

A Study in Psalms, Week 5

Psalm 92: Worship—Our Delight and Our Duty

“Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming.”

Psalm 147:1

Introduction

1. Angry, aggressive, speeding driver on I-40
2. Ten miles later; he was pulled over by sheriff—elation, mixed with guilt
 - a. Q: Is it right to rejoice when the wicked are punished?
 - b. Q: How should a Christian feel at this moment?
 - c. Q: What if it's alcohol-induced liver disease? Cigarette-induced lung cancer?
3. Psalm 92 brings this issue into clear focus
 - a. How is it possible that a godly person can rejoice at the destruction of the wicked?
 - b. What makes us feel guilty about punishment of evildoers, while the psalmist feels glad?

The Worthiness of Worship

1. <**Read Psalm 92:1-3** (with **superscript!**)>
 - a. No author identified, just “A *psalm for the Sabbath day*” (the only psalm so designated)
 - i. The **covenant** name **Jehovah** (LORD) is used **seven times**
 - ii. Often recited during **Shabbat** services on Friday evening and again on Shabbat morning (in ancient times, each reading accompanied the **sacrifice** of two **lambs**)
 - iii. Some Jewish scholars believe the psalm refers to “*the world to come, which is an unending Sabbath*” (Rashi, a renowned Jewish commentator)
 - b. This psalm focuses on several aspects of **worship**
 2. The **blessedness** of worship
 - a. The psalmist says “*It is good to give thanks to the LORD*”
 - b. “Good” has a **broad meaning** here
 - i. We’re conditioned that good means **beneficial**
 - ii. But **beneficial** isn’t necessarily **pleasurable** (castor oil, child birth, root canal)
 - c. The psalmist means worship is good in that it is **pure pleasure** to those that love God
 - d. “Good” also refers to worship as **appropriate**
 - i. It is **morally** good, it is **proper** to respond to God with praise
 - ii. God’s activity in the world is **intended** to bring praise to Himself
 - iii. Of course, that activity **culminates** in **Christ**

“He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace...” (emphasis mine)

Eph 1:5-6
 - iv. Worship may be the **most worthy** activity of all—it brings pleasure to **man** and **God!**

“Praise the LORD!
For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming.”

Psalm 147:1
 - e. Worship is also “good for us” because it **benefits** us
 - i. We’ll look more into this in Psalm 95 (two weeks)
3. The **expressions** of worship
 - a. Giving **thanks** (v.1)
 - i. There is no single expression in Hebrew which means “thanks”
 - ii. Here, giving thanks means **praising** God

b. **Praising in song** (v.1b)

*“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with **thankfulness** in your hearts to God.”* (emphasis mine)

Col 3:16

- i. In David’s time, praising in song included **instrumental** praise (v.3—**lute, harp, lyre**)
- c. **Declaring** God’s **lovingkindness** (v.2)
 - i. Again, no single definition captures the meaning here
 - ii. “Declare” can mean “to make **known**,” “to bring to the **surface**,” “to make **public**”
 - iii. In **Gen 12:18**, when Abraham lied to Pharaoh, Pharaoh replied “*why did you not **tell me that she was your wife?***” What he meant was “*why did you not **expose the truth?***”
 - iv. Worship involves **proclaiming God’s goodness to others**
 - v. God is **exalted** by our public worship and praise
 - (1) It’s **good** for a husband to compliment his wife—**better** when he does it publicly!
 - (2) Similarly, worship gives us the chance to say **publicly** to God what we should already be saying **privately** to Him

The Motivation and Basis for Worship

1. <Read Psalm 92:4-7>

2. The psalmist’s **motivation** is stated in v. 4—“*For Thou, O Lord, has made me glad*”

a. An **answer** to the prayer of Psalm 90:15-16:

“Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children.”

Psalm 90:15-16

b. The psalmist’s worship is an **overflow** of the **joy** and **gladness** God has given him

3. Worship is not a **drudgery**, but a **delight**

Q: One might question if most of what we call “worship” today is really the worship described here by the psalmist.

4. Notice **what** has made the psalmist glad: What God has **done**—His **works**

a. Creation? <See/read Ps 148:1-6>

b. The **punishment** of the **wicked**

c. The **exaltation** and **reward** of the **righteous**

5. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, God’s “**thoughts**” often refer to His **purposes** (v.5)

a. For example, after Paul explained God’s purposes of saving Gentiles through Jewish unbelief, and then saving Jews through the belief of the Gentiles, he wrote:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”

Rom 11:33

6. God’s works are **great** and His thoughts (His **purposes**) are “**very deep**” (v.5)

7. But **some** don’t **get it**—Notice what a “stupid man” doesn’t understand (vv. 6, 7)

a. “Senseless” (v.6) is a term used of **animals**

i. One who cannot (or won’t) understand God’s works is **bestly** or **brutish**

ii. The man who won’t praise God for His works and His worth is no better than a cow!

b. Such men don’t **fathom** the working of God in **His purposes**

i. They are totally **unaware** of the **judgment** that awaits them

c. Notice the **colon** at the end of verse 6 (NASB)

d. Two **contrasts** shown in v.7:

i. The apparent **prosperity** of the wicked versus the **certainty** of their **demise**

- ii. Man's **finite** and **fallible perception** versus God's **eternal purpose**
- e. God's purpose for the wicked is not that they **prosper**, but that they **perish** (v.7)
 - i. Verse 7 indicates that the wicked flourish **just so they can be destroyed!**
 - ii. Note that **grass** has no deep **roots**—comes and goes **quickly**
- 8. The “pinnacle” of this psalm is verse 8 <**Read v. 8**>
 - a. Literally, this is the **middle** verse
 - i. This psalm has an “**arch form**” structure, with v. 8 at the **apex**
 - ii. All other verses have **two** lines, this only has **one**—it falls **exactly** in the **middle**
 - iii. In this psalm, **108 Hebrew words** are **equally distributed** on either side of two central words: “**exalted forever**” (NIV) (NASB says “on high forever”)
 - iv. The name **Yahweh** occurs in verses 1, 8, and 15, with the remaining **four** uses distributed **equally** on either side of verse 8 (very **symmetric**)
 - v. The psalmist is highlighting God's **triumph** over the **wicked** and **exalting** the **righteous** above their **adversaries**
 - b. Verse 8 is at the **theological** center of the psalm, too
 - i. God is “**most high**”
 - ii. Wicked men compare themselves to **other men**, not **God**
 - (1) They think too **highly** of themselves and **fail** to fear God
 - (2) They think their [sinful] actions are **good**—they're **winning** the game!
 - (3) They fail to understand and **dread** their **ultimate destiny** apart from Him
 - iii. In contrast to the wicked, God is truly lifted up—He's “on high” forever
 - (1) This, the psalmist says, is the **basis** for our **worship** and **praise**
- 9. <**Read vv. 9-14**> Two **figures of speech** indicate how God has **exalted** the psalmist (v.10)
 - a. Exalting his **horn** like that of a wild ox (v.10a)
 - i. A symbol of **strength** and **power**
 - (1) Joseph's victory over his enemies (Deut 33:17—“*his horns are like the horns of a wild ox*”)
 - (2) Hannah's “horn” exalted when God gave her a child (1 Sam 2:1)
 - (3) Job's “horn” was “thrust into the dust” after God “handed him over” to his enemies (Job 16:15)
 - ii. As the **ox** triumphs over its prey with its horns, so the **psalmist** has prevailed over his enemies (v.11)
 - iii. **Aside:** Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 5-7) contained a **gigantic laver** for the priests' washing, **52 feet** in circumference, holding over **10,000 gallons** of water, and was supported by statues of **12 giant oxen** (3 facing each direction, NSEW). Today, **Mormons** build their temple baptisteries in this image (but not as large!)
 - b. **Anointing** his **head** with **oil** (v.10b)
 - i. Sometimes signifies appointment to a **high office** (high priest, king)
 - ii. Absence of oil indicates mourning or distress (2 Sam 14:2)
 - iii. Here, it signifies **joy**, **contentment** and **satisfaction**

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.”

Psalm 23:5

“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.”

Psalm 45:7
- 10. Being exalted over our **foes** (v.11)
 - a. We will overcome! But only with God's help.
 - b. **Our** foes must be **His** foes (and **vice-versa!**)

- c. By choosing to worship God for His works, we choose to align ourselves with Him against His enemies
- 11. The principle that God **rewards His own** is evident in vv. 12-14
 - a. **Grass** springs up quickly but also **dies** quickly. **Trees** stand the test of time!
 - i. The wicked already have their “reward in full” but the righteous have heaven (see Matt 6:2, 5, 16)
 - b. Remember, God’s **work** is to cause the wicked to **perish** and the righteous to **flourish**
 - c. God’s people may not flourish as **quickly**, but their prosperity is **permanent**
- 12. **God’s purpose** for prospering the righteous <Read Psalm 92:15>
 - a. The righteous show God by their lives, but the wicked don’t comprehend spiritual things
 - b. The **psalmist’s** point of view: to **praise God** for His gracious acts
 - c. **God’s** point of view: to act graciously **in order to be praised**
 - d. An **important point** for those of us that focus on **ourselves**:
 - i. God doesn’t promise to bless us only for our own benefit
 - ii. He blesses us so we’ll have the **means** and the **motivation** to praise Him
 - iii. In other words, His blessings aren’t so much an end as a **means to an end**

Summary and Conclusion

1. This psalm reveals two important truths
 - a. Praise is good in that it is **appropriate** and **becoming**
 - i. Our worship should be a **delight**, not merely a **duty**
 - b. The **grounds** for praise are the **work of God**, specifically:
 - i. **Punishment** the **wicked**
 - ii. **Rewarding** the **righteous**
2. We shouldn’t seek **revenge** (“*vengeance is Mine, says the Lord*”), but **praise** our **Avenger**
3. Reflect on occasions when God is praised for the destruction of the wicked

“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might.”

From the Song of Deborah, Judges 5:31

“My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.

From Hannah’s Song of Thanksgiving at the birth of Samuel and her triumph over Peninnah, her rival , 1 Sam 2:1

- a. The book of **Revelation** contains similar types of worship, where God is praised for the **destruction** of the **wicked** as well as **blessing** the **righteous** (Rev 11:18, 16:5-6)
4. We mustn’t fail to understand who our adversaries are

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Matt 6:24

“...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

James 4:4

- a. Most of us don’t want enemies, but by following God, we’ve got them! The good thing is that God will take care of them for us.

Next week, Psalm 95...