

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
XLIX. Handling Influentially Harmful Overreachers
(Psalm 49:1-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face influential parties today who overreach their roles to the harm of other people:

(1) Influential progressives have overreached their roles to harm the future financial welfare of public school students: A study by “Eric Hanushek, a Stanford University economist and expert on education” and “work published by professors at Harvard and Dartmouth” show that “COVID-era school closures” will cost “a huge penalty to the lifetime earnings of students forced to suffer . . . remote schooling, totaling possibly as much as \$28 trillion (more than the nation’s entire GDP) over the remainder of the 21st century . . . (T)he learning losses were avoidable,” but “the United Federation of Teachers . . . with the federal government and blue-state (politicians), conspired to close” the schools “during the pandemic anyway.” (“Learning Loss’ High Price,” New York Post, January 2, 2023, p. 24)

(2) Influentially progressive politicians are overreaching on the issue of fentanyl poisoning at the cost of many lives: “Every day, more than 300 of our children and loved ones are poisoned with fentanyl . . . (T)hese . . . deaths aren’t classic overdoses among addicts . . . (K)ids think they can take a pill to fix anything” like “stress and anxiety – [what is] rampant among young people . . . When . . . recreational drugs are passed out . . . it is far too often illicit fentanyl, and it kills before the victim even realizes what is happening . . . Yet most leaders in this country refuse to talk about it, let alone work to stop it,” for “politicians would have to admit how our open southern border has fueled this fatal epidemic.” (Virginia Krieger and Lora Ries, “Fentanyl is poisoning our kids,” Ibid., January 2, 2023, p. 8A)

(3) The influential Roman Catholic Church harmfully teaches that Mary overreaches Jesus’ role: Pope Francis recently prayed for the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, saying, “Today we entrust to our Blessed Mother our beloved Pope Emeritus . . . that she may accompany him in his passage from this world to God . . . (W)e invoke her intercession . . .” (“Pope marks New Year as Vatican prepares to mourn Benedict,” Ibid., January 2, 2023, p. 7A) Pope Francis’s words lead millions of people to think that they must pray to Mary to get loved ones out of purgatory to heaven. Yet, Scripture (a) at 1 Timothy 2:5 claims that Jesus is the sole Mediator between God and man, not Jesus and Mary. (b) Also, prayers for the dead are made in vain: Hebrews 9:27 with 2 Thessalonians 1:9 show that at death, unbelievers face eternal torment, and 2 Corinthians 5:8 shows that at death, a believer is instantly in heaven. (c) Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of death (Revelation 1:17), so He, not Mary, moves the soul at death to its eternal abode!

Need: So, we ask, “*How can we deal with influential parties who overreach their roles to the harm of others?!*”

- I. **Psalm 49:1-4 claims that it is an instructional psalm. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Psalm 49)**
- II. **It addresses the problem of handling the fact that powerful, wealthy evildoers cheat people by overreaching their proper jurisdictions to take selfish advantage of others, Psalm 49:5-6:**
 - A. Psalm 49:5b mentions the problem of the iniquity of “overreachers” who surrounded the psalmist:
 1. The KJV phrase “of my heels” translates the Hebrew noun *‘aqeb*, what **literally** means “heel,” but as it is used here, it **metaphorically** means “overreacher” (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 784; H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. II, p. 691-692). [When Jacob at birth grasped his twin brother Esau’s **literal** “heel,” he was **metaphorically** named “Jacob,” *ya’aqob*, a word that is derived from *‘aqeb*, and means “heel-catcher,” “trickster,” or “supplanter,” what proved to be prophetic as he later tricked Isaac to steal Esau’s blessing! (Genesis 27:1-40; Ibid., H. A. W., p. 692; Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Gen. 25:26)]
 2. Thus, the psalmist faced the problem of being afflicted by powerfully wealthy men who cheated others by overreaching their just jurisdictions to take advantage of others for their own selfish gain, Psalm 49:5-6.
- III. **The psalmist found peace by realizing that strong, evil overreachers know only fleeting glory in false security as their power and glory end in death while the upright have an eternal hope, Psalm 49:5a, 7-20:**
 - A. The psalmist asked why he should fear in times of trouble when evil, powerful, wealthy overreachers cheated him (Psalm 49:5-6), for their wealth could not prevent their deaths, Psalm 49:7-14.
 - B. In contrast, the upright psalmist would see God ransom his soul from the power of the grave, receiving him, what “includes in germ form the hope of the resurrection,” Psalm 49:15; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 830.
 - C. The psalmist then instructed his listeners on the valuable lesson from these observations, Psalm 49:16-20:
 1. We should not fear when a man gains wealth and the glory of his household increases, for when he dies, he will take nothing with him, and his glory of being rich and powerful will not follow him, Psalm 49:16-19.

2. Indeed, man all in his “splendor, pomp” (*yeqar*, Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 1017; *Ibid.*, H. A. W., v. I, p. 398-399; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 430) who does not “discern” (*bin*, *Ibid.*, p. 106-107; *Ibid.*, H. A. W., p. 103-104) [his accountability to God] is no better than the animals that perish, Psalm 49:20 ESV.

Lesson: *To handle the problem of facing parties who overreach their roles to the harm of others, God calls us to focus on the ETERNAL perspective – to consider the futility of the overreachers’ evil that only ends with their death in this life versus God’s everlasting rewards in the resurrection for living righteously for Him today!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) In place of fearing or getting upset at the deeds of influential overreachers, may we focus on the ETERNAL view, noting how futile is the temporal destiny of the wicked who live for this life versus living righteously for God’s rewards in eternity to come.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and provide additional guidance . . .)

While focusing on the **eternal** view to stay optimistic in facing harmful overreachers, Scripture offers more guidance on helping to insulate ourselves in this life from needless trouble from such overreachers (as follows):

(1) On the estimated cost of lost education due to the COVID-19 pandemic school closures, Proverbs 1:5 ESV directs the wise to “hear and increase in learning.” A student can make up for lost ground in learning as illustrated in the life of Abraham Lincoln: “In all his life his schooling did not add up to a year, but he made up for it by reading.” (*Compton’s Encyclopedia*, 1973, vol. 12, p. 281) Later as president of the United States during the hard days of the civil war when he had trouble finding a capable general to lead the Union against the brilliant West Point graduate General Lee who led the Confederate army, Lincoln “felt that he himself must take action. He read all he could on military science . . . Until he found competent generals, he directed much of the strategy for the Army and the Navy. He made blunders, but, on the whole, he was a successful commander in chief,” *Ibid.*, p. 284f-284h.

(2) On the failure of politicians to address the fentanyl drug crisis lest they have to admit that the southern border’s openness is a leading cause of this crisis, (a) instead of handling stress and anxiety with medication, what leaves one vulnerable accidentally to taking lethal doses of fentanyl with the many pills that are available in today’s world, Philippians 4:6-7 calls us to commit what causes us anxiety to God in prayer, and the peace of God that passes understanding will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (b) Then, if we focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, worthy of praise, etc. and think on these things while applying what Paul teaches in his epistles, the God of peace will be with us, Philippians 4:8-9 ESV. (c) Also, Ephesians 5:18 calls us not to be drunk with wine, what applies to any substance abuse, but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit by relying on Him. (d) If we also heed Ephesians 5:15-17 to be very careful to live wisely, using our time well to do God’s will instead of living carelessly, worldly lives, we will avoid situations where we take pills just to take them, and likely avoid death!

(3) On how the Catholic Church presents Mary the Mother of Jesus as overreaching her role to participate in Jesus’ role, (a) Mary’s view of herself counters such error: (+) she called herself a “female slave” of the Lord in being the earthly Mother of Jesus, Luke 1:38; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Luke 1:38. (+) In Luke 1:47, she said that “God” was her “Savior.” (b) Though she was a believer, Mary sinned: in Mark 3:21 ESV where Jesus’ “family” came to get custody of Him, saying, “He is out of his mind” for being so busy that He had no time to eat, that “family” included Mary and Jesus’ earthly brothers, Mark 3:31 ESV. Mary and Jesus’ earthly brothers then did not believe in Him, a sin! Mary cannot then qualify as a sinless intercessor or mediator for mankind! (c) Mary does **not** “accompany” believers in their “passage from this world to God” as Pope Francis said of the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, (+) for as a believer, the instant she died, Mary was in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:8. Since Christ has the keys of death and of Hades (Revelation 1:17), Mary’s soul since her passing always has been in heaven as fixed by Christ. (+) Thus, only God (cf. John 14:16) and God’s holy angels (cf. Luke 16:22) accompany the soul of a believer when he goes to heaven! (d) Jesus’ interactions with Mary reveal His sovereignty over her and her submission to Him: (+) At the wedding of Cana in Galilee in John 2:1-5, Jesus told His mother that she had no authority regarding His spiritual ministry. Mary thus submitted to Jesus’ instruction, informing the servants at the wedding feast to obey Him! (+) While Jesus was on the cross, He gave the Apostle John custody of His earthly Mother Mary so that she was not only under Jesus’ authority in this life, but she was also then placed under the authority of the Apostle John for the rest of her earthly life, John 19:26-27. Since she then went directly to heaven at her death without any further exaltation, Mary’s elevated role in Catholicism that presents her as functioning in Christ’s role in various realms is an errant overreach!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we handle harmful overreachers by focusing on living for God’s eternal reward and blessing.