

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

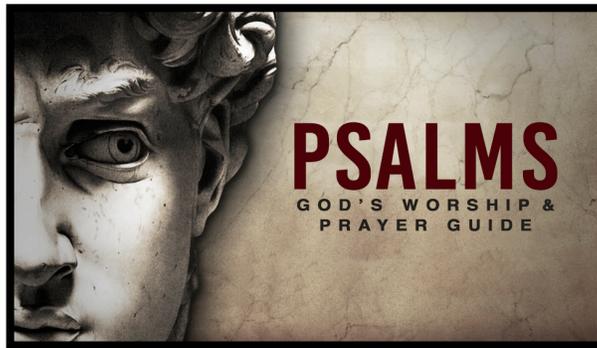
Prosperity, Peace, & Problems

Psalm 144

Written By

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Solomon, being a wise man to beat all wise men (1 Kings 4:29), surely studied the personal and political life of his father, King David. What did he see? He saw how God blessed his father in every facet of his life when he put God first, and he witnessed the removal of that blessing when his father put himself first. Analysis like this is what probably lies behind Solomon's wise words in Proverbs 14:

³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people (Prov. 14:34).

Even though we don't live in a theocracy like Solomon did, and even though we, as believers don't form or come from a distinct nation, as was true in Solomon's life, the divinely inspired principle he communicates here in this book of wisdom transcends time, people, and cultures. When a nation's leaders, by and large, live and lead in light of God's Word, righteousness lifts that nation up as a showcase, really, of how nations will function when the Messiah rules and reigns in the eschatological future (Isa. 2:1-3; 9:6-7). The flipside is equally true, as Solomon denotes. When national leaders turn against God and His timeless, truthful Word, choosing to embrace sinful living, be what it may, the nation, at large, becomes disgraced before the eyes of the world. Put differently, divine prosperity is poured out on nations whose leaders make the gusty move of attempting to listen to and follow God, while those who think they know better and opt to throw truth to the wind so they can devise their own, ever-changing truths, they will not know true prosperity or peace.

David understood this divine premise long before his son wrote about it. Writing in Psalm 144, a worship number designed to be sung in the Temple by all Israelites . . . from the king to the

commoner . . . David looks back, as a leader, over his life and pinpoints answers to a question Solomon would write about later:

How Can You Move From Problems To Prosperity? (Psalm 144)

First and foremost, David speaks here as a God-fearing, Bible-loving king who leads a people who are all over the spiritual map. Some love God and are devout to the core, some only go through the spiritual rituals to check that box so they fit into a society built on the Torah, while others enjoyed all forms of darkness, resulting in a daily quest to subvert those who lived for the light. Further, as a leader, the king faced all kinds of external threats from various enemies committed to the destruction and demise of his small empire. With this said we can better appreciate what David says in this Psalm. Despite all these internal and external pressures, he, as the leader, wanted to move, with God's help, his nation, his people out of their troublesome complexities to a place of lasting peace and prosperity.

If you are a Christian politician or person with power and control over others, I'd dare say this is a Psalm you need to pay strict attention to, for if you, too, love God, then you will, by definition, want the same things for your nation and your people. Additionally, David's words are not just applicable to leaders per se, for what is true at a leadership level is equally relevant at a personal one as well. The call, therefore, to live righteously so divine benefits flow into life are applicable to everyone . . . and on Judgment Day God will judge accordingly. Again, I appeal to Solomon's wise, timeless counsel in this regard:

¹³ The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. ¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil (Eccl. 12).

I share this to underscore how important it is for all of us to pay heed and apply the principles David communicates here by way of divine inspiration.

Unfortunately, we live at a time when absolute Truth has been replaced by ever-changing relative truths, when people in positions of power use the law to do lawless things, when deconstruction is touted to be the path to construction, when division of people at all levels is portrayed as the path from dystopia to utopia, and when purveyors and defenders of truth and logic are demonized to solidify the insatiable power of a feckless few. What's the result? Chaos, or should I say, a lack of peace and prosperity. What is the way forward? This is what David shares with us. Moving through this lengthy text, the wise king gives us three principles which, if applied, move a nation or people individually to a place where God's face shines upon and blesses them immensely.

Seek God's Person (Psalm 144:1-2)

After identifying himself as the author of this worship song, David moves to describe how he, as a leader, thinks about God:

¹ *A Psalm of David*. Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; ² My lovingkindness and my fortress, my stronghold and my

deliverer; My shield and He in whom I take refuge; Who subdues my people under me.

Unlike many in our land who cognitively and practically embrace Nietzsche's vacuous and vain statement that "God is dead," David realized that God is quite alive and well. If God is dead, as it were, which He is not, then as Dostoyevsky writes in *Brothers Karamazov* all things are permissible. Without God as the ultimate reference point for truth, then society and lives are thrown into complete, unrelenting turmoil regardless of what people say. David, as we see, headed in a different direction altogether for he articulates grand, wonderful, helpful thoughts about who God is and how He functions toward those who follow Him. All leaders and all people should, therefore, drop their ruinous anti-God ideologies and their overt hatred of all things Judeo-Christian and bow before the only One who can truly bless a people.

Pause and consider, if you desire to be truly wise, all the metaphors David employs to describe the living, eternal God who is transcendent yet highly immanent:

- *God is David's rock, underscoring His strong, powerful, and immovable nature (v. 1).* The wicked might think they are victoriously advancing their wicked schemes on a worldwide scale; however, they will always run headlong into the One who is all-powerful, who sovereignly raises up one king and puts another one down to accomplish His providential plans (Dan. 2:21). Further, as a rock, or really a massive boulder which is what the Hebrew connotes here, God is always there for the person who knows him.
- *God is David's fortress (v. 2).* Ostensibly, this means that when, not if, the godly leader/person is attacked by the wicked, he always has a place of protection in God's presence, and no one, not even Satan himself, can breach the walls of this divine fortification. When you decide to stand to truth, when you place a premium value on integrity, when facts matter, you can bank on the fact you will be opposed by those who love darkness; however, never forget that you, too, have a fortress in God to run to.
- *God is David's high tower (v. 2).* Think of the fortress of Masada and you understand the king's thinking. Rising 1,424 feet above the desert floor of the Dead Sea, this 18 acre Herodian fortress was well-nigh impregnable. All metaphors break down, but I think you get the point. When your life lived for God arouses the wicked to oppose you because you are a threat to their power-base and lifestyle, you always can run and hide in God who is something akin to a heavily fortified mountain fortress.
- *God is David's shield (v. 2).* A shield from what? Anything and everything the Devil and the wicked can shoot at you. Arrows like discouragement,



disinformation, and dismay. Arrows like mean-spirited words, ad hominem attacks, lies. Arrows like fear, fear of what is going to happen to you now that you've chosen to stand for truth and for God. Yes, when problems come your way, and they will as they did to Jesus, you will always have God there to absorb the brunt of the attack so you can have peace in the storm.

Admit it. You cannot read through all of these metaphors about God and fail to understand that He will always be with you in the spiritual battle for truth, holiness, and righteousness.

David's battles were both physical and spiritual, but in our day our battles are more of a spiritual nature. Paul addresses this in his closing words of counsel to the Ephesians believers,

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6).

We do struggle with the desires of our fleshly nature, as Paul discusses in Romans 6 and 7; however, behind everything lies the powers of darkness. In his classic treatment of the subject in *Angels: Elect and Evil*, C. Fred Dickason, the good doctor devotes chapter 19 to what he calls the *Duties of Demons*. Where believers are concerned, they try everything from getting you to abandon the faith, to getting you to compromise your spiritual walk by committing a heinous moral sin. C. S. Lewis's best-selling book *Screwtape Letters* gives us a helpful view of how believers struggle with the forces of our Adversary by showing how one fictitious demon went after a new Christian convert.

As God taught David how to fight against forces of evil, He does the same thing for us. The person who seeks Him, who desires to know Him deeply and intimately understands this truth. Paul did and that's why he made this enlightening statement to the Corinthians:

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, ⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete (2 Cor. 10).

Paul faced his share of false apostles in the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 11:13), people who constantly attacked Paul, calling him names, saying things to undermine his character all so they could expand their power and control over others. Here in chapter 10, Paul addresses those evil imposters. Whereas they placed a premium value on education, rhetorical ability, looks, and prestige (1 Cor. 1:26), Paul relied upon God (1 Cor. 2:4-5) and His Word, seeking to use both to expose falsity so truth could move people to obedience. As he states here, he took *everything* these naysayers taught in their arrogance and submitted that teaching to the scrutiny of the Word of God. That Word, in and of itself, dismantles and destroys all false, evil thinking masquerading as truth and righteousness. In this way, the Word of God taught Paul how to fight the good fight of the faith by exposing error so truth could be showcased. The same, of course, still applies in our

day. The God who protects us in the spiritual battle also teaches us how to fight against falsity and sin, and, as we see here, that battle is typically in the realm of *ideas*. Those who, therefore, seek God on the battlefield of life *will find answers* to perplexing and problematic questions: Are there just two sexes and two genders? Is critical race theory a friend or foe of the faith? Is equality and equity a biblical ideology? Does biblical tolerance square with cultural tolerance? Are there many paths to God's presence? And so on and so forth.

False ideologies seek to undermine God's truth so people can live as they like and silence those who'd dare say likewise. As vacuous worldviews proliferate, peace and prosperity logically goes out the door, and Christian people are persecuted for they are seen as inhibitors of "progress." If you are that Christian person, realize right now that true peace and prosperity only comes as true righteousness becomes the order of the day. Realize also that the pursuit of knowing God is a quest you must be focused on for it is that which enables you to fully comprehend that despite what the Devil whispers in your ear, God is with you to protect and provide for you so you can be successful.

George Washington as a man who understood, like David, physical and spiritual battle. He also understood, like David, the value of knowing the living God above all else and permitting that knowledge to guide him as a leader. During his first Inaugural Address on April 30, 1789, the battled-hardened, wise leader remarked, ". . . the propitious smiles of Heaven, can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained."¹ At this farewell address on September 19, 1796, he doubled down with this statement:

. . . let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.²

Our nation was far from perfect in Washington's day, however, there was much peace and prosperity for we had a leader who knew the spiritual battle regarding truth had to be fought and won in order for God's blessing to continue. Oh, for more people like him who are not afraid to know God, to acknowledge His assistance, and speak up and out for Him in said culture. When this occurs Solomon's words, like David's, become true: righteousness related to God's character exalts a nation.

In addition to the importance of seeking God who is the source of all peace and prosperity in life, David adds another truth in verses 3 through 11:

Seek God's Provision (Psalm 144:3-11)

What does this mean? It means that even though you might feel like a nobody, even though you might think you are highly insignificant in the complex scheme of life, you, as God's saint, are highly valuable to Him, which means you are in a position to seek His assistance with the battle set before you, be what it may. Here is how David puts it:

¹ George Washington, *Writings*, Vol. 30, p. 294.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 229.

³ O LORD, what is man, that Thou dost take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that Thou dost think of him? ⁴ Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.

David is humbled as he thinks about himself. True he led a great country, and he had many accomplishments as a soldier; however, when he compared himself to God he realized just how small and insignificant he was. Oh, for more leaders who are full of humility, not hubris, especially as they consider the greatness and vastness of God Almighty. David's thought here reveals he was simply blown away that he, a finite man, would be of any concern to the omnipotent, omniscient Being who created all things by the word of His mouth (Gen. 1). But God *did* deem knowledge of and a relationship with David something of great importance. Why? Not only was David the crown of God's creation as a man (Gen. 1:26), he was, by faith, God's son, His special child.

Because of his unique relationship with God, David was in a position to ask for divine assistance as he faced fierce opposition to his righteous leadership:

⁵ Bow Thy heavens, O LORD, and come down; Touch the mountains, that they may smoke. ⁶ Flash forth lightning and scatter them; Send out Thine arrows and confuse them. ⁷ Stretch forth Thy hand from on high; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, out of the hand of aliens ⁸ Whose mouths speak deceit, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. ⁹ I will sing a new song to Thee, O God; upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to Thee, ¹⁰ Who dost give salvation to kings; Who dost rescue David His servant from the evil sword. ¹¹ Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of aliens, whose mouth speaks deceit, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

David boldly asks God here for a spectacular deliverance. His statement in verse five is grammatically similar to Isaiah's "rend the heavens" in Isaiah 64:1-2. Pragmatically, David is saying, "God, could you please tear the fabric of the cosmos above by my head in two and move quickly from your glorious dimension to mine to help me?" He next asks God to touch the mountains He created to make them smoke like a volcano to show His displeasure with the wicked. Lightening can be used, according to David, like divine arrows to get the attention of all of those arrayed against this godly leader. All of this, of course, represented David's prayer for a jaw-dropping point of deliverance from adversaries, internal and external, who lived not for truth but to lies and deception.

A nation will not, and cannot, know peace and prosperity when it is overrun with people who are con artists, who are professional hustlers, who live for scams, who love to swindle people, who hate truth and truth-tellers and love falsity. Yes, a nation is well neigh unto destruction when truth is not the order of the day. Washington knew this. David knew it long before him and that's why he prayed here for swift assistance because the power of the liars was great. What a wise man. On his own, David was not equipped to unravel all of the cultural/personal lies tearing at the fabric of his nation because too many people were part of the deception at all levels. So, he did what any godly person would, and should, do: He called for divine back-up, and from what he says God did, in fact, help him. Read 2 Samuel 22 where David recounts in detail how God delivered him. Psalm 144 is just a song written to say thanks for the divine help at a hard time.

Will you sing to God in worship when others are besmirching your good name? Worship is a sign of great maturity not matter what you are encountering in your life. How are you faring?

You know, a nation is near the judgment of God when error replaces truth. Isaiah warns us of this as he considered the sins which brought his nation to its knees years after David:

¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: ¹³ Transgressing and denying the LORD, and turning away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving *in* and uttering from the heart lying words. ¹⁴ And justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. ¹⁵ Yes, truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey. Now the LORD saw, and it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice (Isa. 59).

Once true truth goes, everything else goes, including justice. How can you have a fair trial when deception and lies are what counts in the courtroom, when innocent people are prosecuted on politically driven charges, and when evidence is falsified or hidden so truth cannot be known? When truth stumbles, the entire society stumbles. Businesses lie to increase profits. Start-ups lie in order to secure funding. Universities lie in order to deconstruct history to teach their tainted, ideologically driven view of history. Scientists lie in order to maximize profits.

So, what are truthful people to do? Tell the truth and ask for God's divine assistance. Take Jeremiah as a case in point. All throughout his book to the ailing nation, he recorded how the false teachers only told the people what they wanted to hear, and that message was completely false.

⁹ "But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.' ¹⁰ "For they prophesy a lie to you, in order to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish (Jer. 27).

The false message of the day was, "We are fine before God because His temple is among us, so there is no way we will ever fall to the Babylonians." How did Jeremiah respond to this false teaching? He spoke the hard truth to them. We can do no less, and we can, like David, avail ourselves of God's spectacular intervention to help us replace lies with truth so peace and prosperity can come our way, again.

Lastly, as you determine to be a person of truth in truth-less times, realize that God is waiting for you to ask big things from Him.

Seek God's Prosperity (Psalm 144:12-15)

Let's put these following words in perspective. David, who has committed himself to seeking and knowing God, and in securing His divine help with the plethora of deceivers inside and outside the nation, now moves to ask for a blessing on future generations. This is a big, bold request. He is saying, "God would you please bless those who come after me because of my love of and defense of truth?" Read on and you'll easily see this:

¹² Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace; ¹³ *Let* our barns be full, furnishing every kind of produce, *and* our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields; ¹⁴ *Let* our cattle bear, without mishap and without loss, *Let there be* no outcry in our streets!

David's request is for God to now go forth and bless the entire nation, from the young men to the peace which needs to be the order of the day on the city streets. Imagine a country where crime was so low, nobody ever screamed for help. Imagine a country where the barns are full and overflowing, where every sector brimmed with outright blessing. That country is possible, and it all starts when the leaders, and then the people, do three things:

- They seek God's person.
- They seek God's provision.
- They seek God's prosperity.

Those who live in a land where these three things describe the people will have no problem agreeing with David's final words:

¹⁵ How blessed are the people who are so situated; How blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!

Ah, Lord, might we be these people. Might we live to see your blessing poured out on us again. Might we be those points of truth which call our nation away from error, so your blessing will flow freely upon us.

George Washington was such a man, a man who honored God and understood His vital importance to the health and wealth of the nation. Speaking to the Senate and the House of Representatives one last time on December 7, 1796 he remarked:

The situation in which I now stand, for the last time, in the midst of the Representatives of the People of the United States, naturally recalls the period when the Administration of the present form of Government commenced; and I cannot omit the occasion, to congratulate you and my Country, on the success of the experiment; nor to repeat my fervent supplications to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and Sovereign Arbitrator of Nations, that his Providential care may still be extended to the United States; that the virtue and happiness of the People, may be preserved; and that the Government, which they have instituted, for the protection of their liberties, may be perpetual.³

Blessing did come and much of it was wedded to this humble, God-fearing man who spoke truth. We now set the stage for more divine prosperity to fall on us as we, too, keep God first in all

³ George Washington, *Writings*, Vol. 35, p. 319.

things. To accomplish this, we will most certainly have to be committed to truth like never before. May God give us the grit and courage to be stand in the gap as David did in his day and George did when our nation was founded.