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Balmer Commentary Collection

## **The Psalms (Book 3)**

**John Brown**

Edited by Billy Balmer

**Volume Three**

Psalms 73-89

## **John Brown (1722-1787)**

John Brown was raised in extreme poverty in Abernathy, Scotland. His father was a herdsman and a godly man who led the family in worship morning and evening. His father died when John was only eleven, and his mother followed soon after, leaving John to earn his living as a shepherd-boy in the hills around Abernethy.

From an early age it was evident that John was a believer in Jesus Christ. John was a very bright young boy and he taught himself New Testament Greek while in the fields with his flock.

John eventually became a pastor in a small Presbyterian denomination, and soon became known for his writing, especially his Self-Interpreting Bible and his devotional notes on the Psalms.

## **PREFACE**

This commentary on the Psalms by Dr. John Brown of Haddington has been prepared by Mr. Billy Balmer of Belfast.

For many years, in his home in Belfast, Billy has been labouring for the Lord by typing notes, editing, and sending his work across the world through different organizations. It has been his intention to edit minimally; replacing older words

with newer ones and rephrasing difficult sentences so that modern readers can more easily understand, enjoy, and benefit from the text. In preparing this material for print, I have made additional edits.

To recognize the many years of service by Mr. Balmer, this present volume is part of the *Balmer Collection* and has been prepared for *The Krapf Project* for use among pastors in rural Africa.

It is my prayer that this material will find a place in the heart of the pastors of rural Africa and that the comforts, encouragement, and lessons taught in the Psalms will greatly benefit the Church.

**Aaron Dunlop**

*Donemana, NI.*

*October 2023*

## PSALM SEVENTY-THREE

This Psalm and the ten following are called *Psalms of Asaph*. It is not, however, certain whether Asaph composed them or simply led the music in singing them. Here we have:

**1. The great foundation of all religion**, namely, God's goodness to His people (vs. 1).

**2. The Psalmist's faith fearfully shaken** by the consideration of the freedom, prosperity, plenty, and apparently peaceful death of the wicked. The situation of the wicked made them proud, oppressive, rude, atheistic, and worldly. The Psalmist, on the other hand, was in a way full of trouble (vss. 2-13).

**3. The temptation, when it had reduced the Psalmist to the brink of atheism, is broken** by a discovery of the connected purposes and providences of God in His Word and ordinances (vss. 14-20).

**4. The Psalmist's good use of his fall and recovery**, to promote a deep sense of his own meanness, ignorance, and folly. It also promoted a complete dependence on God as his Guide and a cleaving to Him as his Portion, infinitely preferable to everything else. Without God, the Psalmist

would be necessarily miserable; but with God, the Psalmist is assured of happiness and excited to praise (vss. 21-28).

## **Devotional**

Let me remember my own weakness and folly. Let me receive instruction in duty. Let me cleave to God as my Portion. Let me resolve to draw my light and comfort from the revelations of His mouth, and ordinances of His grace.

## **PSALM SEVENTY-FOUR**

This Psalm probably relates to the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. In it we have the church's:

**1. Bitter complaints of God's displeasure**, of the outrage of her enemies, and of her apparent hopeless situation (vss. 1-11).

**2. Strong and heart-encouraging pleadings with God** on the account of His relation to them and of the great things He has done for them; that He was at once their God and the God of nature; and that, therefore, He would remember to execute just vengeance on His sworn enemies and grant help to His covenant people (vss. 12-23).

## Devotional

Let me admire the sovereignty and holiness of God in so severely correcting His own people. Let the broken and deserted condition of the church deeply affect my heart and excite my earnest prayers for her restoration.

## PSALM SEVENTY-FIVE

In this Psalm, David:

**1. Returns thanks to God** for bringing him to the throne of Israel and resolves to act for the welfare of the public (vss. 1-3, 9-10).

**2. Rebukes those who opposed his advancement to the throne** because God, the Judge of the world, brought him there and will judge his enemies (vss. 4-8).

## Devotional

Let me think of Jesus, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, and of the danger of opposing His government. If God exalts me to the spiritual honours of His kingdom, let it be my care to glorify Him and serve His people.

## PSALM SEVENTY-SIX

Like Psalm 48, this Psalm was penned after a remarkable victory. It is uncertain, however, whether it was composed during the days of David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah (see 2 Chronicles chs.14; 20; 32). We have in it:

**1. Encouraging congratulations of the church's happiness** in having God so revealed and near to her; and in having His power so employed on her behalf, to the advancement of His own glory and the destruction of her enemies (vss. 1-6).

**2. Important instructions how to make good use of this victory** to the terror of enemies, the comfort of saints, and the rousing of all commitment to God so that one may obey and fear Him (vss. 7-12).

### Devotional

Let my soul bless the Lord that my lot has been always cast in a land of gospel-light. Let me with thankful heart remember what God has done for this church and land. Let me praise him for every deliverance. Let me never fear the rage of men; but, in every danger and doubt, commit my way to God.

## PSALM SEVENTY-SEVEN

This Psalm relates to:

**1. A most difficult case** in which there are remarkably intense and constant prayers, depressing fears, agonizing restlessness, heart-overwhelming meditations, and almost desperate outcries concerning God (vss. 1-9).

**2. The powerful cure of this miserable case.** It is achieved by serious meditation on and solemn acknowledgment of:

- a. The power, greatness, and grace of our God.
- b. The holiness and mysteriousness of God's providential conduct, particularly in bringing Israel out of Egypt and leading them through the wilderness to the promised land (vss. 10-20).

### Devotional

Let me stand in awe of that God who so disciplines His favourite saints. Let me sympathize with men of wounded spirits. If my soul is overwhelmed within me, let me call to mind the gracious character and great works of my God for His church and for my soul.



## **PSALM SEVENTY-EIGHT**

This Psalm is brief but provides instructive history of the dealings between Israel and their God for about four hundred and eighty years, from Moses to David. The Psalm splits into two parts.

### **I. The Introduction**

In verses 1-8, the Psalmist issues a solemn call to an attentive consideration of God's words and works. This knowledge is to be faithfully passed on to the next generation so that they may hope in God and turn from the wickedness of their fathers.

### **II. The History**

The events described in part two are recorded more fully in the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and part of 1 Kings. In verses 9-72, the Psalmist describes:

**1. God's favours towards Israel** before their settlement in Canaan; in plaguing the Egyptians; in dividing the Red Sea; in giving the Israelites water from the rock and manna from heaven; and in bringing them into Canaan despite their constant sin.

In particular, the Psalmist describes the Israelites' forgetfulness of God's mighty works, their

ingratitude for His favours, their complaining against His trying dealings, their eagerness to satisfy their lusts with His benefits, their impenitent hardness, and their hypocritical repentance under His rebukes (vss. 9-55).

## **2. The Israelites' ingratitude, disloyalty, and idolatry**

after their entrance into Canaan. The Psalmist also describes God's righteous judgement as displayed when he removed the tabernacle from Shiloh and gave the Ark and God's people into the hand of the Philistines (vss. 56-64).

## **3. God's merciful return to his people**

as displayed in plaguing the Philistines with tumours; in restoring the Ark and providing a habitation for it at Jerusalem; and in raising up and qualifying David, a descendant of Judah, to govern the people of God in an honourable and happy manner (vss. 65-72).

## **Devotional**

Let me with grief and shame remember my transgressions against the Lord. Let me adore the infinite patience, power, mercy, holiness, and justice of God. Let me bless His holy name for His many undeserved favours towards me and towards the church. Finally, though God currently causes

grief, let me hope that in due time He will have compassion.

## **PSALM SEVENTY-NINE**

This Psalm relates to the destruction of the Jewish capital and nation by the Chaldeans and Syro-Grecians. This historical event is typical of the afflictions of the Jesus' Church. Observe:

**1. How miserable the condition of God's people was** when their enemies raged against them, and their God executed his just judgment on them (vss. 1-5).

**2. Their humble, but fervent, prayers** for the just punishment of their heathen enemies, and for Divine pity, pardon, and help to themselves (vss. 6-12).

**3. The pleas with which they enforce their requests.** Namely, God's relation to them as their God and Shepherd, and the tendency of what they asked to promote the declared glory of His name (vss. 1, 6, 9-10, 13).

## **Devotional**

Let my soul have a deep sympathy with the afflicted members of Christ. Let me bless His holy name that

I am not in similar circumstances. Let me bring to the Lord the spiritual injuries which Satan and my lusts have done to my soul and to the church of God. Let me cry bitterly for God's merciful rising up to destroy them and to show me His salvation.

## **PSALM EIGHTY**

This Psalm relates to the distressed condition of the Hebrew church and nation, perhaps during the Syrian, Assyrian, or Chaldean invasions (see 2 Kings chs.12-13; 15; 17-19; 24-25). Here are:

**1. Earnest prayers for God's special presence and favour** (vss. 1-3, 7, 19).

**2. Mournful complaints of the lasting appearances of God's anger;** of the overflowing of their grief; of abuse and insult by their neighbours; and of the unhinging of their constitution, which God Himself had fixed when He brought them out of Egypt (vss. 4-13).

**3. Further prayers that God would consider and pity His vineyard,** their church and nation; assist their king His vinedresser; and convert them to and quicken them in His service (vss. 14-19).

## Devotional

Let me be affected with the distresses of God's church. Let me long for the fullest appearances of His glory and the blessings of His presence. Let me insist that His Spirit may glorify Jesus Christ, the great Man of His right hand, in taking what is His and showing it to me.

## PSALM EIGHTY-ONE

This Psalm was probably composed for the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24). Here are:

**1. Solemn urgings to praise God** for what He is to and what He has done for his people (vss. 1-7).

**2. Instructions concerning God's New Covenant grant of Himself** and His benefits to men; their ungrateful refusal of that; and the misery they suffer by that (vss. 8-16).

## Devotional

Let my soul consider what God is to, has done for, and given to men, given to me. Let all my inward powers steadfastly believe His declarations and eagerly embrace His offers. Let my heart be filled with grief that ever I refused to hear my own

gracious God speaking from heaven and offering to me all the unsearchable riches of Christ.

## **PSALM EIGHTY-TWO**

This Psalm was probably penned for the direction and warning of the Jewish courts of justice. It presents:

**1. The dignity of courts and their dependence on God** as their Sovereign, Governor, and Judge (vss. 1, 6).

**2. Their duty** (vss. 3-4).

**3. Their harmful corruption** and the just punishment for that (vss. 2, 5, 7).

**4. The saints' request for the establishment of God's kingdom** in the world (vs. 8).

### **Devotional**

Let me stand in awe of Jehovah's authority and presence. Let me remember I must be answerable to Him for all my conduct. Let me be affected with my meanness and corruption. Let me respect courts as the deputies of God on earth. And, in every station in which God places me, let my care be to live honestly in all things and to cry mightily

that the kingdoms of this world may quickly be made the kingdoms of my Lord and of His Christ.

### **PSALM EIGHTY-THREE**

This Psalm relates to some combination of the heathens against the Hebrews, either in the days of David (see 2 Samuel 8 and 10) or in the days of Jehoshaphat (see 2 Chronicles 20). It contains:

**1. A solemn protest to God** concerning their evil designs against His church and honor (vss. 1-8).

**2. Fervent prayers to God**, that He would defeat these attempts; protect and preserve His church; humble His enemies; and glorify Himself in the world (vss. 9-18).

### **Devotional**

Let me be affected by the inward combinations of my own lusts with Satan and the world, and with the joint attempts of open enemies and wicked professors against the interests of Christ. Let me commit my cause to God who judges righteously.

### **PSALM EIGHTY-FOUR**

This Psalm is very similar to Psalms 27, 42, 43, and 63. Like these Psalms, Psalm 84 was maybe

composed when David was banished from Jerusalem by Absalom his son (see 2 Samuel 15-16). We have here David's:

### **1. Burning affection towards the courts of God**

(vss. 1-7, 10). Verse 3 is of particular interest because it describes David's inexpressible longing to be in God's courts and the indescribable pleasure that he has from being in them because of the intimate fellowship with God he can enjoy there. Compare vss. 1-2 and 10 with Psalm 42:1-2 and Psalm 43:3-4.

### **2. Heart burning desire to the God of the courts**

(vss. 8-9).

### **3. Assured faith of God's kindness** and

persuasion of the happiness of such as trust in Him (vss. 11-12).

### **Devotional**

So let my heart cry out for God, the living God. Let me covet intimate fellowship with Him through His ordinances. Let me praise His name and hold on in His way, until I arrive at the Zion above. Let God be my Friend, my Protector, my Supplier, my Store, and the everlasting Rock of my rest.



## **PSALM EIGHTY-FIVE**

This Psalm relates to some remarkable deliverance of the Jewish nation. It is uncertain, however, whether it occurred during the advancement of David to the throne, during the Assyrian invasion (see 2 Kings 19), or during the Babylonian exile (see Ezra 1. The Psalm contains:

**1. Thankful acknowledgments for Divine favours received** (vss. 1-3).

**2. Prayers that further favours and deliverances may be speedily given** (vss. 4-7).

**3. Firm expectations of a gracious answer** in the coming, reconciling, and blessings of the Messiah (vss. 8-13).

### **Devotional**

Let my soul be affected with the mercies of God which I, my country, and the church of God have enjoyed. Let me be encouraged to ask God for more mercies. Let me, without doubting, recall the promises and expect supply from the fullness of Christ.

## **PSALM EIGHTY-SIX**

This Psalm contains David's:

### **1. Prayers for God to:**

- a. Hear his prayers (vss. 1, 6-7).
- b. Mercifully preserve and save him (vss. 2-3, 16).
- c. Afford him joy, strength, and honor (vss. 4, 11, 17).

### **2. Pleas with which he strengthens his prayers.**

They are drawn from:

- a. The goodness of God (vss. 5, 13, 15).
- b. David's own relation to and trust in God (vss. 2, 4, 16).
- c. David's former experience of God's kindness (vs. 17).
- d. The hatred of his enemies (vs. 14).

**3. Praise to God** because he is unrivalled in His nature and work; because he is the sole object of worship; and because he is great and infinitely gracious (vss. 8-10, 12-13).

### **Devotional**

Let me remember that the Psalmist has left me an example that I should walk in his steps.

## **PSALM EIGHTY-SEVEN**

This Psalm is a praising of mount Zion as typical of the gospel church. It describes how:

**1. Mount Zion is preferred to every other place in Canaan** because of the temple which is more honoured and delighted by God (vss. 1-3).

**2. The church is preferred to all other nations** because of its better inhabitants, greater stability, and more important joys and blessings (vss. 4-7).

### **Devotional**

Let me observe the blessing of being able to relate to Jehovah as my God. Let me praise Him for founding His church on Jesus the immovable Rock of ages so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. Let me rejoice in the glorious promises made concerning her and pray for their speedy fulfilment. While I with joy draw water out of her ordinances and wells of salvation, let me live as a holy and cheerful member of her society.

## **PSALM EIGHTY-EIGHT**

In this sorrowful Psalm, after a very short declaration of his faith, we have Heman's:

## **1. Bitter wailing over his distressed case**

because his troubles were great; his body was at the point of death; his soul was filled with grief; his God was hiding and angry; his mind was distressed with terrors; and his friends were unkind (vss. 3-9, 14-18).

## **2. Bitter groans to and reasoning with God.**

Heman describes how he had cried long for mercy and how nothing could be done for him (vss. 1-2, 9-14).

## **Devotional**

Let me think how dreadful hell must be, when even Fatherly punishments are so severe. Let me think how dreadful sin is because it provokes God to afflict His dearest saints. Let me think how necessary it is to trust God in the worst of troubles.

## **PSALM EIGHTY-NINE**

This Psalm was perhaps composed during Absalom's rebellion (see 2 Samuel 15), during the rebellion of the ten tribes from their subjection to the family of David (see 1 Kings 12), or during the Babylonian exile (see 2 Kings 24-25). It splits into two parts. In the first and joyful part, we have:

**1. The foundation of all comfort, happiness, honour, and stability** laid in the mercy of God and His covenant with David. This is an image of the covenant Jesus Christ made for the redemption of mankind (vss. 1-4).

**2. A celebration of:**

- a. The God of the Covenant because of His faithfulness, glory, greatness, mercy, and justice in all His works (vss. 5-14).
- b. The glorious dignity, happiness, and safety of God's covenant people (vss. 15-18).

**3. A collection of covenant promises**, securing proper qualifications, assistance, and glory to the Head of the Covenant; and unfailing blessings to His covenant seed, despite their many sins and punishments (vss. 19-37).

In the second and mournful part, we have:

**1. Terrible cries over the dishonour, distress, and danger of David's family** (vss. 38-45).

**2. Reasoning with God** concerning this danger. The Psalmist's case is drawn from the continuance of trouble, shortness of human life, and certainty of death. There is also the withdrawing of former

kindness promised in the covenant and the insolent reproaches of enemies (vss. 46–51).

### **3. A triumphant conclusion of praise to God** (vs. 52).

#### **Devotional**

Let me chiefly keep my eyes on David's Lord. Let me with joy behold the covenant made with Him for our redemption. Let me adore my covenant God, as in Him well pleased for His righteousness' sake, and making Him and His seed most blessed for evermore. And as Jesus' suffering for me purchased my eternal happiness, let never my own, or the church's troubles, weaken my faith, or make me drop my songs of praise.