

1. In this lesson, we cover the last two psalms written by King David. That man wrote a little over half of the psalms in this book. When one considers that the book of psalms was not organized as a single book until hundreds of years after he lived, it is amazing to realize how much of an influence that man had in history. Here we are 3,000 years later, studying what that man wrote.
  - a) My point is if God can use David in a mighty way, then God can and does use any person willing to commit their lives to Him in a mighty way. Yes that applies to us as well. Hopefully in this lesson I can share how we can all live to make a difference for Him.
  - b) Let me share with all of you something God shared with me before I ever dedicated my life to serving Him. God once told me in effect, "I am not impressed with your resume." What He meant by that was He was not impressed with what I have accomplished in my life so far. When I got that message, I had just finished graduate business school and was probably on my way to a successful business career like my father before me.
    - i) Since the time of that message, not only have I dedicated my life to serving God, not only have I met my wonderful wife and have two wonderful daughters, but I have made a far greater impact in the world than if I had ignored His advice.
    - ii) Also know that even if God decides to take away all that I have, I suppose I would praise Him like Job when he lost everything, (see Job 1:21) because in effect, what choice do I have? I have come to realize that He is perfect, He knows all things, He is in control and I serve Him, and it is not His job to serve me.
    - iii) I have also come to realize that I will spend eternity in heaven not because of all the things God has done through me, but because of my trust in Him. The way God has used my life, in effect is a wonderful benefit of that trust in Him.
2. Gee, that is a nice speech. What does it have to do with these psalms or me? Glad you asked. ☺
  - a) We are now close to wrapping up this book. We are finishing a series of psalms all written by David (his psalms are scattered through the book). The purpose of this final group of David's psalms is in effect based on his realization that God knows all things about our future. This series started back in #138 with the realization that God made promises to David about his future and he trusted in God's promises to come true.
  - b) The point for you and me is not to know the life of David, but to understand that God has wonderful plans for us as well. Trusting in God brings us a far greater life here on earth than anything and everything we could possibly do without Him. Like God once made it clear to me, "I am not impressed with your resume so far", so He is in effect, is not impressed with what we accomplish without His help.
3. At this point, let me explain how the psalms in this lesson tie to God guiding our lives. David is at a point in his life here where he realizes God is in control of his life and all he can do in effect is praise Him for guiding His life. If I had to summarize this lesson and the rest of the psalms in one thought it is, "Why do we praise God?"
  - a) Let me explain this another way: Once we draw close to God, then what? Do we just ask pray for things we want Him to do? If He wants an intimate relationship with us, what do we do when we draw close to Him? The short answer is we praise Him. We praise Him not only for saving us, but for the good He has done in our lives. Well, John, that should take about 30 seconds if I take my time. ☺ Then what?
    - i) The answer is the next group of psalms. The purpose of these psalms is to give us reasons and understanding of why we praise Him. It is to help us think about our lives and just why we should praise God on a regular basis.
    - ii) To put it one more way: We might as well get used to praising God now, because I figure we are going to be doing a lot of that when we get to heaven.

4. That last statement leads to my next point: Doesn't it get boring after awhile just to praise God because we should? Even if we think of hundreds of reasons why we should praise Him, won't that get boring after awhile? If all we do in heaven is praise Him, won't even that get boring? My short answer to the boring question is the single word "no". Let me explain:
  - a) First of all, God does not call on us to praise Him all day long. We still have lives to live and we can't make a difference for Him if we are praising Him nonstop.
  - b) God wants us to praise Him for our benefit. We should draw upon His power in order to make a difference in the world. If we realize that He is the source of the blessings in our lives, we become a more joyful person. If we realize that God is in charge and aware of all things, the bad parts of life won't bother us as much.
  - c) We can face whatever life throws at us, knowing that a perfect God is still guiding our lives through such times, and that He wants to use us to make a difference for Him.
  - d) What about heaven? Won't that be boring to praise God forever up there? The one thing I have learned since I dedicated my life to serving Him is that life, as a believer never gets boring. I suspect heaven is going to be the same way. When I have moments in my life where I feel bored, I simply pray about what God wants me to do at that moment, and it is amazing the answers I get. My simple point is a life of trusting in Jesus is never boring and I suspect heaven will be the same way.
  - e) As I also like to point out every so often, the bible says very little about life in heaven. The bible is essentially a guide about how to live now. It is as if God is saying to us, "You focus on serving Me now and let Me focus on what I have planned for you in heaven."
5. I have now been writing for a page and one half, and I have yet to summarize what it is these two psalms are about. Let me do it here and then we'll start the psalms themselves.
  - a) The first one is Psalm 144. The main point of this psalm is the fact that God prepares us for what He wants us to do in this life. Then we can be grateful for the blessings we receive from Him as we live to make a difference for Him.
  - b) This leads perfectly to Psalm 145, David's last one. This psalm in the original Hebrew is an acrostic psalm. That sort of means "Let me start my first verse with the letter 'a' to describe how much I appreciate God." Let me then start the second verse with the letter 'b' to describe how much I appreciate Him." It is as if David had a dictionary in his hands and he was searching for every possible word he could find to use to praise God.
    - i) OK John, good for David. How does this affect me? It is not about learning Hebrew so we could understand the subtleties of this writing style.
    - ii) It is about understanding why it is we should praise God with our lives. In effect, this psalm leads me back to my opening comments about why we do praise Him. This psalm is full of reasons why we can appreciate how God is working in our lives in order to make a difference for Him. It is about the realization that God is more than willing to use you or me to make a difference for Him.
    - iii) Let me put it this way: I am not famous. I don't have any great athletic talent or say, a great musical talent. Simply due to my trust in God and my willingness to be used by Him, He has guided my life in order to make a difference for Him. What I want you to see as you read these this lesson is a realization that any one of us can be used to make a difference for Him. It won't happen on our timing or the way we think it should happen, but I have literally watched or learned about multitudes of people who have been used mightily by God simply because they were simply willing to be used by Him with their lives.
  - c) All of this leads to my lesson title: "How we make a difference for God". It starts with praising Him for guiding our lives. It is about trusting in Him to guide our lives no matter where we are in life. It is simply about the willingness to be used by Him to make a difference for Him. The rest, they say, is up to God, and that is where the joy in life is. The joy in life is getting to watch God work through us to make a difference for Him.

6. OK then, on that happy note, let's start Psalm 144, title: Of David
  - a) The term "of David" simply means that he wrote it and that God wants us to think about David's life as we contemplate the words of this psalm. In this psalm I will discuss aspects of David's life and how that ties to the theme of this psalm.
7. Verse 1: Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.
  - a) Of all the possible reasons to be thankful to God, it seems strange to start off by being thankful that God has taught us how to fight. I would say that this concept would require a good explanation. Since I can't promise that, ☺ I'll just do the best I can.
  - b) To understand that "preparation for fighting" reference, first it is necessary to look at what the verse says prior to that phrase.
    - i) First, we have David praising God Himself. The word "LORD" is in all capitals. For the sake of my new readers, that is a translation for the most holy name of God. The idea is God's name is so special here, so it is put in all capitals. The word literally means, "I am what I am". The idea is that we worship a God that can do all things, always existed and further, He desires to guide our lives.
    - ii) The next thing we read is David is calling God "his rock". That is not a rock that one can fit in one's hand. Think of it as a giant mountain of a rock that can't be moved. Think of the Rock of Gibraltar as an example. David's point is that God is beyond the scope of our ability to comprehend Him or control Him. The idea is we can trust in a God that is big enough to help us through all of our situations.
  - c) All of this comes back to the phrase "training our hands for war".
    - i) God has never called on believers to be pacifists. I heard it explained well this way: "If a rabid dog was chasing our young children, we would do what we can to protect our children and even shoot that dog if necessary." (Chuck Missler).
    - ii) Remember that David as king of Israel was expected to lead their army to fight against all of Israel's enemies. Therefore, David realized that his training as a soldier and even as a leader does ultimately come from God.
    - iii) This of course does not mean that David just stands there so God could explain to him how it is he has to fight against the enemy of the moment. It just means that God is ultimately the entity that gives us the time and the desire to learn what it is we have to do in order to be a protector of what God calls us to protect.
    - iv) Let me explain this one more way: One of the 10 commandments is "do not steal". (See Exodus 20:15.) If God does not want us to steal, that means it is ok for people to own things. It also means we should protect what God has entrusted us to protect. In order to protect, we must learn how to protect. That is also what David meant when he said God is preparing him to protect what he must protect.
  - d) Let me end this discussion with a reminder that the bible is not a training manual on how to physically fight a battle. David is praising God because He gives us that ability to fight.
8. Verse 2: He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.
  - a) If God is the one who prepares us for the lives we live, then we must realize that God is our protector. That in effect is the point of Verse 2.
  - b) It may help to quickly go through all of the terms in this verse: The idea of a fortress is to seek God is a place of protection. A "stronghold" is a similar term that describes a big safe place to run to. A deliver is someone who protects us from harm. A shield is used to protect us in a battle. Finally it says that God "subdues people under me."
  - c) OK John, I get the picture. How does God literally protect us? Think of it as a mental place to run to when we don't know what to do next in life. Think of it as God guiding us when we are in the middle of a difficult situation. Think of the fact that the God who knows all things already knows the outcome of whatever it is we have to face in life. With that thought in mind, we can face our own battles and trust in Him at the same time.

9. Verse 3: O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?  
<sup>4</sup>Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.
- a) The thought that the God who created everything cares and guides our lives can be overwhelming to consider. How can a single God control the lives of billions of people at the same time? As I have learned, if you can handle the first sentence of the bible ("God created the heavens and the earth"), you can handle the concept that God is aware of the lives of billions of people and is willing to guide any of us willing to trust in Him to do what is best for our lives.
  - b) That is the type of thoughts David is having in these two verses. When you read the term "son of man", it usually refers to all humans. It is like saying the offspring of Adam and Eve is the people that He cares about.
    - i) But John, doesn't Jesus refer to Himself as the son of man? This is common in Matthew's Gospel, where I counted 20 times Jesus describing himself that way. The point is Jesus is both "fully God and fully man", in that He is God and at the same time became a man for our sake. Therefore, Jesus Himself can be thought of as a "son of man" in that He became fully human as well as always be God.
    - ii) With that speech out of my system, know that David is strictly speaking about humanity in general here and not referring to future Messiah (Jesus) in any way.
  - c) David's point here is that in comparison to the long time frame of man's existence on earth, the life span of the average human is like a "shadow or breath" in that comparison of a specific length of time.
    - i) Think of it this way. On a cold day we can see our breath for a quick second and then it disappears. The idea of a "shadow" is like a sundial where the shadow moves quickly in relevance to an eternal time span. In both cases, the image is about time passing quickly. The idea is our lives pass quickly, especially in the context of the eternity of time as we could imagine it.
  - d) OK John, I get the idea that time passes quickly and our time is short in compared to eternity. What's the point in relevance to this psalm? Again, glad you asked. ☺
    - i) Consider the fact that God cares for us, despite how short our time span is in comparison to all of eternity. If we accept the idea that God knows all things about the future as well as the past and cares for us, then we can draw upon Him and His knowledge of our lives to use our lives to make a difference for Him.
    - ii) As I said in the introduction, God told me once, "I am not impressed with your resume". What that message meant is that He desired that I change my life in order to make a difference for Him. It is about putting Him first with our lives.
    - iii) If we realize that God desires to guide our lives despite the short time span we have, then we can all live a life, no matter the length with a purpose that makes a difference for Him if we are simply willing to be used by Him for His purpose.
    - iv) OK, and what is that purpose for my life? It is to glorify God. The specifics are different for each one of us. It is a matter of asking. It is a matter of discovering one's natural talents and using them for God's glory. As I have learned, God is not looking for ability, but just looking for availability. If we are willing to make ourselves available to Him, He will guide us for His glory.
    - v) On that happy thought, I'm ready to take on the next set of verses.
10. Verse 5: Part your heavens, O LORD, and come down; touch the mountains, so that they smoke.  
<sup>6</sup>Send forth lightning and scatter the enemies; shoot your arrows and rout them. <sup>7</sup>Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners <sup>8</sup> whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.
- a) To understand these four verses, the first thing I want to say here is that they are written in "figurative language". It is a reminder that we are reading poetry in these verses. Let me explain what I mean by the term "figurative" language:

- i) There is an old biblical expression that applies here. It goes, "When the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense. When the plain sense doesn't make sense, then seek some other sense." What that expression means is that if the bible text makes sense in it's straightforward meaning, accept it. If the text doesn't make sense with a straightforward meaning, then it could mean something else."
- b) With that expression in mind, let's discuss these four verses do mean:
  - i) In Verse 5, David is asking God to "part the heavens and touch the mountain so that they smoke". Is David literally asking God to show Himself so that a literal mountain will smoke with fire? I don't think that's the point. Therefore, I do believe David is being figurative in his language in these verses.
  - ii) Asking God to "smoke the mountain" in effect is asking Him to make a significant difference in our lives that is obvious to everyone around us. Remember that David himself had to deal with a lot of warfare. Therefore, David is asking God in effect to get involved in his battles, ultimately for His victory. That is why in Verse 6 David asks God to send lightening bolts to scatter his enemies. Finally in Verses 7 and 8 David asks God to rescue him from his enemies.
- c) OK John, good for David and I'm glad he asked God for help in his physical battles. Let's assume we are not at war at this moment. How does any of this affect me?
  - i) At times, we all have to face battles. We can draw upon a God to guide us to victory in the sense of His will getting done through us. Does this mean that we win all the battles we face in life? That was not true for David and not true for any of us. Since God is perfect, He already knows the outcome of those battles and therefore, we don't have to worry about that outcome. Back in Verse 1, David realized it was God who ultimately prepared him to battle, and now in these verses, David in a colorful way is asking God to guide him through his battles.
  - ii) Getting back to the idea that we are not in a battle at the moment, this is about the realization that God desires to guide our lives to do His will. Even if we are not dealing with a spiritual or physical battle at any moment, we still need to trust in God in order to get through our lives. It is about the realization that He wants to guide us through whatever we are dealing with at the moment. No situation is too big or too small that we can't turn the outcome over to Him.
- d) Getting back to the verses, David is asking God to reach down from heaven and control the outcome of his battles. If God knows all things why do we ask Him to control the outcome for our benefit? In other words, why do we ask Him to let us win and in effect let someone else lose the battle?
  - i) First of all, God knows all things but we don't. Therefore, it is ok to ask God not only to take over a situation but also to guide it based on our desires. Remember that prayer is about getting His will done and not our will. Since we don't know God's will, it is acceptable to ask Him to guide our battles as we desire.
  - ii) Think back to the illustration I used earlier about a rabid dog chasing our children. We should do what we can to protect our children. Yes we can and should ask for God's help so that our children would be safe. My point is there are situations where we should ask for His protection and at the same time, do what we can in order to keep people safe who are under our protection.
- e) What if we are literally at war? Good soldiers must obey orders. After a war is over it may be possible to discuss whether or not those specific orders were appropriate. In the meantime, one must follow the chain of command. With God, we ask Him to sort out the details of the battle as we must obey Him (that is live by the principals taught in His word) and obey those whose command we are under.
- f) As for battling other believers, it comes down to making the best decisions possible and letting God sort out the details of what is appropriate for any battle we fight in life.

11. Verse 9: I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you,  
<sup>10</sup> to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword.
- a) The really good news is that David's outlook gets more pleasant from this point forward. This is David realizing that God's will, will be done and he can look forward to the day where he can pull out his favorite musical instrument and sing praises to God for the victory. Translation: When we are in the middle of a difficult battle or situation, we too can look forward to a day when we can praise Him for the victory in that battle. That praise may come in heaven or it may come here on earth. The point is if we are trusting in God that our victory is assured.
  - b) But John, what about devout believers who die in battle, or die in prisoner of war camps? How did they win their battle? Remember that God's will getting done is much bigger than any one individual life. If they are trusting in God, then they get to sing their victory songs in heaven. My point is evil, always gets defeated, but it usually requires a lot of sacrifice in order to defeat evil and often that is what war requires.
  - c) I believe each of us who trust in God will get to praise Him in heaven and many of us also get the privilege of praising Him on earth as well. As I stated earlier, that doesn't mean we have to praise God around the clock. It should mean that we appreciate the good things He has done for our lives and take some time to thank Him for our victories.
  - d) Remember my lesson title, "How we make a difference for God". The answer is we let Him lead us to our victories that we face in life and then we take a moment to praise Him after we have our victories, or when we make a moment to show Him our gratitude.
    - i) Think of it this way: David still had more battles to fight in life, no matter what was this particular situation. Instead of just worrying about the next battle, David took some time every now and then to praise God for the victory he just had.
    - ii) My point is simply not to wait until the end of all of our battles to give God praise, or else we will never get around to it. We simply need to pause every now and then, realize that He knows all things, He desires to guide our lives, He desires to give us victories in life and therefore we can praise Him in advance for the victories He does give us whether we are aware of those victories or not.
  - e) Speaking of getting back to the reality of the battle, I present Verse 11.
12. Verse 11: Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.
- a) Despite the fact that David was thinking about God rescuing him from his problems, I'm sure David's enemies were still "right in front of him". To put it another way, we may pray for God's help and realize that He desires to help us. Still, we still must deal with our problems. That is what David is realizing at this moment.
  - b) I have to admit that if I ever meet David in heaven, I have to commend his ability to insult his enemies. After going through most of the psalms, I have come to realize what a gift David has for insulting those who don't trust in the God of the bible. ☺
  - c) But John, David's battles appear to be more "black and white" than mine. If you think that is true, remember that David was the run for years from another Israelite king (Saul). Also remember that David had to flee Israel when one of his own sons tried to take over. Yes at times, David fought true enemies of Israel, and I'm guessing that's the case here. My point is David's life like yours and mine, was not always "they are bad people and I am one of the good ones, so therefore, God, please help me."
  - d) In the battles we face in life, we may point out to God how those we fight are not trusting in Him (as if this is news to God). What David is doing is really reminding himself that there is a greater purpose for fighting than just being right. It is about God's will getting done. It is about the fact that He chooses to work through us in order not only to lead people to Him, but also to defeat evil. My point is evil is eventually defeated and God chooses to work through us in order to gain that victory.

13. Verse 12: Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace. <sup>13</sup>Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; <sup>14</sup>our oxen will draw heavy loads. There will be no breaching of walls, no going into captivity, no cry of distress in our streets.
- a) I want you to notice the word "then" to start Verse 12. David is saying in effect, "When the bad guys are defeated, then we can have peace. Then our sons and daughters can grow up in peace and not have to fight such battles. Then we will be financially blessed which is being described by the animals increasing in numbers (Verse 14). Then nobody we know will be taken in to captivity and no one will be in distress (Verse 15).
  - b) I remember on a television show, where someone was portraying a leader in modern Israel dreaming of a day when his children could grow fat and not have to fight the wars that he has to fight in order to have peace. That is the sentiment of these verses. It is about a wish of the day where life can be peaceful and God can be blessed us lots of ways.
  - c) The big question of course, is does that day ever come for the believer? In David's case, he had to fight wars all of his life. By the time his son Solomon came to power, Israel was at peace (victory over) all of their enemies and the people of Israel could live this way.
    - i) The mistake Solomon made was that he started trusting in everything other than God and eventually He took away all of the blessings David worked so hard for.
    - ii) So does that mean we should never wish for the type of life that Solomon had when the nation of Israel was blessed greater than any country in history? Think of it this way: David is spoken of highly in the New Testament and in the Old Testament books written after his life. Solomon was thought of as someone who blew it. Jesus' only comment on Solomon's glory is that the "lilies of the field have greater glory than Solomon at the peak of his power". (See Matthew 6:28-30.)
  - d) Therefore, the big question is, should we desire David's dream in these verses? Does God ever give us a time in our life where everything is wonderful and there are no problems?
    - i) We can always think of reasons to be grateful to God and we can always think of problems in the world around us. I guess a question for all of us to consider at any one time is do we want to focus on joy, or do we want to focus on our problems? Yes our problems are real and still right in front of us. The point is we can have peace through our difficult times if we focus on the source of our peace.
    - ii) But what about the reality of David's hope in these verses? David essentially wanted life to be good and not have anything to worry about. Does that time ever come in our lifetime? In reality, I've yet to see it. I've met many people with good attitudes through life. I've yet to meet a believer at any given moment who's life is so perfect that they have a situation like David dreamed here.
    - iii) Therefore, I suspect the true answer to David's request in these verses only comes with our attitude and our trust in God. Again, David's children did get to see a world of relative peace like David desired, and yet the problem is when one gets a world like that, one tends to trust in that peace instead of trusting in the God who provided that peace in the first place. Therefore, my answer to this question of receiving the things David desired in these verses comes from our attitude and our perspective about God and not what we actually receive in this lifetime.
    - iv) On that happy thought, I'm ready to finish this psalm.
14. Verse 15: Blessed are the people of whom this is true; blessed are the people whose God is the LORD.
- a) The final line gives the answer to David's request of peace, prosperity and happiness. It is not about those who actually receive lots of financial blessings. Blessings in this life come from those who actually trust in God and let go of one's worries. Then we are blessed far greater than by all of the "stuff" listed in the previous set of verses in this psalm.

15. Psalm 145: A psalm of praise. Of David.
  - a) We now begin the final psalm written by David in the book. The final five psalms of the book that come next also focus on praising God, as we'll discover in the next lesson.
  - b) OK John, tell me again why I should spend so much energy praising God? Yes I believe He exists and yes I realize that He guides my life. The question as we get near the end of the book, is what is left to consider in our relationship with Him and what does that have to do with praising Him? The answer is to contemplate the fact that because we believe He knows all things about the past, present and future, and because we believe and know that God is guiding our lives, that should get us to praise Him for that guidance.
    - i) To put it another way, what do we give God in exchange for the blessings he has given us? Since He doesn't need anything, all we can do is give Him our praise.
    - ii) Remember we don't praise Him for His sake, but for ours. We pray to remind ourselves that God is there and desires to guide our lives. By praising Him, it gets our focus on Him and the reality that He exists.
    - iii) Let me also ask the other obvious question: If God is so real, why doesn't He speak to us audibly or show Himself in some very real way? Suppose God appeared that way to your neighbor. Then you would be saying, "Wow, that person must really be special as God appeared to Him." A major reason why God is not more visible in appearances is to avoid jealousy situations. Further, what good would faith be, if God regularly manifested Himself in a real way?
  - c) With that overly dramatic introduction completed, ☺ I'm ready for Verse 1.
16. Verse 1: I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.
  - a) This psalm of praise begins by "exalting" God as one's king. To exalt someone means to hold that entity in very high regard. (Thanks to my on-line dictionary for that definition.)
  - b) It means to not only acknowledge God as existing, but also that He is in charge of our life. That is why David calls God "His King". Remember that David was a king himself and he understood the power of being a king. Yet, David in his role as a king thought of the God who created the universe as being his own king.
    - i) So what does that mean for you and me? Is God really a literal king? He is in the sense that He desires to be in charge of all of our lives. Since God gave us each free will, we have to willfully choose to give our lives back to Him. That is the flavor of this verse and God's desires of each of our lives.
  - c) This leads me to the second sentence of Verse 1. David's desire is to praise God's name forever and ever. The obvious point is that David figured that he would exalt God as being in charge of his life not only for the rest of his life here on earth, but he wanted God to have that honor forever and into the next life.
  - d) I pondered earlier whether or not we spend all our time in heaven just praising God? Yes I suspect that would eventually grow boring even in heaven. I do believe we will do that a lot in heaven, so as I said earlier, we should get used to the idea of praising Him now.
  - e) I believe that if we get used to the idea of praising God now for the good things He has done for us, it gets easier to keep praising Him. It's like getting in good physical shape. Once we in good physical shape, we want to maintain that benefit. Praise of God is like staying in good shape that one wants to maintain for our own benefit in life.
17. Verse 2: Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.
  - a) Speaking of making it a regular habit to praise God, I present Verse 2.
  - b) I was thinking about the term "every day". I stopped and realized as much as I love God, there are many days where I don't pause even for a moment to praise Him for all of the blessings I have in my life. I suppose like most people, I get too wrapped up in my own life to pause, thank God for at the least, giving me the opportunity to know what I do know about Him and praise Him for the life He has given me. Therefore, I ask that you stop for a moment, join me in a moment of praise, and then we'll continue this lesson.



- c) OK, welcome back. ☺ Know that David is not calling on us to praise God every moment of the day. He is asking us to make it part of our lives to consider reasons to be grateful to God for the life He has given us. Let's suppose we are having a real difficult time and can't think of any reason to praise God. At the least, we should thank Him for giving us life and the fact we can take a moment and praise Him, now and forever.
  - d) OK John, what is the benefit of doing this? I understand that a perfect God does not need to hear this, so why should I make it part of my prayer life to praise Him? It is to have joy in our life. I am convinced that in order to be happy and have a positive outlook on life, no matter what our circumstances, we need to be grateful. The kind of person willing to show gratitude to God is also the kind of person willing to show gratitude to others around us and again, that makes us a more joyful person.
  - e) Let me come back to my point about having bad days. Suppose someone close to us just died or is in a lot of pain. (I was trying to think of what would cause me to be in a really bad mood.) Why would I want to be joyful when all of these bad things are happening? First of all, if one is suffering for some reason, God does not expect us to be artificially happy when we are dealing with a lot of pain. What He does want of us is to trust Him through such difficult times and praise Him because we know He will see us through those times. That concept that God will see us through the worst of times is one reason we, like David should praise Him daily.
18. Verse 3: Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.
- a) I've already discussed that God is worthy to be praised no matter what the circumstances, so let me focus on the last part of the verse that says, "no one can fathom".
    - i) John's loose translation: We can never fully comprehend God's power.
  - b) I pondered earlier in this lesson the question of how can God be aware of the lives of billions of people? That is just one way "no one can fathom" His power.
  - c) How do we know God knows all things about the future? We know that because about one third of the bible is predictions. Most of those predictions have come true. David understood this because God told him about the future kings that will be his descendants. David's descendants for hundreds of years ruled over parts of Israel.
    - i) My point here and the point of this verse is that one reason we can praise God is because we cannot fully comprehend what He is capable of doing. We cannot comprehend for example, his knowledge of billions of people or His knowledge of the future before it ever happens. God is worthy of praise if for no other reason, then He has tremendous power that is beyond our ability to comprehend.
    - ii) So, if God's power is beyond our ability to comprehend, why bother to try to grasp it in the first place? God is not asking us or expecting us to understand the extent of His power. God is asking us to trust Him with our lives. That is why we praise Him even if we can't fully understand Him.
19. Verse 4: One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.
- a) This next verse tells us of the importance of passing on knowledge of God to the next generation. Notice the word "will", used twice in this verse. God is not saying we have to struggle to pass on knowledge about Him. It never ceases to amaze me to see societies where God has essentially been ignored for at least a generation. Yet witnesses for Jesus manage to work their way into that society to teach another generation about His love.
  - b) I have accepted that one reason God gave me this ministry is to pass on knowledge about Him to other people around the world who I will never meet. I am not saying that all of us have to be in a worldwide ministry for Him. I am saying that God has called on all believers to be a witness for Him. Like I said in the introduction, "God is not impressed by my resume" of my life without His guidance. At the same time, He is more than willing to use each of us in a mighty way if we are willing to commit our lives to serving Him and learning to live under His guidance based on biblical principals.

20. Verse 5: They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. <sup>6</sup>They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. <sup>7</sup>They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness
- a) These next three verses specify what we are supposed to pass on to the next generation.
  - b) These verses use the words "they and I". My point here is don't make a big deal about those words. In other translations, it says that I (David) will do all of these things. The point here is that David desired to see the next generation receive knowledge of God. It is also David's desire that he himself ponder all of the wonderful things God has done.
  - c) The idea is that God wants us to think about and speak about His great works. How do we do that? First of all, one can't pass on that knowledge unless one has it in the first place. Therefore, we need to study our bible and learn how God has worked in many ways. We need to spend time with other believers to see amazing things God has done in the lives of others. Then we can and should share what we learn with others.
  - d) So when do we stop learning and start teaching others about God? Even if we just got saved, we can share that joy with other believers. Back to the question, when we do stop becoming a student and start becoming a teacher? I find that God makes that obvious to us, when such times come, as He showed me many years ago.
  - e) OK, what "works" am I supposed to share with others? I'm not saying God has to part the Red Sea in front of us. I am saying that we share what we have come to believe from the bible with others so they too can learn of His deeds. We share how God has worked in our lives so others can see how God is capable of working in their lives.
  - f) There is a classical comment in being a witness for Jesus that one can argue all day about theology, but people can't argue with your personal testimony. What is always amazing to watch is how some people react positively to the good news about Jesus. Not everyone will believe, but some will. Watching the positive reactions is well worth the effort and dealing with the rejections of those who refuse to believe it.
    - i) I'm not saying we are all called to be evangelists. However, we are all called to be a witness for Jesus with our lives. That in effect, is the point of these verses.
  - g) Meanwhile, the last time I checked, we got up to Verse 8.
21. Verse 8: The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. <sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
- a) The focus here is on God's relationship with the whole world. It is describing attributes about God that we can pass on to the next generation.
    - i) The first of those attributes is that God is "gracious and compassionate". The idea is that He cares about people and wants the best for our lives. For those of us who do trust in Him, we have learned over time that He is slow to get angry at our sins and is full of love for those of us who trust in Him.
  - b) Verse 9 says, "God is good to all". Think about all the people over the millennia that have been murdered or died horrible deaths. How can the text possibly say the LORD is good to all? To understand, we are speaking in generalities, not specifics about individual lives. As I like to say, if this life is all that there is, life is very unfair. If there is a next life and God does judge people fairly that is the only way He could be "good to all".
  - c) Let me also remind all of us again about the word "LORD" in all capitals. David is using the most holy name of God to describe that He is good not just to Israelites, but to all people willing to put their trust in Him. That word "LORD" literally means, "I am what I am". My point here is simply that God spends almost no space in the bible explaining who He is, or where He came from. He just "Is who He is". That is the God that we trust in and the God who is full of love to all that trust in Him.
  - d) Again, the compassion aspect does come in this life to all that trust in Him, but at the same time one has to accept the idea of a judging God in order for these verses to be true.

22. Verse 10: All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. <sup>11</sup> They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, <sup>12</sup> so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- a) Here we have three verses that say in effect those who trust in God will praise Him. Verses 11 and 12 give us the "how and why". Verse 11 states that people will tell others of the benefits of trusting in Him. Verse 12 explains the purpose of passing on knowledge about God: So that all men (and women) may know of His existence and power.
  - b) OK John, explain the "all". How can all people know Him? Obviously many people die as children and many people live in remote parts of the world who never heard of God.
    - i) As to children, again I believe in a God who judges people fairly and that is "His problem" of how to deal with such people.
    - ii) As to the "isolated", I take the view that the evidence in nature leads to the obvious conclusion of a single God that created all things. If one believes in multiple gods, that would eventually lead back to a single entity that created all things.
  - c) The point is that one day all people will praise God. This is a principal stated in the New Testament as well. There will come a day, either by free will or by force, that all people will acknowledge the God that created this world. (See Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10.) That in effect is the point of these verses.
23. Verse 13: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.
- a) Remember that David is using this psalm to explain reasons why all people should praise God. One of the big picture things to see from reading this psalm is that God does great things for the whole world in that He makes it possible for all of us to live on earth. However, for those of us who are willing to submit to His eternal payment for our sins, He has blessings for us that will go on for eternity.
  - b) David's point here is that he understood trusting in God will go on as long as man exists and not just for his (or a few) generations. Consider how many millenniums this trust in God has gone on. That alone shows that He has been faithful to keep His promises to us.
24. Verse 14: The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.
- a) One of the principals one learns from studying the whole bible is that God raises up all that are willing to put Him first in their life. It doesn't mean all Christians take on some sort of leadership role. It does mean that if we are willing to submit ourselves to God, He will raise us up in the sense that we get the privilege of being with Him forever in heaven.
    - i) In Verse 10 it talked about how all people will acknowledge God one day. Some will praise Him by "force" and some out of our free will. Those of us who submit to Him out of our free will get the privilege of being with Him in heaven, if we are willing to accept Jesus' payment as the only solution for our sins.
    - ii) I do believe it happens in this life as well. I have watched many people submit their lives to God and He in turn, uses their lives for His glory.
25. Verse 15: The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. <sup>16</sup> You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
- a) As I stated, this psalm likes to go back and forth between focusing on God's relationship with believers and His relationship with the whole world. These two verses come back to God's relationship with the whole world.
  - b) So how does God give all of us "food at the proper time"? We have a general principal here and David is not talking about every specific person in history. The point is God provides an environment where food can grow out of the ground and animals that that can be killed for food. To quote an old Jewish expression, "The greatest purpose that an animal can serve is as food for humans." David's point in this verse is simply that God has provided for us an environment where we do have food we can grow and eat.
  - c) If you have nothing else to be grateful for, thank God that He provides food for us.

26. Verse 17: The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. <sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. <sup>19</sup> He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.
- a) Again, we have more "contrasts" here. In Verse 17, David is talking about how the whole world benefits from our relationship with God. In Verses 18 and 19, David jumps back to the benefits to believers who call on Him.
  - b) We can grasp the concept how "God is right" (that is "righteous") in all that he does. He allows evil to exist, ultimately to be defeated and bring Him glory. My question is how can God show love toward all He has made? Yes, most people do suffer due to the evil that exists in this world. Explaining evil is one of the most difficult aspects of any religion let alone Christianity. The short answer is that due to mankind's sinful nature, evil exists in this world and God allows it, in order to draw us to Him for protection.
  - c) That last thought leads well to Verse 18 and 19. How is God near to those who trust in Him, if God is everywhere? It is not about God's physical location. It is about those who do trust in Him, can talk to Him and let Him guide our lives. Finally, Verse 19 says, "He fulfills our desires". Obviously God does not give us everything we want. (If that's the case, I'm still waiting for lots of "stuff". ☺) The point is if we desire to do His will, He gives us the desire of His will and in that sense He watches over all who call on Him.
27. Verse 20: The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.
- a) One cannot accept the idea of a perfect God unless one also accepts the idea that He will one day destroy (i.e., send to hell) all those who refuse to trust in Him. This reminds me of Walter Martin's famous quote of, "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses." What Mr. Martin meant by that is that if people won't believe the good news of the Gospel, then they must understand the destruction that awaits their refusal to accept the Gospel message. That statement is in effect, what this verse is saying.
    - i) To expand a little, the "full" Gospel message is not that Jesus died for our sins, but also that eternal destruction is coming for all who refuse to submit to God.
    - ii) This ties to my point about "give them Moses". That is about understanding the ultimate price of not submitting one's life to God.
28. Verse 21: My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.
- a) Remember again, that this whole psalm is about reasons why we should praise God. David concludes this psalm by saying in effect he will continue to praise God as long as he lives and let everyone else praise Him as long as people and creatures exist.
  - b) Let me quickly ask the question, how do "creatures" praise God? It is not verbally. It is the idea that they too have food to eat and places to live so in effect they are praising God because they have that benefit for their lives.
29. Let me end with a quick summary of how we use our lives to make a difference for Him.
- a) First, it requires that we acknowledge His existence and the fact He knows all things.
  - b) Next, we must be willing to submit our lives to Jesus for the full forgiveness of our sins.
  - c) Then it requires us to praise Him for the blessings He has bestowed on our lives.
  - d) Then, it is about the realization that the results of our lives in effect are "His problem" and we don't have to worry about our future.
  - e) Then, we go forward, making the best decisions possible, living by biblical principals and trusting in His guidance for our lives. That is why we praise Him.
30. Speaking of praise, it's time for the closing prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank You for the great things You have done in this world. We thank You for providing for us and help us to trust that just as You have provided in our past, so You will provide for our future. Help us to remember that just because You desire to guide us, and that is not an excuse to be lazy. Guide the decisions we make and help us to live to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.