

## =STORIES BEHIND THE PSALMS=

Lesson 9

Psalm 96

AIM: to teach my pupils the truths of and the story behind Psalm 96

POINT OF CONTACT: Why not give a little written test on the Psalms study thus far. You might write on one side of the blackboard a list of the Psalms we have studied and a statement about each one on the other side. For the test, have one side numbered one, two, three, four, etc., and the other side labeled A, B, C, D, etc. Have the pupils match up the numbers with the letters. Give a prize for the winner.

INTRODUCTION: The Psalmist is looking at the temple. We have studied much about the temple in our studies of the Psalms. It was, of course, the most sacred site of all for the Jewish people. As the Psalmist looked at the temple, he noticed that there were two things about it: strength and beauty. Read Psalm 96:6 and you'll see that he notices not just strength and not just beauty. He looked at the marble pillars and their strength and yet at the same time looked at the beautiful exquisite carvings and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He looked at the porch upheld by the famous pillars with delicate lily work and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He noticed the immense stone foundation and yet the dainty figures of palm trees and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He noticed the unbelievable size and yet the ornate flowers decorating the temple and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He noticed the great cost and yet the utensils elaborately ornamented and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He noticed the high arch and yet the precious stones gleaming amid the gold and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." He noticed the high walls and yet at the same time the Tyrian tapestry on every side and said, "...strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."

- I. THE TEMPLE TODAY IS THE BODY OF THE BELIEVER. Read I Corinthians 6:19, 20; II Corinthians 6:16. The temple today is not made with hands, neither is it in Jerusalem, neither is it a construction. Rather, it is the body of every Christian. Because of this, every Christian should have in him both strength and beauty. The care that was given to the temple is now supposed to be given to the body.

The Holy Spirit comes in the Christian to live at his conversion. Just as the Shekinah Glory was in the temple, the Holy Spirit lives in the body of every Christian, for we are His temple. The Holy Spirit is a person, and He goes with us everywhere we go. He comforts, teaches, strengthens and helps. He is called our "Paraclete," which is a Greek word meaning "one who runs to our side to pick us up." He is much like a baby-sitter. When parents leave to go out for an evening, they oftentimes employ a baby-sitter to care for the children. When Jesus went back to Heaven, He left with us a baby-sitter, even the Holy Spirit. Hence, your body is a temple, and it is to be adorned with both strength and beauty.

- II. STRENGTH IS TO COME FIRST. It is better to be strong than ornamental. It is better to be right wrongly than wrong rightly. The position is more important than the disposition. We are not to use the beautiful, but to beautify the useful. Character seeks talent; hence, we ought to stress character over talent. What we are is more important than what we can do, for if we become what we ought to become, we will do what we ought to do.

The importance of character cannot be stressed strongly enough. Character is the subconscious doing of right. Stress the importance of paying debts, being obedient, respecting law and order and authority, having proper discipline, etc.

There are several things that should be stressed. Let us warn against these matters:

1. Indecent and immodest dress.
2. Influence of Hollywood.
3. The nude and vulgar plays and movies.
4. The wrong kind of magazines and literature.

III. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE BEAUTY. One has said, "Never mind the beautiful; give us the durable and the useful." Let that one be reminded of the yellow gold of the grain field, the emerald green of the meadows, the silver white of the lake, the peerless blue of the sky, the fresh green of spring, the snowy white of winter, the sevenfold beauty of the rainbow, the glory of the sunset and the towering mountains with their ceaseless lights and shadows. Let them be reminded that the same God, Who made the trunk of the tree so strong also made the leaves of the tree so lovely. The Christian should also have grace as well as truth and beauty as well as strength. Not only should he be a person of character; he ought also to be a person of etiquette and propriety. It is important that our manners be right.

IV. SOME SITUATIONS AND HOW THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD BEHAVE UNDER THEM.

1. When the teacher at the public school teaches something that is not true, what should the Christian student do? He should say nothing, but in his own heart thank God that he knows the truth.
2. When the Christian student is asked something at school against his convictions, what should he do? He should very politely and courteously tell the teacher that his parents or his religion will not allow him to participate. This should not be done with false piety or as a stuffed shirt, but courteously and kindly.
3. When others are doing something in his presence that is against his convictions, what should the Christian do? The Christian should, of course, quietly refrain from participation. He should not act holier-than-thou and should not preach a sermon and, as soon as is graciously proper, he should remove himself from the crowd!
4. What should the Christian person do when criticized for his stand? He should take it gracefully and graciously, not fighting back and certainly not acting overly pious.
5. How should the Christian dress in public? He should always dress appropriately, as long as it is within his convictions.
6. What kind of English should the Christian young person use? He should as nearly as possible use good English. He certainly should not slip into the jargon and slang of the world. Neither should he use a super-pious, super-Heavenly language that makes him offensive and obnoxious to all around him.
7. To what kind of music should the Christian listen? He should listen to all good Christian music. He should shy away from rock 'n roll and the modern folk music, even when set to religious words. Not only should the words glorify God, but also the beat!
8. How should the Christian dress? He should always dress modestly. Girls should avoid mini-skirts, and boys should avoid feminine, mod attire. A Christian ought to dress also in a way good Christians are expected to dress. In other words, people should suspect he is a Christian by looking at his clothing.
9. How should a Christian young person wear his or her hair? Girls should not wear hair that is cut like boy's hair styles, and the boys should not wear hair styled like girls' hair is styled. The Bible says it is a shame for a man to have long hair and unscriptural for girls to have hair like a man. Since it is generally accepted that men in our generation have not worn long beards or long sideburns, it seems that a Christian should avoid drawing attention with such.