

LESSON 4

PSALMS 11—14

PSALM 11: FAITH OR FLIGHT

This psalm is a beautiful affirmation of trust in God rather than a prayer. It might be called “The Song of the Steadfast Heart.” The writer is expressing confidence in the midst of a personal crisis. He has been advised to run from his problems by his comrades (or possibly by his own heart at a low and discouraged moment), but he responds to the advice with a dynamic declaration of faith. It has been properly labeled a psalm of assurance.

Life as a fugitive means that the writer is continually looking over his shoulder for the deadly arrow or spear. Enemies are all around him. He knows at any moment he could be attacked and killed. He yearns for peace, as any person in his perilous situation would; but he also knows that God has put him in a special place of service for His glory and for the blessing of His people. He is determined to stay and face his difficulties in the strength of the Lord.

1. What is the setting of this psalm?
2. What has the writer been urged to do?
3. How does the Lord test the righteous?
4. Why should we stay in the place where God has put us?

PSALM 12: GOD’S ANSWER TO EVIL

This psalm was written during a time when dishonest and unscrupulous people seemed to be in the majority and righteous people from all appearances had almost vanished from the earth. We would classify it, therefore, as a community lament psalm.

An unusual feature of this song is that it first contains a prayer to God and then God’s answer immediately follows the prayer. This characteristic is found only in three other psalms in the entire Book of Psalms (60; 81; 95).

5. What does the psalmist say about the righteous man?

6. What does the Lord say in His answer to this prayer?
7. How would you describe the words of the Lord?
8. On what kind of note does this psalm end?

PSALM 13: WHEN GOD IS SILENT

The writer is a deeply troubled soul as he writes this psalm. He is passing through one of his darkest valleys of fear and hopelessness. It may be that he is in the midst of a sickness that is threatening his life; or, perhaps, he can see that he is on the verge of being hemmed in by enemies. It is possible that he is plagued by both problems—with his sickness providing an occasion for his enemies to rejoice over the possibility of his death.

9. What is a lament psalm?
10. Does God ever forget us?
11. How should we respond when God is silent when we pray?
12. How would you describe the value of prayer?

PSALM 14: MAN'S INHUMANITY TO GOD

In a wisdom poem, this meditation describes those who have left God out of their thoughts. The outgrowth of their foolish conclusions is shown in relation to God, their fellow man, and themselves. Their lifestyle is painted so vividly that Paul used parts of the description to depict the universal sinfulness of the Gentile world in Romans 3:10–12. In addition to being called a psalm of instruction by the heading of Psalm 53 (a twin psalm to Psalm 14), it is also somewhat of a lament. Beginning with a complaint-like statement, it moves through a discussion of that lament and ends on a note of faith.

13. Who is the fool of this psalm?
14. How is the unbelieving world described in this psalm?
15. Describe how God is the mainspring of life.