



# Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms

*From Zondervan*

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“The only way to understand the Psalms is on your knees, the whole congregation praying the words of the Psalms with all its strength.” —Dietrich Bonhoeffer At the time of his execution by the Nazis in 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was not quite forty years old. Yet already, his influence as a theologian was felt not only in Germany, but throughout the world. His interactions with the Psalms reveal a passionate heart and brilliant mind grappling with the Bible’s eternal truths and their application to human nature and temporal realities. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Meditations on Psalms is vintage Bonhoeffer: eloquent, incisive, encouraging, challenging, inviting us to find in the Psalms both a path toward repose in God and a call to Christlike living and practical action as followers of the Lord Jesus. Also available Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Prison Poems Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christmas Sermons

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## **Editorial Review**

### **From the Back Cover**

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### **About the Author**

Translator and editor, Edwin H. Robertson was born in London, England, in 1912, of Scottish parents. For many years he was involved in broadcasting and communications. He is the author of a number of books, notably on the Bible, broadcasting, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He is the minister of Heath Street Baptist Church in Hampstead, London, England.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms Sermon to the Preachers' Seminar Berlin, May 20, 1926 Psalm 127 ON DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY, February 4, 1926, he was a senior theology student at the University of Berlin. This was his third year. He had previously studied in Tübingen and, with his brother, taken a three-month tour of Rome and North Africa. The importance of this visit was his discovery of the power and beauty of the Roman Liturgy in Holy Week. It did nothing, however, to change his theological objections to Rome. On May 20, he delivered the following sermon on Psalm 127 at the preachers' seminary. He was quite aware of the secluded life of the seminary and the turmoil of Berlin outside its walls, where Fascists and Communists fought in the streets. After its defeat in the Great War, Germany, a once-proud nation, had been forced to sign the hated Versailles Treaty. Inflation was rampant and unemployment had reached an unprecedented peak. An unpopular government in Weimar cared little for the church and seemed unable to govern the state. The more sober elements in the German population put their heads down and worked all hours for low pay to rebuild the nation. Bonhoeffer found Psalm 127 to be a very timely word for a desperate nation. PSALM 127 Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat--- for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate. Sermon to the Preachers' Seminar We live in a time when more than ever before we speak and must speak of building and rebuilding. We speak of how our commerce must grow and what trade agreements will bring about this result today or tomorrow, as quickly as possible. We speak of the best arrangements on workers' wages and how workers and employers alike can find a common interest in success. We ask ourselves how we can begin to become once more a rich, troublefree, happy, and respected people. We work today as perhaps we have never worked before to achieve that goal as soon as possible. We all want to do our best to add our one stone to this building. God knows there are others who do not think like this. Let us pray to God that he restores their sight! But we speak here only of those who use the word 'building' seriously, who really put their life and their working strength into it. And of these, there truly are many, very many. Woe betide us if we are not among them! With the question of commerce, there is another

question, closely associated with it---the social question! How much this is talked about and how much is already being done! And we thank those men and women who dedicate themselves to this and do fruitful work. And every one of us here would wish to belong to this band of men and women who take seriously love of their neighbor in this work. Woe betide our Christianity if we do not do this. The people should be rich, healthy, and strong. To this end, the scientists sit from morning to night at their benches, in their institutes, and with their apparatus. Science, technology--- they all work toward building the future. Take up any newspaper and read the print or between the lines and you will hear the word, loud and clear: build, build! So far as we speak of really serious people, they want not only to be rich and respected but a people who are healthy in body and soul. We provide the young people of our cities with opportunities to explore, to dance, and to play. We rejoice that they go out into the countryside instead of seeking their pleasures in dirty and undesirable places in the cities. We speak much more of moral rebuilding, without which nothing can happen, and know that such cannot come about unless each of us begins with his own personal moral building. There are many men and women who see their vocation in the moral training of our youth. They work at it with all their strength and do not complain but are proud of their calling. We are lucky to have such people! And should we not all, so far as we can, have at least a small part of this work? Woe betide us if it is not so! Otherwise we are truly only Sunday Christians, from 9:00 to 10:00 in the morning! But let us hear the words of the Psalms: 'Unless the LORD builds the house . . .' Anyone who hears these words aright sees in them judgment over all times of frantic building and over all times of secure possession. If only the hands of men build and the Lord does not build, there is nothing. There are only two things that we must fully understand: 'Unless the LORD builds' and 'its builders labor in vain.' But what does it mean that God should build? Is there on earth a building, a house, a city, that has fallen from heaven, that was not built by men? Does this verse mean that we have to wait until such a miracle happens? If all our building is in vain, really in vain, which means 'of no value,' why do we begin to rebuild what has been destroyed instead of waiting for God to build? Why do we continue to work to establish the church where once it belonged? Why do we struggle for the moral and religious education of our children, if all we do is in vain? In this way, many may argue if they take the words 'in vain' seriously. And yet, another voice is raised and with comfort says: Certainly, all our doing is in vain if we do only what we want to do. Then we can hope for nothing. But when we are most careful to do what God wants and not what we want, then it is as though the Lord himself builds. For how else can the Lord build except through us? It is only when we build other than in the spirit of the Lord that our very best work is in vain. People who talk like that are certainly right. Woe betide us if we do not go to work with our full strength and goodwill! But are we really agreeing with those who say that when we build with our very best endeavor, it is the same as if the Lord builds? Must there not be with this building of the Lord another explanation than simply our piety and goodwill? None of us can doubt that many are building with the highest motives and with all their strength. Do we want then to say that here God is at work? Here, where only men are involved? Are we then to claim that so long as we have goodwill, God's action is unnecessary? Are we so blind that we do not see that all our work always carries the scars of the past, the signs of sinfulness? Do we no longer see that we are in the world and remain only with our own ideas, even the most pious of us? That we cannot do God's will unless God wills it? That we cannot say yes to God's will, if God has not said yes to us? Yes, it is so! We fail to see the danger of raising a new Tower of Babel, from which we say that we have raised it to heaven ourselves, that now we no longer need the work of God, but our own will can take the place of that. We really believe that we have done all and enough with our work of religion and moral renewal. And we never think that there is something else to be said: 'It is good,' as good as we are. All we would say is, 'We all want with all our heart to be a rich, happy people, and each to be a good, happy person, and have a merciful God.' Ah! This is not something we can give ourselves, nor can we believe it possible by ourselves.

## **Users Review**

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**Annette Puente:**

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for all of us. The book Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms has been making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The book Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms is not only giving you more new information but also to be your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship using the book Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms. You never really feel lose out for everything in the event you read some books.

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Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book may be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the guide untitled Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Meditations on Psalms can be very good book to read. May be it might be best activity to you.

**Otto Tejada:**

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