

STUDY GUIDE

I Am Prayer | Psalm 109 | April 3, 2022

BY RICKY STEPHEN

Ps 109 teaches us what to do with our strongest and darkest feelings, to pray them. It reminds us that prayer is bringing our whole selves to all of God.

Our Whole Selves...

- *We hide our whole selves from God because of our vulnerability and shame.*
 - Genesis 2:25 said Adam and Eve were ‘naked and unashamed’ which means they were totally vulnerable but unafraid of their vulnerability.
 - However, in Genesis 3:8 we read that the first effect of sin was Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden. Our knowledge of good and evil has led us to see our vulnerability and be ashamed.
- *We bring our whole selves back to God by praying with brutal honesty.*
 - Psalm 109 is brutally honest and uncensored. It encourages us to pray even our deepest and darkest feelings.
 - Like other Psalms of Lament or Plea, Psalm 109 has a ‘return to praise’ in v.30. What is surprising, is that the situation of the Psalmist has not changed. This hints at the fact that there can be a lot of relief in just praying openly and honestly.
- *We bring our whole selves back to God by bringing our whole selves back to His people.*
 - Another common feature of Psalms of Lament is that they are in the singular—it is the ‘I’ that suffers, even though Ancient Near Eastern culture was very communal. Psalms show that suffering isolates us.
 - However, in v.30 the Psalmist writes that they will praise God ‘in the great throng.’ This hints at a return to community even though the issue is not yet resolved.
 - By the wisdom and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this Psalm exists to be used in corporate gatherings to remind us of those suffering when we are not. To help us as the church become a place worthy of the brutal honesty of others.

...To All of God

- *Prayer is asking God for something*
 - Whenever someone prays in Scripture, they ask God for something. Prayer is not letting go of feelings or clinging to them, it's lifting them up to our heavenly Father and asking for what we want and need.
- *We call, God answers*
 - The redemptive history revealed in the Scriptures is one of God answering the cries and calls of His people.
 - C.S. Lewis once said of Psalm 109: "It is monstrously simple-minded to read the cursing in the Psalms with no feeling except one of horror at the uncharity of the poets. They are indeed devilish."
 - But this Psalm is not a curse. It is a prayer. It's a request made to God and God has His own will. He can answer *yes, no, or not yet*.
- *When we pray, God's character shapes us*
 - Psalm 109 testifies to God's silence, as it starts asking him to break that silence (v.1).
 - When God is silent, He might just be listening and making room for us to act. He is interested in our growth and development.
 - God's character as steadfast in love is key to this Psalm (see v.12, 16, and 21).
 - In Acts 1:20 Peter quotes Psalm 109:8 about Judas' betrayal. This demonstrates that the early church might have prayed this Psalm when processing Judas' betrayal and decided not to act violently because of it. *Prayer shaped their action*.

I Am Prayer

- Who are we angry at? Who has hurt us? The invitation is to pray about it.
- Psalm 109:4b can be translated "In return for my friendship they accuse me, *but I am prayer*." When we recognize our fragility and the size of the problems facing us, there is not better thing to be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give Psalm 109 another read out loud, what shocks or surprises you?
2. How often do you attempt to hide your true feelings?
3. When have you experienced the consequences of 'holding it all in'? What were some of those consequences?
4. What does God most need to hear from you, today? Try praying with some honesty, together.