**RECEIVING A NEW language of faith**

*After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I [am] thy shield, [and] thy exceeding great reward.*

Genesis 15:1 (KJV)

I. The Psalms are the international prayer book of Israel and the Church.

A. The Psalter, the 150 Psalms are given to mentor us in our relationship to God over the full range of human experience throughout all the seasons of life.

B. The Psalms offer us a rich, diverse, and varied language of faith.

II. A mature language of faith embraces the three categories of the Psalms.

A. Psalms of Orientation. (Psalm 145)

*1 A psalm of praise. Of David. I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. 2 Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. 4 One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. 5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty-- and I will meditate on your wonderful works. 6 They tell of the power of your awesome works-- and I will proclaim your great deeds. 7 They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. 8 The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. 9 The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. 10 All your works praise you, LORD; your faithful people extol you. 11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, 12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. 14 The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. 16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. 18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. 20 The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. 21 My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.*

B. Psalms of Disorientation. (Psalm 88)

*1 A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to mahalath leannoth. A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite. LORD, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. 2 May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. 3 I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death. 4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength. 5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care. 6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. 7 Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. 8 You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; 9 my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you. 10 Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you? 11 Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? 12 Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? 13 But I cry to you for help, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you. 14 Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? 15 From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have borne your terrors and am in despair. 16 Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. 17 All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. 18 You have taken from me friend and neighbor-- darkness is my closest friend.*

C. Psalms of Reorientation. (Psalm 73)

*1 A psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. 8 They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. 10 Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. 11 They say, “How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?” 12 This is what the wicked are like-- always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. 13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. 14 All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. 15 If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. 16 When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. 18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. 19 How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! 20 They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. 21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. 23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.*

III. Psalms of Orientation (Psalm 145)

\* The world makes sense

\* God is present.

\* All is as it should be.

\* Life is predictable and reliable.

\* Good is good; evil is evil.

\* Right is right; wrong is wrong.

\* Nothing is amiss.

\* God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked.

\* The universe is running the way God intended it to.

\* The implication is that if you believe the right things and behave in right way you will always be blessed like this.

\* There is an absence of tension of any kind.

\* Nothing is gray; all is perfect clarity.

The resulting response -worship!

IV. Psalms of disorientation/Language for the “excluded middle” (Psalm 88)

\* Nothing makes sense.

\* Nothing is as it should be.

\* God is absent; heaven is silent.

\* Evil is rewarded; good is punished.

\* Reality comes unhinged.

\* All is grey.

\* No answers are given.

\* Chaos and confusion reign.

\* There is an absolute tension without resolution, which leads to anger, rage, lament, and grief.

The resulting response is Hopelessness.

V. Psalms of Reorientation (Psalm73)

\* The past is embraced and learned from. But can never be returned to again.

\* God’s fulfillments are always greater than his promises. Therefore, he leads us in a brand-new way which we could never have conceived.

\* We wind up facing God alone as our unchanging reward.

IV. All three in one Psalm

A. Psalm 73:1 Orientation

B. Psalm 73:12-14 Disorientation

C. Psalm 73:15-17 Reorientation

D. Psalm 73:18-26 Resolution comes.

Repentance and rest are realized.

Reality is radically re-conceived.

No answers are given and nothing changes but the Psalmist.

God goes from being the provider to being the blessing provided.

***Conclusion***

Real Life in God embraces all three categories: orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. We must have a language, a spiritual syntax of meaning, a grammar wide enough and deep enough to embrace all the realities involved in a walk with God.