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Favorite Psalms

OF THE
Bible Institute Hour
Listeners

Notes for November, 1956

by
✓ CHESTER J. ^{John} PADGETT, D.D. ¹⁹¹⁵⁻

AS GIVEN OVER NETWORK BROADCASTS OF THE
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FOREWORD

We of the radio staff of the Bible Institute Hour joyfully present our west coast listeners with this, the third booklet on the Psalms. It is the earnest prayer of each of us that these simple studies may bring the light of God's Word and the warmth of His love to every reader.

The material contained herein is an abbreviation of the messages delivered by Dr. Chester J. Padgett, member of the faculty of Biola and Talbot Seminary, during the month of November, 1956.

The Psalms included in the booklet are among those selected by our vast radio audience in a recent survey of the most popular Psalms. We are grateful for the wonderful response and for the evident interest on the part of thousands in this portion of the precious Word of God.

The Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Inc.
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THE PSALM OF THE AGED

(Psalm 71)

We do not wonder that so many of God's elderly saints love this Psalm! It was written by an old man for old people and teaches us that the Almighty has a special place in His heart for those who have traveled through the years to a ripe old age.

Growing old is something we all must do, but not all do it gracefully. Faith in God and complete trust in His providence is the way to be joyful and useful though aged.

Note that temptations are not slackened with the passing of the years — "Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me." (v. 2.) The devil wants elderly slaves just as much as he wants young ones. In fact, it may be that he gloats over the failure of the elderly more than over that of the young.

What a sad and tragic thing it is to see an aged saint missing God's best in the very sunset of his life! How terrible that the Christian well along in years does not show more of the Spirit of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit than a young Christian! Surely God values experience highly, and, as the writer of Prov. 4:18 puts it: "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Every day with Jesus ought to be sweeter than the day before.

Old age has its peculiar trials and temptations: strength goes, mental powers may wane, and the awful feeling of not being wanted and of being in the way may come to many. But let every aged child of God know that He will never forget nor forsake (vv. 9, 20-21.)

The Psalmist was very wise in his old age — he refused to quit hoping (v. 14); he refused to quit praising God (v. 14-15); he refused to quit serving (vv. 16-18); he refused to quit talking about the wonders of His Saviour and the Lord (v. 24.)

THE PSALM OF THE KINGDOM

(Psalm 72)

Prophecy is a thrilling subject to every Bible-believer! And the Bible is a prophetic Book. The great bulk of the Old Testament is prophecy. Some of these prophecies have been fulfilled already. Many of them are being fulfilled today (cf. Ezek. 38-39) in the rise of Russia to world-prominence and in the situation in the Holy Land. Other Old Testament prophecies are yet to be fulfilled, such as the Second Coming of Christ in the Rapture (I Thess. 4:13ff.) and the return of the Lord to this earth to establish His kingdom. The coming kingdom is the subject of Psalm 72.

Let us note, dear friends, that the Bible is to be taken literally unless there is good reason for interpreting it in some other way. We all agree that Old Testament prophecies with regard to our Lord's first advent were fulfilled literally. We believe, then, that those prophecies regarding His second advent will also be literally fulfilled.

Now, what will the coming world-wide kingdom of Christ be like? It will be a period of *justice* for all (vv. 1-2.) It will be a time of *peace* (v. 3.) It will be a time of unprecedented prosperity (vv. 6-7.) How the world needs this glorious advent reign!

The leaders of the world are feverishly trying to build a world government. The reason behind their efforts is two-fold: first, *fear*; secondly, *power*. World leaders are telling us that the only hope for civilization is a strong centralized government over all the peoples of the world. Only then can war be outlawed and peace be ushered in.

The present-day rush for world government is the Twentieth Century tower of Babel. Nothing but confusion will result in every realm-political, social, economic and religious. Unlimited power in the hands of a few leads to dictatorship and the suppression of all freedoms (cf. Rev. 13.)

World government is premature at the present moment, but it is coming. The contemporary effort is Satan's counterfeit of the millennial kingdom of Christ. The coming world ruler — the Antichrist — will be Satan's counterfeit for God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Christ is coming (v. 6) His kingdom will be universal — "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," (v. 8.) "All nations shall call Him blessed" (v. 17), and the entire earth shall be filled with His glory (v. 19.) Even so come, Lord Jesus!

THE "WHAT'S THE USE?" PSALM (Psalm 73)

What Christian has not had his times of spiritual depression and doubt? These periods may come through the insinuations of Satan, through physical or mental weariness, or through failure to stay "prayed up" and "read up" in the Word of God. But no matter how they come, they *do* come, and for some of God's people far too regularly!

That the Psalmist was in spiritual trouble is evident: he had come to the place in his own thinking where he felt that to live for God was folly. (v. 13) Now, what had produced this pessimistic view? For one thing, he was going through trials and troubles (v. 14.) The thing he forgot was that "tribulation worketh patience" and that "the trial of faith" is "precious" in the sight of the Lord (Rom. 5:3; I Pet. 1:7.) God is more concerned about the believer's character than He is about His comfort. God's aim is to produce Christ-likeness in every Christian (Rom. 8:29.)

The Psalmist had taken his eyes off God and had fixed them on the ungodly (vv. 3-12.) He was impressed by the apparent prosperity of the wicked (v. 3.) He even felt that in their death there was not the spiritual concern and evident anxiety that marked the passing of some of God's people (v. 4.) He concluded that the godless had less trouble than the godly (v. 5.) Unbelief mouthed out its blasphemies and did not seem to incur the wrath of God (vv. 6-12.)

There are observations that grip the minds and hearts of the believer oftentimes, and they are upsetting to say the least. How get out of this predicament? The answer is given in our Psalm: the writer visited God! (v. 17.) In the house of God his sights were adjusted and his sense of value quickened. He was given a keen analytic judgment and then he saw that the wicked stand on slippery ground and are soon to slide into hell! (vv. 18-20.) Sin never pays and God always has the last word!

This reminder smote the Psalmist's heart. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself. He admitted his sin (vv. 21-22.) Then he re-affirmed his faith and listed his spiritual assets. No matter what the circumstances God was still with him (v. 23.) The Almighty was holding him by the right hand (v. 23.) God was whispering in His ear, instructing him in the way — this he found out when he took the time to listen (v. 24.) Heaven was his home and God was seeing to it that he got there (v. 24.)

Thoughts of heaven lifted him above the problem of earth and once again he saw that his only real good was in the Lord (v. 25), that God was his only strength (v. 26), and that, because those who will not walk with God must perish (v. 27), he would draw near to God, trust in the Lord, and faithfully serve him until he reached those streets of gold (v. 28.)

THE PSALM OF THE FAMILY ALTAR (Psalm 78)

Do you ask, What is the family altar? It is simply worship in the home. It is the training of every member of the family, and especially the boys and girls, in the Bible way of life. Far too many parents, even Christian parents, leave the spiritual training of their children to the Sunday School and church. This is not enough. The most lasting impressions and the greatest impetus to living for Christ come from mother and father through the quiet experiences of family worship. This is the central truth of our Psalm.

Note the earnest invitation of the Holy Spirit in vv. 1-3. He is calling upon all to give ear to the Word of God, to show a vital interest in the teachings of His revelation, to study carefully the message of God to men. To give one's ear and to incline one's ear mean to listen carefully and obediently. How important this is in these days of careless religion! (cf. James 1:22.)

Wise were the parents who responded to God's plea! (v. 4.) These people vowed not to hide the Word of God from their children. Dear friend, are *you* hiding the Bible from *your* children? The worst offense against a child is to rob him of the holy heritage of a spiritual home (cf. Matt. 18:6, 10.) Parents should speak of the wonderful works God has done and in this way inspire their children to love and reverence the Lord.

The family altar is the *command* of God (vv. 5-6.) It is through this means that children become aware of God *every day*, and learn to hope in Him, and remember Him always, and obey His commandments (v. 7.)

Failure to do this is opening the door wide for irreverence, lawlessness and the judgment of God (vv. 8-10.)

The Psalmist now rehearses the sad history of the people of Israel as an illustration of the tragedy of failure on the part of parents to instruct their children in the things of God. These people were hardened in their hearts. The recital of sacred things meant nothing to them. They served God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him (vv. 36-37.)

Dear friends, it is the grace of God alone that sees any believer through to a successful end (v. 38; Phil. 1:6.) We are so sinful and so prone to wander that we know victory is only in Christ (Rom. 7:18, 24-25.) Note how the people treated their God, their Saviour, their best Friend (vv. 40-42, 56.) The Psalm ends on a note of triumph, however, blessed be His Name, and calls attention to the electing love of God (v. 70), His gracious provision (v. 72), and unerring guidance (v. 72.)

THE PSALM OF THE SHINING FACE

(Psalm 80)

Many times a recurring phrase or sentence gives the key to a portion of the Word of God. In the case of our Psalm the repetition is given in vv. 3, 7, and 19: "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."

True to form, the nation of Israel had persisted stubbornly in its unbelief until God found it necessary to bring His heavy hand down upon them. The pressure was great and finally the people began to see the folly of their way and to cry out to the Almighty for mercy (v. 4.) They began to tire of a diet of tears and of subservience to their enemies. (vv. 5-6.) Then it was they sought the Lord and wisely did they pray. Note the argument they brought before God (vv. 8-16.) They reminded Him of previous grace and they pleaded that He would be jealous of His Name and finish His avowed intention regarding Israel. When God's people plead the covenant, they have a powerful argument with God.

Note especially the oft-repeated prayer of v. 3. Spiritual awakening is a work of God. Revival cannot be pumped up; it must be prayed down! God has to do the turning. We are so sinful and so bound to sin that God must operate sovereignly or we are lost in our helplessness. Salvation is of God!

The Psalmist, praying for the people, says, "turn us *again*, O God . . ." This means that revival was possible for it had happened before. What God had once done He could do again. The statement also teaches that periodic revival is needed. God's people find it so easy to backslide that they need occasional proddings of the Holy Spirit to spiritual awakening.

The expression "cause they face to shine" means "let Thy favor rest upon Thy people." A shining face is a symbol of a smiling or happy face. David wanted God's smile of approval upon the nation. Sin always hides the face of God. This is the meaning of David's prayer in Psalm

27:9, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger.

When the Psalmist writes "and we shall be saved" he means that salvation from the start to the finish is dependent upon God's favor, not upon man's merits. The Apostle calls upon the soul to keep "looking unto Jesus, the *author* (originator) and *finisher* (seeing the project through to the end) of our faith" (Heb. 12:2.) See Phil. 1:6 in this same connection.

THE "IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN" PSALM

(Psalm 81)

John Greenleaf Whittier in his ballad "Maud Muller" said:
"For all sad words in tongue or pen,

The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

This is the theme of Psalm 81 — "It might have been!" In the opening verses David calls upon God's people to sing His praises. Salvation is a happy, joyful experience! To know God and to have our sins forgiven is a blessed thing! (Psalm 32:1-2.)

The Christian has everything for which to praise God! Note the grace of God in vv. 6-10: He had lifted the awful burden of captivity from the enemy (v. 6); He had answered the pitiful pleadings of His people (v. 7); He brought them out of the land of bondage and through the wilderness into the Promised Land (v. 10.) He invited the people to open their mouths wide and promised to fill them if they would (v. 10.)

The strange and almost unbelievable thing is — the people would not accept the bounties of their gracious God! God says, "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." (v. 11.) Think of such sinfulness! But, dear friends, which of us believers has not been guilty of the same sin, perhaps more than once!

What are the consequences of not wanting the blessings of God? Notice v. 12 — "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." If we do not want the will of God, we want our own. How wise is the proverb, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (14:12.)

God is not happy about this situation (vv. 13-16.) He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked not in the chastisement of His people. God would much rather bless than curse; He would rather deliver than oppress (v. 14); He would rather feed His people than have them starve on the world's rations (v. 16.) May the Spirit of God teach us that we are much better taken care of at the Father's table than in the pigpens of the world.

THE PSALM OF THE SANCTUARY

(Psalm 84)

David greatly loved the House of God. In this Psalm he expresses in inspired words this love, and indicates why it is that he feels as he does about the fellowship of the saints. Note that he calls the house of God

"amiable" — this means pleasant. No need to prod this man on a sabbath morning to get him out to the house of God — there was no place he would rather be! His whole being thirsted for the presence of God (v. 2.)

Now, why did David so love the place of worship? In the first place, because here he found rest and peace for his soul. This is the picture of v. 3. The environs of the temple in their quietness and peace provided a fitting place of shelter for the feathered folk of heaven. God's house provides the same atmosphere for the trusting child of God.

David loved the church because it was a place of joy and praise (v. 4.) This world is a gloomy place. The night lights on Broadway are no indication of the darkness in the human heart without Christ. The really "blessed" (happy) man is the man who is at home in the presence of God — he "dwells" in God's house; he is no occasional visitor but a member of the family!

In the house of God David found strength (vv. 5-7.) The many spiritual failures all around us indicate that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23.) But the man who dwells in the presence of God receives strength from above (Isa. 40:29-31); this is resurrection strength (Eph. 1:19-23); this is the very strength of God Himself (Eph. 6:10.)

David loved the house of God for yet another reason — there he found such spiritual blessing that he was enabled to share it with needy ones around him (v. 7.) The "valley of Baca" means the valley of sorrow and tears. When the believer enters such an area he is able to transform it into a well of blessing. How selfish not to let Christ possess us completely!

In the house of God David learned more and more about the God he loved (vv. 8-12.) He came to know Him as the "Lord God of hosts" (v. 8.) This means the God of battle — the God who fights in behalf of His people (Rom. 8:31.) David came to know Him as the "God of Jacob" (v. 8.) This means the covenant-keeping God, the God who will never go back on His Word. The Psalmist discovered God as his Shield (v. 9.) This means that God is the believer's Defender and Protector (John 10:28-29.)

David loved the house of God because there he acquired a right sense of values (v. 10.) Somehow in the presence of God the things of earth grow very dim and unimportant and the believer's perspective changes. Gradually the child of God comes to look through the eyes of the Lord Jesus and then and only then can he make the right emphasis with his life (Matt. 6:19; Col. 3:1-4.)

When David dwelt in the house of God he found that the Spirit of God promoted assurance — "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (v. 1.) David discovered the grace of God and the hope of glory in the house of God (v. 11.) My dear friends, where else in all the world can you find so many benefits? Do you not then also love the house of God?