

Lessons from the Psalms

Bro. Jason Wood

June 17, 2000

Readings: Psalms 32

1 Introduction

The Psalms have always been a comfort to me. They bring together all the lessons in the Bible in short poetic form. When I feel downtrodden or just want something to reflect on, the Psalms are often the place I turn. Pick a Psalm at random when you are in need of spiritual uplifting and chances are it will be the right one.

How do the Psalms enhance our character? How does it make us better servants of God and His son? How should we repent? It is these questions I would like to discuss this morning, so that when we read the Psalms we will look a little more carefully and see how well they fit into our lives.

2 The Authors

The Psalms were written for the most part by David as he reflected on God and His wonderful works. David also wrote about the times when he was distressed and how he found comfort in the Lord. His closeness to God and his devotion to pleasing the Lord every day of his life show through in his praises and songs to God. David was animated in his love for God, dancing and singing—lion his faith in God behind everything he did. Other writers of the Psalms included Temple Musicians such as Asaph, who we learn from Ezra 2:41 was an excellent musical leader. Asaph's songs also present important lessons and also acts as

prophetic warnings to the people of Israel, that if they did not honor God judgment would come on them.

3 Character

In the reading we read about traits that we should have as believers. Character was key in David's life and is in our life even if we don't recognize it. Each person portrays a certain character, we should strive to be more like David and Christ and less like the selfish characters of Saul and many others who portrayed evil in their lives.

In Psalms 32:2, we read "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is the type of character we should be.

How important is character? It is appropriate that the first Psalm speaks of character. If we don't do the right things in our day to day lives how can we serve God? We can not stand up and sing praises to the Lord without the right character. Let us look at Psalms chapter 1. In verse 1 we read "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." This was the character that Christ demonstrated, Hebrews 7:26- "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Paul quotes the commandment of God in Isaiah when he preaches, "Wherefore come out from among them [that is the nations and people of the World], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Step one in building a good character is realizing that we should be different from those who are in the world that surrounds us. We should not seek pleasures in the things of man, but in the things of God. This is the lesson in the next two verses of Psalms 1, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." By delighting in the things of God we can become better people and we should have faith that God will reward us for our righteousness. In small ways today and in mighty ways in the Kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matt. 5:3,5.

How different these characteristics are from those of the ungodly in the world. They

are “like the chaff which the wind driveth away” verse 4. They unlike the believers will not be able to join in the inheritance of the righteous in the Kingdom. Verse 5, “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” God distinguishes between the righteous and the righteous. Verse 6, “For the Lord know the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” The righteous are in the book of life, God will reward those who do good. Not only does God hate evil doers, but he will forget them. In Psalms 34:16 we read, “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” Those are pretty scary words. We should instead as verse 14 states, “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”

Now that we know that we must have a good character, what are the characteristics we should follow. First, we should demonstrate our faith, by putting our faith in the Lord. Something that David did continually, his life depended on it more than once: with Goliath, with Saul, with the lion, and when enemies fought him from other countries. Our lives also depend on our faith in God, because as we just read, those who do not have faith and do not follow God have no hope. Let us now look at Psalms 62. In verses 5-10, we read of how we should place our trust as David did. [Ps. 62:5-10]

Next we should give glory to God. This is part of theme of Psalms 32, for in verse 11 we read, “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in the heart.” This theme continues into the next chapter. Verse 1, “Rejoice in the Lord” Verse 8, “Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.” Verse 21, “For our heart shall rejoice in him because we have trusted in his holy name.” A great part of the Psalms are praises and glorifications of God. They are filled with words like “Praise ye the Lord” “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. [Ps. 100:1]”

Once we have put our faith in God and have praised him for all He has done for us it is time to shape our character by doing things in service to Him. David likens the life of a righteous person to that of following a path. Psalms 25:4-5, “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” In Psalms 23:2-3 we read, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Every second of our lives

should be in service to God. We should be waiting on God always for our next step.

4 A Christ-like heart

What sorts of things should we be doing during our walk? The best example is Christ. The Psalms are also full of instruction and celebration of Christ-like behavior. The first of these is found in Psalms 41:1 “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.” We should bestow mercy on the poor as Christ instructed, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” What we do for others will be done for us. Christ continually had mercy on the downtrodden, the poor, the sick, the lame. It is our duty to do the same if we wish to inherit the earth. We will be judged on whether or not we had compassion for the hungry, the naked, and the sick as we read in Matt. 25, especially those in the brotherhood.

We are also to love God’s Word and know it is everlasting. Ps 119:152, “Concerning thy testimony, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever.” Christ likewise said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” Literally speaking, God’s Words have not passed away for nearly 6000 years, but we have to make sure that they do not pass out of our heart. We need to absorb ourselves in God’s Word as David did, finding refuge and strength in them. They are both a rod of discipline and a staff on which to lean for comfort.

We are supposed to have clean hands and a pure heart. Ps. 24:4. Matt. 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” In short, we should be more like Christ, having a Christ-like heart.

5 Sin, Suffering, Sacrifice and Forgiveness.

We all know what we should be doing, how our walk should be. How we should fear and tremble before the Lord. But, we often fall short. David even in all his righteousness fell short when he sinned in his dealings with Bath-sheba. The Psalms also teach us how we should react when we find out something we have done was wrong. We will now read Psalms 51. Again it comes down to the heart, our character. We need to seek true forgiveness, both from God and the person that was wronged. If we do ask for forgiveness

we will immediately know we have received it. Turning once again to Psalms 32 in verse 5 we read, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” David did acknowledged how he missed the mark and did not hide his guilt, he openly admitted to God his wrong doing and by doing so was forgiven, but not without punishment. He lost the life of his son as a result.

Suffering is the result of sin. And true forgiveness usually comes through some sort of suffering. The suffering of animal during the time of David to the suffering of David himself when he lost his son.

6 Review

Let us now review the questions we first asked and sought to find answers for in the Psalms:

- How do the Psalms enhance our character?
 - By providing us with an example, David a type of Christ
 - By showing us how to praise God
 - By teaching us to have a positive impact on others, especially when they are in need.
 - How does it make us better servants of God and His son?
 - By allowing us to have a better understanding of the gifts of God.
 - By showing us the way to love God and be a better servant.
 - How should we repent?
 - By opening ourselves to God and acknowledging our wrong and our guilt.
 - By understanding how we missed the mark
 - By asking for forgiveness in a humble manor through prayer
 - By forgiving others before asking for forgiveness
-

7 Memorial

It is at this time that we reflect on the suffering of Christ who died for our sins. The first words of David in Psalms 22 were spoken by Christ, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was shortly after this that in Matt 27:50, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit." These words and cries were the result of immense suffering. Christ with a pure heart was the perfect sacrifice. In Pet 3:18 we read, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

When we partake of the memorials, we are remembering the suffering that Christ suffered. He gave his body and blood so that we might have hope. Let us read I Peter 4. p. & I Cor. 11:23-24, 25-26.