

LESSON 9

PSALMS 31—34

PSALM 31: “INTO YOUR HAND I COMMIT MY SPIRIT”

With its plaintive and emotional content, this psalm has been appropriately labeled a psalm of lament. Interlaced with the praise of God and the depiction of intense struggles, it sounds like the pitiful cries and the agonizing loneliness found in Jeremiah when he was beaten down by persecution and hopelessness.

The psalm puts into expression some of the deep-felt questions and fears of affliction and woe that are common in life. Tears, smiles, and blood are universal. “The last place to look for originality,” said Alexander MacLaren, “is among the sorrows of man. The needs of the human heart are uniform” (*The Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 291).

For us, the psalm answers the question “What can you do when you are worn out, beaten and broken by the battles of life?”

1. Define a lament psalm.
2. How does this writer describe his situation?
3. What does he mean by “into Your hand I commit my spirit”?
4. How are his “times” in God’s hand?
5. How did Jesus use the psalms?

PSALM 32: THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

Because of its assurance of God’s forgiveness for the penitent believer, this “account of repentance” has been a favorite of Bible believers over the centuries.

In this psalm David writes about how he himself had received God's grace after acknowledging his sin. Surely, the background of the psalm was the forgiveness God granted David after his sin with Bathsheba, a sin that had resulted in lying, having Uriah killed, and concealing his sins for almost a year (2 Sam. 1; 12). Nathan's stinging rebuke sent the fire of conviction into David's heart, and he responded with contrition, deep sorrow, and repentance (2 Sam. 12:9–14).

Psalm 51, a moving plea for pardon that undoubtedly was written shortly after Nathan called David to repentance, must have been written before this psalm. Sometime later, this psalm was written as David looked back at what had happened and how God had responded to him. Perhaps he wrote it for the instruction and encouragement of others, desiring that they might learn from his experience.

The heart of this saga of turning back to God is the truth that repentance is necessary to receive forgiveness and the blessings associated with that forgiveness.

6. Is the word "blessed" singular or plural?
7. What does God do with our sins when they are forgiven?
8. What was life like for the writer when he kept quiet regarding his sins?
9. What will God do for the one who comes to Him?
10. How can we be like horses or mules?
11. What will be true of the righteous?

PSALM 33: LET US PRAISE HIM!

It is likely that this psalm was composed to celebrate Israel's victory over a strong enemy, but the date and the reason for its writing are unknown. As a hymn of praise, it stresses what God has done and is doing with Israel and the nations of the earth. Psalm 32 ends with an exhortation to be glad in the Lord, and this psalm begins with a continuation of that exhortation.

The body of the psalm answers the major question of why we should give praise to God. In arrangement, it begins with a call to worship Him (vv. 1–3), proceeds to give four reasons why He should be worshiped (vv. 4–21), and then ends with a benediction (v. 22).

12. How do we sing a “new song” to God?
13. Is instrumental music in worship commanded by the New Testament?
14. What is said about God’s creation of the earth?
15. How does God control the nations?
16. What does the Lord do for those who trust in Him?
17. Where do we see God’s grace?

PSALM 34: “THE LORD HAS BEEN MINDFUL OF ME”

Obviously, this beautiful psalm was composed by a writer who wanted to give thanks to God for the special help he had received from Him. It contains two types of literature: an individual thanksgiving section and a teaching part.

The thoughts of it are cast in an acrostic pattern, with each couplet starting with a different letter of the alphabet, much like Psalm 25. The entire Hebrew alphabet is used except ו (*Vav*). An extra פ (*Pe*) was added at the end to replace the missing *Vav* and to complete the number of twenty-two letters.

The theme of the psalm is the comforting truth that God looks after those who trust in Him and fear Him. The writer praises God and urges others to join him in thanking God because of how He cares for His people. His words are inspiring and encouraging to any follower of Yahweh.

18. How do we “bless” God?
19. What does this writer say about “the angel of the LORD”?
20. What does it mean to respect God properly in daily life?
21. Does this psalm say that the righteous will be without trouble?
22. Explain the words “they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.”