**Lecture 2: Faith in God Alone (The Prophets and the Psalms)**

“I trust in you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God’.” (Psalm 31:14)

**Introduction**

“All the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).

**The Prophets**

**Jeremiah and Isaiah: Trust the Lord Alone to Save You**

*Trust in the LORD, not in the nations (Isaiah 7–39)*

“If you are not firm in faith [Hiphil *’mn*], you will not be firm at all [Niphal, *’mn*]” (7:9)

LXX if you do not believe, neither shall you understand.

“Be careful, be quiet [*šqt*], do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint” (7:4)

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in *quietness* and in trust shall be your strength” (30:15)

“The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent [*ḥrš*]” (Exodus 14:14).

“Believe [Hiphil *’mn*] in the LORD your God, and you will be established [Niphal, *’mn*]; believe his prophets, and you will succeed” (2 Chronicles 20:20)

“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass’” (7:7)

“I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him” (8:17)

“From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him” (64:4)

Then they [the people of God] shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their boast. And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?’” (20:5–6)

“Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste’” (28:16).

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (26:3).

Hezekiah (36–37) // 2 Kings 18–20 // 2 Chronicles 29–32

Three prayers: 37:20; 38:3; 38:10–20

The Servant?

*Trust in the LORD, not in idols (Isaiah 40–66)*

“They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, ‘You are our gods’” (42:17)

“Deliver me, for you are my god!” (44:17).

“a god that cannot save” (45:20).

“let your collection of idols deliver you !” (48:5)

“he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain” (57:13).

Luther on the First Commandment (Larger Catechism):

God is that in which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.

*Trust in the LORD and not in lies (Jeremiah)*

“Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD’” (7:4)

“I will surely save you … because you have put your trust in me” (39:18)

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.” (17:7)

“He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit” (17:8).

“LORD, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water” (17:13).

“They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (2:13)

**Faith in the Eschatological Vision of the Prophets**

*Faith as Response to the Future (Habakkuk 2:4)*

Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his *ěmunāh* [אֱמוּנָה]

Interpreted, this concerns all those who observe the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgement because of their suffering and because of their *ěmunāh* in the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab; Vermes 2004: 513).

*Faith and the Knowledge of God*

“I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel” (2 Kings 5:15)

“I know that the LORD has given you the land” (Josh 2:9) and that “ the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath” (Josh 2:11 cf. Jethro in Exodus 18:11)

“so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God” (Exodus 8:10)

Ezekiel, e.g.

“And they shall know that I am the LORD. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them” (6:10)

“And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols” (6:13)

“And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will know that I am the LORD” (6:14)

“They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (Jer 31:34).

“I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart” (Jer 24:7).

“I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:14)

“You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame” (Joel 2:26–27).

**The Psalms**

*The Grammar of Faith*

As the worshipping community and its believers pray the Psalms, they articulate their faith, that is, they speak in the grammar of faith the Psalms provide. The grammar articulates the building blocks of faith. I would go further to say that this speaking (or singing!) not only expresses faith but also helps the singers to appropriate the faith and continue to comprehend and live in the faith and to mature in it, to learn it. The grammar for faith can become the grammar *of* faith for believers and communities.[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Faith as Perception*

Faith in the psalms is “primarily a kind of perception that corrects the noetic effect of sin and enables believers to recognize God’s fatherly benevolence not only in God’s redemptive work in Jesus Christ but especially in God’s providential care of creation and history”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine (Psalm 33:18–19)

“The whole human race, no doubt, are maintained by the providence of God; but we know that his fatherly care is specially vouchsafed to none but his own children, that they may feel that their necessities are truly regarded by him.” (Calvin)

*Faith and the Plot of the Psalter*

*Faith, Righteousness and the Nature of Humanity*

“Blessed is the man… [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (1:1–2)

“Blessed are all who take refuge in [the Son]” (2:12)

The man “who would not make God his refuge, but [trusts] in the abundance of his riches and [seeks] refuge in his own destruction!” (52:7).

“As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for *I have sinned* against you!’ (41:4).

“You have upheld me because of *my integrity*, and set me in your presence forever” (42:12)

“I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (40:8).

“Evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me” (40:12).

“Pardon my guilt, for it is great” (25:11)

“Integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you” (25:21).

Psalm 32

*Faith and Shame*

Those who trust or take refuge in the LORD will not be put to shame (14:6; 22:5; 25:2–3, 20; 31:17; 71:1).

The Psalmist prays that his enemies would be put to shame (35:4; 35:26; 40:14; 53:5; 69:6; 70:2; 71:13 etc. cf. 44:7)

*Faith: Passivity and Exclusivity*

“In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, “Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (11:1–3)

“Deliver my soul from the wicked *by your sword*” (17:13).

“Be still, and know that I am God” (46:10).

“Behold the works of the LORD” (46:8).

“Trust in the LORD, and do good” (37:3).

“Trust in him, and he will act” (37:5).

“Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.’ (16:1–2)

“The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply” (16:4)

“I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD” (31:6)

“But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’

**Conclusion**

1. W. H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms as a Grammar for Faith: Prayer and Praise*, (Waco: Baylor, 2019), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin’s Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context,* Oxford Studies in Historical Theology*,* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)