will execute judgment among the nations.

The economy of language in Psalm 110:3 has given rise to different interpretations and textual traditions. Most, however, see the 110:3 as an allusion to the people coming willingly in service to their king.

<sup>213</sup> 8:1: How majestic is your name in all the earth ... 8:3: your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place ... 8:6-7: You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field.

<sup>214</sup> Douglas Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior” in *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, 207

deliberately hidden in the text by God, but to the meaning that that text can now be seen to have in the light of the significance of Christ”.

Having affirmed the early Christian view that Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 have a messianic interpretation, how does Paul use it? He does not raise the debating point that Jesus raised.<sup>215</sup> He does more than Peter who affirms that Christ has been raised and calls for repentance.<sup>216</sup> He takes it further than Stephen, who saw Psalm 110 fulfilled just as he was about to die.<sup>217</sup> Paul takes a different perspective from the writer to the Hebrews who sees Christ in that role in an almost passive, seated context.<sup>218</sup> “At the right hand” is where Christ is, and Paul expects that to be understood. What he does distinctively, is to consider what it means for the believer.

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<sup>215</sup> Matt.22:43-44: He said to them, ‘He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?’”  
See also Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42.

<sup>216</sup> Acts 2:34-39, Acts 5:31: God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

<sup>217</sup> Acts 7:55-56: But he (Stephen), full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”.

<sup>218</sup> Heb.1:3: After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

See also Heb.1:13, Heb.10:12.

## Romans 8:34<sup>219</sup>

Jesus is the Son whom God did not spare, and now, because he is our intercessor, no one can condemn us. There is an implicit Trinitarian reference: in 8:26, the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The believer has security because he has been justified by God, and both the Son and the Spirit exercise a ministry of intercession on his behalf.

Dunn, however, sees greater significance in the use of Psalm 110 here:

To appreciate the significance of Ps.110:1 being used of Jesus we must note two points. (1) The force of the original psalm would presumably have been a highly honorific way of asserting that Israel's king was appointed by God as, in effect, God's vice-regent over his people. (2) In the period around and following Paul there seems to have been a fair degree of speculation regarding heroes of the faith having been exalted to a glorious throne in heaven ... The striking feature of the earliest Christian use of Ps.110:1 then is not the claim itself, but the fact that it was made of one whose life was of very recent memory.<sup>220</sup>

Dunn points out that the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumram and the failed messianic prophets were not spoken of in this way. Paul, instead, builds a cascade

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<sup>219</sup> Rom.8:34: Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God

<sup>220</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 504

of references to Jesus in Romans 8:34: Christ Jesus died; more than that, he was raised to life; and is now at God's right hand. Psalm 110 suggests that the one at God's right hand is "vice-regent in God's governance of the universe. But it is not with the universe, but with Christians, that Paul is concerned here. Because Christ lives and has ascended, he is able to intercede for us, acting as our High Priest in the very presence of God".<sup>221</sup> Paul has, therefore, identified from the Psalm that the vice-regent of the universe is also the intercessor for God's people, "priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek" even if they are counted as sheep for slaughter.

#### **Ephesians 1:20-22<sup>222</sup>**

Paul writes in the context of his prayer for the Ephesians, bringing together allusions from Psalm 110:1 in Eph.1:20 and Psalm 8:6 in Eph.1:22. The place of authority and power which Christ now has will endure (Eph.1:21).

O'Brien says that "where he sat down, that is, at God's *right hand*, is as significant as the fact that he sat down. To be at someone's *right hand* is to be in the position of special honour and privilege ... For Christ, then, to be seated at God's right hand meant sharing the Father's throne ... significantly there is no mention of their

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<sup>221</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 543

<sup>222</sup> Eph.1:20, 22: he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places ... And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church

[believers] being place 'at his right hand'. Christ's exalted status cannot be shared".<sup>223</sup>

However, Paul once again links Psalm 110 and Psalm 8, which he quotes in verse 22. O'Brien encapsulates this when he says: "The all-embracing dominion of Christ is further emphasized in a fresh way as Paul now quotes Psalm 8:6: God has *placed all things under his feet*. Christ has not only been given a position of authority, seated at the right hand of the Father; he is now able to exercise that authority in the subjection of everything under his feet".<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 141.

O'Brien alludes to numerous occasions where the Lord's right hand is alluded to in the Old Testament. Examples from the Psalms include:

Psalm 20:6: Now this I know: the Lord gives victory to his anointed.

He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand.

Psalm 44:3: It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.

Psalm 80:17: Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid*, 144

In these references, Paul sees Christ's supremacy over the universe established, even if the complete fulfilment awaits the destruction of death (1 Cor.15:26).

Significantly, Paul sees all of this for the benefit of believers, because the one under whose feet God placed all things, is the one whom he has appointed to be "head over everything for the church".

### **Colossians 3:1-4<sup>225</sup>**

Paul tells the Colossians that they can leave behind the spiritual forces of this world, and set their hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. The believers are identified with him there.

Pao sees the expression: "where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God", containing two independent thoughts.<sup>226</sup> Christ is in heaven, where the throne of God is situated.<sup>227</sup> "Seated at the right hand of God" furthers this Christological affirmation with its allusion to Psalm 110. Christ has triumphed over all the

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<sup>225</sup> Col.3:1, 4: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God ... When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>226</sup> Pao, David W. *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Colossians and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 211

<sup>227</sup> Psalm 11:4: The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.

Psalm 103:19: The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

enemies (Col.2:15); “he alone should be worshipped”.<sup>228</sup> “God alone sits in the heavens, while the other subordinating angelic beings stand beside him. Christ’s being seated at the right hand of God, therefore points to his sharing of God’s sovereign rule”.<sup>229</sup> To the assumption that Jewish monotheists could attribute divine “functions” to Jesus, but not divine “nature”, Bauckham points out that “this is to misconstrue Jewish monotheism in Hellenistic terms”.<sup>230</sup> “When extended to include Jesus in the creative activity of God, and therefore also in the eternal transcendence of God, it becomes unequivocally a matter of regarding Jesus as *intrinsic* to the unique identity of God”.<sup>231</sup>

#### **When does the rule of Christ commence?**

1 Corinthians 15:25 refers to the one who must reign. Hay asks the question: “When does that period of Christ’s rule commence?” His answer is: “There is no explicit answer to the question in this passage in 1 Corinthians, but some indirect evidence suggests that the reign is conceived as primarily or exclusively future”.<sup>232</sup> On the

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<sup>228</sup> David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 211

<sup>229</sup> *ibid*, 211

<sup>230</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 31

<sup>231</sup> *ibid*, 31

<sup>232</sup> David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in early Christianity: Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 61.



other hand, Fee argues: “Christ’s rule, which by implication began with his resurrection (or subsequent ascension), *must continue* until Psalm 110:1 is fulfilled”.<sup>233</sup> In the light of the full scope of New Testament, Fee’s application is to be preferred. All that has yet to happen is that the powers, that are still insubordinate, will acknowledge Christ’s supremacy. Death suffered a fatal blow at the resurrection of Christ, but “Paul’s concern here is with its final destruction, which takes place when Christ’s own resurrection as first-fruits, culminates in the full harvest of the resurrection of those who are his”.<sup>234</sup>

Paul does not use Psalm 110 to establish who Christ is. That is already accepted. In all these references, Paul “maintains monotheism not by adding Jesus to, but by including Jesus in, his Jewish understanding of the divine uniqueness”.<sup>235</sup> He does, however, help his readers to understand its implications. The One, who will have all his enemies under his feet, is the One in whom all will be made alive (1 Cor.15:22); the One at God’s right hand is interceding for those who are considered as sheep to be slaughtered (Rom.8:36); who is head over everything for the church (Eph.1:22); and with whom the believer will appear in glory (Col.3:4). In this, Paul’s “worldview” of the centrality of Christ, as anticipated in Psalm 110, is more than a “this worldview”, and has an eschatological dimension.

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<sup>233</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 755.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid*, 757.

<sup>235</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 30

**c. The Pre-eminence of Christ: Colossians 1:15–20**

There is debate as to what Old Testament references Paul is making in the eulogy of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20. Moritz writes: “As far as the Psalms are concerned, the only possible use in Colossians is found in 3:1 (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθημένος – seated at God’s right hand).<sup>236</sup> There are, however, strong reasons for seeing references to the Psalms in the “firstborn”, and in God being “pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him”.

**Colossians 1:15, 18: The firstborn of all creation, the firstborn from the dead**

O’Brien points out that the term “firstborn” was frequently used in the LXX to indicate temporal priority and sovereign rank, to denote someone who had a special place in the father’s love. Israel is called “my beloved son” (Ex.4:22).<sup>237</sup> When God established his covenant with David through Nathan the prophet in 2 Sam.7:4-16, God said about David’s offspring: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”. Psalm 89 goes further and says about David himself: “He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation’ ... And I will make

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<sup>236</sup> Thorsten Moritz, *The Psalms in Ephesians and Colossians in The Psalms in the New Testament*, (ed. Steven Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, London: T & T Clark, 2004), 181 Note 3.

<sup>237</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*, (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 44.

him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (89:26-27). David is declared “firstborn”, even although he was, himself, the youngest of the sons of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:11).<sup>238</sup>

Without reference to the rest of Scripture, it may be possible to see “firstborn of all creation” as suggesting Christ was simply the eldest of the family. As creator, however, he cannot be part of creation, so “the genitival modifier, ‘of all creation’ (πάσης κτίσεως) ... can hardly be considered a partitive genitive”.<sup>239</sup> “The word πρωτότοκος “firstborn”, while often used in the literal sense of the first to come from the womb, takes on a metaphorical significance based on the ancient attribution of pre-eminence to the firstborn.<sup>240</sup> As “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (1:18), he is the founder of new humanity.<sup>241</sup> Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:20, he is the first-fruits; then in 15:23, “each in turn”. Psalm 89 describes the rejection of David’s line as kings of Israel: “But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full

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<sup>238</sup> Pao also points out that Israel is called “firstborn” (Ex.4:22), even though Jacob was the younger brother. Ephraim is called “firstborn” (Jer.31:9), although Ephraim was again the younger; cf David W Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 95

<sup>239</sup> *ibid*, 95

<sup>240</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 119.

<sup>241</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 50.

of wrath against your anointed (89:38)<sup>242</sup> (LXX: τὸν χριστόν σου). Paul, therefore, sees Christ, as firstborn, fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 89.<sup>243</sup>

### **Colossians 1:19: The fullness of the godhead was pleased to dwell**

Christ is supreme in creation, over all powers and authorities, and head of the church. The basis for Christ having supremacy is then described by an expression that presents translation difficulties (Col.1:19), but is normally taken to mean that God was pleased to have his fullness dwell in Christ. Moo points out that “the Old Testament never uses ‘fullness’ in connection with God”,<sup>244</sup> but the description of God dwelling can be seen as echoes of Old Testament descriptions of God dwelling in his temple or in Zion. Beale suggests the expressions “pleased” and “dwell” may be traced to Psalm 68:16.<sup>245</sup> “The unique wording in common between Psalm 67

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<sup>242</sup> Psalm 89:52 LXX also refers to the anointed, the Christ.

<sup>243</sup> Gregory K. Beale, “Colossians” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 853.

<sup>244</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, 132.

<sup>245</sup> Gregory K. Beale, “Colossians” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 855.

Psalm 68:16: Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain,  
at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the Lord will dwell for ever?

LXX and Col.1 points to such an allusion”.<sup>246</sup> Psalm 67:17 LXX (Psalm 68:16 EVV) is the only place in the LXX where the verbs “well-pleased” (εὐδοκέω) and “dwell” (κατοικέω) occur together. N. T. Wright notes the allusion to Temple- and Shekinah-theology in Col.1:19, where the ‘fullness’ of God is ‘pleased to dwell’ in Christ, as in Psalm 67:17 (LXX) God has been pleased to dwell on Mount Zion.<sup>247</sup>

For Paul, steeped in the Old Testament, the idea of God being pleased to dwell was not new. He would have known Haggai’s words. He would have recalled Psalm 132, and Solomon dedicating the temple.<sup>248</sup>

How does Paul resolve the dichotomy: God pleased to dwell, but greater than the highest heaven? God was pleased to identify himself with Mount Zion, and with Solomon’s temple, but the term “fullness” was not used. Paul uses the term about Christ without qualification. Christ replaces the temple as the place where God now dwells. Gnostic teaching was possibly incipient when Colossians was written, and

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<sup>246</sup> *ibid*, 856.

<sup>247</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, (London: T & T Clark, 1991), 117.

<sup>248</sup> Hag.1:8: build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord

Psalm 132:13-14: For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,

This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it

1 Kings 8:27: Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

this may well have been written to ensure that concepts of God dwelling and fullness must be governed by Scripture, not philosophy.

Paul also uses the temple analogy to refer to the church.<sup>249</sup> Ephesians 2:21 brings both ideas together: “a holy temple in the Lord”.<sup>250</sup>

All that could be known of God in the Old Testament was revealed at Mount Zion and in the temple. All that can be known and experienced of God now is to be found in Christ.<sup>251</sup> For Paul, this is anticipated in Psalms 89 and 68, and a profound change in the worldview of one trained as a Pharisee.

#### **d.     *The Son of God***

##### **Raised from the dead: Acts 13:16-41**

Preaching in Pisidian Antioch, Paul opened with a summary of Israel’s history, but did not make explicit Old Testament citations. However, in the reference to David in

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<sup>249</sup> Paul using temple analogy for the church:

1 Cor.3:17: For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Cor.6:19: Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?

2 Cor.6:16: For we are the temple of the living God.

<sup>250</sup> Eph.2:21: the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

John also refers to Christ as the temple (John 2:19-21, Rev.21:22).

<sup>251</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, 133.

13:22, Bruce points out that Paul conflates three texts.<sup>252</sup> Jesus is descended from David.<sup>253</sup> This is the key. Psalm 89 is pivotal in the book of Psalms, affirming God's covenant with David (Psalm 89:3-4, 35-37) but concludes with a question about God's promises being kept (Psalm 89:49). Paul affirms that God has kept his promises (Acts 13:23, 32).

Marshall takes the view that Acts 13:23-31 tells the story of Jesus, and then 13:32 makes a fresh start with the good news that results from it: the raising up of Jesus in 13:33 as the Messiah<sup>254</sup> and the raising up of Jesus from the dead in 13:34. Carson takes the view that "raising" in 13:33 applies to the raising of Jesus from the dead.<sup>255</sup> Bruce says this quotation "may not refer exclusively to the resurrection: it illustrates God's fulfilling the promises to the forefathers by raising up Jesus ... It is, however,

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<sup>252</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Acts", in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*, 72. 'I have found David' is the language of Psalm 89:20; 'a man after my own heart' from 1 Sam. 13:14; 'he will do everything I want him to do' from the Targum of Jonathan.

<sup>253</sup> Other references to Jesus' descent from David are Rom. 1:3; 15:12, 2 Tim. 2:8.

<sup>254</sup> I. Howard Marshall in "Acts" in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 585. Compare Luke 1:69: "and (the Lord God of Israel) has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David".

<sup>255</sup> Don A. Carson, *Jesus the Son of God: A Christological title often overlooked, sometimes misunderstood, and currently disputed*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 45 Note 1.

quoted in a resurrection context”.<sup>256</sup> In this, Paul’s first recorded Old Testament quotation,<sup>257</sup> and his only explicit citation of Psalm 2, he presents Jesus as the anointed one, and the fulfilment of God’s promises to David: “As it is written in the second Psalm: “You are my son; today I have become your father”. But what does this mean? Peter used Psalm 2 when preaching soon after Pentecost (Acts 4:25). Its language seems hyperbolic suggesting that Israel’s king was God’s son, that Israel’s king would have universal dominion, or that Israel’s king could provide universal refuge.<sup>258</sup> In the light of the resurrection, however, Peter proclaims that this is true of Jesus. Paul takes up the same theme: what God had promised, he had fulfilled completely (ἐκπεπλήρωκεν) in Christ.

Paul quotes Psalm 16:10 as a prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection. When David penned this, how would his contemporaries have interpreted the expression “you will not let your holy one see decay?” Was David in denial of his own mortality? Peter, however, used Psalm 16 in his preaching at Pentecost, and Paul saw it as a prophecy

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<sup>256</sup> F. F. Bruce, “Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Acts”, in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*, 72.

<sup>257</sup> No doubt Paul had quoted the Scriptures many times since his Damascus Road experience before he came to Pisidian Antioch, but this is his first Missionary journey and precedes any of his letters.

<sup>258</sup> Psalm 2:7: You are my son; 2:8: I will make the nations your heritage; 2:12: Blessed are all who take refuge in him.



about Christ. David may have had some hope of a bodily resurrection, but one thousand years later, his body was still in the grave, but Christ was risen.

Steyn reviews the three quotations in Acts 13:33-35, and concludes the reference to Psalm 2:7 in 13:33 came from the tradition, and that Luke added the other two himself.<sup>259</sup> As stated above, this research takes the view that Luke is reporting Paul's message, rather than composing one himself. Nevertheless, Steyn's point stands, that the Davidic tradition plays "a prominent role by linking all three quotations to one single unit in Paul's (Luke's) argument ... The connection with Jesus' resurrection was very carefully pointed out there by Luke. It was seen as a prophecy from David, which could not have applied to himself, but which has referred to Jesus".<sup>260</sup> Having established at Pisidian Antioch that the Son of God, as depicted in Psalm 2, was raised from the dead, other references such as Romans 1:4 to the resurrection of the Son of God, draw the mind back to Psalm 2.

Convinced of Jesus' resurrection, Paul sees it anticipated in Psalm 16, and Psalm 2 fulfilled in Christ as the one through whom God fulfilled his promises.

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<sup>259</sup> Gert J. Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations in the Petrine and Pauline Speeches of the Acta Apostolorum*, 174: "Christological use of Ps.2:7 could be even so old, that it might have been used in pre-Pauline times"; 184: "The first deals with the exalted Son (at the right hand of his Father), while the other two deal with his resurrection from death".

<sup>260</sup> *ibid*, 184-185.

### 3.1.2. God; Applying Yahweh texts to Jesus

As well as Psalm 110, there are other references where Paul applies “Yahweh” (κύριος in Septuagint) texts to Jesus, including several from the Psalms.<sup>261</sup> “Many of these texts are (or would have been read by Paul as) expressions of eschatological monotheism. We can certainly claim that a major factor in Paul’s application of texts about YHWH to Jesus is his Christological reading of the eschatological monotheism of the Jewish Scriptures”.<sup>262</sup>

#### **The earth is the Lord’s: 1 Corinthians 10:26 quoting Psalm 24:1**

Does “Lord” here refer to “God” as in Psalm 24, or to “Jesus”? Paul is not making a specifically Christological point, but Capes argues that the “weight of evidence demonstrates that he applied this text to the Lord Jesus”.<sup>263</sup> “The discussion in [1 Corinthians] 8:1-11:1 deals with problems arising in everyday life in Corinth ... when Paul dealt with ethical matters, he characteristically appealed to the Lordship of Jesus ... Throughout the discussion the Christological use of κύριος dominates”.<sup>264</sup> Paul begins this argument in 1 Cor.8:6 affirming there is one “Lord”, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>261</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 186-190.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid*, 191

<sup>263</sup> David B. Capes *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology*, 143

<sup>264</sup> *ibid*, 143

Additionally, Fee argues that in freestanding sentences Paul always preserved the designation κύριος for Christ.<sup>265</sup>

### **The voice and the trumpet call: 1 Thessalonians 4:16**

Fee points out the linguistic similarity between this and Psalm 47:5: “God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet”.<sup>266</sup> The κύριος of the Psalm is the ascended Christ, whose *return* will be accompanied by “the voice” and with “the trumpet” of God.<sup>267</sup> Craig Evans analyses 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and sees a variety of traditions, much of which will have taken shape before Paul’s usage. Paul evidently understood Psalm 47:6 in a judgmental way, and this is echoed in the “cry of command”, rather than “shout of joy”. “Believers are raised; unbelievers are judged. Although not cited as a proof-text, or as a prophecy fulfilled, Ps.47:6 has,

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<sup>265</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 133-134.

<sup>266</sup> 1 Thess.4:16: “ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου, καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι appears to echo the LXX for Psalm 47:5: κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος.

<sup>267</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 44-45.

nevertheless, made a significant contribution to the eschatological idea of 1 Thessalonians”.<sup>268</sup>

### **Glorified in his saints: 2 Thessalonians 1:10**

Referring to “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven”, Paul writes in 2 Thess.1:10: “on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people (ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ) and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed (θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν)” echoes the LXX of Psalm 89:7: “God is glorified in the council of the saints” (ὁ θεὸς ἐνδοξαζόμενος ἐν βουλῇ ἁγίων μέγας) and the LXX of Psalm 68:36: “Wonderful is God among his holy ones” (θαυμαστὸς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ).<sup>269</sup>

Green says: “Once more the apostles appeal to the OT, taking this citation from the Greek version of Psalm 89:7 (88.8), which says ‘God will be glorified in his saints’ ... The second affirmation of the verse is that he will *be marvelled at* (“by”) *all those who have believed*, an allusion to the Greek version of Psalm 68.35 (67.36)”.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Craig A. Evans, “Ascending and descending with a shout: Psalm 47:6 and 1 Thessalonians 4.16”, Pages 238-253 in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2015; first published Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 251-252

<sup>269</sup> *ibid*, 60.

<sup>270</sup> Gene L. Green, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians*, (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 294-295

### **The Lord is near: Philippians 4:5**

This expression (ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς) echoes Psalm 34:18 (to the broken-hearted), Psalm 119:151 (when persecutors draw near), and Psalm 145:18 (to all who call on him). Bauckham writes: “I treat this as a stereotyped phrase because I see no decisive reason for choosing Ps.34:18 or Ps.145:18 as the text to which Paul alludes ... it is not impossible that Paul read the phrase in the psalms as referring to the nearness of the Parousia”.<sup>271</sup> “‘Near’ may be taken either spatially or temporally ... It is possible that Paul is here echoing this OT language ... the Lord who may return at any time came near in his incarnation (2:6-8) and is continually near to his people”<sup>272</sup> Both are theologically correct, and the apostle may have intended to include both ideas.

### **To serve the Lord: Romans 12:11 and others**

The expression to “serve the Lord” (δουλεύσατε τῷ κυρίῳ) or “serving the Lord” (τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες) which Paul uses in different ways in Romans 12:11, Romans 16:18, Colossians 3:24 is used of serving Yahweh in Psalm 2:11, Psalm 100:2, Psalm 102:22.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 188n20

<sup>272</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 488-489

<sup>273</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 188.

Paul's sees references to Yahweh that he would have known all his life, find their fulfilment in Christ. "It is not plausible that, where Paul takes the *kurios* of the Septuagint to refer to Jesus, he is not aware that *kurios* is functioning as a reverential substitute ... The texts about YHWH that Paul applies to Jesus rather than to God are quite diverse and cannot all be explained by one principle. But what has rarely been noticed is that many of these texts are (or would have been read by Paul as) expressions of eschatological monotheism".<sup>274</sup>

It should be noted that Paul does not indiscriminately refer Yahweh (or *kurios* in LXX) texts to Jesus. Several times, he uses God as referent.<sup>275</sup>

Capes concludes that "some may disagree whether a certain text refers to God or to Christ; but it is clear that Paul, as well as the traditions from which he drew, occasionally applied to Jesus texts originally referring to Yahweh ... It means that he identified Jesus with Yahweh in a substantive way ... The amazing fact of Paul's religion is that he considered Jesus, a man who died a scandalous death and who, for a short period of time, was contemporary with him, to be divine".<sup>276</sup> Having been convinced of this from Damascus Road, from the oral tradition he had received from

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<sup>274</sup> *ibid*, 190-191.

<sup>275</sup> Examples are Romans 4:7-8 quoting Psalm 32:2: Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity

Romans 15:11 quoting Psalm 117:1, Praise the LORD, all nations!

1 Corinthians 3:20 quoting Psalm 94:11: the LORD ... knows the thoughts of man.

<sup>276</sup> David B Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, 185-186

the apostles and others, from his conviction about the resurrection, these references from the Psalms filled out Paul's understanding of different ways in which Jesus was the "exact representation of God's being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb.1:3).

### **3.1.3. Christus Victor: Taking many captives – Ephesians 4:8**

Paul writes: "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men". This expression is introduced formally "Therefore it says". The only near match in the Old Testament is Psalm 68:18.<sup>277</sup> Paul has changed the 3<sup>rd</sup> person to a 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun, but, more problematical, is that "receiving gifts" has been changed to "gave gifts".

Other questions arise. "Who are the captives?" What does Paul's mean in 4:9, "What does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?" Psalm 68 clearly fits with one of Paul's main concerns in Ephesians that believers should be conscious of the incomparably great power of God working for the benefit of his people (Eph.1:19-21, 3:20-21). The psalm celebrates God's triumph and care for the dispossessed. Arnold states: "There are additional points of correspondence

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<sup>277</sup> Psalm 68:18: You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men.

between the language and thought of this psalm that lead one to wonder if the entirety of this psalm may have been on Paul's mind as he penned Ephesians".<sup>278</sup>

First, the expression that Paul uses to begin his letter, "Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς" (Eph.1:3),<sup>279</sup> is the same expression used in the LXX to complete the Psalm. There are similar expressions in verses 19 and 26.

Second, God cherishes his people as his inheritance (Psalm 68:9). Paul prays that his readers may recognise the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints (Eph.1:18).

Third, the language of praise is common to both. Eph.5:19: speaking to one another with psalms (ψαλμός), hymns (ὕμνος), and songs from the Spirit (ὥδῃ πνευματικαῖς). Sing (ᾄδω) and make music (ψάλλω) from your heart to the Lord. Psalm 68 is "A psalm (ψαλμός), a song (ὥδῃ)"; 68:5 and 68:32 call on the congregation to "sing (ᾄδω)" and "sing praise" (ψάλλω).

Fourth, Psalm 68:35 concludes the Psalm celebrating the "strength and power" God gives to his people. Paul wants his readers to know that God's power is "for those who believe" (1:19).

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<sup>278</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 248.

<sup>279</sup> Note that 2 Cor.1:3 and 1 Pet.1:3 also open the corresponding letters with Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός.



Fifth, the conclusion of Psalm 68 means God equips his people for battle. Paul reminds his readers of the armour of God (6:10-17).

Sixth, in Psalm 68:16, Mount Zion is the sovereign choice of God, because that is his pleasure. In Ephesians 1:11, we are chosen “according to the counsel of his will”.

Seventh, Psalm 68:26-27 encompasses all Israel, moving on in 68:32 to “the kingdoms of the earth”. In Eph.2:11-22, true Israel and the nations are reconciled into one, to become a dwelling in which God lives.

Allowing for the synergy between Psalm 68 and Ephesians, why does Paul apparently change “receiving gifts among men” to “he gave gifts to men”? Although there is evidence of an Aramaic Targum using the same language as Paul,<sup>280</sup> the Hebrew text and the LXX agree on the alternate wording. Various unconvincing explanations have been proffered, such as Paul being indebted to an early Christian polemic against the association of Moses, the Torah and Pentecost with Psalm 68:18.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 249: A number of scholars have viewed this Targum rendering of Psalm 68 as the textual basis for Paul’s citation of the psalm as “he gave” instead of the MT and LXX textual tradition of “he received.”

Arnold, however, considers this view unlikely, not least because the text of the Targum of Psalms dates roughly to the period of the fourth to sixth century AD.

<sup>281</sup> A view described, but refuted by Frank S. Thielman, in “Ephesians” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Don A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 822.

Could it be that Paul deliberately took liberties with the poetic text, when what he was writing was consistent with the overall theology and message of the Psalm about a triumphant God, who bestowed great gifts on his people. Trained as a Pharisee, however, he would have great respect for the text as it stood.

Smith interprets Paul's rendering of Psalm 68 in the context of the Levites in Numbers 8:5-26. They are "taken" by God (8:6, 8:18), and "given" as gifts to Aaron (6:19). He applies this principle to the gifts given to the church.<sup>282</sup> As an analogy, this brings together satisfactorily the "taking" and "giving" of gifts at the same time.

In Psalm 68, the "captives" were Israel's enemies. There are differing interpretations about who the "captives" are today. Smith provides one explanation that comes from Theodoret, Justin Martyr and Jerome. They saw the captives as redeemed men who

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<sup>282</sup> Gary V. Smith in *Paul's Use of Psalm 68:18 In Ephesians 4:8* (JETS 18:3, 1975), 188: Paul wants his readers to understand that God has, throughout history, chosen special men as leaders of the community of believers. The grace given to fulfill functional responsibilities, correspondingly fluctuates. Those responsible for teaching, preaching, and other spiritual duties received the necessary gifts from God to meet the needs of those served. These servants were "gifts" of God given to mankind for the purpose of bringing mankind into a relationship in which God dwells in him ... The Levites, in an analogous manner, were taken captive by God as a special group. They were given privileges and responsibilities in order that God might dwell among the Israelites. They are gifts given to minister to the needs of men at the temple. God, in a special way ordained both the Levites and the New Testament preachers, teachers, etc. to be mediators that would bridge the gap between God and man.

are taken by Christ out of the devil's grasp.<sup>283</sup> "Others go to the opposite extreme and identify the captives as the enemies of Christ who were destroyed at the cross; namely, Satan, sin, and death".<sup>284</sup> Thus, Paul writes to the Corinthians, (2 Cor.10:5): "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ". These evil forces are no longer invincible because Christ has already triumphed (Eph.1:20-23, 5:5-6). Christ descending to the lower parts of the earth has traditionally been interpreted as meaning that Christ descended into hell. O'Brien concludes that the most likely explanation is that it is a reference to the incarnation.<sup>285</sup>

By his use of Psalm 68, Paul has depicted Christ as the great conqueror, sharing the spoils of his victory with his people. Thielman explains: "In the psalm, God's past faithfulness to his people reaches a climax in his ascent to Mount Zion, and that ascent holds promise for the salvation of his people in even more glorious ways in the present and future ... Acting in the role of God himself in Psalm 68:17-18, Christ has triumphed over the cosmic forces arrayed against God's people. From his lofty and

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<sup>283</sup> *ibid*, 183.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid*, 183.

<sup>285</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 296.

newly-won position on the eschatological Zion, he distributed gifts to God's people.<sup>286</sup>

#### **3.1.4. Christology: Summary**

Paul would have known Psalm 110, virtually all his life, but would not have attached any significant Messianic meaning to it.<sup>287</sup> The idea that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled that Psalm as the one who would sit at God's right hand would initially have been anathema to him. When, however, he acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus, everything changed. The earliest Christians saw Psalm 110 in a new light, and he accepted that and realised its implications for who Jesus was and for the church.

That God was one, remained the core element of Paul's belief,<sup>288</sup> but he used his new understanding of Psalm 110 to understand how Jesus could be included in the divine

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<sup>286</sup> Frank S. Thielman, in "Ephesians" in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 824.

<sup>287</sup> Psalm 110 did not feature extensively in Second Temple Judaism: Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 22; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 745

<sup>288</sup> 1 Cor.8:6: yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Eph.4:4-6: There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

identity. This was filled out by seeing Jesus prefigured in other Psalms such as Psalms 2, 8, 16, 68, 69, 89, so that when he wrote the great Christological eulogy (Colossians 1:15-23), the influence of the Psalms is apparent in his understanding of Christ as the firstborn and as the one in whom God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell. He then seemed to be liberty to apply many Yahweh texts from the Psalms to Jesus. His reading of the entire Old Testament was Christocentric. He did not “force” Christ into every verse, but it did signify that for Paul, its full meaning was incomplete until seen through the prism of the incarnate, suffering, ascended and glorified Christ.

In Luke 24:44, when the risen Christ appeared to the disciples, Luke records that Jesus said: “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms”. Whether Paul had been made familiar with the detail of what Christ taught on this occasion, is not recorded. However, Paul used his deep knowledge of the Psalms, as well as the Law and the Prophets, to interpret and to expand his understanding of the person of Christ.

At a time in history when the worldwide power of Caesar may have been a meaningful way to illustrate the universal rule of Christ, Paul chose to draw his understanding and imagery instead from the Scriptures, especially the Psalms. That the Psalms could portray Christ so fully meant the incarnation, life, death, rising again and ascension to God’s right hand was no afterthought, but part of what he believed was an eternal plan. In comparison, the empire and the emperor were trivial.

No community could have claimed greater familiarity with the Psalms than the Jews. It appears, however, that their eyes were kept from recognising Jesus<sup>289</sup> in the Psalms, as Paul's had been until the scales fell from his eyes.<sup>290</sup> However, once he saw Jesus in the Psalms, this became an essential element of his worldview, and underpinned everything he wrote.

## **3.2. Soteriology**

### **3.2.1. Paul's commitment to the gospel**

From the day of Paul's conversion, the whole direction of Paul's life was focussed on the Gospel. This is apparent in his own confession to King Agrippa,<sup>291</sup> and in his testimony to the elders of the church in Ephesus.<sup>292</sup> He was "set apart for the gospel

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<sup>289</sup> *cf.* Luke 24:16

<sup>290</sup> Acts 9:18

<sup>291</sup> Acts 26:14-19: "a voice saying to me in Aramaic": "I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness ... I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light ... that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me ... O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

<sup>292</sup> Acts 20:24: But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ)".

of God” (Rom.1:1). Even when he had been advancing in Judaism, he had already been sent apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal.1:13-16). It was his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known (Rom.15:9). “Woe” to him if he did not preach it (1 Cor.9:16). When in prison, he evaluated his circumstances by the effect they had on the spread of the gospel (Phil.1:12). This commitment continued through to his closing message to Timothy: Of this gospel, “I was appointed a herald, an apostle and a teacher” (2 Tim.1:11).

Paul uses the expression “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) in every letter in the Pauline corpus, except for Titus; and speaks of “my gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου) on more than one occasion.<sup>293</sup>

What was this gospel? To this question, we now turn.

### **3.2.2. The Gospel according to Paul**

Numerous attempts have been made to define the ‘centre’ of Paul’s gospel.

Since the Reformation, the prevailing view at least in Protestant circles has been shaped by Luther’s insistence on justification by faith as central to Paul’s theology. This perspective was challenged by the “New Perspective” proposed by E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Rom.2:16; 16:25, 2 Tim.2:8.

<sup>294</sup> Sanders rejected the view that Second Temple Judaism was a religion of “works righteousness and coined the term “Covenantal Nomism” to describe his view that “the role of

More recently, Douglas Campbell has described “A Post-New Perspective Account”.<sup>295</sup>

It is better to allow Paul to speak for himself in Romans 1.

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law-keeping in rabbinic and other relevant branches of Judaism was not about ‘getting in’ but about ‘keeping in’ – see N. T. Wright, *Paul and his recent Interpreters*, (London: SPCK, 2015), 70-72. James Dunn critiqued and developed Sanders proposal, taking the view that when Paul dismissed the idea of being justified by works of law, he was “thinking of *covenant* works” – see James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008 {2005}), 108.

<sup>295</sup> Michael F Bird, *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 13.

The views expounded and critiqued are *A Reformed Reading* from Thomas R. Schreiner, *A Catholic Perspective* from Luke Timothy Johnson, *A Post New-Perspective Account* from Douglas Campbell, and *A Jewish View* from Mark Nanos.

Campbell reckons there are three main alternatives – see Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel – A suggested strategy*, (London: T & T Clark International, 2005). The first model he reviews is justification by faith, the approach taken by Luther and synonymous with the Reformation grounded most of all in Romans 1-4. Campbell says that many have, instead, opted for the “Salvation Historical model”. This presents promise as seen in the story of Israel fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah in the story of the church, and has its focus on Romans 9-11. The third model is “Pneumatologically Participatory Martyrological Eschatology”. Schreiner concludes that “Campbell investigates Paul, but the Paul he discovers ends up looking a lot like Douglas Campbell”.



First, it is the gospel of God – whether this is a subjective genitive or a genitive of source is debated.<sup>296</sup> Secondly, Paul insists the gospel was promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures, and so the Holy Scriptures are normative.<sup>297</sup> Third, the gospel was concerning God’s Son. Fourth, God’s Son was as to his earthly life “a descendant of David”. Fifth, the resurrection is key.

He then introduces two important themes: “it is the power (δύναμις) of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” and “in the gospel the righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) of God is revealed”. The power of God stands in contrast to the power of Rome. Nevertheless, Paul’s emphasis is not directed to resisting Roman power, but to appreciating God’s power, exerted when he raised Christ from the dead.<sup>298</sup> Whether the term “righteousness of God” is to be understood forensically (declaring the sinner ‘righteous’) or to be attributively (as an attribute of God and his activity) is discussed below.

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<sup>296</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 43 Note 18.

Luter points out that in some instances the context makes it more likely that the focus is on the gospel’s origin (subjective), and in others on the content (objective), but “the genitive makes good sense if it is read either way” – see A. B. Luter Jr, in “Gospel”, in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F Hawthorne, Ralph P Martin, Daniel G Reid, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 369-372.

<sup>297</sup> The term ‘prophets’ as used here extends to Old Testament writers, such as David in the Psalms (Acts 2:30), and Moses (Acts 3:21-22).

<sup>298</sup> Eph.1:19-20, 2 Cor.13:4.

Many other aspects of the Gospel could be seen as the focus – an expression of God’s love; God’s justice; God’s faithfulness. For this study, however, we will restrict our focus to the two elements highlighted at the beginning of Romans: the righteousness of God, and the power of God.

### **3.2.3. Salvation and God’s Righteousness**

#### **a) *The righteousness of God revealed***

In his keynote description of the gospel (Rom.1:16-17), Paul says it is the “power of God for salvation”, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” and “in it the righteousness of God is revealed”. These expressions echo Psalm 98:2-4:<sup>299</sup> God’s salvation, God’s righteousness, God’s faithfulness to Israel, and God reaching out to all the nations.<sup>300</sup>

Keesmaat sees an echo of two psalms of lament in the preceding expression: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel”.<sup>301</sup> Moving from an echo of psalms of lament to an

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<sup>299</sup> Sylvia Keesmaat, *The Psalms in Romans and Galatians*, 142; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 36.

<sup>300</sup> “The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God”.

<sup>301</sup> Psalm 71:1-2: In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame!

Psalm 44:15: All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face

Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *The Psalms in Romans and Galatians*, 140-141. There are, however,

echo of a hymn of praise to God, is an anticipation of “the dynamic of the letter as a whole, a dynamic that moves from lament to thanksgiving and praise”.<sup>302</sup> Psalm 98 belongs to the collection of Psalms in Book 4 (93 to 100) which celebrate God, as King above all gods whose glory will be declared among the nations. However, it has a solemn edge to it: “He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity”. Judgment is part of Paul’s gospel.<sup>303</sup> The themes of Psalm 98 therefore are echoed by Paul as he opens his great gospel letter.

There remains the question as to whether “the righteousness of God” refers to a righteousness imputed to believers or to God’s own righteousness in his saving activity. Schreiner provides strong arguments for both points of view,<sup>304</sup> concluding: “I would suggest that it is a mistake to opt for an either-or here, and thus I conclude that the term ‘righteousness of God’ is both forensic and transformative. This is not to say that both senses are present everywhere the words δικαιοῦν, δικαιοσύνη,

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many other psalms where the Psalmist is concerned about his shame: 4:2; 22:5; 25:2,3,20; 31:1, 17; 69:6,19; 74:21.

<sup>302</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *The Psalms in Romans and Galatians*, 142.

<sup>303</sup> Rom.2:3: Do you suppose, O man - you who judge those who practise such things and yet do them yourself - that you will escape the judgment of God?

<sup>304</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans – The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 63-67.

δικαιος occur. The context colours the specific nuance assigned”.<sup>305</sup> Is this use of ‘righteousness’ consistent with ‘righteousness’ as used in Psalm 98? Stigers,<sup>306</sup> in the *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* confirms that דָּקָה (*s<sup>e</sup>daqa*) is frequently used to refer to the ethical conduct of men, that it carries the implication of imparted righteousness,<sup>307</sup> that it has a forensic aspect before the law, and that it is used attributively when applied to God himself as to his character. “Corollary to the forensic aspect of God’s righteousness is the concept of salvation as vindication”.

In Psalm 98, the righteousness of God is seen in his work of salvation, and in his judgment. This is consistent with Paul’s echo in Romans 1.

#### **b)     *The righteousness of God in judgment***

In Romans 2, alluding to Psalm 62, Paul expresses God’s righteous judgment on those who condemn others for things they themselves practice.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> *ibid*, 66 – he acknowledges he has changed his mind several times on this question.

<sup>306</sup> Harold G. Stigers, *s<sup>e</sup>daqa* in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* (ed. by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, Chicago: Moody, 1980), 752-755.

<sup>307</sup> Harold G. Stigers, *s<sup>e</sup>daqa* in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, 753 sees this in Hab. 2:4, Is. 32:15-17, Psalm 85:10.

<sup>308</sup> Romans 2:6: He will render to each one according to his works.

Psalm 62:12: For you will render to a man according to his work. (A similar sentiment is found in Proverbs 24:12).

*Prima facie* some may argue that here Paul contradicts what he says in Romans 3:20.<sup>309</sup> There is no contradiction, when the statement is looked at in context. Paul contends that God is fair in his judgments: the Jew cannot expect favourable treatment because of his ethnicity. “A Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart” (v. 29). Whether anyone can attain to the standard of righteousness that God requires, is the theme of Romans 3, but first Paul makes it clear that judgment is according to what someone has done: “We would follow those who maintain that the justification by faith granted the believer in this life is the sufficient cause of those works that God takes into account at the time of judgment. The initial declaration of the believer’s acquittal before the bar of heaven at the time of one’s justification is infallibly confirmed by the judgment according to works at the last assize”.<sup>310</sup>

N. T. Wright says: “The just judgment (*dikaiokrisia*, *Rom.2:5*) will be on the basis of the totality of the life that has been led ... Paul never for a moment undermines this biblical and traditional saying, widespread across the thought of ancient Israel”.<sup>311</sup> He further says that this “can hardly be thought un- or sub-Christian, since it appears

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<sup>309</sup> Rom.3:20: For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.

<sup>310</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 143.

<sup>311</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God Vol. 2*, 938. He also references Job 34:1; Prov. 24:12; Isa. 59:18; Jer. 17:10; 21:14; 32:19, Ezek. 18:30; Sir. 11:26; 16:12-14; 35:24; 51:30, 4 Ez. 7:35.

in one form or another not only in Paul but in several other strands of the New Testament”.<sup>312</sup>

Was Paul simply borrowing an expression, or was he allowing the Psalm to frame his thinking. The theme that judgment is according to works was commonly accepted in Jewish circles.<sup>313</sup> Paul could also have referenced a number of other Psalms,<sup>314</sup> but deliberately focussed on Psalm 62. When the opposition has intensified, he acknowledges twice over that God is his rock (62:2, 6), and his need for refuge. He speaks of the cowardliness and falsehood of men (62:3-4), and of the vanity and greed of men (62:9, 10). David remains confident of the power and of the steadfast love of God (62:11, 12), and it is in that context that he speaks of God rendering to a man according to his work. The contrast in Psalm 62 is between those whose rock and refuge is God, and those who do evil. “The psalm, which ends with the phrase quoted here, sees God’s just judgment according to works as an expression of God’s power and mercy. This deep-rooted Jewish tradition is not denied by Paul, but rather

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<sup>312</sup> *ibid*, 1087, which also references 2 Cor.5:10; 11:15; Mt. 16:27; 2 Tim.4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 18:6; 20:12f; 22:12.

<sup>313</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 112.

<sup>314</sup> Psalm 17:3 You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night,  
you have tested me, and you will find nothing.

Psalm 33:13-15: The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man;  
from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,  
he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

celebrated. If one of the purposes of the letter is to show that God's justice upstages that of Caesar and Rome, we could expect nothing less.<sup>315</sup>

Paul is not advocating 'works salvation', but pointing out that judgment will be just. God's  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta$  will be the context in which he will render to every man according to his works.

### **c)     *The righteousness of God affirmed***

In Romans 3:4, Paul quotes Psalm 51:4: "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged", and introducing this quotation formally ( $\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\varsigma$   $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\rho\alpha\pi\tau\alpha\iota$ ).

The context of this Psalm is David's conviction of sin after his adultery with Bathsheba, when Nathan said, "You are the man".<sup>316</sup> David had broken many of the ten commandments; he stood condemned. However, Paul demonstrates that God is righteous not only when he condemns, but also when he shows mercy. "The point made explicitly by Paul's citation of Psalm 51:4 is that Scripture proclaims the justice of God's judgment. The point made implicitly is that Psalm 51 (and its narrative precursor in 2 Samuel 11-12) models the appropriate human posture before this righteous God: not challenging his just sentence of condemnation but repenting and

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<sup>315</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans - The New Interpreter's Bible: Volume Ten* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 439.

<sup>316</sup> This incident may well have come to Paul's mind when he wrote Romans 2:1b: "you who pass judgment do the same things".

acknowledging desperate need”.<sup>317</sup> Romans 3:4 is, therefore, concerned first with theodicy, and then soteriology. The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, but how can there be a righteous salvation unless God is true and is justified in his judgments?

Had Paul gone back to the original narrative in 2 Samuel to make his point, would there have been any difference from making the point from the psalm? God’s grace was apparent in the narrative, but in the psalm, the paramount question is how God has been affected by David’s sin. The psalm demonstrates the evidence of true repentance.<sup>318</sup>

The fulfilment awaited the work of Christ on the cross, but the principles have been established in this psalm for ‘peace with God’ (Rom.5:1), newness of life (Rom.6:4), dead to sin, alive to God (Rom.6:11), not under law but under grace (Rom.6:15), walking not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom.8:4).

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<sup>317</sup> Hays *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 50.

<sup>318</sup> Psalm 51:7: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

v. 10-11: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

v.13: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

v.15: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.



**d) But no one is righteous**

Before Paul establishes the full scope of the gospel, he addresses the problem of the extent of sin. He turns primarily to the Psalms, in the longest concatenation of Old Testament references in all his letters. His opening line is a bold asseveration: “No one is righteous, no, not one”. The quotation is almost certainly from the last line of Psalm 14:1: “There is none who does good”. The Septuagint, however, has translated the Hebrew **אֵין יֹשֵׁעַ הַיָּשָׁרִים** (there is no one doing good) with οὐκ ἔστιν ποιῶν χρηστότητα οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἐνός (there is no one practicing kindness, not even one). Paul’s rendering in Romans 3:10 is οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς, (there is no one righteous, there is not even one). Potentially, Paul was influenced by Ecclesiastes 7:20; “ὅτι ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ἐν τῇ γῇ” (Surely there is not a righteous man on earth). The reason for Paul’s variation from both the Septuagint and from the MT is not clear.

The thrust of all variations – MT and LXX of Psalm 14:1, Ecclesiastes 7:20, and Paul’s rendering – is that no one is doing what is right and good. Seifrid argues that Psalm 14:1 in the Septuagint is concerned with kindness to others, but Paul “shifts to the human-divine relation”.<sup>319</sup> This may be so, but the lack of kindness in Psalm 14:1 is still directly attributable to their denial of God. Moo considers the change of word is “almost certainly Paul’s own editorial change” though he adds: “This (Paul’s) meaning is not far from David’s intention in the Psalm, as he unfolds the myriad

<sup>319</sup> Mark Seifrid in “Romans” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 616.

dimensions of human folly”.<sup>320</sup> Paul continues in Romans 3:11-12 with quotation from Psalm 14:2c-3: “No one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one”. This can be translated: “there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one” (οὐκ ἔστιν ποιῶν χρηστότητα, οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἑνός). Possibly, by using the word δίκαιος in verse 10 and χρηστότητα in verse 12, Paul is alluding to man’s state of being ‘not right’ before God, and ‘not right’ with his neighbour. In the next 6 verses, Paul outlines the wickedness of what man does to his neighbour. Verses 13 and 14 bring together three psalms, describing sins of speech. Romans 3:13-14: Their throat is an open grave; they used their tongues to deceive: from Psalm 5:9; The venom of asps is under their lips: from Psalm 140:3; Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness: from Psalm 10:7. “The piling up of figures is typical of the Psalms, so that one need not imagine that Paul is using keyword linkage to build his statement. He is simply choosing a full range of biblical imagery to make his point emphatically”.<sup>321</sup> The final 4 lines switch from the evil of language to the evil of conduct: Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known: from Isaiah 59:7-8; there is no fear of God before their eyes: from Psalm 36:1.

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<sup>320</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 203.

<sup>321</sup> Mark Seifrid, in “Romans” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 617.

These scriptures, however damning the quotation made from them, also contain a message of hope. Psalm 14 concludes with a plea for salvation; Psalm 5 is a prayer to be heard in the morning; Psalm 140 pleads for God to intervene; and Psalm 10 asserts that God sees and notes mischief and vexation. The passage in Isaiah begins: “Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save”. Psalm 36 extends hope to the children of men to take refuge in the shadow of God’s wings.

Why then does Paul conclude from this list that everyone is sinful? “The surface meaning of the text is clear, that all who are under the law are condemned as sinners; but the subtext is saying all the time, “Yes, and in this situation God will act, because of the divine righteousness, to judge the world, to rescue the helpless, to establish the covenant”.<sup>322</sup> The imagery is of a law court. The charges can be summed up: estrangement from God, wicked speech, violent acts. The guilt is not the result of weakness, but consciously choosing wrong. David sometimes pleads innocence: e.g. Psalm 18:23: “I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt”. Here, David was innocent of the charges his enemies laid against him, and in that sense, he was righteous, but the same David freely acknowledged his sin in Psalms such as 32, 38, 51, 140, 143. This wrestling with the problem of sin, especially by one such as David, makes the Psalms most effective for Paul’s purposes in demonstrating that sin has infected the whole human race.

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<sup>322</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans - The New Interpreter's Bible: Volume Ten*, 458.

Paul concludes in Romans 3:20: “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight”. This allusion is to Psalm 143:2.<sup>323</sup> There is, however, a significant difference in Paul’s quotation. Psalm 143:2 in the Hebrew refers to כָּל־חַיִּים (all living), and in the Septuagint πᾶς ζῶν (all living), but Paul uses the expression πᾶσα σὰρξ (all flesh). For Paul, ‘flesh’ “is a heavily-loaded term ... humankind seen as physically corruptible and morally rebellious, heading for death in both senses”.<sup>324</sup> The psalm “is not adduced as a proof for Paul’s assertion, but his assertion echoes the psalm, activating Israel’s canonical memory. A reader formed spiritually by the psalter, with or without recognizing the specific allusion, will already know that before God no one can claim to be justified”.<sup>325</sup>

Many of the Psalms helped re-enforce Israel’s collective memory of times of bondage, and of deliverance,<sup>326</sup> but that same combination of psalter and history also revealed their propensity to rebellion. Other Psalms repeated the consciousness of sin on the part of the Psalmist.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Psalm 143:2: for no one living is righteous before you.

<sup>324</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans - The New Interpreter's Bible: Volume Ten*, 459.

<sup>325</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 51.

<sup>326</sup> Particularly the historical Psalms such as Psalm 78, 105, 106, 114, and other community laments, particularly in the Third Book of Psalms.

<sup>327</sup> The recognised penitential Psalms such as Psalm 38, 51, 130 but there is also awareness of sin in 25:11, 31:10, 40:11, 41:4.

Hays also states that the echoes do not end with the universal condemnation, but that “to overhear the full range of echoes, we must listen to the psalm as a whole”. Verse 1 speaks of God’s ἀληθεία (truth) and δικαιοσύνη (righteousness) and echoes the whole theme introduced by Romans 3:4-5. “If Psalm 143 implicitly spans verses 20 and 21 of Romans 3, then the righteousness of God proclaimed by Paul is the same righteousness invoked by David’s prayer ... This means that Rom.3:21 is not the introduction of a new theme in the argument, explaining how individuals can find acceptance with God, as so many commentators since Luther have thought, but the climax of a continuous discussion that goes back at least to the beginning of the chapter, or indeed all the way back to Rom.1:16-17”.<sup>328</sup>

The problem with this interpretation as Schreiner points out is that the righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) of God in Romans 3:4b is God’s judging righteousness rather than God’s saving righteousness.<sup>329</sup> However, in verse 21 it is the saving righteousness of God that is manifested, and, in verse 22, this saving righteousness of God is available to all who believe.<sup>330</sup> There is, therefore, a conclusion reached in Romans 3:21-26. God is righteous when he judges (verse 4) and is also righteous when he saves (verse 21-26).

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<sup>328</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 52.

<sup>329</sup> Thomas R Schreiner, *Romans*, 152.

<sup>330</sup> *ibid*, 178.

Wright and Hays both demonstrate that, in every psalm quoted by Paul, there was a longing for righteousness, and that this righteousness could only be known by those who looked to God for salvation, but there was still an unanswered question till Christ came. It is to a review of God's saving righteousness we now turn.

**e)     *The righteousness of God in forgiveness*<sup>331</sup>**

Up to Romans 3:20, Paul has been demonstrating the sinfulness of sin. God is justified in judgment. Romans 3:21-26 is crucial to understanding how God's judging righteousness is compatible with God's saving righteousness. Both fulfil Old Testament Scripture. The key is that God has been propitiated by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that is appropriated through faith (ἱλαστήριον, διὰ τῆς πίστεως, ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι).<sup>332</sup> Paul does not present his argument only conceptually. He turns to the Old Testament to present both Abraham and David as concrete examples. Abraham was justified by believing God in faith (Gen. 15:6). The question may still have been asked: "Could God righteously forgive sins which would have been known publicly, and were clearly not 'unintentional'?"<sup>333</sup> Paul establishes that

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<sup>331</sup> See also the analysis of Psalm 32 in Romans 4 above.

<sup>332</sup> Almost every commentary on Romans devotes considerable effort to exegesis of these verses, which are fundamental to Paul's gospel. Examples are Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 218-242; Thomas T. Schreiner, *Romans*, 178-199.

<sup>333</sup> The Law of the Sin Offering in Lev.4 begins: "When anyone sins unintentionally".

righteousness is a gift from God rather than the result of human effort, and invokes the case of David, who had lusted, committed adultery and orchestrated murder.

Paul used David's confession of sin in Psalm 51 at the beginning of chapter 3 to establish that God is justified when he judges. He now invokes Psalm 32 to demonstrate that God is justified when he forgives. This forgiveness is available to everyone, circumcised or uncircumcised, who is of the faith of Abraham.

**f)      *Salvation and God's Righteousness: encapsulated in the Psalms***

Moo describes the first four chapters of Romans as "The heart of the gospel", and the next four as "The assurance provided by the gospel".<sup>334</sup> In Romans 1-4, Paul has drawn more intensively from the Psalms than from anywhere else, and has shown that God is righteous both in judgment and in salvation. Elsewhere, Paul uses illustrations from life in the empire.<sup>335</sup> He could have used a compilation of situations, depicting wickedness in the empire, among barbarians, and in Greek circles to demonstrate the universal wickedness of humanity. Instead, Paul's view, of the need for salvation and of the provision of salvation, was established by Scripture, especially the Psalms.

**3.2.4. Salvation and God's Power**

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<sup>334</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, see contents page.

<sup>335</sup> For example, when he speaks of running to win the prize in 1 Cor.9, or the good soldier pleasing his commanding officer in 2 Tim.2.

**a)     *The Power of God in Paul's conversion***

From earliest years, Paul would have been conscious of the power of God, as creator of the world, as protector of Israel, as judge of Israel in the exile, and as restorer of Israel when the captives returned.

On the road to Damascus, blinded by the light, and thrown to the ground, he experienced that power directly. Then he realised that the greatest evidence of God's power was seen in the resurrection of Jesus. The gospel was the power of God that brings salvation (Rom.1:16).

But to what extent was Paul's appreciation of God's power informed by the Psalms?

**b)     *Paul's use of Psalm 18:49 in Romans 15:9***

In Romans 15:9, Paul cites Psalm 18:49. "Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles; and sing to your name".<sup>336</sup> Psalm 18 celebrates God's power. In 18:1-2, the LORD is the Psalmist's strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold. When the cords of death encompassed him (18:4), God heard his cry for help (18:6), and came down (18:9). The earth trembled (18:7), the sea fled (18:15), and God rescued him from his strong enemy (18:17), because God delighted in him (18:19). After this tribute to God's strength and salvation, the Psalmist concludes that God's way is perfect (18:31). This is the background to extolling God's name abroad (18:49).

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<sup>336</sup> Psalm 18:49 is identical to 2 Sam.22:50.



This celebration of God's power in Psalm 18 is reflected in Romans. Paul affirms that "the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation" (Rom.1:16); the rescue was carried out when "we were still powerless" (Rom.5:6); God acted in sovereign mercy: "Jacob I loved" (Rom.9:13); God's way is perfect: "How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out" (Rom.11:33), and concludes the doctrinal portion of his letter with this commitment from Psalm 18:49 to praise God among the Gentiles (Rom.15:9).

Many see Paul reading this Psalm as the words of Christ. Wagner writes: "It is widely recognized that Paul understands the speaker of these words from Psalm 17:50 (LXX) to be Christ ... This interpretation is virtually certain in light of Paul's previous use of Psalm 68:10 (LXX) as a word of Christ in Romans 15:3".<sup>337</sup> Moo writes: "It would fit Paul's purposes perfectly if he were attributing to Christ this praise of God for the subduing of the Gentiles under his messianic rule".<sup>338</sup> Pate considers this application of Old Testament speakers to Christ to be "typological speech": "They understood that God sovereignly coordinated history so that key individuals, events, and institutions served as patterns of what the end-times people of God would experience. They were expecting individuals like David, events like the Exodus, and institutions like the Passover, to find fulfilment in the Messiah. They

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<sup>337</sup> J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to Romans*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 312.

<sup>338</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, 879.

were on the lookout for key OT figures whose lives prefigured the life and ministry of Christ, and on this basis the words of these individuals could be applied to Christ”.<sup>339</sup>

Paul, therefore, has encased the entire epistle of Romans with references to God’s power – Romans 1:16 and Romans 15:9. Romans 15:9 does not use directly words of “power”, but Paul’s citations are not atomistic. The use of Psalm 18 at the conclusion of the letter, presents a clear picture of the power of God – the Gospel will go out to the Gentiles, and they will hear the praises of Israel’s God.

The variety of words used in the Psalms to describe God’s power is reflected in Paul’s letters.<sup>340</sup> Paul saw no need to illustrate God’s power from the empire. His understanding of God’s transcendent power was derived from the Scriptures.

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<sup>339</sup> Brian Pate, in “Who is speaking? The use of Isaiah 8:17-18 in Hebrews 2:13 as a Case Study for applying the Speech of Key OT Figures to Christ” (JETS 59:4, 2016), 738.

<sup>340</sup> Psalm 68:35: “Awesome (LXX: θαυμαστός) is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people”. This is reflected in 2 Thess.1:10: God shall be “marvelled at among all those who have believed (καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν)”.  
Psalm 78:43: signs and miracles (LXX: σημεῖα and τέρατα). This is reflected in Romans 15:19: “by the power of signs and wonders (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων), through the power of the Spirit of God”.

Psalm 62:11 it is power, as strength, “Power (τὸ κράτος) belongs to you, God”; this is Paul’s word in Ephesians 1:19: “the working of his mighty strength” (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ)

**c)     *The Power of God in creation and in resurrection***

Francis Bacon is credited with teaching that God has written two books: The Scriptures and the book of creation.<sup>341</sup> Paul holds all human beings responsible for not acknowledging God, because God's "eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Rom.1:20).<sup>342</sup> We find echoes here of Psalm 19:1-4, and 65:8.<sup>343</sup> In his

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<sup>341</sup> Bacon, Francis, *Of the proficience and advancement of learning, Divine and Human*, (London: J. F. Dove, 1828), 53: For our Saviour saith, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" laying before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be secured from error: first the Scriptures, revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing His power.

<sup>342</sup> Commenting on this section, Seifrid says: "Although the various elements of Paul's announcement that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" obviously echo the Scriptures, the formulation itself is unique to Paul": Mark Seifrid in "Romans" in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, 610.

<sup>343</sup> Psalm 19:1-4: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 65:8: The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;

where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.

references to creation, Paul affirms the pre-eminence of Christ (Col.1:16), the liberation of creation from its bondage to decay (Rom.8:18-22), and the goodness of creation (1 Tim.4:4).

Nevertheless, the greatest demonstration of God's power was the raising of Jesus.<sup>344</sup>

The accumulation of expressions for power has been noted: δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, κράτος, ἰσχύς. Creation Psalms had celebrated God's creative power. Historical Psalms had celebrated God's sovereign power. Passover Psalms 114-118 had celebrated God's saving power. Paul added to the recognition of his works of power on behalf of Israel, the recognition of his greatest act of power for all nations in the raising of Jesus.

However, Paul does not just see the resurrection of Jesus as an act of power for its own sake. Its purpose was salvation: (Rom.1:16; 1 Cor.1:24). This again is how power is seen in Psalm 106:8: "Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power" (καὶ ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ τοῦ γνωρίσαι τὴν δυναστείαν αὐτοῦ).

#### **d) Power and weakness**

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<sup>344</sup> 1 Cor.6:14: And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

Eph.1:19-20: that you may know ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Phil.3:10: that I may know him (Christ) and the power of his resurrection.

Many Psalms begin with the Psalmist in distress and weakness, but conclude with confidence in the strength and power of God.<sup>345</sup> Others are conscious of the difference between human power and divine power, even when it may be interpreted by some as weakness.<sup>346</sup>

The theme of weakness and power is emphatic throughout Paul's writings to the Corinthians. First it is seen in the crucifixion: "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God" (2 Cor.13:4). Second, the power that Paul experienced when he was with the Corinthians was God's power: "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling ... but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" 1 Cor.2:3-4. Third, God's power is the perfect answer to human weakness: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" 2 Cor.12:9. Fourth, God's power will be known by the believer at resurrection: "What is sown is perishable; what is raised is

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<sup>345</sup> Psalm 40 begins with: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry", but concludes: "I am poor and needy ... You are my help and my deliverer".

Psalm 61:2-3: from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

Psalm 73:26: My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

<sup>346</sup> Psalm 20:7: some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

imperishable. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (1 Cor.15:42-43).

The Psalmist speaks of the blessedness of the man whose strength is in God.<sup>347</sup> Paul expresses the same sentiments: “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Rom.8:26); “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Phil.4:13). Seeing Philippians through the prism of these Psalms defeats any interpretation that Paul is triumphalist. Hansen notes that “Any use of this verse to support a claim or goal of a triumphant, victorious Christian life without weakness or limitations conflicts with the immediate context and wider teaching of Paul”.<sup>348</sup>

### **3.2.5. Soteriology: Summary**

Paul’s understanding of the Gospel necessarily depended on the historical events in the life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Paul had resisted this until he met the ascended Christ on the Damascus Road. He learned there, that the righteousness he had prided in, based on law, was useless even though he had kept it faultlessly (Phil.3:6). The strength he had relied on, in any capacity, was weaker

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<sup>347</sup> Psalm 68:35: Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel

— he is the one who gives power and strength to his people.

Psalm 84:5, 7Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

... They go from strength to strength.

<sup>348</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *The Epistle to the Philippians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 314.

than the weakness of God (1 Cor.1:25). He brings together again the righteousness that comes from God, and the power that comes from God when he writes to the Philippians.<sup>349</sup>

Reading the Psalms again, in the light of Jesus Christ, he learned sin was more universal and more deeply rooted than he had ever realised, but the righteousness imputed was far greater than he could ever have attained under the law.

He had been aware of the greatness of God's acts of power in saving Israel, but no act of power could compare with the resurrection of Jesus. Whereas in human society all power corrupts, Paul saw divine power as evidence of God's incorruptible divinity, and in Christ the evidence of incorruptible humanity.

Reading the Psalms in the light of Jesus Christ, Paul saw far more than he ever had reading them with unenlightened eyes. He could go to the Jews, and to the nations, and say "The God whose righteousness and whose power is celebrated in these Psalms, is the God who raised Jesus from the dead, and whose gospel I proclaim".

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<sup>349</sup> Phil.3:8-11: Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith - that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

### 3.3. Ecclesiology

#### 3.3.1. A Redeemed Community

As a student of the Old Testament, Paul would have been keenly aware that an essential characteristic of the people of God, was that they were a redeemed people. The root of the Hebrew word  $\text{פָּדָה}$  (pada) is to achieve transfer of ownership through the payment of a price, as Psalm 25:22.<sup>350</sup> The complementary word  $\text{גָּאֵל}$  (ga'al) usually has the additional emphasis of the duty of a near relative, as Psalm 103:4.<sup>351</sup> The two words are used almost synonymously.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> William B. Coker, pada ( $\text{פָּדָה}$ ) in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, (ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, Chicago: Moody, 1980), 716-7.

Psalm 25:22: Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

<sup>351</sup> R. Laird Harris ga'al ( $\text{גָּאֵל}$ ) in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, 144-5.

Psalm 103:4: who redeems your life from the pit.

<sup>352</sup> R. L. Hubbard Jr in "Redemption" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, Leicester: IVP, 2000), 716: "The biblical term denotes only one important aspect of salvation. Redemption involves the release of people, animals or property through outside help. Their social, physical or spiritual weakness makes redemption necessary. Only someone strong or rich can effect it".



In the Old Testament, redemption means deliverance from an oppressor,<sup>353</sup> or from slavery,<sup>354</sup> or from difficulty,<sup>355</sup> or poverty,<sup>356</sup> or death.<sup>357</sup> Psalm 130 goes a step further and expresses the concept of redemption from sins.<sup>358</sup> Israel in Egypt was in bondage to Pharaoh, humanity in sin was in bondage to Satan. However, Pharaoh and Satan are usurpers. God does not ‘deal’ with Pharaoh to negotiate the redemption of his people. Instead, the Passover lamb is slain, the people are led out

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<sup>353</sup> Psalm 74:32: Remember the nation you purchased long ago, the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed.

Ps. 106:10: So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them.

<sup>354</sup> Ex.21:8: If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed.

<sup>355</sup> Psalm 119:154: Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!

<sup>356</sup> Lev.25:25: If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.

<sup>357</sup> Psalm 49:15: But God will ransom (redeem) my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

<sup>358</sup> Psalm 130:7-8: “For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities”.

of Egypt, and brought by God to God (Ex.19:4). Similarly, Paul stresses that redemption from sin is accomplished entirely by what God has done.<sup>359</sup>

Secondly, redemption, in both the Psalms and in Paul, is also “redemption for”, the securing of a people for God: Eph.1:14: the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it (ἀπολύτρωσις) – alternative reading: until God redeems his possession. Psalm 74 illustrates this. The Psalmist feels as though God has cast his people off for ever.<sup>360</sup> However, he clings on to this belief, that God had purchased his people, that they had been redeemed and were his inheritance (74:2). How much more those who had been redeemed by Christ.

Thirdly, lives that have been redeemed are transformed. Psalm 107 depicts those who had been redeemed from desert wastelands (v.2-9), from darkness (v.10-16), from folly (v.17-22), from storms (v.23-32); Psalm 119:134 explicitly states “that I may obey your precepts”.

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<sup>359</sup> Rom.3:23-24: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Gal.3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Gal.4:4-5: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son ... to redeem those who were under the law.

<sup>360</sup> Psalm 74 reflects the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple – the enemy destroying everything in the sanctuary.

Titus 2:14 encapsulates all three aspects: “Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness<sup>361</sup> and to purify for himself a people for his own possession<sup>362</sup> who are zealous for good works”.

Whether the Psalmist is thinking of himself as an individual, or of the people of Israel, or considering the whole of humanity, the cry that comes repeatedly, especially from the Psalms of Lament is for redemption. Paul builds on this, and relates it all to Christ. It is Christ who paid the price: 1 Cor.6:20: “you were bought at a price”. “This redemption obligates Christians to glorify Christ in their daily living”.<sup>363</sup>

Marshall describes it thus: “The English term *redemption* covers two related Pauline metaphors. One is the deliverance of captives from bondage, often by the payment of a ransom (Is 43:1-4; 52:3) or simply the exercise of superior military power. We find this metaphor taken up in Galatians 3:13 and Galatians 4:5 ... Paul can also refer to the buying of people so that they belong to God; here the thought is more of a change of master with the obligation to serve God (1 Cor.6:20; 7:23)”.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> George W. Knight III, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 327 links this expression with Psalm 130:8.

<sup>362</sup> See also Ex.19:5; Deut.7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ez. 37:23.

<sup>363</sup> R. L. Hubbard Jr in “Redemption” in the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 719.

<sup>364</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 438.

### 3.3.2. A Transnational Community

The people of God in both Testaments are a redeemed people. However, is the Old Testament redeemed community the same as the New Testament redeemed community?

#### **a) *The mystery***

For Paul, the mystery had been hidden for ages but was now made plain (Eph.3:9) that “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph.3:6).<sup>365</sup>

From the call of Abram, (Gen.12:3), God had promised that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. Although individual aliens, such as Rahab and Ruth, had been blessed, and there is provision for the foreigner living in the land of Israel (Deut.10:18, 14:21), it is in the Psalms that we find a call to all the nations to worship Yahweh.<sup>366</sup> In Psalm 2:8, the nations are promised as an inheritance to the Son. They are invited to serve the Lord, with the promise: “Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Psalm 2:12). During the monarchy,<sup>367</sup> David celebrates the fact that he is head of nations (Psalm 18:43), and vows that he will praise God among the nations

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<sup>365</sup> See also Col.1:27: God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

<sup>366</sup> This call is taken up most eloquently later by prophets such as Isaiah.

<sup>367</sup> That is, accepting the heading of the Psalm as indicative of when it was written.

(Psalm 18:49). Psalm 22:27 anticipates that all the families of the nations will serve the Lord. The Sons of Korah anticipate that the nations will praise Yahweh for ever and ever (Psalm 45:17), that he will be exalted among the nations (Psalm 46:10), that the nations will clap their hands and shout to God with cries of joy (Psalm 47:1), and that the nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham (Psalm 47:9). Psalm 67:2 says that God's salvation will be known among the nations.

Psalm 98:2 says that God has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.<sup>368</sup> Jew and Gentile will be brought together as one people worshipping one God. Other Psalms which anticipate all the nations being included among the people of God are Psalm 100, where all the earth is called on to worship Yahweh, and all the earth is included among the sheep of his pasture. Paul quotes Psalm 117:1: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him" in Romans 15:11 in his final appeal to the Romans to accept one another.

There remains a school of thought which sees an on-going distinction between Israel, as the ancient people of God with earthly blessings, and the New Testament church with heavenly blessings.<sup>369</sup> In none of the Psalm references, however, is there any

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<sup>368</sup> Psalm 98 brings together the core of the gospel, as we have seen in Romans 1:16-17, God's power and God's righteousness, to both Jew and Greek.

<sup>369</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol.4*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1948 – Copyright Dallas Theological Seminary), 33. This is a classic statement of dispensational theology: "In the coming kingdom of Messiah the distinction between Israel and the Church is still more obvious. Israel, as a nation, is seen through prophetic vision to be on the earth as

distinction made when Israel or the Gentiles worship Yahweh. Likewise, when Paul cites the Psalms, he gives no indication that a future distinction will be made in a coming kingdom. Paul is adamant that God is one, that the people of God are one, and what is announced in Genesis 12, anticipated in the Psalms, and made a reality in the Church, is that the people of God will be inclusive of every nation.

Paul concludes his letter to Galatians, (Gal.6:16): “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule – to the Israel of God”. Commentators differ, but Fee sums it up: “Christ is all and in all: and those who follow him are now designated by Paul with this neologism: they are ‘God’s Israel,’ the real thing”.<sup>370</sup>

### ***b) The Inheritance***

Paul speaks of God’s people having an inheritance.<sup>371</sup> “Inheritance” is a theme drawn from the Old Testament. Initially, this was expressed through the promise of the land: “Land is an important theological category in the Bible. From Genesis 12,

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subjects of the kingdom and in her kingdom glory, while the church is said to be co-reigning with Christ (Rev. 20:6)”.

<sup>370</sup> Gordon D Fee, *Pentecostal Commentary New Testament – Galatians* (Blandford Forum, Deo Publishing, 2007), 253. James D G Dunn, *Black’s New Testament Commentaries: the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: T & T Clark, 1993), 345 in contrast, suggests that in this expression “even in his final curtness Paul holds out an olive branch to his opponents”.

<sup>371</sup> Acts 20:32: (God) can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Yahweh's commitment to give land to Abraham and his descendants is often expressed ... The land, then, is the good gift of God, given as an inheritance to Israel as an expression of their filial relationship to Yahweh. It is pre-eminently a locus for relationship with God. However, the land can be forfeited".<sup>372</sup>

Nevertheless, the Old Testament introduces the theme of God, himself, who is the portion (inheritance) in God's original promise to Abram,<sup>373</sup> and in Psalm 16.<sup>374</sup> The language is reminiscent of "land" language: "portion" (חֵלֶק), "territory / inheritance" (חֵלֶק), "lot" (גֹּזֶל), "boundary lines" (חֵלֶק), "heritage" (נַחֲלָה). Three of the Hebrew words (חֵלֶק, גֹּזֶל, נַחֲלָה) are translated as "inheritance" (κληρονομία) in the LXX. This evokes the language used of the tribe of Levi in Numbers 18:20, Deuteronomy 10:9 and Joshua 13:14: God is their portion. Kraus says: "Lovely is this good fortune: to be privileged to live in proximity to Yahweh, to live in Yahweh himself ... gentle hints of a 'mystic' union with God".<sup>375</sup> This goes well beyond the concept of the

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<sup>372</sup> J G Millar in "Land" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (ed. T. D. Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, Leicester: IVP, 2000), 623-624.

<sup>373</sup> Genesis 15:1: Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great. Or: I am your shield, your very great reward.

<sup>374</sup> Psalm 16:5-6: "The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup ... indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance". NIV seemed to stand out from other translations rendering Psalm 16:5: "LORD, you have assigned me my portion". NIV 2011 has come in line with other translations: "LORD, you alone are my portion".

<sup>375</sup> Kraus, *A Continental Commentary: Psalms 1-59*, 238.

land as an inheritance and Psalm 16 has provided a basis for Paul to develop the concept of the believer's inheritance in Christ.<sup>376</sup>

The Old Testament expands the concept of "the land" to promising the whole world to the Messiah as the inheritance. Psalm 2:8: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession". Paul in Romans 8:17 says that believers, God's children, are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ". Wright says:

Israel was to be the people who inherited YHWH's sovereign rule over the world. The promised land was a sign of this, but already by the first century many Jews had glimpsed the possibility, already implicit within the Adam-Abraham nexus, that the land was simply an advance signpost to YHWH's claim over the whole of creation.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Compare Paul's other references to the "inheritance": those who cannot "inherit" in 1 Cor.6:9, 1 Cor.15:50, Gal.4:30, Eph.5:5: descriptions of the "inheritance" in Eph.1:14 (guaranteed by the Holy Spirit), Eph.1:18 (God's glorious inheritance in his saints), Col.3:24 (a promise to slaves working with all their heart, as for the Lord). 2 Cor.1:20-22 possibly provides the fullest reference: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee".

<sup>377</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God Vol. 2*, 814-815. In his footnote, Wright draws attention to Psalm 72:8-11: "May he rule from sea to sea ...".



But, here the status of ‘God’s children’, derived from his, is reaffirmed and the consequences drawn; if children, then inheritors, inheritors of God and co-inheritors with the Messiah. The ‘inheritance’ is now clear, from its first hint in Romans 4:13 to its full expression in 8:18-25: it is the whole world. This is what God promised Abraham according to Paul. It is what God promised the Messiah, in the foundational, messianic Psalm 2. It is now what God intends to share with all his people: that is what it means to be heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with the Messiah.<sup>378 379</sup>

### **c) God’s faithfulness to Israel**

Paul wrestles with the problem of Israel’s unfaithfulness. Had God rejected his people (Rom.11:2)? Paul’s answer was based on the experience of Elijah: Rom.11:4: “But what is God’s reply to him (Elijah)? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal’”. In this case, Paul used the historical narrative, but his answer is buttressed by Psalm 94:14: “For the Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance”.

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<sup>378</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* Vol. 2, 1022-1023.

<sup>379</sup> The obverse concept of the people as God’s inheritance also occurs in the Psalms. Psalm 33:12 says: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!”. Paul picks up this theme in Ephesians 1:18, when he prays for the Ephesians that they may know the “riches of his (God’s) glorious inheritance in the saints”.

Israel's unbelief had been foreseen and the consequences would be retribution. In Romans 11:9-10, Paul establishes this from Psalm 69.<sup>380</sup> As Paul develops his argument, he quotes Isaiah 59:20-21 in Romans 11:26-27.<sup>381</sup> This echoes David's conclusion to Psalm 14, which Paul used earlier in the epistle: "Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!" (Psalm 14:7). Paul concludes his consideration of God's dealings with Israel in a doxology in language reminiscent of Psalm 77.<sup>382</sup>

Regarding the question Paul asks: (Rom. 11:1): "Has God rejected his people?", Schreiner responds: "Many commentators note that "people" in verses 1-2 refers to Israel as a whole, not merely to the elect ... But since Israel is a theocratic entity, not

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<sup>380</sup> Psalm 69:22-23: Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever.

<sup>381</sup> Rom. 11:26-27: "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins".

<sup>382</sup> Psalm 77:12, 13, 19: I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds. Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? ... though your footprints were unseen.

Romans 11:33-34: Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?'

all those who are part of ethnic Israel are part of the remnant, the true people of God ... the faithfulness of God to his own is supported by the example of Paul himself”.<sup>383</sup>

#### **d) A Transnational Community: now a reality**

God had always intended that the blessing promised to Abraham would extend to all nations. It was always there in Genesis 12:3. The Psalmists wrestled with the questions. First, had God cast off his people?<sup>384</sup> Secondly, they realised that if God was God of the whole earth, all the nations would come and worship him, but although this is affirmed, they cannot answer the question “How will the nations be united with Israel?” Paul concludes that it is in the church where the mystery is unveiled. It is in Christ that the people of God find their inheritance, and that the promises of God are fulfilled. All of this was anticipated in the Psalms.

#### **3.3.3. A Worshipping Community**

“Nowhere in Scripture is worship actually defined”.<sup>385</sup> “There is no systematized statement of what Paul understood to be a fitting worship practice ... Paul’s teaching

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<sup>383</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 578.

<sup>384</sup> For example, Psalm 74 and others in Book 3.

<sup>385</sup> David G. Peterson in “Worship” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 855-863 – see also W. McConnell in “Worship” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* (ed. Tremper Longman III & Peter Enns, Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2008), 929-935; R. P. Martin, in “Worship” in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, Leicester: IVP, 1993), 982-990.

is scattered throughout his correspondence”.<sup>386</sup> There are, however, concepts which demonstrate different aspects of worship in both Old and New Testaments.

### **a) *Worship as Service***

“The most common Hebrew word for worship in the OT is *hawa*, which carries the basic meaning “bow down” or “prostrate oneself” ... Found some 170 times in the OT, it is almost universally translated *proskyneō* in the LXX”.<sup>387</sup> It is surprising, therefore, to find that Paul uses *προσκυνέω* only once (1 Cor.14:25). He uses the term *θρησκεία* referring to “religion” of worshipping angels (Col.2:18) and to describe his own religion in Judaism (Acts 26:5). He uses the term *σέβασμα* to describe what the man of lawlessness will overcome when he takes his seat in the temple of God (2 Thess.2:4), to describe objects of worship in Athens (Acts 17:23), and used the cognate *σεβάζομαι* to describe worship of the creature rather than the creator (Rom.1:25).

Paul uses the term *λατρεύω*, usually translated “serve”. In his testimony to Felix, Paul said: “I worship the God of our fathers” (*οὕτως λατρεύω τῷ πατρίῳ θεῷ* - Acts 24:14); on the shipwreck, he spoke of “the God to whom I belong and whom I worship (*λατρεύω* - Acts 27:23): to the Romans he affirmed “God is my witness, whom I serve (*λατρεύω*) with my spirit in the gospel of his Son (Rom. 1:9), and he

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<sup>386</sup> R. P. Martin, in “Worship” in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, 986.

<sup>387</sup> W. McConnell, in “Worship” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, 930.

encouraged the Romans “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν - Rom. 12:1).

Paul also used the term δουλεύω, translated “serve”, sometimes negatively as in “Do you wish to be enslaved?” (οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε, Gal.4:9), but also positively: “serving the Lord” (τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες, Rom. 12:11). For Paul, therefore, a major part of “worship” was “service”. He was surrounded by pagan worship, both Greek and Roman, he had worshipped as a Pharisee, but worship of God the Father and of Jesus Christ was qualitatively different.

One of the words that Paul would notice in the Psalms was עָבַד (serve), translated δουλεύω in the LXX. This was the call, in Psalm 2:11: “Serve the LORD with fear”. It was the assurance at the end of Psalm 22: “Posterity shall serve him”. It was the call, in Psalm 100 concluding the subset of Psalms focussing on God as King: “Serve the LORD with gladness!”

Although there is overlap in the semantic use of different terms, it is clear Paul saw worship, first, in terms of service rather than ritual or liturgy or religion, a concept consistent with what he found in the Psalms.

### ***b) Worshipping the one God***

Paul remained resolutely monotheist. The clearest statement of Israel’s monotheism is the Shema.<sup>388</sup> The theme is picked up and developed throughout the Psalms, in

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<sup>388</sup> Deut.6:1.

for, for example, Psalm 18:31: “Who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?”<sup>389</sup> The writings of Paul echo this belief.<sup>390</sup>

However, in Scripture, a person’s name is frequently a description of their character, and so it is with God’s name. The third commandment was explicit about not calling on God’s name in vain (Ex.20:7). The Lord’s prayer begins “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9). The God the Psalmists worshipped, and the God Paul worshipped, was called upon by name.

There are explicit references to calling on God’s name. The nations are condemned (Psalm 79:6) because they do not call on God’s name. Psalm 80:18 is a promise to the Shepherd of Israel that they would call upon his name. Psalm 99:6 recalls those who had been answered when they called on God’s name.<sup>391</sup> Psalm 116:13

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<sup>389</sup> A theme strongly reemphasised by Isaiah: Is. 43:10; 44:6; 44:8; 45:21, 46:9. See also: Psalm 72:18; 76:7; 83:18; 86:10; 89:5-10; 136:4; 148:13.

<sup>390</sup> 1 Cor.8:4-65: For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Eph.4:4-6: One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

2 Tim.1:17: Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

1 Tim.2:5: For there is one God.

<sup>391</sup> Psalm 99:6: Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the Lord, and he answered them.

associates calling on God's name with salvation.<sup>392</sup> "Those who call on the name of the Lord" is then used by Paul as a sobriquet for believers. In Romans 10:13, it is the identity of those who are saved: "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved".<sup>393</sup> To the Corinthians, Paul writes about "all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.1:2), a description here of the community. Finally, Paul uses it to call on God's people to live holy lives in 2 Timothy 2:19: "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity".

### **c) A faithful God**

Not only was God, "one", but the Psalmists and Paul shared the conviction that there was no fickleness in God. Martin describes some of the features of the Greco-Roman Religion and Cult:<sup>394</sup> in the Greek religion the gods were revered by offerings to secure a favourable "lot" in this world and the underworld of Hades. "Fate" awaiting the departed was unpredictable. In Rome, notions of uncertainty were reinforced by the admission of Tyche ("luck", "chance"), and the gods were treated in a superstitious manner. Jewish worship, during the time of Alexander, was marked by increasing Hellenization. After the Maccabean struggle, the cultural changes to Jewish life served only to enhance belief in one God and the sanctity of

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<sup>392</sup> Psalm 116:13: I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

<sup>393</sup> In this case, Paul is quoting from Joel 2:32. However, as noted, Psalm 116 also explicitly links calling on the name of the Lord with salvation.

<sup>394</sup> R. P. Martin in "Worship" in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, 982-990.

his house, the Temple at Jerusalem. The Temple remained the focal point for national worship. The home was another locus for worship, featuring especially the Sabbath and the Passover. Finally, there was the synagogue, the centre of praise, prayers and instruction.<sup>395</sup>

Colossians 2:23<sup>396</sup> indicates that Paul believed many of the cultic practices were part Jewish, part pagan, and distorted the essentials of the faith. In contrast, Paul concurs with the Psalmists on the faithfulness of God: “Your faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 119:90); “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Paul also recognised along with the Psalmist that God’s will is perfect: As for God, his way is perfect: the Lord’s word is flawless (Psalm 18:30); you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

#### ***d) Worship as Praise – Individual and Corporate***

Worship includes “praise”. “The great biblical repository of the praises of ancient Israel is the book of Psalms. In Hebrew, the book is called *tehillim* – songs of

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<sup>395</sup> *ibid*, 983-985.

<sup>396</sup> Col.2:23: Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.



praise”.<sup>397</sup> In some Psalms, there is a commitment to praise God personally.<sup>398</sup> Some Psalms call for corporate worship.<sup>399</sup> Others call for all the nations to praise.<sup>400</sup>

Likewise, Paul saw worship, in song, as an essential part of the Christian life. When the church comes together, “each one has a hymn” (1 Cor.14:26). He encourages the Ephesians to “be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph.5:18-19). He encourages the Colossians: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col.3:16).

#### **e) A Worshipping Community: those who are “in Christ”**

In summary, Paul has reinterpreted the essential elements for worship from the Psalms in the light of the person of Jesus. There is still a focus on the temple, but that is now seen differently: “For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple”

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<sup>397</sup> W. McConnell, in “Worship” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom*, 929-935.

<sup>398</sup> Psalm 34:1: I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. See also Psalm 35:18; 40:3; 42:5.

<sup>399</sup> Psalm 68:26: Praise God in the great congregation; praise the Lord in the assembly of Israel. See also Psalm 22:3; 22:23; 148:14; 149:1.

<sup>400</sup> Psalm 67:3: May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. See also Psalm 98:4; 100:1; 102:18; 117:1.

(1 Cor.3:17). It is still God alone who is to be worshipped, but that includes calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **3.3.4. A Holy Community**

Paul's gospel laid stress on being justified freely by God's grace (Rom.3:24), and salvation was by grace, through faith, not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph.2:8-9). Paul defends himself against misrepresentation in the first instance by answering the question: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom.6:1) saying: "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" But he also refutes the charge of antinomianism by providing strong ethical instruction. R. E. O. White says: "His directives for Christian living emerge in scattered counsels and exhortations addressed always to concrete situations and informed by wide pastoral experience".<sup>401</sup>

The call to holiness is present in nearly all of Paul's letters, sometimes as a call to be holy, sometimes as an appeal because they are already holy.<sup>402</sup> The Psalms also

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<sup>401</sup> R. E. O. White, *Biblical Ethics: The changing continuity of Christian Ethics Vol:1* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979), 157.

<sup>402</sup> One of his earliest letters sets the clarion call:

1 Thess.3:13: so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

1 Thess.5:23: Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. On other occasions, he emphasises that his readers are already holy:

contain calls to holiness.<sup>403</sup> The Psalmists were in different circumstances from Paul. Frequently the Psalmist was a fugitive, in despair and in danger, crying out to God in laments, and through wisdom psalms.<sup>404</sup> In others, the Psalmist speaks as the King. Paul was writing to churches with inspired teaching.<sup>405</sup> Did he consequently have a conflicting view of ethics from the Psalmists?

**a) *The basic principle of love***<sup>406</sup>

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Col.3:12: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

To the Corinthians, he makes this general appeal: 1 Cor.3:17: For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple”.

<sup>403</sup> Psalm 15:1-2 O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart.

Psalm 24:3-4: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart ...

<sup>404</sup> There is no definitive list of Wisdom Psalms, though a suggested list would be Psalms 1, 19, 37, 49, 73, 90, 111, 112, 119. Wisdom Psalms include much ethical instruction, but there are many ethical lessons to be learned from all types of Psalms.

<sup>405</sup> 1 Cor.14:37; 2 Thess.3:6.

<sup>406</sup> S. C. Mott, in “Ethics” in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, Leicester: IVP, 1993), 269-275 suggests the basis of Ethics is in Grace, and follows this up with “An Ethic of Love”.

White provides classifications to help analyse Paul's ethical principles, the first being the basic principle of love.<sup>407</sup> Although Paul stresses the primacy of "love", White points out that nowhere does he define this new moral principle.<sup>408</sup> The basis of it, however, is specific – it is Christ's love for Paul.<sup>409</sup> Paul exhorts his readers to love

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<sup>407</sup> R. E. O. White *Biblical Ethics: The changing continuity of Christian Ethics Vol:1*, 157-187.

Romans 13:8: Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Galatians 5:14: For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

1 Cor.12:31: The most excellent way" is the way of "love"

<sup>408</sup> R. E. O. White *Biblical Ethics: The changing continuity of Christian Ethics Vol:1*, 159.

Not everyone will agree that "love" is a new moral principle, however. Jesus said he was giving a new command to the disciples, but the moral principle was established long before.

<sup>409</sup> Galatians 2:20: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15: For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves.

Other foundational texts in Paul regarding love include:

Rom.5:5: God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Rom.5:8: But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

one another. Nowhere is this more emphatic than in Philippians 2:1-11, where Paul begs that they would make his “joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love”, and buttresses this request by the great Christological example of verses 6 to 11.<sup>410</sup>

In the Psalms, the underlying principle in the Psalms is God covenant love (אֱהָבָה).<sup>411</sup> Of 244 occurrences of אֱהָבָה in the Old Testament, 126 are in the Psalms. They occur in all five Books of the Psalms, with 60 occurring in Book 5.

The Psalmists were grounded in the consciousness of God’s אֱהָבָה, as foundational to everything they believed and wrote, and how they acted. Paul’s directives aim to see this divine love in operation. This provides a foundational ethic.

### ***b) Judgment***

If God’s אֱהָבָה is a foundational principle for the Psalms, why then do the Psalmists call for God’s judgment. C. S. Lewis says: “It was therefore with great surprise that I first noticed how the Psalmists talk about the judgments of God ... Judgment is apparently an occasion of universal rejoicing. The ancient Jews, like ourselves, think of God’s judgment in terms of an earthly court of justice. The difference is that the Christian pictures the case to be tried as a criminal case with himself in the dock; the

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<sup>410</sup> Other examples include Col.2:2; 1 Tim.1:5; 2 Tim.2:22.

<sup>411</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III and Janes A. Swanson *The Hebrew English Concordance to the Old Testament with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 559-561.

Jew pictures it as a civil case with himself as the plaintiff. The one hopes for acquittal, or rather pardon; the other hopes for a resounding triumph with heavy damages”.<sup>412</sup> This may be a fair reflection of how different cultures view “judgment”. However, a review of the Psalms makes clear that God, as judge, is righteous (Psalm 9:4), and judges with equity (Psalm 9:8).<sup>413</sup> There are occasions when, as Lewis suggests, the Psalmist looks to God to vindicate him,<sup>414</sup> but there are other occasions when the Psalmist recognises that he is in the dock.<sup>415</sup> God will judge the nations: “for he comes to judge the earth” (Psalm 96:13).<sup>416</sup> God will also judge every person, and that is according to his covenant love (תְּחִנָּה - Psalm 62:12).

Paul’s references to judgment parallel these aspects. God is a righteous judge. God’s judgment is based on truth (Rom.2:2); in the day of God’s wrath, his righteous judgment will be revealed (Rom.2:5). God’s judgment is right (2 Thess.1:5), and Paul knows that he will be given a crown of righteousness by the righteous judge (2 Tim. 4:8). Like the Psalmists, Paul was content to let God judge, and vindicate him. Where people are criticizing him: “My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me” (1 Cor.4:4). God has set a day when he

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<sup>412</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, (Glasgow: Collins, 1961), 15-16.

<sup>413</sup> Other references include Psalm 7:11; 75:2; 82:1; 94:2; 94:15; 98:9.

<sup>414</sup> Psalm 7:8; 9:4; 26:1; 43:1; 57:2.

<sup>415</sup> Psalm 6:1; 38:1; 51:4.

<sup>416</sup> Psalm 9:8; 9:19; 58:11; 82:8; 96:10.

will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed (Acts 17:31). God will judge every person: “according to what they have done” (Rom.2:6).<sup>417</sup> What Paul can affirm that the Psalmists cannot is that judgment will be in the hands of the man whom God has appointed (Acts 17:31).

Paul “recognizes the possibility of judgments here in this life upon those who sin, perhaps even the infliction of illness and death, whose aim is to bring about repentance”.<sup>418</sup> Nevertheless, Paul’s greater emphasis is on eschatological judgment. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1), but at the same time Paul insists everyone must appear before the judgment seat (Rom.14:10). Marshall sees a tension here.<sup>419</sup> God is a Saviour God, but he is also judge. The same tension can be seen in the Psalms, between the “penitential Psalms” and the Psalms where the Psalmist is looking for vindication. Neither Paul, nor the Psalmists, attempt to explain away the tension. John Stott’s aphorism is apropos: “the truth is not found in the middle of apparent opposites, but on both extremes simultaneously”.<sup>420</sup>

### **c) *Imprecations***

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<sup>417</sup> See also Rom.14:12; 1 Cor.3:10-16; 2 Cor.5:10.

<sup>418</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 449.

<sup>419</sup> *ibid*, 449.

<sup>420</sup> John Stott, in *Balanced Christianity* (Nottingham: IVP, 2014), 17, however, attributes this saying to Charles Simeon of Cambridge.

Potentially, a greater problem arises with the “imprecatory Psalms”.<sup>421</sup> How can these Psalms be reconciled with Christ’s instruction to “love your enemy” (Matt. 5:44), or Paul’s instruction “Bless and do not curse” (Rom.12:14). Laney outlines and refutes some “unsatisfactory solutions”.<sup>422</sup> The solution is to see that God is righteous in his judgments, in the outpouring of his wrath against wickedness, and in forgiving the penitent.

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<sup>421</sup> These are usually identified as Psalms 55, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137. For discussion of the ethical problems of the imprecatory Psalms:

Johannes G. Vos, *The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms*, Westminster Theological Journal, WTJ4:2, May 1942, 123-138.

J. Carl Laney, *A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms*, Bibliotheca Sacra, BSac 138:549, Jan. 1981, 35-43.

John N. Day, *The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics*, Bibliotheca Sacra, BSac 159:634, Apr. 2002, 166-186.

<sup>422</sup> Carl Laney, *A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms* deals with the following views:

“the imprecations are from David’s enemies”

“the expression are David’s own sentiments”

they reflect “the inferior Principle of Spiritual Life in the Old Testament”

“the imprecations are against David’s spiritual foes”

“the imprecations are prophetic”

they represent “the humanity of the Psalmist”.



In both the Old and the New Testament, the language of blessing is far more common than the language of cursing.<sup>423</sup> Key verses in the New Testament include Galatians 3:13: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole’” and 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”. This, however, does not remove the curse that lies upon the impenitent. Paul is not afraid to use “curse” language himself, when the foundations of the gospel are at stake.<sup>424</sup> An element of curse may be seen in 1 Corinthians 5 and 1 Timothy 1.<sup>425</sup> These references indicate that even when imprecatory language is used, Paul still hopes for repentance. This reflects Psalm 83:16 exactly: “Cover their faces with shame, Lord, so that they will seek your name”. Paul’s general approach is found in Romans 12:14: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse”.

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<sup>423</sup> M. J. Evans, “Blessing/curse” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 397-401.

<sup>424</sup> Galatians 1:8: But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!

1 Corinthians 16:22: If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!

<sup>425</sup> 1 Cor.5:5: hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

1 Tim.1:20: Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Does this mean that Paul, or any New Covenant believer, would ever be entitled to pray an imprecation for the eternal doom of anyone? Vos answers this: “To do so would be presumptuous for it would involve a claim to infallibility or special revelation ... We are, however, by no means warranted in assuming that the Imprecatory Psalms are *necessarily* prayers for the *eternal* doom of the wicked. They may also be regarded as prayers for severe temporal judgments upon the enemies of God”.<sup>426</sup> Vos also points out that imprecation is implicit in “The Lord’s Prayer”, which teaches us to say “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). “God’s kingdom cannot come without Satan’s kingdom being destroyed ... Evil cannot be destroyed without the destruction of men who are permanently identified with it”.<sup>427</sup>

In the historical narrative in 2 Samuel 10, David exacted vengeance on the Ammonites. In the Psalms, however, he entrusted that to God. Paul follows the example of the Psalms and entrusts the fate of the wicked to God.

#### ***d) A paradigm for Christian obedience: Romans 15:3***

In Romans 15, Paul concludes his appeal to the weak and to the strong that we ought “not to please ourselves” (Rom.15:1). Paul could reasonably have backed this up by yet another reference to the Royal Law (Lev. 19:18) to “love your neighbour as yourself”. Instead, he quotes from Psalm 69: “For even Christ did not please himself

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<sup>426</sup> Johannes G. Vos, *The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms*, 137.

<sup>427</sup> *ibid* 138.

but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me’”

(Rom.15:3).<sup>428</sup> Significantly, all the Psalms quoted in this way refer to the of suffering of the righteous king.<sup>429</sup> To this list, Hays adds Psalm 116:10: “I believed, therefore have I spoken”, quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13.<sup>430</sup> It is not immediately clear, however, that this citation is an utterance of Christ.

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<sup>428</sup> These words are attributed explicitly to Christ in the first person. This is not unique. In Rom.15:9 of the same chapter, Paul quotes Psalm 18:49 as uttered by Christ: Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name.

The words Jesus uses in Gethsemane can be traced to Psalm 42:6 and 12 (περίλυπος εἶ ψυχή): My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death (Περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου ἕως θανάτου).

Mark and Matthew both quote Jesus repeating Psalm 22:1 on the cross (Mark 15:34, Matt.27:46): Ἐλωί, Ἐλωί, λιμὰ σαβαχθανί; (in Matthew: Ἡλί, Ἡλί, λιμὰ σαβαχθανί;). Luke quotes Jesus as repeating Psalm 31:5: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Mark 15:34, Luke 23:46).

Hebrews attributes quotations from the Psalms in the first person to Jesus:

Heb.2:10 from Psalm 22:22: I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.

Heb.10:5-7 from Psalm 40:6-8: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’”

<sup>429</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 107.

<sup>430</sup> *ibid*, 108.

The quotation from Psalm 69 can clearly be applied to Christ, but Paul is also saying to the strong: “You must take your share in Christ’s sufferings, and the reproaches will fall on you. Your enemies will hate you without a cause; they will seek to destroy you (69:4)”. The pressure will be such that you must cry out to God that you will not be a stumbling block to those who seek God (69:5, compare Rom.14:15). Your own family may turn against you (69:8) as Jesus experienced (Mark 6:3). Your zeal for God will be a cause of scorn (69:10). You will be a joke (69:11). The rulers will mock you (69:12). Even the drunkards will abuse you (69:12).

Christ, the righteous sufferer of Psalm 69, is the example for others, “a paradigm for Christian obedience”.<sup>431</sup>

#### **e) *Paraenetic instructions***

Many of Paul’s detailed directives echo exhortations from the Psalms.

Regarding truthfulness, Eph.4:25 says: “having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour”. This echoes Psalm 15:2-3.<sup>432</sup> Regarding

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<sup>431</sup>Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 113.

<sup>432</sup> Psalm 15:2-3: He who ... speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbour”

Other psalms speak of lying – Psalms 4:5, 5:6, 7:14, 12:2, 24:4.

anger, Paul explicitly quotes Psalm 4:4 – Ephesians 4:26.<sup>433</sup> The Book of Psalms opens with the righteous man not keeping company with sinners.<sup>434</sup> Near the end of his life, Paul echoes the same instruction.<sup>435</sup>

Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul stresses that everyone has a responsibility, as far as is possible, to work and provide for themselves – 2 Thess.3:10: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat”. This echoes Psalm 128:2a: “You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands”.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul encourages the Corinthians to be generous in their giving to the churches in Judea. He invokes the righteous man of Psalm 112:9: “He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever”.

The contrasting concepts of the godless man, esteemed wise in this world, and the believer’s “wisdom and understanding” are both stressed by Paul, and both echo the words of the Psalmist. To the Corinthians, Paul writes – 1 Cor.3:20: “The Lord

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<sup>433</sup> In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold”.

<sup>434</sup> Psalm 1:1: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

Other Psalms where David insists on separation from sinners include Psalm 6:8; 34:14.

<sup>435</sup> 2 Timothy 2:19: Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile”. This is an allusion to Psalm 94.<sup>436</sup>

To the Colossians, however, Paul writes that in his prayers he asks God to fill them

#### **f) A Holy Community: God’s purpose for his people**

At both the general level, through the call to holiness, and at the detailed level, Paul reflects the teaching of the Psalms. In subjects such as judgment and imprecations, the Psalmists and Paul take the same approach of stating both sides, acknowledging the boundaries that God has established for his people.

Gordon Fee states regarding Paul’s ethics that “God’s glory is their *purpose* (1Cor.10:31), the Spirit is their *power*, love is the *principle*, and Christ is the *pattern*.”<sup>437</sup> In this, Paul is not simply drawing from individual Psalms, but from the message of the Psalms, beginning with the blessed man in Psalm 1, facing up to vicissitudes of life throughout the book, and culminating in praise in Psalm 150.

#### **3.3.5. A Suffering Community**

Romans 5-8 is the assurance provided by the gospel. By the end of this section, he has worked through the great questions of peace with God, eternal life, union with Christ, release from the law, life by the Spirit, heirs with Christ, and anticipation of future glory. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, but he then quotes a

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<sup>436</sup> Psalm 94:11: The Lord knows all human plans; he knows that they are futile.

<sup>437</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Pentecostal Commentary: Galatians*, 232

Psalm that, superficially, appears downbeat: “For your sake, we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered”.

The concept of the righteous sufferer is deeply imprinted on Paul’s mind. The triumph of the Righteous One and of the righteous ones will be established through being down-trodden. When defeated and apparently put to shame, the Psalmist cries out: Psalm 44:26: “Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!” Paul knows that God’s providential dealings will mean that his servants will be exposed to the cruelty of the ungodly, but he views it from the other side of Calvary. God has risen up, and redeemed his people. When the Psalmist’s people were being put to flight, it was a matter of shame.<sup>438</sup> Paul began his great exposition on the gospel affirming he was not ashamed (Romans 1:16).

At the climax of this exposition, Paul reverses the whole concept of shame. In their suffering, the believers demonstrate the glory of the gospel. Paul is saying to the Romans that suffering will be the lot of those who enjoy God’s blessings in the gospel. In tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword, the love of Christ will be most truly experienced.

### **3.3.6. Ecclesiology: Summary**

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<sup>438</sup> Psalm 44:15-16: “All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face at the sound of the taunter and reviler, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger”.

Hays asks the question: “When Paul reads the Bible, what does he find there?” His answer is that what Paul finds in Scripture, above all else, is a prefiguration of the *church* as the people of God.<sup>439</sup> Our conclusion, from the above, however, is that what was primary with Paul was both his understanding of who Jesus is, and his understanding of the church as the people of God, consisting of both Jew and Gentile.

Hays goes on to say: “Paul uses Scripture primarily to shape his understanding of the community of faith; conversely, Paul’s experience of the Christian community – composed of Jews and Gentiles together - shapes his reading of Scripture”.<sup>440</sup> Paul’s use of the Psalms would rather show that Paul’s concepts were derived from Scripture and applied to the Christian community. What did shape his reading of Scripture was his knowledge of Christ, as God’s Son.

Paul learned from the inspired composition of the Psalms, much that was to characterise the believing community. He realised that Israel, as a nation had failed – not only in failing to recognise their Messiah but in living as the people of God. Paul’s vision was the ideals set out in the Psalms would be the characteristics of the Christian community. His worldview was no longer confined to Israel, but to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

### **3.4. Conclusion: Paul and the Psalms: His Worldview**

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<sup>439</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 86.

<sup>440</sup> *ibid*, 86.



### 3.4.1. Humanity in relation to God

Underpinning everything in the Psalms is the belief that God is God (Psalm 100:3) and that God is good (Psalm 100:5). He is supreme in creation,<sup>441</sup> supreme over the nations<sup>442</sup>, supreme over Israel.<sup>443</sup> God is the ultimate judge whose righteousness requires that he deals with evil.<sup>444</sup> God's goodness is something that can be experienced: "taste and see" (Psalm 34:8). Other Psalms extol God's goodness to those who are in distress.<sup>445</sup>

Paul reflects these convictions about God, with the added dimension that he now sees Christ as part of that supremacy. God's power and divinity are seen in creation (Rom.1:21), but Christ is over all creation, and in him all things were created (Col.1:15-16). The rulers of the nations have no authority other than what God has given them (Rom.13:1-7), and all thrones, powers, rulers and authorities owe their existence to Christ. Christ is head over the church (Eph.5:23), and it is Christ who

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<sup>441</sup> Creation Psalms include Psalms 8, 19, 29, 65, 104, 145.

<sup>442</sup> God supreme over the nations is introduced in Psalm 2, and is key theme in Book 4: Psalms 93-99.

<sup>443</sup> Historical Psalms reflect God's supremacy over Israel, especially Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, 136.

<sup>444</sup> God as judge features in Psalms 7, 37, 50, and underlies almost the whole of Book 3 (73-89).

<sup>445</sup> Psalm 107 for the lost, the prisoner, the perishing, the storm-tossed.

supports and holds the whole body together by its ligaments and sinews (Col.2:19).

Christ is the man by whom God will judge the world (Acts 17:31).

The Psalmist also thinks about his own, personal relationship with God. The Lord is his shepherd, making him lie down in green pastures (Psalm 23); on other occasions, he feels abandoned (Psalm 13), emboldened (Psalm 27), exultant (Psalm 34). The greatest threat to this relationship is sin (Psalm 6, 25, 31, 32, 38, 40, 41, 51, 130, 143). Only God can wash him clean (Psalm 51).

Paul, likewise, sees sin as the great barrier between man and God (Rom.3:9-20), and it is only God who can provide the solution (Rom.3:21-26). Once this is put right, nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom.8:31-39).

Westerholm summarises the framework thus:

The underlying framework remains, for Paul, Jewish in its origins. It includes his convictions about the goodness of God the creator and the derived goodness of the created order; an understanding of creations present *disorder*, not in tragic terms, as the surfacing of flaws or tensions inherent in the cosmos itself, but in moral and religious terms, as the consequence of creaturely unfaithfulness toward God; the implacable hostility of God toward the evil that mars the goodness of what he has made; the ultimate triumph of the Good assured by the combination of God's own irrepressible goodness and his irresistible right arm.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Paul*, 23.

### 3.4.2. Man in relation to man

The horizontal breakdown in relationship between man and man reflects the vertical breakdown in the relationship between man and God.

Anyone reading the Psalms cannot but be affected by the impact that David's foes have had upon him.<sup>447</sup> The first Psalm in the Psalter, after the two introductory Psalms, depicts David fleeing from Absalom, and begins a series of five Psalms where the Psalmist sinks deeper and deeper into distress. Paul draws lessons from these Psalms to counter inter-personal sins such as anger, lying and deceit.<sup>448</sup> Paul also draws a lesson from one of the early Psalms on cursing and bitterness.<sup>449</sup>

Paul's overall conclusion, derived explicitly from the Psalms, is that there is no one who reflects the character of God, that is there is no one who does good.<sup>450</sup> Even for a believer, Paul identifies the difficulty of doing "good".<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> David is highlighted here because of the preponderance of Davidic psalms and laments in Book 1.

<sup>448</sup> Psalm 4:4 quoted in Eph.4:26.

Psalm 5:9 quoted in Rom.3:13.

<sup>449</sup> Psalm 10:7 (9:28 LXX) quoted in Rom.3:14.

<sup>450</sup> Psalm 14:1, 53:1 quoted in Rom.3:12.

<sup>451</sup> Rom.7:7-25 – the interpretation and application of this passage is disputed.

In his paraenetic injunctions, however, Paul demonstrates that the believer, renewed and energised by the Holy Spirit, can once again be like God and do “good”. God will give eternal life to those who in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality (Rom.2:7). He tells the Romans not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom.12:21), that they themselves are full of goodness (Rom.15:14), and that he wants them to be wise about what is good (Rom.16:19). He encourages the Galatians not to become weary in doing good (Gal.6:9), but to do good to all people (Gal.6:10). In all of this, Paul is echoing the instruction from the Psalmist. “Trust in the Lord and do good” (Psalm 37:3); “turn from evil and do good” (Psalm 37:27); the righteous man in Psalm 112 reflects many of the characteristics of the good God of Psalm 111;<sup>452</sup> the Psalmist implores the Lord to do good to those who are good (Psalm 125:4).

Psalm 1 begins with the description of a good man. This goodness seems lost without trace by Psalm 14, but the Psalmist believes that somehow goodness can be restored. Paul’s convictions are that it is “in Christ”, renewed by the Holy Spirit that this is achieved (Rom.8:4).

### **3.4.3. Man in relation to the world**

God’s creation was good (Gen. 1:31). The Psalmist, however, laments the apparent distortion of values when the wicked appear to prosper, and oppress the innocent (Psalm 73:1-16). The Psalmist groans till he is weary (Psalm 6:6); the poor are

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<sup>452</sup> Psalm 112:5: Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

plundered and the needy groan (Psalm 12:5); the prisoners groan (Psalm 79:11).

Still, the Psalmist reaffirms his confidence in God.

In Romans 8, Paul affirms that creation is groaning (8:22), and that he is groaning (8:23), and that the Holy Spirit groans (8:26). Paul, however, goes further than simply affirm his confidence in God, and asserts that in all things God is working for the good of those who love him (8:28).

It is not that Paul substitutes “goodness” as a concept in place of God. Rather, sin and all that follows in its wake, such as disorder, dislocation, death is overcome.<sup>453</sup>

Westerholm sums this up by reference to Romans 12-16:

Paul speaks of three contexts in which Christians must live the good life: in (a non-Christian) society; within the community of believers; and before God.<sup>454</sup>

The task of God’s people is to seek to redeem the evil they encounter by responding in love, to “overcome evil with good”. All of these instructions follow naturally and appropriately from Paul’s vision of reality.<sup>455</sup>

The good life is not lived in isolation, not even in a solitary pursuit of the good.

A worthy response to God’s goodness includes participation in the community

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<sup>453</sup> Romans 5:20: Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

<sup>454</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Paul*, 157.

<sup>455</sup> *ibid*, 158.

of the redeemed.<sup>456</sup>

Those captivated by a sense of God's goodness will want to give themselves to his service ... All that Christians do, in society as well as within the community of believers, is to reflect their desire to carry out God's will.<sup>457</sup>

#### **3.4.4. God all in all**

Paul's ultimate vision is that God will be "all in all" (1 Cor.15:28). The Psalms conclude with an outburst of hallelujahs to God (Psalms 146-150).

The road from Psalm 1 has not been smooth, but the Psalmists consistently affirmed their trust in God. Likewise, Paul began his pilgrim journey in obedience to the voice from heaven on the Damascus Road, and through many vicissitudes in every church, he kept his faith, repeatedly and breaks through in doxology.

Paul has seen what he believed about God fulfilled in Christ; Christ in his glory fulfilling Psalm 2:8, Psalm 110:1; Christ as Saviour, who brought about a greater salvation than the Psalmists could ever have anticipated; and Christ, in whom the whole *ekklesia* of all God's people, Jew and Gentile, would be joined together.

#### **3.4.5. A change of opinion, or a new orientation?**

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<sup>456</sup> *ibid*, 159.

<sup>457</sup> *ibid*, 161.

Having seen Paul's understanding of three essential doctrines comprehensively revolutionised, and having seen how the Psalms enabled him to form a coherent view of these doctrines, the question then arises: did Paul merely "change sides" intellectually, or was the change so radical that it affected him at the core of his life and worship. This is the focus of the final chapter of this study.

## **4. Conclusion: Paul's Hermeneutic and Worldview**

Why is it then that “two thousand years later, Paul attracts more attention than any other figure from antiquity, but one?”<sup>458</sup> When all that we have of Paul today are some occasional letters that he wrote, mainly to churches where there were problems, and a description of some of his travels, why is it that he remains so influential, not only directly but through the medium of his interpreters, such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Barth? Paul has drawn deeply from the rich heritage of Israel's ancient Scriptures and discovered that they find their focus in Jesus Christ, “in whom all things hold together”<sup>459</sup> Not everyone agrees with Paul, but no one can honestly ignore him. His hermeneutic and understanding of the Old Testament have enabled him to form a consistent worldview, but Paul does not preach a worldview, he preaches a person, “Christ crucified”, and his message has resonated in every century since, and now in every continent.

### **4.1. Psalms and the Christian Life**

#### **4.1.1. That same spirit of faith**

When Paul was writing to the Corinthians about human weakness and resurrection life (2 Cor.4:13), he cited Psalm 116:10: “It is written: ‘I believed; therefore, I have spoken.’” He then added: “Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe

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<sup>458</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Paul*, 9.

<sup>459</sup> Col.1:17



and therefore speak”. This illustrates two essential ingredients in Paul’s worldview: first, what he “believed” as a commitment was important, but second and no less vital, was “that same spirit of faith”, the “fundamental orientation of the heart”.<sup>460</sup> It is not that Paul differed in any respect from the narrative accounts in the historical books. That history was part of his identity as a Jew. In the Psalms, we get a response to the God who is behind that history, and the ultimate goal to which that history is pointing. “We must always start with God ... If the book of Psalms teaches us anything, it is that the only proper outlook for the people is to focus constantly on God himself, on his character, his deeds, his purposes and so on ... This focus on God becomes more and more intense as the Psalter proceeds, until it becomes totally overwhelming in the closing group of Psalms”.<sup>461</sup>

Paul’s approach is consistent with this. According to the heading, David wrote Psalm 27 when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, and there penned the lines: “Taste and see that the Lord is good ... Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Psalm 34:8, 12). When his life was at extreme risk on a ship about to be wrecked, Paul spoke of “the God to whom I belong and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). When writing to the Philippians from prison he wrote: “what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel” (Phil.1:12).

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<sup>460</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a concept*, 123.

<sup>461</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms*, 231.

#### **4.1.2. The whole of life**

Secondly, the Psalms have been described as “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul”.<sup>462</sup> Each Psalm was an occasional compilation, written in particular circumstances, but compiled together they delineate “all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short all the distracting emotions ... Often in the Psalms we witness one standing, as it were, amid the invitations of God on the one hand, and the impediments of the flesh on the other”.<sup>463</sup> Paul’s letters provide the same function for the believer in Jesus. They were written to address specific situations, not to present a unified theology, but together they present the fullest teaching for the New Testament church, extending “the invitations of God” to those struggling with “the impediments of the flesh”.

The Psalmists’ whole focus was on God, even when they could not understand him. Paul had the same focus, and insisted on nothing less in the churches he wrote to.

#### **4.1.3. The whole of the Psalter**

In recent years, there has been extensive focus on the Psalms as a literary unit. Brueggeman sees the Psalter as moving in progression “from Obedience to Praise,

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<sup>462</sup> This statement is attributed to Calvin. Quoted here from John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*. Abridged by David C. Searle, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), x

<sup>463</sup> *ibid*, x.

from Duty to Delight”.<sup>464</sup> “The Psalter makes an assertion about *the shape of life* lived in Israel’s covenant by means of the *canonical shape* of the collection of Psalms. Like the Psalter, life derived from and ceded back to Yahweh begins in obedience and ends in praise”.<sup>465</sup> Paul may not have consciously thought of the Psalms this way; his letters canonically do not reflect this structure; chronologically there may be a pattern as Paul moved from being a traveller, to a prisoner, to an old man writing to younger men. However, theologically, his letters cover the same ground, from the call to the obedience of faith (Rom.1:5) to the unbounded ascription of praise in Ephesians 3:21.<sup>466</sup>

#### **4.1.4. General and specific**

The Psalms helped Paul to worship the God of his ancestors. The Pharisees and other Jewish sects may have claimed that they possessed the Torah, and that they worshipped God in the God-appointed way. The Psalms helped Paul to see that true worship was focussed on the glory of God, not the ritual; that true worship involved clean hands and a pure heart, not ceremonial purity; that worship came from forgiven sinners, not from someone who had done no wrong; that worship would come from

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<sup>464</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 189-213.

<sup>465</sup> *ibid*, 193.

<sup>466</sup> Eph.3:21: to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

all the nations, not just the physical seed of Abraham. Above all, he found in Jesus Christ the One in whom everything he had learned about God from the Psalms was fulfilled.

More specifically, when he was writing to the Romans about the gospel of God concerning his Son, he found in the Psalms the essential elements he needed to highlight – the righteousness of God, the power of God, the salvation of God. When he was writing to the Corinthians and dealing with opposition, he found a kindred spirit in the suffering of the Psalmists. When he thought of the ascended Christ at God's right hand, he worked out what that meant for the believers he was writing to.

What would have been missing for Paul had there been no Psalter? He would still have known about God's law from the Torah, about God's mighty acts in creation and on behalf of his people, about God speaking through the prophets. He may even have had the Damascus Road Christophany. Everything he believed may still have been true, but the Psalms helped Paul to see how those who trusted in God worshipped God, and how those who trusted in God responded to life's tribulation.

Paul demonstrated when he spoke in Athens (Acts 17), that he could communicate with philosophers on their own terms. He never gives any ground, however, to Greek philosophy or Roman rhetoric. He retains a worldview that is founded on God's concrete acts in history, a God of righteousness and goodness, and a God who called his people to live lives of practical holiness.

## **4.2. Psalms and the Christian Community**

#### 4.2.1. A Unified Worldview

Paul's readers were a disparate mixture. The greatest divide was between Jew and Gentile, and much of Paul's writing was dedicated to celebrating that that wall had been broken down (Eph.2:14), as well as to ensuring that the believers understood the significance of this (Rom.9-11). These two major groupings were, however, far from homogenous. The "Jew" included Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews (Acts 6:1), strong as well as weak (Rom.14:1-15:7). "Gentile", sometimes defined as Ἕλληνι (Greek) or ἔθνη (nations) or λαοί (peoples) included imperial Romans, sophisticated Greeks and barbarians, slaves and free, male and female. Each would have been influenced by their circumstances, with conflicting notions of justice, propriety, politics, as well as concepts of God and the divine.

In Christ, Paul was convinced there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female" (Gal.3:28). He was also convinced, however, that, in the body of Christ, each has a distinctive part (1 Cor.12:12-31). He did not see that being one in Christ necessitated obliteration of social distinctions (1 Cor.7:17-24). How, then, could there be a unified understanding, "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? (Eph.4:3).

The Psalms play a vital role. It would have been wrong, though understandable, if new believers from non-Jewish backgrounds read much of the narrative of the Old Testament as meaningful only to the nation of Israel. The Psalms do not allow that: they are consistently, relentlessly theocentric. Keesmaat writes: "In echoing the language of these Psalms, Paul is evoking a context where God's justice and steadfast love are appealed to for salvation ... God *has* arisen ... God *has* acted according to

his justice ... God *has* acted to save ... God *has* judged those who practice injustice ... God *has* vindicated his people ... *this* is the gospel the good news, that challenges the so-called ‘good news’ of Rome”.<sup>467</sup> The God whom Paul worships is the God of Israel, the God of Abraham. The Jew, therefore, had an advantage. Would the Gentile always be at a disadvantage? Would they see the history of Israel becoming their history? Could Israel’s Messiah really be their saviour?

Moyise points out, “Many scholars regard Romans 15:7-13 as the climax of the letter, combining the theme of God’s faithfulness to Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles ... Christ has become a servant of the circumcised and a servant of the Gentiles”.<sup>468</sup> At this key point, Paul invokes Psalms 18 and 117. The Psalms may be written in large measure by Israel’s king, but they are often written from the vantage of the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, the outcast. They recognise Israel’s history, but to emphasise God’s mercy rather than their success. They recognise God as creator, but as creator of the entire world. Moyise says, “Paul thinks that Psalm 19:4 is scriptural proof that the good news has been universally proclaimed and unbelief is therefore culpable”.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 141.

<sup>468</sup> Steve Moyise, *Paul and Scripture*, 98.

<sup>469</sup> *ibid*, 98.

#### 4.2.2. The Old Testament: universal in application

The Christians in Berea “received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Berea was not a major centre, like Philippi or Ephesus. They may not have had a full copy of the Old Testament scrolls to hand to examine the Scriptures. However, they had sufficient to check out Paul’s message, and Paul had left them with the urge to do so.

Questions have been raised about the levels of literacy among Paul’s first readers (or listeners to those able to read). Nevertheless, Paul clearly writes, expecting that there was at least, in each place, someone able to read. If any references were not clear, Paul would expect the community to be able to examine the Scriptures, and find that his application would stand up to scrutiny.

Almost as though he anticipated a Marcion-like heresy, Paul was saying how important it was to know the God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament.

Christopher Stanley says that Paul “seems to have made a serious effort to embed his quotations within a network of interpretative remarks that would enable his audiences to grasp his rhetorical point without having to know the original context of the quotation ... Paul seemed to have directed his quotations toward an implied audience that resembled the ‘competent audience’ more closely than the ‘informed audience’ or the ‘minimal audience’”.<sup>470</sup> No doubt many would have fitted the description of ‘competent audience’ when he wrote. However, Paul’s frequent references to the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as explicit desire that they would grow into

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<sup>470</sup> Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, 172

spiritual maturity, indicate that he wanted them to become ‘informed audience’, and understand the Old Testament references in his letters.

Stanley goes on to say that Paul’s audience “had to recall not only the particular passages to which Paul refers, but also the major elements of the belief system that they had inherited from Judaism and its Scriptures. This implicit appeal to a common belief-system served to reinforce the ideological and social bond that united Paul and his audience”.<sup>471</sup> This applied to the whole Old Testament, but had special relevance to the Psalms, where new Gentile believers could learn to worship with all God’s people.

There is, however, more. Paul frequently introduced his formal citations with an Introductory Formula. Ellis points out that “in the Greek world, the formula καθὼς γέγραπται was used with reference to the terms of an unalterable agreement; for the Jew, it signified much more – the unalterable Word of God”.<sup>472</sup>

#### **4.2.3. Theology**

“The reality of God is the axiom of all Pauline theology, the all-determining point beyond which one cannot think or enquire, the point of departure for its all-

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<sup>471</sup> *ibid*, 172-173

<sup>472</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 23



encompassing world-view”.<sup>473</sup> This axiom also underpins the beliefs of the Psalmists. Amongst the psalms which Paul quotes are psalms of creation,<sup>474</sup> a psalm which denounces as a fool the person who says there is no God,<sup>475</sup> and psalms which affirm that God will be praised among all the nations.<sup>476</sup>

Paul sees the God whose acts of power are celebrated in the Psalms as the God who acted mightily in Jesus Christ. “Paul interprets the history of Israel consistently from the perspective of faith in Jesus Christ and as finding its goal in him ... Paul thinks through theologically and Christologically the unity of creation, history, Scripture, and redemption”.<sup>477</sup> The Psalmist sees God as a God whose salvation and righteousness is made known to the nations.<sup>478</sup> God is the God who acts. The Psalms celebrate this at every level – among the nations, for Israel, for the Psalmist alone, for the distressed. This is the God that Paul knew and wrote about.

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<sup>473</sup> Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His life and theology* (trans. M. Eugene Boring, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 392.

<sup>474</sup> Psalm 8 quoted in 1 Cor.15:27, Eph.1:22, Psalm 19 quoted in Rom.10:18.

<sup>475</sup> Psalms 14 and 53 which are quoted extensively in Rom.3.

<sup>476</sup> Psalm 18:49 quoted in Rom.15:9; Psalm 117:1 quoted in Romans 15:11.

<sup>477</sup> Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His life and theology*, 399.

<sup>478</sup> Psalm 98:4 alluded to in Rom.1:16-17.

#### **4.2.4. Christology**

Schnelle describes Paul's Christology as "the manifold conceptual-theological interpretation of the significance of an event at the same time unique and universal: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ".<sup>479</sup> This description is not inaccurate, but could be incomplete. It is not possible to separate the person and the event. Paul's Christology was centred on a person, even if the crucial event had been the resurrection of that person. So, when he writes to the Philippians, knowing Christ is prior, even if resurrection is also essential: "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (Phil.3:10).

Paul, then, in common with other early Christians, identifies Jesus as "Lord" and finds Psalm 110 fulfilled in Christ; the Son promised the nations as his heritage in Psalm 2 is identified as Jesus, who is declared to be the Son of God in power ... by his resurrection. Paul sees Jesus as the one who fulfils Psalm 68:18 – he ascended on high, and led a host of captives. God's justice, which the Psalmists cried out for, will be administered through Jesus. He is also the one to whom the penitent can find shelter from the wrath of God (1 Thess.1:10).

#### **4.2.5. Soteriology**

Paul's theology and Christology laid the basis for his soteriology. The universal problem for humanity, was sinfulness and estrangement from the God whom Paul knew, was real. Judgment and death has come on humanity. However, this God

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<sup>479</sup> Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His life and theology*, 410.

had acted, in power, bringing salvation to Israel. The Psalmists called God their Saviour.<sup>480</sup> Paul considered himself the chief of sinners (1. Tim.1:15), and that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. For Paul, too, God was a Saviour God (1 Tim.2:3, 2 Tim.1:9), but salvation was in the person of Jesus (Rom.5:10, Rom.10:9, Eph.2:5, Phil.3:20).

The Psalmists believed there was forgiveness: Psalms 32, 51, 130. Paul realised that Jesus has “become to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor.1:32). The fact of being saved was important to the Psalmist, but they did not stop there: they worshipped the God who saved them. This was exactly what Paul gave his life to do, preach a gospel of salvation, but focus above all on the person through salvation came.

#### **4.2.6. Ecclesiology**

Paul’s core belief was in the reality of God; for him to live was Christ; his commitment was to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ; but there was one other dimension to his core belief, and that was concerning the people of God.

The people whom God had chosen were the elect. When recounting the history of Israel in Psalms 105 and 106, he described the descendants of Abraham as his בְּחֵירָיו: - ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ (his chosen ones).<sup>481</sup> Paul uses the same expression to the Romans:

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<sup>480</sup> Many references to God as Saviour in the Psalms include 17:7, 20:6, 34:6, 44:7, 67:2, 80:7, 106:8, 116:6, 145:19

<sup>481</sup> Psalm 105:6, 105:43, 106:5.

and to the Colossians.<sup>482</sup> The Psalmist described the people of God as קְדוֹשִׁים - ἅγιοι (holy ones, saints).<sup>483</sup> This becomes one of Paul's most common expression in his letters, addressing the believers as "saints".<sup>484</sup> These two expressions encapsulate much of what Paul believed about the people of God, that they were chosen and that they were holy. However, they were estranged from God, and had to be redeemed; they were divided and had to be brought together; they would become a worshipping company; they had been justified when they believed in Christ and were holy, but they had to become holy in practice; they would also become a suffering people.

Paul is assured about God, he is assured of Christ's final triumph, he is assured that for him there is in store the crown of righteousness, but there are daily pressures on him through his anxiety for all the churches.<sup>485</sup> Brueggemann says regarding the Psalter that "the most interesting question is how to move from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150, from glad duty to utter delight".<sup>486</sup> This resonates with Paul's anxiety: how can he help the churches where people have responded to the call for the obedience of faith, but are being side-tracked by squabbles, divisions, false teachers, immorality and

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<sup>482</sup> "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" (Rom.8:33).

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved" (Col.3:12).

<sup>483</sup> Psalm 34:9.

<sup>484</sup> Rom.1:7, 1 Cor.1:2, 2 Cor.1:1, Eph.1:1, Phil.1:1, Col.1:2.

<sup>485</sup> 1 Cor.15:27-28, 2 Tim.4:8, 2 Cor.11:28.

<sup>486</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 196.

other problems. Brueggemann's thesis is "that the way from torah obedience to self-abandoning doxology is by way of *candour about suffering* and *gratitude about hope*".<sup>487</sup> This gives one clue why Paul could draw so much from the Psalms. His approach was candour about all the problems from within, and about opposition from outside. At the same time, he focussed on the blessings that belonged to them as in Christ, and kept alive the hope they had in him.

As N. T. Wright points out:

Hardly anyone will doubt that Paul knew Israel's Scriptures well and that he used them freely and frequently.<sup>488</sup>

If we fail to spot the way in which Paul is working with key texts from the Psalms and prophets, and filling in the single narrative line with multiple hints of messianic fulfilment, we are actually deJudaizing and dehistoricizing his view of his own work and his view of the churches.<sup>489</sup>

Paul identified with the struggles of the Psalmists; quoting the Psalms was not just finding a proof text. The God who acted on behalf of Israel was the God that Paul knew had acted in Christ. The power of God for salvation had been the experience of the Psalmists, but many of the Psalms and compilations belonged to the exile. The Psalms, however, climax, in spite of exile, with total unrestrained delight in God.

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<sup>487</sup> *ibid*, 196.

<sup>488</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of Israel*, 1450

<sup>489</sup> *ibid*, 1454

How much more so, should the people of God on the other side of Calvary, find their delight in God, whose power was made evident in raising Jesus from the dead.

#### **4.2.7. Impact**

The Psalms convey, often in graphic language, the struggles the Psalmists experienced, alongside the confidence they found in God, and the delight they had in God. It was not just law; nor was it just history. God was alive. Paul had always been aware of this, but the impact of the Psalms was far greater when he discovered that what they pointed forward to, was fulfilled in Christ.

As Paul agonised about his churches, fearing lest his labour had been in vain, he realised this was essential for them as well. He did not write only to rebuke and instruct, but to encourage and build up in the knowledge of God. There has been no point in the history of the church since, when he would have done anything different.

By drawing so much from the Psalms, Paul also demonstrated to his initial readers how much the Psalmists could draw from their experience of God. Paul knew how important it was for his churches to be grounded in true doctrine, but also in true experience. This is as valid today, as ever.

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