

NCAC Adult Sunday School
August 21, 2022

Learning to Love the Psalms
W. Robert Godfrey
Week 5

Review

Over the past month we have been looking at the Book of Psalms, learning about its structure, about how important the middle of the psalms often are and how helpful they can be to us today. We have been looking at individual psalms from each of the 5 books of the Psalms. Last week we looked at Psalm 81 and saw how important it was for Israel and for us today to listen to the Lord, to be in His Word, to obey his Word. How did you do in listening to the Lord this week? We also reflected with Dr. Godfrey on how Jesus perfectly listened to God and God was well pleased with Him. Jesus' death paid the price for our failure to listen to God and he has graciously saved us. Now we have the opportunity to love and listen to him the rest of our days out of gratitude for his great mercy and lovingkindness toward us.

Today we are going to look at a psalm in Book 4 that should help us find comfort from God's future promises for His people and find some joy from a surprising place, God's discipline. Scripture tells us that God disciplines those He loves, and as His people, God's discipline should be a joy and a comfort. In this lesson, Robert Godfrey draws our attention to the blessed man of Psalm 94, rejoicing in God's discipline while praying for judgment against the wicked.

Key Verses

"Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law."
Psalm 94:12

"For the Lord will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it."
Psalm 94:14-15

Lecture Outline

A. Psalm 94 breaks from the pattern of Book 4 by looking at the promises of God in order to derive comfort for the future.

1. The center of the Psalm 94 is verse 12: "Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law." This is an echo of Psalm 1
2. Psalm 94:12 uses the Hebrew word for "blessed" from Psalm 1:1 but a different word for "man" with a slightly nuanced meaning.

- a. The Hebrew for “man” in Psalm 94 and Psalm 1 both refer exclusively to males, but Psalm 94 uses a word that refers to young males.
- b. The Hebrew word for “blessed” in Psalm 94 and Psalm 1 is stative, referring to blessedness as a state of being, not an action.

B. Psalm 94 is a prayer of judgment, even referencing God as the God of vengeance.

1. Psalm 94 is a prayer for God to answer the godly and bring to an end the distress caused by the triumph of the wicked because of their sin.

a. The Psalms teach that the crisis of the godly is sometimes a result of God’s disciplining hand in reaction to the sinfulness of his people.

b. God would call on nations to carry Israel into exile as punishment for Israel’s sin and yet promise to judge these nations for their actions.

c. The context of Psalm 94 is Israel’s cry for judgment, looking forward to the certain and coming judgment of God against its oppressors.

2. The truth of God’s judgment is often unpronounced in modern evangelicalism.

a. Christianity that only highlights God’s love, mercy, and kindness apart from God’s righteousness can be called “judgmentless Christianity”, which is not Christianity at all.

b. Biblical Christianity must maintain biblical tensions in order to preserve the scriptural truth that we serve a God of judgment and mercy.

3. The distress of the blessed man in Psalm 94 reflects a proper understanding of judgment through the desire to see the righteousness of God manifested.

a. Christianity balances a love for the wicked with a love for the future revealing of God’s righteousness in judgment over the wicked.

b. Christians can simultaneously pray for the conversion of the wicked and long for the day of salvation and God’s judgment.

C. Psalm 94 reflects on the importance of understanding and the joy of God’s discipline.

1. Psalm 94 calls for the ignorant, unthinking, and brutish to recognize the righteous ways of God and the judgment His righteousness demands.

a. The blessedness of the man in Psalm 94 isn’t without understanding.

b. The blessedness of the man in Psalm 94 is a result of knowing that tragedy that befalls those who exist in rebellion apart from God.

2. Psalm 94 allows a voice of outrage to be lifted against the ways of the wicked precisely because the godly have an understanding that is not of this world.
 - a. Christians are able to have a genuine outrage over the tragic events of this world, whereas the world has no standard of righteousness.
 - b. Christians should only have a sense of outrage on behalf of God in proper recognition of His law and holiness.
 - c. Outrage over the world's sinfulness in relation to God's righteousness should always be characterized by compassion and love.
3. Psalm 94 teaches us that the wise never envy the lawless and clueless ways of the wicked but rather embrace the discipline of the Lord.
 - a. Psalm 94 recognizes the folly of the wicked by cataloging their lawless deeds and raising rhetorical questions that extol God's knowledge.
 - b. Psalm 94 likely references God's discipline of Israel through exile, but even such harsh discipline is embraced by the humble.

D. Psalm 94 focuses on the fatherly promises of God alongside its call for judgment.

1. Psalm 94 proves that those who God disciplines will not be abandoned, for God will not abandon His heritage, indeed, God is our helper (vv. 14, 17).
2. Psalm 94 is filled with remarkable comforts, so in the midst of our crisis we can look to Him to cheer our souls; indeed God is our stronghold (vv. 19-23).

Discussion

1. What do we learn about our God from this passage of Scripture?
2. Psalm 94:12 says, "Blessed is the man whom you discipline O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law,". When you hear the word discipline is blessedness the first thought that comes to your mind? Why should Israel and why should we consider ourselves blessed when we are disciplined by the Lord?

The Hebrew word means to discipline, to chastise, to reprove, instruct, to learn reproof, to take a warning---Key Word Study Bible, Lexical Aids to the Old Testament

The purpose of God's discipline is reformation

Leviticus 26:23-24

"And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.

Deuteronomy 8:5-6

⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

God's discipline shows us that we are His children, we belong to Him.

Proverbs 3:11-12

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹² for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Hebrews 12:1-11

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

**“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.**

**⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”**

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

3. How have these verses helped you to see the blessedness of being disciplined by God?

4. How have you been trained by God's discipline? How has God's discipline helped you grow in holiness and righteousness?

Questions of the Psalmist

v. 3 **“O Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?”**

Verses 4-7 expand upon the exultation of the wicked. Do you ever ask God this question considering past and present world events?

Verse 5 says, **“They crush your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage”** Israel was most likely facing God’s discipline for their faithlessness but what about today? According to Open Doors USA, 360 million believers are facing a high level of persecution for their faithfulness. That is 1 in 7 Christians worldwide

Our brothers and sisters in Christ receive comfort, strength and endurance knowing the truth of Psalm 94 that the Lord will be their rest v. 13. The Lord will not forsake his people, he will not abandon his heritage for justice will return to the righteous v. 14-5 and the wicked will one day receive their just judgment vv. 13, 23

v. 8-11 **“Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the Lord—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.”**

How does understanding that God is omniscient, all-knowing cause you to praise Him? How does knowing that there is nothing that escapes his notice help you endure during times of hardship or discipline?

vv. 16 **“Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers?”**

Have you ever had a time in a trial when you felt like nobody else cared or nobody understood what you were going through or nobody could help?

Remember God’s word to speak back to Him in vv 17-19 **“If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, ‘My foot slips,’ your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.”**

When have you experienced the truth of these words?

When these truths don’t seem to be a reality for you hang onto Jesus and these truths by faith. He will walk you through the valleys of despair and brings these truths to full bloom in your lives. Persevere and cry out to him for help.

v. 20 **“Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statutes?”**

Isaiah 5:20 **“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”**

What are some modern-day examples of how injustice has been established as law?

What is the psalmist answer to this injustice from verse 22-23?

Is it right and good for us to derive hope and joy in God from his judgement of the wicked?

Closing Response

Psalm 96

Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!

**² Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.**

³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!

**⁴ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.**

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

**⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!

**⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!**

⁹ Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;^[a]
tremble before him, all the earth!

**¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity."**

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

¹² let the field exult, and everything in it!

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

**¹³ before the Lord, for he comes,
for he comes to judge the earth.**

**He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

