

Bible Study on Psalm 90

Community Lament & Praise – Sharing Our Pain and Joy

Christian community is God's gift to His people. In the church of Jesus Christ, God's people walk together, laugh and cry with each other, and share joys and sorrows. Such a community comes about not by chance, but by the choice of God. (LL)

God's people are able to use the past as a frame of reference for the present. Present troubles may seem great; but as the people of God recall His past victories, we draw strength to face the future. We can place our hope in our unchanging God who will act with the same kindness toward us that He has shown to other believers in the past. That hope unites us and brings us peace. (LL)

In the community psalms, we also see the strength of the people of God. Disaster or deliverance often comes to us as a group, not just individuals. Even so, we become by God's grace a source of strength for one another as we join together in prayer and praise to our God. The Christian community is stronger than its individual members. (LL)

The community psalms use patterns of organization similar to those of individual lament or praise psalms. Yet they reflect a disaster or blessing that has come upon the whole community, not just upon a single person. Pleas maybe spoken by one person, yet these psalms reflect the community's pain. Often the problems are so great that the Lord is the only hope. (LL)

A few psalms that fit into this category are Psalms 44, 80, 90, and 124.

This is the only psalm authored by Moses.

This Psalm is a prayer to the everlasting God to have compassion on his servants, who live their melancholy lives under the rod of divine wrath and under his sentence of death—a plea that God will yet show them his love, give them cause for joy and bless their labors with enduring worth. No other psalm depicts so poignantly the dismal state of man before the face of God, holy and eternal. That Israel's 40 years of enforced sojourn in the "vast and dreadful desert" (Dt 8:15) on its pilgrimage to the promised land (see Nu 14:26–35) should evoke such a prayer ought not be surprising. (CSB)

1. How do verses 1 and 2 describe God?
2. How does verse 2 give verse 1 more meaning?
3. How do verses 3, 5-6, and 10 describe people?
4. What contrast is there between God and man in these verses?

5. We are mortal; our Lord is eternal. What insight into God's eternal nature are we given in verse 4?
6. Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8-9 say somewhat the same thing. Why are God's eternal nature and His patience especially important for us sinners?
7. Verses 7-9, 11 are a kind of confession on the part of the people. What are some things they confess?
8. Why would the whole community lament this situation? (Think also about Israel's specific situation at the time of Moses wrote; they had disobeyed God and refused to trust Him. What do Numbers 14:20-24; 20:6-12 speak to this entire generation?)
9. In verse 10 "span" literally means "their pride." Why does that spell "trouble" and "sorrow"?
10. One hears much of leaving a legacy these days. What is a legacy? What kind of legacies do people attempt to leave? What is a truly God pleasing legacy?
11. What is the cost of the different types of legacies?
12. In verse 12 Moses prays that God would give him and his people, "heart(s) of wisdom." For what was he asking? In other words, describe the characteristics of a wise heart. (Keep in mind the truths of Proverbs 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and 30.)
13. Because of our sins, we are mortal. Many people fear physical death. Others are absolutely terrified by it. Even for those who believe in Jesus, the thought of physical death can bring anxiety and anguish. What feeds this fear – even for believers?
14. How could the truths of Psalm 90:1-2 comfort someone who faces such fears?
15. In verses 13-17 Israel implores for God's grace, consolation and refreshment that in this time He might carry out His work and prosper their work. What are some ways this may be done?

How quickly life flies by: grass withering in the summer heat, leaves falling and blowing away in autumn, trees standing bare in winter. Even more heartbreaking is to stand by a casket and stare at a lifeless body or to look in a mirror and see age steal youth and energy. Yet in spring the flowers bloom and the grass turns green. The grave is empty on Easter morning. Jesus has risen! God has taken pity on us and given us everlasting life in Christ. • Lord, give us wisdom to number our days as Your servants, so we will look forward to dwelling with You from everlasting to everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)

Some Answers to the above Questions:

1. Verses 1 and 2 describe God as eternal. He has always existed. He is also “our dwelling place.”

2. Verses 3, 5-6, and 10 describe people who are mortal but with limited number of years to live on this earth. People will eventually return to dust (v. 3). The time people do spend on this earth is filled with trouble and sorrow (v. 10).

3. Moses and the Israelites had good reason to lament. In general, our own mortality fills our hearts with regret, as does the suffering we endure while here because of the sin in our world and our own lives. But the Israelites in particular had much to regret. They would wander for 40 years in the wilderness because of their own stubborn unbelief. They would watch their friends die, and they would not get to enjoy the land God had promised to give them. Their children would go in, but they were denied the joy of seeing God keep this particular promise.

4. Verse 4 tells us that God’s concept of time is vastly different from ours. As the verse says, a thousand years to God are like one day. God is not trapped in time; He created it and stands outside it. This is difficult or even impossible for us to understand because all of our human experience is grounded in time.

5. God’s sense of time is especially important for our redemption. Peter quotes Ps. 90:4, then goes on to say in 2 Peter 3:9, “He (God) is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” God’s patience demonstrates His mercy and love for us. He does not want anyone to be lost, to pass into eternal death.

6. The wisdom for which Moses asks in verse 12 involves knowing God, particularly in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. The people of the OT looked forward to the Savior from sin God in His mercy would send; we know that in Jesus God has kept His promise to do just that. The wisdom of the cross looks like foolishness to the world. But it is indeed our “righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

7. Even Christians may dread the process of dying and the physical suffering that often accompanies it. Because of our sinful nature, we fear the unknown and to our sinful nature death is the greatest unknown. We fear God’s wrath and His punishment in death.

8. God has revealed to us a beautiful truth about Himself. He *is* “our dwelling place.” In life we find a home in Him; in death we enjoy that same security. He is our eternal God in life and in death. Of course, in the resurrection of Jesus, we receive even greater assurances of His power to rescue us from death and the grave.

9. The second part of each verse moves towards a positive that happen.