

## Praying Psalm 49

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### Psalm 49 (ESV)

- 1 Hear this, all peoples!  
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
- 2 both low and high,  
rich and poor together!
- 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;  
the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.
- 4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;  
I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.
- 5 Why should I fear in times of trouble,  
when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me,
- 6 those who trust in their wealth  
and boast of the abundance of their riches?
- 7 Truly no man can ransom another,  
or give to God the price of his life,
- 8 for the ransom of their life is costly  
and can never suffice,
- 9 that he should live on forever  
and never see the pit.
- 10 For he sees that even the wise die;  
the fool and the stupid alike must perish  
and leave their wealth to others.
- 11 Their graves are their homes forever,  
their dwelling places to all generations,  
though they called lands by their own names.
- 12 Man in his pomp will not remain;  
he is like the beasts that perish.
- 13 This is the path of those who have foolish confidence;  
yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah
- 14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol;  
death shall be their shepherd,  
and the upright shall rule over them in the morning.  
Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.
- 15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,  
for he will receive me. Selah
- 16 Be not afraid when a man becomes rich,  
when the glory of his house increases.

- 17 For when he dies he will carry nothing away;  
his glory will not go down after him.
- 18 For though, while he lives, he counts himself blessed  
—and though you get praise when you do well for yourself—
- 19 his soul will go to the generation of his fathers,  
who will never again see light.
- 20 Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

## Adoration

Psalm 49 describes God as transcending our earthly understanding of life and wealth. Human possessions — just as all human life on this earth — will one day come to an end. Adore God for his wisdom and might, his transcendence and his eternal nature — that his ways are far beyond our ways and his thoughts are beyond our thoughts.

[Pray for 20 seconds.]

Praise God for he is true, real, and worthy of our trust. Worship him, because who he is, far surpasses our comprehension. And that when he tells us his ways are better, we can trust that his Word is true. If this is an area of struggle for you, confess your doubts to God as you pray.

[Pray for 20 seconds.]

God, we take you at your word. We believe that “This God — his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.” You are the Lord, and there is no other, besides you there is no God.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, “all flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. ... surely the people are grass.” The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord will stand forever.<sup>2</sup> God, move each of us to love you, the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.<sup>3</sup> We worship you, the true God, as there are no other gods before you.<sup>4</sup>

## Confession

Psalm 49 reveals in verse 5 and verse 16 our temptation to become anxious and afraid when others around us gain power, privilege, or material possessions. Admit your fears, and confess out loud your worries and concerns to God today.

[Pray for 20 seconds.]

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isaiah 45:5. And the phrasing “there is no other” repeats as a refrain throughout Isaiah 45–46.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:6–8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mark 12:30.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Exodus 20:1.

O God, we confess our fears and anxieties to you today, whether they come by the pompous boasts of those around us or the troublesome circumstances in our lives. Let us not be anxious about our lives, what we will eat or what we will drink, nor about our bodies. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and your righteousness, and give us the grace and strength to believe that you will provide for us.<sup>5</sup>

Psalm 49 also speaks of the human desire to impress other people with outward displays. Ask the Holy Spirit to uncover any arrogance in you, any tendency toward a foolish confidence in earthly possessions. Whether you have very little or very much, we have fallen into the sinful boastings of Psalm 49:12–13: “Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts.” Confess these sinful thoughts, postures, and passions to the Lord.

[Pray for 20 seconds.]

Forgive us for our sins, O Lord. Forgive us for thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.<sup>6</sup> Deliver us from empty boasting. Any boasting in human arrogance is evil in your sight.<sup>7</sup> Let us not boast in our wisdom, in our might, in our riches, but let us boast only in that we understand and know the living God, the Lord, who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.<sup>8</sup> “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you [alone] are God. ... For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.”<sup>9</sup> O Lord, we repent. Hear our requests today — let us desire what you desire. And teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.<sup>10</sup>

## Thanksgiving

Psalm 49 responds to the insecurity of worldly wealth with a confidence in God. Hear again, verse 15 — “But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.” In your own words, give thanks to God that he does willingly, freely, and joyfully what no man or woman could ever do — ransom our souls and receive us into his presence eternally.

[Pray for 25 seconds.]

God, we believe your word, as Psalm 49:7 proclaims that none of us can ever ransom another, or hope to give back to God in our own strength the price of a life.<sup>11</sup> Left to our own devices, our

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<sup>5</sup> The three preceding sentences are a paraphrase of Matthew 6:25, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Romans 12:3.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. James 4:16.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 9:23–24.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 90:2, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Psalm 90:12.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Psalm 90:7.

graves would indeed be our homes forever.<sup>12</sup> Like the servant in Matthew 18, we have been forgiven an inconceivable debt by a merciful and generous Lord. Thank you. We are moved with gratitude and awe at what you've done for us in Christ, knowing that we were ransomed from the futile ways of sin that we inherited from our forefathers, not with perishable things of worldly value, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.<sup>13</sup> We praise you that he was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the world for our sake, who through him are believers in God; and you raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that our faith and hope are in God.<sup>14</sup>

## Supplication

As Psalm 49:20 reminds us: "Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish." In your own words, ask God to provide understanding, wisdom, and discernment—that you would know him and understand how he's actively working right now in your circumstances.

[Pray for 25 seconds.]

God, you are the one who provides understanding in everything.<sup>15</sup> We humbly ask that you fill us with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that we might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to you, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in our knowledge of God.<sup>16</sup> Our hearts are deceitful above all things.<sup>17</sup> We need you to speak to us and show us how to follow you today.

## Benediction

As those who have been raised with Christ, let us seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Lord, set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For we have died, and our lives are hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then we also will appear with him in glory.<sup>18</sup>

And we ask all of this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

AMEN.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Psalm 90:11.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 1:18–19.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 1:20.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 2:7.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Colossians 1:9–10.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 17:9.

<sup>18</sup> This paragraph adapted from Colossians 3:1–4.

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