

1. Sometimes when I am in the middle of reading a big book, I like to calculate how far along I am. For example, if I am on page 500 of a 900-page book, I will think about how far I am in terms of percentages. As you like to say John, so what? Well, besides the fact that we are now at the 60% point in the book of Psalms, and besides the fact we are now starting the 4th of the five psalm books, my point is simply to "hang in there, this is the biggest book in the bible, and one day before we realize it, we will finish this book."
 - a) The other thing one realizes when one finishes a big book or any big project for that matter, is that the joy is not in crossing the finish line, but the joy is in the journey itself.
 - b) My point is to have all of us appreciate this journey through the psalms. Yes it is tough at times to go through something this big, but hopefully all of us our learning to appreciate our relationship with God more and more as we tackle this big book in bite size pieces.
2. Speaking of bite size pieces let me discuss this fourth book of the psalms. It is not huge in length as it runs from psalm 90 to psalm 109. We should be through this book in a few lessons, tops. ☺
 - a) I have argued since I started the psalms that each of the five books of the psalms appears to correspond to the first five books of the bible. The 4th book of the bible is "Numbers", which is the book where the Israelites wandered through the desert.
 - b) So John, are you saying we are going to wander through Book #4? No I am saying as the Israelites struggled in their relationship with God, in a similar fashion, this 4th Psalm book seems to focus on our own struggles in our relationship with God. Let me explain:
 - i) There is a biblical expression that goes: It took 40 days to get the Israelites out of Egypt and 40 years to get Egypt out of the Israelites. While the math does not perfectly correspond to history, the idea does. The point is while God leads us into a new life, it takes a lifetime to learn to let go of our old ways and learn to trust God with every aspect of our lives.
 - ii) In summary the book of Numbers is about learning to let go of our old ways as we learn to trust God. I see a lot of that similarity in this 4th book of the psalms.
3. This leads me to a discussion of the two psalms in this lesson.
 - a) The first psalm we have (#90) was written by Moses. That makes it the oldest psalm in the bible. The question needs to be ask: If Moses is honored among religious Jews as being the most important Old Testament writer (after all, he penned the first five books of the bible), why would a psalm by Moses not be #1 as opposed to #90 in this collection?
 - i) The answer is not about arranging the psalms in importance of authors, but they are arranged in order by topic. The topic of the fourth book of the psalms is about learning to trust God. Moses was honored, as his psalm is first on the list on psalms here in Book #4, specifically on the topic of learning to trust God.
 - ii) But John we already have had lots of lessons focusing on the topic of trusting God. What makes Book #4 of the psalms unique is that the topic of trusting God is a central focus as opposed to an underlying point. I'll explain that in this lesson.
 - b) OK John, what is Psalm 90 about? It is about learning to trust God through every situation. Since trusting God is central in this book, it is a good way to start "Book 4". In this psalm, Moses is contemplating how short one's life in this world in comparison to how long God exists. Moses' point is that we need to appreciate how short our lives really are, and how we should use our lives to make a difference for God.
 - i) In other words, we are on the topic of "Be careful not to waste our lives". We only have a relatively short life to live and the greatest purpose one can have is to use our life to make a difference for God. That is Moses' essential message as he starts off this 4th book of the psalms.

4. This leads me to discuss Psalm 91. No author is given for this psalm.
 - a) The theme of this psalm is about desiring God's protection. The psalm is a reminder that God is guiding us through our lives whether we are thinking of His presence or not.
 - b) This psalm is also a reminder that our goal in life is to do God's will. This psalm is quoted by all entities, Satan when he was tempting Jesus. (That is from Matthew 4:5.)
 - i) Among the things one can learn from that exchange is Satan can quote scripture.
 - a) Among the more important things to learn is that Satan likes to misquote the bible when he wants to use it against us.
 - ii) In Matthew 4:5, Satan stated that if Jesus was about to hurt himself, God the Father would protect Him. (That is my paraphrase of Verses 11-12 of this psalm). What Satan didn't quote was part of Verse 11 that says, "in all of your ways".
 - a) The point in that exchange is that Satan didn't mention that God promises to guide us when we do what He desires. That is not saying that God will keep our life pain free. It is saying that when we seek to do God's will, we can count on Him guiding us through that process of doing His will.
 - b) Satan was trying to prevent Jesus from doing God the Father's will and Satan is not above trying to misquote scripture in order to do that for us.
 - c) This leads me back to us. The main point of Psalm 91 is about desiring God's protection and how we receive His protection. If it is our desire to seek God and learn to live for Him, then He promises to us is that He will guide us to do His will.
 - i) To put it another way, God promises that if we seek Him and His desire for our lives, He promises to make it known to us what is His desire for our lives.
 - ii) OK John, how do we learn what is His desire? The answer requires a serious and regular commitment to prayer, time in His word and time with other believers.
 - iii) I find that when we do that, somehow and somehow God makes it obvious to us what is the next step He desires for our lives. God rarely if ever gives us the long term plans for our lives, but more often, just tells us what He desires next.
5. This surprisingly leads to my lesson title: "Trusting God with whatever is next in my life".
 - a) The point is we don't know what is going to happen to our lives in the future. We don't know how long God is going to allow us to live. All we do know is that we should use whatever time He has given us to make a difference for Him.
 - b) God never tells us, "You will 'x' years. Therefore, here is what I expect you to accomplish in that time frame." Instead God just wants us to go forward and trust that He is guiding us. I usually find that over time, it becomes obvious if we seek God, He makes it known to us (by us observing our lives) what is His will for us.
 - c) OK John, what if I have no idea what to do next? Welcome to the club. ☺ The answer is simply to go forward in life, making the best decisions possible with the information at hand, and keep seeking God for guidance through prayer and bible study. I find that when we do that, God makes it obvious what it is He wants us to do in our lives.
 - d) Are you saying I have to just sit and wait for God to lead me? Do I have to hear the voice of God before going forward? No, in fact it is just the opposite. God is more than capable of getting our attention whenever He wants to. We don't have to sit in silence to wait on Him. We should seek Him daily simply through prayer and study and then trust that He is (big "is" here) guiding us as opposed to waiting for some sort of special instructions.
 - e) God will never tell us to do something that is a contradiction to His word. God would never guide us down a path that would violate some biblical principle. The best way to know that God is guiding us is simply by "watching our lives" and seeing the results.
 - i) So why should we seek Him daily? It is not that God forgets about us, but that we tend to "wander away" when our focus is not on Him. It is for our sake, not His.
 - f) With that confusing and long introduction out of my system, it is time to start Psalm 90.

6. Psalm 90 Title: A prayer of Moses the man of God.
 - a) Unless one is very new to bible study, I don't have to spend a lot of time explaining who is Moses. He is considered the writer of the first five books of the bible. He is far and away the most important character in those books. While he was not the first Jewish person, he is often considered the Father of Judaism because he is the author of those first five books of the bible, which is the basis of how Judaism is practiced.
 - b) OK John, I know all of that. Why does the title say "Moses the man of God"?
 - i) Moses understood that God used him in a mighty way. Moses understood that this psalm he wrote was God inspired and should be read as such. We don't know when in his life he wrote this psalm, but many suspect it was late in his life after he had already seen much of the events recorded in his lifetime.
 - c) Since we don't know when Moses wrote this psalm, let us focus on what we do know, which is what this psalm is all about. Let me explain:
 - i) The psalm is about considering our lives and how relatively short our time is.
 - ii) The psalm is saying in effect, "Since our time on earth is unknown, the best thing we can do with the time we are given to use it for God's use.
 - iii) I don't think the title "Moses the man of God" was written to be egotistical. It was written so that we too can be men and women of God simply by living our lives with the desire to make a difference for Him in all that we do. That doesn't mean we have to think about God 24 hours a day. It just means that it is our desire to please God with our lives and live, as He desires us to live. How He desires us to live is a much more complicated question and varies from person to person.
 - iv) The principals of a life for God is what bible study should be focused upon. We should not be learning the bible to be an expert in ancient history. We read it to learn how it applies to our lives, and hopefully I do some of that in every lesson.
 - v) OK, onto Verse 1.
7. Verse 1: Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
 - a) It is interesting to think about this verse from Moses' perspective. Remember that Moses never got to lead the Israelites into the land of Israel, as that was done by his successor Joshua. Moses is the one who led the generation of Israelites out of Egypt.
 - b) My point here is that Moses, and not an Israelite living in that land says that God has been our dwelling place through all generations. Since Moses led the Israelites in effect only to wander through the desert for forty years, he is not describing a specific location.
 - i) OK John, and your point is? The point is those of us who trust in God have made a spiritual home in that trust. Just as we trust that we will be with God forever in heaven, so we trust that He is guiding our lives today. That is the dwelling place being described here: Not a physical location, but a trust in Him.
 - c) When the text says, "all generations", that simply means that since Adam and Eve, all people who have put their trust in God have a "home" in Him. The point is that God promises to be faithful to any and all that are willing to put that trust in Him for the forgiveness of our sins and for guiding our lives to the desires that He has for our lives.
8. Verse 2: Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ³ You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.
 - a) Verses 2 through 4 in effect give the time span that God rules over our world.
 - b) Verse 2 says that God existed before this world was ever created.
 - c) Verse 3 is the reminder that the same elements that make up our body are the same elements one finds in dust. The point is our physical bodies after they die eventually turn back to dust. No matter what we do with our lives, eventually our physical bodies become dust again after our souls are separated from those bodies.

- d) This leads us to Verse 4. The point of Verse 4 is to understand the "timelessness" of God.
 - i) As I like to say, God is not an entity with lots of time on His hands. If God created all things, then He must have created time as we know it. Therefore God must exist outside of time, if He created time in the first place.
 - a) Confused? Then just consider the fact that God exists outside of time and no matter how long of a time span one can imagine, that is a relatively meaningless time span as far as God's existence.
 - ii) OK John, God is outside of time and exists forever. How is that relevant to me? The idea is that if we only live for pleasure in this lifetime, that pleasure is all we get. However, if we are willing to live caring about the eternal perspective and be willing to live to make a difference for Him in this life, then He promises that we will live with Him forever.
 - a) This leads back to my comments about Verse 1. The greatest purpose in life is to live to make a difference for God. That is how we "dwell in Him".
 - b) That is also how we escape the reality of our death. That is how we make our life useful no matter what is the length of that life.
 - e) OK John, how do I this theological stuff to my life? Another good question. ☺
 - i) God's plan for your life is of course, different than His plans for mine. God gives each of desires, each of us roles in life and each of us the opportunity to serve Him in different capacities based on what He has called us to do and again, based on the opportunities presented before us.
 - ii) To put it another way, God gives each of us special gifts and talents. Part of the joy of life is learning what it is we are good at, and learning how to use those gifts and talents to make a difference for Him by ministering to other people.
 - f) Getting back to these verses, the point so far is that God exists, He exists outside of time as we know it, we as people have a limited unknown time in this world, and the greatest purpose that we can use our time is to make a difference for Him. That is how we choose to "dwell" in God as stated in Verse 1. OK, I'm now ready for Verse 5. ☺
9. Verse 5: You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--
⁶ though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.
- a) These two verses use a simple analogy to show how short our lives really are. If one has ever had to cut grass, one can see how quickly that cut grass dies. If one has never cut grass, one knows that once cut grass is separated from the nutrients of the ground it has no way to live and then it quickly dies off.
 - b) With that said, the point of these two verses is not about grass, but about our lives. The point is no matter how long we are allowed to live on earth it is a relatively short life.
 - i) No matter what we have accomplished in life, the point is we can't escape the reality of death. One can use one's life in order to just say make oneself rich or give oneself pleasure, or one can use their life to make a difference for God in this world by using our lives to make a difference for others.
 - ii) John are you saying I have to sell all that I own and go about helping others? Not exactly. I am saying we need to live our lives thinking beyond ourselves and thinking in terms of living to make a difference for God in this life.
 - iii) I am also not saying we all have to go in the professional ministry. I am saying that if we put our trust in God, we are already in the full time ministry. The details of how we are to live that life get back to the concept of time in God's word, time in prayer, and yes using what talents and abilities God has given us in order to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - c) OK, what if I am sick in bed and can't help others? Then make a difference for God by being willing to letting others help you. Pray for others. My point is no matter what is our situation, we can live to make a difference for God in our lives

10. Verse 7: We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.
- a) OK, who are the "we" in Verse 7 and why are "we" so scared of God?
 - i) Since Moses wrote this psalm, the "we" would refer to those Israelites who saw God do the plagues on the Egyptians and yes, saw God punish the Israelites who disobeyed Him wandering through the desert.
 - b) Let me try this another way: God told the Israelites through Moses that because they refused to trust Him to lead them into the Promised Land, that they would all die in the desert and only their children would enter that land. (See Numbers 26:65 as a reference.)
 - i) OK John I know that. What is your point? Based on Numbers 11:21, there were about 600,000 men that came of Egypt over the age of 20. Assuming there was an equal number of women, that means that over 1,200,000 people died during the thirty-eight years the Israelites wandered in the desert. If you do the math, that means about 70 people a day died. So what does that have to do with Moses? I believe he spent the better part of those desert years attending a lot of funerals. ☺
 - c) OK John, and what does all of this have to do with Verse 7? The point is that generation that was with Moses was literally consumed by God's anger and indignation.
 - i) No one knows when Moses wrote this psalm, but it would seem likely that if Moses wrote about being consumed by God's anger, it would have been either during or after that period of time when the Israelites died in the desert.
 - ii) Even if Moses wrote it before that period, I'm sure at some point in Moses' life he saw people being killed and attributed it to God's anger and wrath.
 - d) All right, enough ancient history. What does this have to do with me? The point is at any time God can say to us, "our time is up". Living for God requires living with a fear of displeasing Him. We displease God by sinning. The point is God can at any time in effect "take us out of the ballgame" if that is His desire to do so. He may allow us to die because our time is up, or even as a message to others around us. The point is to live for God requires having a healthy fear of being displeasing to Him in the first place.
11. Verse 8: You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- a) The purpose of this verse is simply to remind us that we can't hide anything from God. There is a classical expression among Christian preachers that goes, "A secret sin in our lives is a scandal in heaven". That means that God cannot tolerate any sin whatsoever and it should be our desire to turn from all sin in our lives.
 - i) OK John, I thought by trusting in Jesus, we are forgiven of all of our sins, past, present and future. That is why we can approach God the Father because we are forgiven of all of our sins. If that is true and God knows we are imperfect people, why are our sins, "so bad" before God? That is another good question to ask.
 - ii) The point is not so that God can strike us down the first time we as Christians disappoint Him. If that were true, none of us would live very long. The point is that a God who cares for us wants the best for our lives and He knows that any and all sins we commit are not His will for our lives.
 - iii) The reason God wants us to confess our sins is not for Him to keep a tally, but for us to be aware that His way of doing things is the right way for us to live.
 - b) This leads me back to Verse 8. The point here is simply that God is aware of any and all sins we commit and it is His desire that we turn from those sins as soon as possible.
12. Verse 9: All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.
- a) Verses 9-11 come back to the topic of how short our lives are. Think about our lives this way: Why does God allow our bodies to wear out? Even if we live to say one hundred or more, usually our bodies don't work as well as when we are younger. As one of my best friends puts it, "This getting old is really becoming an inconvenience to my lifestyle". ☺
 - b) OK John, I get the idea that getting old is not pleasant. Why mention it? Since our lives here are so short, it is another reminder to use what time we have to live for God.

13. Verse 10: The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
 - a) The theme of "how quickly our lives go by" continues in Verse 10. The point here is we may live 70 or 80 years or maybe a lot longer, but the time goes quickly. I recently heard a speech by an older man who was describing his high school years as if it were yesterday.
 - i) The point to my younger readers is simply that time goes by quickly. The mistake young people make is that they think they still have a long time to live and therefore they can worry about that "God stuff" when they get old.
 - ii) Moses is reminding all of us how short our time is. There is no guarantee we will reach the age of 70 or whatever age one picks.
 - b) This leads to the second part of the verse that focuses on the idea of life being "trouble and sorrow". Does that mean we have no pleasure in this life? Of course not.
 - i) What it does mean is that if we live for God, the price for that life is going to be trouble. Even if we avoid broken bones or bad things all of our lives, I guarantee that if one lives for God one is going to have "trouble and sorrow". Why is that? What about the joy of the Christian life that you are always talking about? How does that blend with this sorrow?
 - ii) As to sorrow, the point is that this life is difficult at times. There are always people and forces out there we have to battle that don't want us to do God's will. That is why I can guarantee living for God does cause sorrow in our lives.
 - iii) As to joy, that is about perspective. Keeping that eternal perspective through all one is dealing with is how one can have joy no matter what are the circumstances.
14. Verse 11: Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.
 - a) Remember that having a healthy fear of God is a good thing. It does not mean we fear being "zapped" by Him. It means that we don't want to displease Him.
 - i) The idea is that God cares about our lives and wants to guide us. If you or I have made the decision to live for God, then we must accept the idea that He desires to "live inside of us" and guide our lives. At the same time, that also means that we have to live in fear of displeasing Him and the fear of punishment that can come from displeasing Him in the first place. I usually find that punishment comes in the form of allowing us to live with the consequences of our sins often until we are willing to turn from them. Even then, we still often have to live with the bad decisions we make in life and have to trust in God to lead us through such times.
15. Verse 12: Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
 - a) When I think of Verse 12, I always think of one of my favorite teachers, Chuck Missler who likes to say, "teach us to number our nanoseconds". A nanosecond is a technical term that refers to a thousandth of a second. The point Chuck Missler is making is the same point the psalmist is making here: May we learn to value the time we have on this planet and use it for God's glory. In other words, it is about not wasting our lives just living for our own pleasure or self-gain, but to use our time to make a difference for God.
 - i) A statement like the one I just made always requires disclaimers. Yes we can have time to relax and enjoy our hobbies, but the point is about putting such hobbies in perspective of what is important. I'm not saying we have to spend "24/7" thinking about God. I am saying that it should be the primary concern of our lives to care about what He thinks of our lives and living to make a difference for Him.
 - b) Getting back to Moses, here is a man that probably spent the better part of the last 40 years of his life burying many people and I suspect leading many funerals.
 - i) Even if Moses had nothing to do with the burial of all of those people, seeing all of those people die around him made him realize how short and futile this life is without God and the importance of living for Him daily.

16. Verse 13: Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.
 - a) As I thought about this verse, I thought, "Relent from what?" Is it about all of the deaths that Moses had to deal with? Whatever it was Moses was describing, he understood how painful our lives could be. Moses also understood that God is ultimately in control of our lives and there is a big price to be paid for disobedience.
 - b) Let me try this verse another way: If we deserve punishment for our sins and our time on earth is limited, why pray for compassion as Moses is doing here? What is the point?
 - i) Remember that prayer is not to get God to change His mind, but for us to understand His purpose. The point of this little prayer is simply that people become aware of God's influence in their (or our) lives and that realization may cause them or us to change our ways.
 - ii) Asking God for compassion is about asking Him to hold off on punishment we do deserve for our sins. It is in effect to ask God to give us a chance to turn from our sins. This prayer is really about asking God to work through us to change us to be the type of person He desires us to be.
 - c) Time to move on to Verse 14. Know that this prayer continues to the end of the psalm.
17. Verse 14: Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.
 - a) Let's set the scene here: Moses has been grumbling about how short the life of humans are and how much trouble people have in their lives. Now here in Verse 14 Moses asks God to satisfy us in the morning, so that we may sing praises to Him.
 - i) OK, what is going on here? The point is that yes life is short and has problems, but God can provide us joy during that time with His love for us. That is why Moses is encouraging us to praise Him, to experience that joy He wants for us.
 - ii) Ok John, I see you are back to experiencing God's joy. Let's say I don't feel that right now. What is the secret? It is our attitude. It is realizing how much God loves us despite whatever we are dealing with at the moment. It is about the realization that God wants to spend eternity with us and fill us with His love. That concept should get us to improve our attitude and put our trust in Him.
 - b) The underlying point of these verses is that without God's love, life is ultimately useless. Even if we have no significant trouble at the moment, whatever we accomplish in this lifetime is effectively a waste of time if this world is all there is. What Moses is trying to do is get us to appreciate what is eternal versus what is temporary in an eternal time span.
 - i) Remember that Moses was probably preaching to a generation that was sentenced to die in the wilderness. Moses was trying to teach them that they still could have eternal salvation if they are willing to trust God with their lives.
18. Verse 16: May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.
 - a) Stop and think about the fact this is the only psalm written by Moses. This is a man who got to witness more miracles of God than anyone other than Jesus Himself. Yet Moses asks that God's "deeds" be shown to your servants, which are other believers.
 - b) Now think about the fact that despite all the miracles that Jesus did, He predicted that His disciples would do greater things than what He did. (See John 14:12). OK, how is it that we will do greater things than what Jesus did and how does that tie to Moses statement?
 - i) For starters, it is about the fact that God gives us the privilege of leading others to Him. The miracles that Jesus did when He walked on earth helped their lives on earth, but they would still die one day. If Jesus took away leprosy from someone, they would still die without that leprosy. When we lead someone to Jesus, that person now receives eternal life. That is how our miracles are greater than His.
 - ii) This leads me back to Moses. He was asking that people realize that God exists and He is willing to work through our lives to make a difference for Him.

19. Verse 17: May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us - yes, establish the work of our hands.
- a) This psalm ends with a request that God look "favorably" upon us and establish our works. OK John I can read too. ☺ What does it mean? First of all, it is about believing that God exists and He is willing to work through our lives. The idea is that if we are willing to trust in Him and live to make a difference for Him, He does promise to guide us whether we are aware of that guidance or not.
 - b) Let me put this in context. If the 4th book of the psalms (Psalm 90 starts Book 4) ties to the book of Numbers, then the topic is about doubting God. Numbers is about "wandering" away from God and lacking the trust that He can and does want to work in our lives. So here is Moses asking God to bless those that trust in Him that they (us) may keep trusting in Him and keep trusting that God desires to work through us.
 - c) OK John, I believe in God. Why do I need a psalm like this? The point is all of us at times go through periods of doubts. There are times especially when things go wrong that we wonder where is God and why isn't He working more in my life? In such times, psalms like this remind us that He is still there and He is still guiding our lives. Despite the brevity of our lives, psalms like this remind us God is still working and yes, He still wants to guide whatever we do in our life for His glory.
 - d) On that happy note, I'm going to move on to the next psalm in this lesson.
20. Psalm 91, title: None
- a) Every now and then, there is a psalm with no title and no author given. It is as if the author just wants us to think about the words of the psalm and not add anything about the who, what, when and why's of this psalm. In other words, hopefully from studying the psalm itself, we can see its purpose without any title information.
 - b) That's four lines of dialogue for a title that doesn't exist. Yes, I am writing too much. ☺
21. Verse 1: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- a) The opening line is saying in effect that when we trust in the God of the Israelites, then we are also trusting in the God of the universe. While that may sound obvious to us veteran Christians, for a newcomer, it is something that needs to be emphasized.
 - b) The idea is more than believing that He exists. It is the concept that the God who created everything is capable of comforting us through whatever it is we have to face in this life.
 - c) Which reminds me, I haven't discussed what this psalm is about since the introduction: It is the idea that God will guide and protect us through whatever it is we have to face. That is why this psalm starts off reminding us that we trust in the God of the Universe.
 - i) For what it is worth, many believers have kept copies of this psalm handy so as to study it when they were off to face a great challenge. Keep that in mind if you know that you are about to begin a great or challenging journey in life.
22. Verse 2: I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
- a) I want us to notice the word "say". Is the psalm telling us that we have to speak out loud that we are trusting God to protect us? No it isn't. The point of this verse is not what we say, but what are our actions. In other words, the issue is: are we trusting in God as one who we can mentally turn to for comfort and protection?
 - b) The idea here is that when we feel overwhelmed by life, we can mentally turn to God as a source of comfort from whatever is overwhelming us. Even if we just desire relief from whatever is on our mind, thinking of God should be a desire of the believer.
 - c) The point of this verse is that if we are willing to make that commitment to turn to God for comfort, He promises to do just that. I have found that to be true whenever I make that commitment to turn to Him.
 - i) Think of it as mentally getting away from our problems by thinking about Him as a source of comfort during a difficult time.

23. Verse 3: Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.
- a) I have to admit, I had to look up what "fowler's snare" means. That's the disadvantage of growing up in the big city. A fowler is one who catches a bird in a trap.
 - i) The point is that when we fear being caught in some sort of a trap, God promises to save us. I'll explain this concept further in a moment.
 - b) The second part of this verse warns us about death from some deadly disease. In effect the point is the same as the "fowler's snare". Obviously there have been believers in God throughout history that have died from bad diseases and even from traps being set for them. So if we can die from these two sources, what are these two verses saying?
 - i) The answer is to consider what the bible teaches about the word "save". Consider the fact the word "save" ties to the word "salvation".
 - ii) Whatever life throws at us believers, we can trust in God's salvation to rescue us from the death that can be caused by this or any other source.
 - iii) Yes there are times where trust in God can literally protect us from such bad things. If it is God's desire that we live through such a situation, I find that He makes a way possible for us to do so.
 - c) The underlying point of this verse is we don't have to fear death in its worst forms. God promises to save us, one way or the other through such things and we don't need to worry about what the effects of this world can do to us.
 - i) But John you may say, I don't want to die at this moment, as I'll miss my loved ones. As Paul pondered, "Do I to stay and minister to others or should I be home (heaven) with the Lord." That is my paraphrase of 2nd Corinthians 5:8.
 - ii) We have to remember that it is God's decision when our time is up and not ours. If we belong to God, then we let Him and Him alone decide our "time".
 - iii) On that possibly happy thought, let's move on to the next verse.
24. Verse 4: He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- a) I need to start by explaining an old bible principal. Bible critics may ask us, "Do you really take your bible literally"? If we say yes, they will point to verses like this that imply that God has feathers and wings. That is why I prefer the response, "I take my bible seriously (as opposed to literally)". If I take it seriously, then I understand at times the bible does speak in metaphors.
 - i) So how do I know when the bible is speaking in a metaphor? I use the biblical rule, "If the plain text makes perfect sense, use no other sense. If the plain text does not make perfect sense, seek some other sense".
 - b) That metaphor rule leads me perfectly into Verse 4. Obviously I don't believe God is a big bird that covers us with feathers. That is obviously a metaphor. Since we believe God does not have feathers, we can "seek some other sense". One can take their bible seriously and still believe it uses metaphors to describe biblical truths.
 - c) OK John, enough about metaphors and bible seriousness. What does this verse mean?
 - i) Remember the topic of the previous few verses: It was about seeking and receiving God's protection from whatever life throws at us. God promises the believer that either through eternal salvation or by rescuing us through our problem of the moment He will give us a sense of refuge and comfort.
 - ii) To put this verse another way, if we do seek God as a mental place of refuge, He does promise to give us comfort like a mother bird protects its babies.
 - iii) This verse uses other metaphors to describe the same thing. To a soldier a shield is a source of protection from weapons being used to attack us. A rampart is a small shield that is also used for protection.
 - iv) The point of this verse is not that God will literally protect us if we just stand there and do nothing. The point is He will guide our lives if we will trust Him.

25. Verse 5: You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- a) Long before I ever dedicated my life to serving Jesus, one of my favorite musicians (who once admitted he was not a Christian) recorded a song with these two verses.
 - i) It was one of those cases where the musician liked the lyric references but never thought about or agreed with the biblical principals behind those verses.
 - ii) Just because one understands a specific biblical principal does not mean that same person trusts in God for their salvation. That was a case with the now late musician that recorded a song with these verses.
 - b) OK John, enough about nonbelievers and the bible. How do these two verses affect me?
 - i) One of the easiest things for a believer in God to do is to get our focus on the dangers that exist (real or imagined) all around us. These verses are saying in effect, "Do we trust God or not?" Now that danger is around us, do we trust Him to see us through those dangers? That is what these verses are really asking.
 - ii) Earlier I mentioned Chuck Missler. He graduated from the Naval Academy. He stated that it was this psalm that helped him get through those academy years.
 - a) When we learn to trust God, He helps us overcome any and all fears and that includes any fears, be it real or imagined.
 - iii) When we are really scared of something, be it something real or something we fear may do harm to us, it does come back to the question of "Do we really trust God or not?" I don't know how God will see us through our particular problems, I just know that He has and He will. That is why this psalm speaks of God as our source of comfort, especially when fear can overcome us.
 - c) It is probably also important here to remind us of the concept of "baby steps". That means when we are overcome with fear, we should pray, "Dear God, for the next thirty seconds I am not going to worry about this issue". We then continue to give God our fears in small steps until we can truly not worry for larger blocks of time. With that positive piece of advice stated, I believe I am ready to move on to the next verse.
26. Verse 7: A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.
- a) It is important to state what these verses are not saying: They are not saying that if we trust in God, we will live (on earth) another day while those who fight our battles with us will die in the attempt to save us or save themselves.
 - b) They are saying that if we trust in God and His sin payment, He promises we will live forever. He promises to punish for eternity those who refuse to trust in Him.
 - c) These verses are also not saying we should just stand still and let God fight for us. He still expects us to do the best we can with whatever we have at our disposal.
 - i) These verses are designed to give us comfort through our battles of whatever it is we have to deal with. God promises that He will be a source of comfort through our present ordeal, no matter how long it lasts.
 - d) These two verses are another reminder to see things from the "eternal perspective".
 - i) As I like to say, "If this life is all that there is, life is very unfair."
 - a) Paul said in effect if this life is all that there is, we are wasting our time preaching Jesus. (My paraphrase of 1st Corinthians 15:32.)
 - b) If there is a judgment day coming, then we have to remember (as Verse 7 says in effect) that a "thousand unbelievers may fall around us, but we will live forever." That is why living our lives to make a difference for Jesus is always worth the effort.
 - ii) As I like to ask, would you rather live and take the chance there is no judgment day, or live under the assumption of a judgment day? The latter is a safer bet and living with the knowledge of a judgment day makes us enjoy this life far more.

27. Verse 9: If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- ¹⁰ then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.
- a) By now, we should all get the idea that being a Christian (or a "whatever") is no guarantee that we will live even another day or even avoid any disaster. So if that is true, just what are these two verses saying to us? They are focusing on eternal salvation. The idea is that no matter what happens to us, we are saved.
 - i) Sometimes when everything is going wrong, I find it helps to remind myself that I am saved. I may even repeat that out loud several times. It is a source of comfort when things are not going well at any given moment.
 - b) So is that all these verses are saying: God will save us from eternal damnation? No, it is more than that. The point is we can trust in God as a source of comfort with that concept.
 - i) Jesus does promise us peace in this life. (See John 16:33.) The point of that peace is about knowing that whatever happens to us, we are saved. That knowledge of our salvation gives us a sense of peace through any harm or disaster.
 - ii) Yes we still have to deal with whatever is causing our problems. Yes we still have to face those issues and deal with them the best we can. The point is that God can and does give us a mental sense of peace through such a time. That is the key point of these verses and the psalm itself.
28. Verse 11: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- a) We now come to the two verses I quoted back in the introduction of this psalm. Satan quoted these two verses to Jesus and claimed these verses are speaking about Jesus.
 - i) Notice that Satan did not deny these verses speak of Jesus. That alone is an interesting way to prove that Satan believed Jesus trusted in God the Father.
 - ii) So was Satan right? Does these verses speak of angels guarding Jesus so that He would not accidentally strike His foot against a stone? Since the bible never records Jesus stubbing His foot, I don't know how literal to take this principal. ☺
 - iii) Here is how Satan misquoted the verses: Yes God the Father did protect Jesus during His time on earth, but not so that Jesus would not accidentally hit a rock.
 - a) The point is that God the Father guided Jesus in the way God the Father wanted Jesus to live. Jesus always sought the Father's will. In that way Satan was correct that God the Father would always protect Jesus.
 - iv) However, where Satan misquoted this verse is that he didn't mention that "in all your ways" part of Verse 11. Satan was tempting Jesus by falsely stating that God the Father would always protect Jesus no matter what Jesus did, as opposed to God protecting Jesus in all the ways God the Father desired Him to live.
 - b) Believe it or not, this does lead back to you and me. The point of these two verses applies to us as well as to Jesus. God the Father promises to protect us as we do His will in our lives. Does that mean that if we hit our foot against a stone, did an angel messed up? No it does not. This is another case where the psalmist is speaking in metaphors.
 - i) The metaphor here is that God the Father desires that we do His will. If we are willing to make that commitment, He promises to guide us in our lives. How He is guiding us is up to Him to know and not us. We just should be aware of the fact that if we are trusting in Him, He is guiding us.
 - c) OK John and what is the deal with angels in this verse? Are angels flying around wearing hard hats and protecting us? I hope so, but I don't know the "how".
 - i) The point is God uses angels for the purpose of guiding our lives to do His will. I've personally stubbed my toes too many times to take these verses that literally. However, I do believe that when it is our desire to do God's will, He does guide us and somehow there are angels involved in that guidance process.

29. Verse 13: You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- a) First question: Who is the "you" in this verse? I don't believe it refers to believers, as we don't have the ability to tread over lions and snakes.
 - b) I would argue the "You" refers to God the Father and God the Son. Here is why:
 - i) I believe both the reference to the lion and the snake are demonic references. The point is God will have victories over anything and everything Satan throws at us.
 - ii) So are you saying all lions and snakes represent Satan? Of course not. The references are symbolic. Most of us get the snake reference as it ties to the Garden of Eden story. The best reference to lions is the reference that Satan goes about as a "roaring lion seeing who he can devour". (See Ezekiel 22:25 or 1st Peter 5:8).
 - c) Coming back to us believers, these verses are not saying we can literally have bare hand victories over a lion or a cobra. The verses are saying that Satan can never (big never here) take away our salvation as long as we are trusting in Jesus as both God and the one who paid the price for our sins. Satan can and does work to make us ineffective witnesses for God the Father, but that is a separate issue. The issue here is our peace. Our peace comes from knowing God has given us the ultimate victory over this world.
30. Verse 14: "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵ He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
- a) Let me focus on the word "me" in Verse 14. One can read both of these verses and easily see how they apply to Jesus if we have even a basic understanding of the New Testament.
 - i) What is more important is that we apply the word "me" to well, "me" (you and I).
 - ii) The point of these two verses is that if we trust in God for our salvation, He not only promises us eternal life, but that He also gives us peace in this life through whatever we have to deal with at any given moment.
 - b) Notice these verses say "I will answer Him". That does not mean that God audibly speaks to us when we pray to Him or ask for His salvation. It does mean that somehow and someway, God makes His will known to our lives when we commit our lives to Him.
 - i) I have never heard the audible voice of God, but I am amazed at times how I just know what to do in a certain situation. I realized in hindsight how many situations do turn out for God's glory. When I live by biblical principals, it never ceases to amaze me how well my life is so much better then, well, "when I don't".
 - c) This leads to another basic question: How do we know if we are saved? These verses give the answer. If we are willing to call upon God to be both our Lord (in charge of our lives) and our Savior (paying the price for our sins) then we can know for sure that we are saved. If we trust in God to guide our lives, we can have that assurance of salvation.
31. Verse 16: With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."
- a) By now I have beaten the point to death that being a Christian is not a guarantee of a long and happy life. We are satisfied with "long life" only by having the eternal perspective.
 - i) The way I am positive about that fact is the reference to "my salvation". The way we can prove that our trust in God leads to salvation is that He will literally prove that to us when we are rescued into heaven. One reason Jesus went through suffering and death was to prove to us how we can live forever.
32. On that happy note, I do want to wrap this up in a closing prayer. Father, this whole lesson is was about trusting You with our lives. Help us to remember that our time on earth is short and we use our time wisely, and for Your glory. Help us to remember that You are always there, whether we sense Your presence or not. Help us to remember that You always desire to lead us down the paths You want for our lives and all You ask of us is that we trust You with our lives. Help us to remember those concepts as we live to make a difference for You in every aspect of our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen