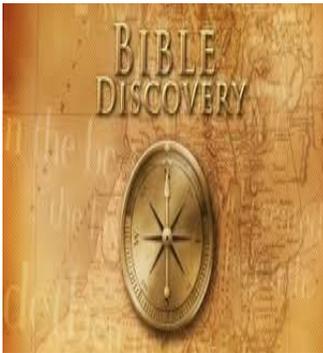


Psalm Living



Ever wonder why King David who wrote many of the Psalms constantly seemed to falter in climbing his spiritual mountains? I mean, he'd make headway scrambling up out of the depths of despair, overcoming struggles, ascending the mountains into the lofty skies of praise & adoration for the King of Kings in one Psalm, then lose his footing & slip back down.

Climbing our mountains is an Olympic event we're familiar with; an event where there are no Olympic medals – yet there should be. Look at Mt Everest, determined in 1861 the tallest mountain in the world. At 29,035 feet it's not far from the cruising altitude of 30,000 feet common for commercial airliners. There has long been international imagination over

reaching the summit of the "roof of the world" viewed as the ultimate geographic feat. The first to succeed in reaching the summit was Edmund Hillary on May 29, 1953, together with Tenzing Norgay, an acclaimed Sherpa climber. Since then there has been a frenzy to be the first – the first couple, the first woman, the first ascent of the Southwest Face; or the youngest, the largest group, etc. In recent years tours guiding the hardy of soul up the mountain have become popular. Yes, there are now guided trips up the mountain as long as you're in decent physical shape and \$65,000 to spare. Before you sign up though - Everest has been climbed by more than 5,000 people from over eighty nations. At least 260 have lost their lives - consider climbers who die on the mountain are often left where they perish because the effects of altitude make it nearly impossible to drag bodies away. Those ascending Everest pass through an icy graveyard littered with remnants of old tents & equipment, empty oxygen canisters, & frozen corpses. And for what – 15 minutes of fame?

David saw a different approach to climbing his mountains. We discover David wasn't a lousy climber who couldn't get his spiritual legs under him; he just had a different system for scaling his mountains. Let's call it Psalm Living. This technique helped lift him out of the many valleys of doubt and up to higher spiritual vantage points where his perspective changed.

This Psalm mirrors the way of the Israelites with God. They'd "have it all together" with God only to wander into wayward living picking up habits of pagans around them, they'd feel the brunt of their distress and cry out to God, remember His grace of the past & call for Him to return. They'd repent & return to the Lord – until the next time. Come to think of it, it mirrors our lives in many ways as well, doesn't it?

But there's another link – the awful awareness with which the Psalmist describes his own heart, and the emotions of his worst moments. The reason for such openness and transparency is a heart bared, open **to** God. Honest examination of our lives can't help but lead us as followers of Christ to question and petition God in the course of our submission to His will on our journey to praise. It's the process which helps us turn our question marks, our doubts, our fears about life, into exclamation points of glory to our Saviour & King! Some may feel it's an unhealthy sign when a Christian questions. If so, let me be among those unhealthy who regularly ask God,

- ***"How can I be a better example of your love?"***
- ***"Is this where you want me to be?"***

And again let me be honest with what I am feeling at that time...

- ***"Will the Lord reject forever?"***
- ***"Has his unfailing love vanished forever?"***
- ***"Has God forgotten to be merciful?"***



**Process to turn
our questions....**

**...into exclamation
points of glory to
our Saviour & King!**



If I'm feeling it, God knows it! I might as well be honest with Him. That in its self's the largest mountain I have to climb. It will lead us to the peak of the mountain – to where we rediscover that all God's promises are trustworthy!

Consider David – lying on his bed of sorrow in darkness that seemed to come from heaven itself. It went on night & day; his soul refused to be comforted, the affliction was too great. Everything seemed gone, even his faith in God seemed to have abandoned him. The very source of comfort seemed to bring ruin & death! Had God truly cast him off – would it be forever? Perhaps there's nothing in the Psalms – or scripture as a whole – that seems more awful than this picture. The Man after God's own heart feeling deserted and alone! When we let it seep into our hearts then the darkness, the sorrow, the pain and agony, the abandonment all mirror our own

lives at one time or another. Our inquiries of the Lord may range from insignificant daily concerns, to earth shattering confessions of innermost heartache, to monumental challenges we are facing. Sometimes we require greater faith to bring God our doubts and fears then to continue to live as though we trust Him when we don't in fact have any idea of where to turn.

**Have you known the
loneliness, the
abandonment, the
sorrow and grief
David is speaking of
in Psalm 77?**

Am I making sense?

Have you been in those times when nothing makes sense & you feel God has left you behind? If God has first place in your life, doesn't it seem natural for you to approach Him with everything that is happening in your life honestly including the confusing situations, the baffling people, the misunderstood moments introduced into your world?

David's lesson to us...

**NEVER
REMAIN
AWAY FROM
God!**

That's what David experienced. But he never remains apart from God. In the midst of all his grief a thought dawns upon him, like a feeble star showing over the horizon, breaking into the depths of the gloom. When he's confronted by the mountains of life that weigh him down, when he recognizes the state of his own sinful condition, he looks up to God! *"To this I appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago."* [Vs. 10-11] In the middle of indecision, in the course of despair, in the course of questioning if God's promises are true, in our need to scale emotional, physical and spiritual mountains; we, like David,

must discover afresh God's ways are holy, God is the God of miracles, God's mighty arm has redeemed his people, Jesus Christ is the mighty arm of God. The Apostle Paul tells us, *"In Him and through Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."* [Ephesians 3:12]

It takes courage to keep approaching God with the factors behind our groaning. Yet, a sincere appeal is respected by our Lord. Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman philosopher, mused interestingly, "A man of courage is also full of faith." As we earnestly approach God, our petitioning faith moves from demanding, *"I could use some help down here, Lord don't you know?"*, to requesting, *"Lord, help me!"*, to where we turn with open surrender and ask God, *"Show me your way, O Lord, teach me your paths."* God provides solutions but only when we come to Him openly, honestly, expectantly, truly seeking HIS direction!

Psalm Living is...

**About never
losing sight of
God's
faithfulness!**

Psalm Living is so much more than pleading to God – more than *show me, answer me, & protect me* – it's about never losing sight of God's faithfulness. We learn a simple yet profound lesson when we remain focused on God - that when we keep our focus on Jesus Christ, life's struggles diminish and our faith grows stronger so we find the strength, the help, the ability to keep going – even when the world feels like its crumbling around us. Knowing we're dependent on God for the help we need, our weakness opens the pathway for His strength to take care of us. We are made strong in our weakness because we are given the strength of God!

Only then can Psalm Living involve committing all the puzzling situations of our life over to God's planning & timing. It's easier for us to plead, question & complain than it is to surrender. It's easier to remain in our condition, crying out to God for help, remaining in our distress, seeking the Lord with hands stretched out, prostrate, with souls refusing to be comforted. Never forget God knows what suffering feels like - He watched his Son, Jesus, die a painful death on the cross for something he didn't do. Never think God didn't hear every breath, every cry, every whisper Jesus made that day. So He knows the depth of our trials & tribulations; He's able to help us but only when we've made the move to have a "hands off" approach to our life, having truly understood God's way is the way to go! Then God is able but only if we don't try to push & pull & steer things ourselves & get in His way.

To ascend the mountain, to overcome the struggles, to find life beyond measure, is to accept what the psalmist discovered long ago, that "I will" is the best route. David promised, "*I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy*" [Psalm 5:7], "*I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel*" [Psalm 16:7], "*I will render praises to You*" [Psalm 56:12]. To find success we must follow the example of Jesus who facing his own death, prayed in the garden & surrendered to His Father, saying, "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*" [Luke 22:42] True freedom only comes when you open your closed fist and release your will to the Father's. Once you've done this, it's easier to turn over your daily frustrations, as well as those major crises. God is waiting to hear from you!

**To find success, we
must follow
example of Jesus...
"Yet not my will, but
yours be done."**

(Luke 22:42)



**When God takes
over, it's time
for rejoicing!**

In a life lived through this process we call Psalm Living, once the questioning, once the petitioning and once the committing stages are over, then the praising begins! Victory in life isn't found scaling the mountain to discover 15 minutes of fame - it's within your grasp, it's a gift of grace to quiet your soul, to bring you peace, to give you direction! When God takes over, it's time for rejoicing. The questions are answered, the petitions honoured, the commitment rewarded. Praise the Lord! Amen?

David knew many joyous moments but he discovered his joy lived in disappointments rather than through any sense of personal triumph or escape from troubles. As David looked to God, saw the magnificence of His glory, as in the response of the waters, the clouds, and the thunder. He saw that the path that led through the seas was the way of God and understood that he required following in those footsteps. David understood that though troubles come in the same way as storms, so too is the faithful presence of the Living God.

**David understood
troubles come same as
storms, BUT so too is
the faithful presence
of the Living God!**

My apologies to David for believing he was weak-kneed. I've come to understand the forlorn condition of those who continue to choose struggling through problems alone instead of petitioning & committing to the Lord. My complete gratitude goes to the Lord for showing me even as I hope I've shown you, that the psalms are a pattern for solving the troubling puzzles of my life. Do we have a glimpse of what accompanied the Psalmist? Was God's presence upon him - in the clouds, in the winds, in the thunderstorms, in the trembling earth, in furious sea - was it that at last the miracles, known in history, became clear once more?

As our Lord led the people of Israel through seas, through deserts, through battles; so too no matter what we face in life, Jesus is the Mighty Warrior, the Captain of our lives. And so too our Lord leads and guides us letting us see the end of our day with the sun setting in peace, in beauty, indeed in the glory of the Lord, if we will...

If you've known heartache and despair, troubles and defeat, then Jesus wants you to know He loves you, He wants to hear from you with honesty and sincerity letting Him know your needs. If we could be of any help to you, we would love to hear from you. Contact us at Mt Brydges Baptist Church (phone) 519-317-8659 or (email) office.mbbc@xplornet.com. May God bless you!