

THE
PSALMS

**of David
and Others**

A Study of Selected Psalms in Their Historical Contexts

Thirteen Lessons with Class Questions

By: Reg Ginn

The Psalms of David and Others

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TECHNICAL TERMS FOUND IN THE PSALMS

<u>Term</u>	<u>Possible Meaning</u>	<u>Example Psalm(s)</u>
Neginah, Neginoth (pl.), Nehiloth (pl.).....	Musical instruments	4, 5, 61
Alamoth.....	Maidens or trebel voices	46
Gittith.....	March of Gittite guard	8, 81, 84
Selah.....	Change from <i>piano</i> to <i>forte</i>	3:2
Sheminith.....	The eighth	6:12
Maschil.....	A didactic or reflective poem.....	32, et. al.
Michtam.....	Perhaps epigrammatic.....	16, 56-60
Mizmor.....	Lyric poem, translated psalm.....	3
Shiggaion.....	An irregular lyric.....	7

<u>Terms indicating familiar Melodies</u>	<u>Psalms</u>
Aijeleth hash-Shahar.... “hind of the dawn”.....	22
Jonath elem rehokim..... “the silent dove of them that are afar off” or “the dove of distant terebinths”.....	56
Mahalath..... “sickness”.....	53, 88
Muth-labben	9
Shoshannim.....	45
Shoshannim Eduth and Shushan Eduth.....	45, 60

Songs of Ascents or Degrees were probably designed to be sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for feasts, dedications, etc. (Psalms 120-134). Some of the terms employed in the Psalms are indeterminate of an exact meaning. Definitions above are taken from The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, John David and Henry Gehman, The Westminster Press, 1944.

To Students and Teachers

The study of The Psalms of David and Others is designed to establish a connection between the psalms of David and Israel and the historical events out of which those psalms came. These inspired writings become more real and meaningful to us as we relate them to the life situations of their authors. David's life was certainly filled with numerous incidents of interest as he rose from a humble beginning to the throne of Israel; as he ruled a God-blessed nation of people for forty years; as he achieved significant military and political conquests; and as he faced painful encounters with sin and its hurtful consequences. Many of the psalms found their origins in these exploits and show us the feelings, reactions, attitudes, aspirations, and fears of a great king about the important events of his life. The psalms open for our inspection David's heart and soul in a way that nothing else does. In this way, the psalms help us to understand this "man after God's own heart" to a degree not possible otherwise.

The lessons in this book are intended to relate selected psalms to Biblical records about David and other writers of these heaven-guided poems. Each lesson is tied to a particular period in the history of David and the people of Israel.

Please consider these suggestions as you use this workbook. It is believed that they will enhance your benefit from this study:

1. The New King James Version is recommended. Wording for answers to the questions following each lesson is taken from that version.
2. Sections of each lesson about the "Historical Context" and the "Historical Connection with the Psalms" should be read and discussed [as necessary] prior to the study of the psalms included in the lesson.
3. Consult the text of each psalm as you study the comments in the "mini-commentary" on the psalm. To conserve space, the text does not usually appear with the commentary.
4. Class comments, questions, and discussion about points made in the lesson will, of course, greatly enhance the benefits derived from the study. Such things as the connection between historical events and statements contained in the psalms, determinations about figurative and literal language in the psalms, etc., can provide fertile soil for class participation.

Introduction to Psalms

In his book, David and His Psalms, Harrison A. Mathews says:

Since most of the Psalms were written by David out of his life experiences we will follow his life closely. David lived 70 years of the most varied experiences. His early life was that of a shepherd tending his father's flock. He early was called to the palace of Saul, but soon was hated by the King. Even then the King could see that David was favored by God, and he resented this deeply. It became necessary for David to flee for his life. He finally found himself in the land of the Philistines with a small band of followers. He lived this outlaw life until he was thirty and Saul had died. He was crowned King at age thirty but it took seven additional years to consolidate his kingdom. Then followed a long period of conquest as the kingdom of Israel was enlarged. At age fifty David committed the great sin of his life. He was never to escape the consequences of this sin, although out of his broken heart were to come many of his great writings. His final days were spent in disappointment and civil war. The one redeeming factor of his life was his satisfaction in knowing that God had forgiven him. He was determined to assist his son Solomon in preparing a great place of worship. To this end, shortly before his death, David wrote many beautiful psalms of praise to be used in the temple worship. Each period in the life of David brought forth its own peculiar writing. We will try to understand this man who, in spite of his sins, was called "a man after God's own heart."

What are the Psalms?

Psalms is a collection of one hundred and fifty lyric poems, many of which were originally used in Jewish worship services. The Hebrew name for the collection was "*Sepher Tehillim*" ["Book of Praises"] because of the pervasive praise to God found in almost every psalm. The Septuagint [Greek Old Testament] called the book "*Psalmoi*" from *psallo*, "to sing." The songs were sometimes accompanied in Jewish worship by the lyre or some other musical instrument. Of course, no such provision for using instruments in worship is made in the New Testament.

Who wrote the Psalms?

Many people would be surprised to learn that not every Psalm in the collection was written by David, who traditionally has been called "the Psalmist" or "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2Sam. 23:1). In fact, while a great many of the psalms *were* the product of the

mind and soul of the Jews' first *great* king, many others are attributed to the work of other men, and a large group remains anonymous. Ancient inscriptions, or titles, are attached to those psalms which have been identified by the names of particular writers or groups of writers. Most scholars accept these inscriptions as genuine, although some do not, and many publications of the Psalms include the titles with their respective psalms. Albert Barnes, a respected commentator on the Bible, says concerning these inscriptions:

On the whole, it seems to me that these inscriptions are to be regarded as a part of the inspired record, and as having the authority of inspiration. The fact that they are found in the Hebrew,-- that they can be traced back to the earliest periods when we have any knowledge of the Hebrew text,-- that they have come down to us with that text,-- furnishes proof which it seems we cannot now set aside; that they are to be regarded as a part of the text, and that they should not be rejected, except as any other portion of the Hebrew text should be rejected, *i.e.*, only when it can be demonstrated that an error has crept into the text by the fault of transcribers.

On the other hand, Adam Clarke, another noted commentator, dissents:

As to the inscriptions, they are of slender authority; several of them do not agree with the subject of the Psalm to which they are prefixed, and not a few of them appear to be out of their places.

We may observe certain facts about the titles of various psalms.

1. Their design was to identify: (a) the author of a psalm, (b) the occasion on which the psalm was composed, or (c) the person(s) to whom it was dedicated or to whom was given responsibility to prepare the psalm for use in public worship.
2. Some titles include very specific information about the origin of the psalms, e.g., Psalms 52, 53, 59, 60, etc.
3. Other inscriptions even specify the type of music that should accompany the singing of the psalms, e.g., Psalms 55, 61, 67, etc.
4. A familiar musical tune to which a psalm should be set is sometimes listed, e.g., Psalms 69, 75, etc.
5. The occasion for which a psalm is intended is sometimes designated in a title, e.g., Psalms 30, 92, etc.
6. Psalms 120-134 are called "Songs of Ascents." It is supposed that they were to be sung by travelers making their way to Jerusalem to worship.
7. The title attached to Psalm 60 provides the most specifics: (a) author; (b) occasion of writing; (c) tune to be used; (d) person responsible for its management; (e) a description of its nature; (f) the purpose for which it was to be used.

A commonly accepted list of writers of the psalms [according to inscriptions] is:

Psalms written by David, king of Israel..... 75
Psalms written by the "sons of Korah"..... 10

Psalms written by “Asaph”	12
Psalm written by “Ethan the Ezrahite”	1
Psalm written by “Heman the Ezrahite”	1
Psalm written By Moses.....	1
Psalms written by [or for] Solomon.....	2
Anonymous psalms.....	<u>48</u>
Total.....	150

Note: Seventy-three psalms actually bear inscriptions recognizing David as their originator. Additionally, Psalms 2 and 95 are both attributed to David when referenced in the New Testament [Acts 4:25,26 and Hebrews 4:3,5,7].

The “sons of Korah” were Korahites descended from the infamous Korah (Numbers 16) and who were employed in singing and playing in the Jews’ worship services. They may also have been composers of spiritual music.

“Asaph,” “Heman,” and “Ethan” were engaged by David to serve as singers and sounders of cymbals (1Chron. 15:16-19).

Asaph was designated as the “chief” of those who served in praising God before the ark (1Chron. 16:5). To him David delivered “a psalm” of thanksgiving (1Chron. 16:7-36), portions of which are virtually identical with wording found in Psalm 105:1-15 and Psalm 96:1-13. It seems obvious that those psalms should be added to the list of David’s compositions.

When were the Psalms written?

It is generally accepted that the one hundred fifty individual psalms were composed by Moses [Psalm 90-- c.1400 B.C.], by David and his contemporaries [c. 1010 to 970 B.C.], and by writers who were among the captives in Babylon [Psalm 137--c. 605-536 B.C.] and perhaps even thereafter. Consequently, it is apparent that the various psalms originated over a lengthy period of time.

It is reasonably certain that the one hundred and fifty psalms were first written as separate poems. They were at some time collected and arranged by some unidentified person or persons. That task has been credited to several people. A popular opinion seems to be that Ezra [c. 450 B.C.], the great priest of the Jewish Restoration, was the one to whom God gave that awesome responsibility. It may be that earlier efforts were made to arrange the psalms into groups or “books.” David may have made such a collection.

What is the structure and character of the Psalms?

Numerous types of STRUCTURE have been given to this familiar book over the

centuries. Critics, however, usually classify the psalms into *FIVE BOOKS*, according to the Hebrew classification, with each book ending in wording that suggests a conclusion of thought or transition.

<u>Book</u>	<u>Psalms</u>	<u>Principal author(s)</u>	<u>Concluding words</u>
I	1-41	David	“Amen and Amen”
II	42-72	David; the Sons of Korah	“Amen and Amen”
III	73-89	Asaph; Sons of Korah	“Amen and Amen”
IV	90-106	Anonymous	“Amen; praise the Lord”
V	107-150	David; Anonymous	“Praise the Lord” [“Hallelujah”]

[The Septuagint assigns many “anonymous” psalms to David]

Barnes classifies the psalms in five categories:

1. Hymns of praise which have as their main object acknowledging the glory and majesty of Almighty Jehovah;
2. Psalms that emphasized the relationship existing between Israel and their God and the impact of that relationship on the history of the nation;
3. Songs of Zion that were to be used in the Jews’ temple worship;
4. Psalms dealing with the adversities and trials of life experienced both by the nation of Israel and individuals within that nation;
5. Religious and moral psalms.

Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts describes the psalms in this way:

1. Individual and communal lament psalms that sought God’s deliverance;
2. Thanksgiving psalms that praise Jehovah for His merciful oversight;
3. Enthronement psalms acknowledging God’s sovereign reign over all men;
4. Pilgrimage psalms to be sung by celebrants of the Jewish festivals;
5. Royal psalms that concern the rule of Israel’s king as well as their heavenly King;
6. Wisdom psalms that deal with essential wisdom and righteousness;
7. Imprecatory psalms which implore God’s wrath and judgment against enemies.

Additionally, there are numerous psalms that explore the life and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the long-anticipated Messiah of the Jews. This category of psalms will be addressed in the final lesson of this study.

Psalms is a collection of Hebrew *lyric poetry*, which was primarily intended to express the deep feelings, emotions, and attitudes of the nation and the people who were special to Jehovah. These psalms, or songs, were to be read and sung as expressions of deep devotion by worshipers in the temple and in other places. They reveal the wide range of emotions experienced by the psalmists and their people as they faced the varied circumstances of human existence. There is tenderness and harshness; fear and confidence; joy and sadness. There is also love and hatred.

The “imprecatory” psalms which call for the vengeance of God upon evildoers [e.g., 5:10; 10:15; 18:40-42; 55:9,15; 58:6-10; 137:7-9] have long raised a problem for students seeking to understand their expressions of hatred within the context of the pervasive love promoted by Jesus in the New Testament. While we may not be able to justify fully the harsh outbursts contained in certain of the psalms, it may help us to remember that:

1. The language used in a different culture than ours might not have actually carried the extremely harsh meanings as it appears to us now;
2. Some of the troublesome passages might have been primarily intended as prophetic, revealing what the end of evildoers *would be* at some future time and not expressing what the psalmist really *wanted* it to be;
3. The statements in question can also be understood as the psalmists’ record of what people *other than themselves* desired to take place. These feelings would certainly be embedded in those persons who would personally inflict punishment on the enemies of the righteous.
4. It has also been suggested that “There is something in our very nature, account for it as we may, which approves of punishment when properly inflicted; which approves of the appointment of a penalty for crime. If this is wrong, it is a wrong in our very nature; it is a universal wrong which has gone into the enactment of all laws--for all law has a penalty...No man feels that he is blameworthy when he thus finds himself approving of a just sentence of law...” [Barnes].

How important is historical context to a better understanding of the Psalms?

Unquestionably, many of the psalms are better understood and appreciated when viewed within the context of the historical events surrounding their origins. While we cannot be sure that certain events correlate with certain psalms, aside from whatever degree of confidence we may have in the inscriptions that accompany many of them, a close inspection of the language and the evident emotion displayed in them will immediately bring to mind things that we have learned about the history of David the King and of the kingdom over which he ruled.

Several lessons in this study will endeavor to associate events contained in the books of First and Second Samuel, First Kings, First Chronicles, and [briefly] Daniel, Esther, and Ezra with selected psalms. Our purpose will be to make Psalms more meaningful as a record of the outpouring of real feelings of real people in real life situations. The student should be sure to read carefully the historical passages suggested for the lessons. Some of the questions accompanying each lesson will be designed to help make connections between the psalms and history so as to enhance appreciation for this wonderful book of inspiration, challenges, and encouragement.

1. The psalms originally were used in Jewish _____ and were often accompanied by _____.
2. Ancient _____, or _____, were attached to many psalms and provide some information about the _____ of those psalms.
3. Titles commonly give what three types of information about the psalms?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. Which psalm carries the most details in its inscription? _____
5. Who apparently wrote the most psalms? _____ The second most were written by _____ authors.
6. Two psalms, numbers _____ and _____, bear no title but are credited to _____ in N. T. references in _____ and _____.
7. The earliest date for a psalm's origin is _____; the latest date is _____.
8. Who likely collected the psalms into one complete book? _____
9. Which of the five Books of Psalms contains the largest number of psalms? _____; the least? _____
10. What is an "imprecatory" psalm? Give a quotation from one such psalm that identifies the psalm as imprecatory.

A Psalm for Happiness

One prominent theme throughout Psalms is an investigation of how man can achieve the happiness for which God created him. As now, the times during which the psalms were written witnessed the futile efforts of people to secure happiness in ways that could never produce happiness. Even the Israelites, the chosen and blessed people of God, had repeatedly reaped disappointment and defeat rather than happiness because they chose to ignore heaven's formula for blessedness that they had been given by the grace of Jehovah.

The recurring lesson of Psalms to the Jews was that *real* happiness could rest only on the foundation of God's will for the nation. Apart from a close relationship with their Lord, the people of Israel could never be happy, and such a relationship could exist only when they showed due respect for His word and obeyed His commandments. Not surprisingly, many of the psalms stress the need for conforming to the Law and relying on the blessings promised to obedient followers of the Law. Indeed, the longest psalm [119] includes some reference to trusting in God's word in all but a very few of its 176 verses.

In this lesson we will examine a psalm that deals with this theme of what *will* and what *will not* provide happiness in a world full of trouble and strife. Psalm 1 will be our focus. Other psalms, such as 37, 73, and 125, deal with this same issue and can add additional insight into God's prescription for true happiness in man's life.

Psalm 1: The Happy Man

The first Psalm in this marvelous collection of inspired poems about the relationship between Jehovah and His people, individually and collectively, is usually considered to be a *preface* to the numerous truths about true happiness that are found in psalms dealing with that theme throughout the collection. Also, this psalm might have been intended to serve as a *summary statement* that would "capsulize" the extensive and sometimes rather lengthy discussions about real happiness in other psalms. In either case, many scholars think that this psalm might have been written *last* instead of *first* and attached to the beginning of the collection by Ezra or by whoever else may have been involved in gathering 150 poems into one grand book. A close examination of this text supports the thesis that only by relying fully on God and His word can men in a sinful and unsettled world enjoy happiness and contentment.

Psalm 1--The Text

Verse 1: “*Blessed is the man who...*”

David [as commonly supposed, or some other author] immediately launches into answering the age-old question, “How can a man be happy in an environment of unhappiness?” Some versions employ “happy” rather than “blessed” in opening this psalm. The English is from a form of the Hebrew *asre* or *ashar*. W.E. Vine defines the word as connoting “the state of ‘prosperity’ or ‘happiness’ that comes when a superior bestows his favor [blessing] on one...The state that the blessed one enjoys does not always appear to be ‘happy’: ‘Behold, blessed [KJV, ‘happy’] is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up...(Job 5:17-18).’ ” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance adds, “to be straight; esp. to be level, right, happy.” Figurative- “to go forward, be honest, prosper.” We are familiar with things said elsewhere in the Scriptures to bring “blessedness” or “happiness.”

Matthew 5:3-12: “Blessed [happy] are the poor in spirit...those who mourn... the meek...those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful...the pure in heart...the peacemakers...those persecuted for righteousness’ sake...those reviled and persecuted.”

Revelation 14:13: “Blessed [happy] are those who die in the Lord...”

16:15: “Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments...”

22:14: “Blessed are they who do His commandments...”

“*The man*” who here seeks happiness will succeed by first *not doing* some things. He *will not walk* in ungodly counsel; he *will not stand* in sinners’ paths; he *will not sit* in the scornful’s seat. These places in which many people walk, stand, and sit will never allow those people to be really happy.

- a. Ungodly counsel is “without God.” Some suppose that peace of mind results from not bothering oneself with such matters as religion imposes. Ignoring the obligations of God’s word will allow unimpeded devotion to one’s personal activities without any competition from religious duties.
- b. The sinner’s path is a lifestyle that includes regular and frequent transgressions of God’s laws. Happiness is supposed to come when one feels free to involve himself in the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21) as he sees fit. Self-denial is a concept foreign to the thinking of men and women who reach for happiness through self-indulgence.
- c. The scornful’s seat is a perspective from which religion and obedience to God are considered not just as nuisances but as *obstacles* to personal

well-being. The existence of a Higher Power ruling over the lives of humans is a concept so offensive to many human minds that it deserves whatever scorn and ridicule may be heaped upon it.

Obviously, if *real* happiness comes from a *real* relationship with God, then choices made against God and religion will destroy any possibility for happiness [blessedness] in the lives of transgressors.

It will be observed that the spiritual status of offenders is progressive. They first *walk* in the company of ungodly men who welcome the opportunity to offer the ungodly advice that religion is an unnecessary facet of happiness. Common morality, they say, is adequate to satisfy the Lord. More than that is above and beyond what He expects of any man. Next, those who have opted to ignore the essentials of the religious life soon find themselves *standing* in the path of men who actively participate in the pleasurable pursuit of sinful behavior. They soon position themselves among sinners and become comfortable in the company of those who freely violate the Father's will. Life, they conclude, is much too short not to take full advantage of the pleasure it offers. Surely, "God is not so uncaring that He would deny to anyone the things that everyone else enjoys." Finally, those who have *walked* and *stood* in the wrong places will find themselves *sitting* with people who don't fear God or don't hesitate to ridicule all the values upon which true blessedness [happiness] depends. Neither reason nor revelation can persuade them that spirituality could appeal to any but the ignorant and foolish in the world.

Verse 2: "*But his delight is in...*"

Having dealt with *negative* factors that will deny happiness, the psalmist turns to *positive* characteristics that qualify "a man" for the happiness he seeks. Whereas unhappiness will follow if he is found *in* ungodly counsel, sinful living, and scornful attitudes toward godliness, happiness will certainly result when he dwells *in* circumstances that please his God.

1. "*His delight is in the law of the Lord...*"

God's word is not just a curiosity to him. It is not merely a body of literature to be read in the same way as other significant writings. It is not only a law that must be studied because it will one day judge us for eternity. It is a book that brings great *delight* to the student because it refreshes the thirsty soul. It nourishes the hungry spirit and gives hope to the down-trodden. It is truly a "treasure hidden in a field" and a "pearl of great price" that offers sight to the blind and instant strength to the weak. The law of the Lord is not just to be read and remembered; it must be obeyed implicitly by the man who would be happy, and obedience is ever a *delight*

to him, never a burden.

2. “*And in His law he meditates day and night.*”

God’s revelation is profound. While its purpose for our lives is easily understood by sincere students of the word, its meaning reaches far beyond a first or second reading of the text. Fresh insights are discovered with every new research into the mind of the Almighty God. New applications become apparent as additional and careful thought is given to the heavenly message of the Scriptures. “Meditation” [Hebrew--*hagah*] is “to meditate, moan, growl, utter, speak.” It appears to “reflect the sighing and low sounds one may make while musing, at least as the ancients practiced it” [W.E. Vine]. At least, it conveys the idea of deep thought and application to life situations. Such mental exercises assure that God’s word becomes really meaningful to the student as he strives to reap the greatest reward from his study. Spiritual wisdom [“seeing things as God sees them”---James 1:5] is the fruit of our meditation. The acceptable life springs from vigorous and constant [“day and night”] meditation on the truths of eternity.

Verse 3: “*He shall be like a tree...*”

There are certain and specific promises made by God to “the man” who chooses to *walk, stand, and sit* in right instead of wrong places.

1. “*He shall be like a tree planted...*”

A tree is a substantial object. It is not easily removed from its position. It can be depended on to fill the functions for which it was designed. It enjoys a long life, sometimes hundreds of years. It endures long after lesser things have faded into oblivion. God’s people are like that. They are the “new creation” of the Lord (2Cor.5:17) and no power in this world can destroy their stability in Christ while they elect to be faithful to Him (John 10:29). Obedient souls will continually fulfill the roles into which the Lord has placed them among their fellows. They will always be *light* and *salt* in an otherwise dark and savorless society (Matthew 5:13, 14). They will offer shade from oppressive heat and protection from the cruel storms that plague human existence. Moreover, the significant value of spiritual “trees” to others does not result from their own efforts to become channels of blessing. Rather, they have been “planted” and cultivated by the patience and loving care of the Master Gardener. Their development into God’s tools of salvation is the product of His deliberate

planning and implementation of that plan (Ephesians 3:10-12).

2. *“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...”*

“Rivers of water” are connected in the Scriptures with life and vigor:

- a. A river “went out from Eden” to water the garden of God (Gen. 2:10);
- b. The reign of the King of righteousness was to be likened to “rivers of water in a dry place” (Isaiah 32:2);
- c. A river “proceeded from the throne of God” to enable the tree of life to bear its fruit (Rev. 22:1).

“The man of God” who relies fully on “the law of the Lord” for his guidance in thought and action is assured that God’s enabling power will make him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” and will equip him thoroughly “for every good work” (2Tim. 3:15,17). His relationship with his Lord will keep him *planted* near to the “fountain of the water of life” (Rev. 21:6) so that his spiritual health can remain strong and vigorous (3John 2) for his own well-being (Eph. 6:13) and for his ability to serve as a blessing to others (2Tim. 2:2). He is “like a tree” that transforms its nourishment into its own growth and strength, which in turn enables it to offer shade, protection, and fruit to others.

The Lord is never far from any of us (Acts 17:27) with His encouragement and comfort. Help for the “blessed” man is never farther away than God’s word and His law. All who *will* may “take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Divine assistance is always available to those who are *planted by* the rivers of water (Hebrews 13:5,6).

3. *“He shall be like a tree... that brings forth its fruit in its season...”*

The “blessed” man is destined to occupy a role of beneficial service in the Lord’s kingdom (Gal. 6:10). Selfishness has no place among God’s people. Christians face lofty expectations (Matt. 5:20), but never more lofty than we can reach if we have truly committed ourselves to becoming the very best that we can be (Matt. 5:48). The child of God is a self-sacrificing individual (Romans 12:1) who regards the cares and concerns of other people as if they were his own (1John 3:17).

Sometimes the “blessed” man is confronted with obstacles that appear to obstruct his fruitfulness in serving the needs of others and even his

own need to develop his talents for more extensive work in the church of Christ. Resources may be limited. Money might be scarce and personal abilities might be less than those possessed by others. And yet, the promise of God in this psalm is clear: the “blessed” man *shall* bring forth his fruit in its season. But he must be patient as God works through the things that might deter him from *walking, standing, and sitting* in the places of righteous service that are intended for him as a Christian. Rest assured-- he *shall* bring forth his fruit in his season [in God’s time!]. Moses’ shortcomings were not so large as to prevent his service to the Israelites, and ours can also be overcome with God’s help (Exo. 3:11,12).

“Whose leaf also shall not wither...”

The only thing that can defeat us in reaching our potential in the kingdom is our own choice to ignore what God expects of us. Jesus’ encounter with the fruitless fig tree should be warning enough about not giving Him our best effort (Matt. 21:19). Trees and plants that are not deep-rooted will soon be scorched and will “wither away” (Mark 4:6) because they have no access to life-sustaining moisture (Luke 8:6). “Rooting and grounding” ourselves in love and in God’s word will prevent any spiritual *withering* (Eph. 3:17; Col.2:7).

“...And whatever he does shall prosper.”

This promise is probably limited to those things we do in the cause of the Lord. Of course, when we address the priorities that Christ has set for us, such as righteousness and the kingdom of God, everything else will fall into place for us according to our needs (Matt. 6:33). A “religion of prosperity” which places great emphasis on material gain is not the object of this promise. “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1Tim. 6:8). It is the *soul*, not the *body*, that rightly seeks prosperity. Spiritual wealth looms large over material riches in the kingdom of God (Mark 8:36,37).

Verse 4: *“The ungodly are not so...”*

The “blessed” man’s prospect is indeed attractive. He has much to look forward to as he strives to be righteous in thought and deed. The “ungodly” [including the “sinful” and the “scorners”], however, are “not so!” They are NOT:

- a. Like a tree with stability and dependability;
- b. Like a tree furnished with waters of heavenly support and encouragement;
- c. Bearers of spiritual fruit. “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much

- fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5);
d. Assured of genuine prosperity in all their endeavors.

“But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”

The chaff is the outer covering of the wheat grain that is not only of itself entirely useless and undesirable but also obstructs the use of the grain inside. The wheat harvest cannot be completed until the chaff is separated from the grain. Using an ancient procedure, both are tossed into the air, the wind “drives away” the chaff, and it is gone, leaving the desirable grain behind. The chaff cannot be allowed to further impede the farmer’s intended use of the grain. It is no better than the fruitless tree that would be cut down because it did nothing more than “use up” the ground (Luke 13:7). The sinner’s life is just as useless to himself, to other men, and to his Maker as the chaff is to the farmer. There is no reason for him or his way to share in the promises made to the “blessed” man. The psalmist offers him only a very dismal prospect.

Verse 5: *“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment...”*

This declaration should not be taken to mean that sinners will not be judged by the Lord. “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). This *standing* is not an appearance but an overcoming. The final reckoning will separate the good from the bad (Matt. 25:31-46). The unrighteous will not *stand*, but will go away into everlasting punishment. It is by their works that they will be judged (2Cor. 5:10), and *ignoring God, sinning against His law, and scoffing at His divine values* can only result in a tragic destiny.

“Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous...”

Not only will the price of sin be exacted upon sinners in the final judgment but oftentimes may have to be paid this side of eternity as well. “Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later” (1Tim. 6:24). God’s people are warned not to tolerate sin among them (1Cor. 5:13). The godly are to withdraw themselves from the ungodly because “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Also, the discipline of unfaithful disciples is designed to “destroy the flesh” that their souls might be saved “in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1Cor. 5:5). Upon discovering the sins of disobedient disciples, the righteous must not allow them to *stand* in their congregation!

Verse 6: “*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous...*”

God knows everything. Not one small act of obedience goes unnoticed by His all-seeing eye (Matt. 10:26). He “knows” [approves] the way of a “blessed” man who gives food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, takes in strangers, clothes the naked, and visits the sick and those in prison (Matt. 25:34-36,46). His Son lived among men on the earth and left us a powerful example of how we, too, can please the Father (1Peter 2:21-23). The unequivocal obedience of Jesus (Phil. 2:8) demonstrated that there was mutual knowledge [approval] between Father and Son (John 10:15). Likewise, our submission to God’s will proclaims our own approval [acceptance] of His plan for our salvation (1John 2:3).

“*But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*”

A final somber and serious warning to the *ungodly*: “Your way will perish, and you will perish with it!” The Lord has given all men fair warning of a day He has appointed “on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

The ungodly man will *perish*, but not in annihilation or oblivion. His eternal *place* will not be where he can continue to *walk* in ungodly counsel, *stand* in the paths of sinners, or *sit* in the seat of the scornful. His soul will be cast into *hell*, “into the fire that shall never be quenched-- ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched’ ” (Mark 9:45,46).

So ends this opening psalm with its impelling message-- happiness and contentment are possible in this unhappy and troubled world *only* through faith in God and obedience to His word. All other efforts are futile. This same theme is found in *many* of the psalms, such as 37, 73, 112, 125, 146, and others. Every student would do well to give attention to their message.

1. Psalm 1 is often considered as a _____ to the book of Psalms. It deals with the subject of how to achieve true _____.
2. Psalm 1 might have been written _____ rather than _____ by _____ or some other person who collected the psalms into one book.
3. Several other “prescriptions” for happiness are found in the books of _____ and _____.
4. Three things or places godly people must avoid are the _____ of the _____; the _____ of the _____; and the _____ of the _____.
5. The sinner’s progress into sin is _____. He first _____; next, he _____; and finally, he _____.
6. God’s law brings great _____ to a godly man, and on it he _____ and _____.
7. The “blessed” man is like a _____ that is _____ close to the _____ of _____.
8. The “blessed” man, like a healthy tree, produces _____ in _____.
9. What word emphasizes the certain spiritual success of a godly person? _____.
10. We can be defeated only if we _____ what God _____ of us.
11. Does “prosper” in this psalm refer to material wealth? _____
12. The uselessness of a sinner’s life is compared to _____ that is _____ by the _____.
13. According to Psalm 1, sinners will/will not finally be judged (circle one).
14. The _____ must not tolerate the _____ in their _____.
15. What are some other psalms that discuss the same theme as Psalm 1? _____
_____.

David: The Shepherd Boy of Israel

Historical Context-- 1Samuel 15-17

1. Saul was anointed as Israel's first king in response to the people's insistence. Saul had an impressive physical appearance and an initial loyalty from the nation. His early reign witnessed significant success against Israel's enemies (1Samuel 8-12).
2. Samuel had warned that disrespect for God's law would "sweep away" Saul's kingdom. Shortly into his kingship, Saul violated laws about sacrificial offerings and was told that his kingdom would not continue. However, he was not immediately removed from power (1Samuel 13, 14).
3. Saul's faithfulness was again tested in the matter of king Agag and the Amalekites. His rejection as king was confirmed by Samuel and, despite his change of heart, the Lord "regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel" (1Samuel 15).
4. God initiated the process of replacing Saul, and David, the youngest of eight sons of Jesse and a keeper of his father's sheep, was selected as his successor. Unlike Saul, David didn't have the appearance of royalty, but God said of him, "This is the one" (1Samuel 16).
5. David's first contact with Saul came through his ability to play and sing skillfully and to soothe Saul's troubled spirit. He became Saul's armorbearer (1Samuel 16).
6. After some time, circumstances placed David before Goliath, a fierce champion of the Philistines who caused great distress to the Jewish army. Accepting the giant's challenge because he trusted in God's help, David vanquished his enemy and enabled a significant victory for Israel (1Samuel 17).

Historical Connection with the Psalms

David's experience as an outdoor-living shepherd doubtless helped to shape his thinking and his attitudes about the God who had made all things and whom he confronted as he performed the simple and unassuming task of tending sheep.

1. He was *deeply impressed* with the grandeur of God's nature and with the powerful message that nature sent to the human heart about the Creator's profound wisdom and unassailable power. Every natural phenomenon spoke to him about the majesty of the Lord of heaven and earth.
2. He was *deeply humbled* by the magnificence of God's natural creation as he observed it firsthand in living outdoors with the sheep and by the realization that the Lord had placed it all under the control and administration of His human creation. What

great responsibility the Creator had placed upon lowly and weak mortals like himself to give proper attention to it all!

3. He learned through his shepherd's responsibilities to place unqualified trust in the providence and protection of a God who cared for him personally. The Lord delivered him more than once from wild animals who attacked the sheep. David was very confident that Jehovah could be trusted to continue His watchcare over him in every other circumstance of his life (1Sam.17:34-37).
4. The common sense of a lowly shepherd was sufficient reason to develop an enduring faith that whatever Jehovah had *said* in His *written* Law warranted as much respect as what He had *demonstrated* in His *unspoken* law of the natural world. There must be marvelous advantages to be gained by any man, shepherd or king, who would do his best to follow the Law's direction in everything, whether tending sheep in the wilderness or tending to the king's business in the courts of power and influence.
5. Many psalms reflect these same truths that were discovered by David as he filled the role of a faithful and brave shepherd. The rugged hills and valleys of God's promised land proclaimed silently the same glory and supremacy of the Creator that were so eloquently spoken of and written about in the Law of the Lord.
6. When David was anointed as king at Hebron, the people acknowledged that God's plan was for him to become their shepherd. They declared, "...and the Lord said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel, and be ruler over Israel' " (2Samuel 5:2). The young man who had tended real sheep willingly transferred his dedication to watching after the "sheep" of the kingdom. Now he would guide, guard, fold, and feed in far more consequential ways:

"He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds;
From following the ewes that had young He brought him
To shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.
So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands." (Psalm 78:71,72)

The Psalms

Psalm 8: The Testimony of God's Creation

David as a young shepherd must have had many experiences that were impressed upon his mind to such an extent that they continued to have an impact on his thinking and on his behavior throughout the rest of his life. Regardless of *when* this psalm was written, David's convictions about Jehovah's nature and character must have first been formed while he was caring for his father's sheep in the wilderness areas of Judea. Any thoughtful

person might reach the same conclusions that David expressed in this psalm, but perhaps only the fresh and innocent mind of a youth could be moved so emotionally as this shepherd boy seems to have been when he first sang this beautiful tribute to his own Shepherd.

There were certain encounters with danger that would have especially caused David to think about God's *greatness* and his own *smallness*, God's *strength* and his own *weakness*.

1. On repeated occasions, the young David had met head-on the hazard of wild beasts seeking to attack and kill the flocks for which he was responsible. Bears, lions, and possibly other fierce animals, posed a constant peril that must be confronted and overcome by a shepherd if the trust placed in him was to continue. And the danger was not only to the flock. The life of the shepherd also was at risk. Ordinarily, a mere boy could not be expected to keep fierce predators away from their prey. But this was no ordinary boy. This was a young man who was invested with the special protection of Jehovah Himself. It wasn't by his own cunning and strength that David was able to go after a bear or a lion and rescue a lamb from the mouth of the hungry beast, but it was by the strength of God that he "caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it" (1Samuel 17:35,36).

After such an experience, how was it possible that the boy wouldn't ask himself in great wonder, "How could I possibly have done what I just did? I know I'm quick and strong, but I also know that my strength and quickness can't compare to that of this wild animal. And yet, there it lies dead." How deeply must the boy David have felt the nearness and the strength of Jehovah in these wilderness conflicts! How often afterward in his life must he have remembered God's interventions and incontestable power that had been displayed in these early events. How many times must he have been reminded to rely once again on God rather than on himself to meet and overcome other kinds of dangerous situations that would plague his life and his rule as king over Israel!

2. Maybe the one incident out of all the boy shepherd's experiences that impressed him most about his own weakness in contrast with God's strength was his encounter with the giant Goliath, an arrogant and powerful champion of the Philistines (1Sam. 17). Men better than David in physical prowess and military skill had cowered before this raging enemy of Israel. Few men would have been thought to have *less* ability to conquer Goliath, this awesome man of war, than a simple boy fresh from looking after a flock of sheep. Saul and his troops exclaimed to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth"(1Samuel 17:33). But what they failed to understand was

that David would not be standing alone against Goliath. Jehovah would be close at his side, supporting him and protecting him every moment. While the strength of a mere lad would certainly fail before such a brute as the Philistine warrior, *God's* strength, exercised *through* David, would be more than enough to vanquish him completely. Surely, no one knew better than David how impossible it would be for him to accomplish his challenge to Goliath if he had only his own resources to rely on. But the mind and the faith of a shepherd boy understood things beyond the grasp of others who were far more hardened and experienced soldiers. He knew that "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1Sam. 17:37). So, the poorly-armed youth went out to meet the onslaught of one of history's fiercest warriors. And we all know "the rest of the story."

David, when he became king and prime defender of Israel's national welfare, no doubt remembered the outcomes of these occasions. He would often face foes with superior forces; he would sometimes find himself in situations from which there appeared to be no escape. But he always could call up in his memory the day when the Lord had convincingly displayed His willingness to help the helpless, with only the condition that they trust in His power and invincibility. Many would be the times when David would take refuge in such trust, and many would be the times when the Lord would demonstrate all over again to the *shepherd king* that His providence was still as reliable as when David had been just a *shepherd boy*.

Let us look at two psalms that possibly originated during David's life as a young shepherd and which might reflect his thoughts about the God who constantly *protected* him, *guided* him, and *provided for his needs* in the same way a good shepherd did for his sheep:

Psalm 8

Verse 1: "*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth...*"

These same words open the psalm and close the psalm. David begins with a premise; he ends with a conclusion, and they are the *exactly the same*.

1. David's God is LORD of all the earth. He is the undisputed ruler and administrator of everything that goes on in the earth.
2. Jehovah's *name* [His nature and character] is *excellent* above all other names. His reputation for faithfulness, wisdom, and power are unchallenged in all the earth. Investigation into God's creation will invariably prove to honest minds the perfect excellence of His character.

3. *Wherever* men observe for themselves the *clear* demonstration of God's divine attributes, there [in all the earth] they will be constrained to glorify His Being and give Him praise! A shepherd boy who sees the Lord's glory in the natural things about him as he tends his sheep will reach the same conclusion as the mighty king who recognizes the providence of Jehovah in the disposition of weighty matters of state-- "How *excellent* is Your name!"
4. God's glory is even greater than what He has displayed in the heavens. The phenomena of nature are but a *small* indication of His true essence. David as a shepherd often marveled at the wonders of the heavens as he guarded the sheep during night watches. And yet, he realized that even the heavenly bodies he gazed at in the dark skies could not tell the whole story about the greatness of the Lord who had made them all. His glory was "set above the heavens." It was far more glorious than the glory of anything He had made (Hebrews 3:3,4).

Verse 2: "*Out of the mouths of babes and infants...*"

1. This statement was lifted from this psalm and quoted by Jesus when children praised Him in the temple when He healed the blind and the lame (Matt. 21:15, 16). Some suppose that David composed these lines with a prophetic eye that could see their usefulness in Jesus' response to His critics ["the enemy and the avenger"] when they would become indignant about His activities. However, there does not seem to be any necessary connection between what David says here and the use that Christ later made of David's words.
2. In David's own life there was strong evidence that God's excellence often generated unexpected strength even in "babes and infants" [relatively weak individuals] that could completely control the power of His strong enemies. Just as God had worked through David to conquer fierce men (e.g., 1Sam. 17:33) and wild beasts (e.g., 1Sam. 17:34,35), He can always use the weak to defeat the strong when it suits His purpose. And it will ever be that, as Paul declared, "I can do *all things* through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

Verse 3: "*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers...*"

1. The shepherd boy would have lived constantly under the heavens, which became the canopy that was stretched over his sleeping body every evening. Cloudless nights gave him ample opportunity to ponder the intricate arrangements into which the Creator had placed the innumerable stars of the heavens. Also, he

must have been fascinated by the appearance of the ever-changing moon as it moved across the sky each night. The more he observed of the Lord's handiwork, the more he was impressed with His awesome wisdom and power.

2. The Law of Moses had been written on tables of stone with "the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). Here, too, it is by Jehovah's "fingers" that the natural creation had been constructed. Perhaps "fingers" is intended to suggest the complexity of what God had made and the ultimate skill that would have been employed in the use of His "fingers" and well as His "hands."
3. David "considered" the heavens in reaching his judgment of God's majesty. He thought seriously and long before his ultimate decision was reached. He weighed the possibilities for the existence of things around him. He observed total unity and order in every expression of nature's laws. The limited knowledge he had for reaching conclusions about the origin of natural things [unless he had been given special information not available to others] was enough for even a shepherd boy to become convinced that only an all-powerful and all-wise Creator could be responsible for what he saw around him. We have so much more by which to arrive at a conclusion about where our universe came from. There is no excuse for us to be less certain than David that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). It is truer now than ever, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1).
4. It may seem strange that David failed to include the sun in this discussion of God's creative power. Only the stars and the moon are mentioned. This likely was because he chose to speak only of what impressed him during the lonely nights he spent guarding his flock. In Psalm 19 he will speak at some length about God's glory being reflected in the functions of the sun (vs. 4-6).

Verses 4,5: "*What is man that You are mindful of him...*"

1. Probably few things cause us to be aware of our personal insignificance and weakness in the overall scheme of things than to spend time in the vast outdoors of the natural world. Looking up at the heavens and around at the distant horizons, we will surely feel our *smallness* amid the *greatness* of the Lord's handiwork.
2. This awareness caused the young David to ask the age-old question, "Why would *so great* a God who had made *so great* a universe be concerned with men who obviously are *so small* when compared to stars, planets, expanses of land, etc.?"

What is there about man that would gain the attention of the God who had made so many bigger and more powerful things? Why would Jehovah be “mindful” of man [mankind] and “visit” the son of man [individually] so faithfully?

3. Jehovah’s dealings with man, originally and continually, have been unique.
 - a. He made man a “little lower than the angels.”
 - b. He “crowned him with glory and honor.”
 - c. He gave him dominion over the rest of creation.
 - d. He gave him control over the animal creation, tamed and untamed.
 - e. He continues to “visit” man in providing for his needs in the world.

4. God’s highest tribute to man was displayed in the fact that man was made just a “little lower than the angels” [Heb.- “lower than God”] and that His choice was that the Savior would live in the world in the likeness of *men*, not *angels*. His concern for man is attached to that choice and to the fact that *men*, not *angels*, would occupy the central role in heaven’s plan of sin and salvation. [See Hebrews 2:5-11.] This is man’s greatest “glory and honor.”

Verses 6-8: “*You have made him to have dominion...*”

1. The extent of God’s blessings for man impressed David when he considered the dominion man had been given over the rest of creation. Man could control things both animate and inanimate through the grace of God.

2. Certainly, in his own case, David had exercised dominion over fierce beasts with the Lord’s help. Generally speaking, “all sheep and oxen-- even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea” were subject to the control of man. Man was put in charge of God’s world, which was both a great tribute and a grave responsibility.

3. Man initially was made in the “image of God” (Gen 1:27). Evidently, God believed that man, in that image, was capable of properly exercising the degree of control given to him. As man has continued to mar the image in which he was created, the degree of control intended for him to possess likely has diminished in some ways. Still, humans are blessed to be the dominant creatures on the earth. We should strive not to fail the trust that God has placed in us (1John 4:19)!

4. Pascal, the French philosopher, said of man: “What a mystery, then, is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction; what a

prodigy! A judge of all things, stupid worm of the earth; depository of truth, cloak of uncertainty and error; glory and refuse of the universe.” How *different* from David’s view of the honor with which the Lord has crowned his creature.

Verse 9: *“O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!”*

David’s gratitude for the blessings and the responsibilities conferred on men, even on a simple and humble shepherd boy like himself, only grew stronger the more he meditated on the singular relationship that exists between God and the human family. No doubt his tender heart was moved in thanksgiving when he thought about how fortunate he was to be a man. Certainly, he would do his best to be faithful to the trust God had placed in him and his fellows.

Psalm 19: God’s Testimony, Silent and Spoken

Psalm 19 is another psalm that possibly came out of David’s early life as a shepherd in the Judean hills. It is similar in some respects to Psalm 8 in the imagery used. Both psalms appeal to the testimony of nature to the greatness of the Creator. Both cite the weakness of man, either when compared to the strength of many other created things or when compared to the perfection and holiness of God as disclosed by both nature and revelation.

Verse 1: *“The heavens declare the glory of God...”*

1. The glory of God could easily be observed by a shepherd boy with his naked eye. Modern telescopes and other technology should make His majesty even more apparent to unbiased searchers.
2. The entire “firmament” [“expanse;” “spread out”] of space surrounding the earth-- including all heavenly bodies and all flying creatures-- supports what the “heavens” say about Jehovah: *“How Great Thou Art!”*

Verses 2-4a: *“Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.”*

1. Each day that passes “speaks” its own silent testimony to be added to that of other days about phenomena that magnify God’s Person. Every night does the same.

The knowledge of God's lofty position is repeatedly "revealed" to thoughtful men.

2. What the natural world "says" about God can be "heard" throughout the earth. Unlike human languages, the voice of nature can be understood anywhere by anybody.
3. The revelation of nature does not depend on men for its proclamation. It "is heard" and it "has gone out" to every place. No man can excuse not knowing the reality of the Creator because he has not been told. The unbeliever can blame only his own callous soul for his lack of devotion to the Almighty Maker of everything!
4. Advocates of a "Big Bang" theory or an evolutionary process that occurred spontaneously from inauspicious beginnings either deny or diminish the creative power of the Lord (Genesis 1:1). His might is reflected in His method of making man and man's world. "God *said*...and it *was so*!"

Verses 4b-6: "*In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun...*"

1. There are innumerable things that magnify God's wisdom and might, but none is more impressive than the sun, the center of David's universe [and ours]. The sun "does its thing" by design and not by chance. Jehovah has "set" [made] a tabernacle [place] in the heavens for it to perform the functions which He intended for it.
2. The sun is a bright and forceful reminder *every day* that God not only made the world but also maintains the well-being of His creation.
 - a. His renewing of each day with its opportunities is compared to the eagerness and confidence of a bridegroom emerging from the bridal chamber or the energy of a strong athlete anticipating a race to be run.
 - b. The "path" of the sun is lengthy from one horizon to the other, but we may be sure that the circuit will always be completed and we will never suffer from any inability of the sun's Governor to provide what we need every day (Matt. 5:45).
 - c. Our Creator has the power to see that every living thing receives the sun's [and God's] benefit. The Lord has made its "heat" [warmth and light] essential to growth and survival, and no dependent creature is denied its benefit.

Verses 7-11: "*The law of the Lord is perfect...*"

1. Reflection on the unspoken testimony of God's *creative power* seems to have led the shepherd/poet to reflect also on the spoken testimony of His *recreative power*.

2. This young man had a deep respect for Moses' Law and for the guidance it offered to humble people. His appreciation of God's physical creation was surpassed only by his admiration of God's spiritual law. He was convinced even as a youth that just as the Lord's natural world provides everything necessary for man's body, His revelation offers everything man needs for his soul. It is a perfect law!
3. David's accolades for the perfection of the law of the Lord pour forth like a swelling fountain:
 - a. It converts the soul. Young men are particularly susceptible to the allurements of sin and its pleasures. Their souls can be blackened with evil thoughts and evil deeds before maturity has any chance to temper their behavior. Even tragedy is not likely to turn them back to the moral life. The power of God's word is all that will really reach a man [young or old] inwardly and give him a proper perspective about the relationship that ought to exist between him and his Creator (Romans 1:16). The heart is changed by *revealed* truth, not *scientific* truth.
 - b. It makes the simple man wise. Perhaps the best definition of "wisdom" is "*seeing things as God sees them.*" Every spiritual problem would be solved and every spiritual question would be answered if we could just learn to look at things the way God does. That's hard to do, but it can be done, because God's mind is revealed to us in His word (1Cor. 2:11-13). There He tells us all we need to know to be truly "*wise.*" The wisdom of this world cannot help us to live right, and really spiritual people humbly measure their footsteps only by the law of the Lord.
 - c. It makes the heart rejoice. Nothing is more exhilarating to the soul than to know one is pleasing the Lord in what he does. Like the Ethiopian, we can "go on our way rejoicing" when we have done what He commands us to do (Acts 8:39).
 - d. It enlightens the eyes. It is so easy to become spiritually blinded by false ideas and prejudicial thinking. It is vital that we "not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). When the "eyes of our understanding" are *enlightened*, we will be able to "know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18).
 - e. It endures forever. In an unstable world, where nothing seems constant but change, God's word can be depended on to be the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). What is right today will be right tomorrow. In the Bible we have an anchor for our souls that can keep us from drifting away into spiritual shipwreck (Hebrews 6:19).
 - f. It is altogether righteous. Its perfect moral standard comes from a perfectly righteous [right] Lawgiver who *cannot* lie about anything that man needs for his own righteousness (Heb. 6:18). This same book assures us that "all Thy commandments are [the path to] righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). "Little children, let no one

deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous” (1John 3:7).

- g. **It warns the vulnerable.** It is not in man to properly direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23), and there are many dangers and pitfalls along life’s road. No wonder so many signs have been posted on the way by a God who truly cares what happens to us-- “*Danger, Keep Out!*” Only a foolish person would ignore heaven’s warnings and plunge headlong into forbidden activities as if he knew more about things than God Himself did.
 - h. **It brings great reward to the obedient.** Not just *a* reward but *great* reward. Godliness, which comes from obeying the law of the Lord, “is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1Tim. 4:8). A righteous man never has cause for regrets about his life. He never needs to be ashamed of *who* he is, or *what* he does. He enjoys a self-respect that worldly people cannot have. His life on earth is a great reward in itself, but the eternal reward for disciples of Christ is inestimable in its value (Revelation 22:1-5).
4. God’s Law, David says, can be categorized by:
- a. **Testimony** (vs. 7). Whatever the Lord has seen fit to say about any matter, His statement is enough to convince the honest heart that *it is so-- period* (Rom. 3:4)!
 - b. **Statutes** (vs. 8a). God has mandated [decreed] many principles that have been intended to “*stand*” [*stare* --“to stand”] as long as the earth exists. These principles are right and always beneficial to mankind. These would include the moral truths that regulate man’s conduct regardless of a change of covenants. These statutes arise out of God’s inherent absolute authority.
 - c. **Commandments** (vs. 8b). The distinction between “statutes” and “commandments” may be tentative, but it is clear that some things required of men are related to the *covenant existing between God and man* at a particular time. God has “legislated” specific laws for man’s spiritual compliance under every covenant. These commands are as crucial to salvation as the facts and promises of the covenant (e.g., Acts 2:36-41). They also are associated with the control properly exercised by the Maker over the things made (Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:21).
 - d. **Precepts** (vs. 9a). The “precepts” are the “fear” of God that His law demands. Truths such as, “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity...” (Romans 11:22) and, “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29), make us reluctant to ignore or deliberately disobey the Lord’s will.
 - e. **Judgments** (vs. 9b). The Father has committed all judgment to His Son (John 5:22). Jesus’ final judgment of the nations will be righteous [fair, right] in every way (Matt. 25:31-46) because He is a totally “righteous Judge” (2Tim. 4:8). The destiny of every man will be determined by the “book” of God’s law [Rev.22:12]

applicable to the time in which he lived. The law of the Lord clearly informs men *while they live* about what requirements their final judgment will be based on.

5. Other truths cited by David about the law of the Lord that make it “*perfect*”:
 - a. It is sure (vs. 7b). It sends no mixed signals to man. It tells us exactly and clearly what Jehovah requires of us (Micah 6:8);
 - b. It is right (vs. 8a). It is altogether fair and unbiased in its assessments of man and his behavior. It condemns the wicked and justifies the righteous (2Cor. 5:10), and it promises no exceptions to its legislation (Rom. 14:10-12);
 - c. It is pure (vs. 8b). It never causes the eye of man’s soul to distort his understanding of his duty. None will be able to stand in the last judgment and blame his failures on an inability to know or understand God’s expectations (Matt. 22:12);
 - d. It is clean (vs. 9a). Every word within the law of the Lord is designed to improve man’s character and disposition. No ugliness can be found in it to make man ugly. Its morality will make man a moral being. This is unlike other “laws” by which some religious people are governed, such as Islam’s standards about revenge and dishonesty and Mormonism’s “revelations” about polygamy and retaliation;
 - f. It is true (vs. 9b). No defender of the faith (1Peter 3:15) needs to be embarrassed because of any weakness in the law of the Lord that makes it hard to defend before its adversaries. Evidence for its integrity is unassailable.

Verses 12,13: “*Who can understand his errors?*”

Verse 11 declares that we are *warned* by the law of the Lord, and there is *great reward* in keeping God’s commandments. The greatest of all blessings that spring from obedience to the law is a state of “blamelessness” before God.

1. “*Who can understand his errors?*” We may maintain an inflated estimate of our spiritual worthiness unless we “look in the perfect law of liberty” to determine what our flaws may be (James 1:23-25). Only then can we work to improve ourselves to become more what we ought to be.
2. “*Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins.*” God’s word will expose us to faults we ourselves might be unaware of or that may be unknown to other people. It will also show us the danger in deliberately and pridefully doing things that displease our Heavenly Father. All such sins will condemn us unless we repudiate them and seek forgiveness. How precious is a book that will provide the prescription for all our ills if we will only follow its instructions!

3. David didn't expect to be "blameless" because he would be sinlessly perfect. No man will attain that goal (1John 1:8). However, he hoped to avoid "great transgression" if he followed the dictates of the law of the Lord to the best of his ability. Sin would never become his lifestyle. He would always recognize his need for forgiveness and improvement.

Verse 14: *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart..."*

This is the real "sinner's prayer." This plea should be the plea of *every* honest heart *every* day.

1. Out of our hearts come all our bad and good words and actions (Matt. 12:34,35; 15:18,19). If we can monitor our meditations [measured deliberations] so that they are "acceptable" to the Lord, we will assure that our words and our deeds will also meet with His approval.
2. The Lord was David's source of spiritual strength. That strength was channeled to the shepherd boy of Israel, as it is to all of us, principally through the instruction and comfort of the Lord's word (Acts 20:32).
3. The Lord was also David's redeemer. But redemption is offered only to those who show themselves to be eligible for redemption through humble submission to the perfect word of the Lord!

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 8 AND 19:

1. God has been "mindful" of man as of no other creature He has made. That is because He made man in His own image. The theory of evolution is an insult to the special concern our Maker shows for us above the rest of His creation. (8:4,5)
2. God's two revelations of Himself both speak eloquently of His infinite wisdom and power. Nature is far too complex and its components too interrelated to have "evolved" on its own. The Bible is far too profound and suited to the human condition to have been the product of human minds. (19:1,7)

Other psalms of interest possibly coming from this time period: 23, 104

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON THREE

1. Give *two* ways in which God's nature reflects God's Nature. [See Romans 11:22.]
2. What *two* experiences influenced David to trust God's power rather than his own?
 - a.
 - b.

Psalm 8:

3. Strength may come out of the _____ of _____ and _____ so that God's _____ might be _____.
4. The _____, _____, and _____ are the work of God's _____.
5. Man is a little lower than _____, crowned with _____ and _____.
6. _____, _____, and _____ have been put under the _____ of _____.

Psalm 19:

7. The _____ declare God's _____, and the _____ show His _____.
8. The _____ and the _____ of the heavens have gone through all the _____ and to the end of the _____.
9. The sun is like a _____ coming from his _____ and like a _____ ready to _____ its _____.
10. The _____ and the _____ of the sun allow everything to benefit from its _____.
11. List *five* categories into which David divided the "word of the Lord":
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
12. The word's value is greater than _____ or _____.
13. "Let the _____ of my _____ and the _____ of my _____ be _____ in Your sight..."

David: In Saul's Court

Historical Context-- 1Samuel 18-20

1. David was taken into Saul's royal court to sing and play music to quieten the troubled spirit of the king (1Samuel 18:1,2).
2. He quickly won the affection and loyalty of Jonathan, Saul's son, and of the people generally (1Samuel 18:3-5).
3. David was highly acclaimed for his success in warfare, which aroused fierce jealousy in Saul (1Samuel 18:6-16).
4. Saul gave his daughter Michal in marriage to David, hoping that this would result in problems for David from the Philistines, but his plot failed (1Samuel 18:17-30).
5. Jonathan and Michal tried to defend David from death when Saul's anger grew more intense because David's reputation as a mighty warrior increased (1Samuel 19:1-17).
6. David finally fled to Samuel, who thwarted Saul's evil efforts with the help of God (1Samuel 19:18-24).
7. Jonathan confirmed his loyalty to David in a last attempt to protect him from his father. The two friends devised a scheme by which to determine Saul's intentions about David (1Samuel 20:1-40).
8. David departed from Jonathan and from Saul's court when it became obvious that there was no possibility for reconciliation with the king (1Samuel 20:41,42).

Historical Connection with the Psalms

A great many of the psalms deal with David's feelings about his enemies and about his awareness of a desperate need for God's help in overcoming the problems they caused him. The experiences he had while living in Saul's company doubtless left their mark on his lifelong attitudes about both *personal* and *national* enemies and about the fact that neither kind can be overcome without the intervening help of Almighty Jehovah.

1. The tender heart of a youth must have been rudely awakened to reality when he found that his first significant personal enemy was king Saul, a man who hated him deeply without cause and who had power enough to carry out his hurtful plots against him. The boy who had been sheltered by the love and protection of a faithful father suddenly found himself a man who constantly had to be on guard against an evil adversary who would not hesitate to kill him if he could.

2. Moreover, the young singer/warrior must have found it hard to understand why his repeated attempts at showing loyalty and support to the king of Israel should result only in increasing harassment and heartache for him.
3. David was aware of his own innocence in the confrontations between him and Saul. It was very hard to bear indignities and dangers that he in no way deserved.
4. The young shepherd boy early in life had developed an unshakable trust in the providence of Jehovah, who without fail would come to the aid of His faithful children when they faced opposition that might otherwise overwhelm them. That trust was never abandoned by the young warrior even when he sought approval from his king but instead received only rejection and harsh treatment.
5. David demonstrated in various psalms that his confidence in the Lord would never be shaken by whatever wicked deeds might be directed at him by those who chose to be his enemies. The Lord--in His time-- would vindicate His loyal servants and would destroy those whose motives and actions were contrary to good morals and true religion.
6. The future ruler over God's nation surely came to be impressed with the truth that Jehovah's watchcare is a "two-way street." If one wished to enjoy the care and keeping of the Almighty Father, he must do his very best to be a loyal and obedient child. There was no promise of safety for the careless or rebellious.

The Psalms

Psalm 7: Confidence in Jehovah's Protection

This psalm bears the inscription [title]: "A Shiggaion" [Meditation] of David which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush [Saul?], a Benjamite." It is widely supposed that this is a "wondering song" reflecting David's bewilderment over his harsh treatment by Saul when he was by invitation a young singer/warrior in the king's court. Saul's delight in David soon turned into jealousy and resentment when he concluded that the youth would fall heir to the popularity that Saul had enjoyed with the people. More than once he tried to kill David with his spear. He plotted to use his own daughter as a snare to David's "ambitions." He even rebuked Jonathan as the "son of a perverse, rebellious woman" because of the relationship that Jonathan had cultivated with David. No wonder that the shepherd-turned-singer was confused by the drastic change that had taken place in Saul's court! But in spite of everything that was against him, a deep trust that God will protect His servants shows through David's perplexity.

Verses 1-5: *“O Lord my God, in You I put my trust...”*

David’s problems with Saul were real and serious. He was but a lad; Saul was a tested soldier. He was only a powerless member of the king’s court; Saul was the king who had significant resources at his command to accomplish whatever he wanted. How could a mere shepherd boy fresh from the fields cope with the unexpected and unexplained antagonism of Saul against him?

1. There was no other who could help him in his distress, not even Jonathan, who loved David dearly but who had little control over his father’s erratic behavior.
2. Saul’s mistreatment was totally undeserved. Contrary to Saul’s thinking, David had not sought the kingdom for himself [“plundered my enemy”]. It was not he but the king who had “repaid evil” to one who was “at peace” with him.
3. Retaliation would be in order if David had acted sinfully toward Saul. However, he had only served him well as a warrior and as a singer of soothing songs.

Verses 6- 10: *“Arise, O Lord, in Your anger...”*

1. God had promised to judge His people fairly (Deut. 32:4) and always demanded fair judgment among them as well (Lev. 19:15). The persecuted and helpless youth implores his God to execute righteous action and rescue him from the hands of an unrighteous enemy. “Judge between us by the plain moral evidence.”
2. The impatience of an unjustly persecuted boy shows through his plea for a just disposition of his problem with Saul. He knew the “upright in heart” would be saved by a completely righteous God.

Verses 11-16-- *“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day...”*

1. Not only can the good man trust in deliverance from a just Judge but also the wicked man may know that the Lord will surely display His wrath upon him if he does not “turn back” [repent] from his wickedness.
 - a. Already the wicked man [Saul] was suffering from the “travail” of a troubled spirit and an irrational mind.
 - b. His “violent dealing” would repay him in kind.
2. Jehovah prepared to employ His “instruments of death”-- sword, bow, and fiery arrows-- to deliver the ultimate punishment to wicked men such as Saul.

3. Such divine treatment of the wicked is eminently just. They are falling into a pit they have dug and into a ditch they have made. What they have sown, they will also reap [See Galatians 6:7-9.] They have none to blame but themselves.

Verse 17-- *I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness...*

1. How grateful David was that he could rely on his God for help in times of trouble when there was no one else to whom he could turn! The trust he had developed when God defended his life against wild animals did not desert him as he struggled to survive against the onslaughts of an ungodly ruler of Israel.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 7:

1. *Never despair in time of trouble. God is always available to help us when no man can. One man with God by his side is always a majority. (7:1,2)*
2. *Sometimes it is hard for us to distinguish the innocent from the guilty in a situation. But God is never fooled. He knows innocence and guilt and will protect the real interests of righteous people against their foes. (7:11)*
3. *Retribution certainly awaits wicked men-- "there must be a judgment!" (7:9)*

Psalm 11: Refuge in Jehovah

Although there is no direct evidence that this psalm originated with David during the time of his trouble in Saul's court, its content certainly is appropriate to that period. The poem deals with a dilemma in David's soul as he resists the temptation to flee from the dangers of his adversaries and seek safety elsewhere. Both his wife Michal and his friend Jonathan urged him to flee from the wrath of Saul. He took their advice and went from place to place in defense of his life. But all the while, his conscience seems to have been engaged in battle with his rationality about where fear should end and faith should take over in his decisions about Saul. God, who would surely protect him, was very real to David. But the danger was real, too. His conclusion: even if good judgment sends me away from king Saul, I must never lose my confidence that Jehovah is stronger than Saul and his allies. He will deliver me in His own way and in His own time.

Verses 1-3: *"In the Lord I put my trust..."*

1. David's decision about what he should do about Saul's threats was an *easy* one. It

was the same decision that had governed his life to this time: “I will trust God!” Whatever happens must not diminish his faith in the Lord’s love and power.

2. Perfectly sound human judgment dictated that hope of safety lay in fleeing from the king as quickly as possible. Escaping from danger as a bird would fly away from predators to a distant mountain made good sense.
3. Such advice seemed in order. The wicked [king] had already made his bow and arrow [or spear] ready to kill David more than once. He had “secretly” tried to capture David in his bed, not thinking that David’s wife Michal would thwart his evil purpose.
4. But even in the face of impelling reasons to run away, how can a righteous man expect real safety and security from his adversaries if he chooses to abandon the “foundations” of his very existence as a righteous man-- faith in his Maker and Sustainer?

Verses 4-6: *The Lord is in His holy temple...*”

There were good reasons to run, but there were better reasons to keep faith with God:

1. The Lord was still on His throne of power in heaven. His Presence remained among His faithful people in the Jerusalem temple. He had not deserted His deep concern for the well-being of *every* loyal subject. That included a scared boy who seemed to have no good defense against an ominous foe;
2. Jehovah arranges things that will: (1) test the faith of the faithful and (2) validate the severe punishment [“coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning wind”] He has stored up for wicked men such as Saul. They have chosen to drink from a “cup” that is filled with a deadly spiritual poison.

Verse 7: *“For the Lord is righteous. He loves righteousness...”*

“He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” (1John 3:7).

How could God do otherwise than to “*behold*” [protect] the upright?

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 11:

1. *Even the well-meaning counsel of the ungodly cannot serve as the basis for important decisions by children of God [See Psa. 1:1.] (11:1).*
2. *Changing circumstances never change God’s character, nor should they change ours. (11:3)*

Psalm 59: “Deliver Us From Evil”

There is some disagreement among scholars about the historical circumstances from which this psalm sprang. The ancient inscription assigns it to a time when the servants of Saul were sent to surround and watch David’s house, lying in wait until morning when they planned to attack and kill him (1Samuel 19:10-18). He escaped only through the clever deception arranged by his wife Michal. If we accept the title of this psalm as a true record of events, this is evidently the incident that motivated David’s reaffirmation of his faith in the goodness and watchcare of Jehovah over him.

Adam Clarke, a noted scholar and commentator, opposes this application of the psalm, assigning it instead to the time of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls. The enemies were Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and other opponents of the project rather than Saul and his servants (Nehemiah 6:1ff). While certain elements of the psalm lend themselves to this interpretation [e.g., the adversaries are called “heathen”], there seems to be no real reason to discard the usual assignment to David, Saul, and other contemporaries.

The psalm gives us an insight into David’s reaction to the vicious efforts of the king to take his life through deception and force. He recognizes the danger involved in the plan to destroy him, but he also never forgets how much in control of the situation Jehovah God is. He believes that “in the morning” all would see that the plan had failed because the Lord’s mercy and power had overruled it to David’s salvation.

Verses 1-7: *Deliver me from my enemies, O my God...*

The psalmist furnishes a candid and harsh description of his opponents.

1. They are very active in their purpose to kill him. They “rise up,” ready to do whatever is necessary to accomplish their purpose.
2. They are “workers of iniquity” and “bloodthirsty men” who “lie in wait” (vs. 2,3).
3. They are “mighty” and numerous [“gather together”], and they have planned carefully [“prepare themselves”] for the success of their mission (vs. 4).

The tactics used by David’s enemies correspond to their character.

1. They operate at night; they “growl like a dog;” their speech is unrestrained, profane and insolent. They say, “who hears, who can stop us?” (vs. 6,7).
2. They are cowardly but persistent in the pursuit of their goal [they “return at evening” and “go all around the city” seeking David’s hiding place] (vs. 7, 14, 15).

Verses 8, 9: “*But You, O Lord, shall laugh at them...*”

The reactions to the danger posed by the psalmist’s foes are mixed.

1. David is understandably troubled for his personal safety. He calls upon God for “defense” and “deliverance” from his enemies (vs. 1, 3).
2. He displays both *impatience* [“Awake to help me, and behold!”] and *patience* [“I will wait for you”] for the Lord to handle his problem with Saul (vs. 4, 9).
3. Jehovah [David’s “Strength”] summarily laughs at the actual weakness of those who plot against His chosen king-to-be (vs. 8, 9).

Verses 10- 13: “*My merciful God shall come to meet me...*”

David is insistent that his wicked oppressors be duly punished and that his “desire” be visited on them all.

1. He calls for their scattering, bringing down, being taken, and consumption in God’s wrath (vs.11-13).
2. He asks that their lives be spared that they might be stern reminders to others about the superiority of the Lord’s power over the best-laid schemes of men (vs. 11,13).

Verses 16, 17: “*But I will sing of Your power...*”

A final, exultant song of praise erupts from the heart and lips of a grateful young man. God’s power, mercy, strength, and concern for a defenseless fugitive will not go unnoticed either by the beneficiary of those divine attributes or by the targeted individuals against whom they are directed.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 59:

1. *No matter how awesome the forces of evil may seem when arrayed against the righteous, the only truly awesome force in this world is Almighty God. (59:8,9)*
2. *Never despair. Although the night of temptation and trouble may make it difficult to “see our way,” deliverance will surely come “in the morning” if we will exhibit the patience to “wait on the Lord” to come to our rescue. (59:16)*
3. *The God of the Bible never sleeps. He is always aware of our every circumstance and need. Our problem is not in awakening Him to understand our situations but rather in keeping ourselves awake to our need to flee to Him for refuge in time of trouble. (59:5)*

Psalm 23: The Shepherd Psalm

Doubtless, this psalm is the most familiar and most popular passage in our Bible, with the possible exception of John 3:16. It has given comfort and encouragement to countless millions of people since it was first written. It is inscribed as a psalm of David, but all details of its historical context are withheld from us. It may be surprising that this poem of assurance and tranquility is placed within a period of David's life when his environment was not at all peaceful and calm.

Actually, we have no way to know just *when* this "Shepherd Psalm" first appeared, but it does deal with two things pertinent to the time when David, recently come from tending his father's sheep, was being persecuted in Saul's court:

1. The first half of the psalm is centered in the extended metaphor of sheep being cared for by a faithful shepherd. Memories of the shepherd/sheep relationship would have been very fresh in David's mind during the time he spent enduring ill treatment and persecution at the hand of Saul. The king *should* have been like a shepherd to the boy singer, nourishing and protecting David in exchange for the young man's loyal service. Instead, Saul sought to protect his own interests at the expense of David's life;
2. The second part of the psalm includes a banquet scene familiar to a king's court. It offers an opportunity for some worthy person to be honored and vindicated by the host in the presence of his enemies. Again, Saul *should* have shown similar appreciation for a youthful and godly servant like David, but instead envy and revenge filled his heart toward the boy.

The young singer/warrior in Saul's court must have been totally disillusioned about the relationship that *should* have existed between him and the powerful king of Israel. Only one thought comforted his mind in the midst of his severe trials: *God* would be a faithful shepherd for him even if Saul wouldn't. The *Lord* would demonstrate his worthiness to his enemies [including Saul] even when recognition was withheld from him by the king and his servants. Jehovah was *always* a *Good Shepherd* and a *Good Host* to people like David who gave their best effort to be submissive "sheep" and appreciative "guests."

If the psalm doesn't actually fall into this time period of David's life, its content surely fits the circumstances he faced while doing his duty to serve an ungrateful ruler. Identifying the psalm with the Jewish nation during the period following their captivity [e.g., Adam Clarke] seems inappropriate, since the writer speaks with first-person pronouns ["I," "my," and "me"].

Verses 1-4: "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...*"

This first line states and summarizes the confident message of the entire poem. In overview, David declares: "I shall never lack anything needful to me, because, (1) the Lord

is my Shepherd who will care for me completely, and (2) God is my generous Host at the feast of blessings where my soul feeds. I will be sustained through whatever trials and troubles my life may present to me.”

1. David knew well by experience the responsibilities of a good shepherd to his flock.
 1. He leads them out and in, so that they find pasture and safety. 2. He knows where to feed them, and in the course of his grace and providence leads them in the way in which they should go. 3. He watches over them, and keeps them from being destroyed by ravenous beasts. 4. If any have strayed, he brings them back. 5. He brings them to the *shade* in times of scorching heat; in times of persecution and affliction he finds out an asylum for them. 6. He takes care that they shall lack no manner of thing that is good [Clarke].
2. We can believe that this young shepherd had done his very best to be always a dependable and loyal leader for the flocks over which he had been placed. He has high expectations for his own role as a sheep in the care of the Good Shepherd. How comforting to realize that one’s Provider and Protector is *THE BEST* (vs. 1)!
3. Like every good shepherd, the Lord supplies every need of His sheep.
 - a. He feeds them in “green pastures” (vs. 2a). This is soft, smooth grass that is pleasant to the senses of the sheep. There are no briars, rocks, or any other impediment to a total enjoyment of the flock’s surroundings.
 - b. The sheep are fed to fulness and contentment. (vs. 2a). They are discovered “lying,” not grazing. They are completely satisfied and feel completely safe enough to lie down in quiet repose.
 - c. The flock is led to drink from “still waters” (vs. 2b). These are *deep and clear*, not stagnant, waters which will never be depleted and from which the sheep have no trouble drinking to their fill.
 - d. The “souls,” or lives, of weary sheep are “restored” through the shepherd’s devotion to their needs (vs. 3a). Their energy is renewed and they are refreshed to undertake whatever further journey their shepherd determines for them.
 - e. That journey is always on “paths of righteousness” (vs. 3b). Each path is unerringly a path that leads them only to things that are good for them.
4. The shepherd’s admirable performance of his duties to his sheep will inevitably bring honor and respect to his “name” [reputation] (vs. 3b). Other flock owners will want to secure his services for their sheep.
5. The shepherd’s attention to duty will also win the confidence and submission of his sheep (vs. 4). Even the darkest shadow of the deepest and most ominous valley will not dissuade the flock from dutifully following their leader without any fear of

harm. He is entirely capable of protecting them from harm [with “rod”-- an implement with which to beat off dangerous animals-- and “staff”-- a pole with a crook by which to snare and retrieve straying sheep] (vs. 4).

“I SHALL NOT WANT!”

Verse 5: “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...*”

The scene now shifts in David’s mind to a great sumptuous feast where he is the honored guest. His gracious Host does not hesitate to pay him tribute even as his enemies look on in dismay. This is the height of vindication for a youth whose attendance at Saul’s feasts frequently ended in attempts on his life by his host rather than in pleasant and satisfying experiences. This spiritual feast provided for him by a *divine* Host was an event of *great joy* and not of *deep regret*. What a difference between the two feasts provided him by the two hosts!

1. David’s enemies would be chagrined when the Lord openly declared his innocence of guilt and his worthiness of justification in those matters where he had been the object of their treachery and wickedness. That would indeed be a “table” at which the poor fugitive would delight to sit!
2. Jehovah’s proclamation of affection for His young servant would be consummated by an “anointing” with oil. This was commonly done for dignitaries and other persons of great honor. It was ironic that when David’s *spiritual* benefactor had *His* way, David’s head was anointed, but if his *physical* benefactor [Saul] had *his* way, David’s head would be taken off!
3. The shepherd boy of Israel was overwhelmed with humility and gratitude when he thought on the wonderful blessings afforded him by the Lord’s “feast.” His “cup” was not just filled-- it overflowed! No matter that his prospects in king Saul’s court had turned sour [to say the least!]. That was only a temporary situation that would be remedied in time by a just God. David’s lifelong and eternal relationship with Jehovah would soon make the memory of his poor relationship with Saul fade into insignificance.

Verse 6: “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me...*”

David’s determination was fueled by his expectation.

1. He expected, based on previous experiences with the Lord, that God’s mercy and blessings would always be available to him. He would always be welcome to eat at the Lord’s “table!” He would never be driven away by this host in fear and shame.

2. He *determined* to do whatever was required to enjoy his place at God's table of good things. He knew that meant "dwelling in the Lord's house" as long as he lived. God requires faithful service from each guest at His table.
3. David could not actually dwell in God's "house" personally. The tabernacle could be served only by Levites, and David was of Judah's tribe. However, he *could* live *representatively* through the services rendered in his behalf by those chosen for the various tasks of ceremony and sacrifice.
4. God's "house" [family] today is His church (1Timothy 3:15). We can actually live and work in it regardless of our national or social backgrounds. We do not need merely to be *represented* there by others. Eating at God's table and dwelling in His house are wonderful privileges offered to any and all who will accept His gracious invitation (Revelation 22:17).

"I SHALL NOT WANT!"

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 23:

1. *God's provisions for His people extend to all areas of our lives. He gives us peace for the mind (23:2b) and peace for the soul (23:3a).*
2. *We "shall not want" for anything needful to our well-being as Christians. "Want" is limited only by God's judgment of what is good for us in our Christian walk. (23:1)*
3. *God's goodness and mercy only follow those who strive to dwell acceptably in His house. Men must learn how they ought to "behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1Timothy 3:15). (23:6)*

Other psalms of interest possibly from this time period: 31, 52

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON FOUR

1. David was close to two members of Saul's family, _____ and _____.
2. _____, a priest, was killed by Saul for giving David _____ and a _____.

Psalm 7:

3. _____ loved David but was unable to control _____'s behavior.
4. God is a _____ judge who is _____ with the wicked _____.
5. Evil men fall into a _____ they have _____ and into a _____ they have _____.

Psalm 11:

6. David was advised to _____ like a _____ to his _____.
7. "If the _____ are _____ what can the _____ do?"
8. The Lord is "in" His _____ and also in _____.
9. God will use _____, _____ and _____, and a _____ against the wicked.

Psalm 59:

10. David's enemies were _____ of _____ and _____ men.
11. "They _____ and _____ themselves through no _____ of _____."
12. David compared his enemies to hungry _____ who _____ all around the the _____ for _____ and _____ if they were not satisfied.
13. He wanted his enemies not to be _____ but instead be _____, _____, _____ and _____.
14. Although David personally was weak, _____ was his _____.

Psalm 23:

15. David's Shepherd provided _____, _____, and _____ of righteousness for His sheep.
16. God's _____ and _____ comforted David through the _____ of the _____ of _____.
17. A _____ and anointing _____ caused David's _____ to _____.

David: A Fugitive from Saul

Historical Context-- 1Samuel 21-31

1. In desperation to escape from Saul, David unsuccessfully resorted to seeking asylum among the Philistines, traditional enemies of the Jews.
2. Saul proved himself to be an unreasonable and vicious foe for David, not hesitating to destroy those who unwittingly gave help to the young fugitive. Even holy priests were included among his innocent victims.
3. When it appeared that Saul had entrapped David at Keilah, God's intervention allowed him to flee to the wilderness of Judah [Ziph] where he was betrayed to Saul.
4. Moving his location to the wilderness of Maon, David and his men were almost overtaken by his pursuers, but Saul was called away suddenly to defend against the Philistines.
5. Later, David encountered Saul in a cave, where he declined the opportunity to slay him. Saul seemed moved by David's decision and admitted the inevitability of David's kingship. His persecution of David was halted for a while but soon erupted again.
6. David sought help from Nabal, who refused to comply. Abigail, Nabal's wife, stopped a plan for revenge and became David's wife after God struck down her wicked husband.
7. A second opportunity to kill Saul was declined in the wilderness of Ziph, after which David shamed Saul for his evil designs against him. Again, Saul seemed humbled and once more declared a truce between them.
8. Still fearing Saul, David lived among the Philistines at Gath for more than a year and pretended that his loyalties had shifted to his former enemies. He seemed destined to fight against Israel when war broke out between the nations, but this was avoided when the Philistines questioned his loyalty and sent him and his men away.
9. God had quit directing Saul's actions, so he sought help from a medium who might consult Samuel's spirit for guidance in his war with the Philistines. The dead prophet disclosed Saul's imminent defeat and death.
10. Philistine leaders rejected David's participation; he thus avoided a "conflict of interest."
11. Amalakites who had captured David's family at Ziklag were overtaken and destroyed by him in a "war" all his own. He graciously shared the spoils of war with the people in places where he and his men "were accustomed to roam."
12. Saul and his sons met their deaths at the hands of the Philistines. Their bodies were taken back to Jabesh Gilead by its valiant inhabitants and given proper burials. This ended forever the tumultuous reign of King Saul and his unrighteous persecution of David, the "man after God's own heart."

Historical Connection with the Psalms

David felt many mixed emotions as he fled from the wrath of King Saul. He was just a young man with few resources at his disposal and few allies to whom he could turn for help in his conflict with Saul. On the other hand, Saul was the nation's ruler, empowered with all the kingdom's assets, and he was free to do whatever he chose in his crusade to kill his youthful opponent.

1. David's emotions now were a continuation of the feelings he had while suffering mistreatment as a singer in the king's court. The only difference was that now he knew reconciliation was impossible, and the dispute would be resolved only when one of them was dead.
2. The psalms composed by David during this unsettled period in his life reveal clearly that his trust in God's protection of the faithful had not diminished in the least nor was he any less determined to maintain his integrity and lay claim to that divine watchcare.
3. With no apparent source of deliverance among his own people, David fled to people not ordinarily friendly. He hoped that some temporary refuge from Saul might be found. His psalms coming out of that episode disclose a heart filled at once with extreme anxiety about dangers posed by a brutal enemy and with strong confidence that he would be delivered from those threats by a God in whom he placed his trust.
4. On at least two occasions, David, the pursued, had the opportunity to kill Saul, the pursuer. Although he could see the hand of God in these incidents, David realized that even as he complied with Jehovah's will *not* to raise his hand against God's anointed, he was prolonging his own frustrations and fears by allowing his enemy other opportunities to resume his relentless efforts to destroy him.
5. David and his small band of followers spent much of this period in various wildernesses, forests, and even among people of other nations who ordinarily would have been his staunch enemies. We can imagine the loneliness and isolation he must have felt as he considered the rejection he continued to experience on every hand. Yet, Jehovah was with him wherever he fled, and his spirit was uplifted when he remembered that he was never really alone in his plight. Several of his psalms reflect his optimism amid depressing circumstances.
6. Several other psalms carry inscriptions [titles] that indicate their place in this part of David's story. Numerous psalms attributed to him bear no title but suggest by their content that they, too, might well be included in this section of Psalms.

The Psalms

Several of the psalms to be studied in this section are related in their historical context and/or their poetic content. A simple arrangement of these six psalms places them into three pairs, each pair dealing with the same incident or similar incidents that occurred as David fled from king Saul to various places.

Psalms 34 and 56: In Enemy Hands

Soon after David had fled from Saul's court, he sought refuge among the Philistines and king Achish [or "Abimelech," possibly a traditional Philistine title] at Gath. We don't know why he supposed he might be protected by those who were usually enemies of his people. Perhaps his action came from the desperation of not knowing anywhere else to turn. It isn't surprising that the Philistines would remember David's role in the death of their champion Goliath and in the victory of Israel over their army following the vanquishing of the giant. Objections arose over his presence in Gath, and David feared for his life. He pretended insanity as a means of avoiding death, and his deception worked. He was sent away to resume his flight from Saul. Psalm 34 possibly expresses David's outlook on things as he saw them while in enemy hands.

Psalm 56 appears to reveal David's thoughts about God and danger during the same period of time. The title introduces the psalm as "when the Philistines captured him in Gath." Since we have no record of any *actual* capture of David by the Philistines, it is supposed that the "capture" refers to his vulnerability to rejection and expulsion from Gath. That would mean that this psalm originated from the same events referenced in Psalm 34. A deep faith in the power and concern of Jehovah to protect the fugitives from their pursuers is evident in both psalms.

Psalm 34:

Verses 1-3: *"I will bless the Lord at all times..."*

1. If there was ever a time when one might expect David to doubt the watchcare of God, it might be while he was forced to hide from his oppressor among hostile people. His surroundings were likely far from ideal. He might easily have supposed that Jehovah probably didn't care a great deal about someone whom He had allowed to be driven into his present situation. Instead-- he declares his intention to bless the Lord at all times! His trust in God never depended on his physical circumstances.

2. He had nothing to boast of among the Philistines that might encourage his men except his boast of protection and safety as a servant of the Almighty God. That, he hoped, would be enough to make their hearts *glad*.
3. David urged everyone in his small company of outcasts to be encouraged in their discouraging surroundings: "...magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name *together*."

Verses 4-7: *"I sought the Lord, and He heard me..."*

1. Evidently, God had already answered the fugitive's prayer for deliverance, assuring him that there was nothing to fear from his enemies. That message had been conveyed to his disheartened followers. They followed David's lead and also placed their trust in the Lord. They were "radiant" and not "ashamed" of their lot. It was comforting to learn that their "poor" [defenseless] leader had cried out to God and had been heard!
2. Jehovah's response convinced this shabby band of warriors that His *angel* was guarding them even while they camped among unfriendly armies. God's *angel* camped with them, and they were safe from harm at the hands of the Philistines.

Verses 8-10: *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good..."*

1. Even men in this present dire situation could be uplifted in spirit by the belief that a real trust in the Lord will result in real blessings for believers.
2. These "young lions" among David's men were strong and vigorous and were usually able to provide for themselves. They had discovered, however, that without God their personal capabilities were not equal to the present challenge. They were all in great danger from the Philistines as well as from Saul, who had not abandoned his determination to destroy them. On the other hand, their courageous leader could assure them that those who seek the Lord's help with their problems will never lack "any good thing," and that is exactly what David wanted them to do.

Verses 11-16: *"Come, you children, listen to me..."*

1. "Seeking the Lord" would require much more than just hoping that He would come to the rescue of these men. They were as helpless as "children," virtual captives at the mercy of the Philistines. The fear of the Lord was all that would prolong their

lives if it led them to exhibit the same qualities of righteousness that God always demands. Control of the tongue, doing good deeds, and seeking peace with others are examples David cited as essential for receiving Jehovah's blessings.

2. A simple and unchanging principle of God's dealings with men now applied to the predicament of these beleaguered men as it always does.
 - a. The Lord "sees" and "hears" the plight of troubled people who cry out to Him for help *if* they are righteous in their lives.
 - b. The Lord turns away His "face" from the unrighteous; He neither listens to their requests nor prevents bad things from happening to them.
 - c. Verses 12-16 of David's admonition about obtaining God's help are quoted in 1Peter 3:10-12, demonstrating that He still hasn't changed His mind about coming to the assistance of those in trouble. [See also Hebrews 13:8.]

Verses 17,18: *"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears..."*

1. God not only *hears* but He *responds* to the cry of righteous people. He will deliver them from all their troubles. What a promise!
2. Of course, deliverance may come at another time and in another way from what we desire and expect. Patience and a submissive spirit will prevent us from "giving up" on receiving the help we ask from the Lord.
3. A "broken" [humble] heart and a "contrite" ["broken down with sorrow for sin"--Webster] spirit characterize those to whom the Lord is "near" and those whom He will save. David's men, although likely far better than the Philistines in the quality of their lives, should realize that God in no way owed them deliverance. Their escape, when it came, would be from God's *grace* and not by their own *merit*. This is as true of spiritual salvation now as it was of physical salvation then (Eph. 2:8,9).

Verses 19-22: *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous..."*

1. Bad things *do* happen to good people. Even God's people must sometimes suffer troubles that may seem out of place for them. It may be, however, that spiritual improvement for themselves or for others may result from unpleasant situations that they may experience (1Peter 1:6,7). Trials are tests of our faith that can make us stronger if we endure them properly.
2. The Lord's deliverance for David and his men could be so absolute that it might be

said of the rescued, “not one of his bones was broken.” This is the reward of righteousness. Of course, Jesus, the most righteous of all, most literally and most completely fulfilled this promise when He was spared the breaking of His legs on the cross (John 19:36). The prohibition of breaking any bones in the Passover lamb pre-figured this fulfillment (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12).

3. Evil [Satan] slays [physically and spiritually] the wicked, but the Lord redeems [physically and spiritually] the soul of the righteous.
4. All haters of the righteous will be condemned by God, but none of the righteous who trust in their Deliverer will be condemned.

Psalm 56:

While this psalm echoes the trust David had expressed in Psalm 34 that the Lord would deliver him from Saul and from the Philistines, this psalm more widely describes the extent and the nature of the danger from which he needed to be rescued.

Verses 1,2: David’s enemies are described as:

1. Extremely dangerous and powerful; they would “swallow him up”;
2. Persistent in their purpose to destroy him; they “fought” and “hounded” him “all day”;
3. Numerous; there were “many” of them who sought to harm him.

Verses 3: There were several reasons for David to fear what might happen to him.

1. Saul still pursued him with the evil intent to take his life.
2. The Philistines to whom he had fled for possible refuge had proved to be a far greater threat to him than he had hoped.
3. He realized he had no man to whom he could turn for help.

Verse 4: There were also several reasons why he must overcome his fear.

1. God’s word had promised him protection and preservation as a righteous man.
2. He had already made his commitment to trust what God had promised.
3. The power of his enemies was limited because of their fleshly nature, but God’s power was unlimited because of His spiritual nature.
4. This thought is repeated in Psalm 118:6 and is quoted in Hebrews 13:6 to encourage Christians in their persecutions. Paul provides similar assurance in Romans 8:31.

Verses 5-7: Saul and the Philistines used similar tactics to try to entrap and destroy David.

1. They twisted his words; they plotted and schemed evil plans against him.

2. They spied on him and conspired together on how to use his actions against him.
3. They had no fear of retribution from God because of their wicked deeds, but--surely, God's anger about their wickedness would result in *their* "casting down," not David's.

Verses 8-11: God's complete awareness of David's problems was comforting to him.

1. He believed that God was keeping a record of *all* the wanderings made necessary by the dangers he confronted.
2. He had already fled from Jerusalem to Ramah (1Sam. 19:18), back to Jerusalem (1Sam. 20:1), and then to Nob (1Sam. 21:1). He could now see that he must flee from Gath and could anticipate seemingly unending "wanderings" as he sought to escape from the hands of king Saul.
3. God also noted every tear David shed out of frustration and sorrow and kept them in His "bottle" [probably alluding to an eastern custom by which tears for the dead were kept in small bottles or jars and later used to demonstrate grief] and in His "book."
4. The Lord would hear every cry for help and would make his enemies "turn back."
5. David repeats the confidence expressed in verse 4: what can *man* do when *God* is "for me"?

Verses 12,13: Promises that men had made to God must be kept if they expected Jehovah to keep the promises He had made to them.

1. This principle has always had its place in God's dealing with men (Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:4; Acts 18:18).
2. We should be careful to remember promises we have made over time to God and take stock of whether or not we have tried our best to do what we have promised.
3. David fully intended to be faithful to his vows of obedience in view of God's promise of deliverance from his oppressors.
4. His efforts to obey Jehovah would be no more than a reasonable response to what God was doing for him:
 - a. Delivering his soul [life] from death at the hands of many enemies;
 - b. Delivering his feet from falling when his enemies attacked;
 - c. Allowing him to continue to walk [live] among the living.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 34 AND 56:

1. *Regardless of what else we may accomplish in this life, our greatest boast is without question a good relationship with our Lord. Everything else is insignificant. (34:2)*

2. *Fear will be either a negative or a positive experience, depending on whether it leads us to trust God less or more for deliverance. (56:3,4)*
3. *The knowledge that God is just keeps us from despair about the wickedness of the world around us. [See 2Peter 2:7,8.] (56:7)*
4. *Our comfort and trust in God come through His written word. How much we should study it, and how much we should thank God for it! (56:4,10)*

Psalms 57 and 142: Refuge in a Cave

These psalms bear inscriptions relating to experiences that David had in the same cave or in two different caves. Psalm 57 is designated as “a Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.” If accurate, this ties the psalm to events in 1Samuel 22:1-5 when David “escaped” from the king of Gath and from the king of Israel to the cave [“stronghold”] at Adullam. Joining him there were his family and about four hundred other followers over whom he became “captain.”

On the other hand, Psalm 142 is a “contemplation of David” when he was “in the cave” at En Gedi, which seems to connect it to 1Samuel 24:1-24. David and his men were already hiding in a cave at Rocks of the Wild Goats when Saul entered the same cave, not knowing that David was there. The situation presented David an opportunity to kill his pursuer. He was not only impressed with the fact that he could never in good conscience do bodily harm to Saul but also that he could never be free from Saul’s persistent persecution as long as the king was alive. While some perceive these two psalms as related to the *same* incident, the variant wording in their inscriptions seems to indicate the probability that they are associated with *different* occasions.

Psalm 57:

This psalm deals with David’s reflections on the dangers he faced from Saul’s oppression, dangers from which he had attempted to escape by fleeing into the deep recesses of a cave [probably near the small town of Addulam]. It also reveals the continuing trust he maintained that God would deliver him from those perils, despite odds to the contrary. There seems to be an ongoing contrast drawn by David in these verses between his *physical insecurity* within the cave and the *spiritual security* that he enjoyed as a faithful believer in the goodness of Jehovah.

Verse 1: David’s physical body was entrusted to the protection offered by the cave in which he sought refuge from king Saul. This protection, at best, was uncertain

and subject to Saul's discovery of him at any moment. Anxiety about capture was always at a high level. On the other hand, his spiritual soul was hidden in God from all harm. It was not within the "shadow" of a cave but in the shadow of God's wings that *real* safety was available to him. Through faith David and his companions were gathered together "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" to be comforted in the protection of the Lord (Lk. 13:34). The "calamities" threatened by Saul would soon pass if they would keep faith with God.

Verse 3a: In the remoteness of the cave, David seemed to be further away from heaven, where God's throne was, than ever before. Yet, he knew that God's awareness of his distress was not diminished by physical distance. God would have no problem in providing "all things" necessary for his deliverance, even if those provisions had to come all the way from heaven. While no help was available *nearby*, all he needed would be sent to him from *far away*. Faith easily transcends obstacles imposed by physical sight (2Cor. 5:7).

Verse 3b, 4: David must have felt at times "swallowed up" by his hiding place as he sought safety in the cave at Adullam. Emerging unharmed from the darkness of its depths into the openness and light of the world above was by no means certain. Similarly, he was overwhelmed by the reproaches and persecutions of his great enemy. But Jehovah, he believed, would show *mercy* to him and *truth* [that God keeps those who are His] to his adversaries. He would escape both the physical confinement of the cave and the oppression of his opposition.

This cave of refuge might have at some time served as a den for lions or other wild animals. This would have called up the image of a man [soul] being cast into the midst of fierce beasts and facing imminent destruction. His enemies [sons of men] were ready in the heat of their passion ["set on fire"] to use spears and arrows to harm him just as fierce lions might tear his body with sharp teeth.

Verse 5: God's compassion for His people and His power to deliver them from troubles would be displayed for men to witness not only *beneath* the earth deep within a cave but also *above* the heavens and earth where all might see. His glory would be displayed everywhere when David was delivered from Saul's evil purposes!

Verse 6: This cave of escape evoked other similarities between Saul's vicious pursuit of the young fugitive and the tactics employed by hunters in their pursuit of the wild animals that might have once lived in this cave. Figuratively, Saul had strung a "*net*" across the mouth of the cave in a effort to ensnare David. Or, he

might at any moment fall into a “*pit*” that Saul had dug at the cave’s entrance. Like a fleeing beast, David’s plight would end all hope of his escape from capture and death.

Such persistent tactics by his enemies sometimes were overwhelming enough to “bow down” David’s soul. Relief appeared to be *physically* impossible! Still, faith in the Lord generated a strong confidence that the tables would soon be turned, and by the intervention of God his enemies would “fall” into serious troubles of their own.

Verses 7-11: David’s heart was steadfast in his trust that God would save him from Saul. Pursuant to his deliverance, he would forever sing praises to his Deliverer before all peoples in all nations, even in the early “dawn” of opportunity. God’s glory must be exalted not only within deep recesses of caves and remote places of hiding but also throughout the earth and up to the heavens!

Psalm 142:

The inscription accompanying Psalm 142 identifies it as a prayer of David “when he was *in the cave.*” Although the psalm might be closely associated with his experience at Adullam, many believe it better fits his encounter with Saul when he was already in the cave at En Gedi before Saul appeared there. According to 1Samuel 24:3, David and his men were “staying in the recesses of the cave” to avoid capture by Saul.

Verses 1-3a-- David’s “complaint” and “supplication” were products of the “troubles” he faced because of the wrath of king Saul. At times he felt “overwhelmed” by the never-ending pursuit mounted by his enemy. Saul would not give up his evil plan to destroy the young fugitive he considered to be a dangerous rival in Israel!

Verses 3b-4-- Amid his seemingly hopeless situation, David cried out to God, his only possible source of relief from the dangers thrust upon him by Saul. God “knew his path” [his present hiding place within the cave] and understood that his predicament had developed *despite* the way he had “walked” in obedience to the Lord. It seemed to David that no one cared what happened to him or “acknowledged” his worthiness of protection from the ungodly king. Achish, king of Gath, had sent him away (1Samuel 21). Doeg had betrayed him (1Samuel 22), and both the men of Keilah, a city he had saved from the Philistines, and the Ziphites were eager to hand him over to gain the favor of his pursuer (1Samuel 23). Refuge

had consistently “failed” him.

Verses 5-7-- Having no one to whom to turn except his God, David called upon Him for the help that no one else would give. Jehovah *was* a refuge to keep him “in the land of the living.” His persecutors were stronger than David and his small band of followers. They kept his *soul* constantly bound in a “prison” of anxiety and uncertainty about his future. They had forced him into hiding in a cave where his *body* was sharply restricted. Deliverance from the Lord would certainly be welcome and would evoke David’s praise forever.

David was convinced that God would secure his ultimate release from danger by using “righteous” people. He also believed that Jehovah would always “deal bountifully” with him as long as he lived by faith in his Deliverer.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 57 AND 142

1. *When we feel “overwhelmed” and “imprisoned” in a “cave” of despair because of our personal troubles, we need to look up and in faith call for help from the same God who delivered David from seemingly hopeless situations. (142:5-7)*
2. *It is certain that “calamities” will “pass by” in one way or another. What is uncertain is whether or not our faith will survive until they do. Maintenance of trust in the Lord’s watchcare over us holds the highest priority in times of trouble. (57:1)*
3. *The early part of our day might be the most rewarding time for us to pray, study, and meditate on God’s glory. The day’s cares often erode our concentration and mental clarity and may detract from a keen awareness of our dependency on God. (57:8)*

Psalms 54 and 63: Refuge in a Forest

Not only did David seek refuge in two different *caves* as he fled from Saul but also he hid himself from his adversary in two different *forests*. First, on the advice of Gad the prophet, he went into the forest of Hereth in the land of Judah (1Samuel 22:5). Later, he “stayed in strongholds in the wilderness” and was in the “Wilderness of Ziph in a forest” (1Samuel 23:14,15). Saul “sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.” David’s thoughts about Saul’s threats against him and about his trust in Jehovah’s power to deliver him are reflected in these two psalms.

Psalms 54:

One of the closest calls David had as a fugitive from Saul was in the forest in the wilder-
(52)

ness near Ziph in the hill country of Judah. Taking advantage of the Ziphites' betrayal of David, Saul's pursuit brought him to within a stone's throw of David's followers. Only a mountain separated the two groups. However, a providential invasion of Saul's kingdom by the Philistines interrupted the king's mission and rescued David from certain doom.

Verses 1,2-- The *substance* of David's prayer was in the form of a plea for salvation from his adversaries. Salvation must come from *God's name* [the totality of His Being] and by *His* strength, for the young fugitive was virtually helpless to defend himself and his men against much stronger forces than his.

Verse 3-- The *urgency* of this prayer lay in the fact that "strangers" [the Ziphites] had risen up in betrayal of God's servant and had allowed "oppressors" [Saul and his soldiers] to mount an almost certainly successful action against his life. How bleak his outlook must have been when his capture appeared to be imminent! How bewildering it was that those who had not "set God before them" could perpetrate a conspiracy to destroy a man whose God was "ever before him" in all that he did.

Verses 4-7-- It seemed ironic that deliverance from so great a threat to David's life could have come through people [the Philistines] who were not customarily servants of God but who had been *used* by God to accomplish His purpose to save a faithful servant from harm. David's life had been "upheld" by those who in most circumstances would have sought to *destroy* it! For a time at least the Philistines had proved to be less dangerous to David than those of his own nation who assisted Saul in his treacherous activities. But be assured-- Jehovah would "repay" and "cut off" David's [and His] enemies in full recompense for their wicked behavior!

Psalm 63:

The historical record reveals very little about what occurred when David left the cave near Adullam and hid instead in the forest of Hereth. We know only that God delivered him from the treachery of Keilah, a lowland town of Judah, when he discovered that its fickle people would take him and turn him over to Saul when the opportunity presented itself (1Samuel 23). This psalm impresses us with the unshakable faith that David maintained that the Lord would sustain him even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Verses 1,2-- A difficult situation from which there seems to be hardly any escape will

prompt a true believer in God to “seek Him early” [as the *first* option] for a solution. Just as there is no substitute for the water required to slake a thirsty body, nothing else can take God’s place when our souls long for relief from distress. Only the Lord can truly satisfy the deep yearnings of our inner selves for the fulfillment of our spiritual needs. David’s *soul* felt a deep need for assurance that God still regarded him as His faithful servant in spite of his distressful experiences as a fugitive from Saul’s vengeance. His *body* was also just as dependent on the Lord for the physical things that would sustain his life.

It may be that the wilderness in which David formed this prayer was a “dry and thirsty land” bereft of life-supporting qualities. That would remind this young man “after God’s own heart” that it would be as useless for a soul to expect relief from its distress without access to God as for a body to sustain physical life without the water and food necessary to its being. His soul was assured that Jehovah’s watchcare over him was as real in a desolate and distant wildernesses as it was in Jerusalem’s sanctuary [tabernacle], the focal point of the Jewish man’s relationship to the Lord. His *power* and *glory* could be recognized and accessed by the faithful in every place and circumstance.

Verses 3--5-- There was something more important to David than his *physical* life, which would end one day regardless of the outcome of his present situation. To have God’s lovingkindness would assure *spiritual* life forever. Thus, every moment of living must be used as a moment in which to “lift up his hands” to God in joy and praise for the opportunity to work toward eternal life in heaven. Escape from Saul’s threats and the continuation of physical life was not nearly so important to David as the continuation of implicit trust in God despite those threats. Whatever the outcome of his wilderness flight, all would be well with his soul if he maintained his faith.

Verses 6-8-- The solitary life of a fugitive in Judah’s wilderness afforded opportunity for much reflection about God’s help over time past. “In the watches” of sleepless nights, as he lay on his bed, thoughts of the Lord’s support flooded David’s mind. God had protected him from the harm of bear and lion when he was but a shepherd boy guarding his father’s sheep. He had thus far been shielded from the harm of Saul and his soldiers even though their military might was far greater than his own. He was resolute-- he would remain under the “shadow of God’s wings” and would follow “close behind” his Guardian Lord, and a Strength far beyond man’s would “uphold” him and keep him from harm.

Verses 9-11-- While his own prospect was bright, however things in the wilderness turned

out, the fate of his enemies was anything but hopeful. Those who sought his life would “fall by the sword,” go into the “lower parts of the earth” [hell], and become the “portion [food] of jackals.”

David was resolved about several things in the light of his unsure physical situation.

- (1) The [prospective] king would rejoice in God.
- (2) All who leaned on God’s help would glory in that help.
- (3) Wicked men who relied on lying mouths would be punished.
 - (a) Perhaps he recalled the lies of the men of Gath who had forced him to flee from their land.
 - (b) Maybe he remembered the lies told by Doeg the Edomite who caused the tragic death of God’s priests and intensified Saul’s determination to destroy him.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 54 and 63:

1. *We cannot anticipate just how God will resolve the problems we pray about. We can only be sure that He will solve them for our good in His time and in His way. The solutions He offers may not be at all akin to those we might anticipate. (54:4)*
2. *Mentally listing one by one the blessings God has given us would help us to be much more mindful of our debt of gratitude to Him. “Count Your Many Blessings” is good advice. (63:6,7)*

Other psalms of interest possibly from this time period: 13, 18, 22, 52 , 59

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON FIVE

1. On two occasions, David dwelt among the _____ to seek refuge from Saul.
2. David hid in two caves at _____ (22:1) and _____ (24:1,3). He also hid in two forests in _____ (22:5) and _____ (23:14,15).
3. Many psalms display David's _____ in _____ as his ultimate Deliverer.

Psalms 34 and 56:

4. David sought the _____ and was delivered from all his _____.
5. "Young lions" lack and suffer _____; seekers of _____ lack _____.
6. The _____, _____ of the Lord react to the needs of the _____, but His _____ is against those who do _____.
7. A _____ heart and a _____ spirit receive help from God.
8. David's _____ and _____ were in God's "book."

Psalms 57 and 142:

9. David's refuge would be in the _____ of God's _____.
10. His enemies were like _____ with teeth of _____ and _____ and whose _____ was a _____.
11. A _____ and a _____ were prepared for David's capture and death.
12. God knew David's _____ and the way he _____.
13. The Lord was David's _____ in the _____ of the _____.
14. Persecutions caused David's soul to feel as if it were in _____.

Psalms 54 and 63:

15. David asked that his enemies be _____ in God's _____.
16. A _____ soul seeks God like a man seeks _____ in a _____ and _____ land.
17. David remembered God's blessings while on his _____ in the _____.

David: The King of Israel (1)

Historical Context: 2Samuel 1-6; 1Chronicles 11-16

1. David lamented the death of Saul and Jonathan when they were slain by the Philistines.
2. Following the death of Saul and Jonathan, David was anointed king over Judah.
3. For a time, there was war between Judah and Israel; Judah prevailed.
4. Abner slew Joab's brother Asahel and then joined forces with David. These two actions eventually resulted in his own death at the hands of Joab.
5. The murder of Ishbosheth, Saul's heir, cleared the way for David's rule over Israel.
6. David was crowned king of all Israel. He reigned seven years and six months over Judah and thirty-three years over the whole nation.
7. The new king enjoyed military victories over the Jebusites and the Philistines.
8. One of David's first acts as king was to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem and to establish tabernacle worship in the royal city.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

The psalms composed by David during this period of his life perhaps comprise a major part of the entire collection. While it is impossible to make definite associations between particular psalms and specific incidents of David's early kingship, the very essence of many psalms makes a strong case for such a relationship. Those poems which can be considered as written by "David, the [New] King of Israel," may be simply categorized as:

1. Psalms of *thanksgiving* to God for overcoming enemies, particularly Saul and the heads of foreign nations;
2. Psalms of *praise* to God for His Person and His power as exhibited in His grace toward David personally and toward the people of Israel generally;
3. Psalms of *promises* made for a deep commitment to Jehovah's rule over His people. These include vows made by David for himself as the king and vows the king offered in behalf of his subjects as a nation.

Several psalms seem to attach themselves to significant historical events occurring during the time represented by the first ten chapters of Second Samuel. This was a period within which David was busy performing his new duties as king over the Jews in both arenas of military conquest and civic administration. The following divisions will be observed as we look at David's experiences as king and at the psalm(s) possibly related to those experiences:

1. David as king over Judah-- Psalm 20-- Lesson 6
2. David as king over all Israel-- Psalm 2-- Lesson 6
3. David transports the ark of God to Jerusalem-- Psalms 105, 96, 106--Lesson 6
4. David plans a great temple; God reaffirms His covenant-- Psalm 132--Lesson 7
5. David's extensive conquests over the nations-- Psalms 18, 60--Lesson 7
6. David administers judgment and justice-- Psalms 144, 101--Lesson 7

David as King over Judah-- Psalm 20

Jehovah guided David to reside in the city of Hebron following the death of Saul. Accompanying the king-to-be were his own family and all his followers and their families. We cannot know exactly how long David lived in Hebron before he was approached by the people of Judah about becoming their ruler, but likely it was only a short time. The new king made a point of honoring the men of Jabesh Gilead for their bravery and for the respect they had shown to Saul's memory when they had dared to retrieve the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall to which they had been fastened by the Philistines. David seemed determined to demonstrate to all the people that his reign would be marked by decent behavior that had not always been seen in their first king.

Having accepted the offer of Judah to become its king, David in his first royal proclamation pointed ahead to a mutual commitment: "Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them" (2Samuel 2:7). His determination to be a real blessing to his subjects is reflected in his prayer for them in Psalm 20.

Verses 1-3-- Trouble would doubtless come to the kingdom and its citizens from many sources. Most prominently, warfare with surrounding nations would sometimes be necessary for the solidification and prosperity of Israel. Such conflict would not be new to the people of Judah, for Saul's reign had been accompanied by frequent episodes of both offensive and defensive military action. However, there would be a fundamental *difference* between the *attitudes* of the two leaders who took their troops into battle. All too often, Saul's focus seems to have been too much on himself and on the image he wanted to project to others as a mighty warrior and an unyielding commander. [See 1Samuel 13:8,9; 14:24,44.] David's concern, as expressed in this prayer-psalm, was for the well-being of his people and for their continuing faithfulness to the Lord.

It was Jehovah, not the king, who could relieve the troubles suffered by the common man. It was not *to the king* that they should look for their defense but to the *God* of Jacob. Help must now come from the sanctuary, not from the palace. As Israel's ruler, David intended to be the *agent* of *God's* agenda for the nation, not the *architect* of his own selfish plans. His personal effectiveness in leading the nation in both civic and military matters would be directly dependent on the people's faithfulness to God's

appointments under the Law. Offerings and sacrifices must necessarily precede great victories on the field of battle!

Verses 4,5-- The king's prayer was for *their* heart's desire being realized, not his own. He desired that the purposes of his *subjects* might be fulfilled in all their public and private endeavors. Whereas Saul's philosophy seems to have been, "When the king prospers, the people will do well," David's outlook was, "When the people are blessed, the king will receive a consequent blessing." "We"-- together-- will rejoice when the problems of the nation are resolved. "We"-- together-- will depend on "setting up our banners" in the name of the Lord to secure that resolution.

Verses 6,7-- David was the Lord's "anointed" (2Samuel 2:4; 5:3). As such, he enjoyed a special relationship with Jehovah. His petitions in behalf of the nation would be heard, and the great power of God's "right hand" would answer from heaven and rescue both king and kingdom from harm's way. But both parties to God's favor must remember it was not by chariots and horses that deliverance would come in time of trouble but by the name [the essence of the Person] of the Lord our God.

Verse 8-- The outcome of any confrontation between the righteous and the unrighteous, whether in the halls of justice or on the fields of warfare, was clear and certain to David. When all the dust had settled, *they* [the unrighteous who trust in themselves] will have bowed down and fallen; *we* [the righteous who trust in Jehovah] will have risen and will be standing upright!

Verse 9-- On the basis of their complete trust in God's mercy and strength, David and his subjects together could call on the Lord for deliverance from any trouble that might confront the new kingdom. They could cry, "Save, Lord," with a confidence born of faith that their common petitions would be answered in uncommon ways by the King of them all.

With a new ruler who obviously held their interests as individuals and the interests of the nation above his own, Israel could rejoice in the hope that conditions in the new kingdom would be better than those under the old administration.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 20:

1. *Misplaced trust will generate misplaced hope of things that can never be. "Chariots" and "horses" cannot do for us what "the name of the Lord our God" can. (20:7)*
2. *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" [Romans 8:31] (20:8)*

David as King over Judah and Israel-- Psalm 2

After seven and one-half years of ruling Judah, David covenanted with the elders of Israel to become their king also. His reign over both groups would last for thirty-three more years. One of his first acts as king was to conquer Jerusalem and to make it “the City of David” (2Samuel 5:9). He would go on to become “great” because “the Lord God of hosts was with him” (2Samuel 5:10). But first there were things to be done. He built a house for himself, took more wives, and added more children to his family. He undertook a military campaign against the Philistines when they opposed his inauguration as king over all Israel. Apparently, this enemy nation did not consider him and his people to be an especially dangerous entity until his numbers greatly increased by virtue of the second coronation. Acting under the direct guidance of the Lord, David was able to drive the Philistines away, despite the fact that he was probably facing superior forces. Some years later, the Jebusites in Jerusalem made a fatal mistake by denying David access to Jerusalem (2Samuel 5:6ff). Still another nation, the Ammonites under king Hanun, also rose to challenge David’s authority as ruler over all Israel (2Samuel 10). They demonstrated their disrespect for the Jews’ king by shamefully treating his messengers. But like the Philistines and the Jebusites before them, they were soundly defeated, along with the hosts of Syria, whom they had enlisted to help in the war against David. In these instances, and in others that likely arose, the Lord overrode the obstacles placed in the way of His anointed king and caused his opponents to suffer dire consequences because of their obstinate behavior. Psalm 2 deals with that behavior and with the futility of men attempting to oppose the appointments of Jehovah.

While there are several Messianic references from the psalm which are *directly* applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament, the psalm seems to have a *primary* application to David and to God’s purpose to rule over Israel through him, even though everyone might not be happy with that arrangement.

Verses 1-3-- David’s opening question calls attention to the futile and pointless efforts of men to set themselves in array against the appointments of God. Whether in national affairs or in matters of doctrine, any opposition to the Lord’s decrees opposes God Himself. It is ignorance of the sovereignty of Jehovah that permits the ignorant to challenge openly things that He has arranged. This was certainly the case when the Philistines rose up to diminish or destroy David’s reign over Israel. It was no more than a “vain thing” they plotted, for God would never forsake His anointed and allow his throne to be pulled down by heathen peoples. He had anointed [appointed] this man to do a job for His nation, and nobody could stand in the way of his doing that job! The same lesson had to be learned the hard way by the Ammonites and perhaps by others who thought it was within their own power to withstand God. Only *He*

could “break the bonds” and “cast away the cords” that He intended to place on other nations through His new king.

Verses 4-6-- How does God view man’s efforts to challenge His arrangements? At first, David supposes, casting God in the role of humanity, He is “amused” at the empty and ridiculous theatrics of such helpless creatures as they posture against the will of the Almighty Creator. But laughter soon turns into derision, which then is replaced by wrath at the impertinence of such foolish men. Out of His “deep displeasure” the Lord declares with absolute finality: “I have set My king on My holy hill of Zion... Keep *your* hands off *my* work!!”

Verses 7-9-- David as God’s king now assumes the role of God’s spokesman to the peoples of the earth. He declares with great feeling what he knew Jehovah had decreed. His anointing as Israel’s ruler had resulted solely from his adoption by the Lord as a *special* son among all His children. “I have begotten you [made you to be my chosen ruler]. I alone am responsible for what you are and what you will do as my king.”

The fate of the nations was in David’s hands because God had “given” them for an “inheritance” and a “possession.” It was therefore altogether useless for them to resist the plans He had for His kingdom and their kingdoms. Those rash or foolish enough to do so would be summarily “broken” and “dashed in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” “Kings” and “rulers” (verse 2) were self-destructing when they chose to struggle against the Lord rather than to submit.

Verses 10-12-- Now the king becomes the counselor to the other leaders of the world. He proposes to give *wise instruction* to those whose “day job” was to judge [make *good* decisions] for their countrymen. They were making *fatally bad* decisions when they attacked instead of trying to cooperate with the *heavenly* judgments that had been placed in David’s hands to execute.

The only rational decision rulers could make about the conduct of their affairs was to “serve the Lord” and “kiss” [accept and respect] his “son” [David] as the divinely-appointed leader of Israel. Otherwise, even a “little” wrath on David’s part would be supported by the might of Jehovah so that his opponents would “perish in the way.” On the other hand, cooperation with Israel’s ruler would “bless” those who made the better choice.

Note-- Although many of the nouns and pronouns in this psalm are capitalized in the NKJ and other versions, indicating references to Divine Persons, the ASV, which possibly is more accurate about such things, employs small letters which likely refer to humanity rather

than to divinity. Of course, when words are lifted from this psalm and definitely attributed to divinity in the New Testament [e.g., verses 1 and 2 are quoted in Acts 4:25,26 and verse 7b is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 to apply to Jesus], it is clear that *primary* references to humans are also to be understood as *secondary* references to divinity. It should be noted that some scholars have concluded that this entire psalm is primarily Messianic and has no actual connection with David and his reign as an “anointed” son of God. See Lesson Thirteen.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 2:

1. *Experience agrees with Scripture: “Good understanding [compliance with God’s appointments] giveth favor, But the way of the transgressor is hard” [Prov. 13:15]. (2:11,12)*
2. *What wisdom would be demonstrated by world leaders if they would only be guided in their administrations by the “fear of the Lord.” “Kissing the Son” would solve all the conflicts that keep the world in turmoil. (2:11,12)*

David Moves the Ark to Jerusalem-- Psalms 105, 96, [106]

Jehovah’s sacred Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines in one of their pre-Saul battles with Israel and was kept by them for seven months (1Samuel 4:11; 6:1). It was returned in the aftermath of devastating punishment inflicted by God on the Philistine people and was sent to Kirjath Jearim, where it remained for twenty years. One of David’s first actions as the new king over all Israel was to attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem. When disobedience by Uzzah interrupted that effort, the ark was deposited with the house of Obed-Edom for three months. Finally, after careful instruction was given about the acceptable transport of the ark in the “proper order,” this significant mission was completed (1Chronicles 13, 15).

We can imagine the intense emotion which David and his subjects must have felt as they realized that at long last [after twenty-one years] their most precious and meaningful object of religious devotion would rest where it belonged-- in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle where Jehovah Himself met with them in the person of their high priest (Hebrews 9:7). David and the others could scarcely contain themselves as they celebrated the event with shouting and playing and “leaping and whirling” before the Lord (2Samuel 6:15,16).

Out of this experience came many of the words of Psalms 105 and 96. The first verse of Psalm 106 also is found in the song David composed either as he accompanied the ark into his capital city (1Chronicles 16:8-34) or as he later reflected on the events of that [same] day (1Chronicles 16:7). It is interesting that the psalmist so completely associated God’s ark with God’s power and goodness that he later selected passages from its original loca-

tion (1Chronicles 16:8-34) and [afterward] included them in these three psalms [and perhaps in others] to proclaim the same attributes of a God whose presence was so awesome that it could be seen over the holy ark only once each year.

Observe these correspondences:

Psalm 105:1-15 first appeared in 1Chronicles 16:8-22;

Psalm 96:1-13 [in entirety] first appeared in 1Chronicles 16:23-33;

Psalm 106:1 first appeared in 1Chronicles 16:34;

Only two verses [35 and 36] of David's original psalm in 1Chronicles 16 do not appear elsewhere in the collected psalms.

Psalm 105:

This psalm carries the title, "The Eternal Faithfulness of the Lord." It recites how the God of the Jews had gone to great lengths to fulfill His promises to their forefathers. To Abraham He had promised a mighty nation and a good land in which that nation could prosper and achieve a prominent position among other nations. Such ambitious plans would not be accomplished quickly or within the natural order of events. Much time must pass and many historical arrangements must be ordered before Jehovah's plans for Israel would be completed. This psalm emphasizes that the Lord was faithful to do what He had promised, despite the times and arrangements necessary to execute the promises.

The psalmist cites a long list of events in which Jehovah had manipulated the affairs of men in order to accomplish His divine purpose for His chosen people. Every event had been an unexpected blessing to an undeserving and often unappreciative nation. The return of the ark to its rightful place in the tabernacle was, in David's judgment, another favor from the Lord that was in keeping with all the other favors offered to Israel over a long period of time. This expression of God's beneficence prompted David to recall all the earlier kindnesses shown to the people of Jehovah.

The psalm divides itself into *five* sections, each of which relates to God's faithfulness in fulfilling His pledge to Abraham and to the other patriarchs of Israel.

- (1) The unwavering integrity of Jehovah [verses 1-7].
 - a. All the Lord's activities are worthy of the thanksgiving and praise of His people.
 - b. Seekers have been blessed by God's "marvelous works" and by the "judgments of His mouth." His *deeds* and His *teachings* are equally beneficial (vs. 5).
 - c. The whole earth testifies of the constancy of the Lord's faithfulness (vs. 7).
 - d. Past performance assures present solutions for those who will honor Him and depend on Him for the resolution of their problems (vs. 1, 3).
- (2) The covenant made with Israel was a testimony to God's integrity [verses 8-15].
 - a. Its fulfillment was realized only after "a thousand generations" (vs. 8).

- b. It was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob under very unfavorable conditions when the people were few and were wanderers without any security (vs. 12,13).
- c. God's unequivocal protection kept His servants from harm (vs. 14,15).
- (3) God manipulated both man and nature to fulfill His promises to Abraham and Israel [verses 16-25].
 - a. He caused a famine by which to send the patriarchs into Egypt (vs. 16).
 - b. He sent Joseph ahead of his brethren to preserve them there (vs. 17-22).
 - c. Jacob's tribe grew into a large and powerful people, which made them hateful to the Egyptians (vs. 23-25).
- (4) Mighty works of God delivered the Jews from bondage and provided the means for their survival on the long journey to Caanan [verses 26-41].
 - a. Moses and Aaron became God's agents of deliverance (vs. 26,27).
 - b. Nature was "turned upside down" to harass their Egyptian oppressors (vs. 28-36).
 - c. They were enriched at the expense of their captors (vs. 37,38).
 - d. The Lord led them through a wilderness by cloud and fire (vs. 39).
 - e. Food and water appeared miraculously when normal supplies failed (vs.40,41).
- (5) Jehovah's faithfulness was reaffirmed after many years [verses 42-45].
 - a. God never forgot what He had promised long ago to Abraham's seed (vs. 42).
 - b. He gave them the lands He had specified for their habitation (vs. 44).
 - c. Their inheritance was abundant, bringing joy and gladness to them (vs. 43,44b).
 - d. *Every blessing within the Abrahamic covenant was intended to produce a nation that would "observe His statutes and keep His laws" (vs. 45).*

This "man after God's own heart" wanted more than anything for his subjects to strive to be "people after God's own heart," too. The ark would provide renewed opportunities for them to worship and serve God according to the strict specifications of the Mosaic Law. That had been the focus of the Lord's dealings with Israel from early on. Anything that might enhance the faithfulness of the people was something of great importance to David, and he rejoiced as the new king to be able to restore the Holy Ark of the Covenant to the use of all citizens in his new kingdom!

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 105:

1. *We should be as grateful as David was to be able to participate in things that further the kingdom of God. (105:1,2)*
2. *If the Lord has patiently overcome every obstacle so that He might provide things for the ultimate good of His people, surely we should be willing to do whatever we must to take advantage of what He has done for us. (105:8,42)*

Psalm 96:

Another psalm which takes its theme from David's original song in 1Chronicles 16 is Psalm 96. Since the first psalm was associated with the ark's relocation to Jerusalem, this one must also have the same origin. The words of Psalm 96 are almost identical with those found in 1Chronicles 16:23-33. This psalm may be divided into *five* component parts that display David's emotional response to the great opportunity he enjoyed as king of Israel in bringing back the Ark of Testimony to the tabernacle.

- (1) Israel's God is worthy of the praise of all the earth [verses 1-3].
 - a. Every creature should sing a "new song" about God's "name" (vs. 1,2a).
 - b. His salvation would be "good news" to many people one day (vs. 2b).
 - c. The glory of His "wonders" should be known among all nations (vs. 3).
- (2) Israel's God should be honored for His uniqueness [verses 4-6].
 - a. He must be feared above all other "gods" (vs. 4).
 - b. He is the *real* God with creative power; all others are only useless idols (vs. 5).
 - c. People with understanding of His strength and beauty offer Him honor and majesty (vs. 6).
- (3) Honor to Jehovah should be expressed through His own appointments [verses 6b-9].
 - a. His strength and beauty are *best* seen in the activities of His sanctuary [tabernacle] (vs. 6b). This would involve the Ark of the Covenant with its cherubim and mercy seat as the one object most closely connected with God's awesome Presence [See Exodus 25:21,22.] (vs. 6b).
 - b. Prescribed offerings and service within the courts of the tabernacle offered the *best* opportunities to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (vs. 8-9).
 - c. David's vision was that the day would come when all nations ["the kindred of the peoples"] would be eligible to worship in His prescribed manner (vs. 7).
- (4) God's sovereignty must be acknowledged by all nations [verse 10].
 - a. The God of Israel exercises [seen and unseen] control over all nations (vs.10a).
 - b. He also firmly controls every facet of the world's activities (vs. 10b).
 - c. His management of men and nature will always be righteous (vs. 10c).
- (5) Jehovah's sovereignty is a source of comfort and joy [verses 11-13].
 - a. Heaven and earth should be glad (vs. 11a).
 - b. Let the sea roar, the field be joyful, the trees rejoice at God's control (vs. 11b,12).
 - c. Both the earth and all its inhabitants will be fairly treated by their Lord (vs. 13).

David's devotion to this Ark of the Covenant was understandable. His joy at bringing it back to Jerusalem was irrepressible. His mission was not for himself alone but for every man, woman, and child in Israel whose deepest desire was to serve the Lord acceptably.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 96:

- 1. Service to God must still be offered in ways He has specified. Work done in His New Testament sanctuary [His church] is even now the way by which we can give Him glory. “Without Me, you can do nothing” [John 15:5]. (96:6,8)*
- 2. Worship is beautiful to God when it is performed in holiness. God’s “set apart” specifications for worship may not be “beautiful” to worldly minds, but God judges them to be beautiful to His eyes and ears, and that is all that matters. (96:9)*

Psalms 106:1

The first verse of this psalm is identical in language to 1Chronicles 16:34, where David composed a psalm celebrating the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Many think that identical words signify identical events. Of course, it is possible that the entire psalm may be a continuation of David’s thoughts about the ark in Psalm 105. If so, then Psalm 105 would relate to remembrances of Jehovah’s goodness to Israel, culminated by His allowing them to bring the ark back home. Psalm 106 then becomes David’s painful recollection of how ungrateful and disobedient Israel had been in response to God’s goodness. It would be a “companion psalm” to 105. These memories would prompt David to be more determined than ever not to allow his people to forget God’s mercies all over again.

On the other hand, Psalm 106:46 speaks of those who had “carried them [Israel] away captive.” The next verse pleads for a gathering “from among the Gentiles.” This psalm is possibly more closely connected to Israel’s later history than to the time when the ark of God was returned to Jerusalem. For this reason, we will include this psalm in our study of captivity psalms in Lesson Twelve.

A third possibility is that Psalm 106 is connected with neither the return of the captive ark to Jerusalem nor with the return of the captive Jews from Babylon. Verse one states a simple and obvious fact about God’s mercy that was appropriate to express at any time and in any psalm.

[Other psalms possibly relating to this period will be studied in Lesson Seven.]

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON SIX

1. How many times was David “anointed” as king over God’s people? _____
2. The men of what city were honored for their bravery by David? _____
3. The ark went from the house of _____ to the house of _____ to the city of _____.

Psalm 20:

4. God would help from the _____ and strengthen out of _____.
5. Two devotions might be accepted by God: _____ and _____.
6. Some trust in _____ and _____, but God’s people trust in the _____ of the _____ our _____.

Psalm 2:

7. What three groups raged and plotted against God? _____, _____, _____
8. God’s responses to them were _____, _____, _____, and deep _____.
9. The king would receive the _____ for an inheritance, which would be broken with a _____ and shattered like a _____.
10. “_____ the Son, lest He be _____, and you _____ in the way.”

Psalm 105:

11. God’s _____, _____, and _____ should be remembered.
12. Jehovah remembered His covenant with _____, _____ and _____.
13. God warned against anyone harming His _____ and _____.

Psalm 96:

14. _____ and _____ are the foundations of God’s throne.
15. God will judge the world in _____ and _____.

David: The King of Israel (2)

Historical Context: 2 Samuel 7-10; 1Chronicles 17-19

1. David's desire to build a great temple was thwarted by Jehovah, who nevertheless promised to solidify David's kingdom and to ensure his throne throughout the future.
2. Numerous nations were conquered by the new king of Israel, who was "preserved" by the Lord "wherever he went."
3. The new king of Israel began to reign and "administered judgment and justice to all his people."
4. David's sound character was displayed when he showed mercy to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, who suffered from lameness.
5. The Ammonites rejected David's offer of kindness and insulted his messengers. Warfare followed, and the Ammonites and their Syrian allies met with a significant defeat before David's army.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

David's reign as king of Israel was to last for forty years. He would have many and varied experiences in his role as the leader of Jehovah's nation. He would achieve striking victories over his enemies; he would suffer several defeats at the hands of family members and former friends. He would often aspire to lofty pinnacles of moral excellence; he would sometimes fall down into the ugly mire of shameful conduct toward his fellowmen. But one thing seems to have remained *constant* throughout his long years of leadership: he continued to be "a man after God's own heart." Even after he had sorely disappointed himself by his own disgraceful behavior and when he had betrayed God's trust in him as His king, David maintained the same desire to please the Lord of Israel as he had first displayed when he was a shepherd boy in the fields and on the mountains of Palestine.

Many of these psalms reflect the exuberance felt by David as he faced the challenges of solidifying his position as king through military conquests of enemy nations. Others spring out of his deep and sober sense of responsibility to govern his subjects with fairness and out of a genuine concern for their well-being. Still others express David's lifelong and heartfelt determination to measure his every action, whether personal or official, by what he thought would please or displease Jehovah. In all but a few recorded instances he seems to have succeeded in these goals.

The psalms of this section are divided into this arrangement:

1. Psalms celebrating great military success against national enemies [Psalms 60, 18];

2. A psalm expressing the king's desire to honor Jehovah with a great temple [Psalm 132];
3. Psalms declaring David's determination to rule his subjects with uncompromising fairness and concern for their best interests [Psalms 101, 144].

David the Conquering King: Psalms 60, 18

One of the most visible proofs of God's pleasure with David as king of Israel was the fact that "The Lord preserved David wherever he went" (2Samuel 8:6). Foes both great and small fell before the new ruler, and powerful nations "became David's servants, and brought tribute." Israel's leader was well aware that his victories had not come through his own military genius or from the overwhelming superiority of his armies. God had promised to support him in his efforts to strengthen the position of His people among the people around them, and He was fulfilling that promise. David realized that when heads of governments trust in "chariots" and "horses," their hope rests on a shaky foundation. It is only the "name" [power and wisdom] of God that can assure success against our enemies of all kinds (Psalm 20:7). These psalms declare the king's gratefulness for God's help.

Psalm 60:

The inscription accompanying this psalm identifies it with a time when "he [David] fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt." Some variation in wording is found in 2Samuel 8:13 in the report of the actual event from which this psalm originates. There, David "made *himself* a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt." The historical account in 1Chronicles 18:12 says that "Abishai...killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt." Notwithstanding the differences in the details found in the three sources, they all speak of the *same* spectacular victory that was representative of many of David's conquests during this time. The Edomites, Syrians, Ammonites, and the Moabites were all unable to withstand the powers exerted by David and his Lord.

It is most likely that this psalm was composed by David during the interval of time between verses twelve and thirteen of the record in 2Samuel 8. Moab had already been defeated (verse 1). The Syrian and Ammonite armies had also been repulsed and their people put under subjection (verses 11, 12). Even the Philistines were temporarily subdued and humbled by David's warriors (verses 1, 12). Yet, nothing was said of Edom until the record of a significant victory over them in verse thirteen. Psalm 60 suggests victories *past* over Moab and Philistia and victories *to come* over Edom, a formidable foe.

Verses 1-3-- The psalm begins with a lament about some unspecified time when Jehovah had shown His people “hard things” (verse 3) because He was “displeased” with something they had done. Consequently, Israel was “cast off,” “broken down,” (verse 1) and “confused” (verse 3). Perhaps the psalmist refers to recent military history when some or all of the nation had suffered from bad leadership and misplaced ambitions. Saul had brought defeat to his army by the Philistines and had lost his own life and that of David’s beloved Jonathan. Abner had given his allegiance to Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, rather than to David, who had been made king over the house of Judah. There resulted “a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David” (2Samuel 3:1). Abner and Ishbosheth were both murdered before both houses of Israel were finally united under David’s rule. Such behavior could not have pleased the Lord. Perhaps it was in some other incident, such as a military reverse experienced in preliminary efforts to overcome the Edomites, that they had reaped the consequences of disappointing Jehovah God.

Verses 4,5-- In whatever way the faithless may have caused God’s displeasure, the faithful had been vindicated in their faithfulness. Their “banner” had been raised in triumph because they had chosen the side of “truth” (verse 4). David and other “beloved” of God would always be delivered from the unrighteous by the mighty right hand of God (verse 5). Perhaps a banner of victory had now been given to Israel to go forth against Edom and finish a task that had been within David’s purpose for some time.

Verses 6-8-- The Lord had promised Abraham “this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18). David’s ancestors had subdued the land under Joshua, and God had divided the territory among the tribes of Israel (Joshua 13-21). “So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it...and not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand” (Joshua 21:43,44). Some of this promised land had subsequently been compromised by the Jews’ unfaithfulness and was lost to the control of enemy nations. It was David’s intention to recover any and all such territory and thereby to demonstrate the faithfulness of Jehovah to a nation that would be faithful to Him.

The people and places cited in verses 6-8 represent the *right* that Israel had to possess them by virtue of the original promise made to Abraham. The expanse of land cited in God’s covenant with the patriarch included Edom, Moab, Philistia, and everything that had been divided among the tribes on both sides of the Jordan River. Any deficit in the full realization of the promise had resulted from Israel’s failure to drive out all the occupying nations. The land had *always* belonged to Jehovah; He could give it to *anyone* He wished.

God’s control over these nations and their territorial limits is clearly stated:

- (1) Shechem-- where Abraham camped and received a pledge for the land (Gen.12:6,7);
- (2) Valley of Succoth-- given to the tribe of Gad in the first distribution (Josh. 13:27,28);
- (3) Gilead-- a region included in the assignment to Gad and Manasseh (Josh. 13:24-31);

- (4) Manasseh-- land involved in a special dispensation by Moses (Josh. 18:7);
- (5) Ephraim-- another possession east of Jordan by special permission (Josh. 18:7); the Caananites were not expelled as prescribed (Judges 1:27);
- (6) Judah-- the centralmost land for government, religion, and leadership; this was David's own tribe and the site of his capital city where God's tabernacle was located. The Great Lawgiver was to come from Judah (Gen. 49:10);
- (7) Moab-- land taken from them by Sihon and retaken by Israel (Num. 21:21-26); the Moabites had been shown many favors by God and the Jews but had responded with scorn and warfare (Deut. 2:9; Judges 3:12-14);
- (8) Edom-- land south of the dead Sea and unsubdued to this time; its "strong city" was possibly Sela [Petra] which was high among rock formations and strongly fortified (Obadiah 3);
- (9) Philistia-- a poetic name for the Philistines' territory on the seacoast of Caanan.

It is significant that locations on *both* sides of the Jordan comprise the psalmist's list of places under the control of the Lord. Four are on the *east*, five on the *west*, one on both *east* and *west*, and one altogether *south* of the Jordan. The largest part of the land of promise is encompassed within the locations specified, and they represent the whole country.

God had taken pleasure in the original distribution of land ["divide" and "measure out"]. The allocations to the tribes were His to give as he chose ["Mine"]. Ephraim [in the person of Joshua] had executed His distribution plan [as a "helmet" protects the head]. Judah's dominance over the rest of Israel and over foreign nations would assure that Jehovah's law [purpose] was carried forward. Moab had already been defeated by David and no longer was of any significance to oppose God's people ["my washpot"]. And Philistia had suffered recent defeats that made any future "shouts of triumph" unlikely [an ironical statement]. Only Edom posed a present problem to Israel's military conquests, and it would soon have God's "shoe" cast at it [a sign of the exchange of property-- Ruth 4:7].

Verses 9-12-- Tactical issues surrounding the conquest of Edom's "strong city" were cause for concern to David. Without God's help in earlier encounters with Edom and/or other nations, Israel had met failure. Was this to be the fate of David's campaign against this last unconquered foe? Without divine assistance, the cause would be lost; resorting to help from other men was altogether vain.

But-- with God's support "we will do valiantly; for it is He who shall tread down our enemies." In this confident declaration lies the king's own pledge that whatever mistakes were made before will not be made again. Faithfulness will *not* be an issue! 2Samuel 8:14 and Psalm 108:6-13 demonstrate that God's help accomplished an overwhelming victory for David and Israel.

Psalm 18:

The inscription states that this song originated after God had delivered David “from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” 2Samuel 22 opens with those same words which are followed by David’s recitation of the words of this psalm. Historically, the psalm embraces events connected to David’s warfare against his son Absalom (2Samuel 15-18), against Sheba, a Benjamite rebel (2Samuel 20), and against four great warrior-giants of the Philistines (2Samuel 21). It also refers to his more remote persecutions by the former king Saul. David’s praise for God’s watchcare comes from reflecting on numerous incidents over a long period of time. These were conclusions born not of hasty thought but of sober deliberations about the Lord’s unfailing help in every situation that had clearly tested both David’s faith and Jehovah’s faithfulness.

Verses 1-3-- Looking back at his frequent encounters with powerful enemies, David identifies *four* things that always were factors in his victories:

- (1) He would love the Lord (verse 1);
- (2) He would trust in the Lord (verse 2);
- (3) He would call on the Lord (verse 3);
- (4) He would be saved by the Lord (verse 4).

Verses 4-15-- Jehovah’s response to David’s pleas for relief from “pangs of death” and “floods of ungodliness” (verse 4) was rapid and powerful. His *anger* toward David’s foes was severe [“smoke” and “devouring fire”] (verse 8) and was manifested in ominous “darkness” and “dark waters and thick clouds” (verse 11). The “brightness” of His righteous nature sent “hailstones and coals of fire” upon David’s unrighteous adversaries (verse 12). The very “foundations” [natural laws] of the earth and seas seemed to be altered by the intense retributions of God (verse 15). While these actions of the Lord are described in symbolic terms, some of them *may* have occurred in some literal measure during the course of David’s military operations against enemy forces.

Verses 16-19-- The enormity of God’s support is seen in the extremity of David’s perils. His “strong enemy” had plunged him into “many waters” and confronted him with “calamity.” The Lord’s support, however, delivered him into a “broad [safe] place” (verse 19).

Verses 20-24-- The reason behind God’s support of David against his enemies was the king’s “righteousness” and the “cleanness” of his hands (verse 20). David’s sensitivity to God’s law (verses 21,22) and his efforts to live within that law (verse 23) secured divine favor (verse 24).

Verses 25-30-- The principles of God’s support were not specific to David. *All* those who are “merciful,” “blameless,” “pure,” and “humble” will be treated accordingly by Jehovah

(verses 25-27). “Devious” and “haughty” persons can expect to be “brought down” (verses 26,27), but the Lord is a “shield” to those who trust in Him and His word (verse 30). Even “walls” and “troops” cannot overcome His strength (verse 29).

Verses 31-34-- The consequences of God’s support were seen in David and his exploits. The rock-solid strength of the Lord brought strength enough to the king to “perfect” his efforts to conquer his opponents (verses 31,32). The capabilities of David’s “feet,” “hands,” and “arms” were enhanced to allow him to be successful in battle (verses 33,34).

Verses 35-45-- The history of God’s support to David was a recitation of the ruler’s many conquests for the glory of Israel. “Gentleness” toward David and severity toward his adversaries resulted in their being “pursued,” “overtaken,” “destroyed,” “wounded,” “fallen,” and “subdued” (verses 37-40). Israel’s leader was delivered from the “strivings” of other nations against him. Instead, they became his subjects and in their fear of him became no threat to the security of God’s people (verses 43-45).

Verses 46-49-- The thankworthiness of God’s support filled the king’s heart and mind. His appreciation for successful endeavors ran deep within his own soul (verses 46-48). But just as important to him was his determination that everyone impacted by his conquests should understand and acknowledge the role played by Israel’s God in those victories (verse 49).

Verse 50-- The assurance of God’s support was comforting. Faithfulness to the Lord invariably would guarantee deliverance not only to this present king but to his “thousands” of subjects and to their “descendants” *forevermore!*

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 60 AND 18:

1. *God’s people must “display their banners” of truth and faith in an effort to glorify the Commander-in-Chief of our spiritual army. (60:4)*
2. *No “city” is strong enough to withstand the onslaught of God’s power. Every obstacle and pitfall in our lives can be overcome when we seek His help and guidance in solving our problems. (60:9)*
3. *David’s four steps for success can also become our own source of strength: [1] Love God; [2] Trust God; [3] Call on God; [4] Wait on God’s deliverance. (18:1-3)*
4. *How great [or how little] would our reward from God be, if He rewarded us “according to our righteousness” as He did David? (18:20)*

David the Devoted Worshiper: Psalm 132

After David had taken the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2Samuel 5:6-10), vanquished the Philistines in battle (2Samuel 5:17-25), brought the ark of God to his new capital city (2Samuel 6:2-19), and built a large house for himself (2Samuel 5:11-16), he was filled with a desire to express his deep gratitude to Jehovah for his many blessings. How better to do that than to erect in God's honor a magnificent *temple* in Jerusalem that would replace the *tent* of meeting used for many years as the focal point of Jewish worship? He proposed to do just that (2Samuel 7:1-3). However, his plan displeased the Lord. It was not David, a man of *war* (1Chron. 28:3), but Solomon, a man of *peace* (1Kings 4:24), who would build the new place of devotion and sacrifice. David should stop his pursuit of a plan he had *supposed* was appropriate to his appreciation for Jehovah's long-standing beneficence.

His disappointment must have been great. Did this mean that God was also about to withdraw His support of David's reign over Israel and His promises about the heirs to David's throne? Lest he be overwhelmed with such anxiety, the Lord repeated those promises and reassured the king that His arrangement for future kings remained unchanged.

Psalm 132:

David was bothered by the fact that he lived in a fine residence while the appointments of Jehovah were housed in a tent (2Samuel 7:2). He thought that his ambition to build a fine temple was worthy, but God thought differently. Psalm 132 reveals what David proposed to do "for" his Great Deliverer. This psalm may be the work of David himself, or it may be a song later composed by king Solomon to voice the feelings and intentions of his father about the temple's construction. Whoever was its author, the poem can have a place in this period of David's life, either in actuality or in retrospect.

Verses 1-5-- David's motivation was pure and should work to his advantage as God's king. He would be filled with great anxiety until the status of the Lord's house reflected "glory" on Him just as his own dwelling proclaimed to everyone the exalted station of Israel's ruler.

Verses 6-9-- David's purpose to build a temple had much earlier been duplicated by his desire to bring the ark from Kirjath Jearim [Ephrathah] to Jerusalem [See 1Samuel 7:2.] (verse 6) and to restore the holy appointments of worship to Jehovah. This involved a "resting place" for the ark, righteous "priests," and joyful "saints" (verses 8,9).

Verses 10-12-- David, God's "anointed" ruler, should not be rejected because of his misplaced aspirations (verse 10). Indeed, God's own promise about the throne of Israel is

strong reassurance to his heirs (verse 11). The only caveat was that the Lord's faithfulness depended on the faithfulness of future throne-sitters (verse 12).

Verses 13-18-- A list of God's bountiful provisions for the well-being of Israel centered in Jerusalem and Mount Zion as the places divinely chosen for the Jews' religious devotions (verses 13,14). Material, spiritual, political, and military prosperity would accompany the nation's compliance with the law of the Lord (verses 15-17).

"Lord, remember David and all his afflictions..."

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 132:

1. *Are we as concerned for our spiritual "comforts" as we are for our physical comforts? Our eternal "comfort" is dependent on the choices we make now. (132:3-5)*
2. *The Lord has chosen the church for His habitation today (2Cor. 6:16) just as He chose Zion in David's time. Do we value His present habitation as much as David valued God's house in Zion? (132:13-17)*

David the Beneficent Ruler: Psalms 101 and 144

It was recorded that David, after being inaugurated as king over both Judah and Israel, "reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people" (2Samuel 8:15). It was apparent that the new king was as much interested in being a benevolent ruler over his people as he was in being a conquering warrior over his enemies. Two of his psalms in particular voice his feelings about his God-given duty to reign with responsibility for the welfare of his subjects. His aspirations for excellence in government would serve well as a model for all leaders of nations.

Psalm 101:

This psalm establishes the goal of high moral principles for himself as king and for all the people as worthy subjects of his kingdom.

Verses 1,2-- David's personal goals for his own righteousness:

1. He would show deep respect for *mercy, justice*, and the praise of God;
2. He would strive to live ["walk"] in a "perfect way" with a "perfect heart";
3. Only then could he expect God to "come" to him [bless his governance].

Verses 3-7-- David's civic goals for the righteousness of the Jewish people:

1. He would not tolerate anything wicked among his subjects;
2. He would not allow undependable workers ["who fall away"] in his service;
3. He would not approve perverseness or other forms of wickedness;
4. He would not endure haughty and proud people who slander others;
5. He would not favor the deceitful and liars;
But...
6. He would encourage people who strove to be faithful to God and the king;
7. He would support the services of those who tried to do *good* work.

Verse 8-- David's urgency to execute his goals for righteousness:

1. His campaign for morality would be instituted *early* in his administration before evil could gain a foothold among the people;
2. This [Jerusalem] was first and foremost *God's* city. Its standards of morality and godly behavior must reflect Jehovah's ownership;
3. The well-being and security of the kingdom depended on its righteousness. The implementation of his goals was extremely important to everyone.

Psalm 144:

This is another psalm stressing David's desire for the prosperity of his subjects. It is interesting that the new king associated the civic well-being of the populace with his own military success. They were considered as concomitant occurrences.

Verses 1,2-- Jehovah was the source of David's military success and the One responsible for his position as king over Israel. The people were his willing subjects because they recognized the hand of the Lord in David's kingly activities.

Verses 3,4-- Without the direct intervention of God in his efforts, David as a weak man would make at best a weak king. Man's inherent inabilities demand God's mindfulness of him. Any person's greatest strengths are only a "breath" and a "passing shadow."

Verses 5-8-- God's powers are awesome indeed when compared to man's. They can make mountains "smoke." They are like lightning and sharp arrows. By them the righteous can be delivered from "foreigners" and those who deal in falsehood.

Verses 9,10-- The Lord's virtues are worthy of a "new song" inspired by new victories and successes. All kings owe their scepters and their "salvation" [military and civil] to the One who consistently delivered David from the "deadly sword." Others might be remiss in

their praise, but the king of Israel would praise God profusely on a “harp of ten strings.”

Verses 11-14-- Deliverance from “foreigners” and their deceitful ways had a positive outcome for the citizens of the kingdom. Military strength nurtures a climate of peace and prosperity in which the maximum good of the people can flourish.

1. Young men can become like healthy, vigorous young plants, free from defects of old age that will soon mar their attractiveness.
2. Young women can develop into useful “pillars” whose beauty is fit to be seen in palaces.
3. Abundant crops in barns and ever-increasing flocks in fields will attest to the material prosperity of the land.
4. Commerce will operate at a high level, evidenced by well-laden oxen.
5. National peace will remove anxieties about enemies “breaking in” to assail them or about their own armies “going out” to defend their lives and property.
6. Public tranquility and civic satisfaction will remove the possibility of protests and demonstrations in the streets.

Verse 15-- How blessed are people whose government provides such opportunities to its citizens for growth and prosperity! How rare such a kingdom must have been in David’s time [or even today]. Much to his credit as Israel’s king and commander-in-chief, this was exactly the kind of government [“such a state”] David desired and planned for his subjects. To God would go all the credit for the “happy” conditions that would prevail in Israel!!

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 101 AND 144:

1. *It is disappointing that today’s citizenry often fails to appreciate and demand excellent moral character in its public officials. (101:2-8)*
2. *Perhaps the “state of the Union” would be much improved if we could learn to associate public prosperity with public morality. (144:11-15)*

Other psalms of interest possibly from this time period: 5, 21, 24, 45, 48, 61, 72, 118

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON SEVEN

1. This lesson involves David's _____ success, his plan to build a _____, and his desire to be a good _____.
2. Some of the nations defeated by David were the _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Psalm 60:

3. God gave a _____ to His people by which to display the _____.
4. How many nations/places are mentioned in Psalm 60? _____
5. Judah was God's _____; Moab was His _____.

Psalm 18:

6. David determined to _____, _____, and _____ God.
7. The Lord rewarded David according to his _____.
8. David would praise God even among the _____.

Psalm 132:

9. David's sons who kept God's _____ would sit on David's throne _____.
10. The Lord chose _____ as His _____ and _____ place.

Psalm 101:

11. David wanted to live in a perfect _____ with a perfect _____.
12. He would _____ cut off all _____ from God's _____.

Psalm 144:

13. David would sing a _____ song on a _____ of _____.
14. "Happy are the _____ whose _____ is the _____!"

David: Fallen and Forgiven

Historical Context: 2Samuel 11:1-12:25

1. David's inattention to duty led to the commission of a heinous sin with Bathsheba.
2. Uriah refused to participate in conduct that would have covered up David's guilt.
3. David's sin was compounded with the sacrifice of Uriah's life on the battlefield.
4. Bathsheba became David's wife following the death of her husband.
5. God sent Nathan to expose David's guilt through the use of a simple parable.
6. David's repentance and God's forgiveness ensued, but dire consequences were attached to the sin.
7. The illegitimate child was not allowed to live, despite anguished pleas to God by David.
8. After some time, Solomon was born to David and Bathsheba.
9. The negative impact of his sin began to manifest itself in David's behavior.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

Our own pages in God's "book of life," in most cases, contain dark chapters that we would like to erase or at least forget. David's life was no different. While most of his history as the king of the Jews and the "sweet singer of Israel" was marked by admirable conduct, one black episode forever mars the record of a man who most of the time was a "man after God's own heart." Of all the deeds we might recall about this great king, his sin with Bathsheba is likely among those we most remember. Not only did David's fall from God's grace expose the clay feet of his humanity but also it signaled the beginning of a long downward slide from the power and prestige he had previously enjoyed while he faithfully maintained his moral integrity before God and man.

The awfulness of David's sins warns us once again that, "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall" (1Cor. 10:12). Happily, his timely response and his deep sorrow and repentance counterbalanced the gloom of his sin with the bright promise of God's continued love and forgiveness. David certainly felt the sharp sting of a guilty conscience, but he also experienced the buoyant relief of a heart forgiven and of a soul offered the chance to start again toward heaven.

The psalms of this part of the poet's life express a deep regret for acts committed and an intense desire for the forgiveness of those deeds. Through his words we can look into the soul of a great man when he was forced to confront his human weaknesses, just as we have looked at his exploits of strength and courage when he conquered his enemies and as he

governed his people with “judgment and justice.” Perhaps the greatness of this man of faith is as much displayed by his reaction to *sin* and *forgiveness* in his life as it is by the way he handled the *success* and *fame* that came from his military and political experiences.

Only one of the psalms [fifty-one] is inscribed and directly associated with David’s fall and forgiveness. However, the others included in this lesson, while not so distinctly identified, are appropriate to this section. They manifest the great anguish that must have flooded David’s heart when he contemplated the foolhardiness of what he had done and his urgent need of forgiveness for his sordid behavior.

David-- Fallen: Psalms 51 and 38

Psalm 51:

The ancient inscription of this psalm says: “A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” This psalm does not refer to what the prophet had *said* to the guilty king, but it portrays in a vivid way the *effect* on him of what was spoken. No other passage in Scripture contains language more replete with remorse and self-abasement because of sinful conduct. It is a profound study of the power of God’s word to touch the sinner’s soul and to bring him to godly sorrow and repentance.

Verses 1, 2-- A plea for pardon-- David does not hesitate to get right to the point of his plea: *he wanted forgiveness* for what he had done! Excuses or explanations were not in order. Both he and God knew the *facts* of his sin and the *circumstances* surrounding those facts. What was done was done and could not be undone, but the severe penalty for David’s adulterous conduct *could* be removed, and the sin could be forgiven if God chose to do that.

Prayer is an avenue by which a man can approach God and ask for many things. He can pray for others and for himself; he can seek material changes in his situation; he may simply praise the Lord and thank Him for blessings already received. David could have done any or all of these things in his prayer--and more. But the only thing that mattered at this moment was that *he had sinned and he wanted to be forgiven!* Nothing could have been as important or as urgent to him just then. He could wait no longer for the relief of spiritual cleansing.

In other psalms, David’s attitude about his spiritual standing with Jehovah was very different: “The Lord rewarded me according to my *righteousness*; according to the *cleanness* of my hands He has recompensed me” (Psalm 18:20). Now, he can rely only on God’s “lovingkindness” and “tender mercies” for a hearing of his prayer. His fear was that he would now be treated by God according to his “transgressions,” “iniquity,” and “sin.”

For some time, David seems to have supposed that his sins were known to only a few. He thought that these people would decline to expose his wicked conduct because of fear, shame, or loyalty. Doubtless, the conscience of a man like David was being actively assaulted during this time by the remembrance of his crimes, but conscience often loses its battle for repentance when confronted by the harsh consequences of changing our behavior. And, too, conscience fights less aggressively as time goes on. Perhaps David thought that if he could for a while repress the guilt he felt about what he had done, God would also forget how bad his sin really had been. But how wrong he was! Nathan hurled a thunderbolt of condemnation against the king's status quo. His own anger against the wrongdoer in Nathan's parable reflected in just a *small* way the anger felt by Jehovah against a man in whom He had placed so much trust and who had betrayed that trust so miserably!

Verses 3, 4-- An acknowledgement of sin-- The first move out of any problem is to admit that there *is* a problem. There were no excuses in David's heart to try to lessen the sting of the guilt in his heart. Since Nathan's sharp rebuke, and prior to the writing of this psalm, David's sin had been "ever before him." The growing conviction that God felt strongly about his wickedness led him to feel that in a large sense nothing else mattered in this situation except that God had been deeply hurt by what he had done. "Against You, and You only, have I sinned." In reality, he had sinned against himself, his family, and his nation, to say nothing of Bathsheba, her unborn child, and her dead husband Uriah. Other people had suffered because of David's sins, but only Jehovah could, *and would*, call him to a full accounting for his deeds. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Years earlier, Joseph in Egypt had the same conviction as David that man's sins are foremost against the Lord (Genesis 39:9), but Joseph had succeeded where David had failed in placing God's interests above his own selfish passions.

David was the first to admit that there could be no excuse for his sins of adultery and murder. He could not plead ignorance-- the Law of God plainly condemned these sins (Exodus 20:13,14). The penalty for any violation was death (Lev. 20:10). So, he could only admit that Jehovah had been entirely "just" and "blameless" when He sent Nathan to deliver His message of damnation to the guilty king. The Lord does not respect persons (Acts 10:34). Not even the king can be excused for sinning against God's commandments.

Verses 5, 6-- An acknowledgement of failing to meet God's expectations-- "...God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Eccl. 7:29). No man's fall into sin can be blamed on God. *All* of us, like David, are both conceived in and born into a world where sinfulness, not righteousness, is prevalent (Eph. 2:1-3). But that excuses *none* of us to break the law of God. His desire for us is for our purity, within ["inward parts"] and without. His revelation is designed to teach us "wisdom" and keep us from foolish actions (Psalm 119:11). Any failure to do right is on *man's* part, not *God's*.

Verses 7-12-- The need for renewal-- It is said, “We never appreciate the water until the well runs dry.” It’s sometimes easy for God’s children to take for granted the blessings of communion with their Father. Perhaps David had been a little guilty of that, too. But now the bond between him and Jehovah had been shattered by his own deliberate acts of disobedience, and everything was changed! He had nothing to feel good about as he did when he and Jehovah were close. All he wanted was for things to be as they were before.

What sin had done to David:

- * Made him ceremonially unclean
- * Made him spiritually unclean (Rev. 7:14)
- * Broken his spiritual “bones”
- * Made his heart perverse
- * Made his spirit unreliable in decisions
- * Stolen his joy of salvation

What David wanted from God:

- * “Hyssop” to make him ceremonially clean
- * His spirit “washed” white (Isa.1:18)
- * Healing with resultant joy and gladness
- * A “clean” heart, submissive and obedient
- * A steadfast spirit always choosing good
- * Restoration of salvation’s happy state

David had made an extremely poor bargain with the devil. All he got was a brief physical thrill. In exchange, he jeopardized everything important in his life, and he lost the most precious treasure he possessed-- his relationship with Jehovah. Moses had learned how to make good choices (Hebrews 11:25), but David, at least for the moment, had forgotten that important spiritual skill!

Verses 13-15-- The response of a clean heart-- We cannot *bargain* with God. Our compliance with His will is *not* dependent on our first receiving His blessings. Our obligation to be obedient is *absolute*. However, it is never wrong to *make promises* to God, so long as we intend to keep them. David’s promises were sincere. If he could believe that God had forgiven his iniquities and that his spiritual integrity had been restored [“deliver me from bloodguiltiness,” “open my lips”] in the eyes of the people, he thereafter would strive to:

- (1) Teach transgressors God’s ways. Sometimes, those who have “been there and done that” are more effective with other sinners than those who haven’t;
- (2) Convert [convince] sinners to renew their faithfulness to God’s law and deter would-be sinners from making wrong choices about departing into sinful practices;
- (3) Sing aloud of God’s righteousness. The real *wisdom* of God’s counsel is often more appreciated after one has suffered the consequences of violating its instruction;
- (4) Show forth and praise God’s mercy to sinners. “He who is forgiven more will love more” (Luke 7:42,43). Those whose burden of sin has been heaviest will feel the most relief. David’s guilt was *huge*-- so would his gratitude be if God would forgive the great debt he owed.

Verses 16, 17-- The non-negotiable demands of the Lord-- The overt exercises of the Law for sin-cleansing would be relatively *easy* for David to perform. They required only certain

physical objects and ritualistic activity [See Leviticus 1-7.]. It wouldn't be difficult to go through the motions of what one must *do* to be forgiven of transgressions. What one must *be* was much harder. We can't doubt that David, a totally-committed champion of the law of the Lord (Psalm 119:127,128; etc.), complied with the processes specified for confessing sin and seeking forgiveness. But now he understood, probably more than ever before, that *performance* without real *devotion* is altogether useless with God. The Lord requires: (1) a broken spirit and, (2) a broken and contrite heart in the worshiper before He will accept the sacrifice and burnt offering which the sinner brings to lay on the "altar."

Verses 18, 19-- A prayer for the national good-- David's determination was not only to be a *better man* personally than he had been prior to his sins but also to be a *better king* in leading his subjects into *greater subjection* to Jehovah, the King of them all. God's "doing good" to Zion would include "building the walls of Jerusalem" [figuratively]. While some scholars suppose that literal walls were being constructed at the time of this psalm, or that the psalm was written by someone other than David and prior to the Jews' return home from their captivity in Babylon, there is no evidence to support either conjecture; nor is there any need to venture such guesses. The nation's spiritual "walls" needed strengthening, David declared, and then faithful compliance with the Law's dictates would be more complete than ever before. These happy eventualities would be the result in large part of his own spiritual restoration and renewed dedication to serve a God who had been merciful enough to draw him personally out of the dark waters of ungodliness and to give him another chance to prove himself as "a man after God's own heart."

Psalm 38:

Unlike Psalm 51, this psalm bears no inscription to tie it directly to David's remorse for his sins of adultery and murder that involved Bathsheba and her husband Uriah (2Samuel 11). It is evident from the reading of these lines, however, that the expressions of deep anguish and guilt are better identified with that episode than with any other in David's life.

It is interesting to speculate on the time frame reflected in the events of 2Samuel 11 and 12. It appears from the text that there was a period of a year or so between the commission of adultery by the king and its open condemnation by Nathan. Battles were fought, Bathsheba became David's wife, and a child from their sin was born to them. We have no way to determine what feelings of guilt and remorse might have festered in the heart of the king during that time. Nor are we sure about how deeply David was moved *immediately* by Nathan's shattering denunciation of his crime. He confessed the sin, but it seems unlikely that he felt all at once the intense regret that these penitential psalms display so clearly.

It surely was in a later moment that David *wrote* his emotional response to God's great displeasure. The recorded, "I have sinned," and all that it ultimately encompassed, could possibly have been a confession made following further contact between David and Nathan.

Regardless of *when* Nathan made the promise, if God's "putting away" meant the sin had been forgiven, the prophet would have had good reason to believe that David's repentance was deep and genuine. It is possible that "put away" referred instead to the *punishment* usually prescribed for such sins as were involved [death--Leviticus 20:10]. God was not yet finished with His plans for David's reign over Israel, and it was not fitting that death should interrupt those plans. David would not *die* just now, but he *would* suffer the severe consequences of his foolish actions.

It is apparent that this psalm and others displaying the psalmist's sorrow over his sins were written at some time following the encounter recorded in the narrative in 2Samuel 12. We cannot know how long it took for David to develop the intense emotions expressed in these poems of penitence. It is even possible that the author intended for them to serve as his formal *confession to the nation* of his crimes against them as their leader and role-model. The psalm is titled, "To bring to remembrance," and neither he nor they should ever forget that *true repentance* is man's *only* escape from the guilt of sin and its certain punishment!

Verses 1, 2-- The burden of God's displeasure-- It is hard not to consider God in human terms and to attribute human traits to Him. Perhaps David had slipped into this mode of thinking as he wallowed in remorse for his great transgressions and as he fearfully surmised what God had in store for him in consequence. Parents often punish children out of the anger of the moment. They may overreact in their emotion and inflict too harsh punishment. Of course, David understood that "God is not a man," but anxiety and fear may sometimes displace our understanding and drive us into faulty thinking. Perhaps in this vein of thought David was pleading with God that His "arrows" and "hands" already were hard to bear, and he prayed that more severe punishments would not be imposed on him [maybe a "cooling off" period was in order]. It wasn't that David didn't recognize that he *deserved whatever* God sent his way, but he could ask that God's *mercy* control His *action*.

Verses 3-10-- The awful consequences of sin-- Some writers explain David's language in terms of a terrible *physical malady* of some kind. Others go further and connect the disease with the sinful act between David and Bathsheba. While this interpretation must be given serious consideration, these *physical* terms can certainly have *figurative* meanings, and they probably do if they are intended to describe David's feelings of guilt and remorse. This is the stance we will take in our study of the psalm.

David describes the devastating effects of sin's guilt on his soul in terms of a terrible physical ailment of some sort. It was a disease that had invaded his entire being:

- (1) There was "no soundness" in his flesh;
- (2) there was no "health" in his bones;
- (3) his "wounds" were foul and festering;
- (4) he was "troubled" and "bowed down" greatly;
- (5) his "loins" were full of inflammation;
- (6) he was "feeble" and severely

“broken”; (7) he “groaned” and his heart was in “turmoil” and “panted”; (8) he sighed and his “strength” failed him; (9) the light had “gone” from his eyes.

If these symptoms were intended to describe a literal disease with which the king had been stricken, he was obviously in a desperate condition. He might well have despaired of finding any physician who could prescribe relief for his physical body. On the other hand, if these were physical ailments used by David to illustrate the more weighty spiritual afflictions brought on by the blame he felt for his iniquities, he might have had even more reason to despair that he would ever see any improvement in his condition. Indeed, he was “sinking over his head” into sin’s condemnation; his transgressions were too heavy for him to bear. He was a real “mess!”

The only redeeming thing in his situation was that God *knew* that he was feeling [“sighing”] the pain of his guilt and that he sincerely wanted [“my desire is before You”] to find some relief from his desperate condition.

Verse 11-- The aftermath of sin among friends-- It is frequently harder for a sinner’s friends and family to extend understanding and forgiveness for his mistakes than it is for those with lesser personal connections to the transgressor. It may be that those who *should* be *most eager* for his repentance are instead the *most reluctant* to embrace his recovery because they harbor some feeling that they have suffered some personal betrayal when the friend or relative ventured into wrongdoing. This seems to have been what David experienced following what he called his “foolishness.” Friends, loved ones, and kinsmen all “stood aloof” and refused him comfort and encouragement. They acted as if they were afraid that they, too, would become contaminated with his guilt if they resumed their previous relationships with him. Their philosophy about a sinner trying to get out of sin certainly was not what *our* feeling should be: “But for the grace of God, there go I.”

Verses 12-20-- The aftermath of sin among enemies-- It was bad enough to be “banished” from the company of those who mattered most to the king. It was worse that his enemies sought to take advantage of his fall from the grace of both God and the people of Israel. His reputation for godliness had been shattered; his support and popularity among decent men and women were greatly diminished when his sordid activities became known to them. His personal and political adversaries would see this as an opportune time to escalate their laying of snares and planning deception and destruction for him. We can’t know just who these people were or what they were trying to do to embarrass him and to destroy the influence of this powerful leader, but we can imagine their glee when David’s unlawful activities were found out.

How could the king respond to their attacks? He couldn’t. What could he say in answer to their vicious slanders and innuendoes? Nothing. He could no more defend himself than if he had been a deaf mute. He was guilty, and everybody knew it [or so he thought]!

If the Lord should refuse to hear his plea, his enemies would press their advantage over him. His “foot had slipped” and now his [and God’s] enemies would rejoice over his apostasy and claim for themselves the loyalty of people previously loyal to the king. He felt powerless to do what it would take to maintain his position of leadership because his physical and mental powers were so overwhelmed by sorrow and anguish over sin and iniquity. On the other hand, the king’s opponents were greatly invigorated by these new and lethal weapons that they could now throw into the fight against him. Their numbers were increasing because some who had feared to oppose a strong king now saw an opportunity to harrass a *weak* and *defenseless* ruler.

It was hard for David to understand why those to whom he had shown only kindness and good treatment would wrongfully return to him such hatred and evil deeds. Perhaps he felt the way Jesus would feel centuries later when the people whom He had fed, healed, and taught the way to heaven cried out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

Verses 21, 22-- A desperate plea for rescue-- The plight of Israel’s ruler indeed seemed hopeless as he confronted the depth of his fall into sin and the enormity of problems that his unrighteous behavior had caused him. *Everything* seemed to be against him, and *nothing* appeared to be in his favor. But wait-- maybe-- just maybe-- the Lord could find compassion and mercy enough to extend His amazing grace to such a miserable and undeserving creature as David considered himself to be.

And so, he resorted to his *last hope* in heaven and on earth as he earnestly cried out:

“Do not forsake me, O Lord;
O my God, be not far from me!
Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!”

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 51 AND 38:

1. *The hardest step in restoration is the first one. Until sin is fully acknowledged without any excuse, further steps are impossible. (51:3,4)*
2. *The “joy of salvation” is usually underappreciated until it’s taken away by sin and replaced by grief, guilt, and anxiety. (51:12)*
3. *We can’t know what serious problems may rise to complicate and diminish the quality of our lives because of some stupid and sinful act until it’s too late to keep our names from being put on the devil’s “payroll” (Romans 6:23). (38:4,11,12)*
4. *Never forget-- our own forgiveness from God is directly dependent on our forgiving others when they seek to recover from a fall (Matthew 6:12). (38:11)*

David-- Forgiven: Psalms 32 and 40

Psalm 32:

This psalm, among all those praising God for His mercy in forgiving transgressors, is the one most surely attached to David's pardon from his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. It reveals the immense relief felt by the king when he could believe that his sins were finally "covered." It also records his renewed motivation for turning others to God and the Law. This psalm, like several others, is called a "Maschil" or a "Contemplation." It was intended to be used to impart a high level of needed instruction to those who seek Jehovah.

Verses 1, 2-- Counting our blessings-- There are numerous "beatitudes" scattered throughout Psalms. David begins this psalm with two:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered."

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile."

Who better than David could appreciate the tremendous sense of relief that follows the confession and forgiveness of long-standing sins? Who had any more reason to be grateful to a merciful God who had "covered" his iniquities? There is a world of difference between sins "covered" and sins "covered up." The guile in a man's heart will drive him into deceptive maneuvers of all kinds as he strives to keep his bad conduct hidden from other men. But when long-hidden secrets are finally confessed and out in the open, and when there is no more need to look over one's shoulder lest things "covered up" should be "uncovered," the new sense of freedom that enters the mind is truly wonderful! Sin had denied David this exhilarating experience for a long time, but now he could enjoy it to its fullest. He was a *new man*!

Verses 3, 4-- The vanity of impenitence-- Sin *always* exacts a high price from its practitioners. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). David had been no exception to this rule. The effects of "covered up" ["silent"] sin on him were devastating. Figurative words describe his condition: (1) His bones grew old; (2) he groaned all day long; (3) God's hand was heavy pressing him down; (4) his vitality disappeared like a plant in drought. Prospects for better times ahead were dismal indeed! *Selah*

[After three groupings of verses in this psalm, the Hebrew "*Selah*" appears. It means "something sent forth as a missile." That is, each section of the text contains truths so vital that it is virtually "hurled out" at readers who need to understand those truths.]

Verse 5-- The simplicity of God's remedy-- There seemed no way out from the morass of guilt and anxiety that his sins had thrown him into. His efforts at deception had failed. His despicable behavior hadn't been covered up well enough after all. Now *everyone* knew what he had tried hard to keep *anyone* from knowing. What else could be done to change his miserable situation than what he had already tried? Actually, he discovered that the answer to his problems was *simple*:

- (1) The sinner acknowledges his sin to God;
- (2) The sinner makes no attempt to hide *any* of his guilt from the Lord;
- (3) The sinner confesses his transgressions fully and without any reservation;
- (4) God forgives the iniquity of the sinner's sin. *Selah*

Happily for David, he came to his senses before it was too late. He was determined to follow this uncomplicated path to the spiritual ease which he had been unable to find by any other road he had traveled in his tortured search.

Verses 6, 7-- God plays no favorites-- What He had done so wonderfully for David, God *could* and *would* do for all sinners willing to pursue forgiveness as the king had done. [See Acts 10:34,35.] *Whenever* sinners found themselves ready to pray in unmixed humility and complete honesty about their sinful condition would be the time when the Lord was ready to "be found." His ear would be open to their fervent petitions, and His protective arms would shield them from a "flood" of sins that might otherwise drown them in damnation. Forgiveness for them could be like the forgiveness that David was enjoying at the writing of this psalm. He was now "preserved from trouble," and "surrounded with songs of deliverance." *Selah*

Verses 8, 9-- Let wisdom be your teacher-- We all waste too much time listening to voices that have nothing of value to say to us. Having learned that lesson the hard way, David wanted others not to make the same mistakes about sin that he had made. He believed that he now understood truths by which others could be rescued from despair as he had been. He was more than willing to become the teacher of the untaught about the "way you should go." He had found that way, and he wanted everyone else to find it, too. He would gladly give them instruction and then oversee ["with my eye"] their progress in righteousness. All that he required of his students was a willing mind to learn truth and to practice truth. Horses and mules can be *forced* in the right direction by bit and bridle, but not people.

Verses 10,11-- These truths are self-evident. (1) The wicked will always have many sorrows; (2) Those who trust in the Lord will be awash in the blessings of His mercy. So... If sinners desire to become righteous, and if the righteous wish to become more righteous... "Be glad in [the opportunity to serve] the Lord...rejoice and shout for joy" [because the Lord will bless your efforts to be upright in heart with a forgiveness not attainable in any other way].

Psalm 40:

This is another psalm often associated with David's forgiveness in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. It, like the others, displays the king's overwhelming grief and despair prior to his forgiveness and the elation he experienced afterward. It is apparent that these thoughts were written some time *after* David's restoration to God's favor. A marked improvement could be seen in his circumstances by this time.

Note-- Scholars are divided on the question of whom this psalm originally spoke about. Albert Barnes lists four possible positions on the answer:

1. It referred originally and exclusively to David and was in no way a Messianic psalm;
2. It was written by David originally and exclusively about Jesus as the Messiah;
3. It has a *double* application, first to David from his actual history, and second to the Christ *because* of David's circumstances;
4. Those verses of the psalm applied to Christ in Hebrews 10 were used as *illustration* and did not endorse any *original* application to Jesus.

Perhaps the third position comes closest to the truth. Obviously, there are references in the psalm that *cannot fairly* be applied to Jesus. Just as obviously, other portions [e.g., verses 6-8] *are used* in Hebrews 10:5-9 to describe Jesus' mission.

Verses 1-3-- Praise to a forgiving God. In reflection, our memory of things isn't always completely accurate. David's "patience" in "waiting for the Lord" to forgive his sins may sometimes seem to us more like frustration or desperation as we read the psalms. But now, as he looks back to a favorable outcome for his petitions to God, David is overcome by memories of how desperate for relief he really had been and how gracious Jehovah had been to rescue him from a seemingly hopeless situation. He had been in a "horrible pit" of guilt because of his dealings with Bathsheba and Uriah. He felt totally stuck in "miry clay" and totally helpless to do anything to better his condition. But out of despair came hope; out of sorrow came joy. God lifted him in forgiveness! It was *more* than he could have expected; it was *certainly more* than he had deserved!

Now [at the time of composition] his feet are no longer in the clay but are on the solid rock of a close communion with the Lord. A "new song" fills his heart, a song extolling the blessings of redemption. Such a "new song" will be sung one day by heavenly creatures and elders (Revelation 5:8-10), but this was a song of praise he could sing now! We, too, can sing of *our own* salvation through the blood of Jesus:

"In loving kindness Jesus came, My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame Thro' grace He lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!"

[Charlotte G. Homer]

David's redemption had become an object lesson for many others in need of a closer relationship with Jehovah. Seeing that God could and would forgive such terrible sins as David had committed, those with "lesser" offenses would be emboldened to confess their own departures and seek restoration.

Verses 4, 5-- Praise to a just and mighty God-- Another Old Testament "beatitude"-- "Blessed" is *any* man who [like David] will trust in a God who is *fair* in His dealings with men. God rejects the unrighteous, the proud, and the liars, and He comforts those who seek righteousness in His way. And who can doubt the *power* of God to totally blot out the guilt of whatever wickedness His creatures may commit? His past record of "wonderful works" and "thoughts toward" mankind are reason enough to trust in His power to forgive. Indeed, His display of mercy and beneficence is much too vast to be recounted.

Verses 6-8-- What God requires for forgiveness. The Law under which David reigned was very specific about the *details* of ceremonies and rituals involved in a worshiper's search for cleansing from guilt [e.g., Leviticus 1-7]. Yet, mere compliance with ceremony was *not* enough. The motives of seekers must be sincere, and their faith in the goodness of God must be strong. "Burnt offering and sin offering" [alone] were meaningless without the dedication of a penitent heart [e.g., Deuteronomy 5:29]. Such devotion was ever intended in all the dealings of the people with the Law ["the scroll of the Book"]. This had been David's mindset as he "came" to God for redemption. The Law promised favor *only* for the truly penitent [including the psalmist] who "delight to do the will" of God. The blessing received by David in consequence of his sincerity and humility was also freely available to all others of the same disposition.

Verses 9, 10-- Fulfilling the vows of forgiveness-- It is not uncommon or wrong to make promises to God when we seek favorable treatment from Him. David had certainly made many [e.g., Psalm 51:12-15]. To his credit, by the time he wrote this psalm, he had done a creditable job of *keeping the vows* he so fervently had directed to God's throne. He had promised to proclaim "the good news of righteousness" to the unrighteous. The Lord's faithfulness, lovingkindness, and truth he had declared to the "great congregation" of Israel. His own sins of the *past* had not deterred him from doing what he could to help others not make the same mistakes in the *future*. This he had vowed; this he had done.

Verses 11-15-- The need for continuing forgiveness. The dark days of Bathsheb and Uriah would not be the only time when David would have to fight the battle against unrighteousness. Sin would rear its ugly head in his life again and again. The devil constantly "seeks whom he may devour (1Peter 5:8)," and any man in David's position will always be a prime target. The king would continue to have confrontations with Satan in his many forms, and he would need to continue throughout his life to depend on the *same* Lord who

had so graciously rescued him earlier from terrible circumstances. “Innumerable evils” of personal temptations and political enemies would surround him for a long time to come, but his hope and his plea would never vary: “Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me!”

Verses 16, 17-- Final advice about forgiveness-- Experience is a great teacher. Although we force ourselves to learn many lessons “the hard way,” the important thing is that we learn them. David had learned well what *sin* does to the sinner. He also knew what *God* can do for that same sinner, if in humility and obedience he will seek divine cleansing from his sins. We are all just “poor and needy” creatures in this harsh and wicked world. How comforting and encouraging it is to believe that those who “magnify the Lord” as God and Savior can “rejoice and be glad” in Him. David had climbed out of the dark valley of sin to the mountaintop of redemption, where he basked in the sunlight of Jehovah’s accepting love. His honest wish was that all others who were caught in the same depths of despair into which he once had fallen would seek God as he had done and would join him in the happiness of forgiveness.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 32 AND 40:

1. *Conscience is the “policeman” of our hearts. Ignoring its alarms can eventually compromise our resolve to pursue godliness in our lives. (32:3,4)*
2. *Unlike the animals, men are gifted with powers of choice and understanding of right and wrong. Shamefully, these gifted persons often choose not to understand the right and wrong involved in doing the will of God. (32:9)*
3. *It is sad that we often wait until the “pit” of sin gets “horrible” before we seek God’s help in getting out of it. (40:2)*
4. *We should sing our “new song” of salvation every waking moment. We have words and music that the unsaved do not know. Ours is a happy song of victory; theirs is only a “sad song” of gloom and doom. (40:3)*

Other psalms of interest possibly from this time period: 69, 130, 139

1. David's two great sins involved a husband and wife, _____ and _____.
2. The prophet _____ told David a parable about two _____.

Psalm 51:

3. David confessed guilt for _____, _____, _____ and _____.
4. How was David "conceived in sin" and "brought forth in iniquity"?
5. David had lost the _____ of his _____ when he sinned against God.
6. God desires the sacrifice of a _____ spirit and a _____ heart.

Psalm 38:

7. David called his misbehavior _____, _____, and _____.
8. He was like a man who could neither _____ nor _____ in his inability to answer his critics.
9. His adversaries were _____ and _____ and rendered _____ for _____.

Psalm 32:

10. What does "*Selah*" mean, and how does it fit into the context of this psalm?
11. _____ and _____ lack the _____ necessary to obey God.
12. Many _____ follow the wicked; _____ surrounds the righteous.

Psalm 40:

13. David's mindset of obedience is also attributed to _____ in _____ (reference).
14. The Lord _____ upon the _____ and _____.

David: Paying the High Cost of Sin

Historical Context: 2Samuel 12:15- 20:26

1. David experienced intense grief when the child born to Bathsheba died, despite the father's prayers for its life.
2. Joab felt it necessary to prod David into assuming his duty of leading his army against the city of Rabbah lest he should replace David as their hero in the minds of Israelites.
3. David's son Amnon dared to test his father's position as family head in wickedly defiling the maidenhood of his half sister Tamar.
4. The king's anger over this crime led to no reprisal against Amnon, which apparently aroused deep resentment in Absalom toward his father.
5. Absalom soon by-passed David and in revenge killed Amnon by his own hand.
6. Joab assumed the king's rightful role in bringing Absalom back from exile and restoring his relationship with his father, who still seemed plagued by indecision and inaction.
7. Absalom's deepening resentment toward David eventually broke out in open rebellion against his father's kingship over Israel.
8. David's reaction was very unkinglike as he fled Jerusalem in fear of his own son.
9. To his chagrin, friends and counselors like Ahithophel deserted to Absalom.
10. On Ahithophel's advice, Absalom committed adultery with David's concubines in sight of "all Israel."
11. Joab again asserted control over David when he curtailed the king's expressions of sorrow over Absalom's death, which culminated in the king's vow to replace Joab as his commander.
12. Sheba, a Benjamite, raised another rebellion against David's reign and was defeated by Joab, despite the king's appointment of Amasa to lead the army.
13. Joab's disregard of David's kingly authority reached its pinnacle when he murdered Amasa and yet continued to occupy the position of top commander over the army of Israel.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

In denouncing David's sins against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, the prophet Nathan had pronounced God's punishments on the king for his crimes. Even though the *spiritual penalty for sin may be forgiven, other serious consequences may be inflicted on the*

sinner (Galatians 6:8)! The heavenly retribution on David would be severe:

- (1) From David's own family would come "adversity" against him;
- (2) His wives would be taken by another, as he had taken Uriah's wife for himself;
- (3) His reign would be plagued by warfare as long as he lived;
- (4) His enemies would blaspheme against God's anointed and thus against God;
- (5) The child born of his sin would surely die.

Every punishment prophesied was visited on David and his family as his personal history continued to unfold. Because of his impetuous and blatant disregard for the responsibilities of leadership laid on him as the king of Israel, his life seemed afterward to lack the same confident assurance that he enjoyed when he knew that he was doing his best to please Jehovah. The moral fiber of his character had been seriously damaged, and it would take time to repair it to its previous excellence.

The psalms of this period in David's life continue to reveal his search for full assurance of forgiveness from the Lord. They also expose the mental and physical impact on his person when God's chastisement was visited on him as the result of his earlier deplorable behavior.

Paying the High Cost of a Child's Death: Psalm 6

While we cannot be certain that this psalm originated in the grief that David encountered when Bathsheba's child was not permitted to live, it reflects a depth of sorrow that *would* be experienced by a parent who loses a child to death. There is probably no other sense of loss so profound as when a child's death accosts the human spirit. If these are David's reactions to God's decision about his child, they would have been written some time after the child's death as a record of how the king had felt during the time he still held some hope that perhaps the Lord would change His mind about the child.

Verse 1-- Another psalm, number 38, begins with these same words. In fact, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the two psalms deal with the same circumstances of sorrow in David's life. We have chosen to assign Psalm 38 to a more unspecific period of mourning over the consequences associated with his grievous misdeeds.

It would seem to any parent that God would consider a sin that would bring about the death of a child to be especially heinous. Only His righteous "anger" and "hot" displeasure could move Him to inflict such harsh treatment on a father and mother. Of course, David by now had come to recognize the justice in such a divine attitude, for his sins of adultery and murder were indeed terrible and inexcusable on the part of a man such as he was. Still, even though David would admit that God was just in His response to these sins, the king could not easily give up the life of his child just because it would have been "fair" for the child to die.

Verses 2, 3-- Out of his grief David pleaded for mercy and for the child's life. The ordeal

was almost unbearable. It possibly was even proving to be a severe test of his faith in the goodness of Jehovah. The child's life hung on for seven days-- a long time for a parent to struggle with such overwhelming anxiety and sorrow. The father "fasted and lay on the ground all night" (2Samuel 12:16). His grief apparently was even taking a toll on his physical health. His "bones were troubled" along with his soul.

Verses 4, 5-- Perhaps David even despaired of life for himself because of his deep sorrow for the child. His servants possibly could have heard him utter some thought that he no longer wanted to live if the child had to die. At least, they were apprehensive that he might "do some harm" [to himself] upon learning that his child had finally died. This would account for his plea to be "saved" from self-destruction, knowing that suicide would not be acceptable to the Lord. In suicide there was no "remembrance" that God disapproved of self-murder. And the grave would make the wrong statement about a man's thankfulness for the life granted to him by his Maker.

Verses 6, 7-- David's temporary thinking that his own death might be better than living without the child had sprung out of his extreme feelings of frustration and helplessness about the child's condition. His groanings, tears, and grief had made his life worse than miserable. His eyes were weak and his eyesight dimmed from much crying. His pain increased as his "enemies" [critical and unsympathetic people] increased. Many were harshly blaming him, and rightly so, for the condition that he and the child were in and for the negative impact that the king's display of "weakness" might have on the kingdom itself.

Verses 8-10-- His thoughts suddenly turned in anger to those "enemies" who were anxious to find flaws in his character and to take advantage of any opportunity to cause him more trouble. There were doubtless many political adversaries and moral degenerates who were in that camp. They could profit from his loss, so they cared nothing for his demonstrations of remorse and were totally untouched by his display of agony about a child who was hanging between life and death. David's only consolation was that his Lord heard, understood, and *was* moved by his parental grief. He would "receive" the king's prayer, even if in His wisdom He could not answer it the way David would have wished.

David's unfeeling foes should "be ashamed" for their conduct and be sorry that they had acted so badly. Their attitude in this sad moment spoke volumes about their ugly dispositions and ungodly characters.

LESSON FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 6:

*"Love...does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth..." (1Cor. 13:6)
Only the hardest of hearts can find joy in the misfortunes of others, even when those misfortunes seem 'deserved.' Remember-- "what goes around, comes around."*

Paying the High Cost of a Rebellious Family: Psalms 3 and 55

A second punishment to be suffered by David for his sins was “adversaries” arising from his own house to cause him grief. Whenever he pondered how this prophecy might come to pass, he likely never imagined that his [favorite?] son Absalom would be one of the players in that ominous threat against his kingdom. Yet, that very son caused his father to plumb the deepest depths of despair when he lashed out viciously at his father’s kingly authority. David’s questionable treatment of Absalom in several matters probably was a strong factor in the son’s rebellious activities, but David’s own weakened moral character must also be blamed for much of what happened between him and his son. The behavior of Absalom and several other persons disloyal to David might have been different if the king had remained the strong and morally aggressive ruler who had governed so admirably and firmly prior to his great sins. Nevertheless, personal responsibility did not lessen the awful hurt the father felt at his own son’s treachery. These psalms open to us some of the anguish felt by a parent who had been betrayed by his child. They also may indicate that David’s grief was *intensified* because he knew that at least some of Absalom’s wicked behavior had to be laid at the feet of a father who had disappointed his son in many ways.

Psalm 3:

The inscription of this psalm reads, “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.” It was probably written after Absalom’s defeat and death, but it seems to combine thoughts held by the father both during and after their conflict. “*Selah*” appears again to “hurl” at us the king’s strong feelings about perils he faced from his enemies and the deliverances he received from his God.

Verses 1, 2-- David’s first notice that Absalom had rebelled against him was that the hearts of “[all] the men of Israel are with Absalom” (2Samuel 15:13). The conspiracy had grown “strong” and “continually increased in number” (verse 12). David’s first impulse had been to flee lest Absalom should “bring disaster upon us.” Though significant, the number of rebels involved was probably greatly exaggerated, but there were “*many*.” Some of them were defecting because they believed that God no longer could support the rule of a king who had so shamefully sinned and disgraced his kingdom before the world.

Verses 3, 4-- After some reflection, and after the panic of flight had subsided somewhat, David was able to shore up his confidence in the Lord’s watchcare over him and to affirm that things would work for his good if he would be faithful to what he still knew to be right. There was no help except it came from Jehovah. Relief was available from God only in answer to his own fervent prayer. And, indeed, God heard him when he pleaded his case.

Verses 5, 6-- Sleep came after prayer. He awoke refreshed, and the Lord's actions "sustained" him in his struggles with Absalom's army. The great battle that resulted in his son's death showed God's hand as David's Faithful Deliverer. Defeat had seemed certain, but a glorious and overwhelming victory had come to him instead. Twenty thousand of the enemy were destroyed. The woods of Ephraim, where the battle was waged, devoured more that day than the sword. It was evident to King David that only Jehovah could have caused all these things to happen! So impressed was he with God's power that henceforth he would not be concerned about "ten thousands" who might rise against him!

Verses 7, 8-- His triumph over the rebels had been complete. God had "struck them squarely on the face and broken their teeth." All Israel should now be impressed that the power of the king lay in his appointment by God, and the welfare ["blessing"] of the nation depended on their loyalty to the Lord and to His chosen ruler.

Psalm 55:

Absalom was not the only person close to David who turned against him in rebellion. Ahithophel the Gilonite was David's trusted counselor. Their relationship had been close. But apparently not much persuasion was necessary for him to defect to Absalom. The king must have felt great concern when someone told him, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators" (2Samuel 15:31). His friend's defection was complete. He freely gave advice to Absalom that he believed would result in David's death. The corruption of Absalom's heart was exposed when he eagerly agreed to a plan that would destroy his father. Providentially, another plan was adopted that allowed David's escape and ultimate victory when the "tongues" of Ahithophel and Hushai were "divided" in their advice to Absalom.

This psalm reflects the deep disappointment felt by David about his close friend's betrayal and about all the others who were returning evil for good in their treatment of a king who had wished no harm to any of them.

Verses 1- 3-- Both what people were saying about him and what they were trying to do to him were sources of great distress to the king. These people *hated* David and sought only to do him violence. That was hard for him to understand.

Verses 4-8-- The effect of his friends' disloyalty was devastating. He experienced "severe heart pains," "terrors of death," "fearfulness and trembling," and "horror" at what was happening to him at their hands. Out of his humanity he wished fervently that he could just sprout wings and fly away from it all! What a relief just to "wander far off" and remain in the wilderness, safe from the "windy storm and tempest" of his troubles.

Verses 9-11-- Of course, such an escape was not possible. He would have to face openly those in rebellion and defend himself against their plots. He had been forced to vacate Jerusalem, and Absalom and his followers had then occupied the city. It was no longer a place governed by the high principles of God's Law. Instead, it was characterized by such things as violence and strife, iniquity and trouble, destruction, deceit and guile. It was now no place for anyone who feared the Lord as David did.

Verses 12-15-- The thing that hurt David most was not that people who had been *openly* opposed to his administration were now rising against him. It was the antagonism of men like Athithophel, his *close friend*, who had turned upon him in treason. One his "equal," his "companion" and "acquaintance" had cut him deeply. Once, they had "taken counsel together" and "walked arm-in-arm to the house of God" to worship together. Now, they were torn apart from all association by this alarming rebellion.

The rift was not his fault. Others had made the choice to break away. They must bear their guilt and suffer for what they had done! "Let death seize them!"

Verses 15-19-- David's resolve, despite the many problems and the many enemies he confronted, was to continue his trust in the Lord. There had been other enemies and other battles, but God had always carried him to victory through his prayers. He would continue to pray and continue in faith to overcome whatever obstacles he might face. Friends and counselors might change their loyalties, but God is "of old" and changes not. He would yet bless the righteous and defeat those who "do not fear God." Right and wrong have always been on opposite sides; that does not change. And the Lord will never change in the way He deals with each side of every issue.

Verses 20, 21-- These verses possibly refer to Absalom even more than to Ahithophel. The father perhaps had been unaware that things had not always been as "peaceful" between him and his son as he had supposed. But unquestionably, Absalom, whatever his complaints against David might have been, had clearly broken the covenant of respect, loyalty, and obedience between a parent and child. There could be *no* excuse for what he had done to betray his father, nor for the feelings of vengeance he held in his heart against the king. For while Absalom's words had been "smoother than butter" and "softer than oil," there was "war in his heart" as he laid his treacherous plans.

Verses 22, 23-- A final word of *advice* for all who may face difficulties similar to David's: "Cast your burdens on the Lord, and He shall sustain you." And one last *request* of God about those who had betrayed him so shamefully: "Bring them down to the pit of destruction." The life of the kingdom depended on it!

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 3 AND 55:

1. *We should not assume that people suffer difficulties only because God has abandoned them. Their problems, like Job's, may be tests through which He gives them opportunities to demonstrate their faith and trust in His love and wisdom. (3:2)*
2. *"The sleep of the innocent is sweet." How much easier it is to enjoy the simple things of life when we refuse to allow the devil's devices to complicate and corrupt their enjoyment. (3:5,6)*
3. *"Flying away on the wings of a dove" might give us immediate relief from the troubles we face, but that would defeat one of God's prime purposes in allowing us to have problems. When we face our troubles and work hard to overcome them, we are made stronger and better able to face other problems ahead. (55:6,7)*

Paying the High Cost of Enemies Who Blaspheme: Psalm 44

Every child of God is obligated to glorify his Father. A man's greatest shame is that he has *brought* shame on *heavenly* things. Doubtless, David's greatest goal was always to generate only honor to Jehovah of Israel. Disgracing the name of the Lord was something that had never entered his mind prior to his sin with Bathsheba. But disgrace had supplanted honor in the courts of Jerusalem when the king thought to do the unthinkable and fell into sin. The prophet Nathan had warned that David's actions would give "great occasion" to his enemies, both domestic and foreign, to blaspheme the name of God. This alarming prophecy saw almost immediate fulfillment, and the Lord's adversaries found in David's behavior abundant reason to speak evil against both the king's person and the king's kingdom for a long time to come.

This psalm likely was *not* written by David. Its inscription calls it "a contemplation of the sons of Korah," who were a group of musicians who served in the musical activities associated with tabernacle and temple worship. It appears that the psalm reflects the concern felt by righteous people in Israel who had witnessed a sharp increase in the disparaging statements made about the king and about the nation because of David's sinful behavior and subsequent distresses. Their increasing anxiety was that the Lord seemingly had withdrawn the support He once had given to David. Sin had left Israel vulnerable to any opposition that might arise from its enemies.

Verses 1-3-- The psalm begins with a testimony to the greatness of God's power and to His past expressions of that power in actions favorable to Israel. In "days of old" He had expelled many nations from the Promised Land and had "planted" His people there. It

was not by Israel's own resources that these things were done but by the strength of Jehovah, His "arm" and His "right hand." His countenance had always been "light" [favorable] toward the people over whom David had been made king.

Verses 4-8-- The psalmist speaks in behalf of the people and declares their future loyalty to such a beneficent God as the Lord had always been. They would expect to have other victories over their enemies by the *same* heavenly might that had lifted them above opposing nations in the past. Their boast as a people would continue to be that a *special relationship* existed between Jehovah God and Israel. "*Selah*"-- this boast could be "hurled" in the faces of other nations without any fear of contradiction!

Verses 9-12-- The disgrace brought about by their king's wicked activities had become known in other kingdoms. These foreigners might become emboldened to assert themselves against Israel if they should conclude that the entire nation had been weakened by the misconduct of its leader. If their God no longer approved of the *king*, probably He no longer approved of the *kingdom*, either. This might be the opportunity they had been waiting for. The psalmist feared what the enemies of Israel might do:

- (1) They would suppose that God had "cast off" His people and would no longer "go out" with their armies;
- (2) They would make plans to "take spoil" following their victories over Israel;
- (3) They would look upon a "scattered" [weakened] Israel as "food" for their armies;
- (4) They would not exalt Jehovah's name ["not enriched"] as it had been exalted by His own nation.

Verses 13-16-- The consequences of David's sins had reached serious levels among those who were seeking an occasion against God and His people. The psalmist expresses his concerns as if God had been *responsible* for the nation's reverses because He had allowed them to happen. Thus, as part of His punishment of the people's *king*, He had made the *people* suffer disgrace among the nations. They had become no more than "a reproach," "a by-word," and a "shaking of the head," all because of "my" [David's] dishonor and shame. Every reproach and reviling from Israel's enemies reminded the people all over again of their king's bad example that was responsible for their bad position of disrespect.

Verses 17-22-- The cry of Israel to Jehovah was that *they* were not at fault! It was *David*, not *they*, who had "forgotten" God and broken His Law ["covenant"] by committing adultery and a senseless murder. But the penalty had been exacted upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty! As a nation, they had been "severely broken" and "covered with the shadow of death" when their reputation as the people of the Lord had been so badly compromised.

Innocent people found it hard to understand why they must suffer for someone else's sins! If *they*, like David, had done foul things, they would understand why God would allow everyone to share in His displeasure. But Jehovah *knew* that it had been David's sins alone that were responsible for this bad situation. So why should *they* be "killed all day long" and be made ready for "the slaughter" by their national foes?

Verses 23-26-- In the light of what they knew about *why* God's wrath was being shown to the world, why could the Lord not act in keeping with *who* deserved that wrath? Why not forget the *people's* affliction and oppression? Instead, arise to their help and redeem them "for Your mercies' sake" [consistent with Your merciful behavior]!

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 44:

1. *It's always hard to understand why sin's consequences often touch the innocent as well as the guilty. But knowing that they do, we should try even more not to hurt others along with ourselves by our thoughtless and needless misbehavior. (44:17-22)*
2. *The reputation as a godly person is a precious commodity. Its value should be regarded as so great that we had sooner part with our material wealth than with our "good name" (Proverbs 22:1). (44:13-16)*

Paying the High Cost of Personal Suffering: Psalm 41

It would be difficult to measure the severity of the retribution suffered by David for his great sins. Others were also affected to a serious extent-- his child, his family, his friends, and even his political subjects. But most of all, David suffered grievous consequences personally. Other psalms expose the depths of the grief and frustration brought into his life by his evil conduct, but Psalm 41 suggests that at some time he might have endured a dangerous illness that had resulted either directly or indirectly from his transgressions of God's Law. Not only would such a malady cause enormous physical pain to the king but also it gave an advantage to his political adversaries that easily could have placed his entire kingdom in jeopardy. Although we have no *historical* record of David being afflicted with any serious physical illness, it would certainly not be surprising to learn that the two-fold problem of deep anxiety and God's displeasure had brought him down to a sickbed.

Verses 1-3-- David was ever confident that Jehovah will never abandon His faithful people even in times of great adversity. He will deliver them from the ungodly, and He will give

them strength to recover should serious illness overtake them. In the midst of a sickness of his own, the king could take courage that a humble man such as he was could be healed in spite of a prognosis that might have spelled death for others.

Verses 4-6-- The king's enemies saw in David's illness their opportunity to be forever free of the problems that his righteous expectations had caused them. Privately, they conferred about his condition and encouraged one another in their anticipation of his death. But in their hypocrisy, they spoke words of encouragement and wished him a speedy recovery when they visited him in his room. They made light of their deceit to one another and talked freely among themselves about their hope that the outcome of David's sickness would not be favorable to him.

Verses 7-9-- The king's foes showed no shame among themselves about their twisted attitude about his affliction. Even as he lay desperately ill, they gathered to make plans about taking advantage of his incapacity. They looked ahead eagerly and schemed about what changes they would make when he was gone. They were very sure that he was history!

The conduct of one person in particular gave David a lot of grief-- a "familiar friend" whose identity we have no way of knowing. He had been close to the king and had sat at his table many times. He seems to have been the "ring leader" in this conspiracy against Israel's ruler. This friend's treachery was especially hard to bear.

Verses 10-12-- In spite of everything to the contrary, David was confident that he would recover and resume his place of power and influence among the Lord's people. He would be "raised up" and again be in a position to "repay" those who had proved themselves so unworthy of his trust and the trust of the nation. His recovery would be proof enough to him that God still endorsed *him* as king and would continue to support him in that role as long as he maintained his "integrity."

Verse 13-- His renewed confidence that the Lord would surely intervene and allow him to leave his sickbed soon lifted his spirits as no medicine could. How "blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen!"

LESSON FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 41:

Significant physical illness can undermine a person's faith like few other things can. That is reason enough for us to be attentive to the sick and to visit them with encouraging words and supportive actions to the best of our ability.

Other psalms of interest possibly of this time period: 25, 62, 71

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON NINE

1. List the *five* hurtful consequences of David's sins:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

2. David's son _____ and his counselor _____ both betrayed him and brought him much pain.

Psalm 6:

3. There is no _____ of God in _____ and no _____ to Him in the _____.

4. David was confident that God would _____ his prayer.

Psalm 3:

5. David's faith allowed him to _____ and _____.

Psalm 55:

6. David longed to have the _____ of a _____ so he might _____ and be at _____.

7. He and his friend took _____ together and _____ together to the _____ of _____.

8. One foe's _____ were smoother than _____ but _____ was in his _____; his words were like _____.

Psalm 44:

9. Bad times had come to Israel even though they had not _____ God nor _____ with His _____.

10. It seemed to many that Israel was _____ all day long and _____ as _____ for the _____.

Psalm 41:

11. David's enemies asked when would he _____ and his name _____?

David: Looking Ahead

Historical Context: 2Samuel 23,24; 1Kings 1- 2:12; 1Chron.21-29

1. God had promised David that one of his sons would succeed him and would build the great temple that David had wanted to give to the Lord (2Samuel 7:12-16).
2. Solomon was designated to become the fulfillment of God's promise (1Chron. 22:9).
3. David began to make preparations in several ways for his son's success as the next king.
4. Contrary to Jehovah's wishes, David commanded a census to be taken to determine Israel's strength and national capabilities for greatness following his death.
5. The Lord expressed His displeasure toward David by a terrible plague on the people.
6. Following the plague, a site in Jerusalem for the future temple was determined.
7. David amassed great quantities of materials for the temple's construction by Solomon.
8. Another son, Adonijah, tried to usurp the throne but was unsuccessful when exposed to David by Nathan and Bathsheba.
9. David proclaimed Solomon's kingship and instructed his son about dealing with disloyal people, including Joab and Abiathar, who had supported Adonijah.
10. Heaven-inspired plans for the temple were entrusted to Solomon to implement.
11. Details and assignments for service in the temple were "fine tuned" to conform to the Lord's wishes.
12. After ruling Israel forty years, David died and Solomon "sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established" (1Kings 2:12).

Historical Connection with the Psalms

One of David's deepest concerns as he grew older was that his successor to the throne should rule over Israel in righteousness as he had tried to do. When God selected Solomon to be the next king, the father's attention was devoted to helping his son prepare for his reign. There were many things the new ruler would need to do, not the least of which was to construct the great temple in Jerusalem where Jehovah could be worshiped and glorified for many years to come. This monumental task would best be accomplished if David could begin making whatever preparations he could before his own death. Many details filled the king's days as he set about to assure the success of Solomon's reign. There was even another family rebellion to contend with before his work of making ready the throne was done. David's activities and his concern for Solomon's compliance with Jehovah's will are reflected in several of the psalms of this period. Additionally, it appears that he was

directly or indirectly involved in the preparation of a number of psalms to be used in the worship services of the temple once it was built.

Securing Solomon's Throne: Psalms 72, 127, and 24

David must have been very excited at the Lord's selection of Solomon, the son of Bathsheba, as the next king of Israel. God attached wonderful blessings to that selection both for Solomon personally and for his subjects as a nation. David's mind was flooded with heavenly visions of the glories of his son's reign under Jehovah and of the healthy spiritual and material consequences that continued obedience to the Lord would assure to all the people. He was determined that God's choice would prevail even in the face of his son Adonijah's rebellion that attempted to derail heaven's plans for the kingdom.

Psalm 72:

This "prayer of David the son of Jesse" is inscribed as "a Psalm of Solomon." It is possible that Solomon wrote this song, but it is more likely that David wrote it *about* ["of" or "for"] his son at some time prior to Solomon's actual ascension to the throne (1Chron. 29: 22). The support given to Solomon by his father would inspire the people to offer him their loyalty as the rightful ruler of God's nation.

It should be noted that many scholars recognize in this psalm a strong reference to the reign of Jesus the Messiah over His *spiritual* people in the kingdom of God. Although some would associate it exclusively with the Messiah, the *primary* application appears to be to *David's* son Solomon and a *secondary* application to *God's* Son Jesus Christ.

The psalm foretells the high level of morality and efficiency that should characterize the reign of Solomon and the resultant prosperity and well-being that would favor the subjects of the new king.

Verses 1-7-- *Solomon's reign would be a reign of righteousness and peace.* David's prayer asked that Solomon be given the authority to administer the Lord's "judgments" [commandments] in a manner consistent with God's "righteousness." With those credentials, he could treat his subjects with "justice" [fairness] and cause civil tranquility ["peace"] to prevail throughout the land [from "mountains" and "little hills"]. His rule would assure justice even for the poor and helpless; innocent children would not suffer when an "oppressor" took action against their "needy" parents.

The beneficent rule of the king would cause his people to respect him and to be grateful for the many consequent blessings of his administration, under which the obedient would "flourish" in much the same way as the earth benefits from heaven's rain. Their loyalty to the king would be enduring. The story of Solomon's decision about dividing

a child claimed by two women illustrates the wisdom by which he ruled and the appreciation he received in return for his extensive administrative abilities (1Kings 3:16ff.).

Verses 8-11-- *Solomon's reign would be a reign of domination over other nations.* His kingdom would be established over a wide area in keeping with the original promise made to Israel when they came out of Egypt: "And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines [Mediterranean], and from the [Arabian] desert to the River [Euphrates]" (Exodus 23:31). Both cities and wildernesses would be included, and his domination over his enemies would be complete. He would enrich his own kingdom with the abundant tribute brought by "kings" and "nations" as far removed as Tarshish [Spain] and Sheba [Arabia]. 2Chron. 9:20-28 cites the historical fulfillment of this portion of David's prayer for his son's success.

Verses 12-16-- *Solomon's reign would be a reign of remarkable benevolence.* The cries of the needy and of poor, helpless people would not go unnoticed, nor would oppression and violence against them be tolerated in Solomon's kingdom. In return for his just and kindly treatment of his people, the king would "live" in the hearts of his subjects. Not only would he prosper materially from the gifts and tribute of the earth's powerful but also he would enjoy the prayers and praise of common people whom he had benefitted so extensively in his administration.

Even the "tops of mountains" would produce abundant harvests for the nation under Solomon [mountaintops were not usually cultivated]. Citizens in both rural places ["the earth"] and in cities would prosper equally through the king's wise and just governance. Consequently, his "name" [reputation] would endure "forever" in Israel. He would occupy a "blessed" status among the subjects of his and other nations because he would be such a "blessing" to all peoples. 1Kings 5:25 says, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

Verses 17-19-- *Solomon's reign would be closely aligned with the reign of Jehovah.*

It would be God who would reap the highest praise when Solomon's kingdom proved to be excellent because only God can do such "wondrous things." Israel under the wise and beneficent rule of Solomon would bring glory to Jehovah throughout "the whole earth." For a time, this part of David's prayer for Solomon was realized in the king's dedication to the Law and to the temple worship. However, God's continued support depended directly on Solomon's continued faithfulness. Before many years, the king erred by loving "many foreign women" and turning his heart from total devotion to the true God to a mixed commitment to many gods. This grievous sin caused Solomon

to lose the Lord's favor and later caused his son Rehoboam to lose most of the kingdom.

Verse 20-- This statement apparently was attached to the psalm because it closed the second book [division] of the collection. It otherwise has no connection. There are other psalms of David in subsequent divisions, but the second book contains a large number of his poems and prayers.

Psalm 127:

This is another psalm inscribed as "Of Solomon." It is also described as a "Song of Ascents," likely intended to be used by worshipers traveling to and from Jerusalem to present their devotions to the Lord. It apparently served as an admonition to Solomon prior to his assuming the kingdom of Israel. His father thought it important for the son to understand that success for him would rest entirely on whether or not he was faithful in depending on Jehovah for guidance and in executing the commandments of the Law as he governed the citizenry of Israel.

Verses 1,2-- Solomon would soon "build a house" [a kingdom and a temple]. Naturally, both he and his father wanted him to succeed as the new king. Only *one* thing would determine success or failure. Labor could bring success only if Solomon would work hand in hand with God to achieve desired goals. Moreover, the security of his government would also need a *divine* watchman to guard its well-being. Hard work and long hours could not assure prosperity and peace for the people. Even strong personal feelings ["the bread of sorrows"] for his subjects would not be enough to make Solomon the ruler they would need. Rather, it was a close relationship with Jehovah that would make the difference between becoming a bane or a blessing to the people of Israel. A conscience clear from any *guilt* about governing his subjects would allow him healthful sleep and provide confidence that the Lord was supportive of him as a "beloved" king.

Verses 3-5-- Solomon's success as ruler of the Jews wasn't the only thing that would depend on his loyalty to God's Law in everything. David's personal satisfaction as a father and as a mentor for the next king over God's people would also hinge on his son's efforts to be faithful to Jehovah. Children, he had concluded from many years of observation, could become either a source of comfort or a cause of great discomfort to parents in their old age. It is often through our offspring ["arrows"] that we achieve or fail to achieve many of the life-goals we consider most important to us. In them we either *hit* or *miss* the target! "Happy" [fortunate] are parents whose children add their own branches of dignity and honor to the family tree and who are never guilty of causing the pain of shattered hopes in the hearts of loving mothers and fathers. No father

ever felt more than David both the parental pride that comes from the positive accomplishments of “good” children and the stabbing disappointment that follows the negative and sinful behavior of sons and daughters who show little regard for God and godliness. His hopes and ambitions rested in the future events of Solomon’s kingship. But his waking thoughts never found relief from the haunting regrets and recriminations that had been brought into his life by his disloyal sons Absalom and Adonijah.

Psalm 24:

This is “A Psalm of David.” It possibly was written by him in an effort to warn Solomon about every man’s need to maintain a holy relationship with the Lord and to point out that it is especially important for a *king* to depend heavily on the Almighty for guidance and support in the administration of his kingdom. If this was not its origin, the thought expressed certainly *could* have offered some good advice to this fledgling ruler-to-be who would soon ascend to the throne and reign over God’s own nation.

Verses 1,2-- Jehovah’s pre-eminence in *all things* is evident. He *made* everything and He *sustains* His whole creation, animate and inanimate. No creature has any cause for pride or for boasting in His presence.

Verses 3-6-- In the light of Jehovah’s *awesome greatness*, who dares to approach the God of the universe? Who thinks he is worthy to “ascend the holy hill” [Zion, where the temple was built] or “stand in the holy place” where the people were represented by priests who came as close to God as it was possible for men to come? In short, what man is worthy to commune with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

No one has any claim to such communion except through a sincere dedication to the Law of the Lord. “Clean hands and a pure heart,” unmixed devotion, and honesty, among other godly attributes, are the only qualities that provide any entree to a healthy relationship with God. Men of this character are like Jacob, who through obedience achieved a good standing with Jehovah. Not even a *king of earth* could claim access to the *King of the Universe* without similar credentials. Solomon must heed this basic truth if his reign was to be successful.

Verses 7-10-- What would be the outcome of a close relationship between the *earthly king* and the *heavenly King*? Any kingdom that would gladly welcome into its gates the “King of glory” would thereby embrace the strongest and mightiest ally that could be found anywhere. Its gates thereafter would be invincible to the attack of *any* foe! The Lord *wanted* this alliance with the kingdom of Israel-- it was theirs to embrace if they chose to accept His heavenly offer. “Lift up your heads” [in anticipation of the union]; then “lift up [open] your gates,” and the King of glory *shall come in.*” He is the “Lord

of hosts” and His resources are *limitless* to help you with any problem that might confront this newly-begun reign of Solomon. “He is the King of glory!”

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 72, 127, AND 24:

1. *A lesson yet unlearned by many politicians is that voter loyalty is usually responsive to positive and beneficent leadership. Longevity usually correlates with leaders trying to ‘do the right thing’ on every issue, regardless of politics. (72:2,5)*
2. *Strong families and happy homes are built on many bases, but the most vital of all is the inclusion of God and His will in every family-related decision. (127:1)*
3. *No greater treasure can men and women accumulate in this world than a family of children faithful both to them and to the Lord. (127:3-5)*
4. *What a privilege to have access (Hebrews 4:16) to the throne of so awesome a God as ours! Prayer, praise, and a holy life open the door to the Lord, and we should take full advantage of every opportunity to commune with the Almighty. (24:3-5)*
5. *The “Lord of hosts” commands many “armies” with which to help us in our struggles against the devil. Failing to sound the alarm to summon His “troops” to our side is a fatal spiritual mistake that we must not make! (24:10)*

A Bad Mistake in Judgment: Psalm 130

Probably thinking that it would be helpful to Solomon’s kingly prospects to ascertain the numerical strength of the people he would rule, David made a serious mistake in ordering a census of the nation (2Samuel 24:1ff. and 1Chron. 21:1ff.). This action was instigated by the devil and was pursued over Joab’s objections. David’s realization that it was a grave mistake to question the watchcare of God came too late to avoid retribution in the form of a severe plague on the populace. David felt desperately penitent about his grievous sin, for the people were innocent in this matter. Psalm 130 may be an outpouring of his grief over the suffering he had caused his nation. Now he would know as never before that Solomon’s success would depend on things other than numbers. His son’s relationship with Jehovah was vital; human resources were not.

Verses 1-2-- David’s plaintive cry to the Lord came from a heart deeply distressed about his mistake that had injured his innocent subjects so badly. His “supplications” came from the “depths” of his despair. He had thought only to help his son; he had instead only hurt his loyal nation.

Verses 3-6-- So hurtful was his sin against God and the people that David realized that without God's mercy, both he and they were doomed. If God "marked" [held strictly accountable] iniquities committed against Him, no man could "stand" uncondemned. Wonderfully, God does forgive sins turned away from, and this is now David's hope as the only way out of an otherwise overwhelming situation. The nation would be devastated if the Lord refused to relent.

Hoping against hope that God would hear his plea for the people, David "waited" on the Lord's salvation. His anxiety was even greater than that experienced by those who wait for daytime to dispel the despair of a night of terror because of a wrenching crisis whose outcome is altogether uncertain. Torn by the agony in his heart, David "watched for the morning" of God's favorable resolution of the plague being visited on people who had done "nothing wrong" to deserve their punishment.

Verses 7,8-- The demonstration of God's mercy and forgiveness in this situation would serve to remind Israel in the future that "the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandment" (Deut. 7:9). His grace and forgiveness are as extensive as the "sinfulness" of the sins to which they are to be applied. God is able to "cover" whatever is amiss if the unrighteous will seek His "abundant redemption."

LESSON FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 130:

We must never become so mired down in our sins that we come to think that we are "too wicked" for God's forgiveness to cleanse us. Remember Saul of Tarsus (1Tim.1:15), the crucifiers on Pentecost (Acts 2:36), and David who caused great suffering to innocent victims (1Chron. 21:17). Know that God's grace is not limited by man's inability to comprehend its expansiveness.

A Great Temple Envisioned: Psalm 132:

As David looked ahead to Solomon's ascension to the throne of Israel, he concluded that perhaps the *greatest* help he could give his son was to make extensive preparations for the building of the marvelous temple that he himself earlier had wanted to construct. Jehovah had commissioned Solomon to erect His temple, and David wanted the job done in a way that would please the object of their worship. He set out to accomplish his significant task in the areas of plans and specifications (1Chron. 28:11,12); building site (2Samuel 24:24, 25; 2Chron. 3:1); building materials and craftsmen (1Chron. 22:1-5; 14-16); financing (1Chron. 29:1-9); and appointments of service for temple activities (1Chron. 23:1-26:32).

Psalm 132, a "Song of Ascents," seems to be "about" David's deep-felt desire to partici-

pate to the fullest extent possible in the realization of his own dream for a magnificent edifice that would provide elaborate quarters in which his people could worship Jehovah and which would also impress other people with the rising importance of the Jewish economy. This psalm was discussed earlier [page 74] in the context of David's *initial* thoughts to raise the temple himself, but it is also appropriate to this period of actual preparations by the king to assist his son in the work ahead.

Verses 1-5-- It was admirable of David that he felt embarrassed that *his* house was at the time of the psalm a more impressive structure than the house of the *Lord*. His intention was to set that situation aright by constructing a marvelous temple for Jewish worship. He would not rest until his goal was reached: Israel would have a temple of worship that corresponded to the nature of their God-- the "Mighty God of Jacob."

Verses 6-9-- The need [as David perceived it] for a great temple was obvious to all. The comparatively unimpressive tabernacle housed at Ephrathah [Kiriath-jearim] had cried out for an improvement in facilities. The need was for another "tabernacle" [temple] in a permanent location, a "resting place," where the Lord could "sit" and be worshiped at His feet. In such a temple the priests could perform their duties in righteous obedience to the Law's appointments, and the people could shout with a joy born of their pride in the sizeable "gift" that they would have presented to Jehovah in the building of the temple.

Verses 10-12-- David connected the building of the temple to the rule of Solomon on the royal throne in Jerusalem. This was the promise that God had made to him at an earlier time, and the plan had *not* been changed. David understood that any blessings coming from a great temple and from the continued ["forevermore"] rule of his posterity over Israel depended on their faithfulness to the "testimony which I shall teach them." David assumed that the loyalties of Solomon and those who would follow him were certain enough that he could feel good about the prospect for the future. Of course, his confidence was misplaced and his dreams for Israel's destiny would be derailed in just a few years.

Verses 13-18-- Jerusalem was favored as the site of God's permanent ["forever"] habitation in the new temple. The city and its populace stood to receive abundant blessings in keeping with its identity as the center of Jewish worship. Both physical ["bread"] and spiritual ["clothe her priests with salvation"] rewards would flow freely to the people. The national interests would also prosper and the "horn of David" [political power] would grow in prestige among the nations. David's heirs would rule in a long dynasty so that the succession ["light"] of his own "anointed" king [Solomon] would never be

extinguished in the holy city. Solomon's enemies would be shamed as his crown [reign] would "flourish" to the glory of God and to the memory of his illustrious father, King David.

Note-- Some versions capitalize "My Anointed," attributing that term to the coming Messiah. We have chosen to follow the ASV and instead to assign the language to Solomon, "anointed" by God and by David to become successor to the throne.

LESSON FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 132:

It is as commendable in people today as it was in David's time when they feel uncomfortable in circumstances where the Lord's work is given 'second place' to worldly pursuits. The kingdom of God is a 'pearl of great price' and a 'treasure hidden in a field.' It always demands top priority!

David's Psalms for Temple Worship

In addition to the other preparations made by David as he looked ahead to the great temple, he apparently prepared, and had others prepare, numerous psalms [songs] that would be used when worship to Jehovah would be initiated in the new temple sometime during the reign of Solomon. These psalms treat a variety of themes but generally emphasize the holy character of Israel's God, the righteousness of His ordinances, and His merciful dealings with His people. Space would not permit giving close attention to many of these works of the psalmists, but brief notations about a few are in order.

Psalm 47: This nationalistic "Psalm of the sons of Korah" proclaims the "awesome" nature of God:

- (1) He has subdued nations under Israel's feet;
- (2) He has chosen a good land for Israel's dwelling place;
- (3) He rules over all the earth;
- (4) He has confiscated the war-shields of those princes who have come to Him in defeat and submission to His control.

Psalm 96: This untitled psalm, author unspecified, "sings to the Lord a new song" of adulation for His glory and justice:

- (1) His salvation is "good news" and worthy of praise among all peoples;
- (2) His creative powers prove His superiority over the idols of men;
- (3) His "beauty of holiness" elicits man's offerings and worship;

- (4) His laws for the earth's conduct are firmly established in righteousness;
- (5) His coming judgment in righteousness and truth is cause for all things in heaven and on earth to rejoice.

Psalm 100: This familiar psalm is a "Psalm of Thanksgiving." The author is not identified. It deals with the feelings of happiness and joy that should accompany our worship to the Lord:

- (1) He is our all-powerful Maker, and it is a great comfort to know that He serves as our Caretaker;
- (2) His "goodness," "mercy," and enduring "truth" are cause for joy and gladness among His people;
- (3) His praise and thanksgiving should accompany us as we "enter His gates and His courts" to worship His Person.

Psalm 103: This "Psalm of David" remembers the innumerable blessings of the Lord:

- (1) He forgives all our iniquities; He heals all our diseases; He rescues our lives from destruction; He showers us with love and mercy; He provides satisfaction for our physical needs; He renews our spiritual "youth";
- (2) He is fair and righteous in His revealed judgments in His Law;
- (3) He treats men far better than they deserve;
- (4) His Father-love brings mercy to those who respect Him;
- (5) He honors men with His mercy and righteousness, despite their frailty and unworthiness, if they will obey His commandments;
- (6) He *expects* praise even from angelic hosts; men who comprise a "lesser creation" certainly should be disposed to "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Psalm 111: The "works of the Lord" are extolled in this psalm of praise. The unidentified psalmist calls for recognition of the many and varied things God has done for those who fear Him:

- (1) He has preserved the memory of His works that they may be "studied" by those who will appreciate their significance;
- (2) He has provided physical blessings and a spiritual covenant to benefit His people;
- (3) His truths are unimpeachable and indestructible;
- (4) He has redeemed His people with an everlasting covenant;
- (5) He offers wisdom and understanding through His commandments.

Psalm 136: This is another psalm intended to generate thanksgiving and a mind of obedience in Jewish worshipers as they sang the praises of God and recited this list of His merciful deeds in their behalf as a nation. The phrase, “*For His mercy endures forever,*” follows each event of Israel’s history:

- (1) He had created the heavens and the earth to enhance man’s existence;
- (2) He had delivered Israel from Egypt by mighty miracles;
- (3) He had displaced many other nations that Israel might have a favorable land in which to dwell and serve God;
- (4) His watchcare over His people had been unfailing in providing their physical necessities and their national dominance over their foes.

“Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven!
For His mercy endures forever.”

Other psalms of interest possibly of this time period: 92, 93, 95, 113, 135, 147, etc.

The Psalms of David and Others

QUESTIONS-- LESSON TEN

1. Two of David's sons, _____ and _____, were rebellious.
2. Give at least *four* kinds of things prepared by David to assist Solomon with the temple:
(a) _____ (c) _____
(b) _____ (d) _____

Psalm 72:

3. Solomon would bring _____ to the _____ and save the _____ of the _____.
4. His blessings would be like _____ that _____ the earth.

Psalm 127:

5. "Unless the _____ builds a _____, they labor in _____ who build it."

Psalm 24:

6. Those with _____ and _____ can "stand" before God.
7. "Lift up your _____...and the _____ of _____ shall come in."

Psalm 130:

8. None could stand if the Lord should _____.

Psalm 132:

9. David once had a "better" _____ than _____ did.
10. The Lord chose _____ as His _____ and as His _____ forever.

David: Looking Back

Historical Context: 2Samuel 20-24; 1Kings 1-2:12; 1Chron. 29:26-30

1. It is difficult to sort out chronologically the events recorded about David's last years. Some time had elapsed between David's restoration as king after Absalom's rebellion and the revolt of Sheba. Some incidents may have occurred earlier in David's life and are just now being related. Other things clearly happened not long before his death.
2. Sheba's revolt was a crisis during David's latter years that caused him grief. Loyalties in the kingdom were divided; Judah remained loyal to David, and Sheba was defeated.
3. The famine and its resolution [2Samuel 21:1-14] appear to be events from an earlier period of the kingdom, but an exact assignment of time is impossible.
4. David's last song [psalm] and his "last words" appear in 2Samuel 22 and 23.
5. An ill-advised census resulted in a plague on the nation attended by many casualties.
6. David's son Adonijah sought the throne while David was incapacitated; Adonijah was unsuccessful because of the intervention of Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet.
7. David proclaimed Solomon to be king; Adonijah's life was spared temporarily.
8. Certain military victories were cited [2Samuel 21:15-22] either to summarize the prowess of David's army or to emphasize the infirmity of his old age and his dependence on others to fight the battles he had once fought himself.
9. David died "in a good old age, full of riches and honor" after ruling over Israel forty years, seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

It is not uncommon for people, as they grow older, to *look back* over their lives and try to make an assessment of the successes and failures that have made up those lives. Reviewing our time on earth may bring us a degree of *satisfaction*; it may cause us *pain*. The book of Ecclesiastes is the record of Solomon's "look back" at his accomplishments and the sense of frustration he felt about the actual worthlessness of what he had been able to do. His final evaluation of life's true purpose was, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). On the other hand, Paul's "look back" was quite different. It was with satisfaction that he could declare, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2Tim. 4:7).

David grew to be a relatively old man while still on the throne of Israel. His life had been filled with many and varied experiences. He had fought battles against numerous enemies; he had faced rebellions within his own kingdom; he had tried diligently to maintain a fair and equitable administration over his subjects; and he had fallen into a deep abyss of sinful conduct and had disgraced himself and his family. In his meditative moments he had many things to think about; he could be satisfied with himself about things he had done that pleased the Lord and disappointed about the things that were displeasing to God. As he reflected on his experiences both public and private, he could also identify certain truths that stood out in his mind as *fundamental* and *universal* in man's journey through this world. These were principles he wanted to share with later generations lest they make the same mistakes he and his contemporaries had made.

A few of the psalms of David refer to old age and to his resolution to be faithful despite his years. Other psalms are less definite about the age of the author, but they definitely expound the wisdom that older people should wish to pass on to those who are younger.

Looking Back at Basics: Psalms 15, 112, and 37

David had ample opportunity to glean many basic truths from life. Some he had practiced from his youth as a shepherd boy; others he had learned the hard way in his struggle to be a "man after God's own heart." These psalms are representative of the things he had come to believe were essential to man's good understanding and to his favor with Jehovah.

Psalm 15:

There was a *literal* "dwelling" in the tabernacle and on the holy hill of Zion by the priests who ministered for the people before God on a daily basis. There was a *figurative* "dwelling" by common people who were living a righteous life.

Verse 1-- David's *two* questions in effect are asking the *one all-important question of the ages*: "What is required of man to please his God?" David answers with several basic truths he has come to appreciate over a lifetime of trying to do right, often-times succeeding, sometimes failing. The basic nature of these standards of personal godliness is demonstrated by their appearance in New Testament teaching in similar or variant language:

Verses 2-5--

<u>Psalm 15:</u> <u>Old Testament Truth</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>N. T. References:</u> <u>New Testament Truth</u>
“Walks uprightly”	Lives perfectly [completely] by word of God	Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:12
“Works righteousness”	Does what is right by God’s standard	Acts 10:35; 1Jn. 2:29
“Speaks the truth in his heart”	Sincere in expression of convictions	Eph. 4:25; 4:15
“Does not backbite with tongue”	Does not slander others; does not spread gossip	1Tim. 3:11; Ro. 1:30; 2Cor. 12:20
“Does no evil to his neighbor”	Does not knowingly harm anyone; does good to all	Ro. 12:17; 1Thes.5:15; 1Pe. 3:11,12
“Does not take up a reproach”	Slow to believe an evil report about others	1Cor. 13:6
“Despises a vile person”	Gives no respect to the ungodly despite their status	1Tim. 3:8 (KJV); 2Tim. 3:2-5
“Honors God-fearers”	Respects true piety in whomever it is found	1Cor. 16:16,18; 2Tim. 3:5
“Swears to his own hurt”	Keeps his promises, even when it is to his disadvantage	Matt. 5:37; Eph. 5:6
“Refrains from usury”	Exacts no interest for money he lends*	Eph. 4:28;Gal.2:10; Gal. 6:10
“Refuses a bribe”	Accepts no benefit that might influence a decision	Phil. 4:8; 1Ti. 3:3; 1Tim. 6:9,10

* The Law forbade interest from Jew to Jew (Exo. 22:25). Jews could charge Gentiles interest (Deut.23:19,20); hence, usury as such was not unlawful. Today, excessive interest would be forbidden in Christian practice.

“He who does these things shall never be moved.” God’s disciple can never be moved away from His relationship with the Lord so long as he remains true to the principles of personal godliness listed in this psalm. Of course, his faithfulness in worship and service to others are additional things required of him as a Christian. “... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1Cor.15:58).

Psalm 112:

Success in life is measured in different ways by different people. David had learned, as Solomon did after him, that *real* success can be measured only by one's acceptability with Jehovah. Everything else was fleeting and empty; good standing with God is eternal and precious beyond human comprehension. This psalm, untitled and by an unknown writer, promotes the same basic truths of a good life that David also regarded as essential.

Verse 1-- The "righteous" man is the one who "fears the Lord, who delights *greatly* in His commandments." No others need apply for this "blessed" status with God.

Verses 2-9-- The righteous man receives numerous *blessings* that the unrighteous cannot enjoy:

- (1) His descendants will be mighty on earth (verses 1-3). "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Obviously, there are exceptions, but parental diligence usually results in godly offspring ["the generation of the upright"]. The faith that first dwells in us can also live in them (2Tim. 1:5), and thus our righteousness can "live forever." Material success will often reside with a godly family because godly principles promote the very qualities that produce prosperity. But regardless of their worldly achievements, or lack of them, our children and their children will be "mighty" on earth in what really counts with the Lord.
- (2) To him light will arise in the darkness (verse 4). Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed when surrounded by the darkness of uncertainty that our problems bring upon us. There may seem to be no way out of the deep anxiety and concern they cause us. We despair of any solution. *Then*, we recall God's promise to righteous people, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb.13:5), and hope revives. We know we can appeal to our Lord for relief from *whatever* confronts us, and we know that He will answer our prayers (James 5:16). What a glorious blessing! How sad that ungodly and irreligious people cannot share with us in that blessing.
- (3) He will never be shaken (verse 6). With Paul, the righteous man can say, "... I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed until that Day" (2Tim. 1:12). He knows the righteous are the Great Shepherd's sheep and no one can snatch them out of His hand (John 10:28). God has placed the destiny of our souls in our own hands, to be faithful or not as we choose.

David had made it his aim throughout his life to strive to be loyal to Jehovah. He was confident that the Lord in turn would guard his soul from danger.

- (4) **He will be in everlasting remembrance** (verse 6). Men may erect great monuments to themselves or to others, but the real significance of those memorials is soon forgotten by most people. The impressions of his godly example will live on in the hearts of others long after a righteous man is dead. Like Abel, "...he being dead still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4). It is impossible to estimate the real impact that obedience may have on both present and future onlookers.
- (5) **He will not be afraid of evil tidings** (verses 7, 8). The righteous man lives each day for its own opportunities to serve God without undue anxiety over what troubles tomorrow may bring (Matt. 6:34). He trusts God enough to believe that regardless of the problems that may lie ahead for him, the Lord "...with the temptation [or problem] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1Cor.10:13). Also, heavenly wisdom has taught him that trouble is one of God's most useful tools in helping him become spiritually strong in this uncertain world (1Peter 1:6,7). We will wait on the Lord until our "desire" to overcome our "enemies" [problems] is realized.
- (6) **His horn will be exalted with honor** (verse 9). The "horn" signifies power and respect among men. The righteous man will be held in esteem for his unwavering demonstration of goodness in all that he does. David was willing to let the evidence [of his life] speak for itself when his fellows came to judge him. His son Solomon would say later, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (Prov. 22:1), and David believed that, too. But a good name cannot be bought with anything except day-by-day living that exemplifies the principles revealed in God's laws for men.

Verses 2-9-- The righteous man also bears serious responsibilities that unrighteous people don't consider to be crucial to a successful life.

- (1) **He is gracious and full of compassion** (verses 4,5). His grace and compassion impel him to "deal graciously and lend." Men of true faith will not simply *speak* of their concern for the needy; they will *act* to assure that the cause of their concern is removed. He who behaves otherwise is void of the love of God (1John 3:17,18). The principle of *sharing* is a basic truth that David understood from many years of living among some people who had a lot and others who had only a little.
- (2) **He guides his affairs with discretion** (verse 5). "Discretion" is the quality of being

“discreet,” that is, “possessing or showing discernment or good judgment in conduct” [Webster]. Good judgment, of course, is anchored in God’s revelation of what good conduct really is. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psa. 111: 10). Every facet of a righteous man’s life is strictly governed by the basic truths that David and others over time had made the essence of their moral character.

- (3) His heart is steadfast (verse 7). “Therefore...be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...” (1Cor. 15:58). David’s own vow to the Lord was, “I shall never be moved” (Psa. 30:6). Most of the time he kept that vow; a few times he fell away in weakness. His insight into what was *necessary* for a successful life, however, never changed. Only respect for God’s law held the key to success.
- (4) He disperses abroad and gives to the poor (verse 9). David had devoted himself to being a king who gave “judgment and justice” to all his subjects, rich and poor alike (2Samuel 8:15). We have an example of his generosity in material things in his treatment of Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth (2Samuel 9). His high estimate of *sharing* serves as a lesson for God’s servants today to demonstrate a liberality far beyond what is seen ordinarily among men of the world. [See Acts 2:44,45.]

Verse 10-- A wicked person may not always appreciate the good qualities of the righteous. [See 1Peter 4:4.] He may be motivated by jealousy, by a guilty conscience, or by a sheer distaste for anything that challenges the godless lifestyle he has chosen for himself. He may “gnash his teeth” in disdain at the godly life, but he will surely “melt away,” and his “desire” [purpose] in life will “perish” in disappointment and end in a total failure to provide any real sense of satisfaction when he reviews his time on earth. On the other hand, David’s reflections in old age gave him comfort to know that he had been good to his fellowmen and had pleased God in the things he had done. With what better feelings about himself could he leave this world?

Psalm 37:

As one nears the end of his life on earth, he commonly tends to raise many questions within himself: “Has my life been lived in a worthwhile manner? Have my choices been the right ones? Has it really paid me to serve the Lord as I have tried to do?” David probably had similar thoughts about himself as eternity loomed before him. This psalm examines the conclusions he reached about the comparative prospects of servants of Jehovah and the servants of Satan. His determinations may be divided into: (A) Prospects for the righteous; (B) Prospects for the wicked; (C) Behaviors that produce continued blessings to the righteous; and (D) Behaviors of evil men that bring them to ultimate destruction.

Behaviors and Consequences of the Righteous and the Unrighteous

A: Blessings to be Expected by the Righteous:

1. "He shall give you the desires of your heart" (verse 4);
2. "He shall bring it [your way] to pass" (verse 5);
3. "They shall inherit the earth" (verse 9);
4. "[They] shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (verse 11);
5. "The Lord upholds the righteous" (verse 17);
6. "Their inheritance shall be forever" (verse 18);
7. "Those who are blessed by Him shall inherit the earth" (verse 22);
8. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" (verse 24);
9. "I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his descendants begging bread" (vs. 25);
10. "The Lord...does not forsake His saints" (verse 28);
11. "The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever" (verse 29);
12. "The Lord will not leave him in his [enemy's] hand" (verse 33);
13. "For the future of that [blameless] man is peace" (verse 37);
14. "The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble" (verse 39).

B. Punishments to be Expected by the Wicked:

1. "They shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither like the green herb" (vs. 2);
2. "Evildoers shall be cut off" (verse 9);
3. "Their sword shall enter their own heart and their bows shall be broken" (verse 15);
4. "The arms of the wicked shall be broken" (verse 17);
5. "The enemies of the Lord...shall vanish...into smoke" (verse 20);
6. "The descendants of the wicked shall be cut off" (verse 28);
7. "Those who are cursed by Him shall be cut off" (verse 22);
8. "Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more" (verse 36);
9. "The transgressors shall be destroyed together" (verse 38).

C. Continued Behaviors of the Righteous that Bring Continued Blessings:

1. "Do not fret because of evildoers nor be envious of the workers of iniquity" (verse 1);
2. "Trust in the Lord...dwell in the land...delight yourself also in the Lord" (vs. 3, 4);
3. "Commit your way to the Lord" (verse 5);
4. "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (verse 7);
5. "Cease from anger and forsake wrath" (verse 8);
6. "Show mercy and give" (verse 21);
7. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (verse 23);
8. "He is ever merciful and lends" (verse 26);
9. "Depart from evil and do good" (verse 27);
10. "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom" (verse 30);

11. “The law of his God is in his heart” (verse 31);
12. “Wait on the Lord and keep His way” (verse 34);
13. “Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright” (verse 37).

D. Behaviors of the Wicked that Bring Punishment:

1. “The wicked plots against the just” (verse 12);
2. “The wicked have drawn the sword and have bent their bow” (verse 14);
3. “The wicked borrows and does not repay” (verse 21);
4. “The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him” (verse 32);
5. “...Spreading himself like a native green tree” (verse 35).

Psalm 37 purports to convey the thoughts of David as he surveyed his life and his reign after he had become “old.” Its content is very much like that of Psalm 73, which was possibly the work of another psalmist who may or may not have been an elderly man. The same issue is considered in both poems: “Does it really pay to serve God?” Of the *wicked* it was said in Psalm 73:

“They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men” (verse 5).

“These are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches” (verse 12).

These perceptions pained the psalmist (verse 16) until he was reminded by the holy atmosphere of the sanctuary [tabernacle] that holy living is prerequisite to God’s salvation. Then he “understood the end” of the wicked in spite of their seeming prosperity (verse 17). The rest of the psalm forecasts the undesirable destiny of wicked people and the psalmist’s determination to maintain his personal faith in the Lord God of Israel.

Both Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 confront an issue likely to surface in the minds of struggling Christians during times of stress. The psalmists’ answer to this vital question must be our answer also as we try to measure the *real value* of righteousness in our lives.

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 15, 112, AND 37:

1. *Righteousness requires acting right toward God and acting right toward other people. A godly example is as important to those who “abide” in the church as it was for men who “abode” in the tabernacle. We are still “our brother’s keeper.” (15:1)*
2. *The list of God’s blessings that accompany a righteous life is long. “Counting our blessings” would help us to keep our commitment to God and to be more faithful in our personal service to Him. (112:1ff.)*
3. *“Fretting because of evildoers” and being “envious of the workers of iniquity” betray a lack of trust in God to resolve everything according to His standards of right and wrong. Never forget-- He has appointed a day to judge all men in righteousness (Acts 17:31). (37:1)*

4. *When we “mark the blameless man” and “observe the upright,” we will see that the righteous life is usually attended by an aura of peace and order rather than by the turmoil and anxiety that often accompany the lives of the wicked. (37:37)*
5. *The Lord works through His children to care for their spiritual siblings who fall into distress. Unfortunate saints will not be forsaken and forced to “beg bread” because faithful Christians will come to their aid in their time of need. (37:25)*

Psalm 71:

The unrelenting assault of old age and infirmity on our physical bodies keeps us constantly aware of the brevity of our lives and the insecurity of our mortality. Pain becomes a familiar acquaintance and dependence on others becomes an unwelcome necessity. To those who are reasonably thoughtful about reality, everything points to how much our trust must be placed in the Lord and how completely every waking moment should be used to prepare ourselves for our ultimate confrontation with death and judgment. Whoever composed this psalm [David or some other poet] voiced the feelings of all aged saints who recognize that youth is not the only time of life when God’s people face spiritual dangers. The temptation is real and great for older disciples to abandon responsibilities toward themselves and toward others that they shouldered in earlier years. Seniors must remember that God expects the faithfulness of everyone until the very end.

Verses 1-5a-- This old saint [of whatever advanced age he may have been] expressed his awareness that passing years never lessen our dependence on the Lord. "Deliverance" "escape," and "salvation" from every adversity depend directly on God’s righteousness and mercy. No man can “go it alone” and expect a favorable resolution to all his problems. “You are my hope, O Lord God.”

Verses 5b-8-- The past is usually a good prophecy of the future. An old man who can reflect that Jehovah has been faithful throughout his life to help him in troubled times would be extremely foolish to abandon trust in God in old age. The God who gave us aid in the *strength* of our life will not forget us in our decline. He is concerned for us even when others are “wondering” how we can survive the incapacities of advanced years. The Lord’s constancy is deserving of our unwavering gratitude and praise.

Verses 9-13-- Whoever wrote this psalm was faced with problems. He had enemies who wanted to harm him militarily or in some other way. The confidence of his adversaries increased as his physical capabilities decreased. They did not believe that Jehovah’s

favor would continue to reside with an old man who had little more to offer God than his loyalty and praise. But this was even more reason for him to keep his trust in the Lord's protection.

Verses 14-16-- This elderly saint would *never* give in to discouragement and to the fear of his enemies. He could not know exactly the "limits" of his enemies' strength and ability to harm him. But he *did know* that, regardless of their power, the power of his God was stronger. The more they threatened him with danger, the more he would "go in the strength of the Lord God," and the more he would depend on the righteousness of Jehovah to deliver him.

Verses 17, 18-- Old age should feel a responsibility to the young. Experience has taught many valuable lessons. Life has demonstrated over and again the faithfulness of our Maker who always rewards those who show faithfulness to Him. There are truths that often are learned slowly and grudgingly, but the "old and gray-headed" who have learned them need to impress those truths on "everyone who is to come" while others are still impressionable.

Verses 19-21-- The events of one's life are sometimes pleasant and sometimes unpleasant. The wisdom of years declares that it is important to maintain a high level of faith in God in bad times as well as in good because He will treat us righteously in *every* situation. He may allow us to be tested by "great and severe troubles," but He will always "revive us again" and increase the strength of our faith and spiritual powers for any future struggles.

Verses 22-24-- The *tongue* and *lips* of an aged saint may not be able to sing God's praises with the same command of force and vigor as when he sang in the strength of youth, but the passing of time cannot suppress his praises to the Lord altogether. The *soul* may inhabit a physical body that cannot bow or stand in reverence before the Almighty God as it once did, but it will continue to humble itself in ever-fresh adoration and undiminished fervor...

"The longer we serve Him, the more precious He becomes!"

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALM 71:

1. *Human society has frequently glorified youth to the disdain of old age. Seniors sometimes have not been given the attention and respect that their years deserve. God, however, cares every bit as much for His children in their advanced years as He did when they were younger and more physically active. His concern for us*

- never wanes. Let us behave toward the elderly as He does!*
2. *Our world would be a far better place if older people took it on themselves to become spiritual mentors of the young. Lessons of living that are learned only by living need to be taught to tender hearts and impressionable minds before they become hardened to the values stressed in God's Book. "Pass it on" would be a very worthwhile activity for seniors as they associate with juniors.*

Other psalms of interest possibly of this time period: 39, 61, 127, 128

1. Sheba, a _____ and a _____, rebelled against David's rule.
2. David's _____ displeased God, and a _____ afflicted Israel for _____ days.

Psalm 15:

3. David asked about living in God's _____ and _____.
4. This psalm lists _____ [how many?] things by which God is pleased.
5. "He who _____ these things shall _____ be _____."

Psalm 112:

6. Blessed is a man who _____ the Lord and _____ greatly in His _____.
7. A righteous man will do what *two* things with his money?
8. What *two* different things are said about "desire" in this psalm?

Psalm 37:

9. About what should we not "fret"? Why not?
10. Which "beatitude" of Jesus [Matthew 5] first appears in this psalm?
11. What had David observed both in his youth and in his old age?

Psalm 71:

12. David had trusted God from his _____ and had been upheld by God from his _____.
13. "Do not _____ in the time of _____; do not _____ when my _____ fails."
14. The _____ and _____ have a duty to declare God's _____ and _____ to future generations.

Psalms of the Captivity and Afterward

[Historical Context: 2Chron. 36:15-23; Ezra; Nehemiah]

1. During the reigns of a succession of wicked kings, God sent warnings of impending disaster to the disobedient kingdom of Judah.
2. The Lord's messengers were rejected repeatedly until God's wrath was raised against His people and "there was no remedy."
3. Over a period of years, the Jews were carried into captivity by the Babylonians who also destroyed the temple, the great wall, and the city of Jerusalem.
4. The nation was kept captive for seventy years, as Jeremiah had warned, until Babylon fell to the Persian empire.
5. Cyrus of Persia was moved to order the rebuilding of the temple and the return to Jerusalem by those who chose to participate in the project.
6. 42,360 Jews with 7,537 servants and singers, led by Zerubbabel, journeyed to the holy city and began work on the temple within two years.
7. Enemies opposed their work and finally stopped it until the Persian king Darius ordered that the project be resumed, after which the temple was completed and dedicated.
8. Ezra and others returned to Jerusalem to restore proper worship and service to God.
9. Nehemiah was sent later as governor to rebuild the wall and the city, which had remained in serious disrepair.
10. These plans were also challenged, but threats were overcome and the wall was finished in just fifty-two days.
11. Radical changes were made in the personal and religious conduct of the people after extensive instruction in the Law by Ezra and others.
12. Activities of the Israelites while in captivity are described in the books of Daniel and Esther.
13. A timeline of events that comprised the years of the Jews' captivity and return might be helpful. Dates are approximate and vary slightly within various sources.
 - 606 B.C.-- Captivity to Babylon begins
 - 597 B.C.-- Captivity expands
 - 586 B.C.-- Captivity complete; temple and Jerusalem destroyed
 - 538 B.C.-- Babylon falls to Persia; Cyrus decrees building of the temple
 - 536 B.C.-- Zerubbabel leads captives back to Jerusalem
 - 532 B.C.-- King Cambyses retracts Cyrus' edict; building halts
 - 520 B.C.-- King Darius orders the building to resume

515 B.C.-- *The temple construction completed*

475 B.C.-- Esther is queen over Persia

458 B.C.-- Ezra returns to Jerusalem to restore worship and teaching of Law

445 B.C.-- Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall and the city.

Reforms later corrected serious relapses in conduct that had occurred during an absence of Nehemiah from the city.

Historical Connection with the Psalms

The Lord's gracious treatment of Israel was spurned by an unappreciative people, and the dire warnings of Isaiah (Isa. 6:11,12) and Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11,12) became reality when the Babylonians carried the nation into seventy years' captivity. These were years of sadness and remorse for religiously-sensitive Jews, even though they were often permitted to build houses, keep servants, engage in business, and even rise to high positions in government [See the books of Daniel (606 B.C.) and Esther (475 B.C.).] The captives continued to have access to priests and teachers of the Law if they were concerned about serving Jehovah.

The psalms of this period reflect feelings and attitudes of writers who longed not only to be free politically but also to be free to worship and serve the Lord in the only place on the earth where that could be done properly--in Jerusalem in the Lord's temple. Their hearts lived outside Babylon as long as they were physically restrained from their beloved city. Some of these poems, (1) bemoan the unfaithfulness of Israel that was responsible for their bondage and, (2) voice their pleas to God to remove their captivity and let them go back home. Other psalms possibly were composed during the persecutions by enemies who tried to stop their efforts to build. Still others contain vows of faithfulness and a determination to avoid the mistakes of the past. They are filled with the gratitude of a nation to whom the Lord had given a "second chance."

These psalms are of three kinds: (1) Those ascribed to the "Sons of Korah," (2) those credited to [the family of] "Asaph," and (3) the psalms that bear no inscription at all. The descendants of Korah and Asaph were charged with conducting the song service in the temple worship. As with many other psalms, it is impossible to be certain about the assignment of some to this period. However, the nature of their content is compatible with songs that would have been sung by Jews aspiring to be faithful to Jehovah at this time.

Psalms During the Captivity: 137, 80, 79, 106, 102

Psalm 137--Despair in a Strange Land:

This is the only psalm that can definitely be assigned to the Period of Captivity. It represents those captive Jews who had found it difficult to adjust to their bondage in a

distant land. While their treatment by their captors was often humane, not every experience had been pleasant. Sometimes, the idolatrous Babylonians, who had no regard for the seriousness of the Jews' religion, made light of their devotions and tried to turn them into entertainment. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion! Make us laugh!" Religion was serious to the sincere Jew, and mirth was largely foreign to the emotions of people who daily remembered better times in a better place and were saddened by the memory. This "singer of songs" renewed his determination to devote his every musical skill to the praise of Jehovah and of the city where he hoped he would sing one day with an exuberance born out of the freedom of both body *and* soul.

This awareness of his painful confinement served to reaffirm the psalmist's godly resentment toward those responsible for his condition. Babylon, the capturing nation, and Edom, representative of nations approving of Israel's captivity, should have to pay for what they had done to God's people. The blessings of heaven should rest upon whoever the Lord might use as His instrument to exact vengeance for His children's distress. The feelings ran *deep*: "Happy shall he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock."

Psalm 80-- An Appeal for Deliverance:

This psalm, a "Testimony of Asaph," embodies the fervent appeal of a suffering soul caught in the physical and religious restraints of Babylonian captivity. The national condition is desperate:

"O Lord God of hosts, how long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in great measure.
You have made us a strife to our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves."

All hope for relief rested in Jehovah. If He would restore them to favor, they would be saved! The Lord alone had been responsible for Israel's national prominence when He delivered them from a similar bondage in Egypt many years before and had caused them to "take deep root" and to "fill the land" of Caanan. Now, the fruit of this vine that God had planted had been pillaged and the "strong branch" had been cut down and burned in an enemy's fire. The nation was perishing as the result of the Lord's disfavor. A *heartfelt appeal* for relief was surely in order:

"Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.
Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name."

Psalm 79-- A Promise of Faithfulness:

God's blessings are never unilateral. They always are bestowed on those who have

obeyed His commandments (Revelation 22:14). The psalmist [of Asaph's family] recognized this order of things as he penned Psalm 79. The awful plight of Israel now stood in stark contrast to the pleasant life they had enjoyed in their own land prior to their disobedience to God and their subsequent captivity. Conquering nations had defiled their temple and had destroyed their holy city. Those killed in the warfare against them had been "too many to bury." A mighty nation had been brought down to the level of "scorn and derision" by their neighbors.

Impatiently, the psalmist calls out for both relief and retribution-- relief from God's wrath and retribution on those who had become agents of His wrath. The wrath was well deserved: "Oh, do not remember *former iniquities* against us!" Salvation for the captives and retribution for their captors would glorify God's name among the nations.

The "groaning of the prisoner" was adequate evidence of Israel's remorse for sins against Jehovah. His great power was sufficient to save the captives who otherwise would surely die [either emotionally or literally]. Release from bondage and restoration to their former condition would bring forth the gratitude and praise of a thankful people:

"So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture,
Will give You thanks forever;
We will show forth Your praise to all generations."

Psalm 106-- Confidence in God's Unwavering Mercy:

Israel had a long history of disobeying Jehovah and of being punished for their disobedience. The captivity in Babylon was another proof that bad behavior destroys even people claiming to be the people of God. The [unnamed] author of this psalm calls upon the Lord to remember His previous relationship to this now-captive nation. While their past history was one of ingratitude and rebellion, His history was one of never-failing mercy and forgiveness toward them. Israel had enjoyed favor as His people; benefit as His chosen ones; gladness as His nation; and glory as His inheritance. But now things were very different. They had "sinned with [like] their fathers," "committed iniquity," and "done wickedly." Nevertheless, they could hope for treatment by the Lord similar to that given to their fathers long ago-- "He saved them for His name's sake" and to "make His mighty power known." The wicked behavior of Israel had repeatedly been forgiven by a loving Savior.

1. They had "rebelled" at the Red Sea and denied God's concern (Exo.14:10-12), but they "stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord."
2. They lusted after food and questioned God's provisions in the wilderness (Exo. 16: 2-14), but God gave them manna and quails to satisfy their hunger.
3. They challenged the authority of God's leaders (Num. 16:3), but only the leaders of the rebellion were put to death.

4. They worshiped a calf of gold (Exo. 32:1-6), but God accepted Moses' intercession and spared the people.
5. They murmured repeatedly against the Lord in the wilderness (Num. 14:26-29), but God spared the offenders an instant death.
6. They committed harlotry with pagan nations (Num. 25:1-5), but God spared the people because of the zeal of Phineas and other faithful men.
7. They provoked Moses to sin at Meribah (Num. 20:1-13), but God gave them water.
8. They compromised with idolatrous nations over many years, "learned their works," and "served their idols." This evil conduct had resulted in their ultimate captivity by the Babylonians [the "Gentiles"].

The outcome of this latest episode of rebellion still hung in the balance. If the people repented, would the Lord forgive and bless them as He had always done for their fathers? They had been "brought low for their iniquity," but would the Lord "regard their affliction" and as always before "relent according to the multitude of His mercies"? He had already made them to be pitied by their captors [resulting in reasonable treatment by the Babylonians and a soon-to-be-issued decree of relief by Cyrus]. Would He not also allow them to be "gathered from among the Gentiles" and return home? If so, how abundant would be their thanks and their praise for this "triumph" of faith and trust in Jehovah! Let all the people join together: "Bless the Lord God of Israel... Praise the Lord!"

Psalm 102-- Confidence in God's Promise:

The Hebrew title to this psalm is: "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the Lord." It is fairly certain that this "affliction" was related to the captivity of Israel in Babylon. Moreover, it appears that the time for the return was drawing near, and the captives were hoping against hope that they would live to see the end of the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11) and be allowed to return home. These thoughts of an unidentified writer may be considered as those of a single individual suffering in bondage or as representative of the nation's anticipation of their long-awaited release from many days of disappointment and despair.

The unpleasantness of the captivity took many forms. Some of it was physical; much of it was emotional. Of course, things were much worse for the conscientious than for those not bothered by conscience. The psalmist employs a number of similes to describe his/their despair in "the day of my trouble":

1. Days passed away with nothing worthwhile to show for them, just as smoke disappears into nothingness;
2. The pain of captivity burned like the fire of a hearth, and the downcast spirit reminded of grass cut down and withered;
3. The captive felt as much out of place in Babylon as a pelican far removed from water;
4. The loneliness and sense of isolation was like that of a sparrow all alone on a rooftop.

There were some among Israel's captors who refrained from any physical mistreatment of the captives but who were set on keeping them aware of the Jews' inferior status while under their control. They "reproached" and "derided" their Jewish prisoners and "swore" against them.

It was not just repressive treatment by their captors that depressed the Israelites. The knowledge that they were being punished by the indignation and wrath of Jehovah because of their previous disobedience to Him only added to their misery. Being "cast away" by God removed all joy from their existence. To devout Jews, bread tasted no better than ashes; drink was no more satisfying than salty tears. To them, life seemed more dismal and discouraging as the days passed.

But-- amid the despair, there remained hope for better times. God had promised an end to the captivity, and the time of release was drawing near. The "set time" had come, and God's people were anxious to build a new temple out of Zion's dust with the stones of the old temple left behind years before by the Babylonians. The Lord, who endures and is forever the same, would neither forget nor ignore His pledge to restore the former glory both of His temple and of His nation. He would answer the prayer of the "destitute" captives and "build up Zion."

The future of this imprisoned nation was soon to become much brighter. History would record the release of Israel in a way that future generations yet unborn would praise the Lord for intervening in the captivity of His people and allowing them to be free again. The "groaning" prisoners, otherwise "appointed to death," would be released and would "gather together" once again in Jerusalem to praise and serve their God!

However, the exile imposed on Israel by Jehovah had taken its toll on the captives. Their physical and emotional strength had been weakened by the years of servitude. At this point in their captivity, their greatest fear was that they might not survive long enough to experience the joy of freedom once again. Their plea was, "Do not take me away in the midst of my days." They had for many years yearned for the change in their condition that the Lord had promised through His prophets. Just as the heavens and the earth were destined to undergo positive changes one day (2Peter 3:12,13), their own change for the better would be welcome, but it must come soon or they would not endure to enjoy it.

When the release of the captives had been effected, and when they had returned to the land of their fathers, the nation would again be established to function as it had in its days of prominence and glory. With God's help, "the children of your servants will continue."

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 137, 80, 79, 106, 102:

- 1. Religious activity must never be turned into entertainment. Its intended purpose to glorify God is far too serious to be changed into a mere pastime. (137:3)*
- 2. It is shameful when the "hedges" of God's people are broken down because of their disobedience and "all who pass by pluck her fruit." Righteousness will*

- withstand the attacks of the foe, but unrighteousness cannot. (80:12)*
3. *It is well said that “when you are down, the best thing to do is look up.” Help from the Lord is the only sure remedy for our problems. (79:8,9)*
 4. *The future is best judged by the past. Why should we doubt God’s willingness and ability to help us when we know how much He has already done for us? (106:4)*
 5. *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!” Gratitude should move us to “tell the world” about God’s innumerable favors shown to us as His children. (102:1)*

Psalms After the Captivity: 126, 107, 120, 85, 48

Many things *were* better for the exiles who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But other things were much the same. Their plans to rebuild the temple and the city walls were adamantly opposed by the inhabitants of the land. They were threatened, unjustly accused and maligned, and subjected to serious internal problems of greed and disloyalty before they ultimately completed their mission of restoration. The psalms written during these unsettled times reflect both the joy experienced by devoted people as they made progress toward a cherished goal and the anxiety of those same people that was caused by fierce opposition to their purpose to build for the Lord.

Psalm 126-- The Joy of Restoration:

This “Song of Ascents” is appropriate to the feelings of exultation experienced by the Jews who returned to their homeland. The long wait for restoration was over. Now they were free to pursue their dream of a temple and a city dedicated to the service of the true God. How happy they must have been!

It was so wonderful to be back home that it seemed to the people no less than a beautiful dream. Laughter and singing now came spontaneously to men and women who just a short time earlier had declined to sing “songs of Zion” by the rivers of Babylon. [See Psalm 137.] The talk among the admiring nations around them was really true-- “The Lord had done great things for them.” Their captivity had made them weep; their restoration to God’s favor now made them “glad.”

Perhaps this was the song of the *first* exiles who came back. Their joy would be even more complete when the others still in Babylon should be “brought back.” Their prayer to

the Lord would be answered when other captives returned in great numbers and with swiftness comparable to the abundant waters of the Nile and other rivers of “the South.”

These newly-situated occupants of the holy city had returned with valuable lessons learned from their captivity. Those who “sow” seeds of humble obedience to the Lord will receive blessings from Him that will bring great joy to their souls. The continual practice of this principle will turn “seed” into the “sheaves” of an abundant harvest. Not every captive Jew had been humble enough to trust the Lord’s promise of restoration, but those who had were now being wonderfully rewarded with blessings that made the long wait in Babylon well worth every sacrifice.

Psalm 107-- Thanksgiving for Deliverance:

One emotion was to be expected in these returning captives more than any other. Surely, not one of them could contemplate the nature and number of blessings attached to their restoration to Palestine without being overcome by an outpouring of *thanksgiving* to Jehovah! Psalm 107 is a rather lengthy exposition of how blessed the nation really was in this restoration and how typical these blessings were of the Lord’s general treatment of the human family. It possibly was composed soon after the first captives reached home and before they had a full comprehension of just how much the Lord had done for them. Nevertheless, those who had been “redeemed” and “gathered” from Babylon should be thankful and should *say so!* Their blessings were in keeping with the history of God’s dealings with the Jewish people.

Jehovah had richly blessed His people in past time (verses 4-9): There was a time when Israel was a nation of wanderers with “no city to dwell in.” They were sometimes hungry and thirsty, and their hearts grew faint because of their circumstances. Without the help of God they would have perished. He had heard their cry, delivered them out of distress and danger, and had led them into a land of promise where they would eventually have “a city” of their own to inhabit [Jerusalem]. He satisfied souls longing for better things and filled them with “goodness” of every kind. The psalmist concluded:

“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (verse 8)

Jehovah had richly blessed His people in the present (verses 10-16): They had recently been in a condition of “darkness” and were overshadowed by a “death” of remorse and despondency. Life had been hardly worth living in a foreign land among strange and idolatrous people. Some of them perhaps had been “bound in irons,” and all of them had been shackled with various afflictions in their status as captives. Moreover, the realization that they had brought their difficulties on themselves by their mistreatment of the will of God made their situation even worse. They had worked hard as slaves for their cap-

tors. No man could help them out of their distress. But finally, they cried to the Lord and He did what others could not. He brought them out from under death's shadow and freed them from their hurtful bondage. He threw open the strong gates of Babylon and gave freedom and restoration to a people who had only known great sorrow. Therefore:

“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (verse 15)

Jehovah had richly blessed His people in spite of their unworthiness (verses 17-22): Grace was multiplied in the Lord's forgiveness of a nation totally responsible for its condition. They had been “fools” in their reprehensible disobedience over many years and had realized their mistakes too late. Captivity had been hard. They had been “afflicted” with many abuses and temptations from an enemy unsympathetic to their religious convictions. Perhaps they were made to eat foods forbidden by their Law. Certainly, they resented the totality of the “food” [provisions] offered them by their godless captors. Probably, lives were sometimes placed in danger by cruel taskmasters, and they “drew near to the gates of death.” Still laden with the guilt of past sins and disobediences, they had cried out for relief to a loving God-- and He had forgiven them and had saved them out of their distresses! And it was not enough that the Lord should save them from the *past*. He was willing to save them from a sinful *future* as well. He gave them Ezra and other prophets and teachers to instruct and warn them in the way of the Law. He wanted them to avoid the mistakes of the past that had led them to a country far away. Their obvious duty now was to be grateful for what Jehovah had done for them. As a result of God's grace, they would soon be able to offer sacrifices again according to their Law, but now their “sacrifices” should be sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Let them be reminded:

“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men.” (verse 21)

Jehovah's blessings to Israel were an extension of His mercy to all men (verses 23-32): It was not only to favored Israel that God's gracious watchcare was given. The return of the captives simply underscored the beneficent Nature of the Almighty. The psalmist picks from innumerable possible examples one familiar situation that illustrates how the mercy of the Lord goes far beyond what men deserve from Him. Those who traveled or did business on the seas during this time in history were well acquainted with the dangers and fears of such seafaring. It was not uncommon for their ships to encounter great storms which often caused extensive damage and death. The lifting and falling of a frail vessel as it was tossed about in the winds and waves must have been extremely frightening to those on board. Souls “melted” in the experience. Often, sailors in their distress would be moved to “cry out to the Lord in their trouble,” and He would deliver them from what appeared to be a certain death. When the storm stilled, they would be glad for the calm as they reached their appointed destinations. It appears that these were Jewish seamen, for

the psalmist observes that their gratitude for God's rescue should lead them into the congregation and into the assembly to voice their thanksgiving before all. But, alas, likely this did not always happen, so the writer is made to wonder again:

“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men.” (verse 31)

Jehovah's rich blessings for the faithful would surely continue in the future (verses 33-42): Jehovah always deals with men in **justice** [fairness]. He turns rivers of prosperity into a wilderness of poverty and suffering for those who are unconcerned with His will. The fruitful land will become barren and unproductive because its inhabitants are wicked. On the other hand, the opposite is true for righteous men. Dry places will be watered, those previously hungry will be fed in their own city, and faithful people can expect to plant seed and harvest the bountiful yield of the earth, all because righteous people receive a return on their investment of “seeking first” those things that are “first” in importance. Both people and cattle will multiply and fill the land under God's watchful eye. When trouble comes, as it does sometimes to everyone, Jehovah's blessings will not be withdrawn. Those adversaries who would bring down God's people and cause them to wander again in the wilderness of sin and deprivation will themselves suffer just such a fate at the hand of the Lord, for He will not abandon His own. Those who have observed how God deals with good and bad people will be impressed with two unvarying principles: (1) the righteous will have cause to rejoice in their expectations of fair treatment, and (2) the wicked will not be able to complain [“stop their mouths”] of their punishment because their own sins alone are responsible for everything that will happen to them when the Lord settles His accounts.

This psalm is a forecast of how Israel could expect to be treated by the Lord in the days following their return home. The same willingness to bow to God's will that had brought them out of Babylon would assure continued showers of blessing. [See Ezekiel 34:26.]

A panoramic observation of Jehovah's interaction with Israel over all the time they have been His favored nation would reveal a fundamental truth about their God:

“Whoever is wise will observe these things,
and they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.” (verse 43)

Psalm 120-- There is No Peace:

It could have been very discouraging to Zerubbabel and other Jewish leaders to be faced upon their return with serious opposition to their plans to build God's temple. They likely supposed that with the Persian king behind them, their work would be unimpeded. How wrong they were! Adversaries “tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them...all the days of Cyrus...even until

the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:4,5). False charges were lodged with the king, and work was interrupted for several years. Nehemiah’s later work on the city wall was also challenged by Sanballat, Tobiah, and others. They mocked, lied, sought compromise, and physically threatened the laborers of Judah. Nothing could stop Jehovah’s project, however, and the work was completed as planned.

Psalm 120 might have been composed during either period of opposition. The problems were the same, and the solution to both situations was (1) faith in God’s protection and (2) persistence to achieve the goal set for the people by the Lord.

Verse 1-- The “distress” voiced by Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, or some other leader involved in the building was “heard” and answered by the Lord. Perhaps the answer was in the response of king Darius who ordered the building to resume. Or it may have been in their own response to the failed “open letter” that charged Nehemiah with plotting to become the ruler of Judah. Heaven would not allow earth to thwart the glory of restoration!

Verses 2-4-- One of “seven” things hated by God is “a lying tongue” (Prov. 6:17), and He defeated the lies and false reports issued by enemies in the land who were determined that neither temple nor wall would be rebuilt. However, their weapons of “lying lips,” a “deceitful tongue,” and a “false tongue” were helpless against the defenses of truth and righteousness employed by the builders. Sharp “arrows” and consuming “fire” would surely be the end of those who resorted to such base tactics against the Lord’s work!

Verses 5, 6-- The dark influences of Meschech and Kedar had caused great pain to the noble purpose of Israel’s leaders to follow God’s plans. These are thought to be places or people in or near locations of the captivity. The psalmist’s lament was that the restorers were still faced with the same kind of opposition that had been raised against them during the days of exile. They had already faced enough threatening behavior commonly shown by men who “hate peace,” but now they were facing more of the same in Jerusalem.

Verse 7-- Jewish leaders in the rebuilding wanted peace with their neighbors. Peace would enhance the completion of their projects. Conflict with other people would certainly hinder the work. How frustrating it must have been to those who had made every effort to be peaceful to have to contend with men who wanted only to wage war against them!

Psalm 85-- A Pledge of Steadfastness:

The captives who returned with Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall had been moved by a reading of the Law to make a solemn covenant to keep its precepts thereafter. Nevertheless, during a time when Nehemiah was away from the city, there had occurred serious relapses in their determination to live righteously. The temple was being defiled by

foreigners, the Levites were being neglected, the Sabbath was being abused, and some of the Jews were still married to pagan women. Nehemiah, on his return, immediately launched an attack on these sins of the people and saw that the unlawful practices were stopped. This psalm perhaps constituted a pledge to Jehovah, composed by “the sons of Korah,” that sin in the nation would cease and that henceforth righteousness would prevail.

The Lord had been very gracious to Israel in bringing them back from their exile. Their iniquity had been forgiven, and the punishing wrath of captivity had been stayed. But now a *new* anger had been raised against them. Heaven was highly displeased that the spiritual progress of the restorers had been deeply marred by sins currently being committed by some of the people. The psalmist’s plea was that the *sinner*s [“us”] needed restoration by God as much as the *wall* needed restoration by the people! Necessarily included in this plea was the repentance of the offenders and the success of Nehemiah’s campaign to reform the deteriorated situation. *Revival* was needed “again” as it had first been needed prior to the return from Babylon.

God’s handling of their problems would be accepted by His people and by His “saints” [those “sanctified” to be leaders?]. But they must meet *one condition* to have God’s peace again. They must not turn back to folly! That is what some had done before; it must not happen again! If they indeed would comply with the Lord’s expectation that He be feared, salvation was “near” and glory once again could dwell in Judah.

The psalmist’s vision of a renewed dedication to Jehovah is described in rich imagery. *Righteousness* [man’s duty] and *peace* [God’s reward] have “kissed each other.” *Truth* will become the principal crop of the land and the *righteousness* [guidance] of Jehovah will oversee the activities of the faithful. His pleasure with Israel’s spiritual progress will be reflected in the physical prosperity of the economy. God will send His revelations of righteousness to His people, and the “footsteps” He prescribes will become the “pathway” for every dutiful soul!

Psalm 48-- The Restoration of Glory:

The attack on sin had been successful. The people had repented and had reformed their lives. Righteousness had been restored along with the temple, the wall, and the holy city. The awesome tasks undertaken by the former captives had been completed. This “Song, A Psalm of the sons of Korah” celebrated the accomplishment of heaven’s plan for restoring God’s people.

The greatness of Israel’s God could now be praised appropriately in His own city and

in His own temple on Mount Zion, situated on the north side of the city proper. He now could “reside” in the “palaces” of Jerusalem and serve as its divine Protector.

Not everyone was as thrilled over Jerusalem’s restoration as the psalmist and his Jewish companions. The kings of other nations were “troubled” by the prospect of Israel’s return to prominence and power among them. They were moved by fear to “hasten away.” They were overtaken by the pain of anxiety that the balance of power might be upset by the resurgence of a people who had once dominated the entire known world. Their spirits were broken just like ships were sometimes broken in storms [“an east wind”] on the high seas.

The Lord had promised to establish the restored nation “forever” [contingent, of course, on their continued faithfulness]. *Selah*-- let that truth be thrown out for all to consider! There was good cause for Israel’s foes to fear these latest developments in their restoration, but there was much more cause for the recent captives to rejoice over their new state of freedom and prosperity! The temple service had been resumed, and there God’s blessings could best be remembered and praised. Let “the daughters of Judah” rejoice and be glad for all that Jehovah’s judgments had done for His children!

The psalmist exults in the newly-wonderful condition of the restored city of God. He wants everyone to “walk around her” and see for themselves just how glorious she is now. Look carefully at all her impressive structures so that her marvelous attributes can be recited in glorious detail to future generations.

“For this is *God, our God forever and ever;*
He will be our guide even to death.”

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM PSALMS 126, 107, 120, 85, 48:

1. *The saved should be deeply concerned for the “return” of other captives of sin to the salvation of the Lord. Our joy of redemption cannot be complete until the fold is “full.” (126:4)*
2. *When honest-hearted men give a fair audience to God’s watchcare over all mankind, they are constrained to “understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.” (107:43)*
3. *How temporary are even the most enduring things of our experience. Only God and the souls of both good and bad people will live forever. How careful we should be to live eternally in the right place. (102:25-28)*
4. *Mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace are the threads that work together to weave the fabric of God’s relationship with His people. If any one is missing, the relationship is incomplete. (85:10-13)*
5. *“Walk about Zion” [the New Testament church] and “note well her bulwarks.”*

She is a perfect institution as Jesus made her, and she must not be altered and marred even by the well-intended “improvements” of men. (48:12,13)

Other psalms of interest possibly of this time period: 44, 46, 74, 81, 122, 146

1. The king of the _____ carried away the Jews to _____, burned the _____ of _____, and broke down the _____.
2. The captivity lasted _____ years until the reign of _____, king of _____.
3. [Psalm 137]: Singers hung their _____ on the _____ by the _____ of _____.
4. [Psalm 80]: Israel was fed with the _____ of _____ and drank _____ in great measure.
5. [Psalm 79]: Sin caused Israel's enemies to say, "Where is their _____?"
6. [Psalm 106]: The Jews _____ against God by their _____ and were _____ for their _____.
7. [Psalm 102]: "You are the _____, and Your _____ will have no _____."
8. [Psalm 126]: Those who _____ in _____ shall _____ in _____ and come again bringing their _____ with them.
9. [Psalm 107]: "Let the _____ of the Lord _____."
10. [Psalm 120]: The restorers had to deal with _____ lips and _____ and _____ tongues as they rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple.
11. [Psalm 85]: "_____ and _____ have met together; _____ and _____ have _____ each other."
12. [Psalm 48]: Observers should _____ around Zion, count her _____, _____ well her _____, and consider her _____.

Psalms in the New Testament

Many references to passages from Psalms are found in the New Testament. Most of these references are used by inspired writers to show the correspondence or connection between truth during the Mosaic dispensation and situations, persons, or conditions that existed during the later dispensation of the Gospel. These correlations demonstrate that “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” Truth is eternal, and the principles governing the relationship between God and man are unvarying.

New Testament references to statements in the psalms fall into two main categories: (1) those involving Jesus Christ, called “Messianic” references, and, (2) those not referring to Jesus, or “non-Messianic.” Of *eighty-three* total citations, *fifty-one* are applied to Jesus Christ; *thirty-two* involve other persons or things. There are *forty-two* different psalms from which New Testament quotations are taken.

References to Psalms in the New Testament

[** = Passages Referring to Jesus Christ]

<u>Psalm Referenced</u>	<u>N. T. Location</u>	<u>Psalm Referenced</u>	<u>N. T. Location</u>
2:1, 2	Acts 4:25,26 **	69:25	Acts 1:20
2:7	Acts 13:33 **	78:2	Matt. 13:35 **
2:7	Heb. 1:5 **	78:24	Jno. 6:31
2:7	Heb. 5:5 **	82:6	Jno. 10:34
2:9	Rev. 2:27 **	89:20	Acts 13:22
4:4	Eph. 4:26	91:11,12	Matt. 4:6 **
5:9	Rom. 3:13	91:11,12	Lk. 4:10 **
8:2	Mat. 21:16 **	94:11	1Cor. 3:20
8:4	Heb. 2:6 **	95:8-11	Heb. 3:7-11
8:6	1Cor. 15:27 **	95:7	Heb. 3:15
10:7	Rom. 3:14	95:7	Heb. 4:7
14:2,3	Rom. 3:10-12	95:11	Heb. 4:3
16:8	Acts 2:25 **	95:11	Heb. 4:5
16:10	Acts 13:35 **	97:7	Heb. 1:6 **
18:49	Rom. 15:9	102:25-27	Heb. 1:10-12**
19:4	Rom. 10:18	104:4	Heb. 1:7
21:1	Matt. 27:46 **	109:8	Acts 1:20
21:1	Mk. 15:34 **	110:1	Matt. 22:44 **

The Psalms of David and Others

LESSON THIRTEEN

<u>Psalm Referenced</u>	<u>N. T. Location</u>	<u>Psalm Referenced</u>	<u>N. T. Location</u>
22:18	Matt. 27:35 **	110:1	Mk. 12:36 **
22:18	Jno. 19:24 **	110:1	Lk. 20:42,43 **
22:22	Heb. 2:12 **	110:1	Heb. 1:13 **
24:1	1Cor. 10:26	110:1	Acts 2:34,35 **
24:1	1Cor. 10:28	110:4	Heb. 5:6 **
31:5	Lk. 23:46 **	110:4	Heb. 7:17 **
32:1,2	Rom. 4:7,8	110:4	Heb. 7:21 **
34:12	1Pet. 3:10	112:9	2Cor. 9:9
34:20	Jno. 19:36 **	116:10	2Cor. 4:13
35:19	Jno. 15:25 **	117:1	Rom. 15:11
36:1	Rom. 3:18	118:6	Heb. 13:6
40:6	Heb. 10:5 **	118:22	1Pet. 2:7 **
41:9	Jno. 13:18 **	118:22,23	Matt. 21:42**
44:22	Rom. 8:36	118:22,23	Mk. 12:10 **
45:6,7	Heb. 1:8,9 **	118:22,23	Lk. 20:17 **
51:4	Rom. 3:4	118:22	Acts 4:11**
53:1-3	Rom. 3:10-12	118:26	Matt. 21:9 **
62:12	Rom. 2:6 **	118:26	Matt. 23:39 **
68:18	Eph. 4:8 **	118:26	Mk. 11:9,10 **
69:4	Jno. 15:25 **	118:26	Lk. 13:35 **
69:9	Jno. 2:17 **	118:26	Lk. 19:38 **
69:9	Rom. 15:3 **	118:26	Jno. 12:13 **
69:21	Jno. 19:28,29 **	140:3	Rom. 3:13
69:22	Rom. 11:9		

References From Psalms in N. T. Books

<u>N. T. Books (12 books)</u>	<u>Number of References (83 quotes)</u>
Hebrews	19
Romans	15
John	10
Matthew.....	9
Acts	9
Luke	6
Mark	4
1Corinthians	4
2Corinthians	2
Ephesians	2
1Peter	2
Revelation	1

PSALMS MOST OFTEN QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Psalm 118..... 12 Quotes
Psalm 110..... 7 Quotes

VERSES MOST OFTEN QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Psalm 118:26 (6 times): “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Psalm 110:1 (5 times): “The Lord said unto my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ ”

Psalm 118:22-24 (5 times): “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”

NEW TESTAMENT EVENTS THAT “FULFILLED” PROPHECY IN PSALMS

Matthew 13:35: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” [...“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:”] (Psalm 78:2)

Matthew 27:35; John 19:24: “They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” [...“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:”] [...“that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:”] (Psalm 22:18)

John 13:18: “He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” [...“but that the Scripture might be fulfilled:”] (Psalm 41:9)

John 15:25: “They hated Me without a cause.” [...“but that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law,”] (Psalm 69:4)

John 19:28: “I thirst!” [...“that the Scripture might be fulfilled,”] (Psalm 69:21)

John 19:36: “Not one of His bones shall be broken.” [“For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled,”] (Psalm 34:20)

Acts 13:27: [...“their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets... have fulfilled them in condemning Him.”] (Psalm 69:4, 9)

Acts 13:33: ““You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” [“God has fulfilled this...as it is also written in the second Psalm:”] (Psalm 2:7)

Luke 24:44: “...that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

Christ Portrayed in the Psalms

The Jews had long looked for the appearance of their “Messiah.” However, they expected Him to be an earthly King, a mighty Warrior, and a strong Deliverer of His people from the oppression of all enemy nations. Their concept of the Messiah was, of course, completely contrary to the character of His Person and the nature of His work that God had planned for Jesus from the beginning. Their expectations for the Christ were also contrary to numerous details about His life, suffering, and death that comprise a significant portion of Psalms. It is impossible to know how much of what the psalmists revealed about the Savior was understood by Jewish worshipers, but it is clear that the national concept of the Messiah was not appreciably changed by any of the references to the Lord in the psalms. A clear comprehension of the psalmists’ true meanings would have given the Jewish mind a completely different picture of the long-awaited Messiah.

Christ-- the Hope of Israel

The picture painted of Jesus in the psalms is one that emphasizes His spiritual mission to redeem Israel from its bondage to Satan. That was far more important than the physical deliverance and political domination that the Jews wanted from Him. Many encouraging things were revealed in the psalms about Jesus’ work on earth that must have excited their expectant hearts. But they became totally disillusioned about Him when He *fulfilled* these promises on a spiritual level. Notice some of the promises about “The Hope of Israel” that were so woefully misconstrued by the Jews:

Psalm 68:18: “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive, You have received [or given] gifts among men.” The nation looked for a king who would ascend a “high” [powerful] throne, capture their enemies in warfare, and give “gifts” [political grants and dispensations] to all his subjects.

Psalm 16:8: “I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.” It would be comforting to have a ruler who professed to be guided by the Law of God. Such a profession would assure that he could not be “moved” from his position of strength at the helm of Israel’s ship of state.

Psalm 118:26: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” So dominant would be the political and military influence of the Messiah, it was thought, that any Jew would only need to be identified as a citizen of His new earthly kingdom to receive respect and favorable treatment by all other people in the world.

Psalm 45:6: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Israel’s political past had been so fractured by the placement and replacement of numerous kings whose reigns were of short and troubled duration that a king with a “forever” administration would be welcome indeed.

Psalm 2:9: “You shall break them [the nations] with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” This was exactly the kind of military power that many of the Jews wanted from their national leader more than anything else. [Perhaps also refers to David.]

Psalm 110:1,2: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your

footstool.’ The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies.” How much better could it get than for Israel to be returned to such a position of power among the nations that other kingdoms would become nothing more than the Jews’ “footstool”?

Israel’s greatest need was to look at scriptures such as these with a *spiritual* eye rather than with the eye of the world. Correctly interpreted, these passages would have set the Israelites on a course that would truly have “made ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). How different might things have been when the Messiah finally came unto His “own” (John 1:11)!

Christ-- an Unlikely King

Kingship and Messiahship were one and the same thing to the Old Testament Jew. His *vision* of Israel’s expected king was entirely different from what he actually *got* when Jesus came to prepare things for a *spiritual kingdom*. A closer study of Messianic statements in the psalms would have quickly disillusioned students of the psalms about the kind of ruler they had come to anticipate. Most of them would likely not have wanted such a king as was described by the psalmists:

Psalm 2:1-3: “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’ ” Fierce opposition from many other nations to an earthly king’s rule would have undesirable effects on the peace and tranquility of the Jewish people. Yet, Messiah’s reign *would* be the object of the wrath of all other leaders and their subjects. What the Jews failed to grasp was that Jesus would engage His kingdom in a struggle-to-the-death “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual* hosts of wickedness in the *heavenly* places” (Eph. 6:12). [Perhaps also refers to David.]

Psalm 69:4: “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully...” The citizens of an earthly regime would have desired *popularity* and *respect* for their ruler. A popular *hatred* for him would have made the success of his administration extremely difficult. The psalmist’s forecast of despise and violence against the Messiah was not in keeping with the Jews’ expectations for Him, but outbursts of hatred and vehement criticism would become more common and more violent as the Savior continued to teach only the truth and as He condemned the hypocritical traditions of the Jewish authorities (e.g., Luke 11:53,54).

Psalm 18:49: “Therefore, O Lord, I will give thanks to You among the Gentiles.” The last thing Israelites would have wanted in their great king would be for Him to divide His attentions and favors between them and the Gentile nations. The Messiah should be *theirs alone!* Gentiles should never have anything that concerned Him for which to be thankful! Perhaps the New Testament confrontations between Jews and Gentiles would have been far less hindering to Christ’s spiritual kingdom if Israel had recognized God’s eternal intention to provide spiritual healing to every nation on the earth (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15,16).

Psalm 22:1: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Any thought that their Messiah could be “forsaken” by the Father under any circumstance would have been totally repugnant to every Jew. Their king must depend on God for his political and military power and success. It wasn’t possible for the alliance between heaven and earth to be severed, because that would do great harm to an earthly kingdom! Still, Jesus’ cry as He suffered on the cross was, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ ” (Matt. 27:46). [Many scholars question an actual forsaking by God.]

Psalm 22:18: “They divide my garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” This kind of demeaning treatment could never be inflicted on such a mighty leader as Israel supposed the Messiah would be. His *humiliation* and His *pre-eminence* could never be reconciled as long as they expected Him to be an earthly king. This inspired prediction of things unlikely to happen to a great king was fulfilled in Matthew 27:35 and John 19:24.

Psalm 69:21: “They also gave Me gall for My food, and for My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Another unimaginable indignity to Israel’s “Messiah.” How could it be? But it did occur exactly as prophesied (Matt. 27:34 and John 19:29). How different the real king would be from the imagined king for whom the nation waited!

Christ-- the Case for Inspiration

The inspiration of scripture is forcefully demonstrated when things unlikely or impossible are foretold to happen and at some later time actually take place. Psalms, along with numerous other sources in the Old Testament, is replete with predictions having to do with the Christ that would never have come to pass except by the overriding hand of Divinity. No stretch of man’s imagination would have expected that these forecasts could ever be fulfilled! The *heavenly origin* of the psalms becomes evident when we consider numerous “impossible” claims made in them about the future Messiah:

Psalm 110:4: “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” The impossibility of such a situation as this psalm proclaims was obvious. The king who sat on Israel’s literal throne was always to be from Judah’s tribe (1Chron. 17:14), but the priesthood always came from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron (Exo. 40:12-15). Consequently, according to physical succession, a king could never be a priest and a priest could never be a king. Yet, the psalmist boldly declared that the Christ, the King of the Jews, would be a priest, and a priest forever! Is it possible? “With God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). Hebrews chapter seven explains that God made Jesus to be a priest like King Melchizedek whose priesthood and kingship were not restricted by the limitations of physical requirements (Heb. 7:3,14-17). The impossible became possible, an eventuality known to the psalmist long before it happened!

Psalm 41:9: “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his

heel against me.” Friends sometimes betray friends, but it is uncommon. David’s close friend and counselor Ahithophel deserted him to follow and help Absalom, and this statement originally cited that event. However, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, one of His apostles and nearest companions for several years, was an even more unlikely occurrence. John 13:18 characterizes Judas’ shameful action as the “fulfillment of scripture.” The quotation there of Psalm 41:9 certifies that David not only looked back on what *had* happened to him but also to another betrayal that *would* happen to the Christ far in the future. A clear example of prophecy.

Psalm 22:18: “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” It was not unusual for Roman soldiers to claim the clothing of the crucified for themselves. However, it was not at all likely that lots would be cast to determine ownership of any single garment. Nor was it likely that the penniless Christ would possess a robe valuable enough or unusual enough that the soldiers would be unwilling to tear it. Their decision to cast lots (John 19:24) precisely “fulfilled” David’s prophecy in Psalm 22:18.

Psalm 34:20: “He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.” Invariably, the legs or other body parts were broken in the crucifixion process to hasten the death of the crucified. The Jews asked that this be done to the Christ so that His body might be taken down prior to the beginning of the Sabbath. The legs of the two thieves *were* broken, but Jesus was already dead and there was no need to further abuse His body. This unforeseen exception to common practice was labeled by the apostle John as “the fulfillment of scripture” (John 19:37). The Old Testament passover lamb was to have none of its bones broken (Num. 9:12). Jesus was the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), our New Testament Passover Lamb sacrificed for our sins (1Cor. 5:7).

Psalm 16:10: “For You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” This declaration by David is the *most impossible* of any claim made about the Messiah. It asserts that His soul would exit the “place of the dead,” and the body that was dutifully placed in a tomb would not remain there long enough to suffer the effects of physical decay. This is a promise of *resurrection!* But that was a foolish promise to make, unless the psalmist *knew by inspiration* about the raising of the Christ long before it took place. “But now Christ *is* risen from the dead” (1Cor. 15:20) and the reality of that miracle was witnessed at one time by as many as five hundred people (1Cor. 15:6), most of whom were still alive and available for interviews at the time Paul reported their experience.

Non-Messianic References from Psalms in the New Testament

Besides the passages from Psalms quoted by New Testament writers that are associated with Jesus Christ and His mission among men, there are many other citations that deal with persons or things other than our Lord. These verses cover a wide range of topics. We will look at two main categories: (1) The Wickedness of Man, and, (2) The Worthiness of God.

THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN

Psalm 5:9,10: “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue. Pronounce them guilty, O God!” (Quoted in Romans 3:13)

Psalm 10:7: “His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is trouble and iniquity.” (Quoted in Romans 3:14)

Psalm 140:2,3: “Who plan evil things in their hearts; they continually gather together for war; they sharpen their tongues like a serpent; the poison of asps is under their lips.” (Quoted in Romans 3:13)

Psalm 36:1-4: “An oracle within my heart concerning the transgressions of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes, for he flatters himself in his own eyes, when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. He devises wickedness on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not abhor evil.” (Quoted in Romans 3:18)

Psalm 53:1-3: “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no not one.” (Quoted in Romans 3:10-12)

It is obvious from these and similar statements in the psalms that the psalmists recognized the sinfulness of man and his need of Jehovah. The man without God’s mercy and forgiveness is in a vile and hopeless condition. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, David and the other writers were conscious that Jehovah was a loving and forgiving God. They and other sinners like them could escape the Lord’s wrath through lifelong efforts to be righteous.

THE WORTHINESS OF GOD

Psalm 24:1,2: “The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.” God possesses infinite power and maintains complete control of all things. (Quoted in 1Cor. 10:26,28)

Psalm 94:11: “The Lord knows the thoughts of man...” God possesses all knowledge of all things. (Quoted in 1Corinthians 3:20)

Psalm 95:11: “So I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ” God denies His blessings to disobedient people. (Quoted in Hebrews 3:11)

Psalm 32:1,2: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” God is quick to forgive the sins of humble and penitent sinners. (Quoted in Romans 4:7)

Psalm 78:24: “...Had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.” God has always provided abundantly for the needs of faithful worshipers. (Quoted in John 6:31)

Psalm 112:9: “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor.” God’s unwavering goodness to needy men is returned in their loving submission to His governance. (Quoted in 2Corinthians 9:9)

Psalm 117:1,2: “Oh, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.” God’s love extends to all mankind. He sent His Son to seek and to save all who were lost (Luke 19:10). (Quoted in Romans 15:11)

David’s confidence in the Lord’s goodness was remarkable. He never lost faith in Jehovah, even when he was suffering the hurtful consequences of his own sin and mismanagement. His constant exhortation to others was to continue to trust that God would stand by faithful people and bring them victoriously out of their direst circumstances. This “man after God’s own heart” is as much an inspiration to struggling people of our time as he was to those of his own generation.

Psalms which are often considered to be predominantly Messianic (with uninspired titles):

Psalm 16: “The Hope of the Faithful, and the Messiah’s Victory”

Psalm 22: “The Suffering, Praise, and Posterity of the Messiah”

Psalm 45: “The Glories of the Messiah and His Bride”

Psalm 72: “Glory and Universality of the Messiah’s Reign”

Psalm 110: “Announcement of the Messiah’s Reign”

1. The New Testament contains _____ quotations from Psalms in its various books. Of these, _____ quotations refer to Christ, and _____ to other persons or things.
2. How many New Testament books contain quotes from Psalms? _____ Which book contains the most quotes from Psalms? _____ How many? _____
3. Which psalm is quoted most often in the New Testament? _____ How many times? _____ Which psalm is next most often quoted and how many times? _____; _____.
4. Which *verse* from Psalms is most often quoted? _____ How many times? _____ Which verse is second most often quoted? _____
5. Portions of how many *different* psalms are quoted in the New Testament? _____
6. List *five* things that the Jews expected of the Messiah that were based on their physical interpretation of the psalms: [Section on “Christ-- the Hope of Israel”]
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
7. List *four* things stated about the Christ in the psalms that were totally foreign to what the Jews expected of their new king: [Section on “Christ-- an Unlikely King”]
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)
 - (4)
8. List *three* things predicted about the Messiah in the psalms that indicate the divine inspiration of their author: [Section on “Christ-- the Case for Inspiration”]
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)
9. Select *two* characteristics of wickedness in man addressed in the psalms. Cite the psalm and where each quotation is found in the New Testament:
 - (1)
 - (2)
10. Select *three* characteristics of God as discussed in the selected psalms. Cite the psalm and where each quotation is found in the New Testament:
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)