

Waltke, Psalms, Session 17, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 17, Communal Lament, Psalm 44, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke examines Psalm 44, a communal lament, within the broader context of Psalm typology. He explores various interpretive approaches, highlighting the psalm's structure and motifs, such as praise, lament, protest, and petition. Waltke emphasizes the psalm's portrayal of undeserved suffering endured by the righteous, drawing parallels to the experiences of Christ and the apostles. The lecture uses Psalm 44 to illustrate how faith sustains believers during times of seemingly unjust suffering and hardship, providing a framework for understanding and navigating such trials. Finally, he discusses the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty even in the midst of unanswered prayers and unresolved suffering.

2. 18-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).



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3. Briefing Document

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke's Lecture on Psalm 44

Subject: Analysis of Psalm 44 as a Communal Lament and its implications for understanding suffering and faith.

I. Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke focuses on Psalm 44, interpreting it as a "prayer for martyrs," a communal lament expressing undeserved suffering for doing good. Waltke frames his analysis within a broader hermeneutical framework, emphasizing the importance of both textual analysis and spiritual engagement with the Psalms. He highlights the psalm's structure, motifs, and theological implications for understanding suffering in the context of faith.

II. Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Hermeneutical Approach:** Waltke emphasizes a multi-faceted approach to interpreting Psalms, incorporating historical, form-critical, and spiritual dimensions. He advocates for "Welford's concursive theory," emphasizing that scripture is both fully the word of God and fully the word of man. He stresses the need to approach the text with faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit ("We must come with the Holy Spirit to the word of God").
- **Types of Psalms:** The lecture builds upon previous sessions covering different psalm types (hymns of praise, songs of grateful praise, petition/lament psalms, and instruction psalms). Psalm 44 is categorized as a communal lament, a significant genre comprising a third of the Psalter.
- **Suffering and Righteousness:** A central theme is the nature of suffering, distinguishing between "deserved" and "undeserved" suffering. Deserved suffering results from law-breaking; undeserved suffering occurs despite innocence or even while doing good (e.g., martyrdom). Psalm 44 exemplifies undeserved suffering for serving God. Waltke uses the analogy of receiving a traffic ticket – one for speeding (deserved) and one for helping a disabled person cross the street (undeserved).
- **Psalm 44 as a Martyr's Prayer:** Waltke interprets Psalm 44 as a powerful expression of faith amidst undeserved suffering. The psalmists, facing defeat and humiliation, do not abandon their faith in God's sovereignty ("Yet for your sake,

we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep for the slaughter"). He notes the use of this verse by Paul in Romans 8.

- **The Structure of Psalm 44:** Waltke analyzes Psalm 44's structure, identifying motifs of confidence/praise, lament, protest, and petition. He proposes that the psalm's structure resembles a ziggurat, culminating in the petition. He also points to a numerical symmetry (10, 8, 6, 4 lines of Hebrew poetry in each section), demonstrating the psalmists' deliberate and controlled composition despite their emotional anguish. This controlled structure contrasts with the uncontrolled panic of the pilot analogy used to illustrate the dangers of losing faith in the midst of suffering.
- **Sustaining Faith in Suffering:** Waltke explores what enables the psalmists to maintain their faith. He highlights the following:
 - **Scripture and History:** The psalmists draw strength from the remembered history of God's faithfulness, particularly referencing the book of Joshua ("We have heard with our ears, O God, our ancestors have told us what you did in their days and days long ago").
 - **God's Sovereignty:** Despite the overwhelming suffering, the psalmists affirm God's control and ultimate purpose ("You have rejected and humbled us... You made us retreat before the enemy... You gave us up to be devoured like sheep").
 - **The Example of Christ:** Waltke links the suffering of the psalmists to the suffering of Christ, offering comfort and assurance to those facing martyrdom. Jesus's suffering on the cross serves as a powerful parallel.
 - **Modern Misunderstanding of Suffering:** Waltke suggests that modern prosperity theology leads to a misunderstanding of suffering, arguing that a lack of risk and a disproportionate focus on health, wealth, and prosperity hinder a deeper engagement with the realities of faith and suffering. He suggests practices like Lent as a means to cultivate a greater awareness of suffering.

III. Key Quotes:

- "Suffering is not marginal. It's not something we put behind us. Suffering is absolutely essential to the spiritual life."
- "Undeserved sufferings are where you have violated no law...So, you haven't violated a law and all of a sudden you see flashing red lights in your rearview

mirror. You've done nothing wrong. Then you're penalized besides, and you know, it's unjust. It's unfair and that's undeserved suffering."

- "Yet for your sake, we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."
- "Our fathers trusted in you and you gave them the land."
- "You, you, you, you, God did it. He never doubted God's sovereignty."

IV. Conclusion:

Dr. Waltke's lecture offers a rich and nuanced interpretation of Psalm 44, emphasizing its relevance for understanding faith and suffering. He encourages listeners to engage with the psalm not just intellectually, but spiritually, drawing strength from its message of God's sovereignty and faithfulness amidst adversity. The lecture also serves as a critique of modern theological tendencies that downplay the significance of suffering in the Christian life.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 17, Communal Lament, Psalm 44

Study Guide: Psalm 44 - A Communal Lament

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences, referencing the source material.

1. What are the three aspects of scripture that must be considered when studying it, according to Waltke?
2. What are the four types of Psalms that Waltke identifies?
3. How do the wicked differ from the righteous, according to Waltke's explanation of the Psalms?
4. What is the difference between "deserved" and "undeserved" suffering, according to Waltke?
5. What are two types of undeserved suffering that Waltke describes?
6. What is the structure or shape of Psalm 44, as described by Waltke?
7. What is the significance of the phrase "You sold your people for a pittance," according to Waltke?
8. What are the four motifs present in Psalm 44?
9. According to Waltke, what key truth can be learned from the lament section of Psalm 44?
10. What two things are expressed in the petition section of Psalm 44?

Answer Key

1. The three aspects of Scripture are that it is inspired by God, it is a mixture of the word of God and the word of man, and that it should be approached with faith in the Spirit.
2. The four types of Psalms are hymns of praise, songs of grateful praise, petition/lament Psalms, and instruction Psalms.
3. The righteous are dependent upon God, concerned for the community, and do not seek revenge, while the wicked are dependent on themselves, self-absorbed, and seek revenge.

4. “Deserved” suffering is when someone is punished for violating a law, while “undeserved” suffering occurs when someone has not violated any law.
5. Undeserved suffering can be due to one's innocence, or it can be the result of doing good, such as being martyred for serving God.
6. Psalm 44 has a ziggurat-like structure, with each section building upon the other. The petition forms the climactic point at the top.
7. The phrase “You sold your people for a pittance” signifies that they were defeated in battle without any gain or advantage. The enemy thrived while they were destroyed.
8. The four motifs in Psalm 44 are confidence and praise (verses 1-8), lament (verses 9-16), protest (verses 17-22) and petition (verses 23-26).
9. The lament section teaches that even in suffering, God is sovereign, and we must trust in that sovereignty, even in the midst of difficult circumstances.
10. The petition expresses that God seems asleep, yet requests that he rises up and helps and rescues because of his unfailing love.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Consider these questions in light of the source material. Craft a well-structured response that fully addresses the question.

1. Discuss the importance of understanding the historical context, the literary form, and the spiritual aspect when interpreting the Psalms, as demonstrated in Waltke's lecture.
2. How does Psalm 44 address the problem of undeserved suffering, and what comfort does it offer believers who experience similar trials?
3. Analyze the structure of Psalm 44, demonstrating how the progression from confidence and praise to lament, protest, and petition contributes to the overall message of the psalm.
4. Compare and contrast the concepts of deserved and undeserved suffering, and explain how the Psalms offer a framework for understanding and navigating these experiences.
5. Explore the idea of the Psalms as “instruments” for flying by faith when rational understanding fails, using examples from Waltke’s lecture.

Glossary of Key Terms

Concursive Theory: The idea that scripture is fully the word of God and fully the word of man, simultaneously.

Doxological Theology: The study of theology as it is expressed through songs of praise, focusing on God's attributes.

Form Criticism: A method of analyzing the Bible by categorizing its literary forms, like hymns, laments, and instruction.

Imprecatory Prayers: Prayers in which the psalmist calls for judgment or vengeance on their enemies.

Instruction Psalms: Psalms that are placed along the way to encourage those reading through the Psalter. They promote ethical behavior and righteousness.

Lament Psalms: Psalms that express sorrow, grief, and complaints about suffering, and often petition God for deliverance.

Maskil: A Hebrew term used in some Psalms, the meaning of which is not clear but that has to do with being prudent.

Motif: A recurring element or idea in a literary work, such as a theme, image, or pattern.

Penitential Psalms: Psalms that express remorse and seek forgiveness for sin, a deserved suffering.

Petition Psalms: Psalms in which the psalmist requests help or deliverance from God, often due to enemies or suffering.

Philology: The study of language in historical sources, especially the analysis of written texts.

Selah: A Hebrew term found in the Psalms, the meaning of which is uncertain, and some believe it to be a pause in reading.

Ziggurat: A tiered, stepped structure from ancient Mesopotamia. Used as a metaphor in describing the structure of Psalm 44 by Waltke.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms Session 17, Communal Lament, Psalm 44,

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted using markdown:

FAQ on Psalm 44 & The Nature of Suffering

- **What are the different types of psalms and why is understanding them important?**
- The Psalms can be grouped into four main types: hymns of praise, songs of grateful praise, petition or lament psalms, and instruction psalms. Each type has its own purpose and unique characteristics. Hymns focus on God's attributes, songs of grateful praise celebrate specific acts of deliverance, lament psalms express grief and seek God's help in suffering, and instruction psalms provide ethical guidance and encourage dependence on God. Recognizing these categories helps readers better understand the purpose and context of each psalm, enhancing their personal engagement with the text. These categories help us to appropriately interpret the purpose of the psalm.
- **Why are the lament psalms so important in the book of Psalms?**
- Lament psalms, which constitute about a third of the Psalter, are crucial because they acknowledge the reality of suffering as essential to the spiritual life. They provide a model for expressing grief and pain to God, rather than denying or marginalizing suffering. The lament psalms also offer a framework for navigating different types of suffering, helping believers to maintain faith even in the face of injustice and hardship. They teach that suffering is not a deviation from a life of faith but a central part of it.
- **What is the difference between deserved and undeserved suffering, and how do they impact faith?**
- Deserved suffering is the consequence of violating laws or moral principles, such as experiencing the consequences of speeding. Undeserved suffering, on the other hand, occurs when someone has done nothing wrong, or even when doing good, yet faces hardship. This latter type can be categorized into suffering due to innocence and suffering that is brought about by doing good. Undeserved suffering can be especially challenging to faith. The psalmist demonstrates how undeserved suffering can cause one to question God's justice and goodness, and

if one does not have the tools to understand these times, it can cause one to "make shipwreck" of their faith.

- **How does Psalm 44 function as a "prayer for martyrs" and what does it teach us about undeserved suffering?**
- Psalm 44 articulates the experience of undeserved suffering for the righteous, specifically those who are suffering for their faithfulness to God. It is a prayer that expresses the hardship of those who are persecuted. The Psalm doesn't shy away from asking the difficult questions such as why God seems to be absent in their time of need. It teaches that suffering for doing good is a real and agonizing experience but one that godly people throughout history have endured. Furthermore, the Psalm expresses the need to trust in God's sovereignty and not one's own strength during times of hardship, especially when it appears as though God is asleep or has forgotten the oppressed. It is a source of truth for believers who are enduring unjust treatment, helping them to persevere in faith.
- **What are the main structural components or motifs of Psalm 44 and how do they contribute to its message?**
- Psalm 44 can be divided into several sections: confidence and praise (verses 1-8), lament (verses 9-16), protest (verses 17-22), and petition (verses 23-26). The confidence and praise section recalls God's past faithfulness. The lament openly acknowledges the present suffering and humiliation, while the protest asserts the righteousness of the people, underscoring that their suffering is undeserved. Finally, the petition calls on God to act and shows the psalmist maintains faith in God despite experiencing intense hardship. This overall structure allows the psalmist to move from remembering God's past acts of faithfulness to lamenting present suffering, followed by a bold and firm declaration of innocence. Finally, the psalm ends with a plea to God for intervention and shows an appeal to his unfailing love and mercy. The structural progression leads to an emotional peak in the petition, where the psalmist's faith and resolve are fully articulated. The structure also mirrors a ziggurat (a structure with a large base that grows more narrow and shorter as it increases in height). This ziggurat structure further emphasizes the significance of the petition in the conclusion.
- **What are some key truths or "instruments" that this psalm provides for navigating times of undeserved suffering?**
- Psalm 44 offers several "instruments" to sustain faith during undeserved suffering: reliance on scripture and historical accounts of God's past faithfulness,

an understanding of God's sovereignty over the situation, an example of Godly people enduring hardship, and the ability to be honest with God about the pain being experienced while maintaining faith. The psalm encourages believers to remember past acts of deliverance, trust in God's overarching control, and take comfort in the shared experiences of those who have suffered unjustly. Finally, it encourages one to not forsake their faith because they do not fully understand the plans of God.

- **What is meant by the "I" and the "We" in Psalm 44?**

The shift between "I" and "we" in the psalm is significant. The "I" most likely refers to the king, the leader of Israel, and the army or nation itself is the "We" who have gone down in defeat. It shows an identification with the nation and the community and expresses the suffering as not only an individual matter, but also one that the community has also experienced. The use of the "I" and the "we" indicates that the suffering was shared as well as experienced on an individual level. The king's personal confession of faith and dependence on God serves as an example for the entire nation as they collectively face their defeat and humiliation. This also serves to illustrate the idea that the king is not above the people and they are not above the king as they are all members of the same faith and community.

- **How does this Psalm challenge the modern emphasis on health, wealth, and prosperity, and what alternative perspective does it offer?**
- Psalm 44 directly challenges the modern emphasis on health, wealth, and prosperity by highlighting the reality of undeserved suffering and the need for faith even when things appear hopeless. It presents a view of life where hardship and suffering are not only unavoidable, but also potentially spiritually beneficial for one's relationship with God. The Psalm demonstrates that a life of faith is not defined by comfort and worldly success, but by dependence on God's faithfulness and sovereignty even during times of difficulty. The psalmist is not concerned with the temporal, but is concerned with the eternal and the spiritual. It encourages a perspective that values faith and spiritual growth over material comforts and ease, emphasizing that true reward lies in the eternal life beyond our earthly sufferings.