Psalm 49 is a very practical psalm that deals with the subject of worldly wealth and power, and the richness of a relationship with the Lord.

What is the meaning of Psalm 49:4?

In *verse 4* the Psalmist wrote,

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“I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will express my riddle on the harp.”
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We can almost see the Psalmist, harp in hand, singing the words of wisdom in this psalm to the people of Israel. Probably, some of the audience was members of the royal palace, and perhaps the king listened to the words.

For the common people, the words would have contained comfort; but for the wealthy, the words carried a cutting edge. In verses 7 through 9 the Psalmist wrote,

> “No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever - that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay.”

To the people of ancient Israel, the words would have rung true, but no answer would have been clearly seen. The great “mystery of the ages” had not yet been revealed. It was obvious that the life of a man was precious to the Lord.

Life was a great growing experiences but it seemed that just as soon as a man or woman had truly gained the experience necessary to make a great contribution, he, or she, was old and died. The question was asked then, as well as today,

“What is the purpose to life?

Is it wealth and power?

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Should we only strive for what is available in this life?”

The answer to the great questions of life would finally be answered in Jesus Christ. It was true that no man could give a ransom rich enough to save one man’s life – only God could do that; and it was done when God became flesh and died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. Yes, the Psalmist was repeating the questions of his day, but the answers were not readily apparent. Praise be to God that He has revealed to us His purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord!

In verses 13 and 14, the destination of those who only concentrate upon worldly power was very plain to see,

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"This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve of their sayings. Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions."
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If many questioned the purpose of life, and where they should place their trust, the psalm clearly pointed to the fact that a trust in riches would lead only to sure destruction.

From a perspective built upon the teachings of the New Testament scriptures, verse 15 does not seem to be that remarkable; but without the revelation of the Gospel message, it is a remarkable passage indeed!

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"But God will redeem my soul from the grave; he will surely take me to himself".
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Such a statement in the Old Testament scriptures could only come from great faith in God, and from the inspired hand of the Lord God Himself.

Within the Old Testament, there was no clear message of salvation. The clear-cut picture of heaven, hell, and a risen savior was still obscured by the mists of time. But in spite of that, the Psalmist had a deep enough love and faith in the Lord to TRUST in Him.

The Psalmist knew that the only real answer to the questions life was found with the Lord. The only answer had to be beyond this life. The Psalmist did not know how the Lord would do it, but he knew that his only hope rested with Him. What faith!

Today, with the mystery revealed, the faith of God’s people should be so much more than that shown in Psalm 49. But tragically, too many Christians do not appreciate what God has given them. They remain immature all of their lives. If ever a doubt begins to sprout in

a Christian's heart, he would do well to read **Psalm 49:15** and see an example of true trust.

In verses 16 through 20, the Psalm ends with very practical advice on the importance of material wealth.

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"Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies, he will carry nothing away; his glory will not descend after him. Though while he lives, he congratulates himself and though men praise you when you do well for yourself, he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they will never see the light. Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, is like the beasts that perish."
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In the very materialistic world that Christians live in today, the warning of the psalm is very relevant, and all would do well to heed it. The only hope and future that any will have rests with God through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.