

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Psalm 49

A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH

What money can't buy – *and even if it could you
can't take it with you!*

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12-6-2015

Psalm 49

¹ Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, ² Both low and high, Rich and poor together. ³ My mouth shall speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart *shall give* understanding. ⁴ I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on the harp. ⁵ Why should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity at my heels surrounds me? ⁶ Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, ⁷ None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him— ⁸ For the redemption of their souls *is* costly, And it shall cease forever— ⁹ That he should continue to live eternally, *And* not see the Pit. ¹⁰ For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others. ¹¹ Their inner thought *is that* their houses *will last* forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call *their* lands after their own names. ¹² Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain; He is like the beasts *that* perish. ¹³ This is the way of those who *are* foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah ¹⁴ Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Selah ¹⁶ Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased; ¹⁷ For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him. ¹⁸ Though while he lives he blesses himself (For *men* will praise you when you do well for yourself), ¹⁹ He shall go to the generation of his fathers; They shall never see light. ²⁰ A man *who is* in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts *that* perish.

Immediately we are drawn to the story of the rich landowner Luke 12:13-21

His ground produced abundant crop and he said to himself “I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there will I store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry” (12:18-19)

But GOD said to him “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” (12:20)

(12:21) Jesus said, “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward GOD”

The structure of the psalm

1. The importance of listening to GOD (1-4)
2. The foolishness of trusting riches (5-9)
3. The inescapability of death (10-12)
4. The contrast between trusting wealth and trusting GOD (13-15)

This the message – and the teaching of Jesus – the emptiness of riches is in the trusting in our wealth . . . rather than wealth itself

1 Timothy 6:10 **For the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil**

5. An appeal to all persons to be wise (16-20)

1. The importance of listening to GOD (1-4)

¹ Hear this, all peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world, ² Both low and high, rich and poor together.

- The psalm begins with an appeal . . . NOTE: GOD's people are above His appeal!
- Warnings in the Word of GOD are intended for . . . them 'others'
- But we all need to attend to GOD's wisdom
- But why this particular message? Because materialism is the enemy of lost and the saved!
- Hear this all peoples . . . it was intended to help guide all people . . . two types
 - a. The poor who are troubled about the wealth of the wicked
 - b. The rich who are oblivious to the where their riches might take them

³ My mouth shall speak wisdom and the meditation of my heart shall give understanding ⁴ I will incline my ear to a proverb . . .

- This is clearly "GOD's wisdom"
- But this is also what the psalmist has experienced
- Before one can teach one has to be taught!
- The preacher who speaks in GOD's name must first listen . . . and the psalmist who speaks the wisdom of GOD must have first experienced it

. . . I will disclose my dark saying on the harp

- Better translated riddles . . . but needs to also be put in context
- NEB . . . 'and tell on the harp how I read the riddle'

NOTE: Music is a wonderful way to convey a message

- Why a riddle? The doctrine of eternal life and the judgment to come! Mysteries!

CRITICAL POINT (1-4): everyone benefits from listening to GOD

2. The foolishness of trusting riches (5-9)

⁵ Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?

- He has no reason to fear in the days of evil . . . because he has the presence of GOD . . . in contrast to those without GOD

⁶ Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches. ⁷ None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. ⁸ For the redemption of their souls *is* costly, And it shall cease forever. ⁹ That he should continue to live eternally, *And* not see the Pit

- To trust and boast in material things is idolatry
- And it is no value in the spiritual world!
- Why . . . because redemption is beyond the ability of money to buy!

This identifies the problem with materialism . . . you cannot trust in it!

- It becomes idolatrous
- It doesn't have to be that way . . . see Joseph
- How do you know if you have a problem with this?
 - a. You will find too much peace and security in your account balance?
 - b. You spend too much time planning what you would buy if you had the money?
 - c. You will be distraught when you have no account balance?
- Q. What loss in life would most trouble me . . . Material or spiritual?
- **And it shall cease forever** . . . (NLT) "No amount of money is ever enough!"
- Only spiritual things are genuinely priceless! Everything has a price on earth!
- The redemption of our souls is a spiritual work, accomplished only by GOD's atoning sacrifice

It began in the Garden and was fulfilled and perfected by the work of Jesus

The redeemed live eternally . . . the lost see the pit . . . literally Hebrew "decay"

CRITICAL POINT (5-9): it would be utterly foolish to trust in our wealth

3. The inescapability (inevitability) of death (10-12)

¹⁰ For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others.

- Much in the pattern of the writer of Ecclesiastes (6:1-2), the psalmist noted that we can't take our material wealth with us into the world beyond

¹¹ Their inner thought *is that* their houses *will last* forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call *their* lands after their own names.

- Hungering for some kind of immortality, they that trust in riches believe their estates will last forever, beyond their own life to all generations

¹² Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain; He is like the beasts *that* perish.

- Though a man may have some measure of honor through estates or descendants or memorials, *he still dies* - just like an animal dies
- Therefore, the truly wise does not trust in riches or boast in wealth
- The truly wise prepare for eternity by trusting God and making their boast in Him

CRITICAL POINT (10-12): we cannot escape death

4. The contrast between trusting wealth and trusting GOD (13-15)

¹³ This is the way of those who *are* foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah

Two paths to perish.

1. One path values the material over the spiritual and that does not prepare for the world to come . . . that way is foolish
2. One path is to be a descendant of the one who trusted and boasted in riches and to approve of their world view . . . this also is foolish

¹⁴ Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.

- This is a ghastly picture
- A man is buried like an animal and death consumes his material body
- But the idea is that the upright - those who did not trust or boast in riches - have a beauty beyond the material and therefore beyond the grave
- God gave a similar staggering announcement in Hosea 13:14:

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

- Every graveyard tells of the power that death has over humanity
- Yet God is greater than the power of the grave . . . O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? . . . 1 Corinthians 15:55

¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Selah

- An example for us . . . confident that God will receive one who trusted in Him

CRITICAL POINT (13-15): it is far better to trust in GOD

5. Here is the practical application of GOD's wisdom (16-20)

¹⁶ Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased;

- This might seem like a strange way to phrase the matter
- Most of us are not consciously afraid at the prosperity of another or when the glory of his house is increased
- Yet GOD knows the fears may come in subtle ways

Afraid because we may think others prosper at our expense

Afraid because material things may matter more to us than spiritual things do

¹⁷ For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.

- The psalmist assures us that our reasons for fear are unfounded
- The fool who trusted and boasted in riches can take nothing with him to the world beyond
- His glory shall not descend after him; all the glory he or she will ever deserve they had in this life
- But for the upright, the opposite is true
 - a. Their glory shall ascend after them and they will in some sense be brought to glory (Hebrews 2:10)
 - b. They shall obtain God's glory in the world to come (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

¹⁸ Though while he lives he blesses himself (For *men* will praise you when you do well for yourself), ¹⁹ He shall go to the generation of his fathers; They shall never see light.

- They shall never see light: The psalmist only had a dim understanding of punishment in the world to come, but he knew it to be in some sense a place of darkness
- This is reserved for those who are in honor yet do not understand

²⁰ A man *who is* in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts *that* perish.

- It is the grave warning to those who may have honor in this world but no understanding
- Their honor in this world will not preserve them in the next

Conclusion

- Nothing wrong with wealth – just don't assume you are going to live forever

The banker rots as fast as the shoe-black, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper." (Spurgeon)

We can't take our material wealth with us to the world beyond, but there is a real sense in which we can send it on ahead

Jesus spoke of using our present material to prepare for His Kingdom

Therefore we need to relax our grip on material things and take instead the hand of Jesus

