

## Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

### Bible Study Notes Book of Psalms

1-19-11

#### Psalm 49

**The Story Behind the Psalm:** The author was watching the righteous suffer and the sinful prosper. He was perplexed. How often we doubt to some extent the goodness of God when we see our neighbors prospering though they live in sin and we ourselves seem to suffer when we try to live righteously! Such was the case in the Psalmist's life. The key verse is verse 17, "For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away." The Psalmist is reminding us not to fret because of evildoers and their prosperity, for all the good that an unrighteous man will ever enjoy is on this earth and all the bad that righteous people ever endure is on this earth. The day of reckoning is coming. Let us not fret because some appear to enjoy the luxuries of life more than we.

#### **The Way It Was Used by God's People**

This Psalm was read when one of God's people felt that his life was not being fair to him. From this Psalm he would gain strength that the Lord is good and that eventually in this life or in the life to come justice will be meted out.

**Theme:** Trusting in worldly possessions is futile. You cannot take possessions with you when you die, and they cannot buy forgiveness from sin.

**Author:** The sons of Korah (Temple assistants)

*For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah*

PSALM 49:1

The futility of worldliness—riches, pride, fame—resounds from this psalm. Comparable in form to the book of Ecclesiastes, this psalm is one of the few written more to instruct than to give praise.

PSALM 49:7, 8, 15

In the slave market of the ancient world, a slave had to be redeemed (someone had to pay the price) in order to go free. In Mark 10:45, Ephesians 1:7, and Hebrews 9:12, we learn that Jesus paid such a price so that we could be set free from slavery to sin in order to begin a new life with him.

There is no way for a person to buy eternal life with God. God alone can redeem a soul. Don't count on wealth and physical comforts to keep you happy because you will never have enough wealth to keep from dying.

PSALM 49:10-14

The rich and poor have one similarity: When they die, they leave all they own here on earth. At the moment of death (and all of us will face that moment), both rich and poor are naked and empty-handed before God. The only riches we have at that time are those we have already invested in our eternal heritage. At the time of death, each of us will wish we had invested less on earth, where we must leave it, and more in heaven, where we will retain it forever. To have treasure in heaven, we must place our faith in God, pledge ourselves to obey him, and utilize our resources for the good of his Kingdom. This is a good time to check up on your investments and see where you have invested the most. Then do whatever it takes to place your investments where they really count.

## Psalm 50

**The Story Behind the Psalm:** Asaph is reproofing the wicked for their sinful lives and is pronouncing judgment on them. He also praises the righteous for their righteous lives and pronounces ultimate victory for them. It appears that perhaps Asaph in Psalm 50 is carrying out the theme of Psalm 49 and assuring justice. In verses 1-7 of Psalm 50, he pronounces vindication upon evildoers. He will not see to that vindication, but he reminds us that God will.

### The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was used after vindication. When God vindicated His people for a stand or for a position they would sing Psalm 50.

**Theme:** The contrast between true and false faith. God desires sincere thanks, trust, and praise.

**Author:** Asaph, one of David's chief musicians

*A psalm of Asaph*

PSALM 50:1

God judges people for treating him lightly. First, he speaks to the superficially religious people who bring their sacrifices but are only going through the motions (50:1-15). They do not honor God with true praise and thankfulness. Second, he chides wicked, hard-hearted people for their evil words and immoral lives (50:16-22). He asks the superficially religious for genuine thanksgiving and trust, and he warns the evil people to consider their deeds, lest he destroy them in his anger.

PSALM 50:1-4

Asaph begins his psalm by describing God's final judgment of people on earth. Surprisingly, we read that God's great fury is leveled against his own people (or at least those who claim to be his). God's judgment must first begin with his own children (1 Peter 4:17).

PSALM 50:5-9

God's perfect moral nature demands that the penalty for sin be death; however, a person could offer an animal to God as a substitute for himself, symbolizing the person's faith in the merciful, forgiving God. But the people were offering sacrifices and forgetting their significance! The very act of sacrifice showed that they had once agreed to follow God wholeheartedly. But at this time their hearts were not in it. We may fall into the same pattern when we participate in religious activities, tithe, or attend church out of habit or conformity rather than out of heartfelt love and obedience. God wants righteousness, not empty ritual.

PSALM 50:16-22

Some people glibly recite God's laws but are filled with deceit and evil. They claim his promises but refuse to obey him. This is sin, and God will judge people for it. We, too, are hypocrites when we are not what we claim to be. To let this inconsistency remain shows that we are not true followers of God.

PSALM 50:21

Just because God is silent does not mean he is condoning sin or is indifferent to it. Instead, he is withholding deserved punishment, giving time for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and wants them to turn from evil (Ezekiel 33:11). But his silence does not last forever—a time of punishment will surely come.