

1. My one word title for this lesson is the word "evil". The psalms in this lesson all revolve around the topic of what is evil and what we are to do about what is evil. The main issue is not about recognizing evil, but about what God wants us to do about it. The remedy for evil is to give the pain it causes to God. That last thought is the main point of this whole lesson.
 - a) We tend to think of evil as those who kill or those who rob others. All of us instinctively know that such things are wrong and we call people who habitually act this way "evil".
 - i) I once saw a movie where a lawyer asks a criminal on trial, "Why did you rob that place?" The criminal responded with "Because, I wanted the money." My point is that one can come to a point where one no longer thinks of stealing or killing as something to be avoided, but just something to be avoided "caught doing".
 - b) The biblical concept of "evil" is not only about those who refuse to seek God but also those who act out in ways that are displeasing to Him. It is more than just ignoring God, it is describing those who go out of their way to do things we instinctively know are wrong.
2. OK, now for my usual question: Why did God place these psalms here and why should I care?
 - a) Going back a few lessons, we had psalms that dealt with God ruling over the world in a future time after Jesus came back. That lead to the last lesson where I asked the question in effect, "OK, so Jesus is coming back to rule over the world. What does that mean for me now?" The answer was accountability to God. This leads to a logical question of, "What about all the evil that exists in our world?" How do we deal with that now in light of the fact God will rule one day?
 - i) The point of these psalms is not just that God will give us victory over evil people, but that God will show us how to be victorious over what is evil in this world.
 - b) OK all, let's pray for God's protection as we begin to deal with evil and Psalm 52.
3. Psalm 52, title: For the director of music. A *maskil* of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."
 - a) Let me get the easy part out of the way first. This is a song that David wrote, and then later gave it to the person in charge of music for worshipping God. David wrote this psalm long before he became king. I suspect that David didn't give it to be played until after he became king, so we have a time gap between "writing" and "played".
 - b) The phrase a "maskil of David", can be translated the "a thought of David". It simply means we should contemplate what David is writing about here
 - c) The rest of the title is based on an event as described in 1st Samuel, Chapter 21. In that chapter, David was on the run from King Saul, as Saul feared David taking over his role as king. There was a moment during those years when David went to where the most holy worship place was located in Jerusalem. He was there to get whatever weapons he could find. David lied to the chief priests and said he was on a mission from King Saul.
 - i) There was a man who witnessed this whole event named Doeg the Edomite. As his last name states, this man was not Jewish but was a member of the Israelites' long term neighbor and enemy, the "Edomites".
 - ii) Doeg told King Saul where David was. King Saul ordered the priests who helped David to be killed, even though it was David who lied to the priests. Doeg carried out the order and killed all the priests at that temple location.
 - iii) So if Doeg is on King's Saul side, does that make him a bad person? No the sin is not supporting Saul. The sin was Doeg being a murderer and a false witness as he blamed the priests. Doeg killed the priests who were innocent of helping David.
 - iv) Doeg is used in this psalm as an example of evil. The psalm is not about him, but about the fate of people who don't care about hurting innocent people.

- d) OK John, so this Doeg fellow committed an evil act. He lived and died roughly 3,000 years ago. How does his bad decisions affect my life?
 - i) The point is not to understand the fate of "Doeg". The point is to understand the damage that evil can do and understand what God wants us to do when we encounter evil.
 - ii) As you read this psalm, notice that David did not pray, "Dear God, let me kill Doeg for what he did". Don't get me wrong, when we have an opportunity to do justice for the sake of society (lawfully, not by taking the law in our hands), we should take such an opportunity. The point of this psalm is about how we mentally deal with the pain of evil and that is David's focus in this psalm and through the psalms of this lesson.
 - iii) I believe that is why David made this prayer public as well. It wasn't so the Israelites could know about "Doeg", but about the danger of dealing with evil.
 - iv) On that scary thought, I can move on to Verse 1.
- 4. Verse 1: Why do you boast of evil, you mighty man? Why do you boast all day long, you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God?
 - a) The idea of "mighty man", is not mighty based on God's strength, but based on one's own strength or based on what one has accomplished outside of God's help. It could also refer to one who has gained some wealth due to stealing. The point is people do get away with stuff for a period of time. Some do get caught and some have to wait for God's judgment.
 - b) As I state every so often, this world would only be fair if we are accountable to God and He does judge people for their actions. If there were no eternal judgment, this world would be a very unfair place as there is many wicked people do get away with things.
 - i) What Verse 1 is saying in effect, "Hey you people who think you are getting away with stuff, there is a God who does judge people and whether you realize it or not, you will be judged for the evil that do in this world."
 - c) I heard an interesting comment about this opening verse I want to share. In the previous psalm, David was guilty of a bad sin. Yet, David didn't brag about it. I believe David was ashamed of that sin. Now contrast David's shame with the idea of evil people who brag about the sins that they commit.
 - i) That is a key difference between those who have a heart for God versus those are evil in God's eyes. One group cares about pleasing God and feels guilt when they are not pleasing to Him. Another group is proud of what they have done wrong and only fear being caught.
 - ii) The point of this psalm is such evil people think they are getting away with stuff but David is reminding all of us that there is a judgment day coming.
- 5. Verse 2: Your tongue plots destruction; it is like a sharpened razor, you who practice deceit. ³You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth. *Selah* ⁴ You love every harmful word, O you deceitful tongue!
 - a) Notice in these three verses, the heavy emphasis on the word "tongue". The point the verses are making is about the danger of bragging over one's sin and the bragging of planning such sins.
 - b) Since the psalms are for believers, other than knowing there is a difference between believers and those who do evil, what are we as believers to get out of these verses?
 - i) What David is teaching us is how to recognize when evil is occurring. The main point is to watch tongues, which is to watch out what people say.
 - ii) Another way to personalize these verses is in effect to watch our own mouths. If we find ourselves bragging about evil deeds, then we know we are going down the wrong path in life.

- c) Let me come back to the idea of "confession" as we did in the last psalm. Suppose one has changed their lives for God, but also realize that in the past, one's life did fit with the "bragging about evil" prior to giving one's life to Jesus.
 - i) Know that God does forgive all of our sins, and that includes forgiving all sins we have committed prior to gave our lives to Him. As I like to say, we still may have to pay the price to society for our sins, but God has perfectly forgiven our sins.
 - ii) A few weeks ago, I met a wonderful young Christian man who used to lead a life of crime and spent a good amount of time in jail. He got saved in prison and after he was released, married a wonderful Christian wife. Now he and his wife go out and witness to others about Christ. The ministry work he does is more impressive than many people who claim they are involved in ministry.
 - a) He said in effect, I can't make up for all I have done in the past, but I know I am saved and all I do know is now I want to live to make a difference for Christ in all that I do. That is the changed "heart" God is looking for.
 - iii) Meanwhile, in this psalm, wicked people are still in big trouble. ☺
- 6. Verse 5: Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin: He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah*
 - a) The verse is reminding all of us that when we see evil occurring, we as a society should do our best to stop it. Still, sometimes people do get away with doing evil things. The reminder here is that even though such people appear to be getting away with stuff, there will come a time, when such people will be accountable to God.
 - b) You may find it interesting that the word used for God in this psalm is not the Hebrew word "Jehovah" that is commonly associated with the God of Israel. Instead we have the word "El-o-heem" used here. This essentially means the "God of all".
 - i) This is the same word for God (El-o-heem) that is used in the first few chapters of Genesis that deals with the creation of the world.
 - ii) I believe the point as it applies to this psalm is in effect, "There is a God who created the world, and everyone who lives in this world is accountable to that God. Therefore, I the God who has created the world am saying to all of those who are "bent" on doing evil, that you will suffer for the evil that you have done.
 - c) If one needs a motivation to avoid doing evil things, just consider what our punishment would be based on these verses. Even if we do believe we are eternally forgiven, like David, punishment does come in this lifetime as God is working on us to do the right thing. My point here is that it is better to be "chastised" in this lifetime as "one of God's", then to face eternal punishment of never turning to God in the first place.
 - i) It may help to remember that punishment to society is different from God's punishment. Asking God for forgiveness is in effect, up to Him and not us. God wants an eternal relationship with us "so bad", that He is willing to forgive us of all (big emphasis on "all") our sins. The New Testament teaches that the only unforgivable sin is a lifelong denial of Jesus' eternal payment for one's sins.
 - d) In this little psalm, we have had the word "selah" occur twice already. For those who are new to my studies in the psalms, (new people join this study every week), that word simply means to stop and contemplate what is being said here.
 - i) The two "selah's" are saying in effect, "If you are doing something evil, stop and consider the eternal consequences and change one's way before it is too late."
 - e) I have to admit, the older I get, the less I worry about the evil that occurs in this world. Maybe I haven't personally felt enough pain of such evil, but I do take comfort in the fact that there is a God who "rights the wrongs" done by such evil. I sort of figure, the worst that can be done to me, is to make me suffer in this lifetime. That is still better than to suffer eternally and that is the fate of those being described in these verses.

7. Verse 6: The righteous will see and fear; they will laugh at him, saying,⁷ "Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!"
- a) Speaking of not fearing evil men, I present these two verses. They are saying in effect that those who trust in God (believers) will "laugh" at those who trust in their own evil actions. The point is those who don't repent of their evil deeds will be eternally condemned.
 - b) Let me try to put this in the perspective of someone who is really suffering due to the evil of others. Suppose we are really hurt by someone and our only mistake was being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Internal peace does not come from changing the circumstances. Such peace is a state of mind that realizes there is a God who will "right the wrongs" of this world and we don't have to struggle to fix what is wrong with society.
 - c) I always think of Paul, who lived in the first century. He lived when roughly two thirds of the Roman world was slaves. The lives of those slaves had little value. Yet, one doesn't read of Paul wanting to overthrow the Roman government. Instead, Paul preached about the peace that comes from within by trusting in a God in charge of justice.
 - d) There are many people who only live for the potential rewards of this lifetime and try to get as much as they can out of this life. Then there are those who realize that there is a God who will judge the world and realize that all people are accountable to a God that will judge the world. That is the whole psalm in a single thought.
 - e) Before I move on, let me change the topic a little. One can also read this psalm about the evil forces that exists "behind" such evil people. If you ever have wondered why the book of Revelation speaks of a thousand year period where Satan is "locked up", I believe it is to show how some people can be evil without the influence of Satan in this world.
8. Verse 8: But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.⁹ I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints.
- a) Is David claiming he is perfect in these last two verses? Of course not. David knew he was personally, not among the "wicked", not because he acted better, but simply because he did trust in God's forgiveness.
 - i) David calls himself an "olive tree" in Verse 8. That simply means that we are "bearing fruit" simply by sticking close to God. That is, praying for His help, doing what He desires of us and living to make a difference for Him in our lives. Olive trees don't produce olives by "pushing hard for the olives to come out." They produce their fruit by being planted in good soil. Our "good soil" is sticking close to God and that is the idea David is trying to convey here.
 - b) Let me talk about the idea of praising God forever. It seems boring in effect to just stand there and say over and over again, "I praise You God, forever and forever". So John, do we spend a lot of eternity just "standing there" praising God for our salvation?
 - i) I don't know what entails "eternity", but I believe it won't be boring. I suspect there will be things to do and new reasons to praise God over and above the understanding of our eternal forgiveness in this lifetime.
 - ii) One thing I have learned from studying my bible is God is saying to us in effect, You (that's us) just focus on making a difference for Me (God) in this lifetime and you let Me worry about what people are going to do in the next life.
 - c) If God desires an eternal love relationship with people, it doesn't mean we just stand in heaven hugging God all day. I suspect God has wonderful plans for those who do put their trust in Him and in effect, praise Him forever for what He has and will do for us.
 - d) This psalm does spend the last two verses contrasting the difference between those who do trust in God versus those who are bent on doing evil. These last two verses, are in effect, state the rewards for avoiding in life those who seek to do evil. With that positive break, now over, it is time to get back to the main topic of these psalms.

9. Psalm 53: For the director of music. According to *mahalath*. A *maskil* of David.
 - a) The title of this psalm, is almost identical to the last one. Again, it is written by David, and it is designed to be sung. Again the word "maskil" essentially means that David wants us to pause and consider the words of this psalm and what they mean.
 - b) The new expression in this title is the untranslated word "mahalath".
 - i) This is probably a musical term that refers to how the song should be played.
 - c) Like the last psalm, this one contemplates the fate of those who do evil. So what is the difference between the last psalm and this one? The last one focused on the "tongues" of the wicked. It was describing those who are "bent" on being evil and is based on what they say. This next psalm deals focuses on the actions of those who are evil.
 - d) It is also important to state before I begin Psalm 53 that this psalm is mostly a repeat of Psalm 14. Much (but not all) of the psalm is fairly identical to Psalm 14.
 - i) If that is true, why repeat in effect, "Psalm 14" here? I believe that the psalm is repeated, to show it in context of the surrounding psalms.
 - ii) I just paused to re-read my comments on Psalm 14. At that time, the focus was mainly on how evil affects us. I believe the point here in Psalm 53 is similar, but it is also about how God sees evil actions, which is why the psalm is repeated.
 - iii) To put it another way, in order to grow as a believer, we need to understand what God love and what God hates. If God hates evil then we need to know how to recognize it and deal with it, which is a key point of this lesson.
10. Psalm 53, Verse 1: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good. ² God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
 - a) One should read these verses from God's perspective. It is as if God is looking down at those people who don't care about pleasing Him and watching how their lives turned out.
 - i) Here, a fool is one who says in effect, "There is no God". It is not just talking about an atheist, but it is also including those who simply don't care about pleasing Him. It refers to people who are too busy say, making a living, or trying to achieve fame or power, and they don't care about the fact their lives are not pleasing to God.
 - b) Verse 2 is saying in effect that nobody seeks after God. Some people think this refers to all people, I don't see it that way. I understand all people have faults and God is aware of our faults. I also understand that there are multitudes of people who do care about pleasing God even though we all fail at times. I believe Verses 1 and 2 are talking about the same thing, which is those people who don't care about God or refuse to turn to God.
 - c) OK John, I am well aware that there are people who refuse to turn to God. How does this affect me and my life? For starters, know that some people, no matter how hard we try, will not turn their lives over to Jesus. They are so ingrained in their lifestyle, they refuse to change and all of our pleading and prayers won't change that. The related point is we never know which people will "get it" and which will not. Therefore, God wants us to be a witness to all people as some will change just as others will not.
 - i) The related issue is these verses teach us what type of people to avoid as much as possible. If such people don't have a heart for God, acting like such people doesn't exactly help our status with God.
 - d) Let's remember the context of Psalm 53 here. This psalm, and the surrounding psalms deal with the topic of evil. The point here is that God is definitely aware that such evil exists. So if God is aware of it, why isn't He doing more about it now?
 - i) The short answer is God, ultimately has a purpose for such evil deeds. God wants to see if such people are willing to change and how others deal with that evil. God desires to work through people to deal with the damage done by such evil acts.

11. Verse 3: Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. ⁴ Will the evildoers never learn-- those who devour my people as men eat bread and who do not call on God?
- a) When Verse 3 says "everyone has turned away", it refers to the millions and billions of people through the ages who have refused to turn to the God of the bible. Even for all of those people who never understood "the" God of the bible, I will argue that all of us instinctively know there is a God we are accountable to. If we understand as humans that there is something "greater than us" we are accountable to, that alone should get us to avoid such acts as stealing and murder.
 - b) The text says in effect, "all of them" have become corrupt.
 - i) Remember that it is God's desire to spend eternity with all humans. However, because God is perfect, He requires us to be perfectly forgiven. A perfect God cannot spend eternity with imperfect people. That is why it "breaks God's heart" when He sees individuals who refuse to turn to Him.
 - c) OK John, I understand the idea that there are many corrupt people in the world and if I get the idea, I'm sure God does too. ☺ How does verses like this affect me?
 - i) For starters, verses like these remind us that God is aware of those who harm believers and what is their ultimate fate.
 - ii) We may think at times, "I don't understand why God isn't rescuing me now through all the suffering I am going through because of that person or group."
 - iii) These verses are saying that God is aware of our suffering and He is aware of what evil people are doing to believers. The only reason God is not rescuing us on our timing, is He has a purpose for waiting, and often that purpose is to teach us something through our suffering or to wait to see if those evil people do change their life styles.
 - d) I want to come back to the man I met a few weeks ago, who did change from a life of crime to becoming an upstanding citizen and a great witness for Jesus. My point is that some people do change. If that is true, why does the text say, "All have become corrupt". We have to see people as God does. God knows all things, including the full lives of all people. While there are some people who do change their lifestyle, God sees such changed people as eternally forgiven, while at the same time God sees the lives of those who refuse to change and that is focus of these verses.
12. Verse 5: There they were, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to dread. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you; you put them to shame, for God despised them.
- a) The emphasis here is on how those who don't care about God will be overwhelmed with dread (think "fear"), when there was nothing to fear.
 - i) If people who don't care about God have lots of fear, what are they afraid of? I believe the "dread" is the fear of being caught. What criminals fear is being caught for what they did wrong. When God says in effect "there was nothing to dread", that means that if such people were willing to turn to God, they would not have to worry about eternity in hell if they would just turn from their lifestyle.
 - b) The second part of this verse, is a statement of comfort for believers. It is a reminder that God will "harm those" who harm believers, as "God despises them". That second sentence also says that God will scatter the bones of those who attack believers.
 - i) I don't know how literally to take this sentence, but all I do know is that I wouldn't want to be on God's bad side come judgment day.
 - ii) Let me talk about God's hatred for a moment. Most of us think that God loves everybody as "God is love" as Christians like to say. Yet the end of this verse says "God despises them". Does that mean God hates some people?
 - a) God does not hate people, but He does hate evil deeds. For those who refuse to turn to God for forgiveness, there are eternal consequences.

13. Verse 6: Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!
 - a) To understand this final verse, one has to keep in mind that Verses 1-5 focus on the entire world. The first five verses of the psalm all say in effect, "There is a God that judges all the individuals of the world and hold us accountable for action."
 - b) With that in mind, Verse 6 is saying in effect, "May the God of Israel act now to restore the fortunes of His people, which in this case refers to Israel.
 - i) This verse in effect is a plea for the Messiah to come and judge the world.
 - ii) Since it has been about 3,000 years since this psalm was written, has this verse "failed" in the sense of no world-wide judgment has come yet?
 - a) I would argue no, for the following reason: During that time span, we have had 3,000 years of people dying and having to face God's judgment.
 - b) At the same time, we still live in a world where a lot of justice gets ignored.
 - c) This verse has also come true another way: The God of Israel, a small relatively insignificant place on the planet has spread through Christianity. So now in effect, the whole world understands what God expects of us.
 - d) I would argue a good percentage of the world understands in effect that there is a God and He has standards for us to live by.
 - c) OK John, I get all of that. Still, why does God "dangle the carrot" of literally ruling from Israel and why has it been 3,000 years since that prediction and counting?
 - i) Because just as God wants us to understand that all humans will be judged by God, so we must understand that there will be coming a day where God will literally rule the world from Jerusalem.
 - ii) The "when" is God's problem. Our job is to be obedient to the God who requires us to act justly and remember we will be judged.
 - d) OK, on that happy note, ☺ I can move on to Psalm 54.
14. Psalm 54, introduction: For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A *maskil* of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"
 - a) In this title, first we have the usual comment that says in effect that David wants us to "think about" (that is what "maskil" means) this psalm. Further, David gave the words of this psalm to the person in charge of music at the tabernacle in Jerusalem.
 - b) The title also mentions "stringed instruments". For David that was harps. I'm sure for many, the modern interpretation of that term would be guitars, violins and harps. ☺
 - c) Now let's talk about the "Ziphites": When David was on the run from King Saul, once he hid out among a group of people called the Ziphites. This is a hillside area in Judah, so these people were Jewish and part of David's own tribe. Some among this group went to King Saul, probably hoping for a reward and said to him, we know where David is, so you can go and kill him. (See 1st Samuel 26: 1-3, which refers to this historical event.)
 - i) David wrote this psalm to express his fear to God and ask for his protection at this time. The lesson of course is about running to God when we are really scared.
15. Verse 1: Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.
 - a) When David wrote this psalm he was living in fear for his life. Instead of saying, "I need to get moving as Saul is close to where I am", David takes that fear and gives it to God.
 - b) The point is when something scares us, the first thing we should do is take that fear to God in prayer. By the way, God never says to us, "There is no reason to be afraid, now toughen up and get moving." ☺ Instead, God wants us to take that fear (as it is very real to us) and give it to Him. Grant it, David still had to make a decision about what to do after giving God that fear. He either chose to run or stay after giving God the problem.
 - c) David is saying in effect, "Since I am trusting in You, help me to remember that my life is in your hands. If you want my life to end today, that is your business. If you want me to live another day and continue to make a difference for You, then I need your help now."

16. Verse 2: Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.
 - a) In this verse, David is asking God to hear him. Does that mean God does not always hear our prayers? Of course not. David is asking God to work in a way that is obvious to him that God is helping him out. The fact that David lived through that period is proof that God did hear David's prayer and God helped him.
 - b) Let me put that another way: Do you want proof that God has answered our prayers in the past? Are you alive and reading this? That's a pretty good sign that God has watched over our lives to date and has some purpose for us to live another day. ☺ As we read this verse, we need to take comfort in the fact that the God who created "everything" does listen and respond to our prayers to Him.
17. Verse 3: Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life-- men without regard for God. *Selah* ⁴ Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.
 - a) In Verse 3, David gives God the specifics of his problem as if God is not aware of it.
 - b) We do that so that if and when God does rescue us from our problems, we can realize "all the more" that God is working in our lives. That is why there is a "Selah" at the end of Verse 3. It is so we can realize that God cares about us wants to guide us and help us through whatever we are dealing with at this time.
 - c) That does lead us to Verse 4. In this verse David is reminding himself (and us) that God does care about us and does help us through whatever we are dealing with. When we realize that God has helped us through our problems, we should thank God to remind ourselves that it was God that got us through that situation.
18. Verse 5: Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.
 - a) The idea here is to ask God to stop evil "in its tracks". David is appealing to God not based on David's faithfulness, but solely on the fact that God is faithful to those who trust in Him. We ask God to stop any and all evil acts that are designed to hurt us not because we are superior (sinless) as people to those who want to hurt us, but solely because we are trusting in God for His protection.
 - b) What if the person who wants to do evil also seeks God? Then the one doing the evil act must still pay the price to society for their crime as well as to seek God's forgiveness.
 - c) We can't just stop all evil by praying, "Dear God, stop all the evil in the world?" The answer is free will must exist. However we can ask God to stop evil "in its tracks" and it is up to Him whether or not to prevent such evil acts from happening in the first place.
19. Verse 6: I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.
 - a) I should explain a "freewill offering" here. In the Old Testament, there are a number of different types of offerings made to God. The idea of a free-will offering is about making an offering not based on an obligation, but just because we want to. The idea here is that David wants to give God an opportunity to work in His life (be rescued) and David wants to show his appreciation to God by giving a free will offering after he is rescued.
 - b) OK John, we as Christians don't offer up animals to show our gratitude to God. How do we offer a "freewill" offering to God? It could be by giving some of our earnings or our time to God as a special "thank you" offering. It could be by going out of our way to do something special for someone in need. It is more than just saying "thank you" to God, but we are in effect, "putting our money where our mouth is", by making an effort to show gratitude to God in some fashion. By the way, I would argue that we should not make a big public deal about doing something to show gratitude. God knows the purpose of our effort and that should be enough.
 - c) That is the "praise" that David is describing in this verse. It is more than just standing there and saying thank you to God for rescuing Him. David wants to make an effort to show His gratitude to God and He desires that sort of attitude in our lives as well.

20. Verse 7: For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.
- a) It's pretty amazing to consider the fact that David died of old age. David spent years fighting with enemies of the Israelites. He spent years on the run from King Saul who wanted to kill him. David had his own son try to overthrow him as king and that son organized an army with the purpose of killing David.
 - i) Yet despite all of that, David lived to an old age and was victorious over all foes.
 - b) Does that mean God will definitely let us live to an old age if we trust in Him? Of course not. It just means that God does and will rescue us out of all situations in which we ask for His help. Sometimes that help comes through death as we pass from "life to life". More often that not, it is about trusting God through the rough moments of our lives and knowing that God will see us through such times.
 - c) We can look with "triumph over our foes (enemies)", not because we are smarter or better people, but solely because we are trusting in the God of the Universe to guide us.
21. OK, we are going to crank out one more Psalm here, because it fits in the same theme.
22. Psalm 55 Title: For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A *maskil* of David.
- a) There is not much to say about this title that has not already been discussed in this lesson. There are no special notes about the circumstance when David wrote it. It just says it is a "maskil" which means it is a thought to contemplate written by David.
 - b) Like the last psalm, David wanted it to be played with stringed instruments. The psalm was given to the person in charge of music to use in a "public worship service".
 - c) This psalm also focuses on the topic of evil, but the specific's of this psalm is about dealing with the pain that evil does to us and how we should mentally "handle" that evil.
23. Verse 1: Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; ² hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught ³ at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down suffering upon me and revile me in their anger. ⁴ My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me.
- a) Let me summarize these four verses in one thought: Dear God, I look around me and see the anger of those who want to do me harm. I am worried because of the fear of death of those who are against me.
 - b) OK we might respond: I am not a king and as best I can tell, no one is trying to kill me at the present moment. Why should this psalm concern me?
 - i) Remember that if we are being a good witness for Jesus, there are demonic forces that want to stop us and make us ineffective witnesses for Christ. Even if we are not on the "front lines" combating the enemy, we as Christians need to be regularly praying for those who do fight God's battles on a daily basis.
 - c) Let me tackle these verses another way: It is easy to be gripped by fear. We could be in debt, or we be dealing with someone who wants to harm us. We can't overcome that fear by trying harder. We overcome that fear by giving it to God and saying in effect, "This bad stuff around me is Your problem. I can't deal with it. You take care of it so I don't have to worry. I ask for Your protection not because I am anything special, but just because I am trusting in You to watch over and guide me."
24. Verse 5: Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. ⁶ I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest-- ⁷ I would flee far away and stay in the desert; *Selah* ⁸ I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm."
- a) Most of us can relate to the idea of being overwhelmed by fear as stated in Verse 5. Most of us can also relate to the idea of wanting to run away from our problems, which is what David is describing in Verses 6 and 7. When David says he would flee to the desert, it is his way of saying he wants to run away from his fears and go hide somewhere.

- b) Most of us also know that we can't just run away from our fears and hide somewhere. We have to be able to face our fears. It does not matter how real those fears are. I believe the "Selah" in this psalm is because God wants us to realize we can't just run away from stuff.
 - c) The underlying point is without God we can't make it. With God's help and our trust in Him, we can preserve through the most tragic of situations. I currently know of several Christians that are battling cancer. They are trusting in God to strengthen them and guide them through this time of their lives. They are dealing with real pain and real problems. Yet they don't fear death as much knowing that God is in control of the situation.
25. Verse 9: Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city. ¹⁰ Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it. ¹¹ Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.
- a) David at this moment was very aware that there were people acting violently all around him. He also understood that there were destructive forces (think demonic forces) at work in the background that want to do harm to those who do trust in God.
 - b) Most adults can relate to having to face the fears of real evil that exist all around us. If we are not paranoid by such fear, even reading the local news can make us aware of the evil that is happening all around us.
 - c) Our only hope is through God's protection. Having lots of money or say, having lots of guns can't protect us from the evil that exists around us. What it really comes down to is trusting in God to see us through our situations at hand.
26. Verse 12: If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. ¹³ But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, ¹⁴ with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.
- a) Now comes the "twist" of this psalm: We all can relate to the idea of evil existing close to us. Now imagine that a close friend, somebody in whom we trust, turns against us and becomes our enemy.
 - i) I'm not saying we should no longer trust our close friends. I am saying that the pain of being hurt by someone we are close to is in effect, much greater than the pain of being hurt by a stranger. That is the point David is making here.
 - b) OK John, let's suppose that someone close to me has hurt me. Other than the fact that he or she has violated my trust in them, what should I do about that pain and fear?
 - i) For starters, give that pain to God. I've yet to find a problem that is either too big or too small for God to help us with. It's hard to imagine a pain greater than to be hurt by someone we really love. Yet, sometimes that type of pain does occur.
 - ii) We can just sit there and feel sorry for ourselves that we are hurt. Yes, the pain is real and yes we get hurt. A good prayer here is, "Lord, I don't know what to do about the situation, so I'm putting the whole thing in Your hands for You to work it out as You see best."
 - iii) Practically speaking, do we just then walk around as if the problem does not exist? Of course not. The issue here is about worrying over those problems. We still move forward and make the best possible decisions we can. We simply trust in God for the results that He desires for our lives.
27. Verse 15: Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the grave, for evil finds lodging among them.
- a) Notice David still cries out his desires to God regarding his enemies. Essentially David is wishing for an early death for those who have turned against him. We can ask in effect "Dear God, please take care of my problems and make them go away right now". We then have to remember that it is up to God to work His way and on His timing to see us through whatever we are dealing with at this time.

28. Verse 16: But I call to God, and the LORD saves me. ¹⁷ Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. ¹⁸ He ransoms me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.
- a) Notice that David is saying he cries out to God in effect, "around the clock". I don't think David's problems went away any faster than your problems or my problems. I think he had to constantly focus on giving God his problems because those problems were always there right in front of him and he had to face them for a long time.
 - i) Sometimes when fear overwhelms us, we have to give God our problems in "baby steps". We may say, "Dear God, for the next 30 seconds, help me not to worry about my problems at hand." Thirty seconds later we pray again. The point is we keep praying our way through our bad situations until we get to a point where we know God is going to work His way and on His timing.
 - b) Another point of these verses is David came out of that situation unharmed. David may have lost resources fighting that battle, but he still lived to praise God for that victory. Sometimes God wants to get us to a point where "all we have is Him" and nothing else in order to win our battles. The fact that David came out of that situation still able to praise God indicates that David did trust in Him and He did rescue David.
 - c) OK John, I know of people that trusted in God but died young. What about them? As I stated, sometimes death is God's way of rescuing us. Life would only be fair if there was a next life. Most of the time God does rescue us in a way where we do live to praise Him another day, but sometimes that rescuing does come through death itself.
29. Verse 19: God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and afflict them-- *Selah* men who never change their ways and have no fear of God.
- a) The first part of this verse says that God will hear them and afflict them. Who is God hearing in this verse? The second sentence gives the answer, "Men who never change their ways and have no fear of God." This verse is about nonbelievers. David throws a "Selah" in the middle of that verse as he wants us to stop and think about that.
 - b) This verse is saying in effect that God hears (knows) the evil that people do. OK, I understand that God recognizes who is saved and who is not. How do we know when we encounter such a nonbeliever?
 - i) The second part of this verse has a way of telling: Such a person has no fear of God's judgment and has no interest in changing their way of living. So if we meet such a person, should we not waste our time telling them about God? Of course not. We never know who and when God will convict someone of their sins.
 - c) Why is David bringing this up here? Remember the title of this psalm is about a man David trusted in, but then somehow he "double-crossed" David. He is not so much mad that the man didn't take his side in some debate as much as he realized that this unnamed man didn't have any fear of God's judgment.
30. Verse 20: My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. ²¹ His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords.
- a) David is still feeling a lot of anger over how his former friend has somehow double-crossed him. Verse 20 talks about how his (David's companion) attacks his friends (who is David) and he violates his covenant. What is David talking about?
 - i) If the man who double-crossed David was a close advisor, that is a "covenant" relationship. Let me give an example of what that means: If we agree to help somebody or work for somebody we in effect have a "covenant" relationship with that person not to double cross that relationship. To speak out against that person is a violation of that verbal or written agreement with that person.
 - ii) Let me put it this way: If we can't be trusted in our relationship with close friends, how will people will ever trust us if we talk to them about God? The issue is our trustworthiness.

- b) This does lead us to Verse 21. The point here is about watching for signs that somebody might double-cross us. The idea is a person is saying one thing, but thinking the opposite.
 - c) So what do we do when we feel the pain of someone double-crossing us? (Remember that Jesus was in effect "double-crossed" by Judas and could relate to this verse.) We do what Jesus did, which is to give that pain to God and say, "I can't handle the pain of what that person did. You take the pain and help me to make the right decisions about that here."
31. Verse 22: Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. ²³ But you, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days.
- a) Remember that I just said the secret of life when a close friend hurts us is to give that pain to God. That is what David is recommending here in Verse 22. That verse is saying in effect that God will see you through the pain of how you were hurt. At the same time, those who never put their trust in God will receive a far worse fate than everything and anything that they do to believers.
 - b) I have found that a secret of dealing with people who have hurt me is to see them as those needing Jesus at that moment. The pain we feel when we are hurting is real. The pain such people who don't trust in God will feel is far worse and lasts an eternity
32. Verse 23b: But as for me, I trust in you.
- a) The final thought David gives here is that he will trust in God when he is feeling hurt by what others have done to us. Getting back to my opening theme of "evil", this last verse is what we have to do when we face such evil. In this last psalm David felt the type of pain hopefully we never have to face, which is to be really hurt by a close friend.
 - i) The advice given in that situation is in effect the same advice given through the whole lesson, which is about trusting God to get us through the pain of that whole situation. Yes we still have to deal with that situation, but for the believer it means that we pray to God for help and trust that He is guiding us for the right solution.
33. Let me wrap up this psalm and this whole lesson by coming back to my opening comments. I said my one word title of this psalm is about "evil" and more importantly what we do about the pain when we are hurt by evil people.
- a) In these psalms David gives examples of ways he has been hurt by evil deeds. It includes being hurt by strangers (Some Jewish people called the "Ziphites" from earlier in this lesson) and the last psalm dealt with the pain of being hurt by a close friend.
 - b) The point is we never know when and how someone can really hurt us. The point is not that we avoid contact with all people as they might hurt us one day. The point is when we encounter such troubles, the most important thing we should do is take that pain and say to God in effect, "this pain is now Your problem to deal with". Of course we still have to deal with the circumstances around us, and the reality of that pain is still there.
 - i) If we know that God is helping us through that tough situation, that is a whole lot better than going at it alone. We then can remember that God will eternally punish those who do evil deeds if they refuse to repent of their actions.
34. On that positive note, I'll end in prayer. Father, in this world, we as believers have to face all sorts of evil. We have to deal with the consequences of our own sins and the sins that others have committed upon us. Give us the strength to deal with the evil that others have afflicted upon us. Help us to see others not as sinners, but as people who need Your help not only with the situation at hand, but with life itself. Help us to see beyond our problems and still be a good witness for You through such tough situations. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.