

1. Why do we praise God? Do we do it because everyone else in church is doing it and we want to fit in? Or, are we praising Him for the good He has done in our lives? That is the key issue of this lesson and the main topic of these three psalms. Let me briefly summarize the three psalms of this lesson and how they affect our praise of Him. Then we can begin our praise session. ☺
 - a) Psalm 64, the first of this lesson, along with many previous psalms, should cause us to be grateful to God not only for getting us through our "messes" but also for providing for us all through all of our lives. I can summarize this psalm by simply stating that we should praise God for righting the wrongs of this world and our lives. As we study this psalm and see it in context of the surrounding psalms, hopefully that thought will make sense.
 - b) Psalms 65 and 66, then say in effect, "Since we are grateful to God for getting us through our problems, let us pause to praise Him for whatever good He has done in our lives."
 - i) Psalm 65 is mainly a list of good things God does for the whole earth and gives us reasons why should praise Him.
 - ii) Psalm 66 then says in effect, "If we are grateful for what God has done for us, let us pause to praise Him for the blessings He has given us in our lives."
 - c) This of course, leads to my lesson title: "Reasons for praising God". I see this whole lesson as a list of reasons why we should pause every now and then and praise God for the blessings He has given in our lives.
 - i) We don't praise God because He needs to hear it. God does not have a big ego. ☺
 - ii) We praise God because it helps us give the proper perspective about life. We praise Him to remind us that there is a God and He is in charge of our lives. We praise God for the good things He has done for our lives as praise makes us joyful. God wants us to live positive lives so our joy in Him can spread to others.
 - iii) This lesson is not an artificial "pick me up" so we can fake being happy. It is in effect a list of reasons why we should praise God and that should naturally make us happy and appreciate all the good things God has done for us.
 - d) With that happy introduction completed, I'm going to jump in and start Psalm 64.
2. Psalm 64, Introduction: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
 - a) The title is pretty basic. It was written by David to be played. That's all there is.
 - b) I have to admit, I am wondering if these studies as of late are getting to be repetitive. It seems that with each lesson, we get King David in trouble for some reason, and then by trusting in God, David manages to get through whatever problems he is dealing with. Even David himself is keeping his titles pretty simple at this point.
 - c) Think about this question: Do our problems magically go away after we have prayed about them a few times? Of course not. Do we find ourselves still worrying about things even though we know there is a God who cares for our lives? Of course, just like David.
 - i) I believe David gets repetitive because that is the way all of our lives are, with the "all" being all of us who trust in God. It seems like once we get out of one mess, there is another one waiting to be dealt with.
3. Verse 1: Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint; protect my life from the threat of the enemy.
 - a) Like the last psalm, David opens up with his worries. Whenever this psalm took place, David was worried about his enemies and once again, he asks God for protection.
 - b) To summarize this psalm, most of it focuses on the evil "talk" that comes from those who oppose the will of God. This psalm will turn positive in the last four verses as to what God will do with such evil talkers. This psalm says in effect, "Stop worrying about those people, as I (God) have you covered and I will take care of them."

- c) Getting back to Verse 1, David is asking God to hear his complaint, which was about protecting his life from the threat of an enemy.
 - i) We will learn over the next few verses that the threat in question is mostly verbal. I'm sure David had to deal with verbal or physical threats most of his life and David, here is giving those threats over to God to deal with.
- d) As I have grown accustomed to by now, God had me go through something yesterday, which fits well with this study. I was an expert witness in court yesterday. I literally had to watch a group of attorneys strategizing how to bring me down (verbally) and use my words against me. I understand that I can't take that personally, because they are simply doing their jobs. But it sort of amazes me how I can be instantly thrust into a situation where people are plotting my verbal destruction that quickly.
 - i) OK, so the threats against me are not as dangerous as the life threatening ones that David and many others have had to deal with over the centuries.
 - ii) The point as it relates to this psalm is that my help in dealing with stressful situations is to give my problems and the results to God. It is His problem how we come out when we are threatened and that is what David asks God.
- 4. Verse 2: Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers.
 - a) Notice that David does not ask God to make his enemies stop their evil talk. David simply asks God to protect him from what wicked people are trying to do to hurt him.
 - i) It is as if David is saying, "Lord, I can't control the actions of others, but You can. Before I ask for anything about "them", first I need Your protection. I don't know how or if I will escape from what these people are saying, but I just know that I am dependant upon You from whatever happens based on what they are saying."
 - b) One of the hardest lessons in life to learn is that we can't fix other people. We can take the people that hurt us and give them to God and say in effect, "They are Your problem, as I don't want to worry about them." Usually once we let go of control over some person, our relationship with them improves. We should give our fears of what could happen to God and say in effect, "You deal with this". That is a key point of this psalm.
- 5. Verse 3: They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows.
 - a) This verse is not being literal. Obviously, David's enemies are not say, putting their tongues through a knife sharpener. ☺ David is saying that the accusations his enemies are making, are coming out of their mouths, as if their speech has been rehearsed to say the worse possible things they could say about David.
 - b) Again, yesterday in court, I watched a group of attorneys strategize of the worst possible things they could accuse me of. The point is people do plan evil against others and if you on the receiving end of accusations, it can feel like deadly arrows are flying against you.
- 6. Verse 4: They shoot from ambush at the innocent man; they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.
 - a) Notice the victim in Verse 3 is a "him" and not David. It is possible David is watching someone else receive false accusations or David is just talking about himself as an "other".
 - b) Remember that the focus of the verse and all of the surrounding verses is on the person making the accusations in the first place.
 - i) It is one thing if a person does something wrong or even appears to do something wrong and it is the job of an accusing attorney or a witness to bring that to light.
 - ii) It is another thing when one makes an accusation just to hurt an innocent person.
 - iii) When we face such false accusations, the solution is not to lash back at those people. The solution is to take the pain we have received from those verbal (or hopefully not physical) lashings and give that pain to God. (I have to admit, it took me years to get used to the idea of not taking it personal when I am on the witness stand in a trial. Still, it is hard to not feel pain when people are putting down your work and it makes one question what one did in the first place.)

7. Verse 5: They encourage each other in evil plans, they talk about hiding their snares; they say, "Who will see them?"
 - a) Most of us know the expression "misery loves company". That applies here. The point is when someone wants to verbally (or physically) assault someone else, they want others to join in on their assaults. Such people enjoy the company of others who also want to assault innocent people so they can plan together to hurt others. The point is people tend to feel less guilty of their sins if there are others willing to join them in their actions.
 - i) I find this verse saying in effect, "If we all work together here, the victim won't know who to blame and we can all get away with this". Such people forget that God is watching over such actions. The truth is, such people may get away with things for a while, but eventually they will have to face God's judgment.
 - b) If we are on the receiving end of such criticism, we should not round up the guilty parties so we can throw them all in jail. (Unless we are policemen.) When people are willing to commit evil acts or even commit evil accusations others, their numbers will often grow. We can't control what is beyond our ability to control. All we can do is turn the pain of situations over to God so we can make the best decisions possible based on the information given at hand.
8. Verse 6: They plot injustice and say, "We have devised a perfect plan!" Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.
 - a) Speaking of popular expressions, I like the one that goes: "We have to give the devil his due". That means among other things the powers to think up and do bad things to innocent people are powerful demonic weapons. We should not underestimate Satan's power to work against us. It is only by God's strength and power that we can overcome any and all evil done against us.
 - i) An example today would be those people who design computer viruses that go on innocent people's computers just to do harm. If such people would use their computer skills for good causes, they can do a lot of good. Instead, such people plan and carry out evil plans because they think their plans are perfect.
 - ii) That word "perfect" means that they don't believe they will get caught in their schemes or that their schemes will fulfill the purpose it is designed to do.
 - b) The idea is that those who plan wicked things against the innocent work hard at what they do. Without the help of God, it is difficult, if not impossible to overcome evil that is done to us. With the help of God, we can deal with whatever evil we have to face. We can let go of the results of such evil, as whatever happens is now God's problem to deal with.
 - c) I have been thinking the past few weeks how God has helped me to survive essentially unhurt after many years of doing my job. My job requires a lot of driving. Every day I ask for God's protection as I go out in the world. I look back at my life and I realize that if wasn't for God's help, I wouldn't have made it this far unharmed.
 - i) But John, what about all the good people who get hurt for no fault of their own? I am not saying I am a better person than others due to prayer. I am saying that we should pray daily for God's protection, as we never know what is going to happen to us today or tomorrow. I also am positive that God allows believers to go through stuff for a reason. Just as there are reasons God allowed David to deal with accusers, so He allows you and me to deal with difficult situations.
 - ii) Sometimes God allows things just to test our faith and see if we trust Him. Other times, there may be some other purpose. My point is that to be a believer is not a guarantee that only good things will happen. Being a believer is about having the privilege of turning to God when we are dealing with problems in our lives.
 - d) OK time for the good news. No more verses complaining about those who want to do us harm. It is time to focus on what God can and does do with the evil acts we face in life.

9. Verse 7: But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be struck down.
 - a) Obviously, this verse was not meant to be taken literally. God is not in heaven with a bow and arrow shooting at people. The point of this verse is that those who plan on doing evil think they will get away with such acts. They think that their plans are perfect. God will, in His way and on His timing, will bring down such people.
 - b) Let me approach this verse from another angle. We tend to think of God as a "God of love". Yet here in this verse it is describing God "shooting down" those who do evil.
 - i) Yes, God is showing love to those who are hurt by evil deeds. God is showing His love by separating those who are His from those who desire to commit evil acts.
 - ii) What popped in my head is the whole story of the Exodus from Egypt. It is as if God said to the Egyptians, "You are hurting those who I have designated to be My people and you Egyptians will suffer for harming them."
 - a) I am sure there were a lot of innocent Egyptians who did not know any better and they too, suffered from the plagues. This is one of those times where we have to remind ourselves that a "fair and just God" will judge all people fairly based on what they knew and how they acted in their lives.
 - b) So how do I know if God has called me to be one of His or am I destined to be an enemy of God? The answer of course, is to commit one's life to God and one will discover that we are one of His. At the same time, those who refuse to turn to God do suffer for eternity for that decision.
 - c) Meanwhile, how about we move on to Verse 8. ☺
10. Verse 8: He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn.
 - a) For those who have been reading these studies for awhile, you should be well aware by now that one of David's favorite things to ask God is to turn the acts of evil back on those people who planned the evil in the first place.
 - i) I jokingly like to call this the "Willie E. Coyote" principal. That name is a cartoon character. He regularly devises evil plans for others and then has those same plans turn back to hurt him. It occurred me to me many years ago how that cartoon character is a great biblical example of what this verse is teaching us.
 - b) So why ask God to turn evil acts back on the people who did them? Why not ask God to just stop these people any old way God felt like it? The point is to make such people committing evil to be aware of what they are doing wrong, and there is no better way then to make such people suffer from the actions they intend to use to hurt others.
 - i) Does praying this prayer guarantee that God will work that way? Of course not. Since we don't know what is God's will it is ok to ask for anything, including this prayer request of having those who commit evil suffer from their own plans
 - c) But John, this verse says that God "will" turn their plans against them. The point is often, God does turn plans of evil against them in order to show them and others the danger of planning and carrying out evil against others. There is a judgment day coming for all people and in that sense, all will see how their plans will (big "will") backfire on them.
11. Verse 9: All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.
 - a) Notice Verse 9 says that all of mankind will see and fear what God can and does to such evil acts. The point is there is coming a judgment day for those who turn from God.
 - b) The verse says that all mankind will proclaim the works of God. Explain that one:
 - i) Paul says in the New Testament that all people will bow to God the Father. (See Romans 14:11). I am convinced that in the next life everyone becomes aware of God and the fact that He judges people. All people will realize there is a god who judges people's actions. At that time, such people will be forced to ponder their own lives in light of the fact that there is a god who does judge the world.

12. Verse 10: Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him; let all the upright in heart praise him!
- a) This psalm ends on a positive note. With all of the things negative that this psalm teaches, the important point is the last line. The righteous are not people who are inherently better than the wicked, but those who are trusting in God for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - i) The righteous people are those who take refuge in "him" (God). That simply means that when we face threats from others, we look to God for our comfort and not to take revenge ourselves for such actions.
 - b) The final phrase is to "let all the upright in heart praise Him". That simply refers to those who in effect are trusting in God for our right standing before Him, and not approaching Him based on one's own worth. It is those who can and do approach God based on Jesus paying the price for their sins and not in the fact that we are "good people". We will also praise Him because we trust in Him to right the wrongs that were committed in this world. We trust in Him to deal with those who commit evil and refuse to turn to Him with their lives.
 - i) With that speech out of my system, we are ready to move on to the next psalm.
13. Psalm 65: For the director of music. A psalm of David. A song.
- a) Here is another psalm David wrote. (The end of long string of David's psalms is coming soon.) This title mentions that this is a song. Maybe it is meant to be sung as song lyrics are easier to memorize than just a bunch of words.
14. Verse 1: Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled.
- a) Notice in Verse 1 there is no "Help me Lord" here nor is there any request for God's mercy. This psalm changes the pattern of the last group of psalms in which David does not ask for anything, but just praises God for who He is and what He has done.
 - i) The point of this psalm is sometimes it is important to praise God, well, just because He is God and we should be grateful for the blessings of our lives.
 - b) Verse 1 says praise awaits God in Zion. That word "Zion" is a nickname for both Jerusalem and the land of Israel in general. It can also refer to the specific area within Jerusalem where the Temple was located. In short, that word is associated with God's promises to the Nation of Israel and is associated with where God's presence is located.
 - i) In context, this verse is saying in effect that God has established His existence on earth and that the center of worship of God at that time was in Israel.
 - c) The verse then says, "Our vows will be fulfilled". Remember that God's promise to the Israelites living in that land was conditional upon obedience. In that sense, David is saying that we as a nation want to be loyal to God and we show that loyalty not just by going through the motions of our vows (commitment to God) but living like we truly believe in that commitment.
15. Verse 2: O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come.
- a) The scope of this prayer just increased from "Israel" to all men (people). This verse in effect is a promise that the whole world will one day acknowledge the God of Israel as "the God".
 - b) I see several fulfillments of this verse:
 - i) The first one is the fact that all people we die one day and realize that the God of the bible is the true God and for judgment sake, all we come to Him.
 - ii) It is also "millennial" in that when Jesus comes a second time and rules from the earth, the entire world will be under the rule of Jesus as the coming world ruler.
 - iii) One can also apply this verse to the spread of Christianity around the world, but that will never be "all" men and women, just a world-wide belief in that God.
 - c) David understood that this verse is "future" in the sense that at the time of his life, essentially only those in Israel worshipped the true God and David is saying there is coming a day where that worship will expand to the whole world.

16. Verse 3: When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.
- a) Notice the words "we" and "our" in this verse. My point is that David is not talking about his own sins here, but the sins of the nation of Israel.
 - b) Let me put this verse another way: Can we as individuals ask God for forgiveness of the sins of our entire nation? We may ask that, but does it really help with all of the individuals of that nation who has sinned?
 - i) The answer is we can ask God for anything. It is up to Him to answer. I believe that forgiveness is individual in the sense that in order to come to God one has to ask for forgiveness of the sins they have committed.
 - ii) I believe that God can bless a large group, be it a church, a community or a nation if the believers in that group do come to God as a group and ask for repentance on behalf of that group. Sometimes that starts with one person in that group willing to pray on that groups' behalf and spreading from there.
 - c) Getting back to the historical aspect of this verse, the point is there have been many times in the history of Israel when they as a nation have cried out to God for help (being that most of the citizens prayed for God's help in effect in unison). God did forgive them of their sins because they (as a group) were willing to come to Him for forgiveness.
 - i) One of the common messages in the Old Testament is no matter how bad the sins are one has committed, if one is willing to acknowledge those sins as wrong and turn from them, God will forgive.
 - ii) But what about the 70 years of captivity? Didn't God not forgive them during that time? God still loved that nation but sometimes He has to punish a group in order to get that group in effect to "pay attention" and stop turning from Him. The fact that God still preached to Israel and brought them back from captivity after that period shows that God has not (and still has not) given up on them as a group.
17. Verse 4: Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.
- a) One of the great mysteries in both Christianity and Judaism is the classical question of "Did God choose us or did we choose God?" The answer is both. An old illustration of this idea is to visualize being just outside of a room with a sign that reads, "come on in". There is nobody to force us to come in and as far as we are concerned, it is our decision to make. When we do choose to come in, there is a big banner on the other side of the door saying welcome, with our name on it, as if someone already knew we made that choice.
 - i) The way I look at this issue is I believe God is perfect. If God is perfect He knows all things and He knows in advance who will choose to follow Him.
 - ii) Since we as people don't have all knowledge, from our perspective, it is still our "free will" choice to follow God. Further, since we as people don't know who is going to choose to follow God, we try to be a witness to all people.
 - b) OK John, nice speech. ☺ What does it have to do with this verse? It is relevant in that the first sentence of Verse 4 is saying in effect, "Blessed are the people that God chooses to dwell with Him forever with Him."
 - i) In other words, the first sentence in this verse is saying in effect, the people who God has chosen to be with Him forever will have blessings in this life as well as the next life. What are those blessings? Yes, it is that we can praise Him, but more importantly, it is that we can trust Him to guide us through this life.
 - ii) This leads us to the second sentence of this verse. That says in effect, those of us who love God can be blessed by the "good things of His house". For an Israelite living at the time of David, it is that someone who believe in God can come to the place of worship and offer a sacrifice for God. For us today, it is that we who are called (and have committed our lives to Him) can approach God not only for our problems, but for blessings in this life and the next life to come.

18. Verse 5: You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas, ⁶ who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength, ⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations.
- a) These three verses are all one sentence. What the verses are saying is that God "speaks" by allowing great things to happen. This means for example, when Israel experiences a victory over its enemies, it wasn't because the Israelite army was better equipped or stronger in number. It means that God allowed the battles to go for their victory.
 - i) In effect, it means when good things happen to us, God deserves the credit.
 - b) So John, are you saying that when things go well, we should thank God and when things go bad we should blame God? No. God is not there in order for us to avoid any pain. If we are committing our lives to serving Him, I find that "blessings" just happen. I also find that I have to go through rough stretches at times. I have learned to look at tough times as situations where I need God's help to see me through such times.
 - c) Getting back to the verses, David compares the power of God to the power of the ocean and its waves. The text also says this is the same God that formed the mountains. The idea here is to remind ourselves that the God of the Israelites is not just some local deity that helps the Israelites at times. It is "the" God who created all things.
 - d) OK John, I already know that the God of the Israelites is the same God that made the mountains and controls the sea. Why is this sentence important?
 - i) The quick answer is a god that is powerful enough to make mountains and control the seas also wants to guide our lives to be used for His glory.
19. Verse 8: Those living far away fear your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy.
- a) The first part of Verse 8 says that those living far away fear your wonders. That means those who live far from Israel may not know God by name, but such people can tell by observing nature that there is a powerful entity that has control over the universe.
 - b) The point is any rational adult cannot claim ignorance of His existence. One can see the power of ocean waves or see the heights of great mountains and then correctly think, "This didn't happen all by itself, there must be something greater that made this exist".
 - i) When one studies geography, one discovers the earth is finely balanced. For example, if our orbit changed just a little we would all die. If the temperature of the world changed significantly (no I don't believe in global warming), the earth would not support life. The point is all of this "fine balancing" of our world implies a creator who finely balanced our world in the first place.
 - ii) The point is the evidence of God is in the creation. One can see the beauty of a sunrise or sunset and realize the "handiwork" of God.
20. Verse 9: You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. ¹⁰ You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
- a) These verses continue the theme of "bless God because the evidence of His existence is all over the world." OK John, so the world is blessed by the way it works. I already believe there is a God that set it all in motion. One of the main points of this psalm is that knowledge of how the world works is designed to give praise to God.
 - i) We should praise God that He designed the world the way He did, so that water flows and provides for people, animals and plant life. If you can't think of any reason to praise God, then one should stop to appreciate some of the natural beauty of this world and thank God for creating it. Even if one can't travel to see an ocean or a mountain range, one can always see the beauty of the world through a sunrise and a sunset. That is one of the main ideas being conveyed in this psalm.

- b) Before I move on, I want to talk about a popular theory being currently discussed among atheists to explain how the world is so finely balanced. They will say, "Well, how do we know there are not billions of parallel universes and we just happen to be in the one that is designed to work correctly?" Atheists argue that this world is finely balanced due to random chance and there are lots of other universes that are not like that.
 - i) The response to that false theory is there is no evidence of such parallel universes. It is a cute theory, but there is zero (big zero here) proof that such other universes exist. It is simply a made up way to deny God's existence. Just because one can make up a theory to explain something does not mean that such a theory is true, especially when there is no evidence to support that theory.
 - c) On the other hand, we have lots of evidence to support the truth of God's word. The fact that the bible is full of predictions that came true long after those authors lived supports the idea it was guided by a force greater than us. (i.e., God.) Also, archeology evidence supports the truth of the bible narrative. Finally, there are too many predictions about what the Messiah (Jesus) will do, to make his life happen by just some random accident.
 - d) Meanwhile, I believe David is still describing the wonderful things God does for us.
21. Verse 11: You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.
- a) There are times of the year when "harvest" comes from plants and trees. They produce enough produce to sustain our lives. One of the interesting facts about human life today is we have more than enough food to feed everyone. The problems of starvation are due to oppressive governments and people living in locations where food cannot reach them.
 - b) This does lead us back to this verse. The point is anyone who is alive can realize how God does bless the world in a way that produces food we can eat. As I like to say, if you can't think of a good reason to praise God, thank Him for the fact that you have had enough food so you are alive at this moment. God has provided for you and me to get "this far", and God does not leave us unfinished with our lives.
22. Verse 12: The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.¹³ The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.
- a) The final two verses of this psalm focus on different types of geography. It says the "grasslands of the desert" overflow. That reads like a contradiction. If one is in a desert, how can there be grass growing there? (Well, you have to spend time in Southern California to appreciate how grass can grow in a desert climate! ☺) The point here is God makes it possible for what seems impossible for nature to do by itself.
 - b) The last part of this verse says that different parts of nature "shout for joy and sing". How do you explain that one? I've never heard a valley or a goat sing to God? ☺
 - i) This verse is saying in effect, that the way nature exists owes its credit to the God that created all of it. The reason life can exist in a desert or the reason we can plant things in certain places is that God provided a world in which that can happen.
 - c) OK John, so we had a whole psalm praise God for the wonderful things He has allowed to happen through the natural way the world works. Tell me again why I should care?
 - i) My wife taught me years ago that the most important thing to do when one is feeling down, is to start listing things one is grateful for. Let's face it, after the last few psalms David was pretty down from constantly having to deal with people who were out to kill him.
 - ii) For the sake of our own health, it is good every now and then to appreciate nature and the way God "works" to make our world work. Even if it is a bad weather day outside, remember that God allows such bad weather in order to spread water around our world. Even if one is experiencing a tornado or a hurricane, often that is just God's way of shaking things up in order to keep our focus on Him and trust in Him through bad moments of weather.
 - d) With that optimistic speech out of my system, we can go on to the next psalm. ☺

23. Verse 66: For the director of music. A song. A psalm.
 - a) The title is the same as the last one, so I won't comment any further.
 - b) While Psalm 65 focused on all of the good things God does through His creation, Psalm 66 takes the realization of how God works to the next logical step. This psalm is a good continuation of the last one and says in effect, "If we are grateful to the God who created this world, here is what we should do in response to that knowledge."
24. Verse 1: Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
 - a) Notice this verse is not just for the Israelites, but for the whole earth. So does that mean we should walk up to strangers and ask them to sing to God? Well it might get those strangers to appreciate God for the moment. ☺ I think the point here is that everyone on earth should realize there is a God who made our world "so finely balanced" and instead of thinking of silly ways how the universe could have happened by accident, we as people of the earth should give credit to the God who created the world in the first place.
25. Verse 2: Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!
 - a) If this psalm is intended for all people to sing, how can everyone know God's name as implied here in Verse 2? The point is not that all people know God by His biblical Hebrew names. The point is all people should be aware that a god exists and He created this world and all people should use that knowledge to give credit and glory to God, no matter what name we call Him.
 - i) Even if someone believed in multiple gods, eventually one has to work their way up to a single entity that created all things.
 - b) Those of us who live in a world where the knowledge of God is readily obtainable (i.e., there is no excuse for not reading the bible) are held to a higher standard. Because we understand that "the" God of the bible is the true God, we should honor Him as such.
 - c) The point of this verse is no matter what is our level of understanding about God, we should take the time to praise God for how He has blessed our lives.
26. Verse 3: Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you."
 - a) I should state right off the bat here, that we don't praise God because He needs to hear it. The point is we should praise God for the goodness of this world because we as people need to praise Him in order to have the type of joy that God wants us to have in life.
 - b) God wants us to live a happy life. It is not possible to live a happy life without being grateful for the good things we get in our lives. Those good things include food and the fact the world "works" to provide food for us.
 - i) As one of my favorite radio commentators Dennis Prager likes to say, we shouldn't try to be happy for our sakes, but for the sakes of people around us. People want to be around happy people. Therefore we should make an effort to appreciate life-in-general and be happier people so the world around us can also enjoy the happiness that life can bring.
 - c) This leads us to the second part of this verse. It says "the enemies of God cringe at His power before Him." In other words, God is watching His enemies who refuse to acknowledge His existence and refuse to honor God as God.
 - i) As I've stated earlier, there are many people who refuse to acknowledge the God of the bible, or worse, refuse to take the time to show gratitude to Him for all the blessings that this world provides. Such people who deny His existence make up stories in order to explain how the world works, instead of giving God the credit.
 - ii) Ok John, I can't stop those who hate God and want to put God down (in effect). Why should I care about this second sentence of this verse? It is to remind ourselves that those who refuse to acknowledge God's existence will suffer not only for their refusal to believe in Him, but their refusal to be grateful for the good things they get in life.

27. Verse 4: All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name." *Selah* ⁵ Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!
- a) This verse says that all of the earth bows down and sings praise to God. The logical question is when did this happen and why was I not aware of it until now? ☺ The point is not that all people at one time stopped to praise God for His creation. The point is we should be grateful for the good things God provides for us in this life.
 - b) The real point is in effect, the world works in the sense that water travels to produce vegetation, animal life and sustain human life. Whether we say it out loud or not, the earth owes a debt of gratitude to the God who made the world the way it works.
 - c) OK John, does this mean I should organize a singing party to praise God for the world? That may bring us joy, but I don't think that is the point of these verses. The point is David wants us to appreciate all God does for us through nature and that we should take the time to praise God for the blessings we have received in this world.
 - d) Verse 4 has a "Selah" at the end. That of course, means to "pause and consider" what has just been said. In other words, David wants us to think about what it means for the whole world to pause and praise God, and that is what I have done in describing Verse 4.
 - e) This leads me to discuss Verse 5. This verse is asking (pleading) us to stop and consider the great works God has done. That includes the way water travels around the world. It includes the idea that vegetation and animal life flourishes and we benefit from that.
28. Verse 6: He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot-- come, let us rejoice in him.
- a) If I had to pick the one event in the bible that is referred to the most in other parts of the bible, it is the story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry ground. I don't know the specifics of how God did this particular miracle, I just take it by faith that it happened.
 - i) That event is referenced often enough in the bible, including this verse that in my mind, we should take it seriously and literally.
 - b) OK John, of all the possible reasons to praise God, why bring up the story of the parting the Red Sea? To quote a religious Jewish friend of mine, "It was the only time in world history where God worked on a visible massive scale for the benefit of His people."
 - i) A God that is capable of splitting a sea so millions can walk across it on dry ground, is a God who can do anything possible to guide and protect those who trust in Him. If we trust in a God that did part the Red Sea, then we trust in a God that is willing to work in ways to amaze us. He can and does show us through nature and sometimes through miracles and sometimes just through the events of our lives how much He cares for us and wants us to do His will in our lives.
 - ii) OK on that happy thought, Verse 7.
29. Verse 7: He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations-- let not the rebellious rise up against him. *Selah*
- a) Verse 7 is a reminder of the big picture. The verse is saying that God is not just a "God of Israel", but a God that watches over the whole world. The verse then goes on to say that if one person or one group rises up against Him, that person or group will be punished.
 - b) OK John, this verse has a "Selah" after it. What should I think about in this verse? (And don't just say a God who rules over the whole world, I know that already! ☺)
 - i) I always believe that the psalms are for believers not unbelievers. God will "soon enough" take care of those who refuse to turn to Him. So what about believers? The point is when we (believes) consider doing something we know is displeasing to Him, this verse reminds us that if God is watching the wicked, He is also watching us to see if we do live to make a difference for Him.
 - c) The real point of this verse and this psalm is to praise Him because He is watching over us and He is watching over and will deal with those who refuse to turn to Him.

30. Verse 8: Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; ⁹ he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.
- a) Verses 8 and 9 give us another reason to praise God. It is because He has preserved our lives, not only in that we are currently alive to praise Him, but the fact we can count on Him to preserve us forever. It is a reminder that there is no death for the believer.
 - b) Let me talk about times of doubts. I'm sure all Christians deal with moments of doubts. I know of some famous Christians who have expressed their own doubts publicly.
 - i) What do doubts have to do with this verse? Sometimes just praising God for who He or what He has done in our lives reminds us of the reality of God in our lives. In other words we don't praise God because He needs to hear it, we praise Him to remind ourselves of His existence and keep our focus on Him.
31. Verse 10: For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. ¹¹ You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. ¹² You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.
- a) For those Christians who think that following God is a simple "cake walk" in that there are no hard times for believers, I present these three verses. Notice it says that You (God) have brought us (Jewish believers before David's time) into prison and laid burdens on our backs. Verses 10 and 12 expand on this concept to say in effect that God has tested us as believers and allowed us to go through all sorts of difficult situations.
 - b) I suspect the specifics refer to the time era where Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt. That would explain the prison reference. The "burdens on our backs" reference was when the Israelites had to work as slaves for the Egyptians. OK, so why mention all of that?
 - i) Sometimes it helps to remember what God has put other believers through, just so we can enjoy a better life serving Him. We as Christians should never forget the many who had to die as martyrs so that we can enjoy the freedoms we have as believers. The point is even if we as individual Christians never had to suffer significantly, there are others who suffered who cleared the way for us.
 - c) OK John, what does all of this suffering have to do with praising God? The point is God does allow believers to go through terrible things at times, not to make people suffer, but to "refine" us in the sense of trusting Him through such tough times. It is a reminder that God does not promise life will always be easy, but He does promise to see us through whatever we have to deal with and He has some purpose for allowing things to happen.
32. Verse 13: I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you-- ¹⁴ vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. ¹⁵ I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. *Selah*
- a) When David was king, there was no temple structure in Israel. David may be describing the temple he was preparing to build through his son Solomon, or David is just talking about approaching God in general. The point is that when any Israelite is to approach God, they are not to do so "empty handed". Animals were sacrificed to show one's commitment to God and to ask for the forgiveness of sins.
 - b) Remember that the Israelites at that time lived in a society based on raising animals. Such animals were like money to them. To give part of our earnings to God includes the idea of trusting God to provide for us in the future. It is also about trusting that He has forgiven us of our sins. That is why the Israelites sacrificed animals and that is why God calls on us to be givers as well.
 - i) By the way, I am not asking for a donation here. ☺ I am just saying that one way we praise God is by offering our own sacrifices through what we give of our resources and our time in order to show our commitment to God.
 - ii) Do I believe it is a requirement of Christians to give money or time? No, I suppose one can trust in God and not give. If we believe in God, then giving is a way of showing that we do trust in God to provide for us today and tomorrow.

33. Verse 16: Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.
- a) David here, in effect is explaining another way we praise God: By telling others of the good things God has done for us. Praise to God is not just when we go to church and sing out to Him. It also includes among other things, when we share our faith with other people. That is what David is describing in Verse 16.
 - b) If we are at a big group setting, and we overhear some people talk about us, we would naturally want to listen in as we would be curious as to what others are saying about us. I believe God likes that as well. My point is when we are saying good things about God to others, I suspect He likes that praise in the sense we are praising Him then and there.
 - c) I believe the point of this verse is that sharing stories of what God has done for us is a great witness to other people because they can't deny what God has done in our lives.
34. Verse 17: I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. ¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; ¹⁹ but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.
- a) To understand Verse 17, one has to read and understand Verses 18-19. These verses are saying when there is some sin in our life that God wants us to confess, in a sense He does not listen to our praise of Him. Yes, God always hears us, so let me explain further:
 - i) If you have ever felt at times that God has gone silent, one possible reason is due to unconfessed sin. One can sense an emptiness in our relationship with God when we have unconfessed sin.
 - ii) Personally, I usually know when such times occur, the reason is obvious as if God wants me to be aware of such sins and wants me to confess them to Him.
 - b) David can praise God as stated in Verse 17 and one reason he can praise God at that moment is because no unconfessed sin came to his mind then and there.
 - c) The reason David is stating this, is not only to remind us of the importance of confessing sins when we are aware of them (and turn from them), but also of the importance of being able to praise God only after such sins are turned from. Yes, there are always areas of our lives where we are not perfect. I am specifically talking about unconfessed sins we are aware of at that moment in time. One of the reasons we do praise God is because He has forgiven us of all of our sins and that is a point that ties to these verses.
35. Verse 20: Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!
- a) This final verse is a good summary of a wonderful prayer of gratitude to God. This verse is our reminder that God has not rejected our prayers to Him or withheld His love.
 - b) OK, John, so how do we know this is true? How do we know God is not in our imagination and how do we know there is a God that has accepted my prayers?
 - i) I find that most Christians when they get saved, experience some interesting little miracles as if to remind us that all of "this" is real. Even if you have never had something like that happen to you, spend some time with new or newer believers and ask them to share with you the stories of how God has worked in our lives.
 - ii) The point is there are only so many things that can be explained by "random chance". If enough good things occur in our lives that are beyond random luck, then our conclusion is that God exists and He does watch over our lives.
 - c) On that happy note, let us close in some praise to God and I will wrap this up for a week.
36. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have called us to salvation. We thank You that You have chosen us to be with You forever. We thank You that we can call on You to guide our lives and give us the privilege of living to make a difference for You in our lives. Help us to turn from any sin we become aware of. Help us to live a life pleasing to You. Help us to be grateful people for all You have done for us. Help us to express that gratitude back to You, not because You need to hear it, but to remind ourselves and be a witness to others of all the good things You have in store for those who do trust You with our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen