

# Songs

FOR YOUR PATH

A Daily Devotional from the Book of Psalms

BY C. J. HARRIS

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## Preface

**T**he book you hold in your hands grew out of my personal journey through the Book of Psalms. Recorded in these pages are snapshots of God's revealed glory, the wisdom for righteousness, and the joy found in the presence of our Father.

The Jews place this book in the same category as Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Above all, the Psalms are meant to teach their reader wisdom—how to live in light of God's character and within the order of His creation. Think of Psalms as a map to blessing both now and for all eternity. Each song and poem is a signpost, pointing us to God and to the path He has lain out for His people.

I pray that your journey is as uplifting and edifying as mine. And I trust you will finish with a song of praise on your lips.

By His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "C. J. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

C. J. Harris  
Rocky Mount, North Carolina

# A Call to God's Path

## Psalm 1:1

*"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."*

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The Book of Psalms presents its reader with two ways in this world. The first is the way of the godly—those who have made God their first and highest pursuit. This path is lined with blessing, hope, joy, wisdom, and all that is truly good. But it is not an easy path, for there is much opposition. Yet it is the only path that leads to the One for whom we were all created.

The second path is the path of the ungodly, or those who have chosen anything other than God as their ultimate pursuit. Christ calls this path the way of destruction (Matt. 7:13). Much travel has worn this path smooth, which makes for easy going. Its travelers will also find many companions to encourage and help them along the way. Psalms names many of these companions—the fool, the wicked, the scoffer, and the liar, to mention a few.

The psalmists call us to the godly path, echoing the call in Proverbs: understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:5). These poets and songwriters describe the glory of the God of our way; they fight off attacks along the path; and they plead with wayward pilgrims to rejoin the King's road.

**Final Thought:** Only two paths lead through this life. Where is yours heading?

# The Delight of the Path

## Psalm 1:2

*“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*

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It's been said that the most important part of a trip is not the destination, but the journey itself. When I was a child traveling with my family, I would take along a book to read on the road. My dad would inevitably glance in the rearview mirror, and seeing my nose buried in the book, he would tell me to put the book down and look at the scenery. He believed that the journey was just as important as the destination.

The psalmist shared my dad's love for the journey, but on an entirely different level. As we follow the path of God, He is our destination. After all, who wouldn't look forward to an eternity in heaven with Him?

But God is also the joy along the path. We can delight in Him as we meditate in the Word. Too many of us become so focused on heaven that we fail to realize that God wants us to begin heavenly worship in this life. He has given us an entire book—66 books, actually—to help us know, love, and praise His name right now.

And this worship isn't confined to church services or devotional times. The delight is available day and night, without end, all along our winding, narrow way. We can taste it in His creation; we can share it in fellowship with His people; we can experience it during acts of service for His glory; and we can even find it simply by being still and knowing that He is our God. The way of God is a way of true delight.

**Final Thought:** Take time to delight in God today.

# The Fruit of the Path

## Psalm 1:3

*“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

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Robert Frost ended one of his best-known poems with the following lines:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Similarly, Psalm 1 concludes its song of the two ways by presenting where each will lead. Though every path has its own unique twists and turns, ups and downs, valleys and vistas—the path of God will always lead to spiritual life and blessing, while the paths of this world plunge travelers into death and destruction.

The Psalmist uses a second image to describe the person that delights in the Lord and His Law, comparing him with a tree rooted deeply into the bank of a river. As he abides there, his life bears fruit in God-appointed seasons.

The picture here brings to mind the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) and the fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:9–11), both of which grow by the inward work of Christ for God’s glory. God preserves this tree from destruction, and its leaves do not wither. So long as the tree draws life from the River, it will bear fruit. And as believers follow God’s path, His grace will lead them home.

The wicked find none of this blessing on their path (Ps. 1:4–6). None of their labors produce lasting fruit, but rather chaff, the empty husks left after the good seed is gleaned, which the winds of time and circumstance drive away. These people will also pass before the Lord, but they will not stand before His judgment. Their path will lead to the destruction of their lives and all their works.

**Final Thought:** Pursue God above all else, and you will rejoice to see His fruit in your life.

# The Unopposable Lord

## Psalm 2:4

*“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.”*

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Now, as ever, so many people rail against God. In the media, public figures ignore or attack His moral law. In academia, teachers deny the truth of His Word. In churches, preachers and theologians dilute or abuse Scripture. And all this just inside the western world—outside, God’s people face persecution, imprisonment, and even death.

In short, humankind wages constant warfare against God. But does this worry Him? Is He troubled by what seems like an ever-growing opposition?

On the contrary, the Lord sits on His throne in heaven and laughs at these fruitless efforts. The psalmist goes so far as to say that God derides the wicked schemers of this world. He is merely allowing the cup of His wrath to fill to the brim (Rev. 16:19).

We shouldn’t complain that God delays His judgment. His patience, after all, has given you and me time to repent from our sin and turn to Christ. We should be grateful for the mercy God shows when humankind rejects Him, because each of us has turned away from God at some point.

But know that God will one day judge those who choose to oppose Him.

Christian, does the seeming might of the wicked burden you? Do you fear the attacks from your culture, your community, or even your church?

This song of the King calls you to lay such fears at the foot of God’s throne. Rest in His power and trust in His plan. Pray along with Maltbie Babcock,

*This is my Father’s world.  
O let me ne’er forget  
That though the wrong  
Seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet.*

**Final Thought:** Our God reigns omnipotent, and none can overthrow Him.

# Submission Is Wisdom

## Psalm 2:11

*“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”*

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At the heart of wisdom is the ability to make right judgments. For this reason, the Bible points out that folly is bound up in a child’s heart. The young boy thinks to himself, “Jumping down three steps is fun and easy. I’ll try eight next time.” He lacks the judgment to foresee the disastrous outcome of his decisions. As an adult, he gains wisdom from experience and observation, which replace much of this juvenile thinking.

The second psalm concludes with a call to wisdom. The Father has given His Son dominion over every nation and every land (v. 8). As ruler, the Son will crush all enemies with a rod of iron (v. 9). He will overthrow all opposition. In light of such power, rebellion is mere folly. Wisdom dictates submission and reverence.

Sadly, many still respond to the Son’s rule with foolish defiance. Yet those who refuse to submit will perish from the way (v. 12). They will come under the wrath of the King they have rejected. But those who choose to submit in faith will find only blessing. God’s people will rejoice in the eternal favor of their King.

**Final Thought:** Submission to God brings joy and blessing. Be wise.



# Rest in God During Trials

## Psalm 3:5

*"I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me."*

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In this psalm about trials, verse five seems a bit out of place. David looks around him and finds enemies on every side. They mock him and his faith, saying David's hope in God is useless. "Give up your hope, and tremble in fear!" they shout.

Like David's enemies, trials can challenge the hope and peace we have in God. We're tempted to think that our situation is never going to get any better. We'll never get past this struggle, so we may as well give up. It's natural to react to problems with fear and worry—for many people, anxiety regularly fills their day and robs them of sleep at night.

But a believer doesn't need to respond to trials that way. David reminds us that all believers have an escape from fear and worry—hope in God. We can cry out to the Lord in our troubles, and like a caring father, He will hear us and come to our aid.

Life will always bring difficult trials, but we rest secure in a God who knows our struggles, hears our prayers, and answers in love. We can lie down and sleep in peace.

**Final Thought:** God will give you peace as you rest in Him.

# More Joy than a Feast

## Psalm 4:7

*“Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.”*

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For those of us who have food readily available in the form of all-you-can-eat buffets and well-stocked grocery stores, it’s difficult to appreciate the joy of a true harvest feast. We can find fresh food easily, but most people in earlier centuries didn’t have this luxury. For them, meal options included seasonal crops or preserved food. When harvest came—the time when laborers gathered fresh, plentiful food—it brought great rejoicing.

The Jewish celebration of harvest began with the Feast of First Fruits and culminated seven weeks later with the Feast of Weeks, also called Pentecost.

After harvesting the barley and wheat crops, the Israelites gathered in Jerusalem to thank the Lord for His provision. Rejoicing echoed through the city as the smells of freshly baked bread drifted through the air. Grape harvest began soon after the feasts, so people brought out the rest of the previous year’s wine. If the grain harvest and the previous grape harvest had been plentiful, there would be even greater festivity.

David, surveying all this merriment, makes a passionate statement—in God, he finds more joy than in the abundance of harvest. The feasting satisfies for a moment, but the joy of God runs deeper and longer than any outward pleasure.

The nineteenth-century hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, conveys a similar thought in her hymn, “Take the World, But Give Me Jesus.”

*Take the world, but give me Jesus,  
All its joys are but a name;  
But His love abideth ever,  
Through eternal years the same.*

**Final Thought:** No joy of this life can compare to the joy found in God. Where is your joy found?

# A Prayer for Straight Paths

## Psalm 5:8

*“Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.”*

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No one can follow God’s way in his or her own strength. The enemies without and within pull us back toward the path of the wicked and its destructive end. Only the One who built the path of righteousness can keep pilgrims upon it.

David recognized this fact and prayed to the Lord of the path for clarity. He desired God’s guidance. The paths of the world twist and turn, easily misleading the most diligent pilgrim. Knowing this, David prayed that God would make the path straight before him, making the right way so clear that he could not miss it.

Like David, we must call on God to guide us. On every side, voices call us to side paths with enticing words and worldly wisdom. The simplicity of the straight path can be obscured when we turn to sources other than God’s Word for guidance. God doesn’t author such confusion. God makes the path plain as we prayerfully wait upon Him.

**Final Thought:** Seek God’s grace to walk the path of righteousness.

# God's Mercy on the Weak

## Psalm 6:4

*"Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake."*

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As Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He began with the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). In presenting His kingdom, Jesus wanted His hearers to know that it was peopled by the weak. Its citizens knew they had no spiritual wealth to buy God's favor. All who come to God come empty-handed.

When we request God's forgiveness, we have nothing with which to commend ourselves to God. Our sin and its fruits of sorrow, pain, and frustration belong to us. We have no righteousness of our own to remove it. Nor can we borrow righteousness from others, for all of humanity are spiritual paupers. And no work we do can make amends for our sin against God. Forgiveness comes only by God's loving mercy—freely given in Christ.

God will answer our prayers for forgiveness. He will restore us as a father restores repentant children. The wrath we deserve has already been poured out on Christ, without a drop remaining for us. For this reason we can pray in full confidence of God's mercy.

**Final Thought:** In Christ, we find mercy and forgiveness.

# The Need for Repentance

## Psalm 7:12

*"If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready."*

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We enter this world on the wrong path. Our nature predisposes us to seek our own good and our own pleasure, leading us in ways of sin and self-righteousness. This nature is so ingrained that David declared that we wander astray from our mother's womb (Ps. 58:3). We all begin on the path of destruction.

With such inauspicious beginnings, our only hope rests in God's longsuffering mercy. We deserve wrath, but God gives time to repent (Rom. 2:4). He gave us the Word and even His own Son to call us away from destruction. If we will repent and believe, God promises to put us on the path of life.

The danger lies in mistaking God's forbearance for disinterest. Since God delays judgment, some wrongly assume that God will not judge or that He doesn't care. David corrects this error by picturing God ready to strike those who refuse to repent. He stands with sword sharpened and bow bent (v. 12). The weapons of war are prepared, and the arrow is trained on its target (v. 13). To go on in our natural way will bring doom, but if we turn back to God in repentance, there is a sure hope.

**Final Thought:** If you would come to Christ, you must repent.