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Psalm 49:1-20

1. "Hear this, all peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
2. Both low and high, rich and poor together.
3. My mouth will speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart will be understanding.
4. I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will express my riddle on the harp.
5. Why should I fear in days of adversity, when the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,
6. Even those who trust in their wealth and boast in the abundance of their riches?
7. No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him--
8. For the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever--
9. That he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay.
10. For he sees that even wise men die; the stupid and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.
11. Their inner thought is that their houses are forever and their dwelling places to all generations; they have called their lands after their own names.
12. But man in his pomp will not endure; he is like the

beasts that perish.

13. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of those after them who approve their words.

14. As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form shall be for Sheol to consume so that they have no habitation.

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.

16. Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

17. For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not descend after him.

18. Though while he lives he congratulates himself--and though men praise you when you do well for yourself--

19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they will never see the light.

20. Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, is like the beasts that perish.”

The book of Psalms contains so many expressions of the human condition--and puts into words the full gamut of human emotion, perspectives, and experience.

Psalm 49 expresses so clearly the fact that we bring nothing physical into this life, and we can not carry anything physical out with us when we die. Verse 17 states, “For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his

glory (wealth) will not descend after him.” Many different cultures have hoped and expected to bring their possessions with them after death. Some made elaborate provision for the life after this one. The pharaohs of ancient Egypt, for example, built huge tombs for themselves--stocking them with food provisions, seed, gold and treasure, tools, family, and even servants.

Psalm 49 also plainly expresses a common self-deception, that men often think they will just continue to live on in the flesh indefinitely. Verses 10 and 11 state, “Even wise men die; the stupid and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others. Their inner thought is that their houses are forever and their dwelling places to all generations.”

Verse 13 then goes on to give God’s opinion of such thinking: “This is the way of those who are foolish.”

Men through the ages, and even up through today, have sought to prevent the body from undergoing decay after death. The embalming and wrapping of mummies in Egypt, along with the elaborate techniques of the Inca’s of South America are examples of this from ancient culture. modern humanists have encased Lenin’s body in plastic to keep it from rotting--but I understand one ear and his nose are doing poorly in less than one-hundred years. Experts from the west were called in for the body of Mao Zetung--and pumped his body so full of preserving fluid it leaked out his pores. Walt Disney and many others have

their bodies super-frozen in vaults to await the development of cures for physical ailments.

The word of God in Psalm 49 says, “He (man) should cease trying forever--that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay.”

Instead the Psalmist points us to the redemption of our soul--as our only true hope. Verse 15 says, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.”

In the New Testament Colossians 3:2 adequately sums up our directive from God: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

So, what are you doing with your treasures, your body, your time, your hopes, and your trust--putting them in God’s hands or your own?