

Psalms 105-106 – John Karmelich

1. In this lesson, we finish the fourth of the five books of the psalms. Now that I've written dozens of lessons on the psalms, I am amazed of what I have learned through them, and how much they have helped me to spiritually grow as a person. I also figure that if God has gotten me this far, He will guide me through the final book, which is Psalms 107 through 150.
 - a) That concept of looking back at one's history is not only relevant to all the psalms, but it is a specific topic of the two psalms in this lesson. Both of them focus on the history of the ancient Israelites, with an emphasis on helping us grow spiritually as people.
 - b) These two psalms are considered "bookends" in that they are designed to go together. Just as Psalms 103 and 104 are designed as "matching pairs", so scholars see Psalms 105 and 106 as "matching pairs with similar themes."
 - i) The difference is Psalm 105 focuses on the Israel's history from their perspective while Psalm 106 discusses their history as a nation from God's perspective.
2. OK, what does God want us to learn from these history lessons?
 - a) For starters, that last sentence is my title for this lesson. The people listed in this history lesson saw God work in a mighty way. The mistake they made was they refused to grow and trust in Him despite the miracles they saw in their lives.
 - b) Now think of our own lives. If we are saved, then whether we realize it or not, miracles have occurred in our lives, the greatest of which is our salvation itself. Even if you don't believe you are blessed in any other aspect of life, if you believe Jesus has died for your sins and you are now living to make a difference for Him, then your life is in effect a series of miracles that does compare with the miracles of ancient Israel.
 - c) The key to reading these psalms is not to think "oh poor them, they didn't get it." The key is to read these psalms and consider, "What can I learn from their mistakes and how do I not repeat them in my own life?" That is what a good history lesson is all about.
3. Let me explain this upcoming history lesson one way and then we'll get started on the text.
 - a) As I like to remind us just about every lesson lately, the fourth book of the psalms ties well to the fourth book of the Old Testament, the book of Numbers. In Numbers, a whole generation of Israelites was sentenced to die in the desert while only their children get to enter the Promised Land. That fact is specifically brought up in this lesson. The point is that group saw God work in a mighty way and they still "before they knew it" refused to trust in His desire for their lives.
 - b) To put it another way, if we have given our lives to Jesus, it means just that: Actually doing what He wants us to do with our lives. It means praying for God's will to get done in our lives and it means that we have to be willing to submit our lives to Him.
 - i) What I have learned to pray is that my life be used by God to make a difference for Him. I pray for God to make me aware of what He has planned for me today and may whatever happens this day be somehow used for His glory.
 - ii) That doesn't mean I have to go conquer a new mountain every day. Making a difference for God usually involves whatever we are doing "here and now". The point is we remind ourselves that He is in charge of our lives and not us.
 - iii) This leads me back to these two psalms. Learning about history is far more than learning facts. It is about understanding the author's perspective of the facts being stated and what the author wants us to learn from those facts. In the case of these two psalms, it is about not repeating the mistake of a failure to trust God despite the evidence that He is already working in our lives to make a difference for Him.
 - c) With that said, we have 93 verses to cover today, so get your running shoes on and before you know it, we are going to zip our way through a lot of text.

4. Psalm 105 and 106 title: None
 - a) Neither psalm in this lesson has a title. There are some clues as to when it was written as the opening line of Psalm 105 is also in 1st Chronicles 16:8. Personally, if the psalms in this lesson don't want us to know about the "who, what when's and where's" of the authorship, that is good enough for me to not worry about it and focus on the text itself.
 - b) OK, with that non-title commentary completed, ☺ I'll move on to Verse 1.
5. Verse 1: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. ² Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.
 - a) The actual history lesson won't begin until Verse 8. The psalm opens with a request for us to give thanks to God, to call upon and make His name known to the nations.
 - b) Let me discuss the three requests made of the reader in Verse 1: They are to give thanks to God, call on His name and make His name known to the nation:
 - i) To give thanks to God is in effect to appreciate what He has done for our lives. We've covered that a lot in the past few lessons. The point here is that we should be grateful for what God has done in our lives as well as done in history.
 - ii) To "Call on His name" is far more than being grateful. It includes asking for His help when needs arise. It is about calling upon Him to remind ourselves that we do belong to Him and desire to use our lives to make a difference for Him. As I like to say, we don't pray for His sake, but for ours. Prayer is among other things a reminder to ourselves that we belong to Him and we desire to do His will.
 - iii) Finally Verse 1 says that we should make God's name known among the nations. The point is that we should not keep knowledge of God to our self, but it should spread to others, which means spread to nonbelievers.
 - a) In effect, this final phrase is the "Great Commission" that Jesus stated in Matthew 28:19. The point is God wants us to share the knowledge of Him with others we encounter in our lives and spread the word about Him.
 - c) Verse 2 in effect is a commentary on Verse 1. It is to "sing out to God" so that we can tell others of His works. To "sing out" implies a few things: First, it is that others will hear us. That is in effect a reminder to not be silent about our love of God. Second it is a reminder to tell God in our own way, both privately and corporately (i.e., with other believers) how much we appreciate what He has done for us.
6. Verse 3: Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. ⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. ⁵ Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
 - a) In these three verses, the focus is on what it we believers should do with their lives: First we should "Glory (trust) in His name". The idea is that if we can take the time to appreciate all He has done for us, it should cause us to appreciate Him all the more.
 - i) The reason we should seek Him is that act of worship gives us the strength and ability to make a difference for Him with our lives.
7. Verse 6: O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.
 - a) Verses 3-5 focused on whom it is we are to worship, which is God. Verse 6 focuses on who does the worshiping, which are all the Israelites. Remember that this psalm focuses on specific aspects of the history of Israel and it is in effect written to Israelites.
 - b) OK John, most of us are not Jewish by birth. Should we study this psalm? The answer is that we are adopted into God's family by our trust in Jesus. That in effect is one of the key messages of the New Testament, that non-Jewish people can enjoy the same privilege of trusting in God for our salvation than those of a literal Jewish heritage.
 - c) If you don't believe me, notice the last phrase: His chosen ones. If we believe that Jesus is God and believe that He died for our sins, whether we realize it or not we are His chosen ones. To put it another way, if you care about pleasing God with one's life and you also believe that statement about Jesus, then again, you are chosen by God to serve Him.

8. Verse 7: He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.
 - a) This verse is the reminder that God is not just the ruler over the Israelites and those of us who trust in Him, but the God who rules over all people.
 - b) From the ancient Israelites perspective, how could His judgments be all over the earth? The answer is how do you explain how all people instinctively know murder and stealing is wrong? That alone is evidence that He exists and His judgment is all over the world.
9. Verse 8: He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. ¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:
 - a) I remember many years ago, I struggled with the term "thousand generations" as stated in Verse 8 and a few other places in the bible. Here is why:
 - i) If God is saying that His word will stand for a thousand generations, that means that Jesus will not return for 40,000 years, using a 40 year span for one generation.
 - ii) The question is, how could we live with the possibility of Jesus returning at any moment when God says that His word would stand for a thousand generations?
 - iii) I talked to a few scholars who gave me feedback on this expression. What I learned was this concept of a thousand generations was not meant that literally.
 - a) One has to read that phrase like a mother telling a child, "I must have told you a thousand times not to do that particular bad thing."
 - iv) With that said, I get the idea that Jesus can return at any time but at the same time, God's word is "timeless" and is stated by the "thousand generation" comment.
 - b) Well now that I've beaten the point to death about how long God's word will stand, how about I take a moment to discuss what it is that will last for a thousand generations.
 - i) This is about a specific promise that God said the land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people. That promise was stated to Abraham, was again stated to his son Isaac and again stated to his son Jacob all in the book of Genesis.
 - ii) Also know that God' promise was not conditional of their acceptance of Jesus. God did not tell Abraham, "I will give you the land of Israel unless of course your descendants reject the Messiah, and then you are burnt toast." ☺
 - a) That is one reason I get nervous when the rest of the world tells the Jewish people what they can and can't do with that land of Israel.
 - iii) A related idea is that this promise was conditional on a separate issue: Obedience to His commands. If the Israelites collectively fail to trust in God, they can be kicked out of the land, which was the point of the Babylonian captivity. However, the land is theirs when they do trust in Him, which is the main point of these verses and has been confirmed through out history.
10. Verse 11: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."
 - a) If you have any doubts that the promise of giving the land of Israel to the Israelites was the main point of Verses 8-10, Verse 11 proves that point.
 - b) OK, why call it the land of Canaan, as opposed to the land of Israel? It is to remember that we are reading a history lesson. When this promise of that piece of real estate was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they did not own the land and the actual conquering of the land did not happen until over 400 years later. During that 400-year period of time, the local residents were collectively called Canaanites.
 - c) One thing you will learn if you study your bible carefully is that God often likes to use ancient names to describe places. That is because we as people like to rename places every so often. The bible will often use original names for places as to keep straight what place is being described. This is one of those cases here when the bible says "the land of Canaan" and we have another one coming up later when Egypt is called "land of Ham".
 - i) By the way, "Ham" was a person's name and has nothing to do with pigs. ☺ I'll explain who Ham is, in a few pages.

11. Verse 12: When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it, ¹³ they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.
- a) We are now getting into the "heart" of this history lesson. To explain these verses, one has to remember that when God first made this promise of God giving the land to Abraham, he was an old man and didn't have any children. When the same promise was given to his son Isaac, he would only go on to have only two children. One of Isaac's sons, Jacob got the same promise and he went on to have 12 sons and one daughter. The point is that this relatively small group of people never owned any part of Israel but wandered from place to place waiting on God's timing for Him to fulfill His promise to them.
 - i) Which surprisingly leads to us. Our job as Christians is to do our best to make a difference for God as we wait on His timing to fulfill His promises to us of the return of Jesus. We as believers will get our own inheritance based on our obedience to what He specifically desires each of us to do with our lives.
 - ii) The point from the Israelite perspective is this family was never "knocked off" and survived through all sorts of trials simply because it was God's desire for this family to grow into a great nation. When they were in Egypt for over 400 years, they grew to over two million people. Later I'll mention some biblical evidence that supports the size of this nation at the time of the Exodus.
12. Verse 14: He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: ¹⁵ "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."
- a) As I read this psalm a few times, it started to strike me how amazing it was that the original Israel family survived as a unit. The point is in effect, "God called the family of Abraham, the family of his son Isaac and the family of his son Jacob to salvation (that became the nation of Israel) whether they liked it or not. They miraculously survived all sorts of trials, tragedies and even kings were rebuked for their sakes.
 - b) For you and I, this is another reminder that just as God has miraculously preserved those who trusted in Him back then, it applies to us as well. We as Christians are also God's "anointed one's" and even His "prophets" (that is, those who spread the word about Him).
 - i) That doesn't mean all Christians are guaranteed long lives. It means that God does protect us from harm and those who want to hurt us. It means we can trust in God to get us through any and all situations if we put our trust in Him for getting us through those situations.
 - c) Let me describe the word "prophet" as it used here. When we think of biblical prophets, we think of the main characters of the whole bible, or at least the Old Testament writers.
 - i) The term technically refers to anyone who is willing to spread the word about God's existence. If we preach or teach about God to someone, at that moment, we are acting as a prophet for God.
 - ii) In this verse, the reference is simply to the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as they were "moving" from Israel to Egypt. Because they were called by God to form a nation for Him, they are called prophets simply because their existence and survival does speak of God's existence.
13. Verse 16: He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food;
- a) One of the biggest misconceptions about being a believer is that we get to avoid tragedies. This verse is saying in effect that God allowed a horrible tragedy to exist in order to get this particular family to move to Egypt.
 - b) Were other families affected by this famine? Of course. Was it fair to everyone else that God allowed this famine to occur? Of course not. Sometimes God allows bad things to occur for reasons that are beyond our ability to comprehend at that moment in time.
 - c) Does that mean God is behind every bad thing that happens? Of course not. The point is God is guiding our lives just as He was guiding the lives of the original Israelite families. Sometimes He allows bad things to happen in order for His will to get done.

14. Verse 17: and he sent a man before them-- Joseph, sold as a slave. ¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, ¹⁹ till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.
- a) In these verses, the psalmist is recalling the story of Joseph. He was one of 12 sons of Jacob and the great grandson of Abraham. He is the main character of roughly the last dozen chapters of the book of Genesis.
 - i) The point of these verses is in effect, that while Joseph suffered terribly, it was all part of God's plan to get the Israelites to move to Egypt. His brothers sold Joseph into slavery. He was later put in jail in Egypt for a crime he didn't commit. He was later released from jail, appeared before the king of Egypt and made the second in command in Egypt besides the king ("Pharaoh") himself.
 - b) Now that I have summarized much of the last part of the book of Genesis, consider the following: God could have had the Israelites move to Egypt in a much less dramatic way. God could have just told Jacob (Joseph's father) to move to Egypt to avoid the famine.
 - i) So why did God go to all of this trouble in effect to get this one family of Israelites to live in Egypt? I believe it is to show that God is in control of the situations of our lives whether we realize it or not.
 - c) Before I leave these verses, let me quickly comment on "shackles". If you read this story in Genesis, there is no mention of that fact that Joseph was "chained up" like this in jail. It is logical to make that assumption since he was put in jail, but the psalmist, being inspired by God does add this little detail that we don't have in the original Genesis account.
15. Verse 20: The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free. ²¹ He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed, ²² to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom. ²³ Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
- a) This text is recalling the section in Genesis where Joseph rose to power and became the second highest ranked person in Egypt. (See Genesis 41:40.) With Joseph in leadership, his brothers (who betrayed him many years earlier) were now going to move to Egypt and be protected from this famine that affected an area that included Egypt and Israel.
 - i) The point for us is that when God allows tragedies in our lives, one will find that God also makes a way for us to escape or get through a difficult time. Just as God allowed the Israelites to survive through a long multi-year famine, so God makes a way for you and I to continue to serve Him as long as we are trusting in Him.
 - b) OK time for me to explain whom Ham is, as I promised a few pages back. If Ham is a name for Egypt, why not just say Egypt? Ham was one of three sons of Noah, who many centuries earlier, settled in Egypt and is the ancestor of all Egyptians.
 - i) Also remember psalms are poetry. The writer already used the word Egypt in the previous part of this sentence and now needed a synonym, so he used "Ham".
16. Verse 24: The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes, ²⁵ whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.
- a) In Egypt, the family of Israelites grew to a large nation. The growth of this family scared the Egyptians and God allowed that anger by the Egyptians to grow for His purposes.
 - i) While this anger led to the slavery of the Israelites, it is another reminder that God is working out "His plan on His timing" to those who trust in Him.
 - b) I promised you earlier that I would give support for the number of people who came out of Egypt. In Numbers Chapter 1, the men over the age of 20 years were counted soon after they left Egypt. The total number from that count was 603,550. (See Numbers 1:46.)
 - i) That number excluded one of the 12 tribes of Israel (Levites). If one assumes that there were an equal number of women plus children, the total number of people who came of Egypt was between one and two million.
 - ii) My point of this whole exercise is to show that God did take a small family and turn them into a large nation over a 400-year period of time.

17. Verse 26: He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. ²⁷ They performed his miraculous signs among them, his wonders in the land of Ham.
- a) Between the time of Joseph (again, the great grandson of Abraham) first came to Egypt to the time of Moses was roughly a 400-year time gap. Why did God wait so long? The answer was given to Abraham, when he was told the sins of the Canaanites (those who lives in Israel) was not complete and Abraham was told that his descendants would not get the land for another 400 years. (Based on Genesis 15:13.)
 - i) The point is that while the Israelites were suffering in slavery, God still is working out a plan for their (and our salvation) and to rescue them and us from a world that does not honor Him as God.
 - ii) So why wait 400 years? Maybe it took that long (and longer) for the Israelites to realize that they needed God to be in charge of their lives and not the Egyptians.
18. Verse 28: He sent darkness and made the land dark-- for had they not rebelled against his words? ²⁹He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die. ³⁰ Their land teemed with frogs, which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers. ³¹ He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. ³² He turned their rain into hail, with lightning through out their land; ³³ he struck down their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country. ³⁴He spoke, and the locusts came, grasshoppers without number; ³⁵ they ate up every green thing in their land, ate up the produce of their soil.
- a) In these seven verses, we are recalling the plagues on Egypt. Most of us know the stories of God using Moses to send the plagues on Egypt because they refused to let the Israelites go and worship Him. If this is new to you, read the first dozen chapters of Exodus.
 - b) It is more important to understand why God wants us to focus on these plagues: The important point is that God goes to great lengths and troubles to separate those He has called from those who don't care about Him.
 - i) Let me put it this way: If God has called you and me to serve Him, that means He has separated us from those who don't trust in Him. But John, I never saw any great plagues rain down on those who wanted to do me harm. True. ☺
 - ii) What we have seen is God going to great lengths to prove that He loves us and has called us to serve Him. I don't believe anyone makes it to hell that God intends to be in heaven.
 - iii) So what does that have to do with these plagues? Just as God went to dramatic extremes to call the Israelites into His plan of salvation, know that God has called you and me into a plan and is willing to go to great lengths and trouble to call us, separate us from nonbelievers, and keep us as close to Him as possible.
 - c) The other point is if we can trust God to get the Israelites out of Egypt "His way and on His timing", we can trust in God to get us through our lives and guide us through our own tough circumstances, again, "His way and on His timing".
 - d) With that happy thought floating through our head, I am ready to keep moving.
19. Verse 36: Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their manhood. ³⁷ He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered. ³⁸ Egypt was glad when they left, because dread of Israel had fallen on them.
- a) The final plague on Egypt was the death of the firstborn child of everyone who refused to trust in God. Why have that one last emphasized here?
 - i) Most nonbelievers respect the concept of "family" and caring about their children. God wanted to demonstrate He and He alone is in charge of how we deal with our families. This plague shows He is greater than our ability to produce children.
 - ii) Yes, this plague is what it took to get the Egyptians to finally say, "OK, that is enough. You Israelites, get out of here and take our gold with you". It took the understanding that God is in control of life itself, for the Egyptians to let His people (Israelites) be separated from the Egyptians.

- b) What is interesting to think about is the fact that the Egyptians still refused to worship the God of the Israelites despite the damage and death. That alone shows the power that the "world" has over nonbelievers. To put it another way, many people still refuse to turn their hearts over to God because they don't want to change their lifestyle. That is the great message being taught about the Egyptian people and about all people who refuse to trust in the God of the bible.
- i) Again, as one reads this section, don't think about ancient Egyptians. It is about knowing God has called us to be separate (in terms of thinking) from nonbelievers.
20. Verse 39: He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night.
- a) This verse focuses on the fact that after the Israelites left Egypt, for the next forty years, God provided a cloud covering through a very hot desert and also a fire to keep warm at night. The point is that God cares for them and us when even through a difficult time.
21. Verse 40: They asked, and he brought them quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. ⁴¹He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.
- a) These verses point out different moments during the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert and how God miraculously provided food and water for them in a desert.
- b) So, does that mean I should expect miracles from God in order to survive? I hold the view that every day of a Christian life is in effect a miracle from Him. Let me explain:
- i) If God has given me the ability to work then I should work to provide for myself (and my family). God will not do for us what He expects us to do for ourselves. At the same time, I have seen God do incredible miracles to people I have known in effect to draw those people down the path He wants them to go.
22. Verse 42: For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham. ⁴³ He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy; ⁴⁴ he gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for-- ⁴⁵ that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws. Praise the LORD.
- a) These final four verses summarize the purpose of the psalm: To remember how God kept His promise to Abraham that his descendants (Israelites) would be taken out of Egypt and they would in effect "own" the promised land.
- b) Let me remind us of what the Promised Land represents: It is not symbolic of heaven if for no other reason that the Israelites have to fight wars there. The Promised Land is symbolic of the rich, full life of trusting God with every aspect of our lives.
- c) The point is that if God has called us to a life of trusting Him, then we like those Israelites need to be grateful for how He has worked in our lives to draw us closer to Him.
- i) Just as God had a long term, multi-generational plan for those Israelites, so know that God has a similar long-term plan for our lives as well as our descendants if those descendants also learn to trust Him with their lives as well.
- d) I can't finish this psalm without adding another of my technical points. The last part of Verse 45 just prior to "Praise the Lord" (by the way, that is English for "Hallelujah") is a reminder that a reason God separated the Israelites was in effect to "Keep His laws".
- i) Does that mean we Christians are required to keep every commandment in the Old Testament? The short answer is that one has to read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. There are some laws that obviously still apply such as murder and stealing as two prime examples. However, Jesus sacrifice on the cross does fulfill all of the Old Testament sacrifice requirements as described in the law.
- ii) Being a Christian is all about trust in God, and not about keeping a list of 1, 10 or 1,000 rules. What I have found is that when we do trust in God, and learn what He desires through His word, we end up being obedient not by trying harder, but by trusting and believing that He is working through us to change us to be the type of person that He wants us to be.
- e) With that said, it is time to start Psalm 106.

23. Psalm 106, Verse 1: Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
- a) It is interesting to note that Psalm 106 starts the same way Psalm 105 ends. This psalm starts with "Praise The Lord" and that is how the last psalm ended. The point is God is encouraging us to praise Him, not that He needs to hear it, but for our sakes so that we draw close to Him and we have a more joyful life.
 - b) Remember that scholars believe Psalms 105 and 106 were designed to go together. Both describe parts of the history of Israel. Psalm 105 focuses on the good things God has done for them (and us). Psalm 106 focuses on the danger of failing to act on God's promises.
 - c) The key point as we read this psalm is to remember that despite the Israelites' failure to trust in God, that we will read about in this psalm and despite our own sins, He is still faithful to keep His promises to them and us.
 - i) To put it another way, just because we break our word to God at times, we can trust on Him to be faithful and never break His promises to us.
 - d) Meanwhile, it is time to get negative and focus on what the Israelites did wrong. ☹
24. Verse 2: Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?
- a) In Verse 1, there was a call to the reader to praise God. Now in the second verse, the psalm writer is asking, "who can fully declare what He has done?"
 - i) This verse is not discouraging us to praise God. The point is we cannot fully comprehend all that He has done for our lives. We can get so busy focusing on our own issues, we can forget that God is there, watching over us and in effect worthy to be praised for the good He is doing in our lives.
 - ii) OK John, suppose things are not going so good right now. Why should I praise Him? (I warned you it was time to get negative. ☹) The answer is the way to overcome problems starts with changing our perspective. If we realize that God is guiding us, that will help us deal with whatever it is we have to face in life.
25. Verse 3: Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right.
- a) Verse 3 has another change in "tone", where it reads as if we have to be perfect or at least really good in order to be blessed by God. If you think that, you're view of Christianity is "backwards". Let me explain:
 - i) The point of this verse is not that we should do well and then He will bless us. The point is we should make the effort to live the type of life that God desires us to live and then He will bless us. I also admit, this is one of those principals that has to be experienced over time in order to be appreciated.
 - ii) It doesn't mean every moment of one's life will go well if we trust God. Think about the famine discussed earlier in this lesson. The point is if we put our trust in God to lead us, He will guide us through good and bad times and yes we will be blessed in our lives both on earth and in heaven.
 - b) But John, the verse also says, "Who constantly do what is right". The idea of this phrase is not about being perfect all the time. It is about regularly and constantly making the effort to seek God. If we do that, we will end up doing what is right. The secret to living the Christian life is not about trying harder, it is about letting God work through us to change us to be the type of person He wants us to be.
26. Verse 4: Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people, come to my aid when you save them, ⁵ that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation and join your inheritance in giving praise.
- a) These two verses are in effect a personal prayer to be included in God's promises. Let me paraphrase: Dear God, I get the idea that people are blessed if they trust in You. Help me to learn to trust in You daily to guide my life so that I too can enjoy the "prosperity of life" that you have designed for us.

- b) Let me explain what the bible and the psalmist means by the "prosperity of life". The bible never guarantees financial blessings to those who trust in Him. If that were true, people would come to God for the "stuff" and not for a relationship with Him.
 - i) The idea of "prosperity of life" is that to live a life learning to trust Him daily and doing the right thing leads us to a far greater life than anything and everything we can do based solely on our power and strength.
 - c) At the end of our life, do you want to brag to God about how much stuff you have or how much of a difference you have made for Him in this world? While we all chew on the guilt of that statement, I'll sneak over to the next verse. ☺
27. Verse 6: We have sinned, even as our fathers did; we have done wrong and acted wickedly.
- a) Beginning in Verse 7, we get another Israelite history lesson with an emphasis on what they did wrong from His perspective. The point of this history lesson is for all of us to look at our own ways of displeasing God and confess them as sin.
 - b) It would help here if I define confession: It is the concept of saying or even thinking that "our way of doing something was wrong and God's way of right." I believe even when we first have that thought; God forgives us if we are willing to turn to His way of doing things in the future. Even if we mess up again, it is a matter of realizing God's way was right and by His power working through us, we can change for the better.
 - i) In confession, the mistake we make is we think "we should have done better" and we hold onto guilt. God is in effect saying to us, "No, you are not capable of doing better without Me. Only by my power working through you can you properly do My will for your (our) life at any given moment.
 - c) OK, it's time to see what the Israelites did wrong and learn from it.
28. Verse 7: When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. ⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. ⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert. ¹⁰ He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. ¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived.
- a) Here we are recounting the story of the crossing of the Red Sea from the Book of Exodus. When the Israelites first got to the Sea, they doubted in God's ability to rescue and guide them. Even after they walked through the Red Sea and the same sea came crashing down on their enemies, the Israelites soon still doubted in God's ability to guide them.
 - b) OK John, I know this biblical story. Why tell it here? It is about reminding ourselves that when we get to a point in life where we are thinking, "This is it, I'm doomed and there is nowhere to go". That is often when God does His best work and guides us to the next step. To put it another way, "It is not over until God says it is over." Just because our situation may look impossible, does not mean it is impossible for God and trusting in Him means that there is going to be a way of escape although He does not usually share with us in advance as to how He plans on leading us the next step of our lives.
29. Verse 12: Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. ¹³ But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel. ¹⁴ In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wasteland they put God to the test. ¹⁵ So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them.
- a) After God got the Israelites through the Red Sea, they paused to praise Him. Soon afterwards, their trust faded. The Israelites said they were craving meat and were not happy with the food He was miraculously providing for them. (See Exodus 16.)
 - i) God gave them what they wanting but also sent a disease on them.
 - b) This reads like God is cruel. The Israelites did praise Him and they asked for a specific food (in this case meat), but He punished them and allowed a disease in their mist.

- c) The point is not that the Israelites were punished for praising God after the Red Sea crossing. It is that the Israelites failed to learn the lesson that He was guiding them "His way and on His timing". The point is we can ask God for stuff, but we must remember we are here to do His will, and not the other way around. Sometimes God giving us what we want is a bad thing. It is about God teaching us "the hard way" that we should desire what He wants for our lives and not what we want.
 - d) OK then John, what does God want for my life? Ask Him. The answer varies from person to person. Sometimes the answer becomes obvious over time as we watch our lives and we see how and where He is leading us. The issue is not the specifics of our lives as much as it is to trust Him to guide us down the path He wants for our lives.
30. Verse 16: In the camp they grew envious of Moses and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD. ¹⁷ The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan; it buried the company of Abiram. ¹⁸ Fire blazed among their followers; a flame consumed the wicked.
- a) The point here is that a man named Dathan lead a group that challenged God's decision to make Moses and Aaron the Israelite leaders. God responded to that challenge by killing those people who choose to rebel against Moses. (See Numbers 16.)
 - b) So does this mean that if I rebel against God, He will "wipe me out on the spot"? If God did that, none of us would live very long. Sometimes He does allow drastic events to occur to make a point, but for the most part, God simply wants to teach us to trust Him and yes there are penalties in this lifetime for a failure to let God guide us as He desires.
 - c) I could describe more details about this event, but the last paragraph had enough guilt. ☺
31. Verse 19: At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. ²⁰ They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. ²¹ They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt, ²² miracles in the land of Ham and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.
- a) When you read the story of the Israelites coming out of Egypt, it is truly tragic. The big picture is how God guided them, then they turned from Him, then God did something to drive them back to Him, then they turned from Him again, and that story repeats.
 - i) Now think how often God has done good things for our lives, yet we still refuse to fully trust in Him with every (big emphasis on every) aspect of our lives.
 - ii) I am not writing this as one who is superior to anyone else reading this. I too, fail to trust God at times and in situations as well.
 - b) Yes you may say, but I was never like the Israelites who literally created a false god out of metal when they turned from Him. (Exodus 32:1-3.) My response is to watch what people do when they stop going to church for a while. It is amazing to see the activities and interests they develop and in many ways are no better than making a "metal idol".
 - i) Yes John, but I've never done that. The point is God is faithful despite the sins we commit and He always desires that we turn from these sinful issues.
32. Verse 23: So he said he would destroy them-- had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them.
- a) This is an interesting story from Numbers where God said in effect, "I've had it with the rebellion of the Israelites, and I will have another group of people to be my witnesses."
 - i) This got Moses to plead on the Israelites behalf and God held off wiping them out.
 - b) This story brings up an interesting question: Is God capable of changing His mind?
 - i) One possibility is that God was testing Moses to see how he would react to God's statement. It was God's intent to keep working with these Israelites, but it was also God desire that Moses keep leading them despite their faults.
 - ii) Another possibility is that God was "hinting" at the future formation of the Christian church being a greater nation in size then this Israelite nation.
 - iii) The point as it relates to this psalm is that Moses did intervene and pleaded for the lives of the Israelites and God spared the. (Story is in Numbers 14:11-20).

33. Verse 24: Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise. ²⁵ They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the LORD. ²⁶ So he swore to them with uplifted hand that he would make them fall in the desert, ²⁷ make their descendants fall among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands.
- a) By now, one can see the pattern of "God helping the Israelites, later they lacked faith in Him and He acted in a harsh way in order to get the Israelites to focus on Him again.
 - b) As to the specifics here, they are describing a key point in the book of Numbers, that the entire generation of Israelites were to die in the desert and only their children get to enter the Promised Land. Considering that there were about 1.2 million adults that came out of Egypt, I estimated an average about 70 people per day died in those 40 years in the desert.
 - i) Moses did a lot of funerals. ☺
 - ii) So why was God so hard on them and how does that affect me? The lesson is about being a witness for God. We can get to a point (no one knows what that point is) where God can say to us, "I give up trying to use you to make a difference for me and in effect, you are out of the ballgame". That in effect was the fate of this entire generation of Israelites. Only their children entered the Promised Land.
34. Verse 28: They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods; ²⁹they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them.
- a) The "Baal of Peor" was where the Israelites worshipped a local false god. If God already sentenced this generation to die, why would He care what they did at this point? That is because His name is at stake with this generation and therefore this plague happened to remind them who was in charge. (The story is told in Numbers 25 and 31.)
35. Verse 30: But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked. ³¹ This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come.
- a) This is from Numbers 25:7, where a man ended the plague by wiping out the leaders of the last rebellion against God. The point is God was angry at the Israelites for their lack of trust and a "hero" emerged who was willing to trust God.
 - b) So if a plague breaks out, do I have to go kill someone? No. ☺ It means that if people around us are lacking a trust in God, He is still looking for us or anyone to be a leader in the sense of standing up to say we still trust God to see us through the present situation.
36. Verse 32: By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; ³³ for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips.
- a) This is an interesting little story from Numbers 27:14 (I told you Psalm Book 4 ties to the book of Numbers!) where Moses was so angry at the Israelites, he struck a specific rock when God only told Moses to only speak to the rock. The punishment for Moses was that he too, was forbidden to enter the Promised Land.
 - b) So why was this punishment so hard on Moses? The short answer is "he blew the model". Many chapters earlier, Moses did strike this rock and water came out. Now God just wanted Moses to speak to the rock. Now compare this to Jesus: Jesus only had to die once for all sins. After that we speak to Him for our requests, not strike Him again.
37. Verse 34: They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, ³⁵ but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. ³⁶ They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. ³⁷ They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. ³⁸ They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. ³⁹ They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves.
- a) These six verses summarize how God saw the Nation of Israel in all the centuries that they occupied the land from the time of the Judges until the Babylonian captivity many centuries later. Yes there were some good moments in-between times of disobedience, but the point is in effect no matter how hard God tried to get their focus on Him, they collectively turned to serve other gods.

- b) One of the underlying points here is that the Israelites became as bad or worse than the original people that lived in this land in the first place. One of the reasons God used the Israelites to wipe out the original inhabitants was that their sins were so bad, God said in effect, "it is more merciful to kill this group than to let them keep living".
 - i) Then over the next several centuries, the Israelites were doing the same wicked things. They too, were sacrificing their own children (alive) to their false gods.
 - c) OK why would they offer their children? The historical answer is that it was a sign of trust in that local deity to bless them if they were willing to offer their children to them.
 - i) It was also an ancient form of "abortion" in that they engaged in prostitution and now had children from that act. It was killing what they didn't want.
 - ii) Let me say that whatever we have done before we trusted in Jesus is fully (a big emphasis on fully) forgiven of any sins we commit. The only unforgivable sin is to doubt that Jesus has paid the price for all of our sins.
38. Verse 40: Therefore the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance. ⁴¹ He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them. ⁴² Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power.
- a) These verses in effect describe the Babylonian captivity when the nation of Israel was literally taken out of the land for disobedience. Roughly a century before that event, the territory of the northern tribes of Israel was taken over by the Assyrian Empire.
 - i) The point is when we fail to be a good witness for God, He can and will "take us out of the ballgame" in terms of using our lives to be a witness to Him.
 - b) The point is God uses the "carrot and the stick" to get our attention. That is a reference to the fact that donkeys and horses can be motivated by a carrot (good things) or being hit by a stick (bad things) in order to get them and us to do the will of the one in charge.
39. Verse 43: Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. ⁴⁴ But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; ⁴⁵ for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. ⁴⁶ He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive.
- a) Here is a summary of the entire history of the nation of Israel from God's perspective. The key point is that God never gave up on them, but in order to get the people to turn back to Him, He had to discipline them harshly to get their attention.
 - b) The point for us is that God can't "unlove" what He has decided to love. We can't sin enough to lose His love. We may sin enough to lose our ability to be a good witness for Him and for the sake of His name, God may take some of us "out of the game".
 - c) To summarize this whole lesson, to earn salvation from our perspective, is only about our trust that Jesus is God and He died for our sins. Being a good witness for God is then based on our behavior once we make that commitment. God cares about protecting His reputation, which is why He punishes us when we turn from Him.
40. Verse 47: Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. ⁴⁸ Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD.
- a) There are bible scholars who argue that these last two verses of this psalm and the last two verses of this fourth book were added later. My answer is "ok, whatever". ☺
 - b) To me, this ending is saying in effect, "We now understand what is God's game plan. We understand what it is we have to do to be a good witness for Him. Let us praise God for the sake of preserving His good name. Let us praise Him as that causes our souls to focus on Him and makes us better people. Let us praise Him for His wonderful plans for mankind despite how much we rebel against Him. Let us praise Him for taking the trouble to love us in the first place so we can love Him back. Finally let us praise Him that He gives us the privilege of being His witnesses to a lost and dying world."
 - c) Yes that is my closing prayer. We'll talk again next lesson. Thanks, John