

Praying the Psalms

Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Seven

October 24, 2023

Praying the Psalms of Emotion

Emotions are a gift from God when we know how to address them, how to express them, and how to use them for good in our lives. We need to cultivate godly emotions. God created us, he gave us emotions, so he understands them better than we do.

Let me ask you: Where do you have difficulty controlling your emotions? What are the situations or people who can evoke sustained and overwhelming, maybe even uncontrolled emotions in you?

Controlling our emotions—cultivating godly emotions—is a challenge. The Psalms help us.

Psalms Expressing Anxiety and Fear

Psalm 18:3 – 6

I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.
⁴The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
⁵The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
⁶In my distress I called to the Lord;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.

This is a Psalm of David, expressing great fear. What caused this fear?

Who is “waging war” against you?

How do we “cry to God” for help? You don’t have to explain everything that’s happening or has happened. God knows.

Psalm 34:15

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry.

It’s the stormy sea of emotions that often pushes you to admit that you need help. Jesus told us we would have trouble:

John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Life is full of storms of all kinds, and those storms bring waves of strong emotions. Sometimes these emotions simply overpower you, and they are so strong that you start to believe what you are feeling.

The enemy says:

- God won't protect you from the worst outcome
- God must not care about you, he must not see your struggles
- God can't possibly forgive you

At times your emotions roar so loudly in your ears that you can read the Bible but you have difficulty processing it.

Proverbs 14:30 – The Message

A sound mind makes for a robust body, but runaway emotions corrode the bones.

There are times when your anxiety and worries so overtake your thoughts that you begin to see everything through negative lens. Those are runaway emotions, and they affect your mind, your health, your body.

Consider these later verses in Psalm 18:

He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.

¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.

¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the Lord was my support.

¹⁹ He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.

You can declare your belief in God and his deliverance even when your emotions are raw and out of control. God can rescue you from your runaway emotions, give you peace of mind and take away your fears.

Psalm 46 (Verses 1 – 3, 7, 10-11)

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

⁷ The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

¹⁰ He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalms Expressing Repentance and Confession

There are seven psalms identified as Psalms of Repentance. They are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. These Psalms of Repentance teach us that repentance is a turning away from sin and turning toward God—a process that doesn't merely alleviate guilt but cultivates deep joy through obedience.

So how do we grow in a joy-giving habit of repentance?

Psalms 51 is probably the most widely known of all these psalms of repentance.

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your unfailing love;

according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

⁵Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the
time my mother conceived me.

⁶Yet you desired faithfulness even in the
womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret
place.

⁷Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the
bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins and blot out all
my iniquity.

¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

¹⁴Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O
God, you who are God my Savior, and my
tongue will sing of your righteousness.

¹⁵Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will
declare your praise.

¹⁶You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would
bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt
offerings.

¹⁷My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not
despise.

¹⁸May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up
the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the
righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Here are some important steps for real repentance from Psalm 51:

1. Define the sin.

We have to call our own sin what it is; we can't be easy on ourselves.

2. Appeal to God's mercy.

David appeals for forgiveness based on what he knows about God's character: that he is merciful.

3. Avoid defensiveness and see God rightly.

David says to God, "against you, you only, have I sinned". All sin is ultimately against God.

4. Ask God to break and heal you.

David prays, "Let the bones you have crushed rejoice."

5. Rejoice and proclaim truth.

Take comfort in knowing that the grief you're experiencing is a sign that you have the Holy Spirit working in you, causing you to hate what God hates.

6. Resolve to obey.

Practicing this kind of repentance leads to deep joy as you learn to hate your sin and love the Savior more.

Psalm 32:1-5

Blessed is the one

whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one

whose sin the Lord does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent,

my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night

your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess"

And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

Blessing comes through repentance. Misery comes when we harbor sin and refuse to confess and repent.

Repentance is required to be born into God's family:

Romans 10:9-10:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Jesus said: I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32).

But even after we are born again, we still need to have many times of repentance as believers.

2 Corinthians 7:8 – 10:

Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—⁹ yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.