

PSALMS

Chapter 101

I Will Walk with Integrity

A Psalm of David.

I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will make music. 2 I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; 3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. 4 A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil. 5 Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure. 6 I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me. 7 No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes. 8 Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

Ps 101 A king's pledge to reign righteously (see 2Ki 23:3). If authored by David (see title), it may have been composed for Solomon's use at his coronation (see 1Ki 2:2–4; see also 2Sa 23:1–7 and introduction to Ps 72). Only Christ, the great Son of David, has perfectly fulfilled these commitments. In the final arrangement of the Psalter this psalm, together with Ps 110 (both relating to the king), frames the collection of ten psalms located between the preceding thematic group (Ps 92–100; see introduction to Ps 92) and that which follows (Ps 111–118; see introduction to Ps 111). This little psalter-within-the-Psalter is concentrically arranged: Ps 102 and 109 are individual prayers; Ps 103 and 108 praise the Lord for his “great ... love” (103:11; 108:4) that reaches to the heavens; Ps 104, which celebrates God's many wise and benevolent acts in creation, and Ps 107, which celebrates God's “wonderful deeds” (107:8, 15, 21, 24, 31) for man through his lordship over creation, are complements; and so also are Ps 105, which recites the history of Israel's redemption, and Ps 106, which recites the same history as a history of Israel's rebellion. As a mini-Psalter, it includes most of the forms and themes found in the rest of the Psalter. Its outer frame is devoted to royal psalms and its center pair is devoted to recitals of Israel's history with God—with its themes ranging from creation and God's eternal enthronement to the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the exodus from Egypt and entrance into Canaan, the exile and restoration, and finally the ultimate triumph of the Lord's anointed. The collection bears a distinctive redemption history-stamp and evokes recollection of all the salient elements of the OT message. (For the problem of the Book division at Ps 107 see introduction to that psalm.) (CSB)

Composed of seven couplets (the number of completeness), the psalm begins with a twofold introduction (vv. 1–3), followed by a five-stanza (vv. 3b–8) elaboration of the theme of the second stanza. Of these five stanzas, the middle one (v. 6) speaks of the king's commitment to the “faithful” and “blameless,” while the other four (vv. 3b–4, 5, 7, 8) declare his repudiation of all the “faithless” and “wicked” in the land. (For the parallel relationship of stanzas six and seven with three and four see notes below.) The middle stanza is linked with stanzas one and two also by the catchword “blameless.” (CSB)

Promises made by the king fit a coronation ceremony. Perhaps used at an annual celebration of the king's enthronement. David is named as author, but even this greatest of Israel's kings could

not live up to these lofty standards. Only David's greatest Son, Jesus Christ, perfectly fulfills the promises. (TLSB)

Format: The high ideals break into two sections: vv 1–4, the king's pledges; vv 5–8, the king's demands. (TLSB)

In this psalm we have a portrait of the ideal king. He is devoted to serving God. He carries out the duty of a ruler to support the good and oppose the evil. (PBC)

101:1–2a Celebration of the pattern of God's reign, which the king makes the model for his own. – In this opening section David declares his devotion to serving the Lord. (PBC)

101:1 *love and justice*. Two of the chief qualities of God's rule. (CSB)

Augustine: "God neither loses the severity of judgment in the bounty of mercy, nor in judging with severity loses the bounty of mercy" (NPNF 1 8:491). (TLSB)

101:2a *when ... ?* An urgent prayer for God to come and sustain in him his pledge (see 1Ki 3:7–9; see also Ps 72). (CSB)

101:2b–3a The essential commitment. (CSB)

First vow given is for personal integrity. (TLSB)

way that is blameless. The king will study diligently what is the wise and right way for him to live. (TLSB)

This describes a life of integrity, that is, being forgiven for sin and living free from sin. This requires constant vigilance and frequent maintenance. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

when will You come to me? The king asks the Lord to grant wisdom. (TLSB)

heart ... eyes. In OT understanding, a person follows the dictates of the heart—the inner man—and/or the attractions of the eye—external influences (see 119:37; Jdg 14:1–2; 2Sa 11:2; 2Ki 16:10; Job 31:1; Pr 4:25; 17:24). For the combination heart-eyes see v. 5; Nu 15:39; Job 31:7; Pr 21:4; Ecc 2:10; Jer 22:17. (CSB)

101:2b *house*. Royal administration (also in v. 7). (CSB)

Not just within the king's own family, but in his rule over the whole nation. (TLSB)

101:3b–4 A repudiation of evil deeds and those who promote them (see v. 7). (CSB)

The king denounces what does not belong in his reign. (TLSB)

The most basic duties God has given to rulers are to oppose and punish evil and to protect and encourage good. (PBC)

101:3 *it shall not cling to me* – There will be no tolerance for a person who might appear faithful but is an apostate. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

101:4 *perverse*. Opposite of the blameless integrity sought by the king in v 2. While humans may promise such integrity, sinful hearts make it impossible, except by the ideal King—Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

101:5 A pledge to remove from his presence all slanderous and all arrogant persons (see v. 8). (CSB)

The king pledges to lead the people to live with the same just and loyal integrity as will characterize his rule. (TLSB)

David will do everything in his power to drive evil out of land. (PBC)

haughty look and an arrogant heart. The arrogant tend to be ruthless (see Isa 10:12) and are a law to themselves. (CSB)

The expression describes someone who is ambitious, and looks down on other people. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

destroy ... not endure. Such harsh punishments for cited misdeeds reveal the king's deep desire for only God's justice to be known in the land. (TLSB)

101:6 A pledge to surround himself in his reign with the faithful and blameless. (CSB)

David was an exceptional ruler, but nevertheless he fell far short of the ideal expressed in this psalm. Godliness begins at home. David's failure to reach the standard he had set was due especially to his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. The failure in his own family life severely handicapped him in his efforts to oppose wickedness among his sons. (PBC)

I look with favor. I will look with favor on (see 33:18; 34:15). (CSB)

the faithful. Those who maintain moral integrity. (CSB)

minister to me. Serve as my aide (see Ex 24:13), attendant (see Ge 39:4; 1Ki 19:21), personal servant (see 2Ki 4:43), commander and official (see 1 Ch 27:1; 2Ch 17:19; Pr 29:12). (CSB)

way that is blameless. Those who study this (v 2) are the very people the king wants in his courts and as citizens. (TLSB)

101:7 A repudiation of all those who make their way by double-dealing (see vv. 3b–4). (CSB)

101:8 A pledge to remove all the wicked from the Lord's kingdom (see v. 5). (CSB)

morning by morning. With diligence and persistence (see Jer 21:12; Zep 3:5). It may have been traditional for kings to hear cases in the morning. (CSB)

The hour to try cases and dispense justice. This indicates the king's diligence. Cf 122:5; Jer 21:12. (TLSB)

Ps 101 No nation has the kind of political leaders described here. Even King David failed miserably, as his many sins involving Bathsheba demonstrate (2Sm 11). No nation has the kind of citizens described here. Even we in the Church know we have not always been people of integrity. But Jesus was blameless, a man of perfect integrity. He comes to us with His royal and loyal love, shown perfectly on the cross. He brings us into the one “nation” made blameless in Christ’s blood—the Church. • We pray, Lord, come to us and make us people of integrity in Your Church and in our nation. Amen. (TLSB)