

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 25: Psalms 42-72 *What Do Those Mean Psalms Mean?*

Welcome to Week 25 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

This week, we're going to be continuing in the book of Psalms. Last week, we read Psalms one through 41. This week, we'll be reading Psalms 42 through 72. As I mentioned last week, every week when we do this, we're going to give you a few more facts about the Psalms and then take a look into a couple of the chapters themselves. So the question we're going to be asking and answering one of them this week is "Who wrote the Psalms?" A lot of people think well, David wrote the Psalms. And yes, that's true. He wrote 73 to 75 of them. Two of them, we're not quite sure about 73 For sure, potentially 75. So about half of the Psalms were written by David, but there were other writers of the Psalms as well. The others include Asaf and his family that's 12 of the Psalms, the sons of Korah wrote 11 Psalms, someone named Heman wrote one Psalm, and he wrote that one with the sons of Korah, Solomon wrote two Psalms, Moses wrote one Psalm, Ethan the Ezrahite wrote one Psalm. And then there are about 48 songs that are anonymous, that we do not know who wrote them.

So let's take a look at a couple of the songs together, shall we? First of all, let's take a look at Psalm 51. It's a really important one, because Psalm 51 was written by David immediately after Nathan the prophet had confronted him, because he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had murdered Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. We read about that back in week 15 in Second Samuel. So after David is confronted, he repents, he apologizes, he's in absolute agony of heart and mind over the sin that he's committed. And take a look at just a little bit of how he responds in this time of grave sin and grave sorrow. The psalm opens with David saying this Psalm 51:1 "Have mercy on me, oh God, according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion. Blot out my transgressions, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." And then it closes with this, Psalm 51, beginning with verse 16, "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, oh God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. May it please you to prosper, Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem, then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous in burnt offerings offered whole, then bulls will be offered on your altar."

This is just a taste of David's response to his sinfulness after being confronted by Nathan the prophet. It would be an awesome Psalm to teach to Fallen leaders whether fallen leaders in the church or outside of the church. David knows how to repent and how to apologize. He makes no excuses. He deflects nothing. He admits everything. He blames no one else. And he falls completely on the mercy of God. Read through it. It's been taught actually, in leadership courses, about how to make things right after you've done something extremely wrong. When you get to Psalm 51 pay attention to that, it's so important.

Also, as you read through this week, you're going to be reading this week especially some psalms that are hard to understand because they are filled with anger with vengeance and even with hatred. This is a group of Psalms called the imprecatory psalms. "Imprecatory", I-M-P-precatory. Imprecatory. I won't spell all that out, you don't care. But the imprecatory

psalms are psalms that actually pray for calamity to come on our enemies in some pretty brutal ways sometimes. Here are the imprecatory Psalms. Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109 and 137. Those are the imprecatory Psalms. The most challenging and difficult of the imprecatory Psalms, Psalm 137. We'll talk about that in two weeks, because it includes a verse about bashing babies' heads against rocks. I mean, it's one of those places that cynics of the Bible point to and go what a brutal God you've got. We'll get there and trust me, while the expression is horrifying, it doesn't make God look bad. We'll tell you why. When we get there, if that doesn't keep you coming back, I don't know what will.

But the reason I'm talking about that this week is four of those imprecatory Psalms and a big chunk of them 55, 58, 59, and 69 are in a clump together in this week's reading. So, let's take a note of a portion of one so you'll understand what it is I'm talking about. Let's take a look at a little bit from Psalm 59. Okay, Psalm 59, beginning with verse 1. "Do you rulers indeed speak justly? Do you judge people with equity? No. In your heart, you devise injustice and your hands mete out violence on the Earth. Even from birth, the wicked go astray from the womb, they are wayward, spreading lies. Their venom is like the venom of a snake like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears that will not heed to the tune of the charmer, however, skillfully and chanter may be, break the teeth in their mouths, oh, God, Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions. Let them vanish like water that flows away. When they draw the bow that their arrows fall short. May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along? Like a stillborn child that never sees the sun?" Whoa.

First of all, from a writing standpoint, that is on vivid imagery. Secondly, from a moral standpoint, it's horrifying. So what's going on with these imprecatory psalms that say things like that? Well, here are a couple of things to note about the Psalms. While most of the Bible is God speaking to us, the Psalms are us speaking to God. So when you read a psalm, and you go, how could God think that you got to pause and go, Oh, that isn't necessarily what God thinks. That's what someone who's talking to God thinks. That's what someone who's talking to God feels. That's how they feel in the moment. So is that accurate? Yes. It's accurate as an expression of a person pouring their heart out to God, in love and anger, in hatred, in frustration, in wonder, in awe. It's a true expression of all of those things, but it's not God speaking to us, it's us talking to God, it expresses the true nature of almost every single human emotion you can imagine.

So they're not necessarily an accurate indication of God of what God wants us to do. But they are an accurate indication of how we feel as we approach God sometimes, and they let us know. We can tell God, anything, even our worst thoughts and our worst emotions, why? Because God knows them already. We might as well admit them to him. And Psalms is real people in their real emotions, expressing those to God who receives it, who hears it, and who loves us anyway. So many of the expressions in the Psalms are ugly, they're horrifying, they're there, they're hateful. But they're not God's expression to us. They're our expression to God. And if we read it that way, they'll make a whole lot more sense.

So let's conclude this week this way. We're going to read a Psalm for you every week and this week, we're going to read one of the Psalms that you'll be coming up to this week, Psalm 61. Let me just read it for you and then we'll conclude. "For the Director of Music with stringed instruments of David. Hear My Cry, oh, God, listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you. I call as my heart grows faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you

have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe, I longed to dwell in your tent forever, and take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. For you, God have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name, increase the days of the king's life, he is yours for many generations. May he be in the throne in God's presence forever. Appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him, then I will ever sing in praise of your name, and fulfill my vows day after day." Thanks, everybody. We'll see you next week.

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