

1. In this lesson, we are going to discuss why we should praise God. What is to be learned is that being blessed by God and praising Him go hand and hand. If we want God to bless our lives, we should praise Him for that. I'm also going to explain what is God's blessing, in this lesson.
  - a) Let me give the title of this lesson. It is the phrase "Praise the Lord". That phrase is used in all three psalms here. The question is "what does that mean and why should I care?"
  - b) To explain further, first one has to understand what the word LORD means. That word LORD is usually translated, "I am what I am". The idea is "God is, who God is" and He doesn't have to explain who He is to us. The idea includes the fact that He exists and He rules over this world. He created everything that exists and He cares about our lives.
    - i) God explains through the bible what it is He expects of us. However it appears, He does not have the desire to explain why He exists or where He came from.
    - ii) Simply, God is, "who He is", which is why the most important name of God, is that single word LORD put in all capitals for us to comprehend.
  - c) This leads back to the key question of this lesson: Why should we praise God?
    - i) First of all, we don't praise Him for His sake. As I have stated in previous lessons, God does not need "pats on the back for His ego's sake".
    - ii) We praise God for our sake. It is about making us better people. As one grows in life and one grows in their relationship with God, one discovers that praising Him and obedience to Him and living a good life all go hand in hand.
    - iii) Being the type of person that God wants us to be requires us to praise Him. Making the effort to appreciate Him for who He is (God, enough said there) helps us to love Him and to live the type of life He desires for us to live.
    - iv) Let me try it one more way: I don't desire to live fifty, eighty or one hundred years. I know I will live forever. If living forever requires me to praise Him, then I should do just that. If praising Him causes me to live a better life in this lifetime, then I should want to do that too. If I am tempted to sin in some fashion, I have learned that praising God helps to keep me from that sin. If I am struggling or worried about some situation, praising Him helps to get my perspective right.
2. OK John, if all the psalms in this lesson (and in the next few lessons) deal with praising God, why have a bunch of separate psalms? Why not one long one to discussing praising Him? They are separate as each psalm has a separate purpose for praising Him.
  - a) For example, Psalm 111 focuses on the good things God has done for us. If we are going to spend time praising Him, it helps to know reasons why we should praise Him. Psalm 112 then gives us reasons why we should respond in praise to Him.
  - b) You may find it interesting that in the original Hebrew, both Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 are called "acrostic psalms". That means the first letter of the first line starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The second line starts with the second letter of that alphabet. It may also help to know that the phrase "Praise the Lord", which starts each of these two psalms is not part of that run through the Hebrew Alphabet.
    - i) Also note that both of these two psalms are only 10 lines long. Each verse contains two "half verses". Those half verses each begin with the next letter of the Hebrew Alphabet (after the previous half a verse) in the order of that Hebrew alphabet.
    - ii) OK John that is neat if we happen to speak Hebrew. Let's assume we don't. ☺ Why should we care about that bit of trivia? The answer is it helped the Israelites to learn these psalms and therefore, remember reasons to focus on praising God.
      - a) Since we don't speak Hebrew, it just shows the Psalmist cares about people wanting to learn the psalms and uses this "acrostic" to help people learn it.

3. In this lesson, we are also going to start a section of the psalms that runs from Psalm 113-118. Bible scholars call these specific psalms the "Egyptian Haifa" by. What that phrase means, is about being showing gratitude to God for leading the Israelites out of Egypt.
  - a) Well John, since we are not literally ancient Israelites and God did not literally lead our ancestors out of Egypt, why should I care about this group of psalms?
    - i) The answer is just as God called the nation of Israelites out of Egypt in order to serve Him, so God has called you and me away from our old lifestyle in order to make a difference for Him now in this lifetime.
  - b) This leads me to the word "holy." The idea of holy does not mean we are better people than nonbelievers. Holy in effect means we are separated to serve God.
    - i) The secret of making a difference for God has nothing to do with "trying harder". By trying hard we are relying on our own strength and not God's strength.
    - ii) The point of being holy is simply that we care about pleasing God. One way we do that is to praise Him. That is why these psalms are here in the first place.
  - c) It was tempting to cover Psalm 113-118 as one lesson, but truthfully there is too much text in that group for me to cover all in one lesson. Therefore, it was best if I start them here and then keep going in future lessons.
4. Before I start on the psalms themselves, I want to quickly discuss the issue of "why are these psalms here at this specific location?" If these psalms are about praising God and they are so important, why are they near the back of the book of psalms?
  - a) They are part of the fifth book of the psalms, as this fifth book is all about preparing us to lead the type of life God wants us to live. As I have stated a lot lately, I believe this fifth book of the psalms is similar in theme to the fifth book of the Bible Deuteronomy.
    - i) Both Deuteronomy and this fifth book of psalms teach us how to live the type of life God wants us to live. Instead of giving us a list of "do this and don't do that", these specific psalms teach us that if we focus on praising Him, it will lead the type of life that God desires of us. Obviously there is more to it than that, or else we would just have one short psalm telling us just to praise Him.
  - b) In summary, praising God is what we should do in order to be obedient. The concept of praise and obedience are intertwined and that is why these psalms are here.
5. Finally, let me comment on the fact none of these psalms have a title. There are no comments as to who wrote them or the occasion why each was written. Whoever the authors were, they just wanted the reader to focus on praising God and therefore, there are no title comments.
6. Psalm 111, Verse 1: Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
  - a) The psalm begins with the words "Praise the LORD". To transliterate from the original language, it is the Hebrew word "hallelujah", which simply means, "Praise the LORD".
    - i) Since I've already beaten the point to death that we should praise Him for our benefit, let us move on to why it is we should praise Him in the first place.
  - b) Let's look at the rest of Verse 1: The next phrase says we should extol (praise) God with all of our heart. OK, how do we do that as opposed to say half our heart?
    - i) The idea is to "give it all we got". It means we don't just worship God on Sunday (or whenever) and act differently the rest of the week. It means we care about pleasing Him with every aspect of our lives and we care that our lives are pleasing to Him in all that we do.
  - c) Finally, we read where to do this: "In the council of the upright and in the assembly."
    - i) OK, where are these two places? Think of it as wherever believers gather to worship God. The idea is we don't just worship God in church on Sundays (again or whenever), but we praise Him regularly and hopefully on a daily basis.
    - ii) The other related idea is that God wants us to work in teams. It is more than just praising God alone. In teams we encourage others by praising God together.

7. Verse 2: Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.
  - a) In Verse 2, we begin the Hebrew "acrostic", where each half of a verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Now that you know that, I'll drop that topic. ☺
  - b) The idea here in effect is to spend some time thinking about the good things God has done either in our lives or in our world. That doesn't mean we have to praise God all day long, but simply to spend a little time on a regular basis praising Him for who He is and what He has done in our lives and in our world.
  - c) So why should we think about God's works? For our benefit. It is to bring joy to our lives by focusing on Him in the first place. To put it another way, "To get in a good mood, spend some time getting in a good mood." If one is so down at the moment that one can't think of anything to be grateful for, then just think of some good things God has done for others or for this world. As my wife taught me in moments when I am felling sorry for myself, "Give me a list of five things one is grateful for at this moment in time."
8. Verse 3: Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.
  - a) Let's start here by explaining what is glorious and majestic about what God has done.
    - i) The idea is to spend a few moments appreciating the world that He has made for us and appreciating the fact that we are alive and breathing right now. It is about appreciating the good things one has in life.
    - ii) God does not expect us to spend every waking moment praising Him, but if we spend a few moments being grateful for what He has done for us, that does get us to be more joyful and that is part of the idea here.
  - b) The second half of this verse says, "His righteousness endures forever". The idea of God's righteousness is to realize "God's way of living is the right way for us." The specific's of understanding what is right for us, is all about understanding His laws.
    - i) Later, I'll get to some specifics about how God's laws apply to Christians. The point for now is the concept that "God is right about everything" will go on forever both in this world and in our next life as well.
    - ii) It also does not mean that once we go to heaven, we just kick back and never praise God again. That joy and close relationship He desires to have with us continues in the next life and goes on forever. That is why I figure, I might as well get used to the idea of praising God now as I'll be doing that forever.
    - iii) Even if I'm wrong about the forever part, I have learned that praising Him now and regularly does benefit my life and bless my life on a daily basis.
9. Verse 4a: He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
  - a) This is about the fact we have a recorded history in the bible of the great things God has done for the nation of Israel. Those ideas should be studied by all believers.
    - i) I remember many years ago my father thought the God of the Old Testament was different than the God of the New Testament. I had to explain to him that God is the same, yesterday today and tomorrow. I bring that up because it is important to emphasize that the Old Testament wasn't just written for the Jewish people, but for all believers to study and learn of God's works.
  - b) One way we can recall ways in which God has worked in our lives is to keep a written record of such events. I promise that if we are willing to keep such records, God will honor that and give you reasons to fill in that book. Such records area a reminder of His existence when we don't sense His presence in our lives.
10. Verse 4b: the LORD is gracious and compassionate.
  - a) To explain this, think of the opposite: God does not strike us dead if we mess up. When we mess up, God says in effect, "I'm still here waiting for you (that's us) to realize that I (God) was right and you (us) were wrong. Then I (God) am more than willing to renew our relationship once we acknowledge He was right and turn from that sin." The idea here in effect is God still cares about us despite our faults and our sins.

11. Verse 5: He provides food for those who fear him;
- a) So is this verse saying if we believe in God, He will drop food in our laps? I've yet to have that happen in my life. I know of a pastor who told a time when He had literally nothing and then some unknown person just left food on his doorstep. So it can happen that way.
  - b) The idea is more about the concept that those that trust in Me (God) will be taken care of and nobody dies before their appointed time.
    - i) If one believes in God, then one should also believe that He wants to provide for us so that we do have the strength and ability to worship Him.
  - c) In the historical context, this verse may have been referring to the fact that Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel suffered through a long famine, and God provided for him and his family by having one of his sons become a "top dog" in Egypt. (This paragraph is very short version of the last dozen chapters or so, of the book of Genesis.)
  - d) The point is in effect, "It is never over until God says it is over". If it is His will for us to survive another day, we need to have faith that He can and will make it possible.
12. Verse 5b: he remembers his covenant forever.
- a) The idea in effect is God's relationship with us does not end the moment we are saved or end the moment we die. It goes on forever with us. It goes on into the next life as well as the next generation. The idea is also that just because we mess up, does not change His relationship with us. He is still faithful to all of us who trust in Him to provide for us.
13. Verse 6: He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.
- a) OK it is easy to read how God has shown his power to the ancient Israelites, but when has He ever show his power to you and me? For starters, if we are saved, than God has worked in our lives. It began with "Him" and not us. The point for us is about being grateful. It is about taking a few moments to tell God how grateful one has for the good things of this world and the good things of one's lives.
  - b) But John, isn't Verse 6 is about how God has "worked" in terms of giving the Israelites the land that once belonged to other nations. Yes, in direct context, it refers to how God has made it possible for the land of Israel to actually be given to the Israelite people.
    - i) In the recorded history of our world, there has never been a group of people that were conquered, scattered and came back together again to form a country. The only exception is the Israelites, who did that after the time of the Babylonian captivity and again in 1948. Regardless of what one thinks of modern Israel, it is amazing how a nation that hasn't been a nation for roughly two thousand years came back together to be a nation again.
  - c) Now notice the word "them" in Verse 6. God does not promise us that each of us will conquer and inherit somebody else's land. This is about a specific promise given to Abraham that the Israelites as a nation would inherit that specific land.
  - d) The point for you and me is that if God is capable of doing that, (bring them together as a nation again), imagine what He can and does do for those of us who trust in Him?
14. Verse 7: The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.
- a) To discuss this verse, first of all I don't believe God has literal hands. The idea here is that what God does for our benefit, is in effect a good thing. The idea is also that God is faithful to us who trust in Him despite the sins we commit against Him.
  - b) Next it says, "All of his precepts are trustworthy". This refers to God's laws in the bible. There are a total of 613 laws listed just in the first five books of the bible. The idea is in effect that we can trust in all of those laws to be good things if we obey them.
  - c) This leads to the classic question: Are Christians required to obey the Old Testament laws? The New Testament clearly says we are not under those laws. (See Romans 6:14). However salvation and obedience go hand in hand. For example, God does not want us to steal and murder. So how do we apply those laws to us? The secret is to trust in God and desire to please Him and then I find it just comes "naturally" to be obedient to Him.

15. Verse 8: They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.
  - a) OK, what is the "they" in Verse 8? It would connect to the last noun of the previous verse. That would be God's laws for us to study. As I like to say, just because we as Christians are not bound by the Old Testament laws does not mean we shouldn't study the law or the bible in general. One reason I teach the bible is to help all of appreciate all the more what it is God wants us to learn from this book.
  - b) The point of this verse is in effect that God's laws stand forever despite the critics. God's laws are written for anyone and everyone who wants to draw close to Him and learn what it is that He desires for our lives. The related point is that God is always faithful to us despite the fact that we are not always faithful to Him.
16. Verse 9: He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever-- holy and awesome is his name.
  - a) The idea of redemption is more than just being saved. It is about being saved "now in this lifetime" in order to make a difference for Him, again, now in this lifetime.
  - b) To quote a favorite expression of mine: "I'm not impressed with someone who says they believe in Jesus. I'm impressed with someone who does something once they have made that commitment." I'm impressed with people who state they are grateful for what God has done for them and then uses that knowledge to spread His love to others."
    - i) The point is we are saved not only to live forever, but to make a difference for God in this lifetime. That is what the verse means by "ordaining His covenant forever". It means that we who believe in Him will continue to have a close relationship with Him in this lifetime as well as in the next lifetime.
  - c) Finally, the verse says, "holy and awesome is his name". There are many religious Jews who refuse to write God's name because they believe is too special to write out. In my correspondence with one Jewish friend, I will write "'G-d" and skip the letter "o" out of respect for my friends views on writing His name. My own view is that if I'm writing His name for His glory, it is ok to spell out any of His titles or names.
  - d) My own view of "holy and awesome is God's name" is in effect that we should not take God's name lightly. One of the 10 commandments is in effect to not take God's name in vein. (Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11). I don't believe it just refers to cursing using God's name although that idea is part of this concept. The more important concept is about having respect for God's name as it honors who He is.
    - i) The verse says God's name is "holy". I talked about "holy" in my introduction. The idea is in effect that we are to separate His name and not take it lightly. What that means practically is we take His name seriously and not jokingly.
    - ii) As I say on my web site, "I take God seriously and everybody else is fair game." One reason I tell jokes in these lessons is that I believe God has a sense of humor and since we are imperfect people, it is ok to laugh ourselves.
17. Verse 10: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.
  - a) Verse 10 is also in effect Proverbs 1:7. I'm not positive which verse came first, this psalm verse or Proverbs 1, so we don't know who gets the original credit. ☺
  - b) To fear God is not about walking around fearing a lightning bolt striking us if we sin.
    - i) Fear of God means we care about pleasing and displeasing Him. It is called the beginning of wisdom in that if we care about pleasing Him, then it will naturally follow that we want to learn more about Him and what He desires of our lives.
  - c) The verse then applies that those who do fear God will understand His laws. The idea is that one does not need a special set of instructions to understand the bible: One just needs to have a healthy fear of God and then He will guide us to understand our bibles.
  - d) The psalm ends with the request to give Him praise. Since I hopefully have done that through discussing every verse of this psalm, I agree that to Him belongs all praise.

18. Psalm 112: Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.
- a) Psalm 112 is similar in design to Psalm 111. Both begin with "Praise the LORD". Since I've already beaten to death what that expression means, I'll just praise Him at this point and move on to discuss the rest of Psalm 112.
    - i) Like Psalm 111, Psalm 112 is another "acrostic", where each half of a verse begins with a different letter in the Hebrew alphabet. While the opening line of Psalm 112 is similar to the last line of Psalm 111, in the Hebrew, the words are a little different so this line could begin with the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet.
    - ii) OK, enough foreign language study. ☺ Back to the studying of the psalms.
  - b) The main difference between these two psalms is that Psalm 111 focused on the good things that God has done for us. Hopefully I've beaten that point home by now. Psalm 112 focuses on how we should respond to His blessings on our lives. Let me just say for starters it is more than just yelling out Praise the Lord in gratitude. However, sincerely stating the phrase "Praise the LORD" is a good start. That is why it opens this psalm.
  - c) Notice that Psalm 112 in many ways, picks up where Psalm 111 ends:
    - i) Not only does it repeat the key phrase "Praise the LORD", but like the final verse of Psalm 111, the opening verse tells us we are blessed if we fear God.
    - ii) Again, fearing God is not about fearing being struck by His "lightening bolt". It is about fearing disappointing Him. To teach this concept another way, it should be the natural desire of Christians to want to please God. That fear of not being a good witness for Him should be what drives us as believers.
  - d) The second half of this verse says blessed is the person that finds great delight in His commands, which is the Old Testament law. Although I do study my bible regularly, I have near thought of the idea of being blessed by studying all of His commands.
    - i) As I have thought about how those laws do apply to my life, I consider them good laws. The blessings come by thinking about those laws and how to apply them.
    - ii) I know very few wealthy people who actually know their bible well. Therefore, I don't believe this blessing is connected with with financial prosperity.
      - a) What this expression means, is that understanding what God desires of our lives, blesses us as it gets us to think about Him and draw close to Him. That is how we are blessed if we read and study our bibles and it's laws.
    - iii) Since Christians are not under the law as I stated earlier in this lesson, why should I find delight in learning His commands? The idea is that learning them teaches us the best way to live. The secret to obeying them as I have stated earlier in this lesson is not about trying hard, but about letting the power of God work through us to make a difference for Him. To draw upon that power, one praises God and asks Him to work in our lives. God then, out of His love for us, works through us in order to make a difference for Him in our lives. That is how we are blessed.
    - iv) One more related comment while I'm on a roll. ☺ It is important to read the laws of the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. Some of those laws do apply to Christians today (in terms of obedience, not salvation), with murder and theft as prime examples. Other laws, such as the food laws in Leviticus Chapter 10 specifically apply to the Jewish people as their diet helps them focus on God.
      - a) The discussion of the food laws at is another lecture all unto itself and I wrote a whole lesson on how those food laws apply to Christians.
      - b) I don't believe Christians have to eat that specific diet. However, those laws do teach us by visual example how to draw and stay close to God.
  - e) OK, it is time to stop talking about food laws add how we are blessed as Christians by taking delight in God's commands and move on to read the rest of Psalm 112.

19. Verse 2: His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.
- a) Who is "His" at the start of this verse? Looking at Verse 3, I realize that "His" refers to God Himself, and this verse is saying that we who trust in God are His children.
    - i) The main point of this verse is that God considers all of us who trust in Him to be His children and we are blessed by that trust in Him.
  - b) Let me give an example how God's children will be mighty in the land. Within the hour of writing this page, I watched my wife take care of my sick daughter (strep throat) and was proud of how my wife acted. Hopefully my daughter will grow up and remember how her mother took the time to take care of her and at the same time how we praise God regularly and will pass that trait on to the next generation.
    - i) The point is one way we respond to God's love is to pass that love on to the next generation. Even if one does not have children, one should in one capacity or another work with someone of the next generation to pass on how the Christian should live their life. That is why Paul took on Timothy as his young assistant.
  - c) This also leads to the second half of this verse. It says the "generation of the upright will be blessed". As I previously stated, this is not about a financial blessing. It is about being blessed by drawing close to God because it is our desire to be close to Him.
    - i) When we desire to please God by obeying Him, even though we are far from perfect, it does bring joy to our lives when we trust in Him and we can and should pass that joy on to the next generation.
    - ii) OK, let's say we don't feel joy at this moment. Let's assume we want to be a more joyful person. The secret is not to try harder, but simply to start praising God and letting His love come into our lives. That act of thinking about positive aspects of His love and the good things He has done for our lives does bless us and that is the idea being conveyed in this psalm.
20. Verse 3: Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.
- a) OK John, you have been preaching for a while now that this blessing has nothing to do with financial gain, but here in Verse 3 it says, "wealth and riches are in his house".
    - i) To explain, remember that the word "His" from Verse 2 applies to God. The idea is that all believers are His children. If you doubt my interpretation, look at the second half of Verse 3: "His righteousness endures forever". Enough said there. ☺
  - b) OK does that mean when we get to heaven there will be lots of gold and wealth there for us to have? If that were true, what would we buy with that material stuff?
    - i) I believe this verse means that those of us who trust in God are blessed in far greater ways than those who refuse to submit their lives to Him in the first place.
    - ii) It does not mean the life of the believer is any easier than the life of nonbelievers. It means the results of our lives are now God's problem, not ours.
    - iii) OK, how does not worrying about results "equal" wealth and riches? Another good question. I just don't think that trusting God makes one financially rich. I know most believers don't have a lot of financial wealth.
    - iv) The New Testament book of Ephesians (1:11) teaches us that Christians inherit all things. There is no good blessing that God holds back from the believer. All we have to do is trust in that blessing. That doesn't mean God will rain money down from heaven on us. It means that if we put our trust in Him (through prayer, regularly study of His word and time with other believers), He will take care of our needs by leading us down the path that He desires for us.
    - v) What if I don't know what to do next? Welcome to the club. We just make the best decision possible and trusting that God is guiding that decision. That trust in God is the blessing this verse here in this psalm is describing.
  - c) To finish the verse, the last part says His (God's) righteousness endures forever. It applies to the next generation as well as our next life in heaven, whatever that entails.

21. Verse 4: Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. <sup>5</sup> Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.
- a) To explain the references to darkness and light, one has to understand that this has nothing to do with sunlight or any other natural source of light.
    - i) The idea is if we have God in our lives, His power is working like a light source within us. Jesus Himself taught this principal. (See John 8:12 as an example.)
    - ii) Think of what light is: It allows us to see in the dark. This is another way of describing how God is working in our lives for His glory. The idea is in effect if that we are trusting God, He is guiding us like a light whether we realize it or not.
  - b) Next the verse emphasizes that God works for the gracious, compassionate and righteous man. To explain this, first a few disclaimers.
    - i) The word "man" here refers to any man or woman. Second, it has nothing to do with having a good or bad day. We can go through lengths of time without being gracious, compassionate and righteous, and still be saved. The point is those who trust in God just "naturally" develop these traits.
  - c) If one cares about pleasing Him, one would just want to be gracious and compassionate to others. If one cares about pleasing God, one would just want to do the right thing.
    - i) It comes back to the idea of focusing on praising God first, and then these other positive traits will just "naturally" (for the lack of a better word) come in our lives.
  - d) This leads us into Verse 5. Again, if we learn to praise God regularly, one of the outcomes of that trait is that good things will come to our lives. By trusting in Him, we develop the trait of being generous and lending freely.
    - i) Let me explain the concept of Christians and generosity: One has to have material things in the first place in order to be generous with them. This verse is teaching us that God will provide for us if we make the effort. It is also teaching that if God has been generous with us, He expects us to be generous with others. You may say, "I don't feel very rich, why should I be generous with my money?"
      - a) Part of the answer is trust. Giving to God of one's time or one's substance is a way of showing that we trust Him to provide for our future.
      - b) Even if we don't have a lot of money, it is a matter of showing God that we trust Him with what we do have now and giving away some of what we have shows our trust in Him to provide for our future.
      - c) Let me discuss giving of our time. Think how much God has worked in our lives to change us for the better. God wants us to share His love of people with others. Even if we believe we are too shy to say go "door to door" for Jesus, we can still do actions to make a difference for Him.
  - e) The final phrase here is that a person who trusts in God "conducts his affairs with justice".
    - i) To put that in simple English, those who trust in God do the right thing. If it is our desire to please God, then in life we would want to do the right thing. Does that mean we should never mess up? Of course not. It just means that if we desire to please God, our actions should follow and that includes how we treat others.
22. Verse 6: Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever.
- a) When this verse says that a person who trusts in God will never be shaken, it does not mean that such a person will never have fears in his or her life. It just means that if it is our desire to please God, it will be our desire to do the right thing and we don't have to fear being in hell due to our trust in God paying the price for our sins.
  - b) We may wrongfully suffer in this lifetime, but we don't have to fear eternal punishment, but we don't have to fear eternal punishment if are trust is in Jesus. That in effect is what the second half of this verse is saying, we will live and be remembered forever not because we are a good person, but just based on our trust in God to guide our lives.



23. Verse 7: He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
- a) The first half of this verse says that believers in God don't have to fear bad news.
    - i) I think it is natural to fear what we don't know. The point of this verse is that if we are trusting in God for our future, then we should not have to fear what could happen to us. Yes bad things may happen in our future. The verse is not taking away that possibility. The point is we don't have to worry about such things because our lives are in effect "God's problem" and not ours to worry about.
  - b) This verse does not mean believers are perfect all the time. The point is when we go through times of fear, we need to take those fears and give them to God. When we are worried about some specific issue, the secret is to realize the results of those issues are now God's problem. Then we just go forward in life making the best decisions possible knowing that God is in charge of the results. That is the point of this verse.
24. Verse 8: His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
- a) On one level, one can read this verse about Jesus Himself. It could refer to the fact that we trust in Him returning to earth one day to triumph over sin. With that hope stated, let me describe how this verse can and does apply to us now:
    - i) It is important to emphasize again that this psalm does not teach that believers are to be perfect people. This psalm is just a reminder that when we show gratitude to God, we don't have to fear anything. That is the key point of Verses 7 and 8.
  - b) This psalm also doesn't mean that believers will always win in this lifetime. The victory is not always in this lifetime, but in the next one. We are here to make a difference for God in this lifetime and with that difference, we don't have to have any fear of this world.
    - i) This leads me back to the issue of having a secure heart. It doesn't mean we lack doubts at times. It just means that when we live a life of gratitude to God, we then trust in Him more and then and only then do we become secure in trust in Him.
  - c) I have heard some of the strongest Christians I know express their moments of doubts about God's existence. I once heard Greg Koukl say, "If we are 90% sure (or whatever percentage we pick) that God is real and we have doubts 10% of the time, then we should focus on the 90% factor and give that doubting percentage to God to deal with."
    - i) My point is it is normal to have doubts. We can be secure in God like this verse says and still have our doubting moments. This psalm is not teaching that we believers have to be perfect in our trust of God. It just means that for the most part, we do trust in God and we can give our moments of doubts to Him.
25. Verse 9: He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.
- a) This verse is saying God has scattered his gifts to the poor. This refers to spiritual gifts that all believers receive when they put their trust in Him. No matter what is our status in this world (i.e., rich or poor) God gives believers "gifts" to make a difference for Him.
    - i) If you don't know what your gift is, ask yourself or ask your friends, what is it that you are good at that can make a difference for God? A similar question is what is it we enjoy (or can't stand not doing) in the first place? Those desires we have our gifts from God and are designed to be used for His glory.
  - b) Next, this verse says, "His righteousness endures forever". Obviously this verse is about reminding ourselves that "God does what is right" and that fact goes on forever.
    - i) It is also a reminder that we can always trust in God and we will win in the long run as we have joined the "winning team" no matter what happens in this world.
  - c) Finally, this verse says "his horn" will be lifted high. Think of an animal horn. Such horns are the source of their power. The point is God's power will be honored. The point is those of us who trust in Him will honor God with our lives. This leads back to worship. The point is by worshipping God, we do honor Him as God and it benefits our lives.

26. Verse 10: The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.
- a) One of the most painful things to contemplate is the eternity of hell. We all know people who don't trust in God and they will spend eternity away from His presence.
    - i) Such people may have "stuff" in this lifetime, but they don't realize the futility of living just for this lifetime.
    - ii) I'm not against having fun or enjoying one's life. I'm just saying one has to realize that the true purpose of living is to make a difference for God. Those who refuse to understand that aspect will be like the wicked people described in this verse.
    - iii) I suspect that many people near the end of their lives are literally like the person described in this verse, where they realize what a waste of a life it is to just live for one's own pleasure and desire.
  - b) OK John, so why does this psalm end on such a sour note? ☺ The purpose of this psalm is to get us to have gratitude for what God is doing in our lives. By ending this psalm on such a tough reminder, this verse is saying to the believer, "Hey, stop and consider the alternative of choosing to live for God with one's life. Stop and think about what happens in the end for people who refuse to trust in Jesus' complete payment for their sins. Stop and consider what happens in the end for those who refuse to make a difference for God".
    - i) If the positive things said about trusting in God don't give us enough motivation to live for Him, then think of the negative motivation of this verse.
    - ii) With that happy thought stated, I'm going to sneak in one shorter psalm before I wrap up this lesson. If we are going to make it all the way to Psalm 150, we have to keep plugging away to get through all of these psalms.
27. Psalm 113, Verse 1: Praise the LORD. Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.
- a) If you recall from my introduction, I stated that Psalms 113 through 118 are all a group of psalms that scholars call the "Egyptian Haifa". The word Haifa is a transliteration of the Hebrew word that just means praise. It doesn't mean we praise Egypt. It means that the Jewish people used these psalms as reminders that God has called them out of Egypt (a symbol of this world without God) to live to make a difference for Him.
    - i) These "Egyptian Haifa" psalms were and are sung at Jewish holidays. When Jesus was with His disciples the night before the crucifixion, the gospels mention that the disciples sang a hymn. (See Matthew 26:30 or Mark 14:26.)
    - ii) My point is most commentators believe that the hymns the disciples were singing were the Egyptian Haifa's because they are sung on Jewish holidays and Jesus was celebrating the Jewish Holiday of "Passover" with His disciples at that moment.
    - iii) Therefore, if these psalms were good enough for Jesus to sing, ☺ I believe they are important enough for us to study and learn what they mean.
  - b) This psalm starts off by asking us to Praise the Lord. I explained in my introduction that the main purpose of praising God is that is the way by which we make a difference for Him. The secret to living the Christian life is not by trying harder, but by trusting God, including giving Him praise and then letting His power work through us to make that difference for Him that He desires of us in the first place.
  - c) The next line of this psalm focuses on the "who". Ok, who are God's servants? Does this mean I have to be a priest or a minister in order to serve God? If I have beaten one thing to death in these studies, is that anyone and everyone who trusts in God has (not will be, but has) been called to make a difference for Him. Our "mission field" is wherever we live. It involves any and all of the lives of people we come in contact with. My point is all of us who trust in God are His servants and not just those who have a formal church title.
  - d) Finally Verse 1 tells us to praise His name. The idea is that God's name is special in that we should honor God as "God" and not take our relationship with Him lightly.

28. Verse 2: Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore.
- a) Focusing on praising God's name is a big part of praising Him. That is why the word "LORD" is stressed here. It is about thinking about God's name and why that name is important to our lives.
    - i) So why is God's name is so important? For starters, did you know that the only thing God considers more important than His name is His word (i.e., the bible)? We'll get to that point when we discuss Psalm 138 in a few weeks or so. ☺
    - ii) So if we are to praise His name, does that refer just to "LORD" or any of the titles of God? I believe it can be any of them. The idea is far more than not using God's name in vain. The idea is that His name is special to those of us who trust in Him. As I stated earlier, I believe making jokes about people is "fair game", but God's name and reputation is something we should take very seriously.
  - b) The point for you and me is not that we walk around all day yelling out "Great is God's name" or something to that effect. The point is we praise God regularly, and we take His name (i.e., "who He is") seriously in that we fear being displeasing to Him.
  - c) I also want to discuss the last word "forevermore". Think about all the false deities that are no longer worshipped over the millennia. Think about all the societies that have tried to eliminate the worship of the true God and yet the worship of Him has gone on in those societies. Finally, "forevermore" includes the concept that worshipping God will go on in our lives for eternity, so we might as well get used to the idea of praising Him now as we'll be doing that for a very long time.
29. Verse 3: From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised. <sup>4</sup> The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.
- a) When Verse 3 says from the "rising of the sun to where it sets", this is an expression that refers to the whole world. The point is that the worship of the true God does not just happen in Israel, but it happens wherever there are people who put their trust in the true God that rules over our world.
    - i) Think of it this way. Even somebody living isolated on an island who has never heard of our God, can understand that something created this world and this same entity makes us understand that killing and stealing is wrong. If we realize that such an entity exists, He should be worshipped as God.
    - ii) When you think of the ancient false gods, they each control specific functions. For example, there was a god for rain, one for pleasure, another one for success in life. Even if one believed in more than one god, there has to be a single entity that created all of them as a "head" of those false gods. I'm stating all this because even from the perspective of the psalmist, people realized God ruled over all the world.
  - b) OK John, I know all of this. Why should I exalt God like these verses tell us do?
    - i) Well, if we can't think of any personal reason to be grateful to God, we can always thank Him just for being the ruler over all of our world. The essential idea is to remind ourselves that God is in charge and no matter what we are dealing with in our lives, He is there, He is in control and He is aware of our situation and wants us to trust Him to lead us down the path He desires for our lives. Then we make the best decisions possible knowing that the results are now "God's problem".
30. Verse 5: Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, <sup>6</sup> who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?
- a) These two verses are saying in effect, "What else can we possibly trust in, in our lives other than God Himself? Since God is watching over us and cares about our individual lives, why do we still at times try to do things our way as opposed to His way? Why do we try to do things based solely on our strength and fail to ask for His help? To answer that, we have to constantly fight our natural instinct to things our way as opposed to doing things the way God wants us to do them.

- b) Remember that these psalms (#113-#118) are being used to collectively praise God. When they are sung, collectively people are singing out in effect, "Who is like the God we worship who is above all the false gods and He gets involved in our world."
    - i) One of the false arguments against worshipping God is that He is above getting involved in our world. If someone thinks, "God created the world and now He leaves it alone and leaves it up to us." That is a false theology and can be disproved simply by the evidence of how God gets involved in our lives.
    - ii) Verses like this remind us not only that the God of the Israelites is also the same God who created the world, but also gets involved in our lives.
  - c) OK John I know this. Why should I care? It is to remind ourselves that God is there for us and wants to get involved in our lives. When things are not going well, it is a great reminder that God still interferes in our lives His way and on His timing for His glory.
31. Verse 7: He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; <sup>8</sup> he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.
- a) In these two verses, the emphasis is on the fact that God takes care of the lowest of people and God "seats them with princes".
  - b) A thought about this verse: I have personally watched God take people from some of the lowest rungs of society and raised them up to meet and even become great leaders based on how they have lived their life to make a difference for God. The point for us is that we may think that we are "nothings" in life, but God can and does take anybody willing to make a difference for Him and raise them up in society.
  - c) This verse can also refer to our eternal rewards as well. The idea is that if we are willing to commit our lives to serving God, our eternal rewards include being in the same room with some of the biblical "greats" we read of. I have been correctly taught is that one reason we should study our bible is we are going to spend eternity with the biblical saints. Getting to know those saints through His word gives us a chance to think about questions we can ask them when we actually meet them.
  - d) Going back to "today", the main point is not to see ourselves in terms of our financial status or leadership status. We need to see ourselves as somebody who can be used by God in a mighty way (whatever that is), if we are just willing to make a commitment to be willing to serve Him. The "how" begins with a commitment and then let God lead us down the path that He desires for our lives.
32. Verse 9: He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.
- a) One has to remember that in ancient Jewish society, for a woman to not have children was considered a sign of failure. I am also aware of women who want to get pregnant get pregnant even when the doctors say it can't be physically done (and vice-versa).
    - i) I remember when my wife and I struggled on this issue and she went through miscarriages. I have a friend who is currently going through that same struggle.
    - ii) The point is, pregnancy does happen for the believer on God's timing, (assuming we are willing to make the effort) to follow His lead on that issue.
  - b) The bigger picture here is not just about barren woman, but about our willingness to trust in God. Remember that "barrenness" is a synonym for having nothing. I still remember before I got saved when I believe God told me, "I've followed your life so far, and I'm not impressed". Around that point in time, I started changing my life to make a difference for God. My point is in effect, I too was once "barren" in terms of pleasing God with my life.
33. Let me wrap this lesson up by tying together the whole concept of praising God and what that does for our lives. I'll do that through my closing prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise You because You do watch over our lives and guide them to make a difference for You. We can't explain all the things that happen in our world. We just know that we trust in You and praise You for how You do work in our lives. Now guide us as You desire us to live, and help us to do Your will and live to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.