

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are two teachers and every day during the past week we had a quiet time from 7 selected PSALMS in the Old Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned from our quiet times. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM THE PSALMS - PART 4.

(S) **SHARING FROM SELECTED CHAPTERS FROM THE PSALMS**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Psalm 50, 51, 62, 71, 73, 78 AND 82. Now we will use our notes to share important truths and lessons from some of these Psalms and discuss some difficult passages.

Sharing quiet times from Psalm 50.

A Psalm about true and hypocritical worship of God. In Psalm 50, Asaph wants to show how the living God wants to be served.

First. In verse 1-6, God appears as the Judge of his people Israel. God calls himself by his name *Elohim*, which denotes that he is the Creator and Ruler of the whole creation, and by his name *Jahwe* (Jehovah), which denotes that he is the God of the covenant. He will appear in majesty and power when he comes to judge. Fire will devour before him and the windstorm will rage before him, just like his appearance at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16-19). He summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets as well as the heavens above to gather together his people Israel for the Final Judgement (5). The picture is thus as follows: God is sitting on his judgement throne as the Judge and Accuser (Prosecutor). Israel is standing in front of God's throne as the accused. And all who dwell in the heavens and on earth stand in the background to be witnesses how God is going to judge his own people (Isa 1:2). The Final Judgement Day will not be in secret, but openly and public. For a long time, God has tolerated the wickedness of Israel, but now he can no longer remain silent (3). Even before God speaks, the heavens proclaim God's righteousness (6).

Second. In verse 7-15, God testifies against those in Israel who worship and serve him in the wrong way. God maintains that he has the right to accuse and judge Israel, because they are his own people! In verse 7-15, he tells them in which way he wants to be worshipped and served. Israel thought that God wanted to be worshipped and served by bringing animal sacrifices to him. But that is precisely not the way in which God wants to be worshipped and served. Israel must not think as the Gentile nations do, that God has a need to eat and drink. If he needed to eat and drink, he would *not* have asked people to bring these to him, because he already owns all the animals on earth! There is nothing on earth that people can bring to God in order to worship and serve him. *There is nothing on earth that people can give to God as a gift. God already owns everything on earth!* Every animal in the forests, the cattle on a thousand hills, the birds in the sky and the creatures of the field all belong to God. God says, "The world is mine, and all that is in it!"

How then does God want people to worship and serve him? God wants people *to thank him for everything he gives to them!* What is pleasing to God is *the sacrifice of saying thank you to God again and again.* What is honouring to God is to pray to him and call on him for help in their daily lives. In short, God wants people to worship and serve him, not by giving human gifts and sacrifices to him, but by receiving his divine gifts (Act 17:24-25).

Third. In verse 16-20, God rebukes those in Israel who worship and serve him in a hypocritical way. He accuses people who recite his laws, but break them as wicked people. He condemns as wicked people who say that they are God's covenant people, but are disobedient to the demands of the covenant. These people in Israel know exactly what the Old Testament Law says, what may be sacrificed and what not, what may be eaten and what not, etc. They always *talk* about the law, but *do not live* according to the law. They hate the instruction of God's prophets and teachers and throw their instructions of God's Word behind their backs. As a result, they actually live in sin. They join with thieves and adulterers and speak evil of others. They think because God keeps silent about all these sins, God was altogether just like them! Their thinking is blasphemous. Therefore God no longer kept his silence, but gathered them together to rebuke them and accuse them to their face.

In verse 22-23, God warns both those who worship him in the wrong way as well as those who worship him in a hypocritical way. They must consider what God has said or else he will come and tear them to pieces, without anyone to rescue them! And he reminds them that the only right way to worship and serve him is to bring to him the sacrifices of saying thank you. Everyone who does this will see and experience God's salvation.

(T) **Sharing quiet times from Psalm 51.**

A Psalm of penitence. David wrote this Psalm after he had committed adultery with Batsheba and had killed her husband. This history can be read in 2 Samuel chapters 11-12. It describes the struggle of David's soul. The awareness of his sin and the consciousness of his terrible guilt made itself felt irresistibly. David despaired, not so much because he suffered for his sin in his own body (10), nor because he feared other people's revenge for his blood-guilt (16), but because he was acutely aware that his sin had brought separation between him and God!

First. In verse 1-6, David humbly asks for God's mercy. David cries out to God to have mercy on him according to his unending love and great compassion. *God's mercy* is his love towards a wretch in need of pity, while *God's grace* is his love towards a guilty and undeserving person in need of forgiveness. David needed God's mercy and God's grace. He cried out to God to *blot out* his transgressions from God's book in heaven. He cried to God to *wash away* his iniquity just as clothes are washed by scrubbing. And he cried to God to *cleanse* him from his sin so that he may once more be ceremonially clean as the law demanded (1-2).

David describes his sin in three ways: To *transgress* means to deliberately rebel against God and to tear himself loose from God. To do *iniquity* means to twist God's Word and to make God's ways crooked. To *sin* means to miss God's goal and to fall short of God's standard of perfect obedience (2-3). David understood that sin was not simply wrongdoing, it was *wrongdoing against God*, because it was God who had determined how people should behave towards other people (4). David realised that sin is *not simply a list of wrong acts*, but that sin is *a part of his personal nature*. Already at birth, he inherited this sinful nature from his parents and every sinful act he did only *revealed* his sinful nature (Job 14:4). Although David acknowledged his sinful actions and sinful nature, he still declared that God was completely right and just to judge him for his sins (5). David knew that God desired complete truth, honesty and sincerity in the inner man. Especially, that in his inmost being he would be absolutely convinced of his sinfulness and that there was not a single excuse in his self-defence. He desired God's wisdom in his inmost being, that is, to see his own sinfulness as God saw it. Whoever has seen his sin as God sees it, also wants to get rid of it.

Second. In verse 7-13, David fervently asks for God's regeneration. David did not only want to *hope* for God's mercy. He did not rest until he *experienced* the reality of God's mercy and the grace of God's forgiveness in his soul. He cried to God to cleanse him with hyssop and to wash him until he would be whiter than snow. This would be a painful process, because hyssop was a bush which had a biting effect and washing took a lot of scrubbing and wringing. The assurance of forgiveness would again lead to joy and gladness. Therefore he pleads with God to blot out all his sins from God's presence (7-9).

David did not only want *complete forgiveness*. He desired *regeneration, a change of his inner nature*. What would he do in the future when new sins came to him? So he cries to God, "Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Only then would he be able to do what is pleasing in God's sight. Only through regeneration would God not cast him from his presence or take away his Holy Spirit from him. Only through regeneration would he be able to have the joy of salvation and a willing spirit (10-12). And then only would he teach other people the way of salvation (13).

Third. In verse 14-17, David tells God what he wants to do as a response to God's benefits. After crying once more to God to save him from blood-guilt, he tells God that he would sing of God's righteousness, which punishes sin, but forgives those who turn back to God. But also here he pleads for God's grace to open his mouth so that he may declare God's praise. David says that God does not delight in animal sacrifices, but in the sacrifice of praise to God. *The sacrifice of praise coming out of a broken and yet contrite heart* is the kind of sacrifice that God would not despise (14-17).

(S) **Sharing quiet times from Psalm 62.**

A Psalm about whom to trust and whom not to trust.

First. In verse 1-7, David finds rest in God alone. David asked how long his enemies would assault him. He was king, but his enemies planned to topple him from his important position. His enemies regarded him as "a leaning wall, as a tottering fence", which could fall every moment. They tried to accomplish their goal by lies and by pretending friendship (3-4).

But David's soul was not anxious, because his soul was quietly resting in God. Although it stormed in his outward circumstances, he lived in quiet submission to God. He believed that his salvation could only come from God and so he quietly waited for God's salvation to come. God was for David like a fortress built on an unassailable rock. Whoever wanted to attack him, first had to overcome God. This no one could do! As long as he sheltered with God, he was safe and he would not be shaken (1-2). When he thought about the devious attacks of his enemies he became anxious, but when he considered that salvation and honour depended on God his soul quietened down again (5-7).

Second. In verse 8-12, David exhorts his countrymen to find rest in God alone. He exhorted them to trust God at all times: that is, to trust God in times of prosperity and in times of adversity, to trust God in times of health and in times of sickness, to trust God in life and in death. He exhorted them to depend on God and make God the One in whom their whole inner being finds rest when their outward circumstances were full of troubles. He exhorted them to pour out their hearts to God and tell him all their troubles and everything else that was in their hearts (8).

David exhorted his countrymen *not to trust in ordinary people*, because they were like one breath and then they died. He exhorted them also *not to trust in the very important people*, because they were 'lies'. They might seem to be fixed points of support, but in reality they were only appearances, dummies with no real inner content. When all important people in the world were weighed together on a scale, it would become apparent that they were really nothing; that they were really just like air! In the matter of salvation, they had no weight, they were empty (9). David exhorted his countrymen also *not to trust in extortion, stolen goods or in wealth*. These were the things that people usually run to in the first place, because they seemed to bring quick advantages in life. Trusting in these things was like building castles in the air (taking pride = vanity, 10). Even when one's wealth increased, he should not put his trust in it, because the last word will be spoken by God and he will reward each person according to what he has done. When David says, "One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard", he intends to say that he is absolutely certain that all power belonged only to God, and thus not to people, however important they may be. People, who sheltered with God as their fortress on an unassailable rock, need not fear important people or tyrants (11). Lovingkindness also only belonged to the God of the Bible and he will not allow his covenant people to be oppressed forever. A time will come when God will judge all people and reward each person according to what he has done (12).

(T) Sharing quiet times from Psalm 73.

A prayer of practising the presence of God. The writer is Asaph. He recounts his struggle with the problem about God's moral government of this world. He wrestled with the following question: "*How can faith in God's righteousness be reconciled with the suffering of righteous people and the prosperity of the wicked people?*" This is an oppressive question, because it touches the bases of our faith. People's faith stand or fall in relationship to their view of God's moral government of this world.

First. In verse 2-16, Asaph describes how his faith was shaken by looking at things from man's point of view. Asaph tells how he had almost lost his foothold and had slid back into unbelief when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and godless people in comparison to the hardships of the righteous and godly people. When he looked at the prosperity of the wicked, he envied them and wished that he, as a believer in God, would also be so prosperous (2-3). It seemed as if the wicked people on earth had no struggles: Physically, materially and politically they prospered. Physically, their bodies were healthy and strong. They were not plagued by the burdens and ills common to man (4-5). Socially and politically, they used arrogance and violence to attain their goals. In their pride and arrogance they believed that everything they did was permissible, no matter what their actions did to other people or God. Their *hearts* were callous, their *minds* were conceited and their *tongues* spoke maliciously and threateningly (6-8). They even spoke arrogantly and defiantly against God in heaven and claimed the government of the whole world for themselves (9). Their success caused many people to follow in their footsteps (10). They believed that because God did not act immediately against their arrogance, wickedness and godlessness, God *did not* know what they were actually doing or even worse, that God *could not* even know what they were doing (11). The wicked were always carefree while they increased in wealth (12).

Asaph wondered why he was still a believer in God. A voice in his heart said, if this is how it is in the world, if these are the results of being wicked and godless, then it surely is meaningless to believe in God and live according to God's law. Then it is useless that he struggles day after day to keep his heart pure and his acts free from guilt (13-14). A treacherous thought crept into his mind saying that he should also begin to speak like the wicked and godless people, order his life like theirs and bid farewell to God and religion. But then his conscience argued that he would be a traitor. He would betray all those people whom he had taught the ways of God and were looking to his example (15). Nevertheless, as he struggled in his own heart and mind, *the question "how the righteousness of God can be reconciled with the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked" did not let go of him.* He struggled to understand and find an answer to this mystery, but it only became more and more oppressive to him. He tried to find answers for the mysteries of life *in the light of his own reason.* He acted as if human beings have always been able to solve the mysteries of life *by their own human wisdom and discernment!* But it was all in vain (16).

Second. In verse 17-28, Asaph describes how his faith became strong by looking at the world from God's point of view. It was only when Asaph entered the sanctuary of God, the place where God dwells and can be found, that he found an answer to his nagging question. All the time he had been looking at the prosperity of the wicked and godless people *from the viewpoint of man.* When he looked at the prosperity of the wicked and godless *from the viewpoint of God,* everything changed. It was only from God's point of view that he *could see the end* of the life of the wicked and godless people. Wicked and godless people only look at every day of their life and never at the end of their life. The righteous and godly people should look at the end of everything happening on earth. Where does earthly prosperity lead to? What

will be the end of the arrogance and violence of the wicked (17)? God showed Asaph *the end* of the wicked and godless people. Their prosperity is like a very slippery ground. God placed them on that slippery road and they will very suddenly fall and be destroyed. Sudden and unexpected terrors will sweep them away. When God finally acts, the wicked and godless will be swept away like fantasies (18-20).

Only when Asaph had entered into God's presence and had viewed everything happening in the world from God's viewpoint, did he begin to realise how stupid he was in his human reasoning and how unreasonable he was in his thoughts towards God. And Asaph repented (21-22). What brought him to his senses was the realisation that he was always with God and that God was holding his hand. Asaph realised that God always guided him with his wise counsel from the Bible during his lifetime on earth and that when he died, God would take him into divine glory. That is why Asaph finally decided to desire nothing except God himself. He said, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you." (23-25). Asaph realised that his struggles on earth were not over and that he still had to suffer. He still had to face the degeneration of his physical body and maybe many disappointments of heart. But throughout all these sufferings on earth, he would hold on to God as his portion, as his real inheritance forever (26).

Asaph concludes his Psalm by saying that whoever falls away from God must fall. Whoever seeks life outside God must perish. But whoever stays near God and makes God his refuge will inherit God himself as his portion, as his eternal inheritance. Therefore, it is good to practise living in the presence of God (27-28)!

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Every day have a quiet time from one Psalm. The selected Psalms are Psalm 84, 90, 91, 92, 103, 104 and 107. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share your discoveries, lessons and blessings.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".