

PRECEPT
UPON
PRECEPT

Psalms

PART 1

THE LORD HEARS
WHEN I CALL
(PSALMS 1–22)

PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT®
PSALMS
PART 1
THE LORD HEARS WHEN I CALL
(PSALMS 1–22)

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HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY; ARTHUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE

How to Study Your Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994/2010

The New Inductive Study Bible—New American Standard Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2000

Hebrew Word Study Tools

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

LONGMAN III, TREMPER

Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014.

VANGEMEREN, WILLEM A.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2008

WALVOORD, JOHN F.; ZUCK, ROY B., EDS.

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures—
Old Testament**

Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983-c1985

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software

Powerful search engines and up to 4,000 electronic Bible study resources (commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries etc.) make it fast and easy to do simple and complex searches of multiple sources, then pull materials together for orderly presentation—excellent for word and topical studies based on English or original Hebrew and Greek. Available at www.logos.com.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WE WANT YOU TO KNOW . . .

We are excited that you have chosen to study *Psalms* with us. It will be such a blessing to your life because it is part of God's Word, His self-revelation, each part of which is essential to understanding the whole purpose of God.

As a book of the Bible, *Psalms* holds a unique place. It's a collection of poetry—prayer, praises, or songs—each psalm with its own message. They're not chapters, each building on the previous, intended to be read sequentially. And unlike prose, with chapters divided into paragraphs, verses in poetry are collected into “stanzas,” each stanza within a poem separated from the previous one by a blank line.

To understand the psalms, it's important to see the flow of thought between stanzas, namely how does one connect with the previous ones? For example:

- Does the stanza contrast with the previous one?
- Does it give the reason or result for what was said previously?
- Is it a request or a call to action due to the psalmist's circumstances spoken previously?
- Is it praise in light of who God is or what He has done mentioned previously?

Unlike English poetry that often emphasizes rhyme and meter (or rhythm), Hebrew poetry's most important element is parallelism, by which authors emphasize ideas. Sometimes that parallelism repeats a thought in other words. Other times, the parallelism adds new information to an original concept. A third type contrasts ideas, showing how they are different. A fourth uses analogies, likening one thing to another, the characteristics of which are similar.

David, who wrote many of the psalms, appointed Levites to serve in the house of the Lord. “They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (1 Chronicles 6:31-32).

We are invited to pour out our hearts to God, to come before Him and present our concerns. We were made to sing, to lift our voices in worship, to speak to God and to others “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with [our] heart[s] to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).

So as you study the psalms with us, use them for prayer and praise of God . . . or as a springboard for your own songs or poetry of prayer and worship to God. Pour out your heart before Him and listen for His response. Grow your intimacy with God in your prayer and worship.

LESSON ONE

Psalms One through Five

THIS LESSON INCORPORATES The following located in the Appendix:
Observation Worksheets of Psalms 1–5
“Psalms 1–22 at a Glance”
“The Lord”
Word studies
Cross-references

Psalms—theology sung. Through Psalms we learn about God—His attributes, what pleases and displeases Him, His relationship to the righteous and the wicked, and His revelation of the future concerning Messiah, salvation, and judgment.

In this course, we’ll begin our journey into the Psalms with Psalms 1–22. What an adventure awaits us!

If you have not yet read the section titled “Before You Begin . . .,” do so before moving to Day One.

DAY ONE

Blessed. A word you may have heard many times, used in many ways. But what does it mean to be blessed by God? And who does He bless? We’ll look at this as we begin our study of Psalms this week.

1. Always start your time in God’s Word with prayer. As you study this week, ask Him to teach you by His Spirit and to show you who He blesses and how.
2. Today we’ll look together at Psalm 1. There are rich truths in this short psalm. Begin by simply reading this psalm using the Observation Worksheet in the Appendix. As you do, look for the main types of people. An easy way to begin observing a psalm is to ask who it’s about.
3. What two types of people are described in this psalm?

4. Now read your Observation Worksheet of Psalm 1 again and mark:
 - a. *righteous*, including pronouns and synonyms such as *man* if referring to a righteous man. You might underline these in blue.
 - b. *wicked*, including pronouns and synonyms such as *scoffers*. You might underline these in brown.
5. On the back of your workbook, you’ll see marking suggestions for some words often used in the Bible. An asterisk [*] shows words in this workbook with suggested markings.

Read Psalm 1 and this time mark:

- a. *Lord* (see *God*)* including pronouns
 - b. *law**
 - c. *blessed**
6. In the Appendix, you’ll find pages titled “The Lord.” List what you learn about Him from Psalm 1. Include scripture references. As we study each psalm, you’ll add to this list and discover rich truths about who He is and what He does.
 7. Now use your markings to see what God teaches us about the righteous and the wicked from this psalm. Look at each place you marked the righteous and the wicked and list what you learn.

Righteous

Wicked

8. Now, it's time to write a short theme for each stanza of this psalm. Look at each stanza. Who and what is it mostly about? As you evaluate these stanzas, consider how the second one relates to (compares, contrasts, or continues) the first. Then use words from the text to summarize the main thought in each.

Record the themes below or in the margin of your Observation Worksheet.

a. verses 1-3

b. verses 4-6

9. To conclude our observations we'll identify the theme for Psalm 1. We know the psalm is mostly about two types of people—the righteous and the wicked, so we'll include them in our theme.

Let's think together:

a. What word or phrase describes the righteous?

b. What word or phrase describes the wicked?

c. Using these words from the text, summarize the theme of Psalm 1 on the line for "Psalm theme" at the top of your Observation Worksheet. You may want to use a pencil so you can adjust your theme later if needed.

10. Now a few more things to help us think about this psalm.

a. You observed that the blessed or righteous man meditates on the law of the Lord.

- 1) Look up the definition of the Hebrew word translated "meditates." Record on the next page the definitions that best fit the context of verse 2.

If you've never done a word study, you may want to read the section "It's All Greek to Me!" in *How to Study Your Bible*.

2) From these definitions, what do you know about the blessed or righteous man?

b. Review verses 2 and 3.

1) How does verse 3 relate to verse 2.

2) So what kind of prosperity is the psalmist referring to?

11. Now for some application. How has the Spirit of God been speaking to your heart as you studied this psalm?

Use the lists you made about the righteous and the wicked to examine your life. Which one describes you? Think carefully, Beloved.

Examine your values, your focus, your conversation. Are they like those of the wicked or of the righteous? How?

How often do you meditate on God's Word? Are you like a tree planted firmly in the truths of God's Word? Be honest with yourself about where you are. Then go to God and talk with Him about it.

Your answer is a matter of life and death, a matter of eternal destiny. The righteous are blessed, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Record what the Lord shows you.

12. Now that you've studied Psalm 1 for yourself, you can read what commentaries say about it. Take notes if you want.

DAY
TWO

1. Begin today with prayer, again asking God to teach you, as well as the others in your discussion group. Then we'll begin our study of Psalm 2.
2. Read Psalm 2, looking for the main characters as you did with Psalm 1. This is always a good place to begin when studying a psalm.
3. List below the main characters you observed.

4. Read Psalm 2 again and mark *nations*,* *peoples*, *kings*, *rulers* all the same way, including pronouns and any synonyms for these.

Remember, an asterisk [*] shows words that have suggested markings on the back cover of your workbook.

5. Now read the psalm and mark:
 - a. *Lord*,* including pronouns
 - b. *Son* (see *Jesus**), including pronouns and synonyms

If you're not sure how to mark *King* and *Anointed*, that's OK. You'll see who they are as we continue our study.

6. It will be beneficial to make a Key Word Bookmark for Psalms. Cut out the bookmark on the back cover of your workbook. On the blank side, list key words from Psalms and mark them the way you will throughout the book.

Now list the following key words on your bookmark:

- a. *anger, fury, wrath**
 - b. *blessed* (see *bless**)
 - c. *refuge*
7. Now read Psalm 2 again and mark these.
8. Look at your markings.
- a. Add to your list about the Lord in the Appendix.
 - b. Briefly list what this psalm says about *the nations, peoples, etc.*

We'll get you started.

nations, peoples, kings, rulers
in uproar
devising a vain thing

9. Let's evaluate each stanza to form a theme and note them below or in the margin of your Observation Worksheet. As you did with Psalm 1, use words from the text to summarize who and what each stanza is mostly about. As you move from stanza to stanza, think about the flow of thought from one stanza to the next.
- a. 1-3
 - b. 4-6

- e. In the last line of this psalm, what's the contrast to the kings, judges, and peoples?
12. As you continue to study Psalms, you'll find that some psalms like Psalm 2 contain prophecy(ies) of the first and/or second coming(s) of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Let's look at some examples of this by using cross-references.
- a. Acts 4:25-26 quotes Psalm 2:1-2. Read Acts 4:24-28, part of a prayer by believers after Peter and John were jailed for preaching the gospel, then released.
 - 1) How do these verses help you understand Psalm 2:1-2?

 - 2) By the way, according to verse 25, who wrote Psalm 2?

 - b. Now compare Micah 4:1-3 and Zechariah 14:16 with Psalm 2:6. What do you learn?

 - c. Acts 13:33 quotes Psalm 2:7. Read Acts 13:32-35. What is Psalm 2:7 referring to?

 - d. Now read Revelation 19:11-16 for context. Then compare Revelation 19:15 with Psalm 2:9. When will the event described take place?

13. Finally, are there people today who live in rebellion against the Lord? What do they need to know from this psalm? How will they know it?

14. Now feel free to read about Psalm 2 in commentaries.

Good job! We realize Psalm 2 is not an easy one, but what rich truths! You might end your day by worshiping your King.

DAY THREE

1. Go to the Lord and ask Him to give you wisdom as you study Psalm 3. God's Spirit gives that wisdom.
2. Psalm 3 begins a little differently from Psalms 1 and 2. Just before verse 1 is a superscription. Superscriptions contain information such as the writer, the occasion, who it is for, and/or how it is to be sung. In the Hebrew Bible, the superscription is verse 1.

Sometimes marginal notes or footnotes give cross-references about the occasion (the historical context).

What does the superscription for Psalm 3 tell you?

3. There's a marginal note in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) for this superscription that gives 2 Samuel 15:13-17 as a cross-reference.¹ Read this passage to learn more about what was happening when David wrote this Psalm.
4. Begin observing Psalm 3 by identifying the main characters.

¹ New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Ps 3 title) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

5. Read this short psalm again and mark *David* and *Lord*, including pronouns and synonyms.

When you finish, read it again and mark David’s adversaries, including pronouns and synonyms (*enemies, wicked, etc.*).

6. Now add the following to your Key Word Bookmark. Then read Psalm 3 at least twice more and mark the words on your bookmark.

- a. *deliverance, save, salvation* (see *redeem**)
- b. *crying* when it refers to crying to the Lord (see *pray**)
- c. *arise, O LORD*

7. Next in our observation process is to add to your list on the Lord in the Appendix. As you list what the psalm tells us about our Lord, be sure to prayerfully pay attention to each entry you list. These are truths about your God.

8. One more thing before we continue our observations. There is a musical term repeated in this psalm, the word “Selah” at the end of the second line in verses 2, 4, and 8.

The marginal note in the NASB says, “*Selah* may mean: *Pause, Crescendo* or *Musical interlude*.”² Whichever is correct, *Selah* is an attention-getter, either with a pause, a crescendo (a gradual increase in volume), or a musical interlude (music plays but no words are sung).

9. Use words from the text to summarize the stanzas below or in the margin of your Observation Worksheet. Who and what is each stanza about? Remember to think through the flow of thought from stanza to stanza or how each stanza continues from the others.

a. 1-2

b. 3-6

² New American Standard Bible: 1995 update, marginal note (Ps 3:2) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

c. 7-8 (You might include the repeated key word in this stanza.)

10. When you record a theme for one of the psalms, use words specific to that psalm—rather than something generic like, “Enemies against David”—so that you can distinguish it from the theme of another psalm.

For example: What do you learn about David’s circumstances in Psalm 3:1, and what does David say about God in verse 3? Pencil in a theme at the top of your Observation Worksheet. If you realize later you need to make it more specific, you can come back to it.

11. To make sure you didn’t miss it:

a. How do David’s words in the second stanza contrast with what the enemies are saying in the first stanza?

b. How did knowing these things about God affect David according to verses 5 and 6?

c. So what did David ask God to do and why in verses 7 and 8?

-
12. In the midst of our circumstances there is always the Word of the Lord, the message of truth, for your life. Consider:
- a. In the first stanza, what are people saying? When someone tells you God is not going to help, what will your attitude be? What do you learn from David's attitude that will help you in similar situations?

 - b. Look carefully at what David knew about God according to verse 3. Do you know Him like David did?
 - 1) Is the Lord your shield, the One you go to for protection? He may use human sources, but ultimately is He the One you look to?

 - 2) Is He your glory or is your glory your job, your family, your status . . . ?

 - 3) And is He the One who lifts your head, or someone or something else?

 - c. Look at verse 5. When you're tired and weary or you're worrying or fearful concerning circumstances and can't sleep, what can you learn from this psalm that will help?

Shield, glory, lifter of my head, Savior. Beloved, He is what you need in any and every circumstance of life.

13. Now you can check out Psalm 3 in commentaries.

David wrote seventy-five of the psalms, so it's helpful to read about his life. Only a few psalms give the circumstances, but if you're familiar with David's life, you'll have a better understanding of those he wrote.

When you have time, you might read about David a chapter a day from 1 Samuel 15–1 Kings 2; and 1 Chronicles 11–29 and record the main event(s) for each. If you have the New Inductive Study Bible, above each chapter there's a place to record the theme or main event(s).

Or when you finish studying this course, you might consider studying Desiring God's Own Heart, a study of 1 and 2 Samuel/1 Chronicles, part of our New Inductive Study Series, or our Precept Upon Precept or In & Out courses on 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel/1 Chronicles.

DAY FOUR

Today we'll move to Psalm 4. As you pray, know that you've been prayed for, dear one. Even as we write this course, you are on our hearts.

Have you noticed that we're using a general pattern to study each psalm?

- Read the superscription for any background information about the psalm.
- Read the psalm to observe who the main characters are.
- Read again and mark the main characters. Always mark the Lord, even if His name is not mentioned often in the psalm.
- Read again and mark key words.
- List truths about the Lord.
- Summarize a theme for each stanza from what you've observed, thinking about the flow of thought from stanza to stanza.
- Review your stanza themes, then use a few words from the psalm to summarize the main theme.
- Reason through the psalm stanza by stanza.
- Now consider the following personal application: How does what you learned about God in this psalm impact your life and relationship with Him? What can you learn for your life from the people in this psalm?

As we study Psalm 4, notice the way we follow the pattern.

1. As it states in the first bullet, begin by reading the superscription. What do you learn about this psalm?
2. Now read the psalm to observe who the main characters are (second bullet), and then mark the references to each one (third bullet).
3. It's key word time (fourth bullet). Add the following words to your Psalms Key Word Bookmark. Then read Psalm 4 two or three times, marking a few words at a time from your bookmark. Reading several times will help you become more familiar with the psalm.
 - a. *call, prayer** the way you marked *crying*
 - b. *righteousness* (see *righteous**)
 - c. *heart*
 - d. *sin**
4. Add to your ongoing list about the Lord in the Appendix (fifth bullet).
5. Now we'll move from one stanza to the next; don't forget to think about the connection, the flow of thought.

Record the stanza themes (sixth bullet) below or in the margin of your Observation Worksheet. If a key word and its synonym are repeated in a stanza, you might use that word in your theme.

- a. 1
- b. 2-3
- c. 4-5
- d. 6-8

6. What is this psalm mainly about? Record the theme at the top of your Observation Worksheet.
7. Now let's reason through the psalm.
 - a. What does David request of God in verse 1?
 - b. Verses 2-5.
 - 1) Who is David speaking to and what do you learn about them?
 - 2) What is David calling them to do?
 - c. What's the question asked in in verses 6-8 and how does David respond to it?
 - d. Why do you think David uses "Selah" where he does? If needed, review what you learned about "Selah" in Day 3.

8. God’s Word can be life-changing! “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Review the last bullet of our Psalms pattern. As you look at the flow of thought in this psalm, think about how it relates to your life.

What did David ask the Lord to do for him? What was his situation? How did what he knew about the Lord change his perspective? Don’t skip this, Beloved. Time with God in His Word should make a difference in our lives!

9. Good job! You can finish your study time today by reading what commentaries say about Psalm 4.

DAY FIVE

Today we’ll observe our final psalm for the week: Psalm 5. As we do, we’ll learn more about the Lord’s blessing.

1. How is this superscription different from the one for Psalm 4?
2. Read Psalm 5 to see who the main characters are. Then read again and mark them.
3. Add the following to your Key Word Bookmark; then read Psalm 5 and mark key words.
 - a. *wickedness, evil, transgression, like sin**
 - b. *lovingkindness*
4. Now add what this psalm says about the Lord to your list in the Appendix.

Also, briefly list below what you learn about David’s foes, those involved in various kinds of wickedness.

5. As you evaluate what you marked in each stanza, use the main characters and/or key repeated words to help you write a theme for each. Don’t forget to pay attention to how each stanza relates to the others.
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-7
 - c. 8-10
 - d. 11-12

6. Record a theme for Psalm 5 at the top of your Observation Worksheet using a few words from the text.

11. In the Appendix is a page titled “Psalms 1–22 at a Glance.” Completing this chart will give you a visual overview of Psalms 1–22, and it is a helpful tool for future reference. Finish your week by recording the themes from your Psalms 1–5 Observation Worksheets on “Psalms 1–22 at a Glance.”

Do you have a *New Inductive Study Bible (NISB)*? There’s an *At a Glance* chart at the end of each book of the Bible where you can consolidate your themes in one place. If you have an NISB, you may want to record your theme for each psalm there also.

*But let all who take refuge in You be glad,
Let them ever sing for joy;
And may You shelter them,
That those who love Your name may exult in You.
For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him with favor as with a shield.*

—*Psalms 5:11-12*

O Beloved, do you exult in the Lord? Do you sing for joy to the one who is your refuge? Take time to exult in Him now for who He is. You’ve learned or been reminded of so much about Him this week!

PSALM 1
Observation Worksheet

Psalm Theme _____

- HOW blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
 Nor stand in the path of sinners,
 Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
 Which yields its fruit in its season
 And its leaf does not wither;
 And in whatever he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
 But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 But the way of the wicked will perish.

PSALM 2
Observation Worksheet

Psalm Theme _____

WHY are the nations in an uproar

- And the peoples devising a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
- 3 “Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”
- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
- 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
- 6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”
- 7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
- 8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.
- 9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.’ ”
- 10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
- 11 Worship the LORD with reverence
And rejoice with trembling.

- 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in*
the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

PSALM 3
Observation Worksheet

Psalm Theme _____

A Psalm of David, when he ¹fled from Absalom his son.

O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!

Many are rising up against me.

2 Many are saying of my soul,

“There is no deliverance for him in God.”

²Selah.

3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

4 I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain.

Selah.

5 I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me round about.

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!
For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;
Your blessing *be* upon Your people!

Selah.

¹2 Samuel 15:13-17, 29

²*Selah* may mean: *Pause, Crescendo* or *Musical interlude*

PSALM 4
Observation Worksheet

Psalm Theme _____

For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

ANSWER me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.

3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.

4 Tremble, and do not sin;
Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And trust in the LORD.

6 Many are saying, "Who will show us *any* good?"
Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!

7 You have put gladness in my heart,
More than when their grain and new wine abound.

8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep,
For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

PSALM 5
Observation Worksheet

Psalm Theme _____

For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD,

Consider my groaning.

2 Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,
For to You I pray.

3 In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;
In the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch.

4 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;
No evil dwells with You.

5 The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes;
You hate all who do iniquity.

6 You destroy those who speak falsehood;
The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

7 But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house,
At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.

8 O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes;
Make Your way straight before me.

9 There is nothing reliable in what they say;
Their inward part is destruction *itself*.
Their throat is an open grave;
They flatter with their tongue.

- 10 Hold them guilty, O God;
By their own devices let them fall!
In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out,
For they are rebellious against You.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in You be glad,
Let them ever sing for joy;
And may You shelter them,
That those who love Your name may exult in You.
- 12 For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him with favor as with a shield.

PSALMS 1–22 AT A GLANCE

Book Theme:

Author:

Psalm Themes

Key Words:

1
2
3
4
5
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10
11

Psalm Themes

12
13
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THE LORD

PRECEPT
UPON
PRECEPT

Psalms Part 1
The Lord