

## Psalms 3 through 5 – John Karmelich

1. These three psalms all share a common topic that is about when and how we should pray to God. With that said, throw up a quick prayer and then I'll focus on prayer for this whole lesson.
  - a) The last lesson covered Psalms 1 and 2. Psalm 1 as an introduction to psalms and it focused on how to have the proper attitude toward God. Psalm 2 focused on explaining life from God's perspective. Psalm 2 had references to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
  - b) Psalms 3-5 focuses on believers. They each say in their own way, "Here is how one approaches God and here is how one should pray to God." They say in effect, if one now knows what God expects of us based on Psalm 2, here is how we react to God in prayer.
2. This leads to a good question: If the three psalms in this lesson are all about our prayer life to God, why not combine them as one big prayer? Why are there three separate psalms?
  - a) Well, maybe they needed all three in order to have an "even" 150 Psalms. ☺
  - b) The real answer is that is how we pray. God does not expect a memorized list of requests. Our prayer life should vary based on what is going on at any time and even what time of the day it is. These three psalms reflect those variances in ideas and time of day.
  - c) Again, these psalms get into issues of when to pray. Two of the three psalms emphasize our prayer life first thing in the morning. These psalms are not necessarily designed to be recited at that time of the day, as much as they are reminders to each how to pray first thing in the morning. The third of these psalms focus on our prayer life at bedtime.
  - d) Speaking of when we pray, shouldn't we just pray whenever the need arises or whenever we feel the need to pray? Yes that is important, but that is not the topic of these three psalms. These psalms say in effect, if one desires to draw close to God, there are certain times of the day that are good to spend with God.
    - i) One of those times are first thing in the morning. They say in effect to start one's day by focusing on God, before the day gets busy with stuff to do. Prayer first thing in the morning has been a part of my prayer life for many years now. I have found that God blesses the day when I start it by focusing on Him.
    - ii) So why does he do that? The answer is not about our specific requests as much as it is a desire to please Him with our lives. Such prayer shows that commitment.
    - iii) The second time of the day one is requested (not required, requested) to focus on God is at bedtime. It is God saying in effect, "Do you want a good night's sleep? Great, spend a few moments contemplating one's day, confess any sins that have happened today, let me (God) worry about tomorrow and go get some sleep.
    - iv) God knows we are tired at bedtime and doesn't expect detailed prayers before one goes to sleep. Such prayer is a time to contemplate our actions of the day.
3. Let me wrap up the introduction to remind ourselves why we pray in the first place.
  - a) Being a Christian is more than just saying, "We believe that Jesus is God, and died for our sins." That is only the beginning of a Christian's relationship with God. Once we make that commitment, God wants us to spend the rest of our lives making a difference for Him. God wants to "take over" our lives. Learning to trust God requires us to have an active and regular prayer life.
  - b) What I am saying is if one wants to be used by God and draw close to Him, one should have an active and regular prayer life. Our prayer life should not be about reciting memorized prayers over and over again. It is about talking to God, sharing one's desire for Him to be in charge and praying for His will to be done in our lives.
  - c) With the idea in mind that we pray to get God's will done for our lives, let us begin a journey into the subject of prayer and our relationship with God.

4. Psalm 3, title: A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.
- a) This is the first of many psalms where it is titled. These titles as best we can tell are as old as the psalms themselves and are recorded as part of the Psalms.
  - b) The title for Psalm 3 tells us it was written by David and gives us the "when". It was written around the time when he was fleeing from his son Absalom.
    - i) This story can be found in 2nd Samuel 15 through 18. When David was the king of Israel, one of his sons (David had many children from multiple wives) wanted to be king and he organized a major rebellion against David.
      - a) Absalom gained favor with Israelites with decisions. His popularity grew to the point where he, and much of Israel wanted Absalom to be king. The rebellion grew to the point where David had to sneak out of the country with those loyal to Him. A civil war then occurred. Eventually David won as his general killed Absalom who got himself stuck in a tree.
    - ii) David was obviously troubled by what Absalom did, but instead of just cursing out his son, David laid out his pain to God and wrote it in this Psalm. I wonder if since David gave his emotional pain to God, did that make it possible for David's general to capture and kill Absalom? That is speculation on my part.
  - c) One thing to keep in mind is that because David was a king, he had access to paper to write on. For us to write today is as simple as typing on a computer screen or writing on paper. In David's time, such paper was not readily available to the average person. Because David was a king, he could have access to materials needed to write.
    - i) This writing material is called "papyrus". It is roughly the equivalent of a sheet of paper. Such paper was then put in scrolls to preserve them. I'm oversimplifying the story, but I simply want to make you aware of the fact that David had access to writing materials because of his power as a leader and a king.
  - d) Getting back to the psalm, what I find interesting is how David handled this rebellion. Remember that as a king, David was used to having enemies. What emotionally hurt David was not that enemies existed, but that his own son rebelled against him.
    - i) In this psalm, David is pouring out his pain before God. I'm sure David was insulted by people saying in effect, "This is what you deserve and now Absalom is king." I'm also David believed that God was punishing him by this rebellion.
    - ii) All of those emotional feelings running through David's head at this time, he wrote out his feelings in this Psalm. That is why this Psalm is important, not so we can learn history, but so we know that we can pour out our pain to God.
  - e) This leads us to how we can relate to this Psalm. If one is going through a period in one's life when it feels like everything is going wrong and people are insulting our life, then one can reach out to God for comfort.
    - i) Let me put it another way: Most of us know the feeling of being unloved and feeling like everyone has rejected us. Even when there are still people around us willing to help, we still feel alone, especially when someone close to us rejected us. All we can do is "cry out in pain" to God and that is what David does here.
  - f) OK, with that unhappy introduction completed, ☺ it is time to start Psalm 1.
5. Psalm 1, Verse 1: O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!
- a) The word "LORD" when all in capitals refers God's most holy name, which is commonly called "JWTH" or "Jehovah". The point is David in his sadness turns to the one "entity" who can relate to the pain he is going through at that time.
    - i) If you get nothing else out of this psalm, know that no matter how bad one feels at the present moment, know that God can related to whatever pain we feel.
  - b) So why mention God's name? Doesn't God know we are speaking to Him when pray? Of course He does. Did David write this psalm knowing others would read it? Possible and that is one reason why David started this psalm with a reference to God Himself.

- c) What I see with that opening title is David reminding himself first that there is a God, He does care about my pain and I can turn to Him. That reference to God tells the reader just who this psalm is addressed to.
  - d) The next two lines of the psalm, effectively repeat the same sentence. The first line says "How many are my foes (enemies)"? The second line asks, "How many rise up against me"? So why in effect, repeat that line? Did God not hear David with the first line?
    - i) The simple answer is that this is "poetry" and it is common in poetry to repeat a key point for emphasis. To put it another way, when we are in pain, we often repeat multiple times why it is we are in pain. David may be repeating a line not so much for the sake of poetry, but it is David's way of writing out the pain he is feeling at the present moment.
  - e) Yes on the surface, the issue is lots of Israelites rebelling against David's command. The issue for us can be if we just feel those under us rebelling. The more common feeling is that when things are falling apart around us, we get the feeling that no one respects us.
    - i) It may or may not be true. The point is we feel this way at that time.
    - ii) The point is when we feel the pain of rejection, we give that pain to God. That is what David is doing here and that is what God wants us to do with our pain.
6. Verse 2: Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." *Selah*
- a) It is one thing when people simply reject us. It is another when they hit us where they know it hurts. The people around David knew he trusted in God. Therefore, David's enemies insulted him by saying "God will not deliver David from this".
    - i) Whether or not David would win against this rebellion is one issue. I believe a bigger issue is David had to deal with the accusation that God won't help him.
    - ii) It is one thing when people insult us or turn from us. It is another when they hurt us where they know it hurts. If one's relationship with God is the most important thing in one's life, one can expect pain by people insulting that relationship as they know that is how to hurt us. It is one of Satan's best weapons against Christians.
  - b) Instead of David thinking, "God has let me down", David takes the pain of that insult and gives it to God. David says in effect, "Lord, I can't handle the pain of those insults, but you can. I don't have the strength to deal with those who are hurting me right now, but You do. Therefore, I am giving You this pain."
  - c) OK, time for a technical note. At the end of Verse 2 is an untranslated word: "Selah".
    - i) That word means "to pause and consider". In other words, the writer of the Psalm wants us to pause and consider what the writer is saying at this point in the psalm.
      - a) Some people theorize that this is a musical term as if to tell the musicians to play a solo so the audience can pause and contemplate that last line.
    - ii) The point here is God wants us to pause and consider how David is bearing his pain before Him. The "pondering" is about how we can relate to this pain.
7. Verse 3: But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.
- a) The first part of Verse 3 says in effect that God is the one who protects David like a shield.
  - b) One has to remember that David had years of experience of being a military general. David spent years fighting the former king of Israel (Saul) and has been involved in lots of warfare. The way David relates to the idea of God protecting him is like God being a big shield that protects David from all the insults he has received.
    - i) Does this mean that God is a "physical shield" or that God miraculously put a bunch of metal shields around David? Of course not. This is poetry.
    - ii) The idea here is that God can relate to our pain. Despite what anyone can say to hurt us, we can always run to God for protection from such insults.
  - c) This use of poetry reminds us that God's word, particularly in the Psalms, is meant to be taken seriously, but not necessarily literally.

- d) I remember hearing the testimony of a badly tortured prisoner of war. What kept him alive was he realized there was always "one part of his mind" that the torturers could not touch. The part of his thoughts kept the prisoner alive through all of that suffering.
    - i) That "area" of our brain is essentially the area where we can cry out to God. It may not get the torturer to stop, but it is an area of comfort of knowing God is there.
    - ii) With that said, one important reason to learn to memorize some scripture is because one never knows when one has to recite it in tough conditions.
  - e) Now that we understand God's protection, the rest of the verse says, that God (The Lord) puts glory on me (David) and lifts my head.
    - i) Again, one must remember that we are reading poetry. This text does not mean that God instantly restores David to his former kingship. Nor does it mean that God literally is lifting David's head up.
    - ii) The point is that David can take comfort in prayer in difficult times and he (and us) can feel a sense of peace despite whatever pain is around him.
8. Verse 4: To the LORD I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. *Selah*
- a) Again, David wrote this Psalm at a time of deep pain. He had to abandon his throne as his son was rebelling and wanted to kill him. I don't know what pain is worse: I suspect the pain of having one's own son hating you is worse than losing what power one has.
    - i) The point is David was in real pain, in that pain he cried out loud to God.
    - ii) The important thing for you and me is not about David's life 2,500 years ago. The important thing is that you or I in our deepest pain can cry out to God and He promises the Christian that He (God) will see us through that pain.
  - b) The next part of the verse says God answered from "His Holy Hill". So what does that mean? Does that mean God lives on a big hill somewhere? No.
    - i) Most likely, this refers to a "Jewish concept" that one prays toward Jerusalem as the future Messiah will rule the world one day from a Temple in Jerusalem.
    - ii) OK, so do I have to figure out which way is Jerusalem and pray toward it? No. ☺ The idea is to remember that God is in charge and He will have His Messiah (Jesus) rule the world one day from that hill.
  - c) This verse ends with another "Selah". Again it essentially means to pause and consider what the writer is saying. The idea is that when we are in intense pain, the important thing to remember is that God cares about us and He wants to see us through such times.
  - d) The verse also says that God answered David at this time.
    - i) It does not necessarily mean God will answer you or me out loud just because we are crying out to Him. If "God is God", that means He is in charge and He can do whatever He wants. God is not under any obligation to speak to us in difficult times or any time. I do find that when we cry out to Him, He is more than willing to help us in His own way to work through those situations.
    - ii) My point here is to expect God to work but don't "put God in a box" by expecting Him to work a certain way or to expect any specific response to our prayers.
9. Verse 5: I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. <sup>6</sup> I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.
- a) Verse 5 is a great response to prayer. This verse says in effect, "I have turn over my problems to God and now I can get a good nights sleep knowing that the outcome is God's problem and not my problem." (I warned you that these three psalms deal with the time of day we pray, and here is the first reference to the times when to pray.)
    - i) Those of you who have been reading my lessons for awhile know that at times I deal with sleepless nights and sometimes God gets us "up and writing" in the middle of the night. For those of you like me who struggle with sleep, compare that idea of staying awake and worrying to David's view that He could now get a good night's sleep knowing that God is in charge.

- b) What this verse is saying in effect is "God is in charge, I told Him about my problems, and now I know I don't have to worry about the outcome as God is in control."
    - i) So, does that mean we don't still have to take action to face our problems? Of course not. It just means that we have given the "outcome" to God.
    - ii) The peace of prayer comes from knowing that God is aware of our issues, and we have given those issues to God to deal with. We no longer have to worry about the outcome as we have prayed in effect, "God you are now in charge and whatever happens from this situation is now Your problem to deal with. I can now get a good night sleep as I don't have to worry about the outcome".
    - iii) Personally, I have found that when I pray that deep "surrender" prayer to God, the outcome never comes out as bad as I fear. This is a form of trust in God.
  - c) This leads me to verse 6. That verse says David doesn't have to fear tens of thousands.
    - i) Getting back to history, David's son Absalom organized a rebellion against David. There were literally tens of thousands of volunteers lined up with Absalom. My point is what David is saying about thousands of soldiers is very literal.
    - ii) You and I may not literally face thousands of soldiers lined up against us, but we can face whatever fears are in front of us, knowing that God is in charge of the outcome and knowing that we want God's will for that outcome.
    - iii) It doesn't mean we will not get out a situation "injury free". It means that that we trust that all things happen to us as believers for a reason and that God has a great plan for our lives. That is the idea of Romans 8:28. It means we can let go of our worries and let God be in charge of the results.
10. Verse 7: Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.
- a) Even though David put the results in God's hands, he didn't hesitate to tell God what was his (David's) desire to do to his enemies. David goes from "God, I'm going to sleep, you take care of my problems" to "Strike my enemies in the jaw and break their teeth".
    - i) So does that mean we should wish "ill" on those who want to hurt us? Good question. A good response might be, "God I hate what that person (or group) is doing. If it were up to me, I would smash in their mouths. However, God I simply give you my desire and the results of the battle are up to You".
    - ii) I think the point of this line is to say we can give God our desires in any prayer.
    - iii) Believers in God understand there are spiritual battles to be fought and we can pray for victory over those enemies. So, how do we one balance God's command to love one another with our desires to hurt those who have hurt us?
      - a) The "short and easy" answer is there are times for warfare and there are times to make peace. That is something we let God and "our commanding officers" in warfare decide. The reality of life is we often have to obey our superiors even if disagree with their decisions. We can't just "run home" every time we don't like an order given to us to obey.
    - iv) Getting back to the psalm, we are more than welcome to give our desires to God in life, but we truly have to let go of the outcome and realize God is in charge. The other point of this line is we may cry out a certain request, but God is under no obligation to grant that prayer request. In short, "He is God and we are not".
11. Verse 8: From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people. *Selah*
- a) This is the final line of this Psalm. David has said in effect, "Here is my desire for my enemies" and the results are now in Your (God's) hands. David can now have peace.
  - b) Going back a few verses, notice the "order": First David says in effect He can sleep in peace knowing God is in charge and then in Verse 7 David can yell out "break their teeth".
    - i) So does that mean David didn't "let go" of his anger? No, it means David first gave the results to God and then David added what he wanted as results.

- ii) The point for you and me is to remember we can ask God anything we want, but we also have to remember the point of prayer is to get God's will done, not ours.
  - iii) That is how David could pray for his own personal peace and in the "same breadth" pray for the destruction of His enemies.
  - c) That is also why David could end this prayer in Verse 8 with the reminder that all victories in life come from God. The secret to living a joyful life is to put the results in God's hand and then we can know the outcome is already determined for our best.
  - d) That is also why this prayer ends with David's request for a blessing on "His people". In effect David is saying, "May God bless those who love Him and call upon His name".
    - i) Well, what if the person we are fighting also trusts in God? If we know that to be the case, if we can, we should try for a peaceful solution. If that person still insists upon fighting us then we have to defend ourselves. Again the underlying issue is about giving the outcome to God.
  - e) Getting back to the prayer, David is ending this prayer in effect with, "May those who put their trust in God, see a great outcome for their lives ". That is Verse 8 in a "nutshell". That is the blessing that David desires here.
  - f) OK, time to move on to Psalm 4.
12. Psalm 4 notes: For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.
- a) The opening comment for this psalm gives directions on how this psalm is to be played by an orchestra. It also says it is written by David.
  - b) So, if we have no idea how the music goes for this psalm (as I stated in the opening lesson), why keep this musical reference as part of the title?
    - i) We will learn by verse two that this psalm is meant for public worship and given the fact it this psalm was designed to be sung, that title supports that fact.
13. Psalm 4, Verse 1: Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.
- a) This psalm opens with a cry out to God. Since we don't know what David was thinking when he wrote this psalm, all we can do is study the whole psalm as to its purpose.
  - b) What this opening verse does teach is that David wrote this psalm at some moment of great personal stress as he is crying out to God in his prayer.
  - c) So, if David is trusting God, why mention God's name here? It is a reminder of who we are to focus upon when we pray.
  - d) I believe the idea of "Verse 1" is about humbling oneself before God. What David is doing is getting in the right frame of mind as he prays to God here.
    - i) David is saying in effect, "God, you know how much trouble I am in and You are my only help, so with that attitude of "it's all up to you", I come to You in prayer."
    - ii) David is asking for God's help, not because David is loyal to God or that David is a good person. It is because David understands God reaches out to people who do seek Him and are willing to live by His desires for our lives. Ok, with that said, it is time to move on to verse 2.
14. Verse 2: How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? *Selah*
- a) David is still calling out for God's mercy, but the focus of Verse 2 is on those who are seeking out false gods. That fact alone tells us this Psalm is meant for a "group prayer".
  - b) OK, now picture yourself in a typical church service and you are singing this psalm. Verse 2 mentions "men" (men and women) seeking false gods". So if people at a religious service are singing this psalm, is that "heathen" reference for us or for nonbelievers?
    - i) The answer can be both. We tend to think of "false gods" as little statues that were worshipped in ancient times. Today we tend to think of false gods as other religions. The truth is false gods are anything that draws us away from God. The idea is to avoid anything and everything that can draw us away from God.

- ii) Let me explain further: If we regularly skip church to play a sport, becomes a false god. If we regularly ignore time with God say to work extra hours that can be a false god. I'm not saying one cannot have a hobby. I'm saying one should put God first in one's life, and not compromise on spending time with Him.
      - iii) There can be exceptions at time, when say we have to work extra hours. The question is what "rules" our life, a desire to worship God or make more money?
    - c) What does that have to do with this verse? Read the first line of the psalm again. Notice the phrase, "turn my glory into shame".
      - i) I believe this line is a reference to those who claim to be following God, but are in effect, giving Him "lip service". Again, I am not saying that one has to spend 100% of their time with God. He understands we need balance in our life. The problem is when we ignore Him in order to do other things.
      - ii) This verse has one of those "Selah" words, which means we should stop and ponder it's meaning. Since I've done that for half a page, I will move on. ☺
15. Verse 3: Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him.
- a) Given the fact we have established that this psalm is meant for public reading, Verse 3 opens with the reminder that God has picked those who love Him for himself.
    - i) Let me explain: We as humans don't know all things, and therefore, we choose whether or not to obey God. If God is perfect, He must know all things. From His "all-knowing" perspective, He knew and knows who will follow Him.
    - ii) With that said, those who choose to seek God are "set apart". The idea of being "set apart" is like having a set of dishes that are only used for special occasions. The idea is that those who are called to serve God are "set apart" for His use.
  - b) This leads back to the verse. It is a reminder that God is more than willing to listen to the prayers of those who have made the commitment to seek Him with their lives.
    - i) Well, doesn't God hear all prayers? How do people get saved if the "ungodly" don't have their prayers answered? The answer is God is open to anyone at anytime willing to turn their lives over to Him.
    - ii) This verse is not talking about when one first commits to God. It is talking about those who have made the decision to live by God's rules and turn their lives over to Him. Once we have done that, the point of this verse is now we have an established relationship with God and He wants to work on that relationship.
  - c) In summary this verse is a reminder that if we have committed our lives to be pleasing to God, He is more than willing to listen to our prayers, no matter what we are feeling or what we have done wrong as long as we are willing to confess our sins to Him.
  - d) Which reminds me, I have been considering my own prayer life in these studies. I pray first thing every morning, but to be honest, I rarely put much thought into those prayers before I start. What I am learning is that God is willing to take any sort of relationship as being better than none. Therefore we should stop and consider how we approach God and what we are going to say when we spend time in prayer before Him.
    - i) Think of it this way: If we have the privilege of talking to the God of the Universe, it wouldn't hurt to take a little time to prepare for what we want to say in that conversation with God.
    - ii) I bring that point up here, as I think that is the point of this Psalm. It is about considering what we do when we approach God. We should consider the fact that we have the privilege to speak to God and we should use that privilege wisely.
    - iii) I'm not saying one have to recite a memorized prayer or read a specific list when approaching God. What I am saying is we should take a few moments before we pray to consider what it is we want to say to God and how we approach Him.
    - iv) While you are pondering that difficult thought, I'll move on to Verse 4.

16. Verse 4: In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.  
*Selah*
- a) We need to remember here that this psalm opened with some musical comment about how this psalm is to be played. While the music for this psalm is long gone, the point is this psalm was meant to be sung publicly. I mention that here as Verse 4 tells us to contemplate about our relationship with God before we go to sleep.
    - i) This verse does not mean we have to pray this psalm before bed. It is simply a reminder to recall our behavior of that day at nighttime.
    - ii) This psalm has been nicknamed the "nighttime" psalm due to this bedtime reference here in Verse 4. This psalm is often contrasted to the previous psalm and its reference to a good night's sleep.
  - b) This leads us to the verse itself. It starts with a reminder to not sin in our anger. Most of us know the most likely time to "mess up" is when we are angry about some situation.
    - i) I know I am at my worst when I am tired. This verse and this sentence are a reminder to watch and contemplate our behavior when we are tired.
  - c) This verse is saying in effect, there are times when we are going to be angry. To be angry at something wrong is not a sin. To act in a sinful way based on that anger is the danger. That is what this verse is warning against.
  - d) This verse has another "Selah" at the end. That means is when we are about to go to bed, we pause to consider our day think about anything we might have done to offend God.
    - i) In other words, if Verse 3 is a reminder to be with God in the morning, Verse 4 is a reminder to contemplate our day at bedtime. It doesn't mean we have to stay up late and pray. It just means to take a few moments, think about our actions of the day, confess any sins as just that: "sin". We need to be willing to turn over any anger or frustration we feel to God. Then we can relax and get a good night's sleep. In other words, if you or I can learn to let go of worries and potentially sinful activities, we can sleep better.
    - ii) I admit I don't practice this as much as I should and that probably adds to many of the sleepless nights I have had in the past.
17. Verse 5: Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.
- a) This verse is not saying that when we think about our day, we need to get up, go find an animal and sacrifice it to God. The idea of "right sacrifices" is about turning our life over to God. It is about saying in effect, "Here is where I messed up today and I give to You my mistakes. I trust that your way of doing things is the right way for my life."
  - b) That may sound like a lot before bedtime, but the simple act of contemplating one's day at the end of the day and thinking about what offends God is well worth a few moments of time before one goes to sleep.
  - c) This does not have to be a complicated long list of things. It can be as simple as saying, "What I did today Lord was wrong, and here is what I am thinking about. I understand that Your way is right and mine is wrong and I want to turn from that action." That is confession and that is the "right sacrifices" being discussed here in this verse.
  - d) Shouldn't we stop and turn to God whenever we realize we have sinned? Of course. My point here is that bedtime is a good time to take a personal "inventory" and clear one's conscious in order to prepare for sleep.
  - e) I am not saying that one should spend "x" minutes every morning and every night with God. I am saying that when one develops the habit of setting time specifically for one's relationship with God, it prepares us for both day and night, and yes, it makes us a better person and even helps us to get better rest when we do rest.
    - i) My goal is to help all of us have a better relationship with God. These verses teach us the proper attitude in our prayer time with God.
    - ii) That is the main idea of both Psalms 3 and 4.

18. Verse 6: Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. <sup>7</sup> You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.
- a) In Verses 6 and 7, the purpose of the psalm is shown in a different light.
    - i) These verses are saying in effect, that if we carve out part of our day (and evening) for God, He not only will bless those specific times, but He will also bless the rest of our day. These verses are teaching that we can have a much more joyful life if we are willing give God part of our day in regular prayer.
  - b) Verse 6 opens with "Who can show us any good?" It is not a question to be asked of the person next to you. It is a question to be contemplated about life.
    - i) It is to ask oneself in effect, "Who in comparison to God can show us good things?" Yes those around us can make us happy at times, but true joy (an inward feeling of peace) only comes when one has a close and personal relationship with God.
    - ii) Let me put it this way: We know that we are saved, not because we are good people, but because our sins are 100% forgiven. We can have joy of knowing we don't have to work to earn our salvation.
  - c) Verse 6 is the reminder that God's face (a metaphor, God does not have a face) is looking favorably upon those people who are willing to call upon Him and willing to live their lives with the goal of pleasing Him. Seeking God and living for Him "is" pleasing Him.
  - d) Verse 7 is a reminder of how great is God's blessing. It is saying the joy of knowing that God loves us and wants a relationship with us forever is greater than any joy that can be brought by grain and new wine.
    - i) Let me explain that verse another way: We can be happy for a time when we have a new "things". After the newness wears off, we are craving another new "thing".
    - ii) However, the joy that comes from knowing one has a loving relationship with God brings far more joy to one's life than any or every "thing" in this lifetime.
    - iii) While we may have a hard time relating to the joy of "new grain and new wine", the underlying picture is about God's joy in comparison to "stuff".
19. Verse 8: I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.
- a) When I said Psalm 4 is the "nighttime" Psalm, this final verse is my additional proof. This verse states in effect we can have a good night's sleep at anytime, no matter the situation.
  - b) The main reason we lose sleep is we worry about something that has either happened or may happen in the future. Most adults are well aware of that fact.
  - c) Here's a question to ponder: Why did God create us with the need for sleep? Why couldn't we just be productive all day and night? The scientific answer has to do with the fact our bodies need time to rejuvenate to function properly.
  - d) With that said, what is the underlying purpose of this psalm? It is to remind us to give our worries, our sins and our issues to God, so we can get a good night's sleep.
  - e) The verse literally says God makes me dwell in safety. The idea is that no matter what is going on in life, God wants to help us through those moments and yes, even get a good night's sleep despite whatever is going on around us.
    - i) In summary, it means to not worry, and give those things we are worried about to God at bedtime. Most adults are well aware of the fact that sometimes, when we are willing to let go of an issue and give it to God, He often gives us a fresh perspective after that rest and helps us to see our issues with a new perspective.
  - f) OK, now that I've finished telling everyone how to sleep, ☺ it's time to sneak in one more Psalm before I wrap up this lesson.
20. Psalm 5 introduction: For the director of music. For flutes. A psalm of David.
- a) The introduction to this Psalm is the same as Psalm 4. The point is this psalm is written by David and is meant to be sung publicly. Again, the original music to this psalm is long gone and we only have the words, and not the music.

21. Psalm 5, Verse 1: Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. <sup>2</sup> Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.
- a) This psalm opens with the reminder to whom we pray: It is the God who created the world, but is still the God who can and does listen to my individual prayers. It is also the God who is in charge of my life and in that sense is like a king.
    - i) Let me pause and ask, how does God "handle" all of those millions of prayers at the same time? The short answer is, if one believes in a God big enough to create the world, then one should believe in a God that can handle all of those prayers.
    - ii) If God created all things, then he created time as we know it. With that said, I don't believe time as we know it, does not exist in heaven, so time is not an issue.
    - iii) Do I understand how it works? No, but I know that it does.
22. Verse 3: In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.
- a) If the previous verse was a "nighttime prayer" lesson, Psalm 5 is another morning prayer.
  - b) The reason I put Psalms 3, 4 and 5 in one lesson is not because "they fit", but because these three psalms teach us about the importance of praying at different times of the day and the benefit of both morning and evening requests being made to God.
  - c) I wrote earlier about the idea of preparing for morning time with God. Here in Verse 3 it says that David laid out his requests to God in the morning and waited for answers.
    - i) What that means is when we pray, we should pray with the expectation that God will answer those prayers. Does that mean that God will answer them right there as we are praying for them? The short answer is we let God work on His timing.
      - a) At the same time we should pray expecting God to answer those prayers, or else why should we pray in the first place?
      - ii) It might help to remember that the purpose of prayer is to get God's will done, not our will. Since we don't know God's will, it is ok to ask anything and everything, but we have to accept that God will ignore prayer requests that are not His will.
    - d) In summary, this verse is a reminder to give our prayer requests to God and to expect Him to answer to those prayers. That is what I mean by preparing for prayer by simply thinking about what it is we are asking God in the first place.
23. Verse 4: You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. <sup>5</sup> The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. <sup>6</sup> You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.
- a) OK, we jump from the positive aspects of prayer to negative comments that God hates those who take pleasure in evil activities. These verses go downhill from there. ☺
  - b) So why make this jump? Why change the focus from the positive benefits of prayer to talk about those who hate God and live only for pleasure in this lifetime?
    - i) The idea is that if prayer is getting God's will done, then we have to learn to love what He loves and hate what He hates. Christian growth is often described as growing in our love of sinful people and growing in our hatred of sinful activities.
    - ii) It is learning to love what God loves (people, who He has created to have a loving relationship with) and hating what God hates (sin, and its affect upon people).
    - iii) This leads us back to Verses 4-6. If we are going to have a "healthy hatred" of what God hates, we have to know what it is and how to recognize it.
  - c) I believe these verses are not so much to look at other people, but to examine our own lives and see what is God cannot stand about our lives. After all, such evil people are usually not in church reading these psalms. ☺
  - d) God wants us to think about evil as to consider our own ways that we are displeasing to Him. If we know the fate of evil people, that should want to draw us away from such activities. OK, enough of evil for the moment. Let's get back to our behavior before God.

24. Verse 7: But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple. <sup>8</sup> Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies-- make straight your way before me.
- a) Let me paraphrase Verse 7 for all of us: Lord, we have permission to come to heaven and into "your house" not because we are good people, but solely due to your mercy. You God, have chosen us out of the world to be with You forever, and for that fact we will be forever grateful for what You have done for us.
  - b) Since I'm paraphrasing, let me take a stab at Verse 8: "God, all the ways the bible teaches me how to live is what I should desire for my life. My enemies are anyone or anything or even any of my own desires that draw me away from what You desire for my life. Now help me by guiding my life to do the things you want me to do with my life."
    - i) Verse 8 is a request for God to lead us down the right path in life. Doing God's will is more than just living the right way, it is about praying to God to give us the strength and wisdom to make the right decisions.
    - ii) In other words, we don't have the ability to live the way God desires by our own strength. The only way we can live a life pleasing to God is to ask for His help in living the life He desires for us.
    - iii) So why should I pray that prayer regularly? Isn't once enough as God remembers our prayers? The point is not for God to understand our prayers. The point is for us (emphasis on "us") to understand our prayers. Prayer is a reminder to us of what God desires of our life and regular prayer reminds us of what we are to do.
  - c) Now let me quickly tie these verses we have read so far together. The point here is that it should be our desire to please God. Therefore, we should turn away from the way those who have no interest in pleasing God. We should pray for God's will to be done in our life so we can have the ability to live the way God wants us to live.
  - d) In the Gospels, Jesus took a lot of time to pray to God the Father. The reason He did that was in His "human state" Jesus understood (and wants us to understand) the importance of drawing upon God's strength in order for us to live the life God wants us to live. That idea of drawing on God's strength is a summary point of all three of these Psalms.
25. Verse 9: Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit. <sup>10</sup> Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you.
- a) OK, the psalm is back to picking on those who turn from God. This psalm goes back and forth a lot between how believers should act and how "sinners" act. Why is that?
    - i) In other words, why should we focus our prayers over those who have turned from God? Part of the answer is for us to understand the type of behavior God hates as well as the type of behavior God desires for our lives. Another part of the answer is for us to understand what is the ultimate fate for turning from God.
  - b) Personally, I have a tough time praying negative things about people. I want people to turn to God and I don't want to wish evil on people. However, one has to separate the act of sin from the sinner. God wants us to punish the sin and still have compassion for the sinner. At the same time, governments should carry out justice on those found guilty.
  - c) OK John, I get all of that, but this psalm still calls on God to put down those who do sin and do turn their lives away from God. How do you reconcile that? Easy. The answer is that God knows all things and we don't. Not every person makes it to heaven and only God knows who has chosen to reject Him. While God calls on us to pray for people's salvation, we must also understand that God does not violate free will, and therefore, we must accept the fact that some do reject Him.

- d) OK, all that negative stuff may be true, but why focus on it? It is to remember the fact that God is "Holy" which essentially means that He can stand no evil whatsoever. It is a reminder when we look at our own lives as well as the lives of others. Yes, God will punish those who turn from Him, but more importantly, this Psalm is a reminder to us of how we behave when we (emphasis on "us") turn from Him.
  - e) Let me point out one more thing about these verses. There is an emphasis on the mouths and tongues of the wicked. The idea is for us to understand that we can see the evidence of those who are wicked by what they say. It is not simply a matter of God saying, "this person truly seeks me and that person is wicked". We can judge people and we should judge people based on their words and activities. Yes, only God knows who is saved, but He still calls on us to judge people's behavior to determine how we deal with people.
  - f) OK, enough guilt for those verses, we can now focus on the positive of the last verses. ☺
26. Verse 11: But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. <sup>12</sup> For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.
- a) After finishing describing the fate of those who turn from God, the psalm finishes with some positive thoughts of those of us who have turned our lives over to God.
  - b) These last two verses are saying in effect, "Be glad that God chose you to live for Him, or else we would end up with the same fate as the wicked. In other words, the only reason you and I don't have the tongues and mouths of the wicked was that we were chosen by Him for salvation. For that we should never cease to give God thanks.
    - i) To put it another way, we shouldn't be grateful for how good we are, we should be grateful that God choose us and because He did, He gave us the ability and desire to live for Him with our lives.
    - ii) So given that, does that mean we shouldn't pray for nonbelievers? Of course not. It only means that God alone knows who is saved, so therefore we can and should reach out to all people, as we don't know who is on "God's list".
  - c) With that I can wrap up not only this Psalm, but the last three psalms. The main point of these psalms is about publicly showing our gratitude to God for what He has done in our lives and living our lives to make a difference for Him. These Psalms teach us about our prayer life in the morning and at bedtime. The idea is not specific prayer times as much as it is beginning and ending our days with thoughts of God. It is to say in effect, not only we care about God, but we know that we don't have the power to face the day or even to get a good night's sleep without giving to God the issues of life we have to face. There is more to it than that, but that is a good summary of this lesson.
  - d) This leads me back to these last few verses and in effect, my closing prayer. This verse ends with the point that we should be grateful that God picked us and not only should we stop and thank God for fact, but we should live to make a difference for Him in this lifetime. In essence, that last sentence is my closing prayer, so I won't adding thing more to this lesson. It's a good spot to stop.
27. Let's pray: Father, Help us to worship You all the days of our lives. Help us to make time for you before and after our day gets "busy". Help us to look to You for guidance on how we shall and live and with that time spent with You, trust that You are then working to make a difference in our lives. Help us to have an effective prayer life where we seek to get Your will done. Help us to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.