

Selections from the Psalms | Joy • Lament • Jesus

01 More Joy

June 11, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

Gerald Wilson begins his commentary on the Psalms this way:

“Picture yourself as one of a crowd, packed together with thousands of others—shoulder to shoulder, elbow to elbow—experience as one a common event... There is in the air a sense of excitement and anticipation. A sense of common purpose and experience draws the whole crowd together as you respond to the event of the moment. In this setting you discover that your individual response becomes part of something larger than just yourself as you react in community to the joys and sorrows, victories and defeats that are acted out before you.

...this is what reading the book of Psalms ought to be like. For whenever we crack open this biblical book and read from its collection of 150 songs, whenever we allow ourselves to become truly immersed in the world they bring to life, we are taking our stand within a huge crowd of faithful who have sung the Psalms throughout the generations of the people of God.”¹

William Plummer from his commentary from the 1800s says:

The Psalms are wonderful. They have been read, repeated, chanted, sung, studied, wept over, rejoiced in, expounded, loved and prayed by God’s people for thousand of years... pious people here and all over the earth have found and can find no compositions more suitable for delineating their devout emotions, and for expressing their pious sensibilities than those of inspired Psalmist. If to any man the songs are

¹ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, (NIVAC, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p 13.

*unsavory, the reason is found in the blindness and depravity of the human heart.*²

Brothers and Sisters, we are not reading a simple collection of poems and songs, we are reading words that faithful men and women have read for centuries. We are reading words that Jesus himself read and quoted often. The Psalms make up the most references in the NT. NT writers and the early church depended on it as a guide for daily living and right worship, from joy to lament. They also saw God's promises developed throughout its pages and rejoiced at the coming of Jesus because of the Psalms prepared them for his coming and deepened their longing for God to come. We will not be disappointed by our time this Summer in the Psalms. We will be encouraged, challenged, and guided by its words. As another scholar put it:

READ Psalm 4

It seems the Psalmist, which is David, is experiencing some sort of difficulty, most believe it has something to do with agriculture drought. Which has led to perhaps some slanderous statements towards David and God. This Psalm has 3 stanzas or movements to deal with these difficulties—Petition (1-2), Wise Counsel (3-5), and Confidence (6-8). In a sense, we get a first hand biblical perspective on how to deal with life when it is not as it should be; when things are not as you planned; when things are not going as you wish...but what is most surprising is the focus on JOY, yes JOY...Joy is what is at stake. Lets take a peek into this ancient Psalm that has guided the church for centuries.

² William Plummer, *Psalms* (Geneva Series of Commentaries, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Trust, First Print 1867, Reprint 2016), p 5.

II. PETITION (1-2)

- A. Towards God (eager longing)...One might gasp at the directness of David towards God and think he might need to dial it back a bit...I mean David this is God you are talking to, but what you must hear here is his longing coming through. His eagerness for God to respond. He does not need a pat on the back but he needs the voice of a righteous God to answer and be gracious. David has no where else to turn his burden, his hurts, his longings but God.
1. Answer, O God my righteousness
 - a) *you have given relief*...notice the pleas towards God is based upon a God who has answered. In poetry there is a way to structure things to emphasis points. Here this statement that God has granted relief is bookend by the same type of lines.
 2. Be gracious on me and hear my prayers
- B. Towards Man (a call to non-believers)
1. Who are these men, literally translated as “Sons of Men”? It is believed and most of your translations will put a foot note down at the bottom identifying these men as men of high honor, high rank. Several times this construction shows up in the Psalms as men of high honor as opposed to men of low estate. So perhaps David is addressing men who had much influence to change or help circumstances. Either way David is upset with their response to the distress of crop failure.
 2. Honest questions to those who are living in such a way that is directly opposed to God and his ways, “How long”...
 - a) honor turned to shame
 - b) will you love vanity
 - c) will you seek lies

3. The psalmist offers warnings in his pointed questions to the way they are living, to their attitude, he does not allow them to continue with their destructive thinking

He then moves to some wise counsel for these Sons of Men, these men who have let the burdens of the day get the best of them. These men who when trouble comes their heart is evident...

III. WISE COUNSEL (3-5)

- A. But know the LORD (YHWH)...notice the shift from God to LORD. Perhaps you already know this but LORD in all caps is the personal name of God, Yahweh. It is four letters in the original Hebrew text and the Jewish people considered the personal name of God so holy they did not speak it but inserted the term adonay. So most translations help us English speakers by putting the personal name of God in all caps. Now why is this important? The shift here is to establish exactly who the Psalmist is talking about and to conjure up God's covenant with his people...he has set apart a people and he hears his people. We saw this very same thing in Titus where Paul reminds the church that God has set apart a people for himself. He has set apart, he has initiated and established a relationship. This connection with YHWH was significant and the bedrock of understanding daily life. Brothers and Sisters on this side of the cross, we could not have a better view of YHWH making us his own! Know that the Lord is yours, don't just make an intellectual assent to that truth...know it!!
 1. sets apart the *godly*...godly is understood as one who practices obedience to the covenant the YHWH has established.
 2. hears

- B. Be Angry (quoted in Eph 4:26 to protect the unity of the church)
 - 1. but don't sin...the sin for the Psalmist is to look for answers outside of the Lord, their God who has made covenant and promised to not leave them nor forsake them. Sure be angry, be frustrated, but run to the Lord and have that conversation, run to others who will point you towards him. It is evident that the sinful act of the sons of men has been to run to other things to answer them and to fix their problems. And in a very real sense, David is warning them
- C. Ponder your hear
 - 1. on your beds...be reflective when you hit an end (Lam 3:40, *Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord!*...Ponder, reflect, this should be a common practice for the believer...Why do you think when we take that long journey around the sun, we call a year, it causes one to consider, "What did I do for 365 days?" Something about returning to your starting point that breeds reflection. Reflection on our actions. Reflection on any significant accomplishments. Reflection, for the Christian, on the state of our Christlikeness. God has seemly designed our very existence on returning back; yes time has moved but we return back to where we started. The day has passed, you are back on your bed...ponder. Reflection is God's gift to us to avoid sin.
- D. Be Silent...turn off the noise and listen to God, his word, and reflect on his work. Just be quiet with all your ramblings and listen!
- E. Offer
 - 1. right sacrifices...remain faithful even in your distress; pain is inevitable, it will come. Remain faithful, for He is faithful, and...

F. Put trust

1. in the Lord...not man's ideas on the latest scheme to grow crops fast, or perhaps for us get rich quick. Trust in the Lord not in your bank account. Trust in the Lord, not in your circumstances.

IV. CONFIDENCE (6-8)

A. The Lord will show himself

- B. More Joy...is this not the pursuit of all men. Is this not the elusive carrot on the stick that we are running after. The pursuit of joy is not a misguided pursuit. Joy is exactly what God's wants us to pursue. The psalmist had no issue with joy and matter of fact says he has it! The problem, as the delightful little poem has pointed out, is where we are looking for it!

1. than when you have everything...the foolishness of those sources become evident when trouble comes. What we have here in this Psalm, and what David is making evident, is that when trouble came their true hearts become evident. Now hear me clearly, notice David does not say the situation goes away. He does not say the circumstances have changed; no, but joy has not left! So much so, In peace he lies down to sleep!

- C. A good night's rest...when is the last time you rested in peace? This peace David experiences in the midst of tribulation reminds me of the words of Jesus when he is comforting his disciples as he has let them know he must go away, that he must go to the cross. He says John 16:33, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

V. JOY IS BETTER WHEN IT SPRINGS FROM GOD

- A. This does not mean that everything is always perfect, that you will never experience pain, loss, or hurts beyond measure, this just means that when all is stripe away—God cannot be stripe away, the work of Jesus on our behalf cannot be stripe away.

But I have to ask you...”How long?”