

# "God will redeem my soul"

## Thoughts on Psalm 49

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**H**IGH OR LOW, rich or poor, all the inhabitants of this world face a common end. The psalmist, whose words anticipate the Lord Jesus Christ, invites everybody to listen to his Divinely inspired wisdom. He asks: "Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me . . . ?" (49:5, RSV). The wound to the heel that Jesus received at the hands of the serpent's seed was not to be fatal: "God will redeem my soul from the power [mg. hand] of the grave" (v. 15). The grave is the appointed end for everyone; can anyone else, other than the Lord Jesus, be redeemed therefrom?

The psalmist speaks of the preoccupation of mankind with seeking wealth: "They . . . trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches" (v. 6). Jesus commented on such as these in the words, "how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mk. 10:24). Even though they be multimillionaires, "none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption" (Ps. 49:7-9). Under the Law of Moses, by payment of a sum of money, a man could redeem his brother if he had got into debt (Lev. 25:48), but such redemption only led to continuation of this mortal existence. All the money in the world can never ransom a man from the grave. All die penniless.

The psalmist says, "wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others" (49:10). In Jesus's parable of the man who built bigger and better barns and boasted of his riches, God says to him: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be . . . ?" (Lk. 12:20).

The psalmist continues: "Their graves are their homes for ever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they named lands their own. Man cannot abide in his pomp, he is like the beasts that perish" (vv. 11,12, RSV). Then in verse 14 he says: "Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; *Death shall be their shepherd*; straight to the

grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home" (RSV).

By contrast, David could say: "The LORD is my shepherd . . . He restoreth my soul" (23:1,3); that is, He does not lead me down to stay in Sheol, He gives me back my life. Indeed, the psalmist of Psalm 49 continues: "But God will redeem my soul from the power [hand] of the grave" (v. 15). But of others he says: "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich . . . for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away . . . He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light" (vv. 16-19).

The Lord Jesus Christ, speaking in John 10:11, says: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep". He came to "give his life a *ransom for many*" (Mt. 20:28). He alone could give to God a ransom for his brother, and, in words which pick up Psalm 49:9, Jesus says: "My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give unto them *eternal life*; and they shall *never perish* [unlike the beasts], neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, Which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (Jno. 10:27-29).

The final prayer of Jesus as he hung upon the cross was, "Father, into *Thy hands* I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46), a quotation from Psalm 31:5. To this Jesus no doubt added three days later the rest of the verse: "Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth".

The Apostle Peter proclaimed the risen Lord as follows: ". . . whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). The Son of God was safely in His Father's hand, and surely it is a most comforting thought that so are all those who fall asleep in Jesus. So, when "Death is swallowed up in victory", we shall all rejoice and shout: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

The Kingdom of God is the only thing worth living for.