

1. This is a lesson that best starts by giving my title. I call it "God does not leave us half done".
 - a) Visualize food that requires baking before eating. I'll use a pizza as an example. Would we consider eating a pizza that is only "half-baked"? Assuming we are not starving and desperate for food, we would rather that pizza is fully cooked before we eat it.
 - b) The point of my title has nothing to do with pizza or any other baked food. My point is that if God has called us to be one of His, He won't leave us "half-done". Remember that salvation is not just a one-time commitment, but is a life long journey of trusting in God.
 - i) What I also mean by that is we are suffering at the present moment, or if we are going through some sort of difficult situation, a god that has called us to salvation, does not want us to just "sit there" and be miserable. God wants us to trust Him to guide us through our lives and help us through our current situation.
 - ii) To put that last statement another way, God will never leave us "half done".
2. At this point, let me summarize the two psalms in this lesson, and then tie it to that title theme.
 - a) In this lesson, we have two more psalms written by someone named Asaph.
 - b) (Just so you know Asaph will continue to be the writer all the way through Psalm 83.)
 - c) Psalm 76 appears to be describing some sort of a great victory in the history of Israel.
 - i) Scholars debate over which victory this is, but the references appear to be about a time several hundred years after the time frame of King David. Remember that an Asaph is mentioned elsewhere in the bible (a number of times in 1st Chronicles) was in the ministry around David's time. Many scholars argue there was more than psalm writer named Asaph.
 - ii) Putting the "who was this Asaph" debate aside for the moment, the point is Psalm 76 focuses on a point in time when God gave the nation of Israel a great victory.
 - d) Psalm 76 is obviously followed by Psalm 77. This next psalm (#77) asks the question: Dear God, we (as in the nation of Israel at that time) are in trouble and we would like You (God) to work now, just as You have done in the past history of our nation. In other words, at this moment things are looking bad for the nation of Israel, and we know that You God have worked in our past, but we don't see You working now, on our problems.
 - e) So my big question is, "Why have Psalm 76 and Psalm 77 in that order?"
 - i) Here is Psalm 76 describing a time of Israel having a great victory.
 - ii) Then comes Psalm 77 describing a time when we don't see God working.
 - iii) The answer comes back to my title of God won't leave us "half done". Just as God has done great works in Israel's past, so He won't leave them or us "half-done" in their (or our) lives for the rest of their history or the rest of our history.
 - iv) Remember that the Israelites are still "God's chosen people". This is not about how one is saved. This is about the fact that God made an unconditional promise to the nation of Israel that God would bless them collectively as long as they would trust in Him. In short, God won't leave them "half-done".
 - f) This does lead to you and I. We too as Christians are called into God's plan for salvation as well. If God has given us great victories in the past (as in the fact He has saved us), He will not leave us half "undone" for the rest of our lives. God's goal for each one of us is for us to follow Him and do His will for our lives.
 - g) Practically speaking, it means when things are going wrong in our lives and we can't sense God being there to help us, it is a matter of trusting that He is still there, still guiding us, and yes, He won't leave us "half undone". We read of his great victories in Psalm 76 to help us through the "dark times" that are being described in Psalm 77.
 - h) With that happy thought stated, ☺ I'm ready to start Psalm 76.

3. Psalm 76, title: For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of Asaph. A song.
 - a) As I stated earlier we have two psalms today written by someone named Asaph. As I also stated there are debates among scholars about whether or not there was more than one Asaph and in regards to when this psalm was actually written.
 - i) For example, the bible does mention in 1st Chronicles a bunch of times a man named Asaph who was the worship leader at the time of King David.
 - ii) Also, when the first Greek translation was made of the psalms, roughly a few hundred years before Jesus and roughly 500 years after the time of David, there is a single comment on this psalm (#76) that says this psalm is about an event that happened in Israel's history roughly two hundred years after David. Whether that comment was Jewish tradition or an actual fact is one reason why this is debated.
 - b) OK John, so scholars debate when this was written and the historical significance. That was millenniums before we were born. Tell me how this psalm affects me?
 - i) As always, that is the key question. The psalm is about a time where God has worked in a great way to rescue the Nation of Israel. The fact that scholars don't agree on the "when" is another sign that God works similar ways at different times. It also shows that God continues to work in the lives of those who trust in Him over the centuries and millenniums.
 - ii) To put it another way, this psalm is all about praising God for the great victories He has given us in our lives. Think of the psalm this way: The last psalm (#75) was in effect a question of where is God now that everything is falling apart. Psalm 76 then follows up that question with "Just watch how God is working".
 - a) If Psalm 75 asked, "Where is God", then Psalm 76 responds with "right here in front of you the whole time." Just as we wonder where is God when things are going wrong, there should equally (if not more so) be times of praising God when things are going right and the problems we have been dealing with, all of sudden get taken care of in a way we can't explain.
 - c) With that happy thought stated, ☺ let me get back to the title itself.
 - i) The title mentions stringed instruments and the fact this psalm is a song. As I have stated a number of times in these studies, the original music is long gone.
 - ii) It sort of makes one wonder, "Why did the Israelites go to so much trouble to preserve the words, but not go to equally as much trouble to preserve the music?"
 - a) I suspect the simple answer is that it was not God's will for the original music to be preserved. We are free today to sing it to our own music.
 - iii) The point for us to learn is simply that the words we are about to read were originally intended for music. Since this is a "happy Psalm" in that it is about how God has answered prayer and given us victories in our lives, then in that "happy mood", we should sing this psalm to the best of our ability.
 - iv) As we consider how we should sing this psalm, ☺ let's start on Verse 1.
4. Verse 1: In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.
 - a) Speaking of "debate over when this psalm was written", notice Verse 1 seems to mention the divided kingdom. When Israel was two separate kingdoms after King Solomon, one was called Judah and the other was called Israel. This verse may be implying that.
 - i) Then again, even when the kingdom was united under David, Judah was the largest and most dominant tribe. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, so this line could simply be hinting at the concept of how God has been working publicly in that He works through the Nation of Israel and He will work again in that the Messiah will (from the perspective of the psalm writer) come through Judah.
 - b) No matter when one thinks this psalm was written, the point is that God has worked through people in the past and will (is) working again. If that fact alone doesn't get us to appreciate the God of Israel who is also the God of the world, I don't know what will.

5. Verse 2: His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.
 - a) The ancient name for the city of Jerusalem is Salem. The first time that city is mentioned goes back to Genesis 14:18. Abraham paid tribute to the king of Salem. The city of Salem, (i.e., the city of Jerusalem) was rescued as part of Abraham's effort to help his nephew Lot.
 - i) OK, John, why is that ancient history significant here? The point is that long before the Israelites took control of Jerusalem, The bible is teaching in effect that God knew that city would be the basis of the center of worship.
 - a) There is an old joke that the bible in effect is a tale of two cities: Jerusalem and Babylon. Jerusalem represents the center of where God is worshipped, and Babylon represents where those who oppose God was based. The bible describes the rise and fall of both cities throughout the bible books.
 - ii) Today, three major religions all consider Jerusalem significant. It is the center of worship for Jews and Christians. Muslims also consider Jerusalem significant as they claim this is where Mohammed left the world to be with God.
 - a) One interesting fact about modern Israel is that they let representatives of all three religious build churches, mosques and synagogues in the land of Israel despite the fact it is a "Jewish state".
 - iii) If my memory is correct, the city of Jerusalem has been attacked 29 recorded times in history. For a city with no natural resources and is not significant in location, this city sure has been desired by conquerors, throughout the millennia.
 - b) This leads to a discussion of the word "Zion". This is an ancient word that is associated with Israel. The point is "Zion" is always associated with Israel and in particular with the city of Jerusalem. Despite Satan's best effort over the millennia to have this city ruled by people who don't fear the God of the bible, that city will always be associated with the God of the Bible, past, present and future.
6. Verse 3: There he broke the flashing arrows, the shields and the swords, the weapons of war.

Selah

 - a) Verses 1 give us the "where" of this psalm. Verse 2 alludes to the concept that the physical location of Jerusalem as the basis of where God was located. (That is, God's headquarters on earth as a symbolic center of worship of Him). Verse 3 begins to explain what God did here in Jerusalem: Notice the word "he" in Verse 3. That is describing God Himself leading the Israelites to victory. The point here is that despite large and well-equipped armies that originally defended this city we eventually defeated by the Israelites.
 - b) OK John, so the Israelites successfully conquered this city with God's help. How is that significant to my life today?
 - i) The point is not about knowing ancient history. The point is the same God that can be trusted to give great victory despite odds that seem stacked against us can also give us victories in our lives against whatever we have to face.
7. Verse 4: You are resplendent with light, more majestic than mountains rich with game.
 - a) This is one of those verses that helps if we see different translations:
 - i) You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. (NKJV)
 - ii) Glorious and excellent are You from the mountains of prey [splendid and majestic, more than the everlasting mountains]. (Amplified Bible.)
 - iii) You are glorious and more majestic than the everlasting mountains. (New Living.)
 - b) To explain, remember that this psalm is gratitude to God for victories He has given us.
 - i) This verse is saying God is better than "mountains of prey". OK what does that mean? Think of soldiers preying on their enemy. It is saying despite our enemies best effort to defeat us, despite the fact that this world makes it best effort to defeat those of us trusting in God, He is still there, He is guiding His followers and He is more powerful than any enemy can throw at us. Again, the underlying point is despite whatever we are dealing with, God won't leave us "half done".

8. Verse 5: Valiant men lie plundered, they sleep their last sleep; not one of the warriors can lift his hands.
- a) Again, we have another verse describing the defeat of those opposed to God. This verse is literally describing soldiers that are about to be defeated by God, but don't know it yet.
 - b) OK John supposed I am not fighting anyone at the moment. This is one of those cases where if we are not living to make a difference for God, we are not involved in "the fight".
 - i) At the least we should be praying for fellow Christians who are on the "front lines" fighting to make a difference for God.
 - c) The way to look at this psalm is to know that if we are trusting in God, then most likely at some point in our lives we will be fighting battles to make a difference for Him.
 - i) That can mean some project God has called us to do.
 - ii) That can mean some physical struggle we have in our lives.
 - iii) This psalm is a reminder that if we are trusting in God, no matter what happens in our "quest", we are on the winning side and we can have confidence God will see us through what we are dealing with.
 - d) OK suppose I am tired or sick right now and can't deal with battling anything significant.
 - i) God encourages our rest just as He encourages us to fight. Stop and think of all the times in the Gospel accounts where Jesus separated Himself to go rest and pray to God the Father. Think of all the times Jesus made it a point for the disciples to get away and get some rest. My point is that making a difference for God is demanding work, and there are times where we do need our rest.
 - ii) The trick is to know the difference between being lazy and just resting. I find God makes it obvious to me through prayer when it is time for each to occur.
9. Verse 6: At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still. ⁷ You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?
- a) Meanwhile, God is "busy" fighting for Israel here. Verse 6 is saying that the enemies of God cause both their horses and chariots to stand still. The point of Verse 7 is that when "God is angry" (i.e., when we see God working) nothing can win against Him.
 - b) OK, John, what does all of that mean? It is not about us fighting in a war against chariot riders. The point is God does fight on behalf of those that trust in Him.
 - i) God does not have emotions like you and I do. When it says God is angry, it just seems from our perspective that God is angry at His enemies and causes them to lose the battles they fight against His people.
 - c) So John, are you saying the nation of Israel will win every battle it fights? Of course not. If you think that, you don't know your history. As a general rule, the Nation of Israel has been successful when it has collectively trusted in God to lead them to victory and have been defeated when they trust first in their weapons or other gods. I don't see modern Israel being much different from ancient Israel in that regards.
 - d) The point for you and I is not about the nation of Israel. Here, it is about trusting God especially when the odds seemed stacked against us. Logic may tell us there is no good way out of a bad situation. God is one who says to us to trust Him despite however the situation looks in front of us. Trust in Him is what leads us through whatever it is we have to face.
 - e) Last night at my men's bible study, someone new came. His life is a true mess at the moment. He needs to find a job just to pay his rent. He has medical issues that require significant attention. His family situation is pretty bad. I have no idea how to help someone with that great a need. All I do know is that a God is more than capable of helping someone who fully trusts in Him.
 - i) My point is when the odds seemed incredibly against, that is often when God gets angry (from our viewpoint) to prove that He and He alone controls the destiny of our world if we are just willing to trust in Him.

- f) I once heard a story of a famous preacher a generation ago, lying in a hospital bed. He overheard other people saying about him, "He's not going to make it, is he?" This preacher managed to sit straight up and yell out, "My God is able". Yes he made a full recovery, not because of His willpower, but because of His trust in God that no matter what happens in that situation it is God's will for his life.
 - g) That's the point of this verse. Not just that God can defeat whatever enemies we are battling, but the fact we can trust in God to lead us to victory no matter what the odds are.
 - h) So does that mean we should just charge ahead no matter the odds? Not always. We should do our best to discern God's will for the moment and then go forward, trusting that God is guiding us. It's not the "odds" that are the key issue. The trick is just to do our best to figure out and do what we believe God wants us to do at that moment.
10. Verse 8: From heaven you pronounced judgment, and the land feared and was quiet-- ⁹ when you, O God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land. *Selah*
- a) These verses are saying that God has found his enemies "guilty" from heaven. There are specific moments in time where it appeared as if God had single-handedly saved the nation of Israel from sure defeat.
 - b) So how does God have enemies? It is not describing a force equal to God that must be defeated. The point is some people willfully choose to ignore the God of the bible and such people attack against those who believers who do trust in Him.
 - c) Next question: If such people are so bad, why does God allow them to organize in the first place? This comes back to free will. God wants people to see the errors of their own ways and see the consequences of turning from Him with their lives.
 - i) So why does God wait for a specific time to interact in the lives of people? Because He wants us to see the errors of our ways and God likes to work in a way that makes it obvious to everyone that when He works in a "major way" so we can know that it is God working to make a difference.
 - d) Now think about our own lives. Think about the projects that we take on in order to make a difference for God in this world. We have no idea of how successful we will be. We don't know what the opposition to our project will do to us. All we know is that we trust in God to make it through our day and make it through our projects.
 - i) Lately, I have been thinking about my wife and a specific project she has been taking on for the last year or so. It is amazing to me how God has led her every step of the way and provided for her to move through this project. Without giving a lot of details, I have watched God do great things through her during this time.
 - ii) My point is often we don't appreciate how God can and does work until we see it for ourselves and personally experience it in a mighty way. That idea of how God works includes the idea of defeat of those who don't want God's will done.
11. Verse 10: Surely your wrath against men brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained.
- a) Of all the verses I studied this week, this is the toughest one to deal with. It essentially says that when God brings down the plans of those who work against Him, this act of God bringing them down will bring Him praise. The question is when does God bring people down and how does that specifically bring Him praise?
 - b) I was thinking of the most horrible crimes committed in the past century. Both Hitler and Stalin had millions of people killed over and above World War II. So how were these evil men brought down? Since they are dead, God has judged them for what they did, and they are receiving the wrath of God. At the same time God did allow millions to die.
 - i) So how does one explain God's existence and praise to Him through such horrible things? If this life is all there is, then definitely life would be very unfair. If however, those people live forever, and are judged for what they did in this lifetime, that would be a fair way of judging people.

- ii) But John, if people are to live forever, why is this life the standard for eternity? The short answer is we live long enough where it is obvious to those around us how we act and whether or not we have a heart for God in the first place. I would argue we live long enough to where God can judge us based on how we act.
- iii) What about children and babies that die? I don't have all the answers, but I trust in a perfect God that will judge all people perfectly. All I do know is that behavior matters and trusting in a God that has perfectly forgiven us matters "perfectly".
- c) This believe it or not, does lead me back to the verse. The point is God will perfectly judge people for their deeds, and those who have suffered because of other's bad deeds who have trusted in the God of the bible will praise Him for this judgment.
 - i) As for the rest of us who have not suffered at the hands of such evil men, we too will praise God not only for our own salvation but for also for Him judging people fairly and giving people what they deserve for all of eternity.
 - ii) I have to be careful of the word "deserve" here. One could argue "ten thousand years" (or whatever amount) is enough for a horrible crime. Eternal separation from God is not just for doing bad things. I have learned that eternal hell as well as one choosing to live in a personal hell, is a matter of choice. If one chooses to ignore the God of the bible, one is willfully choosing not to be in His presence. That is what causes eternal separation even more than the bad deeds we do.
- d) Finishing the verse, it says the "survivors of your wrath are restrained".
 - i) This is about judgment. Remember we are forgiven not because we are good people, but due to our trust in Jesus. I do believe there will be others in heaven, because I can't explain how it is fair for a baby who died and has never learned about Jesus to be sent to hell. I truly don't know how God is going to judge in situations like that. I believe the final point of this verse is simply that the desire to sin ends in heaven for all of us.

12. Verse 11: Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them; let all the neighboring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared.

- a) Let us remember that this psalm is about the fact that God does judge the world and He does interact in the world on behalf of those who trust in Him. With that stated, why does Verse 11 tell us to make vows to God. Jesus said in effect, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no, and in effect, nothing more than that. (See Matthew 5:37 on that point.)"
 - i) The idea of a vow here in this psalm is not about swearing to God when making a promise. The point of the psalmist is simply that the vow we make is to put our trust in the fact that God exists, He will judge us and do our best to live by the standards that God calls to live by.
 - ii) To put it another way, yes just by trusting in Jesus sin payment eternally saves us, but that is not an excuse to live a sinful life. We still must turn over our sinful thoughts and acts to Him and ask God to change us to be more like the type of person that He wants us to be. The vow God wants all of us to make is that we trust in His existence, we trust in His sin payment on our behalf through Jesus and we vow to trust in Him with our lives and turnover our sins to Him.
- b) This leads to the second part of this verse that says, "let all the neighboring lands bring gifts". That is another way of saying we should not keep God to ourselves, but share the concept of His love and His judgment with others.
 - i) When the text says for neighboring countries to bring gifts, I don't think it is a literal request of say, Egypt to bring gifts to God's temple. I believe it is simply an acknowledgement that the God of the Israelites is the God that rules the world. It is a call for all people to trust in that God and believe He cares about our lives.
- c) To put Verse 11 another way, if God does interfere in man's affairs in order for His will to get done, that should get people from all nations to honor and fear that God.

13. Verse 12: He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth.
 - a) I don't know enough about the early history of Israel to know whether or not other kings of other countries feared the God of Israel. Given how often Israel was attacked by its enemies through history I have a lot of doubts about that concept.
 - b) This verse is very predictive of Jesus. Through the two millennia since Jesus died and was resurrected, there have been multitudes of kings of many nations that feared Him.
 - i) Think of all the kings who have paid tribute to popes and other church leaders over the centuries.
 - ii) Think of all the kings who cared about pleasing God as they ruled.
 - iii) My point is simply that this verse has come literally true over the millennia.
 - c) Believe it or not, that is the end of this psalm. The main point is simply that we can count on God to give us victories and I suspect they come when we least expect them. The point is we can count on them to happen. With that happy thought stated, it is time to get depressed again ☹ as I present Psalm 77.
14. Psalm 77, title: For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.
 - a) Here we have another psalm of Asaph.
 - i) As I stated in the introduction Asaph will be the author for a few more psalms after this one. As I have also stated, a classical debate among bible scholars is whether or not there was more than one Asaph. This psalm was definitely written around the time of David, while most scholars argue that the last one (#76) came later in time. It is not important enough to remember, just interesting to note that some scholars with way too much time on their hands debate things like this. ☺
 - b) This psalm was written for another person in charge of music during the time of David, who was named Jeduthun. Here is my best guess as to why this is stated.
 - i) What is significant for us to know is that this psalm was written with the original intention of having it sung. As I have stated, all the original music is long gone.
 - ii) Most of us adults are aware that we remember the words to songs much better than straight text on a page. One reason these psalms were sung is that it helps us to remember the words and helps us to focus on the points the psalm teaches.
 - iii) The idea of learning a psalm by singing it, is actually an important concept for this psalm, as it is all about remembering how God has worked in the past. The idea of focusing on how God has worked in the past of course is the theme of this lesson.
 - iv) It is probably best at this point if I just start on the text and as we go along I'll explain how it fits in with my title and what God wants us to learn from it.
15. Verse 1: I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me.
 - a) Well, this psalm starts out "tough enough" and explains that whatever was going on in the life of the author, instead of stating his problems, the author cried out to God for help.
 - i) The lesson for all of us is we are usually so busy trying to fix our problems, we forget that the greatest resource we have to help us deal with whatever problems we have is available for the asking.
 - ii) Asking God for help should always be our first step in dealing with our problems, not the final solution if all else fails.
16. Verse 2: When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. ³ I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. *Selah* ⁴ You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.
 - a) Like many adults, I am well aware of having nights where I do not sleep well. When we are dealing with problems, often we can't sleep because we can't get our minds off of whatever is bothering us at the moment.
 - b) The good news about the author of this psalm, is that instead of just complaining that he could not sleep due to his problems, he gives his problems to God.

- c) Here is my experienced advice when we can't sleep because we are worried about some problem about what to do. The solution is not television or talking about the problems. The solution is not even writing which is usually what I do when I can't sleep at nights.
 - i) The solution is about taking and giving one's problems to God.
 - ii) The solution is to get on one's knees and pray for God's help.
 - iii) The solution is to pray, "Lord I don't know what to do here. I don't know what steps to take to make this situation work out. I don't know what to do next. Therefore, Lord, this is Your problem, You deal with it."
 - iv) It is like saying to God, "Right now, I feel half done (there's that lesson title again). I need You (God) to guide me through this solution."
 - v) Once we get to that point of total surrender is when God does His best work.
 - vi) Often the middle of the night is when God wants me to write only because He wants me to share what I just learned at that moment. That does not mean all of us have to write when we are awake, it is just what God calls me to do at times.
 - a) My point is once we have let go of our problems and stated them out for God, that is when we can then "function". Then we can talk it out with others, or in my case "write it out", or maybe even go back to bed.
 - b) I have found through experience that once I have laid out problems to God and said in effect, "This is Your problem as I can't deal with it", then and only then I have peace from my situation of the moment.
 - d) I should also remind all of us that sometimes we have to give our problems to God in "baby steps". That is when we are still worrying about a problem after we have given it to God, so therefore we need to pray again.
 - i) Sometimes we have to pray, "Dear God, for the next two minutes I am not going to worry about it." When we start to worry again, it is time to pray about it again and not worry about it for another "two minutes" or for however long we can go without worrying about that problem.
 - ii) My point is God is willing to work on our level. If the most we can go is say a few minutes, God is willing to comfort us for the length of time we can handle and then He is more than willing to work with us again.
 - e) Yes we still have to face our problems in life. Yes we still have to make the best decisions possible given the information at hand. My point of this commentary about giving our problems to God is about letting go of the worrying over the issues we have to face in the first place.
 - f) Believe it or not, I am still talking about these three verses, where I suspect the author is obviously tired late at night, and he is giving his problems to God to deal with.
 - i) With that said, let's move on to Verse 5 and see what happens next. ☺
17. Verse 5: I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;
- a) One of the interesting arguments this writer Asaph is going to bring up, is thinking about how God has worked long ago in the history of Israel.
 - b) A great mistake that we make is that we can forget that God can work in a mighty way in our lives just as He has done with famous biblical characters. We make the mistake that somehow we are less important than famous bible characters and that God can't or won't do equally great things in our lives today.
 - c) Does that mean the only solution to our problem is a "biblically sized" miracle? ☹ No.
 - i) The point is not that God will "part waters" for us. The point is the same God that did part the Red Sea is a God that is more than capable of helping out our lives and is more than willing to get involved in our lives.
 - ii) With that said, let us move on to Verse 6 and read how God dealt with Asaph and hopefully learn a few things about how God can and does deal with our issues.

18. Verse 6: I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired: ⁷ "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? ⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" *Selah*
- a) In these verses the author Asaph asks God a lot of questions. He ponders:
 - i) Will the Lord reject us forever? (Verse 7)
 - a) It feels like God has not done anything significant in the life of His people in a long time and at that time it seemed like God has rejected Israel.
 - ii) Will he never show his favor again? (Verse 7)
 - a) This is the feeling one has when it feels like somehow God is too angry at us and we feel like God will never work in a mighty way again.
 - iii) Has his unfailing love vanished forever? (Verse 8)
 - a) Asaph is so worried about his problems or the problems of the nation of Israel that it feels like God's love is forever gone.
 - iv) Has his promise failed for all time? (Verse 8)
 - a) By now one can see the pattern, of Asaph contemplating if God will ever work again in the nation of Israel. This is what sleep deprivation can do to our thoughts. (Speaking as one who is experienced at this. ☺)
 - v) Has God forgotten to be merciful? (Verse 9)
 - a) The idea of "mercy" here is not about eternal salvation. It is about God intervening in the life of His people, despite all of their (or our) faults.
 - vi) Has he in anger withheld his compassion? (Verse 9)
 - a) Asaph is convinced that God must be angry with "His people" or else He would have worked some sort of miracle by now.
 - b) You read these questions and think "Oh boy I thought I had problems. ☺ I am worried about the problems of my own life and here is Asaph worried about a whole country."
 - i) An equivalent prayer inquiry for us might be, "Has God stop being merciful to my country, or hometown or my church? This is the kind of prayer one prays when it seems like the whole world is falling apart around us and we don't see God working. We may see a big catastrophe somewhere and wonder, "Where is God?"
 - ii) It is in real bad times, where often we do seek God with these types of questions.
 - a) The answer is despite the horrible things that have happened, God is still on the throne, He does still care about people and He wants us to get involved in His plans for our world, which is what prayer is all about.
 - iii) Whether our problems just have to do with our own lives or has to do with the lives of hundreds or even say millions of people, the truth is that God is still in charge, He is still "on the throne" and despite the bad things that are happening, He still wants to have mercy and kindness to those who are trusting in Him.
 - a) As I like to state in these bible studies, if this life is all that there is, life would definitely be unfair. However, through tragedies and difficult times is often when God does His best work and gives great opportunities for those of us who do trust in Him for God to do great things through people.
 - c) OK, time to end my speech and get back to the verses. In the last set of verses, God wants us to contemplate how He is still working even when we don't see Him working.
 - i) As to Asaph's problems, we will read how he deals with his issues starting in Verse 10. Speaking of which:
19. Verse 10: Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High."
- a) Remember where we left Asaph: Wide-awake in the middle of the night, pondering why isn't God working in a mighty way. For Asaph it seemed like God was either too angry at Israel or didn't care about their problems as He was not working in a mighty way.
 - b) Now in Verse 11, we will start to read of Asaph's solution to all of his problems:

20. Verse 11: I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. ¹² I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. ¹⁵ With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*
- a) I can sum up these five verses in one thought: Instead of complaining, "God has ignored us", Asaph starts to think about how God has worked in the past history of Israel.
 - i) Asaph realizes that the same God who has worked in a mighty way in the past is the same God who is still on the throne today.
 - ii) Asaph realizes that God has not worked a mighty work recently just so that He could let His people just "sit there and rot away". To repeat again, even though we don't see how God is working in our lives today, He won't leave us "half done".
 - b) OK John, we are not Israelites living millenniums ago. How does this apply to us?
 - i) The point is that God is still working in our lives and does want to work in our lives even when we can't sense Him working and even when our problems seem overwhelming for us to contemplate and deal with.
 - ii) Again, we are back to the concept of worrying about being "half done". Why do we worry about our present problems when we know God has worked in our lives in the past?
 - iii) One thing I encourage all of us to do is keep a journal of how God has worked in our lives in the past. Our problem is short memories. If we can see or read how God has worked in our own past that can often give us the strength to go forward when it seems like God is not working now the way we want Him to work.
 - c) This does lead me back to these verses. You can sense how Asaph's attitude improved in these set of verses simply by remembering how God has worked in the past.
 - i) In other words Asaph is saying, "I know God has worked in the past history of Israel. I know that God is still on the throne. Therefore I know that God will see us through our present problems and He will work His way on His timing."
 - ii) To say my title again, Asaph realized God would not leave him "half-done".
21. Verse 16: The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. ¹⁷ The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. ¹⁸ Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. ¹⁹ Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.
- a) One of the most powerful things we can watch in nature is a storm. We can see rain pouring down and watch lightening and thunder and think "this is powerful".
 - i) Asaph is saying that just like a storm is a powerful thing to watch, so God is a powerful thing to watch when He does work in our lives.
 - ii) Asaph is alluding to the parting of the Red Sea by Verse 19, but the image is much more than that. If you read of the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 15, it only mentions the waters separating. There was no discussion of any rain or thunder.
 - iii) Therefore, whatever Asaph is describing in these verses is more than just that one incident hundreds of years prior to when Asaph was writing this psalm.
 - b) So John are you saying when life gets bad, we are to think about the parting of the Red Sea or some sort of great thunderstorm? ☺
 - i) No, I am saying that when things are falling apart around us, we should focus on the fact that God is still there and still working in our lives. It is to remember that God has worked in the past and He loves us too much to let us just sit there "in our misery" worrying about problems.
 - ii) I am also not saying that our problems will magically go away once we pray about them or once we realize that God is capable of working in our lives.

- c) I want to focus now on another point these verses make. Verse 19 says that one cannot see God's "footprints" when (in effect) He parted the Red Sea.
 - i) To put it another way, if one could find the exact spot where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, I suppose it is possible one may find evidence of that biblical event, but one will not find any evidence of God's existence.
 - ii) The point is that in order to see God's existence, one has to not only trust that He exists, but one (in effect) has to look up to heaven and not down to earth.
 - iii) I read Jon Courson's commentary on these verses and he said that when a ship captain is sailing across the sea, he does not look down at the water for evidence of where other ships have sailed in the past. That captain looks up in the sky as traditionally captains use the stars and the sun's position as guidance for sailing.
 - a) The point being that we don't look for evidence of God's existence based on past miracles, but we look "up" and trust that He will guide us.
 - iv) Just because God led the Israelites through the Red Sea, does not literally mean He will work the same way with us today. God's path for you or me is a different in that He has a plan for each of our lives. It is a matter of moving forward and trusting that He is guiding us through good times and bad.
 - v) That idea of trusting God to guiding us, and not literally trying to follow the footpaths of how God worked in the past, is Asaph's point in these verses.
- 22. Verse 20: You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.
 - a) This psalm ends with the reminder that God had lead the Israelites out of Egypt by the chosen leaders that God choose, which were Moses and his brother Aaron.
 - b) The point is just as God has worked through appointed leaders in the past, so we can trust Him to guide us through our own difficulties through our own lives. God may call us on to lead other people through a situation or He may call on others to lead us.
 - i) The point is we don't just sit there and "wait for God" (assuming we're not lying in a hospital bed), but we keep moving forward trusting that God is working in our lives and He is guiding us.
 - c) On that thought, let me come back to my lesson theme of God not leaving us "half done".
 - i) I have to admit that when life gets me down, I need to remind myself of the simple point that God won't leave me "half done". The same God who rescued me into my salvation will somehow lead me through problems I am dealing with.
 - ii) We may be thinking, "I am dealing with a horrible mess and I have no idea how I will get through that situation". It is when we give the results of that situation to God is usually when we do find a way to get through it. The point is to realize that the results of whatever we are going through is "God's problem and not ours." We then make the best decisions possible, knowing that He is there guiding us through whatever we are dealing with.
 - a) The point is that we trust will guide us through that situation or else He will bring us home to heaven. Either way, we are being rescued and that is a victory for God and for us through difficult situations.
 - b) That is how God does not leave us "half done" in life.
 - 23. With that said, let us end in prayer. Dear God, we are so grateful that You never (big emphasis on never) leave us "half done". We may not see how You are going to rescue us through a particular situation. All we know is the results of whatever happens is Your business. Our job is to go through our lives, living to make a difference for You and then make the best decisions possible given the situation at hand. We ask Your guidance, especially when we don't have the answers to our problems. Help us to remember You are always there guiding us. Help us to live to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen