How do we face life together? Rejoice in the Lord…with the Psalms

Intro

Consider Philippians 4:4-7

1. Tells us to rejoice, not be anxious, make supplication to God
2. How do we do that practically? Consider the Psalms
3. Oh, by the way, Paul was in prison when he wrote Philippians

Brief Overview of the Psalter

1) 5 "books" within the Psalter; each with their own theme/concentration
2) Poetic language often expressed in song; Easer for reader to memorize and slowly consider the meaning
3) Every part of the book conveys meaning: all books end in Amen!

The Psalms are for you to use

1) Imprecatory Psalms—Psalm 109

a) Psalm 109 written by David while he was experiencing injustice
   i) David is a real person who is experiencing real emotion
b) Verses 6-20 are the "imprecations" or invoked curses
c) What do we as Christians make of these? Can we curse our enemies with these words?
   i) Consider Matthew 5:43-46 and Ephesians 6:12
   ii) So…does the Bible contradict itself? No. We interpret scripture by scripture. The unclear is interpreted by the clear.
d) What is going on here exactly?
   i) Look again at the imprecations and the reasons for them
   ii) Main theme: May the wicked man receive what he's giving out
   iii) This follows the pattern of Scripture[1]:
      (1) Agag in 1 Samuel 15:32-33
      (2) Adoni-bezek in Judges 1:6-7
   iv) It is as if David is saying, "God, do what you normally do to wicked men."
e) How do we know that David isn't just getting revenge through God?
   i) Consider the account of David, Nabal and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. God prevents David from the sin of revenge.
   ii) What is David doing in Psalm 109 instead of revenge? Prayer.[2]
      (1) See v1, v4, v26
   iii) Is God under obligation to do exactly as David asks?
f) Therefore, how do we use these words rightly?
   i) Don't forget Matthew 5 and Ephesians 6
   ii) Pray for the conversion of our enemies first[3]
   iii) It is right to pray for what God has promised in Christ's work[4]
g) Psalm 109:8 cited by Peter in Acts 1:20 as prophesy
   i) God used David in his distress to prophesy about Christ
   ii) An example of multi-layered meaning in the Psalter (Psalms of David and of Jesus)

2) Psalms of Lament—Psalm 88

a) This is from Book 3—the crisis over God's promises…yet He is faithful
b) The first way we see God's faithfulness is in who wrote Psalm 88
   i) Heman the Ezrahite…of the Sons of Korah

ii) Who was Korah? See Numbers 16 for his rebellion against Moses
iii) Yet, consider Deuteronomy 24:16
iv) Korah's "Sons" lived and went on to serve God faithfully
v) God kept his promise stated in the Law in Deut 24:16

c) What is Heman's situation? See verse 15
d) What is Heman's reaction to his situation? Consider verses 3, 6, and 7.
e) How does he feel? Does it make a difference in how expressive he is?
f) Heman effectively states, "I feel like death. God, are you going to leave me here to die so I cease to exist? Are you going to leave me here alone?'
g) This is not teaching about Sheol but rather revealing the depth of emotion that Heman experiences[5].
h) Why the graphic description of Heman's suffering? Even there, he **prays!**
i) God had a purpose for such suffering
   i) Calvin calls Heman, "the prophet.[6]" Why?
   ii) This is a Messianic Psalm. In his pain, even when he forgot about eternal life, God used Heman to foreshadow Christ.
j) God's faithfulness is shown in 2 more ways:
   i) That suffering is never in vain (James 1:2-4)
   ii) Christ came to suffer in our place…therefore, he understands our suffering (Hebrews 4:14-16; Isaiah 53:3)

<u>The Psalms are for the Church to use</u>

1) Sing them together for mutual encouragement
   a) Psalm 136 is a liturgical reminder of God's goodness[7] and was used in 2 Chronicles 20 as Judah's Army marched to battle
   b) What about Psalm 88 or other Laments? Direct expression of those suffering, and a reminder for others to identify, strengthen, encourage the suffering (Romans 12:15)

<u>Practical example of how to use the Psalms</u>

1) Psalm 13 (of David)
   a) Verses 1-2: Honest expression of situation and feelings
   b) Verses 3-4: Appeal to God in faith—he believes God can do such things
   c) Verses 5-6: Rejoicing in and remembering God's faithfulness
   d) What if this is you?
      i) Pray these words. Really? Yep…this is for your use
      ii) Rejoice…God has dealt bountifully with you (Ephesians 2:4-7)
   e) What if this is your neighbor?
      i) Remember when your felt that way? Pray with and for and encourage your neighbor.

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[1] *The Treasury of David,* Charles Spurgeon, 1869. Loc 59112 of 91859
[2] *Commentary on the Psalms*, John Calvin, Geneva, 1557. Loc 24259 of 31316
[3] *Learning to Love the Psalms,* W. Robert Godfrey, Ligonier Ministries 2017, Loc 1624 of 5373
[4] Ibid.
[5] *The Treasury of David,* Charles Spurgeon, 1869. Loc 44552 of 91859
[6] *Commentary on the Psalms*, John Calvin, Geneva, 1557. Loc 13387 of 31316
[7] *The Treasury of David,* Charles Spurgeon, 1869. Loc 82777 of 91859