

Psalms 23-25 – John Karmelich

1. In the last lesson, we covered what many Christian scholars consider the most important psalm in the bible, which was Psalm 22. That naturally comes before Psalm 23, which is the most famous psalm in the bible. There are people who know little to nothing about the bible, but could probably recite the six lines of Psalm 23. One can find hundreds (or thousands) of poems that are based on that psalm.
 - a) I pondered, what is it about this psalm that makes it so popular? It is short, but so are a lot of other psalms in the bible. It probably has to do with its theme, which is about God guiding and protecting us. There is a universal appeal to the thought of God watching over our lives. That appeal makes this psalm popular.
 - b) What I hope to cover in this week's lesson is to understand the concept of God's guidance and protection in terms of what it is and isn't.
2. Since Psalm 23 is only six lines long, it would probably be good to cover some more ground while we are in the neighborhood studying the psalms. ☺
 - a) Psalm 24 focuses on the reigning Messiah, which is a Jewish title for an everlasting king, and as Christians know, refers to Jesus.
 - b) This psalm in effect asks the question, "What makes the Messiah so special, and what do we do with the knowledge that He exists?"
 - c) With that said, let me tie Psalms 22-24 together for a moment:
 - i) Psalm 22 focused on the role of the Messiah as payment for our sins.
 - ii) Psalm 23 focuses on the role of the Messiah as our protector.
 - iii) Psalm 24 focuses on the role of the Messiah in His second coming as the ruler of the world. It also covers what we do with that knowledge as we will find out.
 - d) Next, we are also going to cover Psalm 25 in this lesson as well.
 - i) This psalm is also about God guiding our lives, but it is best if it is read in light of the previous group of psalms. Psalm 25 says in effect, "OK, now that you know what God has done for the sake of our sins (Psalm 22), how God is protecting us here on earth (Psalm 23) and what God is going to do for us in the future (Psalm 24), the next and logical question is "What do we do with that knowledge?" That is the theme behind Psalm 25.
 - ii) In other words know that we understand the role of the Messiah in past terms (Psalm 22), present terms (Psalm 23) and future terms (Psalm 24), how does that help my life "here and now". That is the theme of Psalm 25.
3. This actually leads me to my lesson title, which is "How do we put our trust in God when things are falling apart?" In other words, the overriding theme I see in this lesson is about what we do when we are in "deep doo-doo" ☺ For my foreign readers, this an old American expression about being in big trouble and what we should do about it.
 - a) I see this lesson about bring our problems to God and learning how to work our way through tough times. I've touched on that theme in other lessons recently but this one really seems to focus on that theme. I'll explain it some more as we go.
 - b) With that said, let me jump into Psalm 23:
4. Psalm 23 introduction: A psalm of David.
 - a) All three psalms in this lesson say in effect that David wrote them and not much else. His name appears in the title of all three psalms with no further comments about how they should be sung, nor is there any reference to any event in his life that ties to these psalms.
 - b) It is as if David is just saying in effect, "I wrote these as God inspired me to write them, but it is not necessary to make any comment about them or how they tie to our lives.
 - c) Since I just explained about the title of all three psalms, I'll move on to Verse 1. ☺

5. Verse 1: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
- a) The first thing I noticed about this psalm is the strong emphasis on God's existence and the fact He wants to help our lives. In this six line psalm, I count twelve references to God in terms of what He has and can do in our lives.
 - i) When David wrote this, He grasped the idea that God exists, He watches over our individual lives and He is with us no matter what we are going through.
 - ii) That may sound "basic" to you and me, but a large percentage of the world never take the time to talk to Him and ask Him to help us with our lives on a daily basis.
 - b) Now let me talk about Verse 1. It starts with the idea of God being our shepherd.
 - i) The word used here for God, is the most holy name of God, often called "Jehovah" which means, "I am that I am". The point being here is that God is capable of providing all that we need.
 - ii) The verse compares God to a shepherd. Sheep are pretty dumb animals that constantly need to be guided and protected. To call people sheep is truly an insult of one understands the limited intelligence of sheep.
 - c) So John, are you saying we are a bunch of dumb sheep incapable of living without God's help? That does not sound appealing. ☺ The idea is God wants us to trust in His guidance the same way sheep need a shepherd for protection and guidance.
 - i) Know that God never forces us to worship Him or look to Him for guidance, but that is what He desires of us. My point is David is saying here that God is David's guidance not because David is a robot or incapable of making a decision, but because David desires God to rule over his life.
 - ii) What does that mean practically? Should we ask God for permission before every decision we make? The idea is not so much about praying before every decision, but about taking the time every day to pray to God and remind ourselves that He desires to guide our lives as well as protect us. Then we should go forth knowing that God is guiding our lives whether we realize it or not.
 - d) Now let's think about this verse in the light of Psalm 22. In the last lesson, we discussed a psalm teaching us how God paid the "price Himself" for our sins so that we can approach Him. With that knowledge in place, we can look to God for guidance because we have been made "sinless" as the complete price for all sin has been paid.
6. Verse 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
- a) To understand Verse 2, we need to know a little more about sheep. They like green pastures not only for eating grass, but it is a place for comfort. Also sheep will not drink water from fast moving streams or rivers. They like still (non-moving) water to drink.
 - b) OK John, we are not literally sheep, and we don't need to lie down in grass or drink non-moving water. How does this apply to us?
 - i) The idea is that God provides what we need to survive. Since I am self-employed, I never know where or when my next job will come from. I don't know how God will provide for me this day or this week. I just know that God has not gotten me this far to "let me down now".
 - ii) What God wants of us is to be 100% dependant upon Him. That doesn't mean we don't do the footwork necessary in whatever capacity we have to do, but we do turn the results over to Him so we don't have to worry about the results.
 - iii) The point as it relates to this verse is just as God is like a shepherd guiding sheep to pleasant places to rest and still water, so God desires to lead us toward what we need to survive and prosper.
 - iv) My point here is not specifics about finances as much as it is about learning and believing that God is guiding our lives, He does care for us and wants to provide for our needs.

7. Verse 3: he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- a) Let's start with God "restoring my soul". OK, what does that mean?
 - i) On one level it is talking about salvation. The point is we can't have God's peace as taught here in Psalm 23 until we understand the price paid for our sin as taught in Psalm 22. That is why this psalm is next after Psalm 22.
 - ii) Our soul (our inner being) may be worried about some particular issue. It says here that God does "restore" us. That means God wants us to take those things we are worried about and trust that He will work out our problems for His glory.
 - iii) I find the tricky part is constantly "letting go" of worries. Our problems are still right in front of us even after we pray. The trick is not only to pray about those situations, but to stop worrying and give God the opportunity to restore us.
 - b) Now I can talk about the next sentence. It says that God "guides me in the path of the righteousness for his name sake". Let me break that down:
 - i) The "path of righteousness" is not a literal street. It about doing God's will and actually trusting that God will provide for us.
 - ii) I don't know how God will get us through the current situation we are in. I just know we have to fully trust in Him and trust that He will lead us to right solution. That does not mean we just "lie there" and wait for God to work, (unless we are bed-ridden, but that goes without saying). We just trust God is guiding us.
 - iii) The final part of this verse says "for his name sake". In other words, God wants the credit for our victories. In a sense, we aren't living for Him for "our sake", but we are living for Him (that's God) to get the glory.
 - a) Sometimes we forget that God make the world. If we believe that, then in effect, "it is His world" and our job is to do what He wants. Living for God gives us far greater joy than living for ourselves and our desires.
 - b) My point is not that we can't enjoy the things that God has given us. My point is that it is our goal as Christians to believe and trust in Him and that living for Him is the greatest purpose one can have in life.
8. Verse 4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- a) Ok, what is "walking through the valley of death mean"? I don't know if I've ever been there, but it doesn't sound like an appealing place to be. ☺
 - b) God never promises that every moment of our lives will be pleasant. There are going to be times and places when it feels like everything is falling apart and there is no hope.
 - i) In such "low times" is when we feel like we are in this really bad valley.
 - c) The verse is asking the question in effect, "When I am really scared and I don't know what to do next, what should I do? How do I mentally prepare myself when I am in a situation where it looks like there is no hope whatsoever?"
 - i) The answer is the rest of the verse. It says we will "fear no evil". To put it another way, the worse thing that can happen is our death. We cannot be hurt any worse than that as we are then taken to heaven for the rest of our lives.
 - ii) Personally, my greatest fear in such times is for those who I love and support. My fear of losing everything is not as scary as the idea of my family losing everything. My point here is we have to trust God even with that aspect of our lives. It is not up to us as much as it is "up to Him".
 - d) Before I move on, let me talk a little about the term "rod and staff".
 - i) Sheep, left alone tend to wander. As opposed to cattle that can be "driven", sheep tend to wander off, which is why Jesus often describes people as wandering sheep.
 - ii) My point as it relates to this verse is that a shepherds' rod and staff are used to guide the sheep in the way they should go. It also is used to protect the sheep from pending danger.

9. Verse 5: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- a) So what did David mean by "preparing a table before him in the midst of his enemies"? Could David sit down to a fancy dinner when surrounded by enemies? I doubt it. ☺
 - i) More likely, it means that even in the worse of situations, God does provide for us.
 - a) Has God gotten you and me "this far" in life? Were we able to eat enough to get us through bad past situations? The answer is yes in the sense we are alive right now to be able to think about those times.
 - b) The point is if God has provided for us through the worse of times, why do we worry about a present or future situation?
 - b) This leads us to the next sentence. The text says "You anoint my head with oil". In "bible speak" (i.e., Hebrew thought) that has two possible meanings:
 - i) The first idea is it could refer to a pronouncement that one is destined to be a king or a leader. When people were called to take on leadership, a sign of God blessing them was to pour oil on their head. That may sound messy to us, but it speaks of God's love and power flowing "all over us".
 - ii) The second idea of oil anointing is comfort. It was an ancient custom when a guest comes to one's house, to pour a little oil on their head. In a desert climate (like Israel) one gives comfort to a person by putting a little oil on them.
 - iii) So, which of these two concepts is David referring to here? Either one in the sense that the oil represents God comforting us in the "presence of our enemies". Even if the oil is there to anoint David, it is to say that he will be victorious over his enemies in that God has already granted Him victory.
 - c) OK John, good for David. What about me? Remember that no matter how bad the situation looks, God wants to comfort us with the fact that He does care about us and He does want to see us through whatever "bad thing" we have to face.
 - d) The bible never promises we won't face difficult situations or hard times. It does promise that God will see us through whatever we are going through if we trust in Him. That in effect, is how God comforts us with food and with oil in the presence of our enemies.
10. Verse 6: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
- a) The idea here is that if we regularly let go of our worries over a situation and trust God with the outcome, then we can be assured that His goodness and His love will follow us.
 - b) OK, what is God's "goodness"? The idea is that God wants and desires good things for our life. He doesn't want us to live in the "valley of the shadow of death" all of our lives. Just because we may be there now doesn't mean we have to stay there. God wants to guide us through our troubles so that we can appreciate how good He is.
 - c) Finally, we have the reference to "dwelling in the house of the Lord forever".
 - i) One has to remember that David, as king of Israel, did not live in the temple. The temple was for the priests and not the king of Israel.
 - ii) Here is a good bible trivia question: Ask someone what did King Solomon (the son of David and next king) desire? The answer is wisdom. God not only made Solomon wise, but because Solomon didn't ask for money or fame, God also gave Solomon those things as well. While there is nothing wrong with wisdom, David asked for something greater. (See 1st Kings 4:29, for the Solomon reference.)
 - iii) I said this is a game of "bible trivia", as the follow up question should be, "What did David desire for his life?" This verse, written by David, does give that answer. It was David's desire to "dwell in the house of the LORD forever". Did that mean that David secretly desired to be the "High Priest" as opposed to the king?
 - a) Not exactly. The point is David wanted to live a life pleasing to God so that He could spend eternity in His presence.

11. Psalm 24, title: Of David. A psalm.
 - a) Like Psalms 22 and 23, we have the exact same title here. So why mention David's name? I suspect so that we tie these psalms together. After I get through Psalm 24, I'll tie the last three psalms together and discuss why they are here in this order.
12. Psalm 24, Verse 1: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;
 - a) This psalm starts by focusing on "the whole world". David is not focusing on his life or even the Israelites for the moment, but reminding us that God is the "God that created the world and all that is in it." That may sound obvious to us, but in David's day, "gods" were local deities. David is getting the idea across that God is not only the god of the Israelites, but the only God that exists and the one that created the world.
 - i) So why is David focusing this way. Let's read on and find out. ☺
13. Verse 2: for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.
 - a) To understand "Verse 2" we have to go back to the creation story in Genesis. The idea is that the sea (ocean's) were created first. Then land was created "on the seas".
 - i) It would be like saying, first there was water, and then life was created to exist on land. Yes we are skipping details, but one gets the idea both by "biblical terms" and "biologically accepted terms" that all that is created by God.
 - b) The psalm is about to switch its focus to the Messiah. The point of these opening two verses is that before we can discuss who can come to worship God, first we have to discuss "who is eligible". This verse is saying in effect any and all people may come and join in the worship of God and not just the Israelites.
14. Verse 3: Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?
 - a) So is this verse referring to God's throne in heaven or to the (not standing today) throne that existed in Jerusalem at the time David wrote this? The answer is "either".
 - i) David is asking the question, "Who is worthy to ascend to this place?" In other words, it is asking what person is good enough to rule over all that God has created? We'll discover the only answer is Jesus.
15. Verse 4: He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.
 - a) Whether this refers to the temple in heaven or a future temple on earth is beside the point. The main point is who is good enough to be such a ruler? This gets back to the idea of God being perfect. One thing the bible asks us to accept is that God exists and He has no faults whatsoever. God "by definition" is incapable of sin because He is perfect.
 - i) To be perfect also implies that He knows all things and has no need of anything. That is my starting point for explaining who God is and what He requires of us.
 - b) OK John, so we believe in a perfect God. What does that have to do with this verse and our lives? The verse ask if we 1) have clean hands (i.e., no guilt of any sin), 2) a pure heart (i.e., given totally to God and no one else, 3) does not look to any idols and swears by something other than God? In other words, who is perfect?
 - i) Personally, other than Jesus, I have never met anyone who fits that description.
 - ii) What the gospel writer John wrote Revelation, he said that the only time he wept (cried) is when he realized that no one was found good enough to take the title deed to the earth. (See Revelation 5:3-5). The reason John cried is he probably thought about all of the good religious Jews that he knew, and realized that no person was good enough to deserve this honor.
 - iii) OK John, and what does this have to do with us? It is about the realization that no matter how good we are (by God's standards) we all fall short in some manner. That is why we have to be "perfectly forgiven" to be in heaven.
 - c) The related idea of this verse is to contemplate the role of Jesus, not so much as one who died for our sins, but as one who will rule and reign from this temple forever.
 - d) In other words, the focus of this Psalm is on Jesus as our ruler.

16. Verse 5: He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior.
- a) OK John, if you claim that this is about Jesus in His Future role as the redeemer (and future ruler) of the earth, why does this verse say that He will be vindicated from "God his savior"? Doesn't that last phrase speak of Jesus, as in our savior?
 - i) The point is we consider Jesus our savior as He died for our sins. So how is God the Father "the savior"? The answer is God the Father is Jesus' Savior as He is the one who raised Jesus from the dead. In the same way we look to Jesus as being our Savior, so Jesus looks to God the Father as being His savior from eternal death.
 - b) OK John, how does this affect us? The other way to look at this verse is about teaching us how we can become perfect before God. It is not by trying harder, but it is by accepting Jesus' sin payment on our behalf.
 - i) The danger for the Christian is we may say in effect, "I trust I Jesus' payment for my sins for most parts of my life, but this "part over here", I am ok. It is the danger of telling God in effect, I don't need your help with "x" part of my life as I have that covered all by myself.
17. Verse 6: Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob. *Selah*
- a) Whenever I think I am going way off base with my analysis of a verse, I can often read the next verse and say in effect, "Good, I was on target with where God was leading me."
 - i) My point is the text is talking about believing in God redeeming us not just because we confessed our sins, but because we believe in a perfect redeemer who paid the price himself for our sins.
 - b) Let me explain further. There is a heavy emphasis in the bible about a group of people (technically speaking, from all generations) who are interested in seeking God based on His way of doing things and not our way. (When I say "our way", I mean the idea of approaching God based on our goodness and not His standards, which is the law.)
 - i) I believe what this verse is getting at, is that we should seek God and His desire for our lives and we are blessed for doing that. At the same time, we need to remember that it is not by trying harder that we please Him, as much as it is trusting that He is working in our lives and by seeking His will, (called "His face" in this verse), we can live a life pleasing to Him.
 - ii) With that in mind, we should not ignore our sins, but just confess them as wrong and let Him work through us to battle our "sinful nature" and trust in Him to win any and all battles over sin in our lives.
18. Verse 7: Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. ⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. ¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty-- he is the King of glory. *Selah*
- a) These verses are interesting in that Verses 7 and 9 are identical. So why repeat a verse twice? Why does it bear repeating? Part of it is poetic and part of it is for us to understand the importance of the concepts being taught here.
 - i) In fact, the only difference between Verses 8 and Verses 10 are the descriptions of the "King of Glory": Verse 8 says he is "mighty in battle", while verse 8 says He is the "Lord Almighty". Other than that, Verses 9 and 10 repeat Verses 7-8.
 - ii) These verses are talking about the gate entrances to Jerusalem, to prepare for the coming Messiah. Make no mistake about it, these verses are focusing on the long promised Jewish Messiah who Christians argue is Jesus in His Second Coming.
 - iii) These verses are a poetic way of describing Jesus coming one day to rule over the world, literally from Jerusalem.
 - b) For what it is worth, David considers these verses important enough to include a "Selah" at the end, which probably means to pause and think about what one just read.

- c) Verse 8 says "mighty in battle". What does that mean? It means that part of the role of Jesus in His second coming is to lead a military victory over the forces that control this world. That is what the "Battle of Armageddon" is all about as described in Revelation 16:16. This end time battle is not really a battle, but more of a "wipe out" as Jesus defeats those forces (spiritual or human) that refuse to acknowledge Him as the king of the world.
- i) It is describing a future day when Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem.
- d) OK, John, why should I care about the gates of Jerusalem? How does it affect my life today that I should worry about the ancient gates being opened?
- i) First, let us discuss what they could (note that word) literally be talking about and then talk about how they could affect our lives.
- ii) In the ancient city of Jerusalem, (which still exists today, as part of a larger city), there is one gate facing the east that is sealed shut. Many centuries ago, a non-Jewish cemetery was set up just outside of this gate to prevent a Jewish Messiah from using that gate, as it is forbidden in Jewish law to step on a dead body.
- iii) With that in mind, do I believe that a resurrected Jesus will literally enter through that gate one day, despite the cemetery? Yes I do as do a lot of religious Jews believe that their promised Messiah will enter through that gate.
- iv) If you ever wonder why the non-believing world is so against the existence of the modern nation of Israel, understand that there are demonic forces behind that movement. If Israel doesn't exist, then the "Messiah" cannot return to lead it.
- a) This has nothing to do with the Jew's non-belief in Jesus. This has to do with an unconditional promise that God made to David that the Messiah would rule the world one day from Israel. If Israel does not exist, then the Messiah cannot come and rule from that nation. (See 2nd Samuel 7:12-16.)
- v) This leads back to us: If we truly want Jesus to rule over our lives, then we should also want Him to return to rule over the earth. We should care about this verse, because if we do believe Jesus is in charge of our lives, then we do want Him to come rule over the world as promised.
- e) OK, getting off of my end-times pulpit, ☺ let's get back to the verses. What are these verses saying to us and why should I care? The point is we as Christians should mentally prepare ourselves for the possibility of Jesus returning in our lifetime.
- i) Asking the city gates to "get ready" is a poetic way of keeping our focus on Jesus.
- ii) Let me approach this another way: We each have our own problems. Why should I worry about the return of Jesus when I have other things to deal with?
- a) One has to remember that there are two ways God can rescue us out of our problems: One is He could call us home and the other is, the world as we know it, could change dramatically as Jesus could return to rule this world.
- iii) Over the past bunch of lessons, I have been talking a lot about seeing our problems in the "eternal perspective". Part of that perspective is remembering that Jesus could return at any moment. If Jesus said that 2,000 years ago, why should I believe it? God designed it this way so every generation of Christians should live with that possibility. It is another way of keeping our focus on Him.
- f) Let me wrap up the psalm this way: Psalm 22 focuses on Jesus dying for our sins. Psalm 23 focused on Jesus guiding us through our lives on earth. Psalm 24, which we just finished focuses on Jesus in His "second coming". Belief in His second coming is just as important for the Christian to understand as the events of the cross.
- i) Does that mean that Jesus is going to come back soon, given the situation of the modern Nation of Israel? The correct answer is "I hope so", but no one but God the Father knows the timetable of Jesus' return. It could be today or it could be centuries from now. The point is we should live our lives with the possibility that it could happen at any moment.

19. At this point we are going to start Psalm 25.
- a) Psalms 25 through 32 begin another section of the psalms. (Don't worry I'm only going to tackle Psalm 25 in this lesson.) ☺ It is like this psalm (25) is saying, "OK, I understand that Jesus died for my sins, cares for my life and is coming back again. (A one-sentence summary of the last three psalms.) So now what? In that sense, the next eight psalms are more "practical" and focus is on our lives in light of that knowledge.
 - b) Before I begin, let me also mention that Psalm 25 is an "acrostic". That means in the original Hebrew language, the first letter of the first word starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and that pattern continues through psalm.
 - i) That pattern is broken late in the psalm and one rabbi suggested, "The pattern breaks the same way problems in our lives break up our routines in life".
20. Psalm 25, introduction: Of David.
- a) Those two words are all that it says. Nothing is said about the music and nothing is said about the situation when it was written. It is like the psalm is trying to tell us, "Just focus on what the psalm is saying, and don't worry about the title." ☺
21. Verse 1: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;² in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- a) The idea in these two verses are about getting our focus on God. The idea is that most psalms start by getting our focus on Him and not on ourselves.
 - b) Whatever is going on in David's life at that moment, he is feeling overwhelmed about the possibility of enemies winning over him.
 - i) Instead of complaining about his soldiers being "too weak" or complaining that his enemies have better equipment, David is saying in effect, "I will trust in God to get me through this situation."
 - ii) That is the key point. Not about understanding David's predicament, but about trusting that God is aware of what we are going through at the moment and trusting that God will get us through whatever we are dealing with.
 - c) Let me talk a little about the line that reads, "Do not let me be put to shame."
 - i) The idea here is David is in effect is putting God to the test. He is saying that his enemies are aware of his (David's) trust in God and if he loses the battle, it would make God "look bad".
 - ii) So does that mean that every time we want something, we should pray for God to give us what we want because others know we trust in Him? Of course not. God is not a genie in a bottle to give us what we want. Prayer is about doing His will. Since we often don't know what is His will, the prayer is simply asking that our victory be His will. If that actually happens is up to God and not us.
22. Verse 3: No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse.
- a) Speaking of trusting in Him and not being "put to shame", I present Verse 3.
 - b) This verse says that no one who puts their trust in God will ever be put to shame. It probably is a reference to hell. It also means that if we trust in God, He will get us through the problem of moment. The point is about trusting God with the results of our problems and letting go of the fears of what could go wrong.
 - c) Now let's talk about the second half of this verse that says in effect that those who don't trust God will be put to shame who are "treacherous without excuse".
 - i) Ok, so what does "treacherous without excuse" mean and how do we avoid that?
 - a) In short, it is condemning down those who try to cheat others.
 - ii) Let me go back to David having to face enemies. Why is he accusing his enemies of being "treacherous without excuse"? It most likely has to do with David's understanding that the land of Israel was promised to the Jewish people and those enemies of Israel should be aware that the land of Israel is "now the Israelites".

- d) OK John, good for David and good for the Israelites. How does this affect my life?
- i) Remember that the purpose of prayer is to get God's will done. If we give God the desires of our hearts and we earnestly try to do what we believe is God's will for our lives, then we can be sure that those who resist us are being "treacherous without excuse". It could refer to the demonic forces that fight us doing His will.
 - ii) Let's say we have no idea if what we are fighting are "treacherous liars". We just know we have problems and need help. I would start by just giving the situation over to God. I would then just go forward, trusting that He is guiding us through our situation. If one gets resistance, whatever "that is", one can be certain that if that resistance is opposing God's will, that resistance is "treacherous liars" as it or they are opposing God's will whether they realize it or not.
23. Verse 4: Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; ⁵ guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
- a) Speaking of giving the situation over to God, I present to you verses 4-5. In other words, my sermon over the last set of verses "jumped ahead" of just what God wants us to: Turn the situation we are dealing with over to Him.
 - i) We shouldn't spend hours rehashing a situation trying to figure out what to do. (That is what I did last night, which is why I am writing this comment here.)
 - ii) God wants us to let go of our worries and let Him deal with them.
 - iii) On a more practical level, I find it helps to find someone to pray with over one's situation. Have someone to pray with us over what we are facing and then know (not think, but know) that the results are now in God's hands.
 - iv) What if I don't have anyone who knows my situation to pray over it? Then call your local church and ask someone to pray with you. You would be surprised how many people are willing to help you pray over our problems.
 - b) While I've been rambling on and on about how to deal with our problems, notice Verse 4 in effect says to do "just that". It is about trusting in God's truth and trusting in Him working in our lives, on an individual level all day.
 - i) So John, if that is true, why were you up late last night worrying about a problem? I was trying to recall my actions and thinking what I should have done differently. After I emailed and told a good friend about my problem, I discovered he prayed for me last night. By "coincidence", I was asleep soon after he prayed for me.
 - ii) That is why I'm making such a big deal about getting spiritual help by asking others to pray for you and with you.
 - iii) Are you saying my problems will just go away by prayer? Most likely not, but we are getting God involved and that always makes the problems easier to bear.
 - iv) That in effect is what Verses 4 and 5 are saying: It is about trusting in God and putting our hope in Him all through the days of our lives.
24. Verse 6: Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
- a) An important idea to remember is that we appeal to God not based on "how good we are", but only on the fact that God loves us and wants to help our lives.
 - b) OK John, theologically speaking, I know that. Why should I pray that? The problem is that our egos get in the way of our prayers. We think about our problems over and over again, instead of just turning them over to Him. In other words, it is about praying, "Help us to let go of our problems and trust that it is Your (God's) desire to help us, not because we deserve it, but just because You wants to."
25. Verse 7: Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.
- a) Verse 7 continues the thoughts that we want God to help us, not because we are perfect, but just because we want God to help us. In a sense, the psalm is saying in effect, "Don't think highly of ourselves, but focus on God being "good" and wanting to help us.

- b) Ok John, how does thinking about my sins, help my situation of the moment?
 - i) It is thinking in effect, "I am not nearly as good or as smart (or whatever) that I think I am." It reminds us that we have no "goodness" apart from God.
 - ii) Paul realized that and said that in effect last line. (See Romans 3:21-23).
 - iii) The point of thinking "lowly" of oneself is not about denying what we can do, but about letting go of the results of our situation and putting the results in the hands of the one who is "good" and wants the best for our lives.
26. Verse 8: Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. ⁹ He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.
- a) Verses 8 and 9 are reminders that God guides those who are willing to listen to Him. OK, that is stating the obvious. Why state that here?
 - i) It is a reminder of who should be in charge of our lives and the fact we should trust in Him. We all go through periods of doubts about God and one way to handle such doubts is to remind ourselves (as David is doing here) that God is there and yes, He wants to guide our lives.
 - b) Remember that God gets no benefit out of such prayers. Lines like these here are to remind ourselves that God is there and wants to work in our lives. Prayer is a way to benefit ourselves by remembering what God can and will do in our lives if we trust Him.
27. Verse 10: All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.
- a) In Verse 10, it appears to be asking us to "keep His covenant" which is the law. So is the text saying the best way to live is to obey all of the Old Testament Commandments?
 - i) In one sense it is, but the New Testament makes it very clear that the nation of Israel was unable (through it's history) to perfectly keep the law. (See Acts 7:53, Romans 2:25). It is also clear in the New Testament that Christians are not under the law. (See Romans 6:15.)
 - ii) That does not mean that the laws themselves are bad, it just means that the greatest thing we fight is our own human nature. The only way we can be pleasing to God is to let Him work through us to make a difference for Him.
 - b) The verse and the psalms are not saying to "try harder" to obey the law. The verse is saying God is good to those who are willing to make the effort to trust in Him.
 - i) The verse says in effect, God will bless us who are willing to trust in You.
28. Verse 11: For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.
- a) The verse is saying in effect, "In light of what you the reader know now about Jesus in light of Psalms 22-24, we should dedicate our lives to Him. That means confessing of one's sins and realizing we are a sinner before Him.
 - b) To put it another way, if we realize Jesus died for our sins as taught in Psalm 22, that God wants to guide us as taught in Psalm 23, and that Jesus will reign over the world one day as taught in Psalm 24, now what?
 - i) In effect, that information should drive us "to our knees", which is what Psalm 25 is doing in effect here. It is to realize that God is perfect, He cares for us and He wants us to confess areas of our lives where we have not turned them over to Him.
 - ii) The reason this psalm and the bible as a whole spends so much time on our sins, is because that is what it takes to drive us closer to Him. To realize that His way of doing things is the best for our lives is a key component to asking forgiveness.
 - c) All of this does lead me back to Verse 11. This verse is about asking God to forgive us our sins. The reason this verse is here it to see it in light of the last three psalms.
 - i) It is to say, I now realize how much God loves and how much trouble God has gone through for the sake of those that love Him and what He asks of believers in exchange is not to be perfect, but to seek "perfect forgiveness" of one's sins.

29. Verse 12: Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. ¹³ He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. ¹⁴ The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.
- a) Verses 12-14 ask in effect, "Why should I ask forgiveness of my sins? What benefit is there to my life if I do such a thing?
 - i) The answer is that God will guide our lives. (See verse 12.)
 - ii) That person who trusts in God will receive prosperity. (See verse 13.)
 - iii) His descendants will inherit the land. (See verse 13.)
 - iv) That person will receive the ability to have God "confide" in him (or her) and make His (God's) rules known to him. (See verse 14.)
 - v) I would say all of this requires more explanation, so here goes:
 - b) Let's start with Verse 12. How does God guide our lives? It starts by using the bible as stories and illustrations to show us how to live our lives. The reason God wants us to spend a lot of time in His word is that those stories teach us how God wants us to live.
 - i) To give an example, last night I received an e-mail wondering if it is ok to get a tattoo. I told that person in effect, "Is what you are doing (getting the tattoo) pleasing to God?" If such an act is beneficial to reach out to specific people for God then do it. If not, how is it beneficial to God?
 - ii) My point here is that the decisions we make in life should be done in the light of the scripture. God wants us to consider Him in the decisions we make in life. To understand what He wants, we have to know Him and His word, and that is what this psalm is emphasizing at this point in time.
 - iii) What if my question has no direct biblical answer? Then simply ask God if what I am about to do, pleases You (God)? You would be surprised how God makes it obvious to us when it is our desire to seek His will.
 - c) Verse 13 mentions prosperity. Does that mean that everyone who seeks God will be financially prosperous in life? If that were true, people would come to Jesus for the financial benefits and not to seek forgiveness of their sins.
 - i) At the same time, the bible has a lot to say about money and how to use whatever financial benefits we receive in life to be used for His glory.
 - ii) I believe a better understanding of "prosperous" is that if it is our desire to make a difference for God with our lives, we will.
30. Verse 15: My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.
- a) This verse is NOT saying that God will rescue us "now" from whatever is the problem of the moment because we have prayed this verse and are looking to Him for answers.
 - b) The point of this verse is that whatever problem we are dealing with, trusting in God is the only true way we will get through that problem. In the same way one's problems have a starting date, we can trust in God they will have an ending date.
 - c) Does this mean we just sit there and wait for God to fix things? Of course not. For all we know, God may still want us to take all necessary steps to deal with our problems. At the same time, God wants us to know, He does care and will see us through our problems.
31. Verse 16: Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. ¹⁷ The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. ¹⁸ Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.
- a) One should not read these verses and say, "Help me God, because woe is me". ☺
 - b) The point here is that one can feel so depressed in that nothing is helping the situation and all we can do is hope in God. I have a friend who lost a child to cancer. He is a devout Christian, but he went through a long period where nothing seemed to help the pain. My point is in times of heavy pain, all one can do is cry out to God and trust that He will see you or me through that time. If God could get my friend through that, that same God can also handle whatever life is throwing at you or me.

32. Verse 19: See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me! ²⁰ Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. ²¹ May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.
- a) I can summarize this psalm and these verses as saying in effect, "I am in a lot of pain and anguish, it is getting worse and there is nothing I or anyone around me can do to help with my suffering. All I can do is turn to You (God) to see me through this, because my hope is in you." That summarizes the whole psalm in this one thought.
 - b) OK you may say, I'm not going through anything this "heavy" at the moment. Why should I pray this psalm?
 - i) Well then, give some thought to asking God to help you the next time you do go through a tough time, as I promise, they do come in life to all. We could also use it to help pray for someone we know going through a tough time.
 - ii) The point of this psalm is not to think, "Woe is me, only God can help me!" The point is to realize that God does desire to see us through whatever we are dealing with and God will see us through such a time. That is the key point of these last few verses and the key point of this psalm.
33. Verse 22: Redeem Israel, O God, from all their troubles!
- a) Verse 22 seems like a strange ending. All of a sudden we are shifting from God dealing with our lives on an individual basis to "Protect all of Israel".
 - b) Well for starters, David was Jewish and this psalm for centuries was only studied by those who are Jewish. The ending in effect, broadening the scope of the psalm to all Jewish people who are putting their trust in God. The next step is to widen the scope to include all people who trust in God.
 - c) I am not saying one has to be Jewish to pray this line. I am saying that we do trust in a God of the Jewish people, who is also the savior of all of mankind. That is why we can pray to "Redeem Israel". Not because we are or are not Jewish, but because we trust in a God that originally worked through the Jewish people to save all people who are willing to call on His name.
 - d) Also know that the word "Israel" means "struggle with God". I guarantee that if one is suffering and praying, one is "struggling" with God for answers for one's situation.
34. Let me quickly wrap all of this up and tie these psalms together.
- a) Psalm 23 is about the realization that God is there and God wants to guide our lives.
 - b) Psalm 24 is about God ruling over our lives.
 - c) Psalm 25 is about God helping us through our problems.
 - d) In summary, these psalms are teaching us that God cares, God rules and God wants to help us through our lives if we are willing to trust Him. While that may sound obvious, what these psalms do is give us help in how we should cry out to him, based on appreciation (Psalm 23), based on believing He rules (Psalm 24) and based on the fact we know He is going to see us through all of our problems (Psalm 25).
 - e) Now if that isn't a happy ending, I don't know what is. ☺
35. Father, I don't know what you have planned for me today or for the rest of my life here on earth. I just know that You are there, You do care for my life and You are guiding me whether I realize it or not or whether I "feel" it or not. Help us to let go of our worries and trust that You know the outcome of all things and are working them out for our good. Help us to deal with whatever is in front of us, and use that situation for Your glory. Help us to give You our pains and troubles so we are free to worship You for who You are, and make a difference to the world around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.