

1. We're covering three psalms in this lesson. I can summarize all three of them in three words: "When God works". That is my three word title for this lesson. The focus of this lesson is not so much on how God works or why God works, but "when" God works. It is about remembering how God has gotten us through past situations and using that knowledge to remind us that since God has gotten us through the past, He will see us through our present and future issues.
  - a) Psalm 19 describes the unknowable depth of both God's world (our universe) and God's word. It is to say in effect, this world and God's word are both too much for me to comprehend, so I need Your (God's) help to comprehend both of them.
  - b) Psalm 20 is considered a "battle preparation" psalm. It was sung by Israelites prior to entering battle. It is a prayer in effect to prepare me for whatever lies ahead.
  - c) Psalm 21 is considered an "after the battle" thank you psalm. It was sung after battles were won and in effect gives thanks to God for what He has done.
  - d) OK, so why are these three psalms here and in this order? I believe it is to say:
    - i) God is too big to comprehend, but we will worship Him anyway.
    - ii) We will trust God through whatever we are about to face.
    - iii) After we "face whatever we have to face", we then stop and thank God for getting us through what we just went through. It helps us remember who is guiding us.
  - e) That's a good summary of our prayer life to God. We are admitting that He exists and He is too big to comprehend. Still we trust in Him, and trust that He is guiding us. After we get through our battle of the moment, we thank Him not because He needs to hear it, but to remind ourselves it is He that ultimately got us through our last predicament.
    - i) To shorten it, "God is bigger than we can imagine, God still wants to guide us, God can lead us to a victorious life and we should thank Him for our victories."
2. OK John, this is all pretty basic stuff. Why should I study these psalms? How can each of them affect my life and make it better? As usual, I'm so glad you asked. ☺
  - a) Let's start with Psalm 19. This psalm first focuses on the physical universe. It is to say in effect, "The universe is so big, how can I accept the idea of a God who cares about watching me and my life, when I am so insignificant in comparison to the universe?"
    - i) One good way of answering that question is to say in effect, "What would life be like if our existence is a big random accident in the development of the universe?"
    - ii) If that were true, then life is ultimately a waste of time. Even atheists would have to argue that if our existence is just a random accident, then ultimately people have no purpose for living. If however, there is a God who wants us to trust Him and has an eternal plan for our lives, then "life" ultimately has a purpose.
  - b) This leads us to the second part of the psalm, a focus on God's word. When David wrote this, the focus would have been on the first five books of the bible all written by Moses. One can expand that thought now to include all of the bible.
    - i) My point is if God exists, and He has a purpose for our life, what is it? That is why God gave us His word, to explain what He expects of us.
    - ii) It is interesting to consider the bible spends little space arguing for the existence of God. It essentially says in effect, "The evidence in the physical world is that God exists. The bible is here to tell us what to do with that knowledge."
  - c) That leads us to the purpose of Psalm 19. It is to contemplate the "great size" of both the universe and God's word. In both cases, it is overwhelming to understand all it contains.
    - i) The psalm says in effect, it is not a waste of time to learn about our universe and God's word. We still have to remember that "God is God and we are not". We can't fully comprehend His plans for our world. Therefore, we must trust Him.

- d) This also leads me to Psalm 20.
    - i) The important point here is that we often have to face battles that are too big and too overwhelming to face or comprehend by our own strength.
    - ii) This psalm comes after Psalm 19 because once we understand that God is too big to fully comprehend we learn that we must trust in Him "anyway".
    - iii) God does not want us to just "sit here" and watch life go by. He wants us too trust Him through our battles and trust that He is working for our best through such times. In summary, Psalm 20 is the reminder not that God exists, but that God will see us through whatever we are facing at the moment.
  - e) Finally, this leads us to Psalm 21.
    - i) Like psalm 20, it is a short psalm and the purpose is pause to give God the credit for whatever victory(s) we have just gone through.
    - ii) So why praise Him if we know He got us through our situation? The problem is our short memories. Stopping to give God credit is to remind ourselves that He was there the whole time and He did get us through our situation of the moment.
    - iii) What if we haven't had any victories as of late? Then consider the psalm this way: Thank God for getting you through the day (or week) without any significant problems. (Only God knows what He has protected us from.) Another idea is to pray for others that you have seen go "victorious" over some issue or cause.
  - f) OK, hopefully by now, you get the idea that these psalms deal with the "when" we pray to Him for the victories of life. Therefore, I believe we are ready to start Psalm 19.
3. Psalm 19, introduction: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
- i) All we know of the background of this psalm is that David wrote it and it was meant to be sung. Like all the psalms, the original music is long gone.
  - ii) It is interesting to contemplate, that besides everything else David had to think about, he took the time to contemplate the stars and their relationship to God.
4. Verse 1: The heavens declare the glory of God; The skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- a) I need to pause before I dissect this verse, to give some background on our universe. I am grateful for Chuck Missler's comment, which is essentially the rest of this paragraph: For those who like to study life forms on earth, the numbers of species can be staggering. A bug expert may say there are hundreds or thousands of different types of ants. Whatever the correct number is for each category of animal or say insect, those numbers are still dwarfed by the size and scope of the universe.
    - i) Let me explain the universe another way: The size of our galaxy alone is roughly 100,000 light years from one end to the other. If the distance from the earth to the sun was the equivalent of the thickness of one sheet of paper, then the distance from the sun to the nearest star would equal a stack of paper 73 feet thick.
    - ii) The number of known galaxies is more than 100 billion.
  - b) My point is, if the physical universe is so vast, how can there be a single God and more importantly, how and why would He care about individuals like you and me?
    - i) To answer that question, one has to contemplate how the universe came into existence: There has to be a force greater than the universe that made it exist. If there is more than one god, then there has to be a greater god that made the gods. If one thinks about it logically, one eventually comes to a single god.
    - ii) Gee John, that is interesting to think about it, but what does it have to do with this psalm? Everything. The point of Verse 1 is essentially that the evidence for the existence of God can be seen in the universe. It all "speaks" of a creator.
    - iii) If that is true, why are there so many atheists in the scientific community? Part of the answer is that there must be a spiritual conversion to accept the existence of God. Part of the answer is people refuse to believe what is obvious to believers about the existence of God.

5. Verse 2: Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.
- a) These verses compare what we see in the sky to "speech". The point is one can study the movement of the sun and the stars and it speaks of God. OK, how does that work?
    - i) The evidence of God's existence is in the stars and that evidence is "universal" in that it speaks (by physical evidence) to people of all languages.
    - ii) The essential idea is to look up at the stars and contemplate, "well this too much for me to comprehend. Still the stars could not come into existence by accident and therefore there must be a greater force than the stars that created them."
    - iii) In Romans Chapter 1, a key point is that people will have no excuse for a lack of evidence for God's existence because the evidence is "all around us". In other words, the evidence for creation is obvious just by looking at the night sky.
  - b) Let me drag this study back to us. ☺ We as Christians accept the idea that God exists and He does watch over our lives. You and I cannot fully comprehend how a God that created billions of stars also watches over our lives and cares for us. We simply accept this by faith and at that point, we watch the evidence as we see God work in our lives.
    - i) If we accept all of this is true, why should I care about this psalm?
      - a) Remember that part of the "10 commandments speech" is to not look at the stars and be "driven to worship them". (See Exodus 20:5.) Part of the point of that verse in Exodus is when we see the stars, we don't look at them as being "little gods", but that there is a God that created the stars.
    - ii) Getting back to my question, why should Christians care about this psalm? We don't believe that the stars in the sky tell our future. However, just because God does not want us to worship the stars, does not mean God wants us to ignore them. They teach us, if nothing else, of the vastness of God's size, which by definition is more powerful than the universe if He created it in the first place.
    - iii) Do I understand how the God who created all of the universe can communicate with us, and why He is so interested in our individual lives? No, but I accept it as fact based on all the evidence I see, and that includes the evidence of the universe.
  - c) The alternative (atheist) view of the universe is in effect, that life is ultimately a waste of time because if there is no eternal purpose to life, then we might as well enjoy every moment and minimize our suffering.
    - i) While that may sound appealing, what does one say to a child who is dying of cancer? Do you say, "Oh well, too bad for you?" As pleasant as the thought be may of a life without any accountability to God, that life is ultimately unfair to all people. The best alternative is the existence of a God we are accountable to, and that is one reason I accept His existence as that is the only way life would be fair.
    - ii) Ok, enough theology. Let me get back to the text.
6. Verse 4 (cont.): In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. <sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.
- a) These verses focus on our sun. In effect, Verses 1 through the first half of verse 4 focus on the evidence of God's existence in the "night sky", while these two and one half verses focus on the evidence for God in the daytime sky.
  - b) Let me start with the first phase. It says that God has "pitched a tent for the sun".
    - i) What does that mean? The essential idea is that God made a path for the sun to travel. The point is the sun is not standing still. It has its own orbit within the galaxy. Further, the position of our galaxy is also affected by its relationship to other galaxies. My point and the psalm writer's point is the sun does not stand still and even David who wrote this psalm got that.

- c) So how did David know the sun moves? There were no telescopes when David wrote this. That is one reason why we take these psalms as "revelation from God".
- d) Another view is that in science, one always has a "point of reference". David described the sun as moving because David based his point of reference by where he was standing.
- e) OK John, so the earth moves around the sun and the sun moves around the universe. This is not news. ☺ Why is that relevant here and why should we care?
  - i) A point is for us to understand is that the bible is "very aware" of how the solar system and the galaxy "works". It is evidence the bible is not fiction.
- f) The other point leads us to the last phrase, "nothing is hidden from its (the sun's) heat".
  - i) Well, what if we are in the shade? Aren't we hidden from the sun's heat? Not really. We are still affected as it heats whatever we are "under".
  - ii) In fact, all the earth's energy sources have their origin from sun power. The sun affects the movement of wind. The sun affects all plant life and the sun is necessary for plant growth. The rotation of the earth around the sun causes water to move downhill. My point is the sun affects all sources of energy whether we realize it or not.
- g) Roughly two decades ago, there was a popular book called, "Earth in the balance" by former American Vice President Al Gore. While I don't believe his theories on the earth's coming destruction, he is right in that the "earth is finely balanced". For example, if the orbit of the earth was any closer or further away from the sun, we could not live. If there was no ozone layer, we could not live. One can sight dozens of illustrations of how the earth is "finely balanced" to support life.
  - i) If the earth is so finely balanced, many people fail to see the logical conclusion that there must be a creator who made the earth so finely balanced. Despite my disagreements with Al Gore's politics I understand He believes in God partially due to His understanding that the earth's "balancing" could not be an accident.
  - ii) What does all of this have to do with the psalm? Everything. The point of these verses is the evidence of the sun's movement and even the heat from the sun is evidence of the existence of God.
- h) To sum up these six verses, together they show that the evidence of both the nighttime sky and the daytime sky point to the existence of God. They may not say what this God wants of us, but they point to God's existence. Which does lead us to Verse 7.

7. Verse 7: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

- a) We now change subjects from the creation of the world to the creation of "God's law". These verses say in effect, "God's word and the laws in God's word can be trusted."
- b) So why switch topics like this? Why go from the creation of the universe to God's word?
  - i) The answer is that the universe teaches us that God exists. God's word teaches us what He expects of us. In that sense, the transition makes perfect sense.
  - ii) So why is God's law so important? For starters, if we never had it, we would never know what God expects of us. We would have no idea how to treat other human beings and there would be no standard of "right and wrong" that was "stamped" (for the lack of better word) by God Himself.
  - iii) Without God's law people may get a basic understanding of the existence of a god, but they wouldn't know what to do with that knowledge of God's existence. His law teaches us in effect, "Here is God's standard for living, now go do it."
- c) This does lead us back to these verses. They say in effect, studying God's law makes the simple (think naïve) person wise. The concept of wisdom is the knowledge to do what is the right thing. In fact, they teach us to have joy by obeying those laws.

- d) OK John, you and both know that Christians are not under the law. (See Romans 6:14). What then is the purpose of God's law for us? God's laws as described in the first five books of the bible do teach us God's standard for right and wrong. That didn't change with Jesus, it just made us perfectly forgiven of its requirements.
    - i) I am convinced the only way to live a life pleasing to God and "in effect" obeying the law is by sticking close to God and letting Him work through us as opposed to us trying to obey God's laws using our own willpower. That in effect is also the Gospel message as Jesus came to show us how to be pleasing to God the Father.
  - e) So why should we Christians study the "law" if we are not bound by it? It is to learn what is our responsibility to God and to other believers. The law can be summarized by the concept of loving God as much as possible and loving others as much as we love ourselves. That as Jesus taught is the "essence" of the law. (See Luke 10:27.) Essentially all the Old Testament laws "fall into place" under the concept of loving God and loving others. Studying those laws teach us how to love God and how to be loving to others.
    - i) Jesus new command was to love one another. Other than saying those words, how do we practically love one another? The Old Testament law gives us hundreds of examples to contemplate and practice. The benefit of studying the law is that it teaches us how to love one another as well as how to love God.
    - ii) To summarize, we don't learn the law so we can "try harder" to obey it, we learn the law so we can see how God wants to work through us to obey His law.
    - iii) OK, enough of law school. ☺ Let's get back to the text.
8. Verse 9: The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.
- a) Grasping the concept of "fearing the Lord" is a tricky thing. It doesn't mean we fear obeying Him, it means we fear the consequences of not obeying Him. If we care about pleasing God, then we should fear displeasing Him.
  - b) So how is that fear, "pure and enduring forever"? Do we have to fear God after death?
    - i) First of all, the idea of "pure" is that this fear keeps our focus on Him.
    - ii) Next, the idea of "enduring forever" can refer to the idea that as long as there are believers in God in this world, those who seek Him do fear His wrath.
    - iii) Now the tougher question: Does the fear of God continue in the next life?
      - a) The bible says very little about our next life. The bible is essentially a manual on how to live life "here and now". It is as if God is saying in effect, "You let me worry about the next life and you people (that's us) should just worry about pleasing Me as that is enough to deal with."
      - b) If heaven is a perfect place, then I do believe God takes away our desire to sin in the next life. I still believe the "Fear of the Lord" somehow endures in the next life, but at the same time, somehow we become "sin free".
  - c) On that confusing point, I'll sneak over to the next sentence. The essential idea of the next sentence is that God's laws are "perfect". OK John, if these laws are so great, why don't Christians have to obey them? One point of the history of Israel is to show us how it was impossible for people to be obedient to God based on one's willpower. The law is a good thing, but it must be obeyed not through "willpower" but by letting God work through us.
    - i) OK, what does that mean? It means if it is our desire to please God and we are regularly seeking Him through prayer and His word, the desire to obey will "just happen" in that God will put the desire in our hearts to please Him. There are still advantages to learning the Old Testament law as it teaches us what God desires for us. However, obedience to those laws does not come from trying harder, but by letting Jesus work through us.
    - ii) Now that I've beaten that point to death, ☺ it's time to move on.

9. Verse 10: They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. <sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- a) These verses say in effect that God's laws are more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey or for that matter any other food or material thing we may desire.
  - b) OK John I get that. What does it mean? Does it mean we don't work for a living so we can concentrate on studying His word? Does it mean we have to skip desert in order to read our bibles? Not exactly, but you're getting closer.
    - i) The idea is essentially that time spent earning a living or time spent eating a favorite desert may give us pleasure for some length of time, but time spent in God's word has a far greater and longer benefits.
    - ii) I'm saying there is nothing wrong with working for a living or even eating a desert. The key is "balance". If we ignore God's word because we are spending too much time on "x or y", then we have a problem.
    - iii) Can you go a few days without food? How long can you go without having money to pay for things? Those are both needed. Yet, if you ignore God's word for a while, are we any different? One needs to regularly spend time in God's word and it is as beneficial to our growth in life.
  - c) The related point is Verse 11, which indirectly makes the point that there is a "great reward" for studying God's word. The essential point is that there is benefit to studying God's word in this lifetime as in the next.
    - i) If you didn't know that you wouldn't be reading this study. ☺
10. Verse 12: Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. <sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.
- a) The idea here is that no one is perfect. The only way to avoid sin is to pray to avoid it.
  - b) The text specifies "willful sins". Let me explain. The idea is to think, "It is ok for what I am about to do, because I know afterwards I can ask God to forgive me and He will".
    - i) So how do we avoid "willful sins" or any sins for that matter?
    - ii) The answer is in effect, the first few words of Verse 13: "Keep your servant". It is not about "trying hard" to avoid sin. Without God's help, we are powerless over sin. The idea is about asking God to help us avoid the temptation of sin.
  - c) OK, we may pray every day and still fall into the temptation to sin. What am I doing wrong that I keep on sinning?
    - i) For starters, you are human. I recently heard a wonderful comment by radio personality Dennis Prager: He says that both Judaism and Christianity teach that our (believer's) greatest enemy is not any particular person or political cause, but our own sinful natures. That fact alone should keep us regularly praying to God.
    - ii) The way I look at it is as follows: Yes I mess up and when I do, I bring that sin to God to confess it. At the same time, I cannot imagine how much worse my life would be if I never pray in the first place. I remembered how I used to live before I got saved and I can see the great "before and after" difference.
      - a) If that last sentence doesn't help, stop and think how your non-Christian friends behave and ask yourself, "Can I ever live like that?" If the answer is no, then keep on praying for His help to deal with our sinful nature.
    - iii) My point is we can't be perfect even if we pray around the clock. The time we do spend with Him does make a difference and does prevent us from sinning a whole lot more than we do. The point is not perfection, but seeking God's help in order to avoid as much sin as possible in the first place.
    - iv) Remember that how much we sin as a believer does not affect our salvation. That is only determined by our trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our ability to avoid sin does affect how good of a witness we are for God and to other people.

11. Verse 14: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.
  - a) Some years back, a head pastor of my former church used to open up every sermon he preached with this verse. It was a reminder to him to let God speak through him when he preached from the pulpit.
    - i) Does that mean his preaching was perfect? Of course not. Does that mean he was able to live up to the standards he preached? Of course not. The point here is not about reaching "perfection", but the realization we are living a whole lot better than if we never asked for God's help in the first place.
  - b) Does this mean I should pray this verse every time I speak before a Christian audience?
    - i) Well, it couldn't hurt, but it is not a requirement. ☺ The point is not how often we recite this (or any particular verse), but the point is to regularly remind ourselves to let God "use us" and opposed to just trying to do things ourselves. A purpose of prayer is not to remind God that He needs to get involved in our lives. Prayer is to remind ourselves that God is there and He wants to get involved in our lives.
    - ii) I was taught many years ago, that one of the biggest mistakes Christian preachers make is teaching without invoking God in prayer prior to teaching. I try to keep that in mind when I write these lessons. I am grateful to everyone who prays for me and hopefully I can do the same for others.
  - c) Hey, look, I made it through Psalm 19 and still have room to write about two more. ☺
12. Psalm 20, Introduction: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
  - a) Like Psalm 19, the only introduction comment is that it was written by David, and it was written to be sung. Since I don't have the music, let me just focus on what it says.
13. Verse 1: May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. <sup>2</sup> May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.
  - a) I stated back in the introduction that Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 are designed as "bookends". What I mean by that is Psalm 20 was designed to be sung or prayed prior to starting a particular battle, while Psalm 21 was designed to be used after that battle was over.
    - i) For the Israelites of David's day I'm sure that meant literal war-like battles.
    - ii) For us, it may be a physical battle or it could be some cause we are battling.
    - iii) The point is David designed this prayer to help us through whatever it is we are about to face. With that in mind, let us go over Verses 1 and 2 again.
  - b) These verses are a good introduction to the idea of asking God for help. These two verses don't state the "what or why" of asking God for help, just that we should do it.
    - i) Like the ending of the last psalm, the issue is not trying to take things on without invoking God's help. It is not like God is just sitting there ignoring us until we invoke His name in prayer. The idea is to remind ourselves that God is there and He does want to help us. We should stop to consider that God is willing to help us through whatever we are about to face at the moment.
14. Verse 3: May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. *Selah*
  - a) Here in this verse David says we should ask God to remember our sacrifices and burnt offerings. The untranslated word "Selah" is at the end, which means we should stop and think about what this verse says.
  - b) First, let's remember we are dealing with the Old Testament here, and part of the lifestyle of the religious Jew was to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings as a sign that an Israelite was willing to turn from their sins and commit their lives to God.
  - c) OK John, that is neat. How does it affect us Christians? We don't do burnt offerings and sacrifices today, as Jesus was our "burnt offering" for our sins. The New Testament equivalency of this verse might be the concept of committing ourselves to serving God and the "sacrifices" might be the idea of regularly doing "God's will" as opposed to doing our will at any given moment.

- d) So is this verse saying, "Dear God, bless us because we have been faithful to You?"
  - i) A better way of saying this verse might be, "Help us to trust that You will see us through what is about to happen. Help us to remember that we have committed our lives to serving You and help us to remember that You are there and You are willing to help us through what is coming up."
  - ii) Remember that this psalm is a "preparation for battle" psalm. To think about our sacrifices for God is not say, "Hey God, look what I have done", but for us to remember that just as we are committed to God, He is committed to us.
- 15. Verse 4: May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.
  - a) Remember that the purpose of prayer is to get God's will done and not ours. Asking God to give us the "desires of our heart" should be to get His will done.
  - b) Again, remember that this psalm is about preparing ourselves for whatever we are about to face in life. With that in mind, this verse is not saying, "Hey God, give me a billion dollars because I am trusting in You". This verse is saying, "Lord, it is my desire to please You and I want to be victorious in what I am about to face. That is my desire. I am giving You that desire. I ask You (God) to bless me not because I deserve it, but just because You love me and want to see me succeed in making a difference for You."
    - i) With that upbeat prayer stated, I'm ready for Verse 5. ☺
- 16. Verse 5: We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests.
  - a) Notice the verse does not say when "we" are victorious, but when "you" are victorious. This line is saying in effect, we will again thank God when we have won our battle of the moment and give Him all the credit. (That in effect is what Psalm 21 is about, coming up.)
  - b) OK, John, the psalm appears to be about fighting physical wars on behalf of Israel. With all due respects to any and all in the military that read this, how does it apply to me?
    - i) Yes, this psalm is about physical battles and dedicating those victories to God.
    - ii) It is also about whatever battles we face in life. It could be about dealing with a person or group that doesn't like you or me. It could be about some challenge at work or school in our life. The idea here is that whatever battle we are about to face in life, we give the results to God (not the work, but the results) and trust that the outcome will work out for His glory.
    - iii) The idea of this verse is to say in effect before the battle begins, "Lord, I don't know what is going to happen during this battle (or encounter), but I trust that You will guide me and You will work out the results for Your glory. I will still do the proper preparation, but I will trust that You will work out whatever actually happens for Your glory. Guide me through what I am about to face so that I can praise You after it is all done."
- 17. Verse 6: Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he answers him from his holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand.
  - a) So when it says, "the LORD saves his anointed", does "his anointed" refer to the person making the prayer request, the king of Israel at that time (David) or the future Messiah?
    - i) Truthfully it can refer to any of those three: It could be saying in effect, "Lord save me for eternity no matter what happens in this battle." You could also correctly read it as saying, "May the leader of our country or the leader of our battle be blessed for trusting in You". It could also be prophetic of "the" anointed which is a reference to the Messiah (Jesus) and the fact God saves Him from death.
    - ii) If I had to pick the "most likely" meaning, it probably refers to either the king of Israel or the general leading the battle. In other words, soldiers want their commanding officer to do well and they are asking for God's blessing.



- b) OK John, good for the Israelites and their commanding officer. How does this help me?
    - i) The idea of this verse is to remember that in effect "God is God". If we do believe He has the power to fix any situation for His glory, then we should petition Him and ask to make us or those leading the battle to be victorious.
    - ii) The idea is also that we don't know the outcome of the upcoming battle, but the God who knows all things does know what is going to happen. We are asking God to "make it so" that we win, or better stated that God "wins" through what is about to happen in our lives.
18. Verse 7: Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. <sup>8</sup> They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.
- a) Let me first state the obvious here: This line is not saying to lay down whatever weapons we have for the upcoming battle. God is saying to us in effect, "Trust Him through what is about to happen and use what talent and skills I (God) have given you (us) to make a difference for Me (God). Trust Me with the outcome."
  - b) Verse 7 is also saying in effect, "Don't give the credit to our superior "firepower". It is not our weapons or our skills that make us victorious, but our trust in God. The forces we fight against will lose because they are not trusting in God.
  - c) OK, what about battles where we don't know if the other person is saved or there may be saved people amongst the opposing side? We pray for God to give us the courage to face and win the battle at hand. The results themselves we give to God, but we ask for His strength and His power to work through us so that we personally are victorious no matter what the outcome of the actual battle.
  - d) Being a guy, I can't resist sharing an old football story that popped in my head. ☺
    - i) Many years ago, I heard a story about a football game between two top college teams. There was a "one on one" battle within the game between two outstanding athletes that both went on to have great professional careers. After the game was over, one of those two players said in effect, "I am a winner not because I won this game, but because I trust in Jesus as my Savior and that makes me a winner." That is the type of attitude that this psalm is trying to teach.
    - ii) That player still used what skills he had to help him in the game. At the same time, he understood his life was in God's hands and he lived with that thought and dedication to God in mind. That is what these verses are telling us.
    - iii) Ok, let's say your battle is not sports or war related. The point here is that you will not win or lose based on what "weapons" one has, but based on whether or not you or I put our trust in God for the outcome of whatever we are about to face.
19. Verse 9: O LORD, save the king! Answer us when we call!
- a) The verse ends with a plea to "save the king". As I stated earlier, a big part of this prayer is asking God to bless those who lead us in battle. Asking God to bless the king is essentially the same thing as asking for victory, because we are asking God to bless "our side" to win the battle at hand.
  - b) Does this psalm mean we will automatically win any and all battles we face in life if we dedicate the battle to God and pray for Him to bless us to victory? Of course not.
  - c) The Old Testament generally uses Israelites' battles to say in effect, "The Israelites win when they are trusting in God and lose when they are not." Usually our lives are not as clear cut. Still, I have watched God do amazing things with people when they are willing to dedicate their battles to God and that is the point of this psalm.
  - d) Let me end the psalm this way: Since if we don't know the outcome of whatever we have to face, it is still worth the trouble to give God the credit for the victory (in advance) as our lives are 100% dependant upon Him anyway.
  - e) With that said, we are ready to cover the "victory" psalm of Psalm 21.

20. Psalm 21, title: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
- The title of this psalm is the exact same as the last two. The fact that David wrote this psalm as well as Psalm 20 gives us another clue that they are designed to go together.
  - Again, Psalm 20 was designed to be sung prior to going to battle while Psalm 21 was designed to be sung after the victory is won for God.
21. Verse 1: O LORD, the king rejoices in your strength. How great is his joy in the victories you give!  
<sup>2</sup> You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. *Selah*
- Even in these opening two verses, one can see how Psalm 21 ties well with the requests being made in the previous psalm. This psalm opens with the line in effect, "Our leader is happy about the victory in the battle and we rejoice because our leader is happy".
    - It is the job of a soldier to please his or her commanding officer. This psalm is about praise because our leaders are now victorious.
    - OK John, what if our battles are more "one on one" and we don't have a leader to praise? Then give God the praise to leading you into victory. He is our leader that got us through the battle of the moment.
  - OK John, let us get more "realistic" here: Most of the battles we fight in life never come out exactly as we planned. There is usually some cost to us through that battle and we may feel like a winner or loser coming out of the battle, but there was a price to pay.
    - The bible never promises the battles we fight will be "cost free". The point is we give God the credit for seeing us through the battle. We are victorious in life because we trust in Him and not our skills to get us through the battle.
  - Getting back to these verses, they imply the "good guys" won the battle. So if I lost a particular sporting contest (or whatever) after I dedicated it God, how am I a winner?
    - Putting one's trust in God means He is guiding our lives. He may have allowed us to lose that battle to teach us some lesson that we may have to share one day with another person going through a similar loss. The point is not so much whether or not we won that particular battle as much as it is trusting God with the outcome and with the fact He does have wonderful plans for our lives. Often our losses prepare us for greater victories that come later in life.
22. Verse 3: You welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.
- Meanwhile, back at this psalm, it is describing the king getting the spoils of victory and a crown placed on his head. As I have stated, the original purpose of this psalm was to give the glory to one's commanding officer in this battle.
  - OK John, I didn't get a gold crown on my head the last time I won something. ☺
    - We as good soldiers for Christ should remember that we are giving the victory to Him and not us. The verse is not praying for a gold crown for "us", but for those lead us to victory, which ultimately is God as we are relying upon Him.
  - When I am about to deal with some sort of "battle", my main concern is about being successful and I usually look for someone to pray with me before it begins. What I often fail to do is then thank God for that victory when the battle is over. I want my leader, Jesus to be crowned with victory and I need to give Him the credit.
  - The verse says, "You welcome him" with blessings. Who is the him? Ultimately this verse is prophetic of Jesus having victories over the evil of the world. I get the impression the verse was mainly written about the King of Israel being victorious, but one can see the underlying idea of God leading us to victory.
  - OK, time for a tougher question. Let us say our battle leader is not a Christian. We are part of that army because we "signed up" for it. Why should we celebrate our leaders victory when he or she doesn't believe in God? The point is we ultimately give God the credit even if our leader does not trust in God. Our leader may not "get it", but we do, and for that we should give credit to God.

23. Verse 4: He asked you for life, and you gave it to him-- length of days, for ever and ever.
- a) OK, who is the "he" at the start of this verse? This "he" is asking God for "life" so we know "he" is not God the Father. Whoever this "he" is, he is granted life forever. That would logically make the "he" Jesus, as God the Father raised Him from the dead.
    - i) OK John, I believe Jesus will rule and reign forever. Why should I pray this particular psalm of victory if I believe that? The point is not to remind God of that fact, but to remind ourselves of that fact. For the Christian, we see Jesus as our leader (guider of our lives) and we want to see Him get the credit for our victories.
  - b) On another level, one can read this verse as being about King David in that God gave him victories so that he could reign a long time. In Jewish thought, telling a king to "reign forever" can just mean to reign for a long time. That was the original thought although the underlying idea is the prophetic aspect tying the verse to Jesus.
    - i) So, is this verse here to praise David, or is prophetic of Jesus? The answer is both.
24. Verse 5: Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty. <sup>6</sup> Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.
- a) Singing this psalm may not give us a "big ego", but it may give our leaders one. ☺ These verses are describing how God has bestowed greatness on our leaders. Isn't this type of praise in effect, too much for praise for human beings to have?
    - i) Some argue yes, and that is why many see this psalm as being "Messianic".
  - b) OK John, should we praise our human leaders this way, or are these verses strictly talking about Jesus having the ultimate victory? The way I personally look at it, is we can thank God privately for our Christian leaders who will have great rewards in heaven one day for their faithfulness, but I would be limited about using such flattery to people directly.
  - c) As to praising Jesus, I take the view we might as well get used to the idea of doing that a lot now, because I get the impression we are going to be doing a lot of that in heaven.
25. Verse 7: For the king trusts in the LORD; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken.
- a) The concept continues here of praising one's local king. The modern equivalent would be like praying for our leaders that they be saved and they trust in God.
  - b) Let me try this concept another way: Whether we like it or not, we are dependant upon other people for our success in life. No person is an "island" and no person has such complete dominance and power that they are not dependant upon other people. Therefore, we should pray for our leaders, that they believe in God and trust in the power of God. Why? If for no other reason, we depend upon them and without God's help, we are all in trouble. Therefore, it is beneficial to pray for those who are over us.
  - c) Yes this verse is thanking God that the leaders of Israel do seek God. I get that, but what I see as the more important application is how we apply that to our leaders today.
26. Verse 8: Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes.
- a) There is a style of poetry in the bible where one starts of talking about a person or a group and then the poetry focuses on the power behind those people. For example, you can find poetry in say, Isaiah or Ezekiel that starts off be describing evil power and the text will shift to describe the evil spiritual forces behind such people.
    - i) That same principal is in play here. The text of this psalm starts off by focusing on the leader of Israel, but it is "shifting" to describe the power behind that leader.
    - ii) In other words, the text is talking about the king of Israel, but one can also see the shift as the text is now talking about God wiping out all who oppose Him.
    - iii) Getting back to the issue of should we praise our human leaders the way say Verses 5 and 6 do, I would save such praise for God alone as the shift is occurring where the verses are now focusing on God being the power behind our leaders.

- b) OK John, that is neat. Why should I care and pray this psalm? It is not to remember David, it is to give credit to the God who sees us to victory in life. That is the point of this psalm, to remember how God has lead us to victory in all situations.
    - i) Grant it, we don't have to pray for David. However, all of us deal with leaders and hopefully, we want to see our leaders be successful. Even if we don't like our leaders, we still want God to "succeed" through people and that is the idea of this psalm as it applies to our lives.
    - ii) Let us remember the idea that, God will do what God wants to do, but He wants us (believers) to be part of His plans, and that is part of the idea of praying for the success of our leaders and thanking God for that success.
  - c) So what does this have to do with Verse 8? Verse 8 is saying "your hand" will be victorious over all who oppose you. OK why pray that line? It is again to remind ourselves that just as God has given us victories in the past, we can trust Him through whatever we are dealing with at the present.
27. Verse 9: At the time of your appearing you will make them like a fiery furnace. In his wrath the LORD will swallow them up, and his fire will consume them. <sup>10</sup> You will destroy their descendants from the earth, their posterity from mankind. <sup>11</sup> Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed; <sup>12</sup> for you will make them turn their backs when you aim at them with drawn bow.
- a) By Verse 9, we are strictly focusing on Jesus as the future king who will rule over the world. How do I know this? Well, verse 9 says that at the "time of your appearing", whoever this person is, will make his enemies be like a "fiery furnace".
  - b) Whoever the verse is describing, it is something greater than a person. I don't see it as being about God the Father because it is describing "the time of his appearing".
  - c) John, are you saying the Old Testament and specifically here in the psalms is describing a future time where a specific "king" (or Messiah in Hebrew) will come and rule over the world? Yes I am. In "Christian speak", it is describing the second coming of Jesus where He will come to rule over the world and judge those who refuse to bow to him.
  - d) The rest of the verses fit the theme of those who oppose God. To sum them up, they say in effect that any and all plans made against God will not succeed.
  - e) OK John, I sort of know all of this and accept it. Why should I pray for it to happen?
    - i) It is to remember that God is in charge, God is in control of the situation at hand, and God wants to give us victories in life. We may or may not win the specific battle of the moment, but we can give God the credit for the victory because "in the end God will be victorious.
  - f) To sum it up, this psalm is not just to thank God for a past victory, but to remember that God was there helping us through our situation and if we can trust God to get us through "that", it would help alleviate doubts He will get us through the "future".
28. Verse 13: Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might.
- a) The psalm ends with us praising God for what He has done and will do. For that we should be eternally grateful, and sing praises to Him.
29. At this point, let me sum up the key points of these three psalms in my closing prayer:
- a) Father, I don't know how You are going to get me through the current "mess" I am in. I just know that You have been there in the past to get me through my life. If I know You have been faithful so far, help me with my doubts about You getting me through the present and future situations. I don't know what the future holds, but You do. So help me to trust You just as you have helped me through the past I know that You will guide me through the present and future. Help us to use that knowledge of Your existence and Your guidance to make a difference in for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.