

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Petitionary Psalms -- Psalm 92, Session 11, 6-min. Video Overview

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You ever just look around at the world and get that feeling in the pit of your stomach that something just isn't fair? Yeah. Well, if you have, you're not alone. It's a question that has been bothering people for literally thousands of years.

And it's this one, isn't it? It's so unsettling. You see it all the time. People who cut corners, who are selfish, who frankly just do the wrong thing, and they seem to be winning.

They're flourishing, while good people are struggling just to get by. So what's the deal? Why does it seem like the bad guys get ahead? Well, believe it or not, there's this really powerful answer to that exact question. And it's hidden inside a text written over 2,500 years ago.

It's called Psalm 92. And it doesn't just, you know, mention the problem. It actually builds this entire brilliant message right around it.

Now here's what's so fascinating. This ancient poem, it doesn't start by telling you you're wrong. It doesn't deny what we see with our own eyes.

It actually leans right in and completely acknowledges that frustrating truth. From where we're standing, yeah, the wicked really do seem to win. It basically says, you're right.

The poem agrees that the wicked can flourish and blossom just like grass in a field. It sees the same things we see. But, and this is a huge but, it argues that what we're seeing, that visible success, is just one small part of a much, much bigger story.

So how does this ancient song manage to reframe such a huge problem? Well, to really get the answer, we have to understand what this thing actually is. Because it's not just a poem you read quietly to yourself. No, this was meant to be a performance piece.

And it had a very specific job to do. See, it's called a song of grateful praise. It was written to be sung out loud by the whole community on the Sabbath.

So think of it like this. It's a public declaration. It's a way for everyone to get together and remember a time they were saved.

And to remind each other of this timeless truth about how the world really works, underneath it all. Now, right at the heart of this song is this incredible metaphor. It sets up a powerful contrast between two very different kinds of growth.

And it starts by looking at the success of the wicked. Okay, so here it is. The whole argument laid out so clearly.

The wicked? They're like grass. I mean, it makes sense, right? Grass springs up super fast. It looks green and lush.

It blossoms. It looks successful. But that success is so quick, so shallow, and totally temporary.

It's destined to be cut down. But then you flip the coin, and in stark contrast you have the righteous. Their growth is compared to two of the most majestic, valuable trees in the entire ancient world.

The date palm and the legendary cedar of Lebanon. And this, this is a whole different kind of flourishing. I mean, just think about the date palm for a second.

A single mature tree can pump out up to 600 pounds of fruit in one season. That's not some flashy overnight success. No, that is slow, steady, patient production of something truly valuable and life-giving.

And if you think that's impressive, get this. The cedar of Lebanon is all about endurance. Archaeologists have literally found cedar seeds that are 5,000 years old and can still sprout into a new tree.

5,000 years. That is the kind of lasting power the psalmist is talking about. But okay, metaphors are one thing.

The real genius of this psalm, the thing that makes it so incredible, isn't just the imagery. It's in how it's built. Its very architecture is designed to walk you from that confusing reality on the surface to a much deeper, central truth.

It uses this amazing ancient literary trick called a chiasm. The easiest way to think about it is like walking into a maze. You go through a series of turns, you reach the absolute center, and then you walk back out by making all the same turns in reverse.

The whole point is to draw your attention to what's waiting at the very heart of the maze. So let's build it together. The psalm kicks off with a general call to praise God.

Simple enough. We'll call that theme A. Then it moves on to reflect on how great God's actions and deep plans are. Let's call that theme B. Next, it dives right into the problem we started with, the fate of the wicked.

It talks about how their quick flourishing actually leads to their downfall. That's our theme C. And right here, right at the mathematical and thematic dead center of the entire song, everything stops. The forward motion pauses, and the poem pivots, hanging its entire meaning on one single crucial statement.

And after that pivot, the psalm just works its way back out, perfectly mirroring the first half. It revisits the evildoers, then God's works, and it ends right where it began, with praise. You see? The whole poem, the whole argument, it all revolves around this one line at its core.

And this is it. This is the center of the maze. This is the anchor.

The poem's answer to our burning question is this ultimate, definitive statement of reality. God is eternally on high, completely sovereign over all the temporary ups and downs we see down here on earth. So let's put it all together.

What does all of this- the grass, the trees, this hidden structure- actually mean for our original question about the wicked prospering? Well, it means the psalm's answer isn't a simple fix. It's a fundamental shift in how we see everything. What the psalmist is arguing is that maybe we've been asking the wrong question all along.

The real issue isn't that bad people have their moment in the sun. The real issue is that we're measuring success with the wrong timeline. We're so focused on the fast-growing grass that we completely forget about the trees that will outlast it all.

So here's what it all boils down to. The psalmist is teaching us that God's plans are deep; they're profound, and we can't always see them on the surface. That quick success of evildoers? It's not a mistake.

It's actually part of the setup for their own destruction. Real true flourishing is slow, valuable, and built to endure. And the ultimate truth, that pivot point for all of reality, is God's perfect, unwavering justice.

So this ancient song leaves us with a really timeless challenge, doesn't it? In a world that just loves and celebrates quick wins and fast growth, it forces every single one of us to ask, what am I building? Am I cultivating a life of fast-growing grass, or am I planting the kind of deep-rooted character that is truly, truly built to last?