

Psalm 92 • You have given me strength, O Lord

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As we make our way through the Psalms, one of the things that becomes very apparent is that we are really studying through what for the Jews was their hymnal. And these are the Psalms of praise and particularly where we are. In fact, it really kind of started last week.

But as we... Here in 92 and onward, we are beginning to make our way into some psalms that are more along those lines. Not without exception, but more along those lines of praise and worship Psalms.

And these, in fact, the one that we're going to look at here first, Psalm 92, if you look in your Bible, you'll notice that it is listed as, A Song For The Sabbath. And by the way, this is the only Psalm that has that heading. It's the only one that says, it's A Psalm for the Sabbath.

And it's, A Song for the Sabbath," not because it has anything to say about the Sabbath. But it's a song for the Sabbath because of what the Sabbath was to be about. The Sabbath was to be about a focus on God. It was to be a focus on who He is, and His praise, and worship and so forth.

And the very theme of this psalm comes out very quickly as we get into it. In verse 1, if you look with me there, it says,

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;" (ESV)

By the way, we're going to be talking a lot about praise tonight. But he begins by saying, it's a good thing. It's a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

If somebody asks you, if somebody came to church with you and said, so why do you guys start off singing songs and stuff like that? You could answer them just with this verse, yeah, well, it's a good thing to give thanks to the Lord. What other explanation do you need? It's a good thing. It's a good thing to do it.

It's good for our hearts. Not that the... Not that it's directed to our hearts. It's funny too! People will walk out of a church service sometimes and they'll talk about what they got out of the worship time. Sometimes they'll go, oh man, that worship time, I just... It was just...

Or they might talk about how it maybe wasn't that great. Maybe it felt kind of flat or something like that. Yeah, I don't know, the worship tonight was a little bit... Or, yeah, I don't know. Some of those songs we sang, I wasn't too familiar. So I wasn't really... As if it's about us. As if it's for us. Worship and praise is unto the Lord. And that's something we have to remember.

And even if you don't know a song, and which happens sometimes. Whether the worship leader's introducing a new song, or you're... We've gone to visit at a church and they're doing just - completely different. That's not going to stop you from worshiping. If the projector screen went blank and you couldn't see the lyrics, so what? We can still worship the Lord.

Sometimes if I don't know the song, I like to close my eyes and just listen to the lyrics. And do my best to make it a prayer. Make that my prayer to the Lord, whatever is being lifted up in that song. And sometimes I'll even pray some of the words back to the Lord that I'm hearing and make it a conversation. Make worship a conversation where you're exalting and lifting up God.

We've got a lot of growing to do in worship, to be honest with you. We have a lot of growing up to do. About what worship is, what it's about, and how it ought to be done, and for whom.

But the psalmist goes on here after making the statement that, it's good to give thanks to the Lord. And then in verse two and following, he begins to speak about the things that we give thanks to the Lord about.

He says in verse 2,

"to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,"

You say, well, why is the faithfulness something we talk about at night? Well, it's because you got through the day. Right? His steadfast love in the morning and His faith..., I made it, God! You get to bed and you're like, all right, whew, I made it!

But then he goes on to talk about how we worship. And it says,

"3 to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre."

We don't use those exact instruments necessarily in our worship. That's not a big deal. He's just naming the instruments that they used. But you'll notice that he talks about the importance of music and actually we're going to talk more about that. We're going to talk about music and singing in a little bit, later as we get through some more of these psalms.

Verse 4, he says,

"For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; (In fact, he says,) at the works of your hands I sing for joy."

Singing and music is an integral part of worship. But please understand it is not in itself worship. That's where we often make a mistake. We think that as soon as the music begins, okay, now we're going to begin to worship. Well, not necessarily. Music becomes a vehicle for worship to take place. But it is not the essence of worship itself.

The apostle Paul tells us that, our spiritual act of worship is to offer ourselves as living sacrifices. It's something that he says, is holy and pleasing to God. (Romans 12:1) So every time you and I surrender our will and we say to the LORD, I am Yours. I belong to You. My life is Yours. Which is a way of, in the New Testament, of offering yourself as a sacrifice to God. We don't put animals on the altar anymore. We put ourselves on the altar. Right? It's a living sacrifice, not a dead sacrifice.

And it's a holy and pleasing sacrifice. He says, that is your spiritual act of worship. And that is how we are to worship the Lord - in spirit and in truth. Right? Your spiritual act of worship is to say, Lord, I'm Yours.

Now, if you're singing and you're saying that to the Lord, that's wonderful. Then in that case, your singing is part of your worship experience. And it's going up to the Lord.

But you can sing a song and not worship the Lord? Music is not worship. Music can be a wonderful vehicle for worship. But understand what real worship is. Lord, I am Yours. I give myself to You. I belong to You.

We sang that song tonight about how, every breath, in my lungs, the very breath in my lungs belongs to the Lord. And that's a way of saying, my life is Yours. Every beat of my heart, the movements of my body, where I go, what I do, what

I say. I belong to You, God. And so I want to give myself to You completely. That's worship. That is worship.

Oh, we get so weird (Pastor Paul groans) about what constitutes worship, and how you should worship. Hey listen, I had people tell me one time, it's impossible to worship sitting down. Somebody had tell me that one time. In fact he said, I was surprised when I came to your church that after the first song or two, some of the people sat down. So what's up with that? How can they possibly worship God sitting down? Again, it's basically taking the externalities and making them worship.

When I say externalities, I'm talking about the external ways. Music is really kind of an external, but so is posture. You can sit down, lie down, stand up, be on your face, lie on your back, it doesn't matter. The issue isn't your posture. I mean, the posture can be important if it is conducive in your mind or heart to worship. It can be important to you. But it doesn't mean that a particular posture is the only one that is really going to make you accessible to God, or the key to reach the throne of grace. Until you stand, or if you don't raise your hands...

Raising hands is a biblical thing. The Bible tells us to lift our hands to the Lord. But that is not worship. It's an external form that is a wonderful vehicle, but you can do it for the wrong reasons. You could be in a crowd of people where everybody's raising their hand. And you could just kind of feel a little bit uncomfortable because you're not. And so up goes your hand or even hands. And it's like, well, I'm not... I don't really know what I'm doing or why I'm doing it. I don't want to do it but everybody else is doing it. So I better do it, or, I'm going to look like the odd man out. Hey, that's not worship.

But if you lift your hands in worship because you're using that as an expression of surrender, Lord, I give my life to You, wonderful! Wonderful. You see. Worship begins in the heart, but the things that we do can be very important. And that's why it talks about singing and so forth.

He says,

"at the works of your hands (there at the end of verse four) I sing for joy."

And he says,

"5 How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!"

I like that phrase. *"Your thoughts are very deep!"* Because it's basically telling you and I, that to connect in with the thoughts of God is an important thing in our lives. But it's not going to happen just simply because we've kind of said, hey, God, I was just wondering if I could kind of clue into Your thoughts for a minute here. I don't have, I only have like 30 seconds or whatever.

My point is, it may not be immediately understood or even discerned by the average person. The psalmist is basically, talking about how, I've taken time to ponder the works of Your hands. And that means, I've taken time to meditate on the works of God, the things of God. I've taken time to think it through, to really ponder it. And from that pondering and meditating, he says, *"Your thoughts are very deep!"*

You see, we're not encouraged to be deep thinkers today. That's just not part of our cultural norm. It used to be. People used to be deep thinkers and they used to write deep things. Just pick up a book that was written, in the early 1900s or even the late 1800s or before that. And you're going to find that in our culture today, we're going to struggle to keep up with the language. We're going to struggle to keep up with the thought processes.

I read C.S. Lewis, and I have to go back and read pages over and over again to just figure out what he's saying. And there are other authors who are like that, who are just very deep thinkers. But they weren't deep thinkers just because they were super intelligent. They meditated on the things of God. And the Lord shared His heart with them.

Now, the converse is that the person who really doesn't want to think about it, is going to end up not knowing anything about the Lord. Look what he goes on to say in verse 6.

In fact, the ESV is even a little crass. It says, *"The stupid,..."* which your Bible may translate as, senseless. The Hebrew word means, brutish. I don't use that one either. And I can't remember the last time I called somebody brutish. I don't think I ever did. Back in the 70s, it would have meant that he probably had too much of a certain cologne on or something like that.

But anyway, he says,

"6 The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this:"

7 that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evil doers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever;

8 but you, O LORD, are on high forever."

So the psalmist is kind of contrasting his own meditation and his own deep thinking on the things of the Lord with the, what he calls, the senseless man or the foolish man who really kind of lives for the moment, never directs his attention to the things of God, or to the works of the Lord. And therefore he lacks understanding. And he also lacks a reason to praise, by the way. Did you catch that? He lacks a reason to praise.

Have you ever found praise difficult? Not necessarily because anything bad was going on in your life, but you just found praise kind of difficult. I find in my own life that when I begin to live my typical American existence, which is to live a very superficial kind of a life, that I find praise more difficult to get into. Because I'm not pondering the things of the Lord. I'm not really focused on what God is doing in my life, and the works of the Lord and so forth. And I'm not moved, I'm not moved to praise like I should be.

Isn't that crazy? When you're going through a hard time, and I mean a really hard time and you have a breakthrough. You ever been there? Where you just, you were just struggling and life was just a big fat drag. And then the Lord just broke in and brought deliverance. Suddenly, you've got so much to thank Him for.

And every chance, I mean, every song that you hear, you practically burst into tears. You can't even listen to a song on the radio without crying. Because it's just so fresh and so real. The deliverance of God is just tangible at that moment. Because you've spent time just dealing with issues and bringing them to the throne of grace and laboring over it. And now the Lord broke in and brought the deliverance that you were longing for. And suddenly..., And your walk with God is so real. It's really a wonderful thing.

But in verses 6, 7, and 8, he's talking about the man who just isn't there. He's living that superficial American life where, I'm not really thinking very deeply. I'm not. And I don't have any real reason to praise.

Verse 9,

"For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered."

What a drag. But look how he goes on to contrast his own life in light of the blessing of the Lord. After saying that the enemies of the Lord are going to be scattered, he says, yeah, but me?

Now he says in verse 10,

"But (look what you've done in my life. He says, first of all,) you have exalted my horn..."

Now, you guys know that the word horn in the Scripture is always strength. It's a symbol of strength. And so he's saying, you have exalted my strength. How has he exalted the strength of the psalmist?

He says,

"...like that of a wild ox;"

I've never even seen a wild ox, but I can imagine that it's probably kind of an energetic creature, I suppose. I mean, that's the best I could put it.

He's essentially saying, and you and I would say, You've given me strength. You've given me just this abundant strength. And in the... From our New Testament perspective, it's the work of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are strengthened and empowered to do the work that God has given us to do. And to also stand against the temptations of sin. Okay?

See, we would say things differently than the psalmist. We understand we have different revelations of insight and understanding related to these things. But we would be saying essentially the same message. You've given me strength. Lord, I thank You for Your Holy Spirit. You've strengthened me. You've given me physical strength to deal with things that I didn't even know I could handle and deal with.

And You've given me spiritual strength to enter into situations of, like, witnessing and sharing my faith and so forth that I... the power just doesn't come from me. It comes from You. And I thank You for that. I thank You that You've empowered me through Your spirit. Or, Lord, You've given me the strength to say no to this sin, or this issue in my life.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 10. He says,

"you have (also) poured over me fresh oil."

And oil, as you know in the Scripture, is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Once again, in our New Testament sort of a way, we would use the same kind of an idea to praise God for just pouring out His Spirit on our lives. God, thank You for Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your Spirit and the ability that You give me through the Spirit. You've poured it out. You've poured Your spirit over me. What a beautiful picture.

Verse 11,

"My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants."

I want to just ask you a question here for a moment. Have your eyes seen the downfall of your enemies? And I'm not talking about human enemies here. Let's think of this here in a little bit more of a spiritual perspective. Maybe the things that trip you up, maybe the things that cause you to sin repeatedly. Maybe the things that have challenged you over the years and kept you feeling like maybe a second class citizen in the kingdom of God, even though you're not. Have your eyes seen the downfall of some of your enemies?

It's an important question. And there's a point in our lives where we should be seeing some victory in our lives. Not because we're cool. But because He's cool. Not because we have power, but because He has power. We ought to be seeing victory. We should be seeing signs of God's victorious working in our lives. We should be seeing it. And some of it is keyed to praise. And he says, *"My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies."*

If we were able to go across the room and talk to people about things in your life that have changed since the time you came to Jesus Christ. And you looked at those things like enemies. Some of you might get up and say, well, before I knew Jesus, I just, I had a potty mouth. I just couldn't talk without some kind of an obscenity coming out of my mouth. And it was really embarrassing as a new Christian. But I've seen that enemy in my life fall. The Lord has cleaned up my language. Praise the Lord!

Some of you guys, were doing drinking, drugs. You could say, hey, I've seen an enemy fall in my life. Could be many other situations.

But have you seen the doom of your evil assailants? It should be seen. It should be seen. As we repent of our sin, as we give those things to the Lord, as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, which, by the way, is incredibly hard. Because, it sounds really nice. I'm going to yield myself to You, God.

But what we don't. What's not being said is that there has to be a death there. A simultaneous death. It's one thing to say, I'm giving myself to You. But what we have to also say is, I'm not giving myself to this fleshly impulse." Or, "I'm not giving myself to my evil fleshly desires to go do, or to partake in..., or whatever. And that requires a death to self. And that's very, very hard.

In verse 12, he says,

"The righteous flourish like the palm tree..."

You might look at a palm tree and say, wow! Is that really something that flourishes? But back in, in Israel, the palm tree was known for its... It was a fruit bearing tree. It brought forth palm dates. And so this statement is a statement about the fruitfulness of the Lord.

When he says *"The righteous flourish like the palm tree,..."* He's saying, the righteous are fruitful in their lives." They're bearing fruit. Right? They're bearing fruit. Believers ought to be bearing fruit, the fruit of their salvation. But there also should be something else in our lives on an increasing measure.

Look what he goes on to say, "The righteous also, he says,

"...grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

That reference cedars in Lebanon is all through the Old Testament. It's a common symbolic picture of strength. Something that's very strong. Strong, tall, and kind of majestic even. The cedars of Lebanon. And so this is speaking of stability. The righteous are fruitful and there's a stability in our lives that is given by God. We see a greater stability in our lives.

How many of us can give a testimony of our lives just being a mess before we knew the Lord? I've told you guys many times that what brought me to the Lord, was the demise of my marriage. Now, I'm still married to the same woman, thankfully. But I had to see that marriage really come to an end from an emotional and every other kind of a way, to shake me loose from what my life was all about, in order to come to the Lord, just to even come to the Lord.

Well, my life just exuded instability at that time. I mean, I was just, it was just chaos. And then the Lord saved Sue and I. And started teaching us what it meant to be a husband and wife according to His Word. Which, I mean, good grief, we've been married 41 years and we're still learning. Okay? I mean, we're still... We got still got a long way to go.

The point is, God has been bringing stability into our lives ever since we got saved! Ever since the day we said to Jesus, yes, I receive You as my Savior and Lord. God has been working stability into our lives. And it grows, as you go. And it's such a, it's such a wonderful thing.

So, verse 12, is a fascinating praise to the Lord, as we're praising Him for the fruitfulness of our lives and the stability of our lives. Which are there because of the Holy Spirit's presence as He does that work in us.

Verse 13, He says, and still referring to the righteous,

"They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God."

They... oh, I like this,

"¹⁴ They still bear fruit in old age; (I love that one. He says,) they are ever full of sap and green,

I've been called sappy. So I guess that's correct. Green, I don't know about that. I know what he means though. Why? So that they might,

"...declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

And you know what? There's something good about hearing that from an older person. By the way, There's not much to recommend about getting older. Let me just say that. And I can only say that now that I'm starting, well starting, I'm getting there. Right? There's not a whole lot to recommend about getting older. But this is a great promise.

Because essentially it says, first of all, old age is not going to withhold the work and the power of God from bearing fruit in our lives. We may live in this culture that is all about being young and looking young, even if you aren't young, which is scary. But God's Word says, age is not a hindrance at all for fruitfulness.

And if you've wondered, am I going to be fruitful when I get older like I am now. The Lord promises that fruitfulness will continue. There's no reason in the world it has to stop. And, not only does it not stop, but this older individual that he's referring to here, speaks and declares the uprightness of the Lord, saying, *"he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."*

Now don't get me wrong, if a 6 year old comes up to me and says, I just want you to know, pastor Paul, that the Lord is upright, and He is my rock. I'm going to be very happy to hear that. But if a 86 year old person comes up to me and says, I just want you to know that the Lord is upright, and He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

That means more to me because that person has seen the things that life can deal out in their years. And their experience with the Lord has left them still praising and still thanking God for His faithfulness, and it's a very beautiful thing.