

1. Well, we have now made it to the "triple digits" of the Psalms. If you have made it with me this far, I'm sure we can make it through the last 50 psalms, before we know it.
  - a) We are still in the 4th of the five books of the psalms. We have completed the series of psalms (about the last eight) that specifically focused on praising God for the future day of Jesus' His Second Coming.
  - b) These next two psalms are back to the present. It is as if the psalms are now saying to us, "All of this wonderful stuff about our eternal future is great and it helps my perspective about my life. However, I still have to deal with my life now, so what about that?" These two psalms each give us guidance on how we are to face the "here and now".
2. With the "here and now" thought in mind, let me summarize both of these psalms.
  - a) Psalm 101 is about human leadership. David wrote it, and it appears to be his coronation speech. In effect the psalm is saying, "I (David) have been called by God to be a leader over my people and here is what I should do in order to properly rule over my people".
    - i) The idea for leaders is the reminder that God is ultimately in charge and one day Jesus Himself will be the perfect leader over the world. In the meantime, we as people (not just leaders) have to make the best decisions possible and look to God's guidance through prayer and His word as to how to live our lives.
  - b) Then we have Psalm 102. This one deals with suffering. The author is unknown. The psalm seems to be saying in effect, "Hey God, if You love me so much, why are You allowing me to go through so much suffering? The good news is that this psalm is not just a bunch of complaining. It also talks about seeing our problems from His perspective."
    - i) The underlying point of this psalm is about perspective. It is to ask us in effect, "Is God in charge of our lives or not?" If He is, then we have to trust Him even during the worst of times as this psalm is describing. If we do trust Him, then we must have faith that such bad times will not go on forever, even though we may not be able to see an end of what we are dealing with at that moment in time.
3. While I have been working on this lesson, I am also dealing with a sense of being overwhelmed of things going on in my life. When such feelings come, I have learned to prioritize them by first going to God in prayer and study, and then do the best I can with the time I have. I then trust Him to see me through such times and trust that He is guiding my life at this moment.
  - a) What does that have to do with this lesson? The point is God does care about us in our lives and whatever our lives entail. He does want to guide us through our issues if we are willing to trust Him to do so. That ties well to Psalm 102.
  - b) God also wants us to remember that if He has gotten us through "yesterday's trials", He promises to guide us through our present and future trials as well.
4. With that said, let me tie these two psalms together and hopefully explain where we are going in this lesson: Psalm 101 reminds us who is really in charge of our lives (God). Psalm 102 then reminds us that He allows difficulties in our lives in order to keep us close to Him.
  - a) As I like to remind all of us a lot lately, this 4th book of the Psalms ties well to the fourth book of the bible "Numbers". The underlying concept of both books is about learning to trust God with every aspect of our lives. The first psalm in this lesson deals with trusting God as our leader over our lives. The second psalm in this lesson deals with trusting Him through the difficult times of our lives. That in effect, is a summary of this lesson.
  - b) At this point, let me end this introduction with my title: "Praise to God who is in charge, our lives and does guide us through our tough times and rescues us from our suffering". Yes that is long, but it gets the point across. OK, enough rambling, ☺ let's start the text.

5. Psalm 101, title: Of David. A psalm.
  - a) This is the first psalm we have had by David in a good while. His name will appear on and off through the next few psalms. The theme of this psalm is about being a good leader and that is why scholars believe it was designed for David's coronation. Even if scholars are wrong about that point, it is true that this psalm is about the desire to be led by God and make the best decisions we can knowing that God rules over our lives.
  - b) This psalm also hints of the fact that no human ruler is perfect and we won't get perfect leadership over our lives until Jesus Himself comes back to rule. That is of course, another reason we do pray for Jesus' return over this world.
  - c) For the sake of my new readers, I'll state that the word "psalm" simply means that the author wants us to think about the words of this psalm and contemplate their meaning.
6. Verse 1: I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise.
  - a) Notice that David is not asking for God's love and justice. David is singing out that His love and justice exists. It is important to praise God not only for the love He shows us, but also for the fact that He does bring justice His way and on His timing.
  - b) I was contemplating why God would want us to sing of His justice. It is one thing to appreciate God loving us, but how often do we really sing out for His justice?
    - i) If we want God to really be in charge of our lives and of our world, then we do want His justice. It means we want God to do "what is right and fair".
    - ii) This world is a difficult place to live through. Tragedies are part of life and some are too horrible even to grasp. Without God intervening in our lives, I can't even imagine having to deal with all that this life throws at us.
  - c) In summary we too should sing out because God does give us His love and justice. The best way to see it is simply to ask for it, and watch it happen in our lives.
7. Verse 2: I will be careful to lead a blameless life-- when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. <sup>3</sup> I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.
  - a) It is important to state here that David is not claiming he was perfect. He is saying that it is his desire to please God and therefore make the effort to be as sinless as possible.
    - i) Just because God has forgiven all of our sins, does not give us a free license to go sin all we want. If we have given our lives over to Jesus, then it should be our desire to please Him with our lives. That does mean avoiding sin as much as possible and making our best effort to lead a sinless life.
    - ii) I was thinking of a friend from church who asked a bunch of us to pray for him. He was about to face a strong sinful temptation this upcoming week. My point is that we should not face such temptations alone. By the power of prayer and asking others to pray for us we can have the strength overcome our temptations.
  - b) This does lead back to these verses. David is not saying he is perfect. He is saying that that he is dependant upon God to lead a life that is pleasing to Him in the first place.
    - i) If we desire to live a life pleasing to God and being grateful for what He is doing for our lives we should praise Him for protecting us.
  - c) Verse 3 then says that David will set no vile thing before his eyes. Does that mean he is to avoid temptation as much as possible? Yes it does. Sometimes we have to face situations where temptations come and like my friend from my church, we should ask for prayer.
    - i) In the meantime, we also ask God to guide us and keep us away from anything and everything that does cause us to turn from Him in the first place.
  - d) Verse 3 ends with the statement of "The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me." My translation: I will not act like those who don't trust in God in the first place.
    - i) Again the idea is not to be perfect, but to make a serious effort to seek God and do our best to live by the principals the bible teaches us. Remember that David is writing this as a leader and based on his desire to be led by God.

8. Verse 4: Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.
  - a) If David was giving this psalm as his coronation speech, then I suspect this verse means that all the people he will appoint under him will be the type of people who seek God.
    - i) OK, John, does that mean we should only hang out with Christian people or only work with people who believe in God? First of all, we can't always control whom we are required to be with during the day. The issue is not whom we have to be with. The issue is whether or not we let the lifestyle of those who don't trust in God affect our own lifestyle.
  - b) Coming back to my friend that asked for prayer for protection, he didn't ask God to "magically transport" him away from what he had to face. He did ask God to give him the strength to face that temptation. That is in effect what David is asking God here in this verse and what God is asking of us as believers in Him.
  - c) Finishing my discussion of being around evil people, if and when we can control such situations, we as believers should make the effort to choose to be around others who also want to please God and avoid sinful acts. Again, it is not about being perfect. It is about the desire to be as pleasing to God as much as possible with our lives.
    - i) OK, I've beaten this point to death now. ☺ It is time to move on to the next verse.
9. Verse 5: Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.
  - a) Verse 5 gives examples of what David meant by the evil people of Verse 4. These sins are not the only indications he sees of evil people, but again, they are just examples.
  - b) OK, so why mention, "slander his neighbor in secret"? Why not first mention something more serious like murder or stealing? Murder and serious are more serious crimes, but slander is a more common problem.
    - i) If you were to ask me what sin does the most damage in life, I would say slander. I believe there is more pain caused by slanderous talk than any other sin listed in the bible. Let me explain why that is true:
      - a) Most people are honest and do their best not to steal or hurt other people. Yes a "criminal class" does exist and I'm not denying that fact.
      - b) I'm just saying that it would be logical to have people around us who don't have a history of stealing or physically hurting other people. However, it is harder to stop people from making slanderous accusations, and that is what David is warning against in this verse.
    - ii) Let me try this one more way: What sin is more likely to occur among those we go to church with? Stealing or slander? Even in prayer we tend to spread rumors about people and "hide it" by saying we should pray for them. Recognizing and stopping slander should be the duty of all Christians. If someone shares a story with us that is really an accusation, our first response should be, "What did that person say when you confronted them on that issue?"
      - a) When the slander spreader says they have never confronted the accused on that issue, you know that slander has occurred.
  - c) OK, time to get off my slander "high-horse" and move on to the next issue stated in this verse: "Haughty eyes and a proud heart".
    - i) This is not something one can see by examining someone's eyes. Both terms are describing a person who wants to raise him or her self up as opposed to doing what is best for the group or doing what is best for the leader of that group.
    - ii) Let me explain this another way: If someone asks us to do a task, we have every right to say no, but if we say yes and ignore what is being asked of us, in effect it is a sin because we have put our interest ahead of what we were asked to do.
    - iii) If our leaders decide to complete a task "this way", having a "haughty eyes" or a "proud heart" means we refuse to humble ourselves to accept that decision.

10. Verse 6: My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.
- a) I was thinking about who is really the person being spoke about in this psalm"? Yes David is the author and yes it speaks of his desire to do the right thing.
    - i) With that said, I've yet to see a leader in human history live up to the standards set in this coronation speech. That is why I also see this psalm as tying to Jesus Himself being the ultimate ruler who will fulfill what this psalm teaches.
    - ii) This psalm is not just teaching us what was David's standard for being a good leader. It is about understanding what is God's standard when Jesus comes to rule over this world one day and should be our leader's standards as well.
  - b) With that optimistic statement out of my system, I can now come back to Verse 6.
    - i) This verse says that whoever is speaking will be among the faithful in the land.
      - a) The reason I just gave that little speech about Jesus, is that David like the rest of us cannot read people's minds, but can only judge actions.
      - b) David as a leader had to judge how people act and see if they are faithful to him and faithful to God's desires for their lives and all of our lives.
    - ii) David's point seems to be that he wants faithful people to be around him to do the right thing as servants of God and do His will through their lives.
  - c) OK John, David lived and died roughly 3,000 years ago. So he gave a nice coronation speech. How does that affect my life today?
    - i) Yes it is about the ultimate ruler over our lives. All of us live in a world and we have to deal with imperfect people who are over us. At the same time, we as Christians should recognize God as the ultimate authority over our lives.
    - ii) To put it another way, we have to do whatever our leaders over us tell us to do. At the same time, we should not violate biblical principals to obey our leaders.
    - iii) There are a handful of stories in the bible where someone tells their appointed leaders that they cannot do what their leaders ask. Sometimes such people have to suffer in this lifetime for taking such a stand for what is right. Remember that God will eventually reward us when we take such a stand to do the right thing.
      - a) Let me give an example: In Exodus, the leader of Egypt ordered women in charge of delivering babies ("midwives") to kill the Jewish babies as they were being born. Those Egyptian women lied to their leaders and didn't kill the babies. The story mentions that God blessed those midwives for doing the right thing and gave them their own families. (Exodus 1:15-20.)
  - d) OK, I wandered away from the verse. The point here is that God calls on us to do the right things in life and that He desires our leaders to appoint people under them who also are to do what is right in life. Sometimes doing the right thing takes "guts" as I explained in that Exodus midwife illustration, but we have to remember that taking a stand for doing the right thing will always make us victorious in the long run.
11. Verse 7: No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.
- a) This verse is saying in effect, "I won't have any liars or people who practice deceitful things as part of my administration."
  - b) That is a good thing to state, but how do you watch everyone to see if they are honest?
    - i) Going back to the Egyptian women in charge of delivering babies, they knew what was the right thing to do. They couldn't disobey a direct order that came from the Pharaoh of Egypt, so they said, "the babies were born before we could get there".
      - a) I don't know how true that statement was, but it spared their own lives and again God blessed those midwives by giving them families of their own.
  - c) What this means for you and me is about doing our best to avoid doing the wrong thing and doing our best to help those under and above us to also do the right thing in life.

12. Verse 8: Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.
  - a) Let me start here by giving an explanation of two specific words used here: The word "land" refers to Israel. The "City of the Lord" refers to Jerusalem from where David ruled.
  - b) OK John, with that said, just what does this verse mean? Did David literally have police going around killing anyone who was wicked while He was king?
    - i) The bible records that David did have rebellion issues while he was king and he depended on God to deal with such rebellion. The point of this "coronation speech closer" is that it was David's desire to always do what he believed God desired. David wanted to prevent anyone who didn't trust in God to have any sort of power in a country that was supposed to live under His authority.
  - c) So what does this "fancy statement" mean for us? For starters, it is a reminder to pray for our leaders not only to do the right things, but also to avoid what is sinful. Should I pray for our leaders to kill all evil people? I don't think that is literally possible.
    - i) We should pray for those in power to stop those who do harm to society and bring justice to this world. If you recall, the first verse of this psalm was a call for God's justice as well as His love. Justice is a desire to bring closure to crimes and even sins that were committed. Grant it, not all people do get caught in this lifetime, which is another reason why we believe in a God who will judge all things.
    - ii) Just because we believe God will "right the wrongs of the world one day" does not mean we as a society should not make every effort to do our best to deal with problems in our lives. Sometimes justice does happen and sometimes it does not. That should never stop us from doing the right thing and praying for justice.
  - d) Before I end this psalm, notice this psalm is only eight verses long. For a coronation speech, that has to be a record low in terms of how long a political leader spoke. ☺ OK, time for Psalm 102.
13. Psalm 102, title: A prayer of an afflicted man. When he is faint and pours out his lament before the LORD.
  - a) Speaking of dealing with justice, I present Psalm 102. While this psalm does not give us any specifics about who is being afflicted, it does teach us about the importance of pouring our hearts out to God when we do deal with injustice in this world.
  - b) But John, the title says, "Afflicted". How do we know it is a case of injustice? Maybe the person is in pain based an injury or a disease.
    - i) The issue of this psalm is not about how one gets afflicted. The point is when we go through a time of suffering, we can just sit there and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can try to fix it ourselves, or we can turn to the God who is in charge of our lives for comfort during such times. The last choice is what the psalmist is doing.
    - ii) The point for us is about looking to God for comfort to help us through our own affliction. It is about seeing our lives and even the existence of the world from God's perspective. That is the key idea (seeing life from God's perspective in rough times) being presented in this psalm.
14. Verse 1: Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry for help come to you. <sup>2</sup> Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.
  - a) Whatever the writer of this psalm is going through, he starts off by doing the right thing. The unnamed psalm writer was going through a lot of pain for an unstated reason. The writer takes that pain and gives it over to God for his own comfort.
    - i) If you learn nothing else from this lesson, remember that during the darkest and most difficult times of one's life, one can turn to God for a source of comfort.
    - ii) Whatever the author (or you or I) is going through in our lives, the point is we can always ask God to give us peace and comfort through such times.

15. Verse 3: For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.
  - a) Whatever the author was going through, one can sense that he felt that his life was about to come to an end. I don't know if that was literal or just an overwhelming problem.
    - i) For most adults there comes moments where we think, "This is it. I'm not going to get through this situation and my life as I know it now is essentially over".
    - ii) It is in such times that we have to remember that our lives belong to God and not ourselves. It is up to God to decide when our time is up.
    - iii) I have personally witnessed some amazing situations that seem beyond help and God has lead people through things I would not have wanted to live through.
    - iv) I recently learned of someone who got fully paralyzed for life. One has to ask, "Why would God allow something like that to happen?" As I like to say, I can't explain all the bad things that happen in this world. I just have to accept that for those of us who trust in God, He has reasons for allowing tragedies to occur.
  - b) OK, John and what does all of this bad stuff have to do with Verse 3? Everything. The point is one can get to a point where one feels like their life is all over. That is the flavor we will get through in this psalm. We will read of the remedy later in this psalm.
16. Verse 4: My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food. <sup>5</sup> Because of my loud groaning I am reduced to skin and bones.
  - a) To appreciate this psalm, one has to relate to the idea of being so depressed that even the idea of eating food is unappealing. Even if one has never experienced that feeling, most of us adults know at least one person who has gone through times like this.
  - b) Notice for the author, this was not an "I felt bad and I skipped lunch" feeling. ☺ This was a feeling of being so depressed, he was getting physically unhealthy due to a lack of food.
    - i) Obviously, some people eat more when they are depressed and others stop eating. Either way, the point is the same. The idea here is that many people get physically unhealthy because of physical, mental or even emotional pain.
      - a) Again, we will get to solutions later in this psalm. In the meantime, we are still describing painful moments and how they affect our lives.
  - c) Before I move on, let me ask, why bother to describe these horrible feelings?
    - i) The idea is for us to relate to the pain. While we may not be going through such times at the moment, most of us can understand what it is like to experience unhealthy lives because we are dealing with some specific problem.
17. Verse 5: I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. <sup>7</sup> I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof.
  - a) One of the commentaries I read stated that the exact type of birds being described in these verses is debated among scholars and we are not sure of the exact species. Now that you know that bit of bible trivia, let me explain what these verses are talking about.
  - b) The important idea here is not the birds themselves, but the sensation of loneliness. The author is using "alone birds" to describe how alone he felt in his suffering.
    - i) Most of us understand the concept that when we are really suffering, no one can relate to what we are going through and no one understands our pain.
    - ii) That is why it is often best to find people to minister to suffering people who have already gone through similar situations. If we don't have anyone around who can help in such situations, that is another reason to pray to God to bring in another person who can relate to what the suffering person is going through.
  - c) Finally, notice the phrase "lie awake". As one who personally deals with a lack of sleep at times, I can relate to that part of this suffering. While I don't know the specifics of what the author is going through, I do understand lack of sleep as a byproduct of worrying about issues that I am dealing with at moments in my life.
  - d) Again, the solution to whatever we are dealing with always begins with giving our problems to God, which is what the author did in the opening two verses of this psalm.

18. Verse 8: All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse.
  - a) Whatever pain the psalmist is feeling, he even senses (real or imagined) that his enemies are using this pain to taunt him and put him down.
  - b) Remember to take a stand for God means that one is going to have enemies who don't want us to trust in Him. It means that those who pick on our trust in God will mock our condition and say things like, "So, where is your God now that you are suffering?"
    - i) The answer of course is that God is still there and still in charge. God never works on our timing, but only on His. One of my favorite biblical quotes to the question of God rescuing us comes from Daniel 3:18. In that story, Daniels' three friends were about to be thrown in a very hot furnace. Their response to their accusers were in effect the words, "but if not". That simply means that God may or may not choose to rescue us. It is up to Him and not us. Either way we will still serve God.
  - c) The point of Verse 8 is that when we feel really low, we can expect those that oppose our trust in God to say or think bad things. The way to get through such times is to remember the God we serve. That is why I gave that little "Daniel speech" about trusting God.
19. Verse 9: For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears <sup>10</sup> because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. <sup>11</sup> My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.
  - a) I have to admit I struggled with Verse 9 for a while. How could anyone eat ashes as food?
    - i) Then I remembered that this is poetry. It may not be that literal. The author is simply trying to get us to understand how much pain he was in at that moment.
    - ii) To understand Verse 9, one has to picture being in so much pain, that one's tears run down off one's face and into a cup of liquid. One has to visualize being in so much pain that one sees one's food as just being a bunch of ashes.
    - iii) When we think of "ashes" we think of death. We think of things that have burnt up. The point is the author is in such pain, he sees his life as essentially over.
  - b) This leads us to the rest of these verses. The point is the author feels like he is at a point of death as he wrote this section of the psalm. I suspect that for us to really appreciate this psalm, we too have to feel like there is no hope for our lives.
  - c) Remember that we are still in the fourth book of the psalms. As I said in the introduction, this 4th book of the Psalms ties to the 4th book of the Old Testament "Numbers".
    - i) The book of Numbers was in effect a "death march" as a whole generation was sentenced to die for a lack of trust in God. My point is the author realizes how futile his life is without any trust in God. The author realizes how much pain and suffering this life can be. He sees his time on earth as short lived as grass.
    - ii) What these verses and this psalm teach us is when life seems hopeless and futile, that is when we need to get back to the eternal perspective. The good news is the author does "just that", which begins the next section of this psalm.
20. Verse 12: But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. <sup>13</sup>You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come.
  - a) The psalmist ends his "pity party" with Verse 11. Starting with Verse 12, the author starts to see life from God's perspective. In other words, this psalm gets happier starting now.
    - i) The first thing the psalmist reminds all of us is that God is in charge forever.
    - ii) The next thing we read is that God will have compassion for Zion. Ok, time for an explanation of that word "Zion": It literally refers to the land of Israel and people who trust in the God of Israel. It is the concept that God promises a homeland for those who put their trust in Him.
  - b) Some scholars suspect this psalm was written when the Israelites were in the Babylonian captivity. That would explain the reference that the appointed time has come (that is, we want God to come soon) for Him to show favor to her (the Israelite people) in Verse 13.

- c) OK John, we are not living in Israel 3,000 years ago. How does this apply to us?
  - i) The first principal to remember here is simply that God is in charge and does rule over all of us who trust in Him through all generations.
  - ii) For God to "have compassion on Zion" is a reference to the literal future time when the Jewish Messiah (i.e., Jesus) does come back to rule over the world as I have now beaten that point to death in the past few lessons. ☺
  - iii) However, there is a "sooner" principal to learn here: It is the idea that no matter what we are going through in our lives, there is a God who loves us, cares for us and wants to guide us to do His will for our lives. God never promises us a pain free life. He does promise to guide us through our rough times if we trust in Him.
  - iv) That in affect is the point of these verses and this psalm. It is that God promises to guide us through the best and worst of times if we willing to trust in Him.
- 21. Verse 14: For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity. <sup>15</sup> The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. <sup>16</sup> For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. <sup>17</sup> He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.
  - a) One reason I hold the literal view of God ruling from Israel one day is because of verses like these. These verses do give literal support to the idea that God still cares for the land of Israel. This leads me of all things, to a quick discussion of "judgment day":
    - i) The way I view "judgment day" is if I have the choice of being not literal enough with my bible interpretation as opposed to being too literal, I believe God will more likely excuse being too literal as opposed to be not being literal enough.
    - ii) My point as it relates to these verses is that they are describing God caring about the very ground that Israel exists on. The text mentions in Verse 15 that kings of other nations will bow down to the coming king of Israel. Verse 16 then says that God Himself will rebuild Zion (land of Israel) and He will appear there. Verse 17 then says God will not ignore the pleas of those who call out from that land.
  - b) OK, John, once again, this was written roughly 3,000 years ago. How has God done this?
    - i) This gets back to the question of how literal do I take this speech? It is one thing to say that God comforts those who trust in Him and I am not denying that fact.
    - ii) Remember that the psalmist was going through a lot of a pain at that moment. The psalmist sees his solution by remembering the fact that even though he has a short time to live in this world. God rules forever and there is coming a day where He will "right the wrongs" of this world and rule from Israel.
    - iii) So John, how do you explain why it has been roughly 3,000 years and counting?
      - a) God is "infinitely" patient so that as many people as possible can be saved. Just as the world had a beginning, it also has to have an ending one day. Therefore, a day has to come when God in effect says, "that's a wrap".
      - b) Think of it this way, if God decided to wrap it up, say fifty years ago, most of us would not be saved and appreciate the God of this world. Instead of complaining how long He has taken, we need to be grateful He has waited as long as He has in order for more of us people to be saved.
  - c) All of this does lead me back to the psalm writer himself. He is suffering at the moment for some unstated reason. He sees his solution by seeing life from God's perspective.
    - i) The point for us is whatever happens to us in our lives, God is still in charge, He still rules over the world, and He will still "right the wrongs" on His timing.
  - d) Before I move on, let me bring up one more question: Why does God want to rule from the land of Israel? What makes this land and people so special? It is not that Israelites are better than other people. It is about picking a "spot" on earth where all who trust in Him can look to Him as our God and as an example for the rest of the world to follow. In summary, God picked the land of Israel, because He wants a place on earth to rule from.



22. Verse 18: Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: <sup>19</sup> "The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, <sup>20</sup> to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death."
- a) I always appreciate when an author states the purpose for writing something blatantly. It makes my job much easier as a commentator when the purpose is clearly stated. I say that because Verse 18 states that this psalm was written so that a future generation may learn to praise God. OK, let me explain that idea a little more.
    - i) The idea of this psalm is not about remembering the author who lived roughly 3,000 years ago, and how much he suffered while writing this psalm.
    - ii) The idea here for all of us to understand that God rules over our lives and we can (big emphasis on "can") trust in that He not only to guide our lives, but promises us great things just for trusting that He exists and we can be eternally forgiven of our sins just by trusting in God's perfect payment for our sins. OK, that was a long run on sentence, but hopefully you get the idea here. ☺
  - b) The essential idea of these verses is that God is well aware of what we personally go through in our lives. That includes the pain that individuals are feeling at any moment. I have to admit it is hard to grasp the concept that a single God can listen to billions of people at the same time crying out to Him. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that if God is big enough to make this world in the first place, then He is also big enough to understand all of our individual problems and issues of our lives.
  - c) The next great reminder of these verses is simply to remember that none of us will live forever, as we currently understand life to exist. It is only by trusting in the God who created everything that we actually can and will live forever.
  - d) As the psalm writer is "wallowing in pain" as described earlier in this psalm, he also remembers and trusts that there is a God, who is in charge and will not only rescue Him either in this life or in the life to come, but that there is also coming a day when He will literally rule over this world. (OK, that's two run on sentences. Time to cut that out. ☺ )
    - i) This comes back to my quote from Daniel that says in effect, "But if not". God may or may not rescue us out of our current predicament, but that does not negate the idea that He does rule, He is in charge and He will guide us to eternal life just because of our trust in what He has done, is doing and will do in our lives.
23. Verse 21: So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem <sup>22</sup> when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the LORD.
- a) These verses are not describing any date in history, as there has never been a date when the nations of the world have come to the land of Israel to celebrate God. Therefore, it seems pretty obvious that this verse is describing something in their and our future.
  - b) The point for all generations is that we can look forward to a future day when God will literally rule the world from Jerusalem. Again John, how do you know this will happen?
    - i) Remember that about 30% of the bible is predictions. Many of those predictions have already come true. To put it another way, If I can trust the stories of Jesus death and resurrection, then I can trust many of the same authors who talk about Jesus returning again one day to literally rule over this world.
    - ii) This leads me back to dealing with present suffering. Sometimes life can be so traumatic, it lacks explanations. I explained early in this lesson about a young man who was paralyzed for life recently. I can't explain all of life's tragedies. I just know that our only hope is in a God that rules over our lives who we can talk to and trust to guide us through whatever we have to face in this life.
  - c) That little lecture does lead me back to this verse. The point here is that there will be a day where representatives of all nations will assemble to acknowledge Jesus as "God of the world". It is something to be looked forward to by all Christians. Even if we are dead when this happens, I believe we Christians will somehow be able to see this event unfold.

24. Verse 23: In the course of my life he broke my strength; he cut short my days.
- a) In the midst of all of this "happy talk" about God returning to the earth, the psalmist comes back to his present reality that he is going through suffering.
    - i) I think most of us do that at times. We may think some happy thought and then, "Yeah, but the reality is I'm still stuck in this situation".
  - b) What I suspect the psalmist is thinking here is something in effect of, "Instead of living to an old age, I am going to die now at a much younger age". No matter how long one lives, life is relatively short and it feels like we are dying way too soon. That is why it is essential to learn to live for God with whatever time span He has given us.
25. Verse 24: So I said: "Do not take me away, O my God, in the midst of my days; your years go on through all generations.
- a) Let me start this verse by explaining the phrase, "midst of my days". It literally means "middle age". The idea again is the psalmist is thinking, "I am not old and therefore I am not ready to die." The psalmist is in effect begging for God for more years of one's life.
  - b) Let me stop and address any and all young people reading this lesson. You may think, "I am not middle aged yet. I have plenty of time later in life to make a difference for God. Why should I live for Him now since I am young?" My response is that no one knows how much time one has in life. There is no guarantee of how long one will live their life.
    - i) One has to learn that living to make a difference for God is the greatest purpose one can have in life and that time should begin now if it hasn't already.
    - ii) Let me remind all of us of a story I shared a few weeks back. A young man was telling an older man what he wanted to do in his life. The young man said he wanted to make a lot of money. The older man then said, "OK, then what?" The young man responded, "Then I want to take it easy and enjoy my life." The older man responded, "OK, then what?" The young man said, "Then I suppose I die and I get judged by God for how I lived my life."
      - a) At that point the young man went away crying as he realized what a waste of a life that ambition was. By the way I am not against making money or even going into the business world. My point is that one needs to learn to live for God as essentially that is the only true purpose of living this life.
  - c) OK John, let's say we agree that we should live our lives for God. What does that mean practically? If I go to church every week is that enough? Taking regular time to praise God is a good start. Giving one's life to God is about our attitude. If there is could be some specific task He wants us to do, we need to ask Him. I have learned God is more than willing to guide us down the path He desires for our lives if we let Him. I then find that by watching my life and going in the direction that I believe God is leading me, it becomes obvious over time just how He is leading our lives.
    - i) But John, what if am say, sick right now or in a situation I cannot change? Again, it begins with prayer. Ask God to help you and lead you down the path He desires for our lives. I find that if God wants us out of our particular situation He will make it happen if we are willing to try to change that situation.
      - a) If God wants us to continue in that same situation, He will make it continue that way. The related point is to trust in His timing for our lives.
  - d) Speaking of His timing, that does lead us back to this verse. The reminder here is no matter how young or how old we are, the God we trust in is willing to guide our lives if we let Him. The God we trust in is well aware of how old we are, or what we desire to accomplish in our lives. The secret is to remember that our lives belong to Him in the first place. We can't change our past, but just whatever time we have left to make a difference for Him. How we actually make that difference is up to Him to lead us, which He is more than willing to do if we trust Him.
  - e) Well, I should end the lesson after that speech, but we still have four more verses to go.

26. Verse 25: In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.
- a) I should state here that verses 25-27 of this psalm are quoted in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews (1:10-12). The point in Hebrews is simply that Jesus Himself was responsible for creating the universe, as we know it to exist. The point is the book of Hebrews teaches us that the "you" here in Verse 25 refers to Jesus Himself.
    - i) What that implies among other things is that the writer of the book of Hebrews read and studied Psalm 102 and believed not only that it ties to Jesus return, but that Jesus Himself was there in the beginning with God the Father when the world as we know it was created.
    - ii) So why is it important to know that Jesus existed before the world was created? It is an argument that Jesus Himself is "eternal" like God the Father. The bible does not teach that God the Father created Jesus and that Jesus then created everything else. The Bible teaches Jesus always existed. That is what I believe is meant in Proverbs 8:30 (and the surrounding passages) as it described someone who was with God the Father as the world was created in the first place.
    - iii) OK John, how do we know that God the Father did not create God the Son? Among other bible passages, consider Isaiah 44:24b. It reads, "I am the LORD, who makes all things". Notice Isaiah uses the title "LORD" (that means "Jehovah God") as the entity who made our world. Hebrews Chapter 1, which quotes this verse in the psalms, says that Jesus is responsible for making all things. My point is if one ties Verse 25 of this psalm, with Isaiah 44:24 and Hebrews 1:10-12, the combined point of these verses is that Jesus is God and Jesus did create all things.
  - b) That little speech does lead me back to this verse. It says that "you" did this work. Now that I've beaten the point to death that "you" refers to Jesus, let me explain this verse in relevance to the rest of the psalm.
    - i) Remember that the writer of this psalm was somehow in a lot of pain and was convinced he was dying way too young. Instead of worrying about his situation, the writer recalls the fact that God (Father and Son) created the world and if they created it, we should respect them as being in charge of this world.
    - ii) Therefore if God is in charge of this world, then we let Him be in charge. God does give us the freedom to choose to live for ourselves or live for Him at any particular moment. If we choose to let Him run our lives, then we do "just that": Let Him be in charge. That means we accept whatever time frame God has given us to live and we use that time frame to make a difference for Him with our lives.
  - c) I was thinking here of the bible story of King Hezekiah. This was an Israelite king that was dying and then asks God for more time to live. God grants his request and gives that king 15 more years of life. (See 2nd Kings 20:6). The problem with that request is that in those next 15 years of the king's life, he gave birth to a son named Manasseh who was the next king. That new king was recorded as one of the worst kings in Israel's history. (See 2nd Kings 21:1, 21:11 and 2nd Chronicles 33:9 to record the bad history of Manasseh.)
    - i) The point of that little story is that if God says "our time is up" as it was God's desire for King Hezekiah at that moment (before the 15 years), He may have a reason why He wants to end our lives at that time. In the case of King Hezekiah, it was to prevent the rule of one of the worst kings in the history of that country.
    - ii) My point, which does tie to this verse, is simply that to let God be in charge does not mean we should be suicidal. It just means that we accept the idea that God is in charge of our lives we accept Him as being in charge. To steal a bad movie line, "It's not over until it's over" and only God determines when our life or our particular situation we are dealing with is "over". In the meantime, we make the best decisions we can with the information at hand.

27. Verse 26: They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.
- a) OK, who is the "they" who will perish and how do I avoid being part of "they"?
    - i) Reading the last verse again, it is describing the world itself. The idea is if God created our world, it will not last forever. As an example, when our sun burns out one day, then at the same time, life on our planet would no longer exist.
    - ii) My point is life, as we know it will not go on forever. That is in effect another reason to live for God because no matter what we accomplish for ourselves, in effect has no meaning if this world as we know it will come to an end one day.
  - b) On another level, one can read this verse about being those who don't trust in the God of the bible. People can think whatever they want, but that doesn't deny the reality of His existence and the fact that this is His world. What should motivate us as Christians is the true reality that this life is in effect "nothing" in comparison to eternity.
    - i) I have wondered why doesn't God just "take us home" as soon as we realize that He exists and we should live for Him? The answer is that God gives us the honor and privilege of leading others to Him and helping others grow in Him. That too, is a good summary of the purpose of our lives as Christian believers.
28. Verse 27: But you remain the same, and your years will never end.
- a) This is an obvious statement to those of us who trust in God. The idea is that our lives will come to an end one day and even the sun we see will burn out one day, but the God we believe in, does not age and will live forever. It is another reason to live for God and not just to live for our own pleasure.
29. Verse 28: The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you."
- a) The good news about this psalm is that it is "future oriented". It not only sees life from God's perspective, but that it also sees our own future from God's perspective.
    - i) What I mean by that is that it not only looks at our own lives and says in effect we should live for God, but that the lives of people who come after us, should also be set on living for God.
    - ii) In effect, this psalm ends with another call for evangelism. The point is if we believe God exists and that eternal life is dependant upon that trust in Him, we should teach that to the next generation and as many people that are willing to listen to us that God exists.
30. With that happy statement, out of my system, I want to come back to my lesson theme of living now knowing that God rules over our world forever. The main thing to get out of this lesson is that we should not waste our lives just doing things for our own pleasure. Yes we can enjoy our lives and God wants us to enjoy our lives. I have learned that when we give our lives to Him and make time for Him, He then in turn gives us the desires of our hearts if we put Him in charge of our lives to begin with. Trusting in Him gets us through the rough times of our lives and having Him rule over our hearts gives us the proper perspective of how to live life in the first place.
- a) OK, I've beaten the point to death about trusting God through good and bad times and if we let Him rule over our lives, we will experience far more joy than trying to live life without letting Him be in charge. It's time to end the lesson.
31. Let's pray: Father, we pray for our leaders. We may not always agree with their decisions, but we do realize that You have placed them in charge and we have to respect the fact that they are our leaders. Guide them so that Your will may be done for all of our lives. Next, we ask that You be guide us through our own lives. Our lives can be difficult at times and we can't explain all the bad things that happen to us and around us. We simply accept the fact that You are in charge. You provide both love and justice to this world, and we wait on Your timing as we live to make a difference for You in this world. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen