

Psalms 49:0 ¶ To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

I liked JFB's summation of this psalm: "This Psalm instructs and consoles. It teaches that earthly advantages are not reliable for permanent happiness, and that, however prosperous worldly men may be for a time, their ultimate destiny is ruin, while the pious are safe in God's care."

**Psalms 49:1 ¶ Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
Psalms 49:2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.**

The psalmist wants everyone in the whole world to hear what he has to say, no matter whether they are among the nobility or the common folk, whether they are rich or poor.

Frankly, that is the call that all the writers of scripture would make to all the people on earth today if they could, a call that we should take up on their behalf in our world today.

I liked Guzik's comment: "There are four kinds of riches. There are riches in what you *have*, riches in what you *do*, riches in what you *know*, and riches in what you *are* – riches of *character*. The psalmist spoke of those who are only rich in the first way – the least important kind of wealth."

Psalms 49:3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

The writer is confident that he is about to speak wisdom that comes from understanding from deep within his being.

That is the way we should feel when we are speaking the truth of God's word.

Maybe the psalmist knew that he was writing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I have certainly felt like the LORD was giving me inspiration in the writing of a few of my poems, some of the times I have felt the closest personal fellowship with my heavenly Father.

Spurgeon made a thought-provoking comment: "The help of the Holy Ghost was never meant to supersede the use of our own mental powers. The Holy Spirit does not make us speak as Balaam's ass, which merely uttered sounds, but never meditated; but he first leads us to consider and reflect, and then he gives us the tongue of fire to speak with power."

Psalms 49:4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

I think the psalmist is saying that he is going to present his truth in the form of a parable or riddle (from the Hebrew) that is sung to the accompaniment of a harp.

Psalms 49:5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

The writer introduces his subject with a question. “Why should I fear when times are evil and I am surrounded by evil doers?”

Psalms 49:6 ¶ **They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;**

Psalms 49:7 **None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:**

Psalms 49:8 **(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)**

Psalms 49:9 **That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.**

“They” seems to make a connection between the evildoers and the wealthy being referenced in this group of verses. Those that trust in their riches (not in God) and like to brag about it cannot redeem his brother or pay a ransom that will keep him from dying. A soul is very valuable, beyond what any man could ever pay—no matter how wealthy. Everyone dies.

The CJB translation was a bit different: “...because the price for him is too high (leave the idea completely alone!)”

The psalmist lived in a time in which one was dependent upon sacrifices and offerings to maintain a relationship with the LORD. Thankfully, we can be confident of a relationship with God that is rooted in the sacrifice of Jesus and guaranteed with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Ephesians 1:10–13 “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Good observation from Guzik: “One may know if they **trust** their wealth if they find too much peace and security by their accounts and holdings, and if they despair when such decline. They can ask the question, *What loss in life would most trouble me – material or spiritual?*”

Psalms 49:10 **For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.**

Psalms 49:11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call *their* lands after their own names.

The rich man knows that wise men die just as surely as do the silly and foolish. When they die, they leave their wealth to others. They name their estates after themselves, thinking that they will last for generations to come and they will be remembered.

Psalms 49:12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

Psalms 49:13 This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

No matter how honored a man may be in this life, he will still die just as surely as a common animal. It is to their folly that they put their trust in their riches. Sadly, their progeny usually consider them wise and follow their foolish example.

Spurgeon's vivid word picture: "He is not like the sheep which are preserved of the Great Shepherd, but like the hunted beast which is doomed to die. He lives a brutish life and dies a brutish death. Wallowing in riches, surfeited with pleasure, he is fatted for the slaughter...."

I like these comments from The Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC): "The Bible is not against riches as such but the attitude of self-sufficiency and self-confidence so often associated with riches. The rich come under condemnation for their insensitivity, scheming, deception, and attitude that they rule the world."

Selah = a time to stop and think

Psalms 49:14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

Just like the sheep, they will die and their bodies will decay. I'm not sure what the middle part of the verse is saying.

Another good quote from the EBC: "Death is personified as a shepherd who leads the rich as sheep to the slaughter. Those who have cared for themselves in life will waste away in death. But the righteous will be victorious. When their night of darkness is over, there will be 'morning,' and their lot will be changed."

And from Spurgeon: "The sweetest reflection to the upright is that "the morning" here intended begins an endless, changeless, day. What a vexation of spirit to the proud worldling, when the Judge of all the earth holds his morning session, to see the man whom he despised, exalted high in heaven, while he himself is cast away!"

Psalms 49:15 ¶ But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

The psalmist is confident that God will redeem his soul from the power of the grave. Like Job, he believed that he would see the LORD face to face.

Job 19:25–27 “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

Selah = Another pause for thought and reflection

Psalms 49:16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

Psalms 49:17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

Psalms 49:18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

Psalms 49:19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

Psalms 49:20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

The psalmist closes with a summary. He reminds us not to be in awe (from the Hebrew) of the rich. Just like you, he will take nothing with him when he dies. He may have considered himself blessed during his life because men praised him and admired his success, but he will die just as surely as his fathers before him and never again experience the light of happiness. The man that does not realize this truth is no different from an animal; they all die.

More Spurgeon word pictures: “Through the river of death man must pass naked. Not a rag of all his raiment, not a coin of all his treasure, not a joy of all his honour, can the dying worldling carry with him. The banker rots as fast as the shoeblack, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper. Alas! poor wealth, thou art but the rainbow colouring of the bubble, the tint which yellows the morning mist, but adds not substance to it.”