

SBC – Oct. 13, 2024
Psalm 49 (NKJV)
“Riches Can’t Redeem”

Psalm 49 (NKJV)
To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

This is yet another song either attributed to or written for the Sons of Korah. They were Levites of the family of Korah. Korah himself died in infamy in rebellion against God as seen in his rebellion against God ordained authority as he took on Moses and Aaron. However, the OT was clear that children are not accountable for the sins of the father and the descendants of Korah lived on and became key worship leaders in Israel (cf. 2 Chron. 20:19).

“This psalm touches the high-water mark of Old Testament faith in a future life.” (Alexander Maclaren)

The OT was pretty hazy about the future life, but there are splashes of revelation that touch on it and Psalm 49 is one of those splashes.

Slide # 1

Psalm 49

“Riches Can’t Redeem”

vv. 1-4 Introduction

vv. 5-12 Wealth Cannot Redeem or Prevent Death

vv. 13-20 The Glory of Wealth is Fleeting

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

This is a general message for everyone to hear – for the whole world. It has application for everyone.

3 My mouth shall speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart shall give understanding.

This Psalm is in the genre of wisdom literature. The focus is on the folly of putting your trust in riches or in envying those who are wealthy.

4 I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on the harp.

A proverb is generally a short pithy saying that imparts wisdom to the one who listens and applies the truth of it. He first focused on listening and then imparting this piece of wisdom.

The idea of “dark saying” is the idea of a riddle. He admits that what he is sharing is like a riddle that might be difficult to understand. To make it easier to remember he says he will communicate the message on a harp.

“The doctrine of life eternal, and the judgment to come, here more clearly delivered than anywhere else almost in the Old Testament, is a mystery.” (*John Trapp*)

It is now very clear to us in light of further NT Revelation, but indeed just by itself there is a lot of “**dark saying**” in the mix regarding the afterlife as presented in the OT. However, with the benefit of NT revelation, we can really appreciate what is being said here.

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

The writer is making a contrast between himself and those who trust in riches as he will go on to explain. As a man of God who has his trust in the LORD he has nothing to fear – even in bad times – even when wickedness is right at his heels and surrounds him. He has no reason to fear in the days of evil because he is with God and God is with him. This makes all the difference.

6 Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches,

This is a KEY verse to explain what it means to trust in wealth. Such a person boasts in how wealthy they are. This, in effect, is a form of idolatry.

There were rich godly people in the OT such as Abraham and David. They had riches but riches did not have them. Their TRUST was in the Lord.

The Bible does not say it is sinful to have riches but the love of money is a problem (1 Tim. 6:10).

Slide # 2**1 Timothy 6:17–19 (NKJV)**

17 Command those who are rich in this present age **not to be haughty, nor to trust** in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

18 Let them **do good**, that they be **rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,**

19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

You can't take your riches with you but you can use it to where you lay your treasures up in heaven. It's all about attitude and stewardship.

One can know if he **boasts** in his riches if he finds deepest satisfaction in gaining and measuring his wealth and if he looks for ways to display his riches. He can ask the question, *What am I appropriately proud of – material things or spiritual things?*

-David Guzik

Note the close link here in verse 6 between TRUSTING in wealth and BOASTING in riches. Trust and boasting go together. Boasting in wealth is a sure sign of trusting in it.

Psalm 44:8 (NKJV)

8 In God we boast all day long, And praise Your name forever. Selah

Galatians 6:14 (NKJV)

14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—

What a great truth and it is found here in the OT. Wealth can't redeem nor provide a ransom. To redeem is to set free by paying a price. To give a ransom is to pay a certain amount to set someone free.

But God is not interested in MONEY! One simply cannot purchase spiritual freedom. And the reason is because...

8 For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever—

This is another great verse. Redemption is costly – it is expensive. It is so expensive that one could never buy it though he might try forever. No amount of money would suffice.

Voltaire was a French atheist and enemy of Christianity, and his popularity made him very wealthy. *“Yet when Voltaire came to die, it is reported that he cried to his doctor in pained desperation, ‘I will give you half of all I possess if you will give me six months more of life.’”* **-James Montgomery Boice**

How costly is the redemption of a soul? It is the price of Christ’s precious shed blood on the cross! That is of infinite value! It is costly beyond measure.

Slide # 3

Mark 10:45 (NKJV)

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give His life a ransom for many.**”

1 Timothy 2:6 (NKJV)

6 who **gave Himself a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time,

Slide # 4

1 Peter 1:18–19 (NKJV)

18 knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19 but with the **precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

9 That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.

No amount of wealth can redeem. No amount of money can buy you out of purgatory – which is not even a biblical concept.

No amount of money can bring about “eternal life” and cause that one should not go to the Pit.

The “Pit” is the place of the lost that is commonly called “hell”. The “Pit” of hell is where the lost end up no matter how much money they might throw at it trying to avoid it. Money cannot redeem – it cannot ransom your soul. Only the blood of Jesus can set one free from sin!

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

He sees that whether a person is considered wise or a fool, they all leave their wealth behind to others. The old question: “**How much did he leave?**”, is answered with “**All of it**”. Everyone leaves everything – you can’t take it with you.

Again, you can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead in the sense of laying up spiritual treasures in heaven.

Slide # 5

Matthew 6:19–21 (NKJV)

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Someone has quipped:

Do your givin while your livin – then you’re knowin where its goin! Certainly after we are gone we have no control over it any more! It is now in the hands of “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.

Here we have a window into the soul of a fool! In their pride they think what they have built is going making a lasting impact. They are so foolish as to think their houses will last forever, and the places they have built to all generations. They call lands and places after their names – so that their fame may endure. But it won’t! This is exceedingly shortsighted!

This is very similar to the parable that Jesus taught about the rich fool.

Slide # 6**Luke 12:16–21 (NKJV)**

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

17 And he **thought within himself**, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

Slide # 7**Luke 12:19–21 (NKJV)**

19 And I will **say to my soul**, “Soul, you have many goods **laid up for many years**; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’

20 But God said to him, ‘**Fool!** This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is **not rich toward God.**”

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

“**Though in honor**” is also translated as “*in his pomp*”. Despite lavishing all kinds of honor and pomp on himself, his position of wealth does not last.

He is like the beasts that perish in the sense that he thinks no further than a dumb animal when it comes to spiritual things. He lives just for now!

This refrain is repeated at the end of the Psalm making it the KEY point in the Psalm. To live for wealth, to trust in it – is so stupid as to put yourself on the level of a mere beast who thinks nothing of spiritual realities.

Slide # 8**Jude 10 (NKJV)**

10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they **know naturally, like brute beasts**, in these things they corrupt themselves.

They simply go about life doing what comes naturally and then they die!
Lots of people in that category!

Slide # 9**Ecclesiastes 3:19 (NKJV)**

19 For what happens to the sons of men also **happens to animals**; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, **for all is vanity.**

When one leaves God out of the equation, this is where you end up! All is vanity. One ceases to have any lasting meaningful purpose! You function on the level of a mere beast.

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

This is the way of the fool. They think nothing of spiritual things and live out life purely on the natural plain. They do not have an eternal perspective. They do not think in relation to the afterlife. That is foolish indeed!

Generally, their descendants approve of their ways and follow along right in the same path. This, too, is folly!

Selah – stop and soak this in!

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.

The prosperous way of the fool is short lived! Sheep are very vulnerable. They are easily killed. The fool is impotent before the threat of death. It is coming for them and they will not be able to resist. The final word for them is death, the grave, and the Pit.

In the great morning of the afterlife, it will be the upright who are in the position of dominion. Those who don't trust in the Lord are going down never to come back up. Their beauty – their beautiful life that they made all about them quickly gives way to being consumed by the grave. They exchange beauty for that which is ugly. They will be far removed from every beautiful thing they knew in this life.

Those whose beauty was mainly measured in mirrors and bank accounts will find that **their beauty shall be consumed in the grave.** – *David Guzik*

Like mere animals the hope of the fool is restricted to this life. Their best life is truly NOW! They live for the moment and that is all they have!

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

But is a contrast word! In contrast to the destiny of the fool is that of the upright. The upright put their trust in God and the place of God in their lives makes all the difference!

This “But God” has been called “one of the mountain-tops of Old Testament Hope”.

“We must remember that *redeem* is a commercial term, meaning ‘to buy,’ ‘buy out,’ or ‘buy [a slave so that he or she need never again return to the marketplace].’ Spiritually, it refers to God’s work in buying us out of sin’s marketplace and setting us free. Who can do this? No one but God.” - **James Montgomery Boice**

The writer understood that God ALONE has the power to redeem from the power of the grave. This wonderful hope of deliverance from the grave is introduced in the OT but we see exactly HOW this will happen as seen in the truth of Jesus Christ Who is the resurrection and life as revealed in the NT. What was cloudy in the OT because the light of day in the NT.

Slide # 10

2 Timothy 1:10 (NKJV)

10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has **abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,**

G.B. Hardy, in his book *Countdown*, said this is the ultimate question in the world. “Number one, has anybody ever cheated death? Number two, if he did, did he leave the way open for me?”

The answer is YES there is one who has escaped DEATH and His Name is Jesus. And YES, He has made the way of escape for us too! The OT foresaw this in a cloudy way, but now the gospel has brought life and immortality to light to where we see perfectly clear!

Every graveyard tells of the power that death has over humanity. Yet God is greater than the power of the grave, and in Jesus Christ we can even taunt the grave saying, *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* ([1 Corinthians 15:55](#)). – **David Guzik**

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

Although there were exceptions, the rich, in general, were known for their oppressive ways.

Slide # 11

James 5:1, 4-6 (NKJV)

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! ...

4 Indeed **the wages** of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by **fraud**, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived on the earth **in pleasure and luxury**; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

6 You have **condemned, you have murdered** the just; he does not resist you.

The Psalmist says do not be afraid when the oppressive evil man becomes rich in his wicked ways. When the glory of his house increases keep this in mind...

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

Death is coming for him! And when the wicked rich man dies, he shall carry nothing away. His glory days are over! He will quickly be forgotten. All his “glory” is only “past tense” – the future holds no glory for him.

Someone has well said, “When we die we leave behind all that we have, and take with us all that we are.”

Slide # 12

1 Timothy 6:6–7 (NKJV)

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we **brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.**

Slide # 13



For those who trust in and boast in their riches their BEST life is truly now. This is the BEST they will ever have it. But for those who trust in the Lord this world is the WORST they will ever have it. Indeed for them the BEST IS YET TO BE!

**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.**

People tend to praise success. People fawn all over them and make them out to be someone really special and great. But what is the end of the matter? That is what really counts!

The fool who trusts in his riches, who lives for self, who blesses himself in his prosperity, this person will go to the place of darkness just like all his lost forefathers before him. He shall never see light. This is the place of eternal darkness that is elaborated on in the NT.

Slide # 14

Matthew 25:30 (NKJV)

30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

2 Peter 2:17 (NKJV)

17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Jude 13 (NKJV)

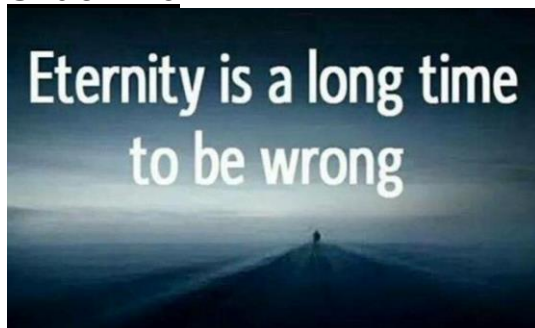
13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Again, even in the OT they had hints of the world to come both in relation to the lost and the saved. He knew that the ultimate destiny of the lost is a place of DARKNESS where they will never see light.

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

Here is the conclusion of the matter! Here is the main point! The Psalm ends with the repeated warning seen in verse 12. It provides a grave warning (pun intended) to those who may have honor in this world, but have no real spiritual understanding. For them they think it is all about them and they make it all about them – not caring who they abuse in the process.

Spiritually speaking they are as senseless as mere beasts who go along naturally with no thought for God and perish in that mode.

Slide # 15

When the Psalm begins by calling the whole earth to give ear (v. 1) and then says, “My mouth shall speak wisdom” (v. 3) we should listen very carefully. The wisdom he shares is that we should TRUST in the Lord and live in light of eternity! Live for God not stuff! Live for God not self!

Live with an eternal perspective! Now that is wisdom!

God help us to do so!

