

1. I decided we are way overdue for an upbeat and joyful lesson. Luckily, these psalms help us do that and they discuss having joy through praise of God. Yes, "praise through joy" is my lesson title. Here, we are going to discuss how and why we praise God and why that makes us joyful.
  - a) If we just get on our knees and praise God for our lives, that is a good start, but that is not what I mean by praise. It is about taking the time to learn to appreciate all it is that God has done for our lives and having joy with that knowledge of what He has done.
  - b) If you are a veteran Christian, think how much God has changed us since we first got saved. If you are a relatively new believer, one should take the time regularly to praise Him just for the fact that one is saved. Contemplating that concept should bring us joy.
  - c) Let's say we can't think of anything to be grateful for at the moment. Then we should stop every now and then and be grateful for the good things of this world. Paul himself taught that principal in the New Testament:
    - i) "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." (Philippians 4:8, NIV)
    - ii) To put this verse simply, Paul is encouraging us to think about good things in life. So why is that and what does that have to do with these psalms?
      - a) As to why think about the good things about this life, (that includes this world, life in general, God, and good things in our lives) we become better people when we focus on positive concepts.
    - iii) Even if you don't want to be joyful, we should do act that way for the sake of those around us. Focusing on what is good makes us happier people and that makes others around us happier as well. In order for us to appreciate God, we need to think about the good He has done in our lives.
2. All of this happy talk does lead to the psalms in this lesson. They are very upbeat.
  - a) The first psalm in this lesson is called a Sabbath psalm. For the ancient Israelites, many of the psalms were read or sung daily, but this one was reserved for the Sabbath. Let me explain the concept of the Sabbath. To explain this, I need to start by remembering that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day.
    - i) Setting aside the discussion of how long was God's day, the point is that God is teaching us to rest after six days of work. Since I believe God is well, God, I believe He could have created the world in six milliseconds or six billion years. The actual time length is not nearly as important as the concept that God wants us (that's you and me) to take one day off per week of our normal activities in order to praise Him and appreciate Him.
    - ii) So John, are you saying I need to be like religious Jews and dedicate a whole day to ignoring my life and just go to church all day? I am saying that when we dedicate a day of the week to activities involving appreciating God for all that He has done for our lives, then we will be more joyful people.
    - iii) OK does this mean I should read this psalm every time I go to church? No, I am just saying this psalm helps us to appreciate God and that should make us joyful.
  - b) The other two psalms in this lesson are equally as joyful. In fact, Psalm 93 ties well with Psalms 95-100, which hopefully I'll cover over the next lesson or two. The key point of this particular lesson is about learning to appreciate all the good that God has done for our lives. My goal by the end of this lesson is to get all of us in even a better mood than we are (whatever that is) at this moment. If that doesn't get you to read further, well then, enjoy your unhappy moment. ☺

3. Psalm 92, title: A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day.
  - a) Before I discuss what this title says, first notice what it doesn't say: There is no author given. Whoever penned this psalm, just wanted us to focus on the fact that it is a psalm, which simply means the author wants us study it. The title also says this is a song.
  - b) For the sake of new readers, let me emphasize now that the original music to all of the psalms has never been saved through history. I do believe God wants us to design our own music to the words as we see fit.
  - c) The most important thing this title says is the fact that this psalm was written for the Sabbath. That just means it was designed to be used for worship services.
    - i) Let me put it this way: Let's say you want to praise God by yourself. You don't know how to put into words the things you or I are grateful for. This psalm gives us ways to appreciate the good things God has done in our lives.
      - a) Let's say we want to praise God as a group. Think of this psalm as one that can be sung as a group in order to appreciate the good He has done for us. It can also be studied as a group so that one's group can learn to appreciate all the good that God has done for our lives.
    - ii) OK, enough happy introduction thoughts, let us praise God by seeing what this psalm wants to teach us about praising Him in the first place.
4. Psalm 92, Verse 1: It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High,
  - a) The first three verses are all one sentence here in the NIV Bible. Other translations put a semi-colon after Verse 1. I wouldn't worry too much about that aspect of the punctuation. What I do want all of us to see is the upbeat tone here in the first three verses.
  - b) Verse 1 says that it is good to praise God and make music to His name. OK why is it good to praise God? Does He need to hear it? Well, yes and no. Let me explain:
    - i) If I believe God is perfect, then I don't believe He needs anything.
    - ii) At the same time, God loves us and wants to have a loving relationship with us. Therefore, I do believe God has joy when we do appreciate the love He has for us and we in turn express that love back to Him.
    - iii) More importantly than worrying about how God needs to hear about our love for Him, is our own attitude. Focusing on the good things He has done for us make us joyful people and makes us appreciate Him all the more.
    - iv) So John, are you saying that I should enjoy the material things I have in this life?
      - a) I am saying that we should appreciate any and all blessings we have in this life, including our salvation and including whatever it is we enjoy in life.
    - v) Let's try this another way: Are there hobbies we enjoy? Make God a part of those things. Tell Him how grateful we are for those things. My point is simply to show one's appreciation to God what we have in life and what we enjoy doing.
  - c) OK John, I just told God how grateful I am for "x" aspect of my life. Now can you leave me alone and let me enjoy what I enjoy doing? Of course. Making God a part of every (big emphasis on every) aspect of our lives is about learning to appreciate all the good He has done for us. I am also assuming the thing we enjoy is not a sinful act.
  - d) This leads me back to the concept of a Sabbath. To "rest in God" is more than just saying thank you; it is about learning to appreciate all that He has done for our lives.
    - i) The reason the book of Genesis said that God rested on the seventh day, has nothing to do with God being tired or that He wants to listen to us praise Him.
      - a) By us taking the time to praise Him, we become more joyful people and truthfully, better people as we interact with others around us.
    - ii) OK John, suppose I am dealing with some emergency at the moment, how do I pause to praise God every seventh day when "that" is going on? Great question. The answer is to praise God while we are dealing with that problem and ask Him to help us through that particular problem. That too, is a form of praise to God.

5. Verse 2: to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night,
  - a) Let me talk about the literalness of this verse. Does God literally wants me to wake up every morning and proclaim how much He loves me and every night before I go to bed to tell God how faithful He is? If we do that, it may be beneficial for a while, but I suspect that soon it would turn into a ritual that would lack any meaning to us.
  - b) Let me come back to the concept of "what does God get out of this"? If we believe God is perfect, then He would not need anything. While that is true, He also desires to have a loving relationship with us. If God is a "God of Love", then He would desire somebody or something to express that love upon. God choose humans to share that love with.
    - i) God does want us to get close to Him and one way we do that is simply to share with Him how much we love Him and appreciate having Him in our lives.
  - c) Let us not forget the simple fact that we too benefit from this. By spending time telling God how much we appreciate Him, it keeps us focused on His love and truthfully, reminds us of the benefits of sticking close to Him. Again, we don't just love God for "His sake", but for our sake: To appreciate how much God has done for our lives.
6. Verse 3: to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.
  - a) Notice that the psalm writer praises God using these two specified musical instruments. No I don't believe one can only praise God by using these two instruments. I believe the psalmist mentions these two instruments because that was his method of praising Him.
    - i) Personally, I can praise God through my writing, as that is my favorite way to express my own praise to Him. There are countless methods to praise God.
    - ii) I don't think God cares so much about the method as much as He cares about us making the effort to praise Him for the good He has done in our lives.
7. Verse 4: For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands. <sup>5</sup> How great are your works, O LORD, how profound your thoughts!
  - a) Notice that thinking about God's works makes the psalmist glad. Think "happy" here: If we are in a bad mood, one way to get joyful is to focus on the good things God has done for our lives. If you are drawing a blank here, you start by saying how much one appreciates the beautiful things of this world or good things you appreciate.
  - b) Notice the expression in Verse 5: "How profound our your thoughts". The bible says in Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are not your thoughts", meaning we can't know all that God is thinking at one moment. However, that does not mean we cannot discern some things that God is thinking about in our world or our life. OK John, what can we discern about God's thoughts? Anytime the bible quotes "God's thoughts" gives us examples.
    - i) A God we worship is a God that doesn't change. Therefore, the good things God says about people back then can equally apply to what we can learn about His thoughts for us. We can discern God's thoughts simply by reading our bible.
8. Verse 6: The senseless man does not know, fools do not understand, <sup>7</sup> that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed.
  - a) The psalm changes subjects at this point and discusses people who don't care about God. To explain this, stop and think about one's own knowledge of Him: Did we learn most of what we know about God before or after we became a believer? Usually, it is "after".
    - i) Sometimes people do learn a lot about God before becoming a believer and I usually find He uses that knowledge to draw us to Him in the first place.
    - ii) On a related note, I have learned the hard way, is that I don't try to change non-believers on biblical issues. I do try to be a good witness for God, because it is only from being born again that one can appreciate biblical views on life.
    - iii) I also have learned that one cannot "argue" someone into the kingdom. They have to be changed by God Himself. All we can do is share the gospel message with people (hopefully in a tactful way) and watch God work. We can't force people to become Christians, but just share His love with others.

- b) Now notice the last part of Verse 7. Such wicked people will be condemned. When we see what wicked people get away with, we can have peace knowing their ultimate end.
  - i) However, that topic gets tougher when it is a loved one who doesn't get it. I have had to learn the hard way that I can't lead anyone to Jesus without His help.
  - ii) Let me explain this concept in a prayer: "Dear God, open this person's heart to Your truth and bring the right person into their life to share that message. Help that right person to say the right words. If that right person is not me, lead that person into their lives and prepare that nonbeliever's heart for that message."
- 9. Verse 8: But you, O LORD, are exalted forever. <sup>9</sup> For surely your enemies, O LORD, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered.
  - a) Verse 8 is best read in contradiction to the previous set of verses. The key point in those last few verses is those who don't trust in God will eventually "come to nothing". I am old enough now to watch evil people rise and fall, but I know for sure that God "outlasts" all of them, and despite the horrible damage they do, God does triumph over evil.
  - b) I was thinking of when American soldiers killed Osama Bin Laden. I was reminded of a famous quote by Mark Twain that said, "I don't cheer over the death of any man, but I have read a few obituaries that I have enjoyed". ☺
    - i) I don't think God cherishes the death of any human, but at the same time, He cannot stand any evil whatsoever. While the death of Bin Laden cannot bring back the lives of those he has hurt, his death is an example that the God of the Bible does triumph over evil on His timing.
    - ii) By the way, these verses do not mean we just sit there and wait for God to work. It still took soldiers to carry out the action of killing Bin Laden. These verses do mean that in the end, God will win and triumph over those who oppose His will.
- 10. Verse 10: You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; fine oils have been poured upon me.
  - a) First, let me explain the analogies used in this verse, and then I'll discuss the meaning.
    - i) In the bible, "horns" are associated with power. Most animals use their horns to attack other animals. It is their source of power.
    - ii) Next, notice the term "wild ox". The King James Bible translates the term "wild ox" as a unicorn. I think the best translation might be "rhino", but essentially it refers to a single horned animal. I'll explain who the one horned animal is in a minute.
    - iii) Let me also explain "fine oils". When a new king was anointed in the bible, oil was poured on him. Such pouring was a sign of recognition of that person's authority.
    - iv) The point of these references is that God has "lifted up", which means to exalt whoever is being described in these verses.
  - b) OK, who is being exalted here and my usual related question of why should I care?
    - i) The answer is, this verse refers to the believer. God has picked out you and me to be with Him forever. In that sense, we are exalted over nonbelievers.
    - ii) Remember that this is a psalm of praise. One reason we praise God is simply because He has chosen us to be with Him forever.
- 11. Verse 11: My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries; my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.
  - a) To understand Verse 11, we need to understand who is the "My" to start this verse.
    - i) Think of it this way: How many of us have seen the defeat of our enemies? How many of us have seen the rout (bad defeat) of wicked foes?
    - ii) Unless you are a soldier and a lucky one at that, we don't get that privilege.
  - b) Yes, this verse is referring to the God of the bible. He is the one who has witnessed the defeat over time of all who has opposed Him. The point of this verse is that no matter how bad things may look for the moment, we should try to have the eternal perspective. God has seen all things, and has watched the rise and fall of many an evil person.

12. Verse 12: The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; <sup>13</sup>planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.
- a) It may help to remember that this psalm was written to be used for a "Sabbath" worship service. That is the main day of Jewish worship week.
    - i) Given that thought, here are these two verses declaring in effect that those who trust in God will "flourish". Yes I will explain that, but first, a tree lesson. ☺
  - b) In Verse 12, those who trust in God are compared favorably to palm and cedar trees.
    - i) Let's start by discussing palm trees. They grow in a desert climate like Israel and flourish with a low water supply. The point is we will be like palm trees and survive and stand tall despite whatever are the circumstances around us.
    - ii) Next door to Israel is the nation of Lebanon. It was known for its forest and its big cedar trees. The point is just as those trees flourish in that climate so will those who trust in God flourish as they trust in God.
    - iii) In Verse 13, it says those trees are said to "flourish" in the house of God.
    - iv) The point is just like these trees "stand tall" in their climates, so those of us who trust in God "stand tall" in His presence. While we may see going to church as just a time to worship God, it is also a time to flourish as in standing tall for Him. Practically speaking, it means that as we take a stand for God, we are being drawn into the love relationship God desires of us.
  - c) Does this mean we have to stand when we sing in church? I think we should not stand out from the crowd and join in, in whatever posture is appropriate for that moment.
13. Verse 14: They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, <sup>15</sup>proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."
- a) These two verses, along with the previous two, all have to do with "standing tall" before God as we gather together to worship Him. Before I explain that, let me explain Verse 14.
  - b) Verse 14 says that believer will "bear fruit in their old age and will stay green". Obviously, not all believers get to live to an old age, so one cannot read this verse as any sort of guarantee of one's lifespan. However, the point is many who trust in God will survive through the troubles of this life and still continue to make a difference for God even when they reach the later years of life.
    - i) The point of these verses is that if one is older, one can still make a difference for God and still praise Him for the wonderful things He has done for our lives.
    - ii) Remember that this is a psalm of praise. The longer one is a believer, the more one can look back at one's life and see the good that God has done both in the world and the lives of believers. That is a promise young believers can also trust in.
  - c) When Verse 14 says, "The LORD (all cap's means "Jehovah") is upright", that simply means we worship Him as God. To say that God is "upright and lacking no evil" means that we look to Him as a perfect deity and there are no faults in what He is.
    - i) Sometimes we forget the simple act of praising God "as God". Such acts is simply to remind ourselves who it is we worship and appreciate all the good that He has done in this world and for our lives.
    - ii) Back on Page 1 of this lesson, I quotes Philippians 4:8. The purpose of that verse is simply to spend time and focus on the good things of this world. A purpose of such an action is to appreciate all the good that God has done in this world. Yes it makes us happier and more joyful when we focus on the positive. It is not an "artificial buildup" as much as it is just getting our mind on the good of this world. That goodness is "God-based" and it is a matter of appreciating it.
  - d) If you want an appropriate ending for this psalm, it would be to take a moment, and think of a few things that one is grateful for in one's life. That is a form of praise to God. That gets our minds on Him and gets us to appreciate the good He has done in our lives. On that happy, thought I am ready to move on to Psalm 93.

14. Psalm 93, title: None
  - a) This psalm is only five lines long and has no title. It is another psalm of praise. The focus of this psalm is a little different from the last one in that the last one focused on creation. Psalm 92 praised God for who He is. Psalm 93 reminds us to keep the eternal perspective in mind when we deal with our lives in the "here and now". With that said, Verse 1.
15. Psalm 93, Verse 1: The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.
  - a) Two times in this verse it says God is "robed in majesty". First of all, I don't picture God as an old man sitting on a throne with a big robe. To say, "God is robed in majesty" is just a way of saying we should honor Him who created our world in the first place.
    - i) If you can't think of anything to be grateful for at the moment, simply tell God you are grateful that He exists, He created this world for His glory, that we have been chosen for salvation and that we get to enjoy our relationship with Him forever.
  - b) The latter part of Verse 1 discusses the idea of the "world being firmly established." What this short psalm is trying to get us to appreciate is how God is timeless. This is about appreciating how we trust in a God that is "above" all things and controls all things.
  - c) This is one of those situations where I should explain what is going on here another way: We can get so caught up in our lives that we tend to forget the eternal perspective. A God that knows all things is well aware of all we go through in life. Somehow, lives problems don't seem so bad when one puts them in that eternal perspective.
    - i) To think about the fact we will live forever makes our problems seem small in comparison and that gives us the strength to get through our present issues.
    - ii) In short, this whole lesson is about perspective. It is about praising God because the "forever" is a whole lot longer than our lifetime. If we can get our focus going that way, we can get through the rest of this lesson pretty easily.
16. Verse 2: Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.
  - a) One way we praise God is that we consider the concept of how long is the span of God's existence: From "eternity past to eternity future".
    - i) The point is to remind ourselves that no matter what we are dealing with at this time, it is "nothing" in comparison to the eternity of God's existence.
    - ii) The point is also to remind ourselves that the greatest purpose that we can have for our lives is to use them to make a difference for Him.
  - b) If that doesn't get us in a better mood, well then there is no hope for us. ☺
17. Verse 3: The seas have lifted up, O LORD, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. <sup>4</sup> Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea-- the LORD on high is mighty.
  - a) These two verses give us visual pictures of something powerful. The idea is of strong, pounding waves of water. Verse 4 mentions thunder as well. The point of these two verses is not about the literalness of these forces of nature, but to remind ourselves that God is greater than these forces and is in control over these forces.
  - b) If that is true, why does God allow good people to die from such violent forces?
    - i) What popped in my head was a story Jesus told about some men who died when a tower accidentally fell on them. (See Luke 13:4.) Jesus said those men who died were not worse sinners than anyone else. His point was we never know when our time is up and sometimes bad things happen that can take us from this world.
      - a) We can only live eternally and joyfully through such storms if have trust in the Son of God to redeem of us of our sins and live forever.
    - ii) God allows storms in this world if for no other reason that to remind us that this world is full of "storms" and the only way we can survive through such storms is to trust in Him. "Survival" is about having the eternal perspective in that we will live through it only by living forever.

18. Verse 5: Your statutes stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days, O LORD.
  - a) This little psalm ends with the reminder that God "stands firm" forever. To explain that, let's go back to that violent storm I was just discussing earlier. Do such bad things in our lives last forever? Of course not. Sometimes the only way to mentally get through such times is to keep the eternal aspect of God in perspective. That is what the psalmist wants us to consider in this little 5-verse psalm. It is remembering that God is "permanent" and whatever we have to deal with is relatively nothing in comparison to that eternal time span. OK, on that happy, note, Psalm 94.
19. Psalm 94, title: None
  - a) OK we have another psalm here without a title. Without getting into why there is no title again, let me instead focus on what this psalm is about:
    - i) The first half is in effect a prayer of protection against those who want to hurt us.
    - ii) The second half is a reminder that God will judge those who refuse to turn to Him.
  - b) The biggest and more important question is why is this psalm here?
    - i) The first two psalms of this fourth book of the Psalms (#90 and #91) reminded us that God is in charge and how short our lives are in comparison to His eternity.
    - ii) The last psalm (#92) praise God for who He is.
    - iii) The next six psalms (#95-#100) all focus on different aspects of praising God for the good He has done and will do in our eternal lives.
    - iv) The big pattern I see of Psalm Book #4 is getting us to appreciate God and keep our focus upon Him despite whatever we are dealing with in our lives.
  - c) This leads us to Psalm 94. The focus is back on those who want to harm us. Why?
    - i) It is one thing to have all of those happy thoughts focusing on our eternal relationship with God. Those thoughts help us through the hard times of this life.
      - a) At the same time, we have to deal with the realities of this world. We can't just ignore our lives and stand still and praise God all day.
    - ii) Psalm 94 is in effect an interruption in a multi-psalm praise to God to remind us that He is well aware of what we are dealing with in this life.
      - a) This psalm is a reminder that God wants to guide us through our current problems and He is not just concerned with our eternal destiny.
      - b) In summary, Psalm 94 is still praise to God, but it is praise for what He is doing now as opposed to what He will do for all of eternity.
  - d) Once I again I wrote way too much for a "non-title", and I'm overdue to start Verse 1. ☺
20. Verse 1: O LORD, the God who avenges, O God who avenges, shine forth.
  - a) This verse remind us that God is not only in charge of our lives and rules over this world, but there is also coming a day when He will "right the wrongs" of this world.
  - b) Does that mean if God will take care of my problems, I should be passive? Hardly. The practical aspect is not about taking the law into our hands but by letting the authorities do their job. If the authorities are the problems then we pray for God to judge their actions.
  - c) If we believe God does judge people, why pray for His judgment? It is that God loves us too much to leave us alone. By praying for His "avenging", it gets our focus upon Him to act and it helps us to recognize when and how He does work.
21. Verse 2: Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve.
  - a) The same theme of "come on God, work now" continues in Verse 2. When the bible uses the word "proud", think of those who refuse to turn to God all of their lives.
    - i) In other words this verse is describing people who think too highly of themselves to need God's help and His forgiveness of their sins.
    - ii) The idea of "God judging" reflects the idea of how helpless we all are without Him interfering in our lives. We need to work through Him in order to have the power to make a difference for Him in our lives.

22. Verse 3: How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant?
- a) As I have stated earlier in this lesson, the only joy that the wicked (those who refuse to trust in God with their lives) have is in this lifetime. This prayer of Verse 3 is in effect, "Dear God, why are you allowing the bad people to win at this time?"
    - i) Part of the answer is that God is waiting to see if any of them repent knowing what their eternal fate will be. By allowing the wicked to get away with stuff for a while, make it more obvious that God does exist when they eventually fall.
  - b) I once heard someone say, "Why worry about the evil of this world when we know such evil people will eventually fall from power?" The answer is that God does want us to seek Him to pray for that evil to end. God does want to interfere in our lives. God does not want to see us suffer and He desires to right the wrongs of this world.
    - i) As I stated earlier, this lesson was written not long after the killing of Osama Bin Laden. My point is God does allow justice to happen on His timing. So why was there about a 10-year gap between the crimes he orchestrated and the time he was killed? I can't explain that time gap. I just know that in the end people do get what they deserve, be it judgment in this lifetime or the next one.
  - c) Bottom line, we should petition God to "right the wrongs" of this world, mainly so that we can be aware that He does work that way and we can be aware of it when happens.
23. Verse 4: They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. <sup>5</sup> They crush your people, O LORD; they oppress your inheritance. <sup>6</sup> They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless.
- a) These verses describe the bad things that those who oppose God are doing:
    - i) Verse 4 describes the arrogant words they speak.
    - ii) Verse 5 describes how they crush people who do trust in God.
    - iii) Verse 6 describes how they hurt those who can't help themselves. In other words, Verse 6 is focusing on people who are either physically or financially weak and such weak people are being taken advantage of by the wicked.
  - b) OK John, whoever these wicked people are, they seem pretty bad. Why pray this psalm? Isn't God already aware of all this stuff already? Why do we have to pray to remind Him of all of this? A clue is we don't do it for His sake, but for ours.
    - i) I have discovered that God likes to work best when we ask Him to work. The same way God does not interfere in our lives unless we ask Him, is similar to the principal of asking Him to interfere in the lives of wicked: In other words it is up to us to petition God in order for Him to make a difference in this world.
  - c) So why doesn't God work faster? I can't explain God's timing. I just know that when we do seek His forgiveness for our own sins, He does work because He loves us. The history of Israel is one big example of God working when that nation as a whole does seek His forgiveness and His help. The same applies to our lives. God does work to help us His way and on His timing.
    - i) In summary, it is worth our time and trouble to pray this way to God. ☺
24. Verse 7: They say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed."
- a) When you see the phrase "The God of Jacob", think of it as insulting way of describing the God of the Jewish people who we as Christians also worship. The point is there are many people in the world who refuse to believe in the God of the bible and refuse to believe that He does act on behalf of those who trust in Him.
  - b) OK John, and why bring up this point here? The point is we desire God to work in a way so that even our enemies can be aware of how He is working. Again, think about the death of Osama Bin Laden: It was done in such a dramatic way, it supports the idea of God working His way and on His timing for justice to be done.



25. Verse 8: Take heed, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise?
- a) The point here is that many people refuse to look at the evidence of God working in this world and that makes them "fools". The biblical word "fools" describes people who refuse to acknowledge the existence and power of God working in this world.
  - b) Do those who deny God's existence now see Him work now that for example, Osama Bin Laden was killed? No, they will just credit the American military or give another excuse.
    - i) People who refuse to believe in God will always come up with an excuse to not give God the credit even when justice is done in our lifetimes. I mention this because this verse is asking why do wicked people ignore of God's existence?
    - ii) To answer that, I was thinking about the miracles that Jesus did and the fact that people refused to believe in Him. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Jewish leaders not only wanted Jesus killed, but also wanted Lazarus dead as well. Lazarus was now a living witness for Jesus. (See John 12:10 on that point.)
    - iii) My point is those who oppose God working in this world can't stand any and all evidence of God working. If they can't ignore the evidence, such people will work to eliminate any and all evidence of God working in this world.
    - iv) This affects you and me in that if we do become a living witness for God there are people out there who want to silence such a "living witness".
26. Verse 9: Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see?
- a) The point here is to remind ourselves that God is well aware of those people who refuse to acknowledge Him with their lives.
  - b) OK time for another question: If God is aware of those who refuse to trust in Him, why isn't He doing more about it now? Peter in effect asked that question. Peter effectively stated that God is slow in judgment (from our perspective) because God is waiting for as many people as possible to repent before judgment day comes. (See 2nd Peter 3:9.)
    - i) Getting back to Bin Laden, God may have waited 10 years to make it obvious to people that He is in charge and He does orchestrate justice on His timing.
27. Verse 10: Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge?
- a) Speaking of asking questions, Verse 10 has two of them. OK, let's answer one at a time.
  - b) The first one asks whether or not God punish nations that refuse to believe in Him?
    - i) I would argue that history has proved that to be true. Think over the last say 100 years of nations that for the most part have ignored or denied the God of the bible. We have watched for example, the fall of the Russian Empire and I am convinced one of the main reasons was due to the fact they did their best to eliminate God from any public reference in their lives.
    - ii) OK, John, what about a country like Saudi Arabia? They are financially rich and for the most part ignore the God of the Bible. I will argue that God still has some purpose for them and He will judge those individually and collectively who refuse to acknowledge His existence on His timing. I don't know the "hows". I just know there is a price to pay for both individually and collectively refusing to turn to our God and refusing to turn to the God of the Jewish people with their lives.
  - c) The second question is much easier. It asks in effect does God lack knowledge?
    - i) The point of the second question is why isn't God working now to deal with the injustices of this world? As I stated earlier, God does work on His timing. It is a matter of us petitioning Him to work, as He likes to work through people.
28. Verse 11: The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.
- a) This verse ends the "prayer portion" of this psalm. The question here is what does the psalmist mean by "man's thoughts being futile?" In context, it is referring to the thoughts of nonbelievers in the excuses they make up to deny God's existence. This verse is not saying all of man's thoughts are bad, just the denials of God's existence in this world.

29. Verse 12: Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law; <sup>13</sup> you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked.
- a) Ok, I said this lesson is about praise to God, and once again, it is time to prove it. The second half of this psalm gets its focus off (notice the "off") of those who oppose God and onto those of us who do trust in the God of the bible.
  - b) Let me end the "first half" by stating why it was here: It is not for their sake, but for ours. It is to remind us that despite all of the evil that exists in this world, there is a God, He is in charge, and He will take care of the wicked on His timing. Since I've beaten that point to death, ☺ I'm ready to move on to Verse 12 and the rest of this psalm.
  - c) OK, Verse 12 says that those of us who trust in Him are "blessed by His law". Explain how that works. I thought Christians are not under the law. (See Galatians 5:18.)
    - i) There are still many things we Christians can learn from the Old Testament law. The law teaches us what are God's standards to live our lives. To trust in Jesus simply means He takes the punishment we deserve for disobedience to that law. Just because we are not "under the law" does not mean we can't learn from it.
    - ii) I should also state that one should read the law in context of the New Testament. That is because many of these laws have to be understood in our relationship with God the Father through Jesus.
  - d) Now that I've stated that, let me explain how that principal fits in context of Verses 12 and 13: The point is the Old Testament law does teach us how to be disciplined for God.
    - i) I once heard a pastor say, "When I read the Old Testament law, I think, this is good advice. It gives good practical advice on how to live my life." The problem is the desire to do our own will as opposed to what God wants prevents us from living by the law. It is only by letting the Spirit of God work through us that we are able to live the type of life that God desires us to live in the first place.
    - ii) The only way to live the way God wants us to live is by letting Him guide us. We learn how He wants to guide us by studying our bible and that includes studying His laws as taught in the Old Testament.
  - e) Meanwhile the verse also means "relief from the wicked". That doesn't mean we avoid those who want to hurt us. It means that God is in charge of the situation and He will protect us from harm either by guiding us through our situation or by our resurrection.
30. Verse 14: For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance.
- a) The "bottom line" of this verse is we can't mess up our salvation if we tried. We can't sin enough to be forsaken by God. This is about the assurance we are saved as long as we are trusting in Jesus' payment for our sins and by trusting that Jesus is God.
    - i) The point here is that even when we are not faithful, God is still faithful. We still can be punished (think discipline) for our sins in this lifetime. Further, we can lose rewards in heaven for a lack of faithfulness.
    - ii) The related point is "God cannot change". If He promises to grant us salvation, that is an unconditional promise. When we mess up as believers, we may be punished in this lifetime or lose rewards in heaven, but not our salvation.
31. Verse 15: Judgment will again be founded on righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it. <sup>16</sup> Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?
- a) The point here is God will judge those who oppose Him and lead those of us who trust Him to do what is right. The question for us is how will we do what is right in life?
    - i) I stated that my title for this lesson is about praise. One way we praise God is simply by having the desire to do His will and yes, trust in Him. Following up that thought with actions is what praise is all about.
    - ii) To say it another way, "putting our money where our mouth is" in terms of making a difference for God is a form of praise to Him.

- b) God wants us to have victory over what is evil in this world. The point of these verses is we can have victory, but we do that by trusting Him, not doing it by our own power.
    - i) Yes, John, but I am sure there are lots of say, good policemen and prosecuting attorneys who don't trust in God. What about them? Yes one can have victories over evil people without trusting in God. Such professionals can put evil people in jail, but in order to have complete victory over evil does require a trust in God.
32. Verse 17: Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.
- a) If we are to trust in God, we must realize that it is He who does preserve us through the trials we face in life and death itself. The point is to realize that God does give us our victories in life and we should praise Him for those victories.
    - i) Again we don't praise God because He needs to hear it. We praise Him to keep our focus and gratitude upon Him, as we "easily wander away" from Him.
  - b) One can also read this verse as being about salvation itself. Getting back to the issue of how short our lives are, we would soon be in hell if not for the fact God has rescued us. My point here is to never forget to regularly praise God for salvation itself. Remember that the God who knows all things first choose us before we ever accepted Him to be in charge of our lives. The psalmist is saying here in effect, "Unless God picked me, I would be in hell before I realized it".
33. Verse 18: When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O LORD, supported me. <sup>19</sup> When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.
- a) If we are trusting in God, then we can also trust in Him to help us when things are going badly, or even if we think about bad things. The point is we can at any time call upon His love for comfort and support no matter what is happening or we might think will happen.
    - i) That is my paraphrase of this verse. I stated this lesson is about praise to God. One way we do show praise is by our trust in Him in times like this.
  - b) One question scholars have is why is Psalm 94 here? Psalms 93 and 95-99 all appear to go together as they discuss our eternal relationship with God. I believe Psalm 94 is here to remind us while we are thinking about the "eternal", that God will still be there for us through whatever this life throws at us. My point is we don't have to wait until the next life to appreciate what He can and will do for us and comfort us through this life as well.
34. Verse 20: Can a corrupt throne be allied with you-- one that brings on misery by its decrees? <sup>21</sup>They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.
- a) These two verses focus once again upon those who oppose God's will. These verses speak about those judges who are corrupt and how they bring bad judgment upon people.
    - i) A point here is that justice does not always happen in this world. Ultimately we have to trust in God that His judgment will "right the wrongs" of this lifetime.
  - b) The reason this concept is mentioned here is yes, so we can praise Him. It is to remind ourselves that no matter what goes wrong, not only can we trust God to comfort us, but also ultimately to right the wrongs of this world.
  - c) OK John, what if you are wrong? What if there is no judgment day? What if another view of God is right and not Christianity? How can I be so sure you are right?
    - i) First of all, the bible and no other religion go to such tremendous effort to prove that it is right. All religions teach principals about how to live a good life. Only our bible is full of predictions that have come true over time that among other things validate that the bible is true and that God does exist. The point is I am convinced there is enough evidence "out there" both through watching the world and through studying my bible to validate the bible as God's truth.
    - ii) I state all of this information about God's existence, as one reason we can have confidence to do the right thing is that there is a God and yes He will judge all people by their actions. Yes that should scare us and at the same time, keep us close to Him.

35. Verse 22: But the LORD has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.  
<sup>23</sup>He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the LORD our God will destroy them.
- a) The point of these final two verses is that we can trust in God to give us victories in life.
    - i) We can trust in God to right the wrongs of this world one day.
    - ii) We can trust in God to punish those who won't to turn to Him with their lives.
    - iii) We can praise God because we are on the "winning side", even though it may not look that way at times in our lives.
  - b) Getting back to the question of "How do I know all of this stuff about God is real? The answer is He does give us comfort through our troubles and when we seek Him, He does guide us to victories over whatever we have to deal with in our lives.
  - c) The point is we can praise God because He does lead us to victory.
36. My goal for this lesson, besides getting us in a better mood, is for all of us to appreciate God a little more for the good things He has done, is doing and will do for our lives. Hopefully in these psalms we have learned to appreciate those concepts about why we should praise Him and apply them to our own lives.
- a) It may help to remember that the purpose of learning the psalms is not an intellectual exercise in learning as much as it is ways to express our love and gratitude to God. The psalms are best read with that thought of gratitude in mind. Hopefully as you read and study psalms in the future, we can consider those concepts as we do praise Him for our lives and all the good we have in this life.
  - b) On that happy note, I'll close in prayer.
37. Father, help us to praise You for the simple fact that You are God. You created the world we live in and exist outside of this world at the same time. Help us to praise You by spending time thinking about You and remember that You love us and desire to guide our lives. Help us to use our lives to make a difference for You in all that we do. Help us to be grateful for the salvation You have given us and the help You are always willing to give us as You guide our lives to make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen