

1. This study is going to be a little unique in that the two psalms in this lesson are both future oriented. What I mean by that is this lesson gives us reasons why we should be grateful for what God will (big "will") do in our lives. Therefore, my title for this lesson is "gratitude for our future". Let me explain that concept a little further and explain how it relates to our lives:
 - a) When we as Christians think about our future, we tend to focus on the eternal. We think that God will bless us when we get to heaven, but in the meantime we must suffer.
 - i) If there is one fault many Christians have, including myself, is that we get too negative (worried) about the rest of our lives in the "here and now". We tend to think it is our destiny to suffer in this lifetime. What I hope to get across in this lesson is our trust in God should lead to blessings in this lifetime as well as blessings in the next lifetime.
 - b) So why we should expect God to bless us? The most important thing to know is that the same God who created everything also cares about your life and my life. He wants to bless our lives "just because He wants to". There are ways in which God is more than willing to work in our lives to bless us if we are simply willing to trust in that blessing.
2. It might help at this time to explain the biblical definition of a blessing.
 - a) The closest I can describe it is a sense of "general overall happiness". It is not like when we win a big prize and we are overjoyed for the moment. It is a sense of happiness we can and should have knowing our eternal future is secure. It is an internal feeling of joy knowing that God is watching out for us, He is aware of all we are going through at the present moment and that He desires to bless our lives and fill us with that joy.
 - b) Suppose we are going through a real rough time at the moment. The beauty of this type of joy is that our present circumstances are not an issue here. The point is we can have joy through whatever we are dealing with if our perspective is right. It is the idea that no matter what we are dealing with, we should be aware that God is very much aware of our situation, He wants to help us and we trust in Him to see us through our problems.
 - i) If we have trust that God is helping us through our difficulties, that is part of the blessing in life of trusting Him no matter what is going on in our lives.
 - c) The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5 lists a bunch of things that Christians need to do in order to be blessed by God. Know that God's blessings are conditional upon our trust in Him. It is more than realizing one is saved. It is about trusting God through every aspect of one's life. That is the key point of the "Sermon on the Mount" which is in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 5-7. Those chapters give illustration after illustration of different aspects of our lives that we need to give to God for Him to be in charge of. If we trust Him with all of those aspects of our lives, we will be blessed.
3. This does lead me back to Psalms 67-68. Both of these are upbeat psalms that deal with God blessing our lives here and now as well as eternally. It is about being blessed as individuals as well as being blessed corporately as a group of believers. They are about the benefits of trusting in God in this lifetime as well as the next one.
 - a) To put it another way, sometimes we as Christians wonder if all the stuff we do for God is worth it. These psalms teach us of the blessings we get for all of the trouble we go through in order to live a life that is pleasing to God. Remember that "all we go through" starts with the idea of trusting in Jesus for every aspect of one's life.
 - b) In summary, its time for us to get happy and realize the blessings we receive as Christians because we are called to salvation. Let us sit back, enjoy God and realize just how much we are blessed for putting our trust in Him for every aspect of our lives.
 - c) With that happy introduction complete, let us turn to Psalm 67.

4. Psalm 67, title: For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm. A song.
 - a) This title appears similar to the titles we have read over the last few psalms we have studied. However, there is one key difference, so let me explain that first:
 - i) That difference is David's name is not mentioned in this title. More than the last dozen psalms all had David's name as part of the title, so we know he is not shy about including his name as the author of psalms. Most commentators still suspect David is the author of this one as the rest of the title fits "David's style" of things that are mentioned in the title of most of the last dozen or so psalms.
 - b) Lets look at the rest of the title since we're in the neighborhood. ☺ It first says it was for the "director of music". That means the words of this psalm are to be sung and whoever wrote this psalm gave it to the person in charge of the "worship service" in Israel.
 - i) The author also wants this psalm played with stringed instruments. That probably meant harps and other stringed instruments.
 - ii) The title also says it is a psalm. I believe that simply means that the author understood this song to be "something special" to be studied.
 - iii) Finally, the text says it is a "song". That simply means that this is not just a bunch of words to be read, but it is to be sung. One of the things that has been long lost in bible history is how the original melodies went for these songs. Most of us know that a list of words are easier to remember if they are sung in a song, and that may be why that fact is mentioned here in the title.
 - c) That leads me back to the unnamed author. I believe the reason David (or whoever wrote it) left the authorship blank is because the subject is a blessing to all believers. That is to say this tune belongs to anyone and everyone who trusts in the God of the bible, and for that reason the author kept his name out of the title. Am I positive on that theory? No, but it would be logical guess given the topic of this psalm.
5. Verse 1: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, *Selah*
 - a) The psalm begins by asking God to bless us and be gracious to us and third, to make his face shine upon us. Since I already defined "blessing" in the introduction, let me describe "grace" as it is used in the bible and in this verse.
 - i) I once heard a Jewish rabbi explain that Christianity's greatest contribution to our understanding of God is that they helped us (the Jews) understand God's grace. This rabbi obviously didn't believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but he did understand that Christians live with the knowledge that God is gracious towards them.
 - ii) So what is grace? The simplest definition is about receiving something we don't deserve. That is what it means in this verse and throughout the bible.
 - iii) It might help to describe what it is not. It is not asking God to forgive us our sins. It is about asking to be blessed not because we deserve it, but just because God wants to. It is asking God to give us something we don't deserve.
 - b) So why should we ask God to bless us with His grace? Because He loves us, period. If you love somebody, you just want to do nice things for them and it is ok to ask God for anything because He loves us unconditionally. He still wants us to be obedient to Him, but that has nothing to do with the fact He does love us as individuals and wants to bless our lives. This does not mean God will give us everything we ask for, but it does mean we can and should expect blessings from God by asking for them.
 - c) Finally the verse asks for God's face to shine upon us. This is a metaphor. God does not have a literal face. The writer uses this illustration because Israelites can relate to the idea of say, a king smiling upon someone means that the king is about to bless that person.
 - i) In that sense, for God to smile upon us, is in effect the same thing as God blessing us and being gracious to us. It is a colorful way of saying the same thing.
 - ii) The verse ends with a *Selah*. Since I spent half a page explaining that verse, I think I earned my "Selah" for the day. ☺

6. Verse 2: that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.
 - a) Let's go to the "why" question of God's grace. Here in Verse 2, the question is, why do we want God to bless us by His grace? The verse reads, "(So) that your ways may be known on the earth and your salvation to all nations".
 - i) If people get blessed for "no apparent reason", hopefully that gets other people to turn to the God of the bible, recognize His existence and worship Him.
 - b) The writer of this psalm does not want God to be gracious just to bless his own life, but so that the name and fame of God will spread upon the earth. If God does something that just blesses our own life, for no apparent reason other than God just showing His love to us, we should want to spread that joy of that blessing to others around us.
7. Verse 3: May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. *Selah* ⁵May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.
 - a) I want you to notice is that Verse 3 and Verse 5 are the exact same, word for word. So what is so significant about Verse 3 that it is repeated again in Verse 5?
 - i) Both verses ask people to praise God. The first part of the verse is asking those who know God praise Him. The second part of both verses is asking all people of the world to praise Him. In other words, we are continuing the idea of the praise of God being contagious and spreading to others.
 - ii) If God's people publicly thank Him for the good He has done for their lives, hopefully that will get others to join in that praise. In effect, these verses are asking for the spread of the knowledge of His existence and His blessing for us.
 - b) One of the important and basic concepts of Christianity is that it designed to be spread. One of the essential commands to Christians is to spread the word about Him to all nations. That does not mean all Christians have the gift of evangelism, but it does mean that God calls all of us believers to be witnesses for Him to other people. A big part of being a witness is asking God to bless our lives and letting others see and also experience His blessing in their lives as well.
 - i) Let me be negative for a moment and throw some rain on this party. ☹ Suppose we are going through a rough time where something horrible has happened to us. How do we have joy and ask God's blessing through such a time? Neither God nor other people expect us to avoid our pain. God desires that we trust in His blessing despite whatever is happening. If people can see that we still trust God despite what has happened to us, that is contagious and others would ask us how they can have joy when they are going through their own rough times.
 - c) Meanwhile, I didn't cover Verse 4. This middle verse between the two identical verses asks God to bless the nations of the world and may those nations realize that the God of the bible also rules over their lives, and not just for Israelites or for other believers.
 - d) I just read a story about when "Handel's Messiah" was first performed in England around 1741. The story is that when King George II of England first heard that song performed, he stood up and started applauding. He wasn't applauding the performance as much as He was honoring the God that is greater than he, the king. That is the idea of what God is looking for, which is for people to honor God as God. If a powerful king can do that, so can you or I do that in our own way or style.
8. Verse 6: Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.
 - a) I am convinced that when a nation "as a whole" honors the God the bible, good things just start to happen to that nation. That same principal can apply to an individual church or any group that honors God as God. I've seen it happen often in history.
 - b) If one looks how the United States has been blessed as a country for so many years, it is not because we are capitalists, but that we honor the God of the bible. Corporate worship of God has been on the decline in our country and so has it's blessing.

- c) As another example, Christianity is now spreading all over China. Their government still does things I do not approve of, but I cannot deny how that country is being blessed at this time and I am convinced it is due to their corporate worship of God.
 - d) So is this verse a guarantee that if we as a community or we as a church or we as country corporately (collectively) seek God and ask for His blessing that He will bless us?
 - i) I believe it is. It may or may not be material wealth. It will be a blessing in that, that group is now acknowledging God and somehow and someday if such a group is desiring to live how God wants them to live, He will bless them.
 - ii) To put this another way, if one's life is "falling apart", spend some time praising God and just watch how He rescues us and blesses our life despite whatever is our circumstance of the moment.
9. Verse 7: God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.
- a) This little seven line psalm ends on a happy note. It says that God will bless us. The "us" refers to anyone and everyone that puts their trust in Him. Notice the verse does not say "might bless us" or "I hope God blesses us", but that He will do this. This is a promise we can count on and I would even recommend pausing and asking for His blessing here.
 - b) The psalm ends with the comment that the ends of the earth will fear him.
 - i) One of the functions of the Spirit of God is to convict people of their sins. The reason many people don't want to hear the Gospel message is they don't want to feel guilty about the sins they have committed. To acknowledge what they are doing is wrong, means that they have to acknowledge God's existence and realize that they are accountable to Him.
 - ii) Let me describe this fear another way: It is not our job to put the "fear of God" into people. The Holy Spirit is more than capable of doing that on His own. Our job is just to love people as they are and let them see the love of God in our lives. That is the blessing that gets others to fear His name and hopefully to turn to Him.
 - c) Now that we have finished that happy little psalm, we can now keep that happiness going and see how the next psalm is also a blessing to our lives.
10. Psalm 68, Title: For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. A song.
- a) For the majority of you who have been with me for a good while, this title is "standard" in that it covers the usual things David likes to say in his titles. It acknowledges David as the author, it was written to be sung and it is given to the director of music. That is a title for the person in charge of music at the "official" Jewish worship service at that time.
 - b) The psalm acknowledges it is a psalm, which I believe is David's way of saying these words were inspired by God and it is meant to be studied. The last part says that this is a song, which simply means it is meant to be sung.
 - c) This psalm is also a praise to God for things He wants to do in our lives, but it also gives examples of how He has blessed people in the past, so we know what we can expect of our God in the future.
11. Verse 1: May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him.
- a) Like the last psalm, the basic request is for God to work in a visible way in our lives, but instead of focusing on God blessing us with personal blessings, this psalm starts off by asking God to bless us by scattering His enemies from before Him.
 - b) My question of the moment is, how can God have enemies? How can a perfect God fear anything? The point is not that God fears an enemy. The point is that there are people who willfully choose to ignore God and in that sense there are enemies.
 - c) If we choose to love God and dedicate our lives to follow Him, there are going to be many people who don't make that same choice. If they choose to ignore the God, they may take that hatred out on those who do follow Him because they don't know how to fight God directly. Therefore, to ask God to scatter His enemies, is really a plea for God's help to deal with the enemies of believers, be they spiritual enemies or human foes.

12. Verse 2: As smoke is blown away by the wind, may you blow them away; as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God.
- a) David uses some simple illustrations to ask God to work in our lives. Just as one can blow smoke or watch smoke be blown by the wind, David asks God to "blow away" His enemies. The second illustration is just as wax melts on a candle, so may wicked people melt, as if they literally fall away (i.e., die) before God.
 - b) Obviously David is not being literal, but just wants God to deal with his enemies.
 - i) This gets back to the point of "Our problems are now God's problems." It is telling God in effect, "I don't want to worry about those enemies, You deal with them. These enemies are causing me pain, and I don't want to deal with that pain anymore, so please God, will You take care of them."
 - ii) When we pray a prayer like that, the reality is often we still have to deal with them. The point is we give the results of whatever happens to God. We can then be confident that whatever happens with our enemies is now God's decision so we don't have to worry about the results.
 - iii) When the talks about the peace of God, (see Philippians 4:7 or Colossians 3:15) this is the type of peace that He was referring to.
 - c) Very recently, I had a client at work that told me a bunch of lies and bounced a large check to pay me. The hardest part was not the loss of money, but letting go of the pain of what that person did to me. I still took the steps of taking legal action, as what he did was a crime. To forgive does not mean we don't follow through on what we should do. If I don't take the footsteps, then that person is free to go hurt somebody else down the road. Forgiving is about letting go of the pain caused by how someone has hurt us and saying, "that person (or group) is now God's problem."
 - i) I don't desire the death of that check-bouncer, but that he should turn to God with his life. I desire that person see the error of their ways and be honest with himself and the God who created him.
 - ii) I'm sure in David's case, he was describing someone who wanted him dead. We still may have to follow through with fighting such people, but we ask God to take the lead and deal with the pain of how such enemies have hurt us.
13. Verse 3: But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.
- a) In contrast to the enemies of God being "blown out like a candle" in the previous verse, we have a request that those who trust in God, be glad, joyful and happy before Him.
 - b) I have to admit, it is easier for me to describe my enemies being hurt before God than it is to describe being glad and joyful before God, especially when I have been recently hurt.
 - c) Is it a command of Christians to be joyful before God? I think a request is a better term.
 - i) If we do love God the way He desires we do, we would want to be joyful before Him. Remember the Hebrew term for "joy" literally means to jump up and down with excitement over something. The idea is that if we appreciate how much God does love and care for us and how much He wants to bless our lives, that should cause us to be joyful with excitement over what He can and will do for us.
 - ii) Being joyful is not a requirement for a Christian, but it is the best way to be a good witness for God. If we are going to spread the word about Jesus, is it better to do it while complaining or better to spread the word while being joyful?
 - iii) Let's say we don't feel joyful right now. The best way to get that joy out is to start working at it. Tell God how much you appreciate Him not only saving you, but calling you into a new life with Him. Tell Him how much you appreciate all He has done for you and all the grace that He wants to pour out on your life. To be joyful, starts with the effort to be joyful, and it will just spread from there.

14. Verse 4: Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds-- his name is the LORD-- and rejoice before him.
- a) Speaking of making an effort to praise God because He is God, I present Verse 4.
 - b) This verse tells us (I picture this verse yelling at me) to praise God not because we have to, but because we want to. Remember what God desires of us more than anything else: A loving two-way relationship with Him. God already loves us unconditionally and proved that love by dying for our sins. What God desires in return, is that we show our love back to Him, and this verse tells us to sing to God out of gratitude for what He has done.
 - c) So does this verse mean I should ignore my life and just sing to Him all day long? Of course not. At the same time, we should not be so busy that we don't take the time to stop and praise Him every now and then.
 - d) Let me comment on the phrase "rides in the clouds". This is not to be taken literally. God is not somewhere in the upper atmosphere going for a joy ride on a bunch of clouds. The point is that God is bigger than we can comprehend and that He is "up there" not in the atmosphere, but up there being that He watches over us and watches over our lives. Saying that God "rides in the clouds" is a colorful way of saying God is higher than we can touch or feel, but nonetheless, God is there and He is watching over our lives.
15. Verse 5: A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. ⁶ God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
- a) Think of an orphan that doesn't have any parents. That is the example of God being a father to the fatherless. To not have a loving human father at a young age means to be robbed of how to properly live a life. The next illustration in these verses is a widow. To be a widow means that a woman does not have a man to protect her. Both illustrations speak of a need in someone's life to be filled by others.
 - b) Now look at Verse 6 for the moment. It describes the "lonely" within a family. This may be describing someone who craves a relationship greater than what their family may offer. It may be a family that doesn't honor God or a family that doesn't treat that child very well. The point is that the child is somehow suffering in a way that family can't help. That family may not be able to help, but God is still caring for that lonely person and God wants to guide them.
 - c) The idea here is to show that God not only cares for all people who desire Him, but that He also cares for those who can't properly take care of themselves.
 - d) This leads to the final reference, which is about leading free prisoners. In one sense, that applies to all believers. If Satan is the prince of this world, that would make all believers prisoners of this world and we need God to lead us to Him out of this world.
 - i) I also think this reference to prisoners applies to specific individuals who are literally trapped due to their belief in God and don't know where or how to turn for Help. It is the same God who can and does lead such people into a state of mental freedom due to their trust in Him and often leads others to literal freedom by trusting in what He can do in our lives.
 - e) The final analogy continues and says, "the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land".
 - i) A "sun scorched land" would refer to a desert location where it is difficult, if not impossible to survive. Remember that Israel is a desert climate. An Israelite reading this psalm would understand this reference to being a "no-man's land".
 - ii) The idea is that those who refuse to turn to God are stuck in their lives and don't realize that if they will just turn to God, He will guide them out of whatever situation they are stuck in. A related point is we can't fix people or force them to acknowledge that God can help them. All we can do is share with them that God is more than willing to help them and lead them through their problems at hand.

16. Verse 7: When you went out before your people, O God, when you marched through the wasteland, *Selah*
 - a) Speaking of "sun-scorched lands", I present Verse 7. This verse is referring to when the Israelites left Egypt, many centuries before David wrote this psalm. If one knows about the geographical route the Israelites took to reach Israel, that route was through a very dry and inhabitable "wasteland". When the Israelites traveled through that wasteland, God was a cloud to His people during the day and miraculously provided water for them as they traveled through the desert. (References, see Exodus 13:21, and Exodus 17:6).
 - b) What David wanted the readers of this psalm to realize is that if God did provide for those Israelites, He will also provide for those who put their trust in Him through all situations. That is what the "Selah" is for at the end of this verse.
17. Verse 8: the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. ⁹You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.
 - a) Remember that when one lives in a desert climate like most of Israel, rain is considered a blessing from God. The idea of these verses is that the God will not only provide for us to get where He wants us to go, but also when we are at that location. God is saying in effect, "I (God) will continue to provide what His people need in order to survive."
 - i) The point is most of us trust in Him to provide for our needs. Notice the word "needs" is different from the word "desires". While our help may come from a variety of sources, it is God who we should thank for providing for our needs.
 - b) Before I move on, let me discuss the word "Sinai". This refers to a specific mountain in that desert wasteland where the 10 Commandments were given. This mountain is singled out as that is where God first spoke to the Israelites as a group. That mountain became eternally associated with the Israelites.
18. Verse 10: Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.
 - a) The word "it" refers to both the desert where the Israelites traveled through to get to Israel and the land of Israel itself. No matter where the Israelites went, God provided for them. The "poor" could refer to the whole nation traveling through the desert or specifically the poor living in Israel at any given time.
 - i) Did God rain money down on those who were poor? Of course not. Yet somehow God made it possible for the poor to survive through that period and the poor should also be grateful to God who made it possible for them to continue to live.
 - ii) If God made it possible for them to survive through all sorts of difficult situations, so is it possible for God to "make a way" for us to survive and even prosper for Him through the most difficult of times of our lives.
 - b) OK John, how do I know God cares for me as much as these Israelites? After all, these psalms were written roughly 2,500 years ago and they are primarily about the Israelites. How can I be sure that God's provision applies to me today?
 - i) First of all, to trust in Jesus is more than just trusting that He has forgiven us of our sins and will lead us into the next life. That trust also includes the idea that God wants to lead us now to what He desires for us. God has a plan for each of our lives to in effect be used by Him ultimately for His glory.
 - ii) I have learned that whatever God has called me to do also means that God has and will provide whatever resources I need in order to accomplish His will.
 - iii) OK John, good for you. ☺ How do I know that applies to me? Ask God. Ask God what He wants from you today. It is amazing how I have watched God answer that type of question. I find that God has a hard time resisting anyone willing to make a commitment to follow Him and He will guide us in what He wants from us. In summary the way to find out if you are "one of God's" is to ask Him and be willing to be used by Him for whatever purpose He has called.

19. Verse 11: The Lord announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it:
¹² "Kings and armies flee in haste; in the camps men divide the plunder.
- a) In these verses we are still reviewing some of Israel's history as a nation. Verse 11 mentions that the Lord announced the word. What does that word "word" refer to?
 - i) Most likely, this is talking about when God first spoke the Israelites through Moses. To ask a religious Jewish person what is the "word", the first response would be the first five books of the bible, known as the "Torah" in Hebrew.
 - a) God announced to mankind what are His standards for forgiveness and what it takes to be "right" in His eyes, which is in effect, "The Law".
 - ii) The text then says in effect that great are the people who proclaim His word. I believe it speaks of anyone and everyone who proclaims the word of God to others. Remember I said in the introduction that this psalm is about future blessings: If you want to be blessed by God, one way to do that is to publicly proclaim His word to others. It shows others that we are trusting in Him.
 - a) It may help to understand the concept that God and "His word" are one in the same. (See John 1:1 that point.)
 - b) The second point is much simpler: The Nation of Israel was able to win wars and divide the plunder of the enemies due to their trust in God. The nation of Israel was specifically called to wipe out the original inhabitants of the land of Israel due to the specific sins of those inhabitants and those Israelites got to enjoy the spoil of those war victories. This verse is not a call for God's people to go attack those who don't trust in Him. This verse is just focusing on the specifics of the history of ancient Israel.
20. Verse 13: Even while you sleep among the campfires, the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver, its feathers with shining gold."
- a) This verse is obviously not meant to be taken literally. Doves are not covered in silver and gold. The point of this verse is that while the Israelite armies were sleeping by campfires, God was protecting them during times when they were vulnerable.
 - i) The point for us is in effect, "We don't have to worry as God "has our back"". Just as the Israelites can trust in God to protect them when they are vulnerable to attack (i.e., sleeping), so God also protects those who call upon His name.
 - b) OK John, if that is true, why use these cliché's about silver and gold? The answer to that question is to ponder, "Who is my dove?" The answer is it is referring to His followers. The reason David uses the dove (I believe) is because dove's mate for life. It is a colorful way of saying that we as believers are the "only ones" for God.
 - i) So the idea that we are covered with silver and gold is saying in effect that God is protecting us with the "best" of materials available.
 - ii) Now I am more confused. If God protects us and loves us this much, why does He allow believers to suffer so much? It is not because He doesn't care for us. God allows difficult things mainly to test us and see whether or not we love Him and are willing to trust Him just as He loves us and wants to be with us forever.
21. Verse 14: When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like snow fallen on Zalmon.
- a) Verse 14 has another strange illustration that requires an explanation: The "kings in the land" refers to the leaders of other nations that existed in the land of Israel prior to the Israelites themselves conquering these kings.
 - i) Here is where it gets strange. Visualize a big pile of human bones on the top of a mountain. From a distance, those bones would look like snow on the top of a mountain because it is a huge pile of "white" on a dark background.
 - b) OK John, that is weird. Why would David describe dead people that way?
 - i) The idea is that if we trust in God for our victories, that victory will be so complete, that the death of our enemy will be like a pile of dead bones that can be viewed off on a distant horizon.

- c) The point as it relates to us the reader is that if God can be trusted to "pile up the dead bones" of the enemies of ancient Israel, that same God can be trusted to do good things for us today and give us victories through Him if (big "if" here) it is His desire to have those victories. The trick in life is making the effort to discover God's will for our lives and then living out our lives to do His will. In that concept, God does promise us victory in life.
 - i) So how do we discover God's will for our lives? Obviously it involves not doing anything that violates His word. The key is simply to pray over our situations and give to God the situations we are involved in. I find that somehow and someday God then just guides us as to what is His desire for that moment. Then over time, we can look back and see how God was guiding us the whole time.
 - ii) OK on that happy note, let's get back to the psalm.
22. Verse 15: The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains; rugged are the mountains of Bashan.
¹⁶ Why gaze in envy, O rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign, where the LORD himself will dwell forever?
- a) From the visual perspective of Israel, Basham is a mountain range to the northeast of Israel. Those mountains are higher than the "hills" of Jerusalem in comparison. The idea is like looking off into the distance and seeing in the background a high mountain range.
 - i) The point here is the center of worship of God was in Jerusalem. That was where the original temple was located and where God chooses to reign from.
 - b) Even though the mountains of Basham are higher than the mountains (or hills) of Jerusalem, the point is God chooses Jerusalem and other places should not be jealous.
 - c) OK John, obviously mountains don't get jealous. What is the point? This verse is not to comment on mountains but on other people. It is saying in effect, "Hey all of you non-Israelites, don't be jealous that God chooses this place to be His center of worship. Instead, come and join in on the worship of the God".
 - d) Are you saying that we have to go to Jerusalem to worship God or say, pray toward Jerusalem? Of course not. The point is we as Christians do acknowledge that a "Jewish God" is the God of the whole world. We don't have to physically turn toward Jerusalem to pray, but we do honor the God of the Jewish people as the true God of the world.
23. Verse 17: The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.
- a) I have to admit of all the verses in this lesson, this is the one I struggled with the most. It is hard for me to imagine why God would want or need thousands of chariots.
 - i) One interpretation of this verse is that "chariots" is a code word for angels. If that view is correct, it refers to the thousands of angels that God has to guard over us.
 - b) Reading this verse in context of the last verse, the point is God "moved" from where He gave the 10 commandments in the middle of the desert to His "home" in Jerusalem. In other words, God first spoke to the nation of Israel out in the desert (that is "Sinai") where the law was first given to Moses. In effect, God next worked through the nation of Israel by leading them to conquer the land and that is where He "settled" in Jerusalem.
 - i) To an Israelite living at that time, there would be nothing more powerful than the force of thousands of chariots moving from one point to the other.
 - c) OK John, we appear to be back to the idea of worshipping God in Jerusalem. Remember that to a Jewish person in David's day, that city was the center of worship of God. David understood he could pray to God anywhere at anytime. He also understood the center of Jewish worship was where the "ark of the covenant" was located in Jerusalem.
 - d) So what do you want us to learn from all of this ancient history? That the same God the Israelites could trust in for protection and guidance is the same God we can trust in for our protection and guidance both at the moment and through all of our lives.
 - e) OK, folks we have about a dozen or so lines left of these ancient analogies. Bear with me while I explain them, and then I'll tie the whole thing together in the end. ☺

24. Verse 18: When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious-- that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.
- a) Verse 18 is quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:8. Let me explain Paul's interpretation of this verse: The text says "you" ascended on high. That "You" is Jesus. No eternal deity can ascend to heaven unless they first came down from heaven to start with.
 - i) If Jesus did ascend into heaven, then He also led those (believers) who have suffered for His sake. I believe that refers to Old Testament saints who went into heaven after Jesus rose from the dead, roughly 2,000 years ago.
 - ii) I suspect the "rebellious" in this verse refers to all people who didn't trust in Jesus and in the next life will be forced to acknowledge Him as such.
 - b) What does this mean from David's perspective? He probably thought it referred to God going back to heaven after He spoke to the Israelites. "Captives" are those who trusted in God before or during the time of David and the gifts refer to the Israelites who honored God and the conquered nations being forced to honor the God of the bible.
25. Verse 19: Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. *Selah*
- a) Remember that I said this psalm is about future blessings. The reason David gives an Israelite history lesson over the last bunch of verses is to remind us that God is there and is still watching out for us. That is the essence of this verse.
 - b) The verse says that God daily bears our burdens. That means whatever issues matter to His people (those of us who trust in Him) also matter to Him.
 - i) It doesn't mean God is suffering with us. It means that God desires that we give the burdens of our life to Him and not worry about the outcomes of those burdens. In that sense, this verse is a blessing as we are trusting in God for our future.
26. Verse 20: Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.
- a) Most Christians get the idea that we don't die, but go from "life to life". (See John 6:50.)
 - b) Through our trust in Jesus as both Lord (in charge of our lives) and Savior (saves us from the penalty of sin), we will never die. That's what this verse is in effect teaching us.
27. Verse 21: Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.
- a) OK who are God's enemies and how do I avoid being one of them? ☺ The short answer is it refers to all of those who refuse to trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - b) The verse mentions the "hairy crowns" of unbelievers. So, will God cut off nonbelievers heads? No, it just means there is eternal punishment for those who won't trust in Him.
 - i) OK John why mentioned that fact here? David is reminding us by reciting some of Israel's history that God is still working today. Trusting in Him brings eternal life and ignoring God (as this verse implies) brings eternal damnation.
28. Verse 22: The Lord says, "I will bring them from Bashan; I will bring them from the depths of the sea, ²³ that you may plunge your feet in the blood of your foes, while the tongues of your dogs have their share."
- a) We had "Bashan" mentioned a few verses back. These are mountains that are not in Israel but can be viewed from Israel when one looks to the northeast of Israel.
 - b) The point as it relates to this verse, is the enemies of Israel live all around that country. (Again, nothing much as changed over the last few thousand years.) The point is God will be in charge of any and all victories the Israelites will have over their enemies, no matter where they run to. That is why there is this colorful reference to the "sea".
 - i) The point is God will give the Israelites literal battle victories over their enemies when they put their trust in Him to a point where they will literally walk over the blood of their enemies and dogs will do what dogs do, which is lick up blood.
 - c) The point for us is that God is in control, God wants to take over control of our lives and essentially God does not want us to worry about the outcome of our situations but to turn those situations over to Him to deal with.

29. Verse 24: Your procession has come into view, O God, the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary. ²⁵ In front are the singers, after them the musicians; with them are the maidens playing tambourines. ²⁶ Praise God in the great congregation; praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel. ²⁷ There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them, there the great throng of Judah's princes, and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.
- a) These four verses are all describing a procession (like a parade) of Israelites traveling together into the sanctuary to worship God. The procession mentions singers, musicians and maidens (young girls) playing tambourines. Finally comes the tribes of Israel. Four of the 12 tribes are listed as examples in Verse 27.
 - b) Consider the fact that all of these groups listed here could not fit inside the original tabernacle structure or even the temple built after David's time. I think David is not just talking about everyone in Israel coming together to worship God, but is discussing an eternal vision of all believers coming together for the purpose of worshipping God.
 - c) OK John, I am not a member of one of the tribes of Israel. How can I as a believer relate to this procession? I see the point being that we as Christians are grateful for what God has and will do for us in our lives. We believers proceed as a group to go worship Him (in our church settings) and proclaim our love for Him. We are grateful for what God has and will do for our lives and we proclaim that gratitude through worship.
30. Verse 28: Summon your power, O God; show us your strength, O God, as you have done before.
- a) This verse is saying in effect, "God, You have shown in the past how You have worked in a mighty way. Just as You have done before, please come and work through our lives today and show us Your power as we live to make a difference for You."
 - b) Let us say we are praying a specific request. In effect, we are asking God to work in a mighty way as He has done in the past. Once we have sincerely prayed that way it is then a matter of letting go of control, and asking God to work His way on His timing.
 - i) I have personally seen God work in great ways of people I know. I equally know that it is up to Him, and not us. Praying is about getting His will done. We can ask for anything, but then we must let go of the control and leave it up to Him.
31. Verse 29: Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings will bring you gifts.
- a) When David wrote this psalm, there was no temple. His son Solomon built the first Jewish temple after David died, but David did organize the building materials for it.
 - b) David could look forward to the day the temple was to be built and predicted that kings of other countries would bring gifts to that temple.
 - i) I believe this verse is pointing to another future day when Jesus does rule the world from Jerusalem and at that time other kings will literally bring gifts to Jesus.
 - c) OK if there is a future day that Jesus is ruling from the earth, why would kings bring Him gifts and what gifts would He need? (Yes, I'm teaching us how to shop for Jesus. ☺) The point is not what Jesus needs, the point of gifts is about showing our commitment to Him and acknowledgement that He does rule over the world.
 - i) So does that mean we should bring a gift to church with us? The point is we trust in Jesus for our salvation and "doing things" shows our commitment to Him.
32. Verse 30: Rebuke the beast among the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations. Humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war.
- a) This verse is not literally talking about animals, but about people that traditionally oppose the existence of Israel and oppose the God of Israel ruling the world.
 - b) In other words, Jesus won't just be sitting accepting gifts. He will also conquer and "take care of" those groups and people who do not want Him ruling over the world.
 - i) Three times in the book of Revelation (2:27, 12:5 and 19:15) along with Psalm 2:9 say that when Jesus returns He will rule the world with a "rod of iron". That term means Jesus will rule with force. Tying those references to this verse, the point is that Jesus will take care of "by force" those who refuse to submit to Him.

33. Verse 31: Envoys will come from Egypt; Cush will submit herself to God.
- The country of Egypt is a country we know. Cush is an ancient biblical name for what is called Ethiopia today. The point is foreign dignitaries will submit to God. Remember that when David lived, Egypt was still a great and powerful world force. I don't know how powerful Ethiopia was at that time. David's point is that it won't just be the local enemies of Israel coming to visit the future king ruling from Jerusalem. Representatives from other countries around the world will come to honor Jesus as well.
 - I think David lists these two countries as examples, because never in the history of Israel have these two countries ever lost a war to Israel (not counting the Exodus from Egypt). I don't think these two were singled out as special, but just to show the point that powerful foreign representatives will submit to Jesus as king.
34. Verse 32: Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, *Selah*
- These last four verses are a "wrap up" to this psalm and request that everyone who loves God sing praises to Him. The point of this psalm is to be grateful not only for what God has done in our lives, but will do. That includes the future guarantee that Jesus will rule the world one day from Jerusalem.
 - What Verses 32 to 35 say in effect is if we are grateful for what God has and will do in our lives, then we should sing to Him. Notice this verse is not just for the Israelites, but it includes everyone in the world to sing praises to God.
35. Verse 33: to him who rides the ancient skies above, who thunders with mighty voice. ³⁴ Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies.
- Verse 33 opens with a reference to God who "rides the ancient skies". No that does not mean God rides around in a chariot up in the sky. ☺
 - The point is that we look up to God as He is "above us" and is everywhere. Yes the power of God is shown by looking at the "vastness" (all the stars) up in the night sky. It is also that the evidence of His existence can be seen just by contemplating the vastness of the night sky and realizing there is a creator who made all of this.
 - The point is also that the same entity that created the universe is also the same God that will literally rule one day from Israel. The combination of seeing the vastness of God and realizing what He has done for our lives should make us be grateful to that God.
36. Verse 35: You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!
- The idea of "awesome" is not just that we are in awe of His power, but that we are aware of the fact that God does rule over the world and at the same time does rule over the hearts of those willing to put their trust in Him. Yes, He is a god of all people who put their trust in Him and at the same time, God is also the "God of the nation of Israel.
 - On that happy thought, the psalm appropriately ends with a "Praise be to God" for all He has done in our world and all He has done in our lives. Further, we are to grateful to God for all He will do not only in the eternal future when He rules from the earth, but also for our own future. As I like to say, God does not leave us "half done". If we trust in God to get us "this far", then we need to trust in Him to help us through the rest of our lives. For those reasons we give thanks to Him. There, that's a positive way to end the lesson. ☺
37. Heavenly Father, Thank You for all the good You have done in our lives. That You for the world You have created that we can enjoy and appreciate. Thank You for calling us into salvation. Thank You for the good You have and will do in our lives. Thank You for using us to make a difference for You. We don't know what our future holds, but You, who knows all things, do. We ask a blessing on our lives and those we love and care about. Help us to continue to trust in You and be used by You to make a difference in the world for You. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen