

1. I've been pounding the point for the last few lessons that God wants us to show Him gratitude. My question is, what should we specifically be grateful for? That is the question of this lesson.
 - a) We are continuing a series of psalms that scholars call the "Egyptian Haifa". That term simply describes hymns of gratitude for God leading the Israelites out of Egypt.
 - b) For millenniums, Jews have sung these psalms at their religious holidays. Jesus, growing up as a Jew most likely sang these psalms as well. There are two Gospel references to Jesus and the disciples singing a hymn. (Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26). Most likely, these psalms are what they sung. As I also said in the last lesson, if these psalms are good enough for Jesus to sing, they are good enough for us to learn.
 - c) Even if that is not enough motivation, just remember that they are about gratitude to God for drawing us out of this world and leading us close to Him.
 - d) While each of these short psalms have a unique purpose, together they get us to focus on gratitude to God for leading us to a life of worshipping and serving Him.
 - e) That leads me to my lesson title: "Why we show gratitude to God". Hopefully, through these psalms, we will express gratitude to Him, and understand why we do that.
2. Let me now summarize each of these "Egyptian Haifa" psalms and explain how they fit together.
 - a) Psalm 113 (from the last lesson) is a call to worship God. That leads to Psalm 114, which teaches us in effect that God is ahead of us preparing the way for us to worship Him.
 - b) Psalm 114 describes how when the Israelites left Egypt and entered the Promised Land, it affected parts of the physical earth. The idea is if that part of the world was physically affected by God's people gathering to worship Him, then we too should appreciate how He has called us in order to serve Him.
 - c) Psalm 115 comes next as it is a reminder to focus on Him and not things that can draw us away from Him. If the purpose of the first two psalms is to draw us toward Him, the focus of this one is about what can keep us away from Him. This psalm discusses the differences between false gods and the true God we worship. This psalm is here as a reminder of who it is we worship and why we are blessed by trusting in Him.
 - d) Psalm 116 is about being restored when we are hurting. It describes those moments in life when we are in pain and are looking for God to help us with our lives.
 - i) It deals with the issue of facing death (or really tough times) and remembering at the least we are saved and more importantly, we live on God's timing, not ours.
 - ii) The point in effect is that if our lives belong to Him, we have to remember just that: We are His. Yes we are to work as hard as we can to deal with whatever we have to deal with, but the results are God's problem if we are one of His. This psalm is another reminder that we don't have to worry about the results of life, because if we have given our lives to God, then the results are His problem.
 - e) Finally we have Psalm 117. It is only two verses. It is a call for non-Jews to worship God. I believe the purpose of this little psalm for us is to be God's witness to others. That is what Jesus called us to do as well, so it is not just a "Jewish thing". If we are to be a good witness to God, we need others in order to have someone to be a good witness to.
 - f) Putting all of these psalms together, including the final psalm (next lesson), they are all about showing gratitude to God for what He has, is and will do in our lives. They get us to get our focus on Him, reminding us of how He guides us, leads us to salvation, guides us through our problems, and finally about being a good witness to others.
 - i) There, that's the whole lesson in one paragraph. You are welcome to read further and study the details or "just take my word for it" and stop here. ☺

3. Psalm 114 Verse 1: When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, ² Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.
 - a) The first two verses are a summary of the fact that the nation of Israel was in effect born in Egypt. God called His people out of Egypt to worship Him. Since this psalm is about God restoring our lives, it is symbolic of where our lives began before serving Him.
 - b) Verse 2 reminds us that Judah is the center of worshipping God where the Jewish temple was located. Remember that Jerusalem is the capital of the area of Judah within Israel. The idea of "Israel was his dominion" describes the area over which God ruled.
 - c) OK John, I get the idea that God has called them and us. How is this significant to me? Just as the Israelites were first called to serve God in a land that was not their own, so God has called you and I as believers in a world that in effect is not our home.
 - i) To grasp this concept, one has to understand that our planet as we know it, is literally Satan's domain. My favorite way to explain this is when Satan was tempting Jesus. Satan said to Jesus, "I (Satan) will give you (Jesus) all of these worlds if you (Jesus) bow down and worship me." (Reference Matthew 4:9.)
 - a) My point is Satan couldn't offer Jesus this world unless it was Satan's to offer in the first place. This world (i.e., all unsaved people) belong to Satan in that people are unsaved until they acknowledge Him as God.
 - ii) What this means for Christians is that God has called us out of a life of only caring about fulfilling our own desires in order to live to make a difference for Him. That is the greatest purpose one can have and that is what God calls all of us to do.
 - iii) Even if we know and accept that, it is a good thing to remind us of that purpose if for no other reason, of the constant temptation to want to go back to living only for our own desires as opposed to living to make a difference for God.
 - d) In summary, when we read of God calling the Israelites out of Egypt, it is not about knowing one's history as it is about remembering that He has called you and me to a life of trusting in daily. That reminder keeps our focus on Him and our purpose in life.
4. Verse 3: The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back; ⁴ the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. ⁵ Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back, ⁶ you mountains, that you skipped like rams, you hills, like lambs?
 - a) These verses are a little strange to read them out of context. In effect they say that certain aspects of nature like a specific body of water or a specific set of mountains and hills jumped like a frightened young lamb. OK John, what does this mean?
 - i) The idea is not that these particular areas of "real estate" jumped in nervousness. The idea is that the God we worshipped is in control of these areas. If He tells these areas to react, in effect they react.
 - ii) The historical moments being described was when the Red Sea was parted so the Israelites could cross it. Next it refers to the Jordan River (which borders Israel to the east), which was stopped so the Israelites could actually enter the Promised Land. (References to these two events: Exodus 14:21 and Joshua 3:16.)
 - a) As far as the mountains and hills, it most likely refers to the moment when Moses first received the law at Mount Sinai. The text in Exodus said that the ground shook when that event happened. (See Exodus 19:18.)
 - iii) Without giving a deep theological explanation as to each of these events, the point here is for us to remember the fact that God is in charge and if He wants the ground to shake or a body of water to get out of the way, He makes it possible.
 - b) The idea for us to remember is that if God can control these "immovable objects", then God can and does want to work in our lives to make a difference for Him. To say it another way, if God can part a big body of water, He can and does change our lives in a way to make a difference for Him. Stop and consider how much our lives have changed since we first became a believer. That is in effect what the text wants us to remember.

5. Verse 7: Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
 - a) The main point of this psalm is to remember that if the physical earth is subject to God, so we should be subject to Him. If parts of the earth (e.g., sea's, mountains etc.) can react to God interfering in what it does or doesn't do, then why is it we as humans fail to do what He asks us to do through His word and prayer?
 - b) Notice the word "tremble". It's hard to visualize a sea or a mountain "trembling". The idea is that God is in control of these immovable objects and in effect, all those parts of nature can do in effect is "tremble" at the thought that God controls them.
6. Verse 8: who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.
 - a) Most likely, this historically refers to when the Israelites wandered through the desert God provided for them water through a rock. A debate among bible scholars is whether or not the Israelites carried around the same "miraculous rock" or whether or not there was more than one rock that provided this water. (See Exodus 17:8 and Numbers 20:11.)
 - i) If I saw water come out of a rock, I would carry it with me as long as I could just for the fact that "it does". I would "bleed that miracle as long as I could". ☺
 - b) OK John, I know the story that God provided for the Israelites. How does this affect me?
 - i) The point of this psalm is in effect that if God can violate laws of nature for the sake of those who trust in Him, then we should trust in that same God.
 - ii) When I say, "violate", I mean the fact that God can part a sea in half or make a river stop or make water come out of a dry thing like a rock. The point is nature is not in charge of the world, God is. The mistake we make as humans is we become dependant upon the natural things as opposed to the God who created us.
 - iii) We might say, "This rock in front of us (whatever that rock is) will not do what I want it to do. I can't get past this rock and I'm stuck in the situation I am in."
 - a) What God is saying to us in effect in this psalm is that He, not our situation is in charge of our lives, and if He wants to move that rock, He will.
 - iv) Does this mean I should be dependant upon "crazy" miracles? Of course not. We as Christians are to go through life making the best decisions possible with the information at hand. The point is never to limit God. If He can control nature, He can also control the outcome of our situation. Life is not about getting our will done, but getting His will done, on His timing. Since we don't always know what is His will, we go forward making the best decisions possible based on biblical principals that God calls us to live by.
 - c) All of this does lead to the next psalm, which is 115. The underlying point of Psalm 115 is about the dangers of trusting in other "gods" other than the true God of the Universe.
7. Psalm 115, Verse 1: Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.
 - a) This psalm starts off by reminding us to give glory to God's name as opposed to taking the credit ourselves for the good things of our lives. A danger we face as believers is the desire for public recognition for the good things God does through our life. In other words, we want our "ego's stroked" as opposed to giving Him the credit.
 - i) A big part of giving God the glory is letting go of the desire for recognition. It is about realizing the emptiness of self-congratulations as opposed to thanking God for all of the good things we receive in our lives.
 - ii) Remember again we give glory to God not for His sake, but for ours. The desire of God to bless our lives and lead us down the path He desires goes "hand in hand" with acknowledging Him as God and worshipping Him. Keeping our focus on Him then makes us the type of person that God can use for His glory.
 - b) The remaining point of this verse is that God is faithful to us despite the fact we sin and turn from Him in our lives. The idea is that God never gives up on those who trust in Him despite our sins and our desires to do things "our way" versus God's way.

8. Verse 2: Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"
 - a) Some scholars believe this psalm was written when the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon. Since there is no title, we don't know for sure. That theory is based this verse because the Israelites are focusing on unbelievers possibly asking "Where is your (our) God now that you (Israelites) are not in the land?"
 - b) Let me modernize this verse. There are times where we wonder where God is. When things are falling apart, we wonder why God hasn't stepped in with one of those "fancy miracles" to rescue us? The answer is He is still working His way on His timing in our lives. We believers are never guaranteed God will rescue us the way we desire Him too.
 - c) To put this concept another way, the purpose of this psalm is to remind us that God is still there. He still cares about our lives and He still wants to lead us down the right path in life despite the question of the moment of "where is God"? Despite whatever we are dealing with at the moment, He is still in charge of the world and in charge of our lives.
9. Verse 3: Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.
 - a) Verse 3, taken out of context, would appear to read that God "does whatever He wants and therefore, He can't be bothered". That is a false statement. The idea of "whatever pleases Him" is about the concept of getting His will done, versus our will in our lives.
 - b) My expanded translation of this verse would be "God is still in charge, He still rules over the world. Any other so-called gods are false gods. His will, will be done, period."
 - c) So what is His will? For starters, it is for as many people as possible to recognize His existence and His desire to rule over our lives. When Adam and Eve sinned, it was more than eating a piece of fruit. It was about wanting do things their way versus God's way.
 - i) But John, what about all the tragedies of this world? What about all of the people who die young and never get the opportunity to trust God? The short answer is this world is corrupted by sin and God is well aware of all of those tragedies.
 - ii) I would rather go through life trusting in a God who decides what is eternally fair for all people, than to think that this life is all there is for those who die tragically. Life would only be fair, if there was a God who judges the eternal fate of people.
 - iii) The good news is the bible lays out the long term plans for God and our world. That is why roughly a third of the bible is predictions, so we can know that God exists and He knows the ultimate destiny of our world.
 - iv) Given all of that, the greatest purpose one can have for one's life is to live to make a difference for Him. How do we do that? Start by asking Him. Start by doing something one enjoys doing that can be used for His glory. Yes we still have to take care of our families and pay the bills. At the same time, I have come to realize how precious the time is that God has given me and I want to use it for Him.
10. Verse 4: But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. ⁵ They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; ⁶ they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; ⁷ they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. ⁸ Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.
 - a) Here we have five verses that all deal with false gods. These false gods were objects that literally can be made. For example, one can make a little statue with ears, but that doesn't mean it can hear. One can make a little statue with feet, but it doesn't walk on its own.
 - b) It seems strange to our culture that people make little statues and worship them. What one has to remember is that those statues represented the gods they worshipped. The closest example I could think of would be like owning a "lucky rabbit's foot" or even a small statue of the Virgin Mary. It is far more than just owning these things. It is the belief that the statues (as opposed to God Himself) bring good fortune to one's life.
 - i) Other modern examples may include posters or little statues of someone famous. Those things too, can be a form of an idol. The real question about our idols is do we want to be like those people or do we just admire their talent?

- c) This reminds me of the classic line, "God wants to be #1 on a list of 1, not 10." That means that God does not want to be the #1 thing we live for, but the only thing we live for.
 - i) Does this mean we can't enjoy other forms of entertainment? Of course not. When we partake in those activities, God wants us in effect to take Him with us. Make our love for Him part of those activities. We should never have more love for those other activities than we do for Him in our lives.
 - ii) Can we get excited and yell at a sporting event? Of course. The convicting question is, "Are we as excited for God as we are for our favorite sports team or our favorite entertainer"? That is the question God wonders about our lives and wonders just how much we love Him.
 - d) Believe it or not, all of this talk about entertainment does lead me back to the verses.
 - i) The point here is in effect that people who refuse won't trust in God do still trust in something. People who ignore God always turn to something else to worship in their lives. That is because God created us with a need to worship Him. If we ignore that need, then people turn to worship other things. I used entertainment as an example as that is the dominant idol in our present culture.
 - ii) Remember the expression: "We are what we worship". If one is endlessly fascinated by entertainment figures, one eventually becomes empty in life just as those entertainers are always replaced by whoever is the next "hot thing".
 - iii) One of the many reasons many people in the entertainment industry get involved in politics is they see the emptiness of just being entertainers. Getting involved in politics is a way of desiring something greater in life. What they don't realize is politics without God's involvement ends up being just as empty as entertainment.
 - a) In summary, living for anything other than God ultimately is fruitless and that is what this psalm is trying to teach us.
11. Verse 9: O house of Israel, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. ¹⁰ O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. ¹¹ You who fear him, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield.
- a) These three lines all repeat the same phrase, "he is their help and shield". The point is that these three groups should trust in God with their lives.
 - b) OK, who are these groups and why are they singled out, and how does it apply to us?
 - i) The first group is the Israelites. This is the nation of people that God has called not only to serve Him but to be His witnesses to the world around them.
 - a) The application is to remember that God's existence reminds us that He is there to guide us and protect us from Satan's desire for our lives (i.e., get us to trust in anything other than God Himself).
 - ii) The second group listed is the "House of Aaron". That is a poetic way of saying the priests of Israel. It is one thing to be called to worship God. It is another to be called to make a difference for Him. A priest is someone who teaches others what God desires of us. That is what the "House of Aaron" represents: they are the priests called to teach other Israelites (think believers) how to draw close to Him.
 - a) OK what if I am not a priest, reverend or "fill in the blank" title. The point is that God wants us of all of us to not only draw close to Him, but to learn about Him so we can teach others about what God desires of our lives.
 - iii) Then we have Verse 11, written for non-Jews. The idea in effect is all of you who are not Jewish by birth but still trust in God, He is our help and shield.
 - a) The idea is that if we are a witness to others, may those others learn to grow and trust in God so that they too, can be "priests" to others.
 - b) Once we learn to trust God with our lives, He desires we share that knowledge with others. Those others is the focus of Verse 11.
 - c) In summary the idea for us is to trust and grow in God and pass it on to others.

12. Verse 12: The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,¹³ he will bless those who fear the LORD-- small and great alike.
 - a) These verses describe being blessed by God. Ok, exactly what does that mean? This would be a good time to remind all of us what is and is-not, God's blessing.
 - i) I don't believe it is financial wealth. However I have seen believers in some situations go from poverty to supporting others just from learning to trust in Him.
 - ii) The real blessing is we get to live the types of lives God desires of us. That is the life of serving Him. Understand that life is not more depressing if we live to serve Him. It is far more enjoyable than any other purpose one can have for their lives.
 - iii) I have personally been financially blessed with a good background and a good education far more than most people. Yet I realize that the greatest pleasure I have in this life is when I do things that make a difference for God with my life.
 - iv) These verses describe "corporate" (i.e., group) blessings as well. The point is God can bless a church, a community or even a nation of collectively that group focuses on worshipping Him and seeking Him with their lives.
13. Verse 14: May the LORD make you increase, both you and your children.¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.
 - a) These verses talk about being blessed along with our children. To explain how God can bless somebody and their children, I remember something I once heard a pastor (Alistair Begg) on the radio say: Show me a father who goes regularly to church and I'll show you a family that cares about God. Children watch how we act far more than what we say to them. If we worship God, usually our family will follow in our footsteps.
 - b) Does this verse mean I will grow rich from trusting God? If there is one thing I have pounded home in the last few lessons, is that blessings are not about financial gain. It is about having the privilege of making a difference for God in this life.
 - i) Trusting in God also means trusting in Him to provide for us. We still have to take the footsteps to provide for our families and ourselves. The point is if we are trusting in God to guide us, He will lead us down the path in order to accomplish what is His will for our lives and even the lives of our children.
 - c) Verse 15 is the reminder of who is blessing us: The maker of "heaven and earth". I stated in the last lesson, a false theology is that the God who created all things doesn't care about our individual lives. Verse 15 argues against that false view. The results of the lives of billions of people who trust in God also argue against that view as well. Just realizing how much my life has changed since I first trusted in Him also adds to the evidence of His existence and the fact that He cares for all individuals who put their trust in Him.
14. Verse 16: The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.
 - a) To explain this verse, I need to remind you of a biblical way of describing the heavens:
 - i) The "first heavens" in the bible refers to the atmosphere where say, birds fly.
 - ii) The "second heavens" in the bible refers to the stars and the "night sky".
 - iii) The "third" or highest heavens refer to where God exists, wherever that is.
 - iv) (See 2nd Corinthians 12:2 as a reference to the "third heaven".)
 - b) This has made me wonder if God needs or requires an actual location to exist. If God is perfect, then in theory He should not need anything including a place to live.
 - i) However, if we as humans are to be with Him forever, He must have created someplace where we can exist with Him, and that is also this highest heaven.
 - c) All of this leads me back to this verse. The point here is that God exists wherever this highest heaven is located. As to the earth, it is given to man. Think "unsaved" man here.
 - i) There is a lot of theology behind the concept of earth belonging to man. As I've made the point earlier, Satan is in control of the earth and in that sense it belongs to people who refuse to trust in God. We as Christians belong in heaven, but we dwell here on earth. (See 2nd Corinthians 5:1-2 on this point.)

15. Verse 17: It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence; ¹⁸ it is we who extol the LORD, both now and forevermore. Praise the LORD.
 - a) This psalm of praise ends with the reminder that those who never seek God in the first place, (called "the dead" in Verse 17) are not the one's who praise Him. It is only those who trust Him in the first place praise Him now and into the next life.
 - b) Consider that those who don't study the psalms would logically not care about God and therefore never praise Him. Those of us who care about growing in our relationship with Him do praise Him because we want to be blessed by Him.
 - c) Again, we don't praise God for His sake, but for ours. It is so our life will be blessed. It is an appropriate ending of this psalm to sing out "Praise the Lord" as sincerely committing to such an act benefits our own lives and the lives of others influenced by God.
 - d) What is also interesting is this final line of this psalm transitions well to the next psalm. That next psalm (# 116) deals with the afflictions one has in this lifetime and it is only by our trust in God that we can get relief from those afflictions. With that said, Psalm 116.
16. Psalm 116, Verse 1: I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
 - a) Let me start here by saying that God hears our cry for mercy should not be the only reason we should love Him. However, it should be one strong reason to worship Him.
 - i) Let me define God's mercy and grace: God's mercy is to not be punished for what we do deserve. God's grace is to receive a benefit or a gift we do not deserve. As Christians, we do receive God's grace because He wants to bless our lives and not because we earn His blessings in any fashion.
 - ii) If all of that is true, why ask for mercy from God? Yes He wants to bless us "just because He wants to". At the same time, God cannot stand any sin whatsoever. As I said a few weeks back, the idea that "God is Love" is an incomplete truth. The other aspect of that same truth is that God cannot stand any sin whatsoever.
 - iii) My point is while we can and should ask for God's grace to receive what we don't deserve, we should also ask for His mercy to spare us of what we do deserve.
 - b) OK, John, what should I specifically ask God for mercy for? For starters, it is to spare us the punishment that we do deserve for our sins of not trusting in Him at all times.
 - i) We ask for mercy so that He won't have to go to extreme lengths (i.e., "tough measures") to teach us what He wants us to learn at any given moment in life.
 - c) This leads me back to this verse. The point of this verse is that we can show gratitude to God because He does show us mercy and spares us of punishment we do deserve.
17. Verse 2: Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.
 - a) The idea of God "turning his ear to us" does not mean that God ignores us when we don't think about Him. The point is when we do call on Him, He is faithful to answer His way on His timing, because our trust is in God's guidance again, His way, not our way.
 - b) The other point of this verse is because we can trust in Him, we should continue to do so as long as we live in this lifetime as well as the next one. The reason this verse is here will become clear as we go through the next few verses.
18. Verse 3: The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!"
 - a) Whatever was happening to the psalm writer at this point, it was not good. Somehow the psalmist was near death and God somehow saved that person to live through that time.
 - b) Most of us have moments when we do face grave dangers. There is nothing like praying out to God when one is so worried about some situation, that only calling out to Him gives us a sense of relief. My wife and I have recently dealt with someone we know that has recently died, and another person facing death. It has made us remember how dependant we are on God for our lives at any given time.
 - i) If one cannot relate to being overcome by trouble and sorrow or even a near death experience, wait a while and usually such moments will come. ☺

19. Verse 5: The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
 - a) The idea of "gracious" here is that God cares about us despite our faults. Remember that the main character in this psalm is in some sort of trouble. For all we know that main character may have done something to cause that trouble. My point is that if we trust in God, we belong to Him. Because He cares about those who trust in Him, He is gracious to us, He is "righteous" (i.e., does the right things on His timing) and has compassion on us knowing that we are imperfect people. That is my expanded translation of this verse.
20. Verse 6: The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.
 - a) I discovered something today that shocked me. This version of the NIV bible I use is not the latest version. I discovered this because I wasn't sure if "simplehearted" was a single word or two words. I just discovered the latest version doesn't even use that word.
 - i) The new translation says, "The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me." The newer translation doesn't change the meaning of the text, but it does help me to explain what it meant by "simplehearted".
 - ii) The idea of both "simplehearted" and "unwary" is not about naivety. It is about trusting in God despite whatever the situation at hand is about. One of the dangers of life is to think that God can't or won't rescue us from our problems.
 - iii) The idea here is that no matter how bad the situation is, we have complete trust in God that He will see us through the problem, either by rescuing us or leading us to salvation. Either way, God wins and we win through Him.
 - b) Let me discuss how this psalm fits in this whole group of psalms that focus on praising Him. There are times in our lives, especially when things are going bad where we don't feel like praising Him. Psalms like this one remind us that we should praise Him even during the difficult moments of our lives. That is one reason why this psalm is here.
21. Verse 7: Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. ⁸ For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, ⁹ that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
 - a) Speaking of taking comfort in God, I present these next three verses. Remember that the writer of this psalm was worried and was in some sort of really bad situation. The psalm writer is reminding himself and us in effect, "Relax, God is in charge".
 - b) Some scholars apply these verses to salvation. I see them more about living another day to make a difference for God. Do I know how He will rescue us out of a dilemma? Of course not. I just know that I depend upon Him and I too must be "simplehearted" in that I trust in Him to work in my life so that I can continue to make that difference for Him.
 - c) OK John, I trust in God, what do I do next? Do I just stand still and wait for God to "zap" me to a new place? I'm a big believer that God guides us if we are moving. Obviously there are exceptions for those who are sick in bed. God does want to guide our lives and He can only do that if we keep moving forward. We make the best decisions possible and trust that God is guiding our lives. This assumes we are trusting in His word and trying our best to live by biblical principals as we go through our lives.
 - d) One more thing on these verses before I move on. Let me discuss "walk before the LORD in the land of the living". I believe that refers to the earth itself as opposed to heaven.
 - i) The point is that God does rescue us and guide us so that we can continue to praise Him and be a witness for Him in this world. OK, enough on that topic.
22. Verse 10: I believed; therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted."
 - a) This verse is simply saying the writer trusts in God and acknowledges the fact that he (assuming the psalmist is a "he") is in a lot of pain at the present moment. The writer does not state the source of his problems, just the realization that he is in some sort of pain.
 - b) God wants us to get to that point of letting go as well. When we stop focusing on how we got to where we got, but just to put the situation in His hands and trust Him to guide us.

23. Verse 11: And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars."
 - a) This is one of those verses where we don't know the specifics. The verse is implying that in haste the psalmist said something that was not true. The verse is not saying that all men (people) are liars, but the writer made this statement due to his pain from suffering.
 - b) OK John, I get that. Why is this verse here? When we are suffering from a tough situation it is easy to point fingers at others. That won't ease the pain. It is only by giving God the results of our situation can we best get through whatever we are dealing with.
24. Verse 12: How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?
 - a) The answer to the question posed here in Verse 12 is "we can't". All God requires of us is our trust in Him and our gratitude for what He has done for us.
 - b) In other words, we can't sacrifice enough to make Him happy. God does not want to bless us because we have done "this or that" for Him. He wants to bless our lives just because He wants to. That is what trusting in His grace is all about.
 - i) If that is true, why does God have all of those Old Testament rituals for dealing with sin? The answer is to show us how painful sin is to our lives. The reason the ancient Jews offered animals for their sins was not to earn God's favor but by offering innocent blood, it shows how painful sin is and it affects innocent blood.
 - ii) The reason we as Christians should appreciate Jesus sacrifice so much is that we don't have to pay any eternal price for sin, as the price has been paid. All we have to do is trust in His grace and then use that grace to share His love with others.
25. Verse 13: I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.
 - a) Verse 13 is the only biblical reference to the phrase "cup of salvation". Jesus implied His blood was symbolically (in a cup) to be shed for sins (See Matthew 26:27 on this point.)
 - i) Are you saying the psalmist knew that Jesus would offer up Himself for our sins? No. I believe the psalmist trusted in God the Father for His salvation. Part of the Jewish holiday Passover ritual (that Jesus was celebrating at the Last Supper) is to drink a sip from a cup to symbolize one's trust in God.
 - ii) What that means for you and me as Christians is if we say "cup of salvation" is that we are saved because we are trusting in Jesus payment for our sins.
 - b) It may help to remember the reason the psalmist is mentioning the cup of salvation is because of whatever predicament he is in, he realizes that he is saved because he is trusting in God and not himself with the results of his situation.
26. Verse 14: I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
 - a) OK, what are these vows the writer has to fulfill and do I have to fulfill them as well?
 - i) The vow is simply to trust in God through all situations and realize that He wants to lead us down the path He desires for our lives. That is the vow to be fulfilled.
 - a) The vow has nothing to do with making specific promises or a deal with God over and above His desire that we acknowledge His existence, accept His payment for our sins and that we live to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) The idea of "presence of all his people" is that we don't live a life in secret for Jesus but we act in a way consistent with what we believe.
27. Verse 15: Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
 - a) We as people tend to think of the death of believers as something tragic. We miss those who died and grieve at their deaths. There is nothing wrong with that.
 - b) My point is to see the death of believers from God's perspective: This verse calls the death of believers "precious".
 - i) I admit I enjoy Christian funerals far more than funerals where I am not sure if the deceased is a believer in God. Not knowing the eternal fate of people is a tragic thing to contemplate let alone dealing with their loss.
 - c) God wants us to take comfort in the fact that He welcomes home saints that have died. It reminds us that God is aware of these deaths.

28. Verse 16: O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains.
- a) This verse states twice, "I am your servant". This is repeated as emphasis. Once again, it is about remembering that the greatest purpose we have in this life is to be His servant.
 - b) Ok John, I sort of get that. What does "son of our maidservant mean"? I believe it simply means that we are born into your (God's) household.
 - i) The idea is we can't earn being saved. We have to be "born into it". So how do we know if we are born into salvation? If we commit our lives to God and then we know we are part of His household. God knows all things. Since He knows all things, He knew we would be saved and "born into His family based on that perfect knowledge.
 - c) Finally the verse says God has freed me from chains. In many cases, believers are in jail (a synonym of chains) simply for their faith. However, I think the point is different:
 - i) It comes back to the idea that God wants us to follow His desires as opposed to living for our own desires. Living for ourselves is the "chains" that bind us.
 - ii) Studying His word and prayer is how we find out what are His desires for our lives. Then we make the best decisions possible living by biblical principals.
29. Verse 17: I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.
- a) It appears this verse is telling us to make a sacrificial thank you offering: Know that obedience to God is more important than sacrifice. (See 1st Samuel 15:22 on that point.) However, an offering our gratitude does show our commitment to Him. When we do good things for others based on what God has done for us it is a good thing.
 - i) The key is our attitude. We don't show gratitude to win points with God. We show gratitude simply because we are grateful for what God has done for us.
 - b) Finally, the verse says to "call on the name of the LORD".
 - i) The idea here is about our continuous trust in Him. In both good times and rough times, we trust in Him to lead us down the path He desires for our lives. When I am not sure what to do next, I will often fire up a quick prayer and then simply make the best decision I can. That is what "calling on the name of the LORD" is all about: Trusting Him to get us through our lives.
 - ii) It doesn't mean we have to pray over every decision we make. Occasionally God may speak to us through formal prayer. Such prayer is simply a way of reminding us that He is there and He is guiding our lives.
30. Verse 18: I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the LORD-- in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.
- a) These two verses say in effect, "I will praise God wherever I am. Whether I am with other Christians or by myself, I will trust in God to lead me in life."
 - b) Does that mean I have to walk around all day yelling "Praise God" wherever I go? No.
 - i) The point is about making our lives consistent in trusting Him in all situations. We don't praise God at church and then ignore Him the rest of the week.
 - ii) Remember that this psalm is about trusting that God is guiding us even though we don't always understand how or why we are going through a particular situation. It is about letting go of the results of our lives and reminding ourselves that our jobs in life is to make a difference for Him in all that we do.
 - c) Let me give an example of what these verses do not mean: If we work for someone, we don't waste the bosses' time by ignoring work so we can share Jesus with others. The point is whether wherever we are, we try to live a consistent life in our trust in God.
 - d) The main point of these last few verses is in effect we fulfill our vows to God not by making a special commitment to God over and above our trust in Him. It is about dedicating our whole lives to making a difference for Him. It is about making God part of every aspect of our lives and not ignoring Him in "this or that" aspect of our lives.

31. Psalm 117, Verse 1: Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.
 - a) This psalm is only two lines long. If you want to memorize a psalm, this is a good choice. It is both the shortest psalm and the shortest chapter in the bible.
 - b) Notice that this verse is calling other nations (i.e., non-Jews) to praise God. The psalm is saying in effect, "We as Jewish believers don't expect you non-Jewish people who trust in God to live like us Jewish people, but just to trust in God to guide your lives."
 - c) I believe the point of this little psalm is to get believers to spread the word about God to others. The psalm is saying in effect, "Don't try to get other people to live for God the exact same way we are living in God. Just spread the word about Him and let God guide their lives just as He has guided ours."
 - i) To say it another way, don't try to fix people. God is more than capable of working in the lives of others just as He has worked in ours. Our job is just to spread the word about Him.
 - ii) God is asking us to ask others to join us in praising Him. That is the purpose of this little two-line psalm. I believe this psalm is for us believers, not for other people. It is about us being a good witness to other people.
32. Verse 2: For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
 - a) If the purpose of this little two-line psalm is to get us to share His love with others, what is Verse 2 telling us? Remember that this psalm along with this whole group is designed to remind ourselves of how we are to praise God and what is it we are to be thankful for:
 - i) In other words, God never designed His love for us to be kept as a secret. He wants us to live a life where we share our love for Him with others. God does not want us to be a secret witness for Him.
 - ii) This does not mean we are required to go "door to door" to earn His love. It does mean that the way we live should be obvious to others around us that we are living to make a difference for God. Remember that people are watching our lives. We are all a living witness for God whether we realize it or not.
 - b) Let me try this concept one more way before I wrap up this lesson: If God's faithfulness to us endures throughout our lifetimes, why should we keep that a secret? If we trust in God with our lives, shouldn't we just want to share that love with other people?
 - c) Jesus taught us to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:19 on that point). That means we live to make a difference for God and work to lead others to Him. I believe that is the purpose of this little two-line psalm.
33. At this point, let me quickly review the purpose of each of these psalms and show how they all tie together for us to worship God. Remember that Psalms 113 through 118 are all part of this group of psalms called the "Egyptian Haifa". Again, that phrase simply means praise to God for rescuing us from this world, which is symbolized by the word Egypt.)
 - a) Psalm 113 (last lesson) is about acknowledging God's existence and the fact He wants to lead us into a life of serving Him.
 - b) This leads to Psalm 114, which is the realization that God has already been working in our life and our world to lead us down the path He desires for our life.
 - c) This leads to Psalm 115, which asks the question in effect, "Well, what about other "gods" (lifestyle) I'm dealing with? It is a reminder to only follow the true God of our life.
 - d) This then leads to Psalm 116, which is about the rewards of following Him. It alludes to salvation itself, but it is also about how our lives are blessed for following Him.
 - e) This then leads to Psalm 117, which says in effect, "if we worship God, we should share that love of Him with others. This psalm is sort of like the "Great Commission" that Jesus talked about where we are to go into the world to teach others about Him.
 - f) Finally, this leads to Psalm 118, the subject for the next lesson. I'll leave us hanging unto the next lesson how that ties into this whole group. I will give a clue for the next lesson and that is the title of my lesson on Psalm 118 is the single word "victory".

34. With that said, let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, may we never fail to give you the credit for the good things You have done in our lives and our world. Help us to realize that You are guiding our lives. Help us to keep from the other so called "gods" of this world. Help us to remember that there are great rewards in this lifetime and the next one for following You. Finally, help us to make a difference in the lives of others and help draw others closer to You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.