

Psalms 69-70 – John Karmelich

1. This is one of those lessons that best starts by first giving the title: "What does it mean practically to be followers of Jesus?" Yes we are to be witnesses for Him, but what exactly are we supposed to do about that on a daily basis? What can we expect to happen to us if we have committed our lives to Him? Those are the simple issues this lesson takes on. ☺
 - a) As opposed to the last number of psalms that focused on God and what He can and will do in our lives, the focus of these psalms is back on us. These psalms state in effect that if we are committed to serving God how do we deal with that responsibility?
 - b) It is to say in effect, "OK, God I know that I have committed my life to serving You and I am overwhelmed by what that entails." This psalm states in effect that we as humans are weak creatures. In order for us to make a difference for God, we need His help. This psalm is in effect a prayer request for God to help us to make a difference for Him.
2. You may find it interesting that Psalm 69 is the second most quoted psalm in the New Testament after Psalm 22. The references in Psalm 69 mainly tie to specific events of Jesus life. OK, so what? The answer is this psalm reminds us of the realization by Jesus himself as a man (and also the apostles as well) of the overwhelming cost to our own lives of being a follower of Christ. That ties to my title: To be a follower of God requires a tremendous cost on our parts.
 - a) For example, Verse 9 is quoted in the Gospels accounts about Jesus and the fact He was consumed with God's Temple (that stood in Jerusalem at that time) being used properly. In other words to care about God includes the idea of caring about what belongs to God. The point is we don't take the worship of Him "lightly".
 - b) The idea is that if we do care about God, it should in effect, consume our lives to make a difference for Him. If it is the goal of Christians to be like Jesus, then we should read the Gospels with the idea of "This is how we should act".
 - i) No not die like Jesus, but be consumed with the idea (for the lack of a better way of describing it) of caring about God and living to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) Does that mean we need to spend 24-hours a day doing things for God? If that were the case, we would never sleep or unwind as needed. Still, someone who is a follower of Jesus will be known by what they do to make a difference for Him with their lives and that is a key point of this lesson.
 - c) Let me put this issue another way: How can others tell we are Christians? People can't read our minds and know we are committed to Him. However, other people can and do judge us by our actions just as the only way we can judge other people is by their actions. Therefore, it is how we act that teaches others around us that we care about God and we want to live our lives to make a difference for Him in all that we do.
 - i) It is important to state that Christians are saved by God's grace alone. However, if God alone saves us, we should then just want to react to that grace, and that is where our efforts as believers come into play.
 - ii) You may say I am too shy to be a witness for God. If you think that, you are normal. Keep in mind that in the book of Acts, the disciples prayed for boldness to preach the word of God. (See Acts 4:29-31.) I think it is a good idea for all of us at times to pray for God to give us the boldness to be a good witness for Him in whatever capacity that is to us at this moment in time.
3. Before I start, let me remind all of us that this lesson includes Psalm 70 as well.
 - a) This psalm is only 5 verses long. It makes an excellent epilog to Psalm 69.
 - b) Psalm 70 is written as if it wants to summarize the key points of Psalm 69 in five short verses. I don't see this psalm as repetitive, but more as a learning tool to summarize what we have just studied in the previous psalm. With that said, I'm ready to start.

4. Psalm 69, title: For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies." Of David.
 - a) The title of this psalm tells us that David wrote it and it was designed to be sung publicly. It was given to the person in charge of music (a specific job title) for worship service.
 - b) The title mentions the melody is called "Lilies". We don't know anything about that song. We did have one psalm (#45) written to the same tune. However the Sons of Korah and not David wrote Psalm 45. It is possible this is the same tune, but we don't know for sure.
 - c) As I mentioned back in Psalm 45, the word "Lilies" is best associated with Solomon. He wrote the poetic bible book "Song of Solomon", and that book uses the word lilies to describe something beautiful. That is only a clue. We don't know the author's intent.
5. Verse 1: Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. ² I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.
 - a) Verse 1 describes David being in some sort of trouble. (If you have been following these studies for a while, we should be used to that concept by now. ☺) I am pretty positive that these verses are not being literal. David is not literally sinking in water, but He is describing the feeling of being in big trouble and not knowing what to do about it.
 - b) The idea of "water coming up to my neck" is a visual picture of needing God's help now, as one is close to dying from the water rising. Another picture is being painted in Verse 2 where David is describing being in a hole and there is no place to put his feet to climb out.
 - i) Most of us have had times in our lives where we feel like everything around us is falling apart and that is the type of situation David is describing here.
 - ii) For the Christian, there usually comes a point where we give up trying all of our possible solutions to our problems and simply cry out to God for help. That is, when we say in effect, "OK God, I give up. This situation is now Your problem. If it is Your desire that I be helped and rescued, it is up to You God, and not me."
 - a) It is amazing how I have watched God work in my life and the lives of others once we have truly let go of a problem and said in effect whatever happens is now God's problem and not mine.
 - iii) Yes I know I have stated that concept many times in these lessons. However, just as we have a short memory, God through the bible likes to remind us that He is always there and always willing to help if we turn a situation over to Him.
 - iv) We may still have to apply whatever solutions we think are best at that point, but we state that whatever results happen is now "God's business" and not ours.
 - a) That concept in effect, is what David is doing in these first two verses.
6. Verse 3: I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.
 - a) Verse 3 says in effect that David is worn out from asking God for help, but so far, David's situation has not improved at all. That leads to another point about asking God for help:
 - i) God is not under any obligation to answer our prayers "our way" and on "our timing". Whatever David was going through, I am positive he got rescued because the bible states in effect that David died of old age at home. (See 1st Kings 2:1-10).
 - b) OK if God did rescue David from this situation, why is he complaining about his present problems and complaining that God is not helping him? We could also ask, why does God not just rescue us the moment we call out to Him?
 - i) The best answer is often God teaches us things through our suffering. I have to admit the best lessons I have learned came through rough periods of my life.
 - ii) I know of some great leaders who have had to go through tremendous amounts of suffering in their lives. I have yet to see anyone used mightily by God who hasn't had to really suffer for long periods of time prior to being used greatly by God.
 - iii) In summary, "suffering" is a way to build up our trust in Him.
 - c) Since none of us know when and how God is going to rescue us, we should never stop calling out to Him during our moments of difficulties. My favorite prayer in rough times is "God, may the lessons You want me to learn here and now not be wasted."

7. Verse 4: Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.
- a) David is stating in Verse 4 that he has more enemies than hairs on his head. I don't know if David had a thick head of hair or near baldness at this point. ☺ I just think that David considered the number of his enemies beyond his ability to count.
 - b) A key point for David is those enemies are seeking to destroy his life. The final sentence of this verse says that David was forced to restore what he did not steal. That implies David was caught by his enemies and made to suffer for some crime he did not commit.
 - c) OK John, so David had to personally suffer due to whatever these enemies of his actually did to him. What does that have to do with me and my life? To the best of knowledge, I don't have that many enemies.
 - i) To answer that, remember that Jesus said that if they hated Me, they would also hate you (you includes us) because we are His followers. When Jesus made that statement in John 15:25, he was probably quoting this verse here in the psalms. So why would people hate us if we are followers of Christ? Let me explain:
 - ii) Nonbelievers want to appeal to God based on their own goodness. Or worse, they just want to ignore God and go on with their lives. If we as Christians are preaching (by our lives) that there is a God and we must surrender our lives to Him. That lifestyle is going to make us enemies, whether we realize it or not.
 - iii) Jesus said that if we are His disciples then we are (as in must) go out and make a difference for Him. That doesn't mean all of us are called to be missionaries, but all of us are called to live and make a difference for Him. The point here is to live that way, will cause us to have enemies, just as it was for David and for Jesus.
 - iv) Also consider Paul's life as a believer in Christ: He led many people to the way of salvation. At the same time, he probably had dozens of occasions in his life where people tried to kill him for what he preached.
 - v) I'm a big believer that if we are not on the "front lines" working for Jesus than we should at the least be on the "back line" providing prayer that is the ammunition that those on the front line need.
 - a) How do we pray for those making a difference for Christ? It can be as simple as praying by name for specific individuals or locations where we want God to work. I am convinced that makes a major difference.
 - d) Meanwhile, we left David "stranded" worrying about those who outnumber him. That verse is a reminder that to live to make a difference for God not only means we will suffer in this lifetime but that there are also demons and people who don't want us to make that difference. Keep in mind that if we are getting resistance for making a difference for God, consider oneself blessed for that resistance. (See Matthew 5:10-11 on that point.)
8. Verse 5: You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you. ⁶ May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord, the LORD Almighty; may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel.
- a) From Verses 4 to 5, David in effect "stops on a dime". (A great American expression for my international audience.) That means David quickly and abruptly changes topics. In the past few verses, David focused on his pain and how his enemies wanted him dead.
 - i) Now here in Verse 5, David is reminding himself that he has faults and that God is very much aware of those faults. So why the abrupt change?
 - ii) Sometimes when we are under attack or suffering for some unknown reason, it is good to remind ourselves that we are not perfect. It is more than just confessing our sins to God. It is the realization that we as believers work as a team, whether we realize it or not. It is a matter of saying and confessing "May the mistakes that I make and the sins that I and others commit not stop or affect the good work that I am doing for You, God or the good work that others are doing for You."

- b) It may help at this point to remember that David was called to leadership at a young age. (See 1st Samuel 10:1.) Even when David was on the run from King Saul, he had a large group of people that followed him. David's prayer in these verses is in effect, "May the mistakes that I make not cause other people who believe in You, God to stumble".
 - i) Suppose you or I say, "I am not a leader as I don't see anyone following me." A point is that we don't know what is going to happen to us in our lives. We may be influencing others one day. If we are living to make a difference for God, that "living" will affect others around us. We need to remind ourselves at times that we are not perfect people, and pray that the mistakes we make not cause other people to turn away from what God wants to teach us in our lives.
 - c) Let me take on these verses another way: Suppose we disagree with something(s) that other people in our church did or taught. We can always run to another church if that is an option. Whether we stay or go is not the issue here. The issue is whether or not we see those people as fellow Christians. We may disagree with things they do or say, but salvation is only about having faith in what Jesus did for our sins and our trust in Him.
 - i) What does that have to do with these verses? The point is we, as Christians have to work with other believers including those we disagree with on issues. Therefore, we ask God to watch what we do as to not cause other believers to stumble.
9. Verse 7: For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face.
- a) Meanwhile, David is still suffering for being a good witness for God. His statement in this verse can apply to himself and many other great followers of God in world history.
 - i) The key word in this verse is the word "your". That word refers to God the Father.
 - ii) Jesus himself endured great scorn for the sake of God the Father. In the bible Jesus was in effect called a bastard (see John 8:41), because others did not believe in His miraculous birth and wrongly said He was born due to an affair of His mother.
 - iii) While I am in that neighborhood, think about how much scorn, Mary, the mother of Jesus endured for years due to what the residents of the small town she grew up in thought about that possibility of Jesus being a "bastard" son.
 - b) While I'm also describing scorn, think of Paul: Think of all the ridicule he must have faced when he went from town to town teaching people who believed in multiple gods that there is only a single God that rules over the world.
 - i) If you ever want proof that Christianity is the "real deal", consider it from the standpoint that it was an obscure belief in a small location within the Roman Empire. Within a few centuries, it became the dominant religion in the world.
 - ii) But what about the spread of Islam? That too spread on a belief in a single God. As to which religion is right, ask yourself this question: Who would be a better expert on Jesus, those who lived with Him when He was around as is the stories of the Gospels, or a different story about Jesus as told in the Koran that came around 1,000 years later? Personally, I would rather trust those who were with Him.
 - c) Meanwhile, the issue of the moment is still scorn. Most of the Old Testament prophets endured scorn for their faith in God. Jesus Himself endured scorn. I would argue that most Christians living today who are making an effort to be a living witness for God do deal with some level of scorn in their own community for our faith in Him.
10. Verse 8: I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;
- a) Here is another verse that David wrote about himself, but it could easily apply to Jesus.
 - b) Let's start with David: We don't know from the bible how David felt like a stranger and an alien to his own brothers, as stated in this verse.
 - i) What I suspect it meant is that he had a heart for God, and his brothers did not. (David was the youngest of eight boys in one family, See 1st Samuel 16:10.)

- ii) Let me put it this way: When we get together with our relatives, do we feel like we are treated as the religious one in the family? I suspect that is how David felt.
 - c) Let's tie this verse to Jesus for the moment. If you read the Gospels carefully, you will note that Jesus had at least four half brothers. (See Matthew 13:55.)
 - i) Think about Jesus growing up in a small town. After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had a full family of at least four more boys and two girls. (See Mark 6:3.) I can only imagine how much the townsfolk kidded Jesus about His illegitimate birth. I suspect even Jesus own brothers teased Him as well, as kids will do that.
 - ii) Does this mean David knew he was writing about Jesus when he wrote this psalm? I doubt it. However, David was inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore the Spirit of God made it possible to tie verses like this to the life of Jesus.
 - iii) If you read John 7:5, the text says that his half-brothers did not believe He was the Messiah. I don't believe they believed it until after He rose from the dead. None of Jesus' siblings were there at the cross when He was crucified or were gathered with the disciples with the disciples when they met right after Jesus was crucified. Yet two of the epistles were written by Jesus' half brothers (James and Jude) indicating that they did believe Jesus was the Messiah after the resurrection.
 - iv) Notice the verse says that he (David) was an alien to his mother's sons. Notice it does not say "father's sons". It is conceivable that David, prophesizing about Jesus is predicting that Jesus was the natural son of his mother but not the son of "Joseph" through this verse. It is a trivial detail, but notice how well it fits to Jesus.
 - d) All of this leads us back to Verse 8. The point here is both David and Jesus felt like aliens among their own siblings because of their devotion to God. With that in mind, here is what Jesus predicted about those of us who do follow Him:
 - i) Jesus said, "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." (Luke 12:53, NIV)
 - a) The point is Jesus predicted that the price of following Him, can and will cause divisions even within one's own family and that ties to Verse 8.
11. Verse 9: for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
- a) Speaking of verses quoted in the Gospels, I present Verse 9. This verse is quoted in the Gospel of John, 2:17, when Jesus cleanses the temple. The point as it applies to Jesus, is the disciples thought of this verse when Jesus saw people disrespect God's temple.
 - i) Here is something else to consider: In John Chapter 2, Jesus made a chord of whips to drive the moneychangers out of the temple. I have always wondered where did Jesus get those whips? Was there a whip salesman wandering by? ☺
 - a) The answer is that the priest(s) selling sacrificial lambs by the temple had to contain those lambs. The lamb pen was probably made of wire and most likely Jesus took some of that wire to make that chord of whips.
 - b) I believe David's point was that He cared deeply about the tabernacle (that later became a temple) for God. I believe that David himself was consumed with the idea of caring about God even to the point where those who were not that religious insulted David to his face or behind his back. An example of this was that one of David's wives insulted his religious zeal to his face. (See 1st Chronicles 15:29.)
 - c) Coming back to us, I guarantee that if we are committed to serving God, there are people we know who behind our back or to our face will put down our zeal for God. We have to accept the fact that such action just comes with the territory of our commitment to God.
12. Verse 10: When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn; ¹¹ when I put on sackcloth, people make sport of me. ¹² Those who sit at the gate mock me, and I am the song of the drunkards.
- a) These next three verses give more examples of how David, Jesus, and probably many others had to endure scorn of those who don't care for God. This does not mean we are

better people than nonbelievers. It is just the realization that our commitment to God will cause others to do some of the things mentioned in these verses.

- b) Let me briefly describe Verses 10 and 11 here. It was common practice for religious Jews to weep (based on their sinful remorse) or fast in order to show their commitment to God.
 - i) In Verse 11, it mentions wearing sackcloth. In short, sackcloth is an uncomfortable piece of clothing and to wear it was a sign of remorse to God.
 - ii) The point of these two verses is that those people who are not committed to serving God will scorn efforts of religious people for what they do.
- c) Verse 12 takes that hatred of religious people one step further. It says those who sit at the gate mocked David. In those days, walls were built around a town for protection. The leading men of that city would often be in charge of the city gates to see who does or does not enter that town. The point here is the leading men of that town would mock David for his "way too serious" commitment to God.
- d) Now think of Jesus and that kind of mocking. The leading Jews of Jesus day may have been impressed by His miracles, but they would not accept Him as the Messiah.
- e) This leads me to the last point of these three verses. It says, "I am the song of drunkards".
 - i) That means those who spent their lives getting drunk all the time made up songs about David or about those who are seriously committed toward following God.
 - ii) Getting back to Jesus, the point is many were impressed with His miracles, but not impressed enough to want to change their lives based on what He was doing.
- f) Here's the point for you and me: we shouldn't expect non-believing friends to act the way we do after we have committed our lives for God. We can expect to be mocked and even picked on for our commitment to Him. It doesn't mean we stop believing in God because of such people, just that we should not be shocked by that behavior.

13. Verse 13: But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation. ¹⁴ Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. ¹⁵ Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me. ¹⁶ Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me.

- a) These next few verses teach us how to properly respond when others pick us on. The essential point of these verses is to give that pain we feel to God.
- b) Let's face it, nobody likes to be mocked for his or her beliefs. David didn't just respond "in kind" to those mockers. David took that pain he felt and gave it to God.
 - i) The Gospels state how Jesus was mocked for His statement that He was a king. (See John 18:37.) I suspect Jesus dealt with mocking all of his life even through his childhood based on the false concept He was an illegitimate child. The point is Jesus did not lash out at His accusers, but took that pain and gave it to God the Father. That is what is being taught here in these verses: Take the pain that others inflict upon us and give that pain to God for Him to deal with.
- c) With all of that said, let us now look at the verses themselves.
 - i) Verse 13 is a prayer for God's great salvation. I think this is more than a prayer to be saved one day. I believe this is a prayer to show us God is real. There are times when things are falling apart, we may ask God to remind us that He is there and He is still watching over us and all of our suffering is somehow worth it.
 - ii) Verses 14 and 15 give visual examples of how "low" David was felling here. He was not literally sinking in water or stuck in a pit, but the pain of seeing others mock his trust in God made David want some sort of assurance of his salvation at this moment in time.
 - iii) So will God answer us when we make a prayer request like this? I usually find, that somehow, someway God reassures us when we need it. It is usually not something blatant, but just a simple sign that He is there and watching over us.

- iv) Of course, it is up to God to act and there is no guarantee of this. Still I have seen God act if no other reason than to help us with our doubts at times.
14. Verse 17: Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.
¹⁸Come near and rescue me; redeem me because of my foes.
- a) First let me ask the question, how can God "hide His face" from anyone? In other words, how can God not hear anyone's prayer if God is all knowing?
- i) The answer is God is aware of all of our prayers and David knew this. David is asking God to "work now" and on David's timing in a visible way.
- ii) Remember that we can ask God for anything at anytime. How and when God answers is His business and we have to accept that fact.
- b) Whatever David is going through at this moment, he feels like he is in trouble and needs God's help to get through his situation.
- i) Based on Verse 18, we know that David's enemies are near by and he realizes that the first place he should run to for help is to God. Yes, others can help us, but it starts with trusting God for the outcome of a situation and then and only then can we call on others who we believe can help us.
- ii) I have no idea what David's situation was at this point and what were his options. All I know is that David turned to God first, and that is what He desires of us.
- c) If this psalm is about Jesus, think about how often in the Gospels He went alone to pray and in effect, ask God the Father to (among other things) rescue Him from constant death threats before His appointed time. My point here is that just as David and even Jesus himself can turn to God the Father in whatever situation they faced, so can we.
15. Verse 19: You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you.
- a) David is saying that because of his trust in God, he is scorned by others in Israel and even disgraced and shamed. Think of others around us who could be thinking, "Look at that idiot over there, instead of standing up for himself or herself, they are hoping that the God of the Universe will rescue them".
- i) Personally I'm getting to the point where I don't care what others think of my work for God. I have found that as one grows in trust of God, one becomes less concerned about what other nonbelievers we know think about our ministry work.
- ii) If we are willing to take a stand for Christ, then we have to be willing to face as David says, "scorn disgrace and shame". Yes those things can be very hurtful and I'm not taking that lightly. The point is we should take the pain we feel from those things and give them to God, just as David is doing in these verses.
16. Verse 20: Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none.
- a) Speaking of the pain felt by others hurting us, I present Verse 20. David says here that the scorn of others has broken his heart and left him feeling helpless.
- b) There are moments in one's life where one does feel like no one can relate to the pain we are feeling. It is moments like that where we must turn to God and say in effect, "I need help and I need it now".
- i) I have found that in moments like that, God does somehow work through our lives to get us through those moments. He may work through other people or He may work through us directly. The point is if we trust in God for our help, a God that loves us that much cannot leave us in that state of mind.
- ii) In other words, God cannot love us any more than He already does. It is simply a matter of learning to trust in that love and trust in it, regularly.
17. Verse 21: They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.
- a) First let me explain what is "gall". It is something bitter to endure. The rough idea would be like someone offering us food or drink mixed with something bad that would harm us.

- b) This verse is in effect, quoted in Matthew 27:34 that reads, "There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it." (NIV translation.)
 - i) So why was Jesus was offered wine mixed with gall? This drink mixed with gall was in effect a type of poison designed to speed up the death. To die of crucifixion is really to slowly suffocate because it was literally painful to breath while being on a cross. Offering this drink to someone on a cross may taste good to them as one gets very thirsty from making all of that effort to breath.
 - a) So why did Jesus taste it? I suspect that the taste gave Jesus the ability to cry out His famous last words of "It is finished". (John 19:30.)
 - b) At the same time refusing to take the drink (He just sipped it and said in effect "No, I won't drink this"), Jesus refused to lighten the physical pain that He was sentenced to receive.
 - c) OK John, enough theology about Jesus, why did David write this and how does it effect you and me? Regarding David himself, I suspect he felt so low from what his enemies were doing to him it felt as if his food and drink were poisoned.
 - i) For you and me, it is a reminder that Jesus "felt the full force" of our sins and the cross was designed to teach us through a slow and painful death how much Jesus had to suffer for the sins of mankind.
 - ii) This verse is also a reminder of when we feel overwhelmed by our problems, it can feel like our food and drink is poisonous. The idea is that one is in so much pain, it feels like food or drink just makes the problem worse.
 - a) Whether or not that is actually true is irrelevant about the point of feeling pain due to something that we did not deserve.
 - iii) A great quote of Jesus on this topic is when He said, "You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." (John16:20b). The point of that quote is we will suffer at times due to our trust in Him, but God will turn our suffering into joy.
18. Verse 22: May the table set before them become a snare; may it become retribution and a trap. ²³May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. ²⁴Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.
- a) The focus changes in Verse 22 from "us to them". David is now wishing harm on those who have tried to hurt him. In Verse 22, David asks that the trap they set for him (called a "table" in this verse) come back to harm his enemies. In Verse 23, David asks that his enemies eyes be darkened so they cannot see and their backs be bent forever. Finally in Verse 24 David asks that God's anger "overtake them" so they cannot survive.
 - i) To explain this, let me ask a different sort of question: Should we ask God to punish those who want to hurt us as bad, or worse than they have hurt us? Remember that "hell" is eternal so in effect one is asking that someone suffer forever for the harm they have done to us or done to one of God's people.
 - ii) If we love God, then we must also learn to love what God loves and hate what God hates. Yes we may want our enemies to repent, but if they refuse to repent, we should want what God wants, and that is to punish them in effect for turning from God and taking that hatred out on His people.
 - iii) So if God loves all people, why would we ask Him to harm people this way? Part of the answer is that God loves us so much that He wants to harm those who are more than willing to harm us. People do suffer eternally in effect for hating the God of the bible and then taking it out on those of us who believe in that God.
 - b) This leads us back to these verses. So is it ok to ask God to physically harm those who oppose His will? David is going through a life-threatening situation and he understood that God was his only way of getting through it.
 - i) Sometimes pouring out our frustration over our problems to God does include the idea of desiring God to harm those who harm us. How God actually does do

harm them is up to Him and not us. The point is if God truly does love us, then He would care for us and would want to stop those who want to harm us.

- c) So if that is true, why does God allow so much suffering of His people? The short answer is God's purposes are often greater than we can comprehend. I have faith that whatever suffering we have to go through is either to teach us lessons about trusting God more or to teach others around us to trust God more through such times.
- d) I once read an interesting study about the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Roughly half of them still believe in God and half do not. If one has gone through that much suffering and seen that much death, one would naturally question God's existence.
 - i) The "good" that came out of that holocaust, included the idea that Israel got to return to their homeland because of it. That may be of little comfort to those who lost everything. However, it does show that God is still working out details of His salvation plan for the Nation of Israel for His glory.
 - ii) As for whether or not it was fair for them to go through that suffering, again, I trust in a perfect God that will judge all people fairly for their lives. That alone allows me to sleep at night and not worry about tough questions like this.
- e) Another way to look at this is to ask, "What is the alternative?" Would it be better if all there is to life was this life and nothing else? What do you say to a child dying of cancer if there is no next life? If there was no evidence for God's existence, I would still rather go through this life believing in a God that "rights the wrongs" of this world than accept the idea that all of the suffering of this life is all there is to life. Which of course, leads to the sin problem, which is why I accept the idea of God Himself having to die for our sins.
- f) OK, John, you've wandered way off these verses. ☺ Actually I've explained why it is ok to ask God to harm those who want to harm us and why we pray prayers of revenge.

19. Verse 25: May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents. ²⁶ For they persecute those you wound and talk about the pain of those you hurt. ²⁷ Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation. ²⁸ May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.

- a) Apparently I was done describing how it was ok to pray for harm for our enemies, but David was just getting started. What I meant by that is if David's desire for his enemies were "bad enough" in Verses 22-24, he vents out even harder in Verses 25-28.
- b) Let me first summarize David's points here and then explain the thoughts behind them. David wishes the homes of his enemies be deserted with no family to live there.
 - i) Verse 26 says that they persecute those who You (God) wound. That would be like us saying, God punished us believers for something we did, but our enemies piled on over and above that. While that idea may sound strange to us, God did punish the Babylonians and other nations in effect for "piling on" more than God intended on the Jewish people at the time of their captivity.
 - ii) Verses 27-28 in effect say that not only should they be punished in this lifetime, but that they should suffer eternally for the crimes they have committed.
- c) When one is angry at the way someone has hurt us, it is natural to ask God to harm them equal or more than they have harmed us. So if someone truly desires to harm us or is trying to harm us, do these verses teach us is that it is ok to ask for harm for those who want to hurt us?
 - i) The short answer is we can ask the God who loves us and cares for us anything we want, but it is up to Him to answer how He sees best.
 - ii) Letting go of our problems includes the idea of letting go of those who want to harm us. It is saying, "they" (whoever they are to you or I) are now His problem. If it God's desire for us to suffer in this life, then we must accept that. If it is God's desire to punish those who harm us "now", then that is His decision and not ours.

- iii) Remember that God's peace comes from letting go of the pain and letting God take the lead to deal with our issues. I still believe that if a crime was committed, one should report that person to the police for "society's sake" and not ours.
- 20. Verse 29: I am in pain and distress; may your salvation, O God, protect me.
 - a) The good news here is we stop focusing on those who want to harm us and beginning with this verse, turn the situation back over to God. Here, David literally states how much pain he is in. At the same time he is trusting in God to save and protection him.
 - b) David is praying in effect, "God, if You want me to live through this situation or die now, it is up to You and not me. If it is Your desire for me to be with You now in heaven, that is your decision and not mine. I'm just going to move forward and make the best decision possible, but the results are your business." That is asking for God's salvation and God's protection at any moment in time.
- 21. Verse 30: I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.
 - a) Here's a thought: Did David's enemies go away between Verses 29 and 30? I suspect his problems are still "right in front of him". What changed for David here is his perspective. He is reminding himself that God is in charge of the situation. David already laid out to God what he (David) would do about his enemies and now it is up to God to act His way and on His timing. Because David has truly let go of whatever his enemies do to him, David knows that he can praise God at this point in time, and that is what Verse 30 does.
- 22. Verse 31: This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.
 - a) OK David is saying "something" will please God more than animal sacrifices. What is going on here, and again, tell me why I should care?
 - i) Let me explain: What God desires of us, more than anything else, is a complete trust in Him for our lives. It is about "letting go" and letting God be in charge.
 - ii) The idea of an animal sacrifice to an Israelite of David's day is in effect to say, "Hey God, look at this expensive offering I am giving You to show my commitment to You." God doesn't have a problem with doing things to show our commitment to Him, (whatever our "ox" might be). To fully trust God with the outcomes of our situations is a greater level of trust than just sacrificing to show our commitment.
- 23. Verse 32: The poor will see and be glad-- you who seek God, may your hearts live!
 - a) So what is the next step after fully committing ourselves to God? Being a good witness to others. This verse is saying in effect once we (or once again) fully commit our lives to trusting in God is when we become a great witness for God.
 - b) I know someone who loves to preach to nonbelievers. He regularly fasts and prays prior to these efforts. While those efforts may strengthen his faith and keep away evil factions from harming his effort, there is nothing greater than being fully committed to God by trusting Him with the outcome of all our situations. That is the type of prayer being offered up in these verses.
 - c) One technical note here: The word "poor" here does not refer to those who don't have much money. That word poor is referring to the "poor in spirit" as Jesus used that term in Matthew 5:3. It is about those who lack the faith to fully trust in God. Nothing increases that faith like seeing others being joyful because they are fully trusting in God.
- 24. Verse 33: The LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.
 - a) Verse 33 is the reminder to all of us that this psalm is not just for David or for us who are committed to serving Christ. I have met people who are literally afraid to step into a church because they are afraid God would strike them dead on the spot. God wants all of us to make that sort of "fully trust in Him" commitment to Him no matter what we have done in our lives or their current belief about God.
 - b) It should be the desire of all us believers to see others join in that belief. This is about God speaking to anyone willing to trust in Him that God is listening, He is willing to help us

and He will lead us through our situations if we are willing to trust in Him. (Gee that would be a great closing prayer, but I still have a few more verses to go. ☺)

25. Verse 34: Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them,³⁵ for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it;³⁶ the children of his servants will inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell there.
- a) Since David has, in effect let go of his worries, an appropriate ending for this psalm would simply be not only to praise God, but request that all that trust in Him praise Him.
 - b) Verse 34 asks all in heaven and earth, in the sea and all that move praise God. Obviously fish in the sea and other animals cannot stop and praise God. That is not the point. The point is the evidence of God's existence is "everywhere", and that alone should get people to realize there is a God and take some time every now and then to praise Him.
 - i) In other words, if one sees mountains and seas, our logic should tell us that all of this creation could not just have happened by itself. There must be an entity (that we call God) that created this in the first place. For that we should praise God.
 - c) Verse 35 and Verse 36 then go on to focus specifically on the nation of Israel. The point here is that if a non-Israelite can look at creation and see the evidence for God, how much more accountable is the Jewish person who has an understanding of the good things that God has planned for that nation and should praise God. Us Christians needs to remember that God's promises to the nation were not conditional upon accepting the Messiah, which is why I believe that piece of land belongs to the Israelites, period.
 - d) For the Christian, those of us living in places where we are free to worship God have no excuse not to praise Him. We should stop every now and then to praise God for the great things He has and will do for our lives. We can trust in God to watch over our lives and give us the peace that comes from giving Him our issues and not having to worry about anything. For the good God has and will do for us, we should praise Him and that's the point of these last few verses.
 - e) On that happy thought, I'm going to squeeze in Psalm 70, as it is only 5 verses.
26. Psalm 70, Introduction: For the director of music. Of David. A petition.
- a) The title says that David wrote this psalm and it was given to the person in charge of music (at the official worship service in David's day).
 - b) The title says it is a petition. That means these five lines are a petition for both the people who want to hurt believers (to be "turned back") and at the same time it is a petition to let all the people who do trust in God exalt Him for the good He has and will do in our lives.
 - c) So if we just finished a 36-line psalm asking for His protection and praising Him, why have this little 5-line psalm in effect to do the same thing? The point is we think about God and then remember our problems are still right in front of us. In effect we need to pray again. Since we know the details of our problems well at this point, often a good summary like this psalm is helpful when we once again won't let go of our problems.
27. Verse 1: Hasten, O God, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me.
- a) There is nothing wrong with the idea of asking God to help us now. If we know we are in trouble and know that we can't see a solution to whatever we are dealing with, one can ask God to work quickly and now in our lives. Remember that God knows all things. Therefore, asking God to work now is not a reminder to God who knows our problems, but a reminder to ourselves that the solution to our problems comes through God.
28. Verse 2: May those who seek my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. ³ May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" turn back because of their shame.
- a) The focus of these two verses is on those who want to harm David. They are saying in effect, "May their plans to hurt me be put into such confusion, that they turn in shame".

- i) If it God's goal for us to make a difference for Him, then we must also trust that the same God will make it possible for His will to be done. At the same time, we trust that God will take care of whatever resistance we have to face in our lives.
 - ii) We pray about that resistance because even though God may know the results of what will happen, we don't know. In effect, we are petitioning God to make it obvious to us that those who want to oppose the will of God be stopped "dead in their tracks". That way, God's will, may be done through those of us who He has called to go out and make that difference for Him.
 - b) One of the great things in life is to watch God work and literally stop the plans of those who want to harm His people. Praying prayers like this remind us of how God can work and watch how He does work through believes to stop our and His enemies.
 - c) But what if it is not that clear cut of an issue? What if those who oppose us at some point are also believers or say, someone we still have to deal with in our lives? The answer is still to let God work it out His way. God wants us to petition Him to help us deal with our issues. It is a way to get us involved in what He desires for our lives.
29. Verse 4: But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "Let God be exalted!"
- a) It is best if one reads this verse as a contrast to the last two verses.
 - i) Verses 2 and 3 both indicate that those who refuse to seek God, will be turned to "shame and confusion". Remember that the title of this psalm mentions the fact it is a memorial. Part of that memorial is to consider the fate of those who refuse to turn to God and what is their destiny now and eternally.
 - ii) With that in mind, now let us consider Verse 4. This verse is in effect a call for those of us who do trust in God to praise Him. That too, is a memorial.
 - b) OK, what does that mean practically? Does it just mean we are to shout a bunch of "Hallelujah's" when we go to church on Sunday? That's not the issue. The point is we are grateful for how God guides our lives and every now and then we pause to express that gratitude to God. We don't do it for His sake. We do it to remind ourselves that God is guiding our lives and even as a witness to others around us of God's goodness.
30. Verse 5: Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay.
- a) David describes himself here as poor and needy. It is possible this was written before he was a king and on the run. I suspect the meaning of that term is entirely different here.
 - i) The term "poor and needy" is not about our financial status. It is the fact we realize we are sinners and have no eternal destiny in heaven without knowing the fact we need and depend upon God every day of our life. That's the point here.
 - b) In effect, this verse just happens to be a perfect ending for this lesson. Remember that my main point of this lesson is about what it takes "practically" to live the Christian life. Yes it is about living to make a difference for God. But that life does not come from drawing upon our own strength, but "God's strength".
 - c) We as believers are also poor and needy, but it is God that desires to work through us to make a difference for Him. That is the point of this verse and that is the main point of this lesson. On that happy thought, I can close in prayer.
 - d) Little did I realize when I started this lesson how much I was going to quote the Gospel of John as it ties to this lesson. It just shows how much some of the psalms directly tie to the life of Jesus Himself as well as applies to us as His followers.
31. Heavenly Father, We thank You for calling us into Your salvation. We realize that it is a difficult life to live at times. Help us to trust You with whatever pain is caused to us by our relationship with You. Help us to turn any pain we are felling over to You. Help us to trust in You and not our own ability to make a difference for You in our lives. Bless us, as we go out in the world and make a difference for You in our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen