

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

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THE

PSALMS

OF DAVID AND OTHERS

[LESSONS 2-13]

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THE PSALMS – NOTES FOR TEACHERS

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PSALMS-- LESSON 2-- "A Psalm for Happiness"

[Psalm 1]

Solomon's prescription for REAL HAPPINESS:

NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS (What not to do)

- A. Do not walk in ungodly counsel;
- B. Do not stand in sinners' paths;
- C. Do not sit in scorners' seat.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORS (What to do)

- A. Delight in God's Word;
- B. Meditate constantly on God's Law.

MUST BE LIKE A TREE

Desirable characteristics of trees:

1. Essentiality. The cycle of life-- Carbon Dioxide--Oxygen---etc. depends on trees and shrubs for maintenance. Christians are salt and light that preserve human existence.
2. Stability. Trees must be planted to achieve their potential in nature. Christians are planted in God's Word and Way to grow enough to become a positive force for good in the world.
3. Simplicity of elements for growth. Trees require light and water to become strong and beneficial to others. Christians only require the light of Bible truth and the living water (influence) of a close relationship with Christ to become what they need to be in the kingdom.
4. Beneficial for numerous purposes. Trees provide shade and shelter; lumber for building; food (fruit) for sustaining life; and many more important things. Christians serve as blessings to glorify God; to save themselves eternally, and to offer spiritual guidance and physical help to needy persons.
5. Dependability. Trees shed their leaves and renew their foliage on schedule; they produce their fruit in season; they maintain their positions over long periods of time. Christians are expected to exhibit constancy and consistency in their lifestyles and in their service to others.
6. Value to the landscape. Trees are usually removed reluctantly and replaced when possible. They often add much to the value of property. Christians both individually and collectively can be compared to found treasure and pearls of great price.

PSALMS--- LESSON 2

REAL HAPPINESS

The world seeks its happiness from many sources. These pleasures may provide temporary satisfaction, but genuine and lasting happiness comes to the Christian through compliance with the will of our Creator and Sustainer. Atheists, agnostics, and skeptics must contend with the doubts and uncertainties that accompany their lack of confidence in a power higher than themselves.

Robert G. Ingersoll, noted agnostic and prominent spokesman for the cause of skepticism, had much to say about his personal disbelief:

"Is there a God? I do not know. Is man immortal? I do not know. One thing I do know, and that is, that neither hope, nor fear, belief, nor denial can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be."

"Religion can never reform man because religion is slavery."

"It has always seemed absurd to suppose that a god would choose for his companions, during all eternity, the dear souls whose highest and only ambition is to obey."

"Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so. Wisdom is the science of happiness."

"Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the noiseless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word: but in the night of death hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing." (Excerpt from Ingersoll's eulogy at his brother's funeral)

Ernest Renan, French scholar and champion of skepticism, said: "O Lord, if there is a Lord, save my soul, if I have a soul."

PSALMS-- LESSON 3--"David: The Shepherd Boy..."

[1Sam.15-17]

WHAT DAVID LEARNED FROM NATURE

- A. The wisdom and power of God.
 - 1. The *seasons* demonstrated the renewing power of the Lord.
 - 2. The *heat of the sun* stimulated *growth* but the *shade* of trees offered protection for man and beast from its rays.
 - 3. The *instinct* of animals and birds allowed them to find the way home.
 - 4. The *perfection* seen in nature [e.g., birds' nests, bee honeycombs] is constant and achieved without practice.
- B. Proper relationships of God, men, and kings.
 - 1. Man is honored by his dominion over nature and bears great responsibility.
 - 2. God provides for His own.
 - 3. God's presence is observed throughout both nature and the Law.
 - 4. Nature, as well as the Law, proclaims God's wisdom and planning.
 - 5. Men must learn to copy God's relationships with nature in their relationships among themselves.

WHAT DAVID LEARNED FROM TENDING SHEEP

- A. How a good shepherd tends his sheep.
 - 1. Exercises his superior wisdom in leading his sheep.
 - 2. He employs his superior strength in defending his sheep from dangers.
 - 3. He insists on complete dependence and obedience from his sheep.
 - 4. He is aware of serious consequences if his sheep wander from him.
 - 5. He can provide safety and contentment to his sheep if they obey him.
- B. How the Lord tends to His sheep as a Good Shepherd.
 - 1. God's wisdom is far superior to man's.
 - 2. God is very strong; man is very weak and helpless.
 - 3. Man is totally dependent on God for his well being.
 - 4. The disobedience of sin brings spiritual disaster to spiritual sheep.
 - 5. God rewards obedience with great blessings here and hereafter.

DAVID'S ENCOUNTER WITH GOLIATH

- 1. Goliath's height-- 9 feet and 9 inches.
- 2. His weight-- unknown, but obviously great.
- 3. His strength-- carried and threw a spear with a spearhead weighing 600 shekels [15 pounds].
- 4. Comparative specifications:
 - a. Robert Wadlow [reported as world's tallest man] was 8 feet and eleven inches tall. He weighed 439 pounds; died age 22 years.
 - b. Saquille O'Neal [basketball star] is 7 feet and 1 inch tall. He weighs 325 pounds; wears size 22 shoe.

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5. This incident with Goliath was a forecast of David's subsequent service as Israel's king. He would be mindful of his role as defender of Israel's as God's people. He would trust in God's wisdom and power in doing this. He would always credit God with his successes. He would strive to be "a man [and a king] after God's own heart."

SAUL'S SHORTCOMINGS AS KING

1. He acted hastily; assumed role of priest at Gilgal; relied on personal judgment.
2. He trusted too much in himself to win victory- felt "compelled."
3. He acted selfishly in attacking enemies as "opportunity" instead of consulting divine guidance through Urim and Thummin, etc.
4. Imposed his oath on army without authority; was against people's best interest.
5. Devalued full compliance to God's will in defeating Amalakites.
6. Was cruel, unbending on personal issues in dealing with Jonathan's eating.

DAVID SAW SAUL'S MISTAKES AND DETERMINED TO AVOID THE SAME KIND OF BEHAVIOR WHEN HE BECAME KING OVER ISRAEL.

PSALM 8-- Verse 1-- Other gods are immoral [mythology] and powerless [idols].

"Our" Lord is the God of the Earth [nature] and God of the Word [Law].

"Excellent" name -- His moral character, creative and sustaining power.

"Name"-- reputation and authority by virtue of position/power.

"All the earth"-- David's world where God taught about Himself and compared Himself to all the pagan gods of that world.

WHY GOD'S NAME WAS "EXCELLENT" IN DAVID'S EYES.

1. He could bring strength out of weakness to man's advantage.
2. He was mindful of man needs; men are weak and vulnerable and unable to defend themselves from dangers.
3. God's attention directed toward man, not angels.
4. Dominion bestowed upon men, not heavenly beings.
5. Man is crowned with the glory of demonstrating God's *greatest* glory: salvation through love and forgiveness.
6. His glory greater than the three heavens: (1) the atmosphere; (2) outer space; (3) abode of divinity (Revelation 21,22).

Verse 2-- God uses the weak to defeat the strong: Joseph and Potiphar; Esther and Haman

Verse 3-- God's creation displays His wisdom and power: Earthly Phenomena-- Alps Mountains/ Grand Canyon-- great contrast with man's weakness; Heavenly Phenomena-- Sun, Moon, Stars-- an even greater contrast!

PSALMS-- LESSON 3

PSALM 19-- Verse 1-- "The heavens"-- moon, stars (Psa. 8); "sun" (Psa. 19). The "firmament" ["expanse"] allows room to display glory.

Verse 2-- Both day and night "speak" by their (1) consistency and dependability and, (2) their adaptability to man's need (1) to work [in the light] (2) to rest [in the dark].

Verse 4-- Nature's "words" testify that God *made* the world and man. God's "words" testify *how* God did it.

Verse 7-- Nature is "perfect" to prove the existence, wisdom, and power of God but is "imperfect" to prove the character of God [consider the harshness of nature: storms, fires, cruelty of men and animals]. The Law [word] of God is "perfect" to prove His character [love, compassion, patience, etc.].

Terms used in other psalms to describe God's communications to men: "Law," "Testimony," "Statutes," "Commandments," "Fear," "Judgments." Psalm 19 adds: "Word," "Way," "Ordinances."

Verses 7-11-- BLESSINGS conferred to man by God's WORD:

- (1) It converts the soul;
- (2) It makes him wise;
- (3) It rejoices his heart;
- (4) It enlightens his eyes;
- (5) It provides stability [unchanging];
- (6) It assures his mind of real values [true, righteous];
- (7) It warns him of dangers;
- (8) It offers him a "great reward."

Verse 9-- God's law is *altogether* "TRUE" and "RIGHTEOUS." Ponder this: Does God do what He does because it is right. Or is it right because He does it?

Verses 12,13-- Men purchase "how to" books and investigate home remedies in an effort to solve their physical problems. It is ironic that they ignore the one source of information [God's Book] that holds the solutions for all of their *spiritual* problems, which are far more serious.

PSALMS-- LESSON 4-- "DAVID: IN SAUL'S COURT"

[1Sam. 18-22]

PSALM 7-- Verse 1-- Many people persecuted David: Saul, Absalom, Shimei, Sheba, Athithophel, Adonijah, "Cush." "Deliver me"-- from betrayal into safety from men of Ziph and Keilah (1Sam.23).

Verse 3-- "this"-- accused of holding iniquity in his hands

1. No "if" about his actual sins [Bathsheba, Uriah] (2Sam.12:13).
2. Many false accusations made [Saul] (1Sam. 18:8,9).

Verse 4-- Three charges made against David by "Cush":

1. Had "iniquity" in hands- unlawful possession of property, e.g., in this case, Saul's throne;
2. Had repaid evil to a friendly and peaceful man;
3. Had plundered possessions of enemies without cause. Alternate translation [KJV, ASV] "Yea, I have delivered him who without cause is mine enemy," e.g., Saul in 1Sam. 24,26.

Verse 5-- Three punishments would be just:

1. His enemies could pursue and overtake him (1Sam. 19:11,21);
2. His life could be trampled as horses and men did in battle;
3. His honor could be completely destroyed in the dust.

Verse 6-- To God-- "Rise up." David was impatient for vindication, called for same justice from God as required of men in Law (Deut. 16:18).

Verse 7-- God's justice would move many to worship and obey Him.

Verse 8-- David had great confidence in God's sense of justice.

Verse 9-- David was confident his own case would not be an exception to God's fair treatment.

Verses 10-13-- David's confidence in God's justice was displayed:

1. In willingness to turn his case entirely over to God;
2. In depending on God's past record of "saving the upright in heart";
3. In trusting His record of dealing with sin and sinners:
 - a. He is always fair and mistreats no one;
 - b. He hates sin is angry with sinners *every* day;
 - c. He will punish wrongdoers by using serious "weapons."

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Verses 14-16-- The self-destructive practices of the wicked [Saul?]:

1. His lifestyle-- bears iniquity as normally as mothers bear children (Matt. 7:17);
2. He bears terrible twins-- trouble and falsehood to cover guilt;
3. He digs pits of deceit [covered over like animal traps] but is often ensnared in own traps [e.g., Haman and Mordecai, Esther 7:10; Michal childless 2Sam.7:23]..
4. Trouble devised for David [while he slept, 1Sam. 19] came to trouble Saul [while he slept, 1Sam. 26:16].

Verse 17-- God had proved His righteousness is immeasurable by His repeated demonstrations in the lives of righteous people. The righteous should praise and thank Him accordingly. We should pay tribute to His reputation for justice to *all*.

PSALM 11-- In this psalm, David revealed his personal struggle between his common sense and his faith in God's protection: should he quickly flee to safety from Saul or should he wait upon God's wisdom to deliver him? We sometimes are torn between what seems *practical* and what seems *right*. How can we decide what we ought to do?

Could David's sense of duty be reconciled with his fear of bodily harm?
Should he abandon his service to Saul, which he considered sacred to God?
Or, should he stay and try to fulfill his duty as best he could?

Verse 1-- His basic plan was to trust God ["to flee" to God as a child to its parent] . This is the same statement as Psalm 7:1. He intended for everything in his life to be tied to that trust. His life was not compartmentalized, and if he could trust the Lord in anything, he would trust God in everything!

Both David's common sense and the advice of doubters around him called his attention to the numerous threats he had endured In Saul's court:

1. Saul twice tried to kill him ((1Sam. 18:11);
2. Saul put him in precarious positions as captain to "go out and come in" (1Sam. 18:13);
3. Saul demanded a dowry that exposed David to harm from the Philistines (1Sam. 18:25);

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4. Saul sought to kill David the third time (1Sam. 19:10);
5. Saul's servants ambushed David during night (1Sam. 19:11);
6. Three bands sent to capture him at Ramah (1Sam. 19:20ff.);
7. Saul renewed vow to destroy David despite Jonathan's intervention (1Sam. 20:30-32);
8. The danger to David was *great and immediate!*

David's argumentation for FLEEING:

Argument #1-- Even nature demonstrates the wisdom of fleeing from imminent danger (vs. 1). Birds fly away when threatened. David's friends and supporters recommended this action immediately.

Argument #2-- Enemies have made extensive preparations to destroy David (vs. 2):

- a. Bows were bent;
- b. Arrows were ready to be shot;
- c. Adversaries would use unfair tactics ["secretly," lit. "in darkness"]. Surely, God wants you to be protected from such people!

Argument #3-- The "foundations" of human decency and respect for religion are disrespected by Saul (vs. 3):

- a. Should nurture and protect those who love you (1Sam. 19:4);
- b. Should place children's interests above self (2Cor. 12:14; 1Sam. 20:33);
- c. Should display basic respect for religion [priests killed (1Sam. 22:18),

Argument #4-- How can the righteous withstand the wicked? (vs. 3)

- a. This is an issue we often face in our own time.
- b. Should we *retire* and "let them have it" ? This is the *easy* way.

David's own defense of his FAITH:

Answer #1-- He would follow his usual practice-- "I will trust God" (vs. 1);

- a. He still rules on earth (in His temple) and in heaven (on His heavenly throne, vs. 4);
- b. God was aware of David's plight and Saul's behavior (vs. 5,6);

Answer #2-- The Lord uses hardships (vs. 5,6) to:

- a. Test the faith of the righteous;
- b. Punish the iniquity of the wicked, often severely.

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Answer #3-- The righteous have cause to stand fast against foes (vs. 7).

- a. N. T. emphasizes this truth (Eph. 6:13).
- b. We are assured of the reward for trust and obedience (Mk. 9:41).
- c. Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."
- d. Ancient proverb: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

Answer #4-- God is completely aware of how men behave (vs. 7).

David throughout his life learned when to flee and when to stay and fight. More than that, he learned that whether he stayed or left, his decision must always depend on which action better served God's plan for his life. In whatever circumstance he found himself, his *trust* must always be *only* in the Lord to solve his problems for his greatest benefit and for the ultimate good of others who were expecting David to show them the way out of difficulties.

PSALM 23-- Obviously, the thoughts expressed in this psalm originated in the experiences of David's boyhood as a shepherd and in his life as a servant of Saul. The psalm may be approached in either of two ways. One is the "light" side or traditional meaning, which is the one usually applied. This interpretation still brings much comfort and encouragement to its readers. This view takes no notice of David's relationship with king Saul but is presented as the expression of trust and comfort that is appropriate to the relationship of *every* child of God with his Father. The other interpretation is *closely* connected to the events of David's associations and service as a member of Saul's royal household.

THE "LIGHTER" VIEW OF PSALM 23

Verse. 1-- Sheep are more helpless than most animals; they need strict guidance. The Bible likens men to sheep *spiritually*. The guidance they need is like the care a good shepherd gives his sheep (Jer. 10:23). Anyone choosing to follow another shepherd makes a fatal spiritual mistake (Prov. 3:5,6).

Adam Clarke, noted Methodist scholar, said: "1. He leads them out and in, 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."

In the local church of today, elders fill the role of shepherds. The Lord's plan is for

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each Christian to have at least *three* shepherds in charge of his spiritual journey: Jesus, the Chief Shepherd and at least two godly and dedicated men who serve over the local congregation. He can say, "I shall not want" for spiritual leadership (1Peter 5:2,4).

Verse 2-- The Great Shepherd *provides* our spiritual food. Jn. 6:54; 1Pe. 2:2.

Verse 3-- The Great Shepherd *restores* our souls (Isa. 53:6) that are marred by sin, depression, pride, anger, jealousy, ambition, etc. We are made "as good as new" when God's word works in us and shows us a better way to walk in His "paths of righteousness."

Verse 4-- The Great Shepherd *removes fear* from our hearts. We are never alone in any crisis. The Great Shepherd gives *comfort* to us, and we know that everything will be all right. Our ultimate fear [of death] is allayed when we know that death will take us to a *much better place*.

Psalm 23, in this context, is the celebration of a *successful spiritual life*, one that is pleasing to our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ (Jn. 10:11).

WHAT A GOOD SHEPHERD PROVIDES FOR HIS SHEEP (Verses 1-6)

Physical Provisions for Physical Sheep

- Food and drink [grass and water] (vs. 2)
- Maintenance of composure [restores soul] (vs. 3)
- Leadership upon advantageous pathways (vs. 3)
- Security [fear no evil; rod and staff comfort] (vs. 4)

Spiritual Provisions for Spiritual Sheep

- Spiritual food and drink (Acts 20:32)
- Maintenance of spiritual focus despite distractions (Lk. 9:62)
- Guidance for unwavering spiritual walk on God's path (Matt. 4:4)
- Spiritual security contingent on continued obedience (Jn. 10:28)

A CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIPS [shepherd and sheep to host and guest]. The second image serves to validate the worthiness [first--physical; second-- spiritual] of the person under consideration. This image includes a host, a guest, and the enemies of the guest.

Verse 5-- A feast is a means of honoring a deserving guest and to validate his accomplishments. It is especially significant when even one's enemies must participate in the validation. Friends, of course, will also concur.

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The anointing with oil removed any doubt from those present as to the purpose of the feast and the significance of the honor bestowed. The "cup" [consciousness] of the honoree was more than "full." His joy went far beyond validation and acceptance at the feast.

Verse 6-- God's future treatment of righteous people can be measured by His current behavior toward them. Ask yourself-- "What is God's record of providing blessings in *my* life?" He will be consistent. His blessings are only limited by our response to personal duty-- to "dwell in the house of the Lord [His church]" all the days of our lives.

THE "DARKER" VIEW OF PSALM 23

The psalm may appropriately be connected with David's experiences when he was a servant in Saul's court. There were positive things that he expected to take place because they were things ordinarily provided by a good shepherd to his sheep and by a good host to his guests. The history shows that David was sorely disappointed by Saul's negative behavior toward him. This chart will illustrate the differences between what David anticipated and what he received:

DAVID DESERVED FROM SAUL AS A GOOD SHEPHERD (Psa.78:71,72):

1. Food and drink always (23:2)
2. Self-esteem (23:3a)
3. Good example (23:3b)
4. Protection (23:4a)
5. Comfort (23:4b)

DAVID RECEIVED FROM SAUL AS A BAD SHEPHERD:

1. Hunger (1Sam. 21:3)
2. Debasement (1Sam. 21:13)
3. Bad example (1Sam. 20:30-33)
4. Danger (1Sam. 19:10)
5. Distress (1Sam. 20:3)

DAVID DESERVED FROM SAUL AS A GOOD HOST (1Sam. 18:2):

1. Gratitude (23:5a)
2. Reward (23:5a)
3. Endorsement (23:5b)
4. Honor (23:5c)
5. Familial trust (23:6a)
6. Permanency (23:6b)

DAVID RECEIVED FROM SAUL AS A BAD HOST:

1. Jealousy, resentment (1Sam. 18:8,9)
2. Punishment (1Sam. 20:31)
3. Repudiation (1Sam. 20:34)
4. Dishonor (1Sam. 20:29,30)
5. Betrayal (1Sam. 18:21)
6. Impermanency (1Sam. 19:1)

David's expectations from king Saul were unfulfilled. He was met instead by extremely evil treatment. However, his reversals never weakened his faith in his Lord. He could always trust Him, even when Saul proved untrustworthy. He would be content to be cast out of Saul's house if he could only continue to enjoy the abundant blessings that were always available in the house of the Lord.

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PSALM 59-- This psalm seemingly was written to address a common question in our minds: do we sometimes feel overwhelmed by all of the problems that beset us, and are we often at a loss to know what we should do about them? It apparently was written at some time following the event to which it is attached. Its theme is "Do not destroy" and its title reads: "A michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him." (See 1Sam. 19:11-18a.) This is David's reflection on, and his reaction to, the devious plan formulated by Saul to capture and kill him.

Verses 1,2-- This is a plea of desperation: "Defend me...deliver me...save me." The plan came from evil men: workers of iniquity (Prov. 10:29); bloodthirsty.

Verses 3,4a-- the tactics of his enemies:

1. They gathered together in numbers sufficient to accomplish their wicked purposes;
2. They lay in wait for an opportune time to strike;
3. They followed a carefully devised plan ["prepare"];
4. Their tactics were worthy of dangerous public criminals;
5. They pursued an *innocent* man who was without defenders.

Verse 4b, 5-- Faith cried out for deliverance: "Awake! Help!" He was a we are: "Where Could I Go But To The Lord?"

1. "Help me" was a cry for *immediate* relief for *one* believer.
2. Punish all the "nations" [Gentiles, i.e., wicked men]. This is God's long-range plan for all unbelievers.

Verses 6,7-- The events of 1Samuel 19:10-18 may have taken place over several days and nights. His enemies "returned" to complete their mission. They exhibited fierce and gross behavior. They supposed that no one, including the Lord, would challenge and oppose them.

Verses 8-10-- David's situation *seemed* hopeless, but he hoped in God to save. God would laugh at the feeble attempts of his enemies to take David's life. Panic was not in order; patience was.

Verses 11-13-- David desired a punishment other than death for his enemies. They should become *living* testimonies that "God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth."

Verses 14,15-- Their punishment described. Compare vs. 6, 7 with 14, 15. Their growl is from hunger, not only anger. They hunt food. They once searched in the city for opportunity to *give death* to David. Now they search for opportunity to *keep life* for themselves by finding scraps of food

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Verses 16,17-- God's power to ordain strength out of weakness (Psa. 8:2) was apparent to all who would later observe the drastic downfall of David's enemies. David's thanksgiving and praises to his Deliverer would be abundant, as ours should be. "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

PSALMS-- LESSON 5-- "David: A Fugitive from Saul"

[1Sam. 23-31]

PSALM 34--

Verse 1-- Desperation evidently drove David to Achish and the Philistines. Looking back, he could see the danger and foolishness of his action. He praised God for overriding his foolishness, rescuing him anyhow. We should pray to make sound decisions and for God to rescue us from foolish ones.

Verse 2-- A man's greatest boast is his relationship with the Lord, not money, etc. At judgment, our confidence will not rest in anything else. Other humble people doubtless were encouraged by David's example.

Verse 4-- Reassurance came through prayer. Deliverance from fears came first, deliverance from his enemies came later.

Verse 5-- Followers immediately gained confidence, even though few in number. They soon would number 400, then 600. They trusted David's way of relief from their fears-- God was the answer!

Verses 6,7-- David attributed the deliverance of the "poor" [helpless] man to: 1. fear of the Lord; 2. prayer; 3. the angel of the Lord [this could refer to Christ ["Angel"-- footnote]. Also, Heb. 1:14 promises assistance to God's people from "angels."

Verses 11-14-- David's lesson for "children" [helpless] who sought long life:

1. Learn to fear the Lord;
2. Observe the Lord's will:
 - a. Keep the tongue from evil;
 - b. Keep the mouth from deceit;
 - c. Stop evil deeds and do good deeds instead;
4. Pursue peace with others.

Saul had violated every requirement for enjoying a good and long life.

Verse 15-22-- There are two fundamental principles in dealing with every situation:

1. God is especially concerned about the well-being of the righteous, who are defined by broken hearts and contrite spirits;
2. God is committed to punish unrighteous men.

PSALMS-- LESSON 5

PSALM 56-- This psalm is entitled: "A Michtam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath."

Verse 1-- David and his men apparently suffered ill treatment by the Philistines who remembered his conquest of Goliath and their defeat at David's hands. David had become a greater hero to Israel than Saul.

Verse 3-- God is our refuge from *any* kind of fear-- "*whenever* I am afraid."

Verses 4-7-- What could "flesh" [men] do to David at Gath?

1. Twist his words and interrogate him;
 2. Devise traps and schemes to harass him;
 3. Gang up on him;
 4. Hide and secretly spy on him;
 5. Be a constant threat to his life.
- Should they be held accountable for their tactics?

Verses 8-11-- God was aware of *all* the dangers and distresses of David. The fugitive's tears were preserved in a "bottle" and written in God's "book." They would be remembered. God was *for* David, better than having a boss' favor at work or a teacher's at school. In God's own time, David's enemies would turn back from their persecutions.

Verse 12,13-- God had kept His promises to David; now, David must keep his vows to God.

What were they?

1. I will trust in God (vs. 3);
2. I will praise His word [promises] (vs. 4);
3. I will not fear what man can do to me (vs. 4);
4. I will render praises to God for deliverance (vs. 12);
 - a. Not to self, to luck, to others.

People in many cultures have considered mentally distressed individuals to be "bad luck" and have avoided all contact with them. This probably had something to do with Achish's treatment of David in ejecting him from his land instead of killing him as a national enemy.

PSALM 57--After escaping the danger from Achish, David fled to live in a cave at Adullam. He evidently remained there for a period of time ["all" the time...1Sam. 22:4]. The hiding place was discovered by Saul's men, and David was in danger of attack. God sent Gad the prophet to warn him: "Do not stay in the stronghold. Depart, go to Judah" (1Sam. 22:5). David's faith in God's help was strong-- "till I know what God will do for me" (1Sam. 22:3).

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His environment in the forest was different from his previous hiding place in a cave. Now, he was out under the stars and felt closer to God with more direct communication to Him. In the cave, God must have seemed fatherly and contact less available. The Lord knew that the longer David remained in the cave, the easier it would be for him to doubt His awareness and power to save. Still, David never lost confidence in either. He remained convinced of two things: (1) Nowhere was too far from God that He did not *know* David's many problems; (2) Nowhere was too far from God that He could not *solve* those problems. When David emerged from the cave undefeated, he knew more than ever before that his trust in the wisdom and power of God had not gone unrewarded.

Verse 1-- Refuge in the cave's shadow was really in the "shadow of God's wings." The cave actually could not protect David-- but God could! David and his men were like small birds (or chicks--Matt.23:37) who hide from a hawk until the danger is past.

Verse 3-- Even heaven was not too remote to send deliverance to the recesses of the dark cave. Nor was it too remote to send retribution to David's persecutors. ["Selah" is a term used some 71 times in Psalms. It literally means-- "to weigh"; "to lift up"; "to hurl." It was originally a musical term adapted to literary usage. It is comparable to "fortissimo" in music and "attention!" in writing. It gives strong emphasis to what has been said previously and calls for the reader or listener to give appropriate notice to the thought that has just been expressed.]

Verse 4-- David was surrounded by wicked and powerful enemies ["among lions"].

1. They were like fierce "lions seeking prey." They were dangerous!
2. They were "set on fire" with the focus of a lion after its prey;
3. Their weapons were suited to kill like a lion's tooth and tongue.
4. Their lies and false accusations incited them to violence as a lion's tongue drives him to the slaughter when he has tasted the victim's blood.

Verse 5-- God will deliver and be exalted even when an enemy is very strong.

Verse 6-- The image changes; now it is the innocent lion [not seeking prey] who becomes the victim of hunters. A "net" and "pit" had been prepared by Saul to capture David when he was to be flushed from the cave. But David predicted: "the trapper will be trapped."

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Verses 7-9-- David's continued resolutions: "My heart is steadfast-- I will sing and give praise." "I will awaken the dawn with praise each day."

Verses 10,11-- God's mercy on the righteous is available anywhere above or beneath the earth.

We don't know *how* God intervened to rescue David from the cave at Adullam, except that He moved the prophet Gad to warn him about the urgency of leaving for another hiding place. Still, we are impressed with His knowledge of how and when to execute His plans to care for His people in all circumstances and in all kinds of problems.

David's conviction about the wisdom and power of the Lord is expressed in Psalm 139:1-12.

PSALM 142-- The title for this psalm is, "A Prayer when he [David] was in the cave." The psalm was written to celebrate the protective care of the Lord, as demonstrated by the episode when Saul failed to discover David and company *in* the cave at Engedi (1Sam. 24). God's providence prevented a cough or a sneeze, a falling rock, or some other thing that might betray him. This was especially true when David cut off the corner of Saul's robe. This incident, upon reflection, was typical of numerous instances when there was, "but a step between me and death" (1Sam. 20;3). There is little in the psalm to attach it specifically to the incident in the cave, except its title, but it is an eloquent expression of David's trust in God's protection in *every* danger he might face.

Verses 1,2-- David continually sought God's help whenever trouble arose.

Verses 3,4-- When deliverance seemed impossible, God was aware of where David's actions would lead without His intervention. He knew about each trap and device employed by David's foes and what was needed to escape each danger. No one else could solve the problem David faced in his present situation.

Verses 5-7-- David recognized that Jehovah:

1. Was his only refuge from danger;
2. Alone could keep David alive;
3. Could deliver him from his persecution;
4. Could free him from his "prison" [hemmed in by a much larger force];
5. Could surround him with righteous people, provide safe environment;
6. Could shower him with bountiful blessings.

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PSALM 54-- The title is, "When the Ziphites went and said to Saul, 'Is David not hiding with us?' " Historical references are 1Sam. 22:5 and 1Sam. 23:14-29. Psalms 54 and 63 both deal with similar situations faced by David in his flight from king Saul. Over time, David and his men sought refuge in many places, notably in two different forests, one in the mountains of Judah and another at Horesh near the town of Ziph. Both psalms describe David's reactions to dangers he faced, to his fears and uncertainties, to his own faith and trust in the mercies of the Lord to rescue him from very difficult circumstances, and to his profound gratitude for the Lord's watch care over him. Thoughts expressed in these two psalms seem to apply equally to the sequence of events in both forests where he hid from enemies intent on destroying him, even though both titles are connected to the time spent in the wilderness near Ziph.

Verse 3a-- Strangers conspired against David to curry favor from Saul.

1. Ziphites informed Saul about David's "hideout" in the forest. David was almost surrounded and captured or killed at a mountain (1Sam. 23:26). Only a message about a Philistine invasion stopped Saul's pursuit, as prophesying did earlier. The timing of these events declares the providence of God at work. God's *enemies* [Philistines] were used to save God's *friends*!
2. The people of Keilah were more despicable than the Ziphites. David had rescued them from the Philistines, but when Saul pursued him there, they intended to betray him to Saul. *Imagine!* No wonder David foretells their demise (54:5; 63:9,10).

Verse 3b-- Selah! A musical term to call special attention to an important statement. The "strangers" were the Ziphites; the "oppressors" were Saul's men.

PSALM 63--David recognized that his relationship with God sustained him through trials.

Verses 1,2-- God *sought* David, as any father would seek a lost son with an *intensive* search. Our most urgent mission in life is to "find" the Lord, not by accident or by casual inquiry, but by *seeking!*

PSALMS-- LESSON 5

Verses 1-6-- David sought the Lord:

1. Early [at the first opportunity]; each day should begin with a petition for His guidance and assistance in the day's events;
2. Persistently-- as a thirsty man seeks water in a "dry and thirsty land where there is no water";
3. In well-watered places, especially in the sanctuary [tabernacle] (Psa. 122:1-"glad"). We can "get something out of worship" when we seek God there. That is also true of Bible classes, meetings, and other such activities where people are *seeking* the Lord;
4. In dry and thirsty places where seeking is harder. At work, school, recreation, sports, etc. We must behave like Christians, talk like Christians, and support what is *good* and *right* in every way;
5. In the night watches. Sleeplessness can sometimes be a blessing when it provides time for undistracted reading, study, and meditation.

Verse 4-- David intended to make the most of his opportunities to seek God and to remain as loyal as possible while he lived. His life might be taken from him at any moment. The present might be all the time he had [like us]. There is no "purgatory" for another chance.

Verses 7,8-- David felt safe and secure in "the shadow" of God's "wings," as a chick felt safe under the wings of its mother (Matthew 23:37). He would try to stay close behind the Lord to assure his safety.

Verses 9,10-- Saul and others who sought to do harm to David were actually the enemies of God. They could only look forward to an unhappy end to their conflict with David.

Verse 11-- The *king* would enjoy a different outcome. [David would not be "king" until after he was given a throne, but this psalm was not *written* until after he had been enthroned.]

PSALMS-- LESSON 6-- "David: King of Israel"

[2Sam:1-6; 1Chron. 11-16]

PSALM 20-- This psalm is titled "A Psalm of David" with no note of the occasion about which it was written. It displays a positive, upbeat tone throughout. It appears to focus on an individual, "His anointed," (vs. 6) and on a group of people to whom that individual is speaking. This "anointed" person and the group to whom he speaks seem to have a great deal in common. There are multiple references throughout the poem to "we," "us," and "our." Evidently, the speaker is king David, and those he speaks to are his subjects in Israel. The psalm is obviously a prayer by the "anointed" person in behalf of the others. It is a *hopeful* prayer and a *confident* prayer that could have been offered to the Lord at many different times during David's life and under many different circumstances, but it is unlike many of David's prayers in other psalms. It contains no references to the king's emotions such as fear, anxiety, outrage, resignation, and bewilderment at the behavior of ungodly people that we find in so many of the other psalms.

While this poem could easily be assigned to almost any period in David's life, and although its words could reflect his feelings about the nation on many different occasions, there is no better time and there are no more appropriate circumstances that directly attach themselves to the encouraging thoughts of these verses. David's assumption of the throne following the death of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa provides the perfect setting for this prayer in behalf of the newly-united kingdom of Israel.

Saul's death occurred in 2Samuel 1. David became king of Judah in chapter 2. The remaining tribes of Israel "drifted" to David as king in 2Samuel 5. He reigned over Judah seven and one-half years and over the united nation for another thirty-three years. He became a "great" king (2Sam. 5:10), and God was "with him." This psalm may be viewed as David's "inaugural address" or "message to congress" following his coronation over the entire nation. In it, he strives to set a tone for his new administration. His focus will be on governing completely and directly under Jehovah's control. His highest goal will be to assure God's blessings by leading his people through all future experiences in full compliance with the Law of God and with full dependence on God's help in achieving *greatness*, not for himself only but also for every citizen of the nation.

Verse 1-- David's prayer begins by enjoining prayer by the people: "May the Lord answer *you* in the day of trouble." Next, trust in God's wisdom [to know what their problems were and how to solve them] and in His power [His ability to resolve their problems] would be required of the people before God would answer their prayers. Many who pray to the Lord "get the cart before the horse" and expect God to make the first move and answer their prayers before they do anything to indicate their intention to submit to His will for them.

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Verses 2,3-- Not only was private devotion necessary to receive Jehovah's blessing but also performing the public rituals of the Law was required of the people. "Help" and "strengthening" would flow from the sanctuary [tabernacle/temple] and from Zion [Jerusalem/Mt. Zion] when the people had provided their offerings and burnt sacrifices to the Lord. A strong nation could be developed only from *within* as its citizens dedicated themselves to wholehearted submission to the God's rule over them and under the leadership of a godly king very unlike the one who had been king before David.

Verse 4-- David's main concern for the future of Israel was for both the physical welfare and [more importantly] the spiritual relationship to their *true* King, Jehovah God. They would have many desires for national conquests and prosperity in the future, but they must not ignore the *real* purpose ["counsel"] of the Law of God for the nation: to *glorify the Lord* among all the other nations of the earth.

Verse 5-- Both king and people would rejoice together in the "salvation" [security and prosperity] of Israel when surrounding countries recognized God's real superiority to their false gods. That would only happen when Israel "sets up its banners" by *proclaiming* and *demonstrating* to other people the superior traits of Jehovah. His wisdom, power, mercy, love, etc., elevated Him far above all others. Banners still proclaim to observers WHO WE ARE and WHAT WE STAND FOR. They will distinguish us as a special people of God. They are vital for victory over Satan's forces, and they *must* be displayed! The Lord's church must show boldness in displaying our banner about the NAME, ORGANIZATION, WORSHIP, WORK, and MANNER OF LIFE that proclaims our differences from other religious people. It must declare to all that our PURPOSE for existing is to glorify God through strict adherence to His will as revealed in the New Testament.

Verse 6-- David wanted his subjects to be aware of his confidence that he, as God's "anointed" ["commissioned"; "Messiah/Christ"] king would enjoy Jehovah's fullest support as he tried always to lead the people upon paths of righteousness. David's prayers in their behalf would be answered, and through their king the powerful "right hand" of God would save the nation from all future crises.

Verses 7,8-- Although the king would raise and maintain a strong army to fight Israel's battles, trust for victory would not depend on military might alone. Only God's *name* [Essence] would be powerful enough to make their enemies "bow down and fall" before their armies and to cause their own nation to "rise and stand upright" as God's victors

All of David's efforts to make united Israel a great nation would be *joint* efforts by him and the populace. Only a deep commitment by him *and* all the citizens could fulfill the promises and the purposes that would ensure a bright future for both the king and his subjects.

PSALMS-- LESSON 6

PSALM 2-- God had a "master plan" for the world from eternity (Eph. 3:11). After man's fall into disobedience and sin, Jesus would offer Himself as man's Savior and spiritual King.

However, there would be many who would oppose the implementation of that plan, e.g., [1] Satan in the Garden of Eden, [2] Pharaoh in Egypt, and [3] the Pharisees during Jesus' time on earth. There were many pieces in the great spiritual puzzle that finally displayed Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for man's salvation. While actively opposing God's purpose, the players were actually being used to cause it to come to pass.

David's kingship was an important part of the chain of events in the Lord's plan that would eventually lead to Christ's life and work to save a lost world. But just as at a later time many would oppose Jesus' kingship, here were many who sought to defeat God's purpose to bring David to the throne of Israel.

Psalm 2 is a poem related to efforts to prevent or destroy the reign of someone who had been chosen by Jehovah to be king over His chosen people. The psalm can be approached in *three* different ways:

1. As an entirely "Messianic" psalm that deals altogether with the *spiritual enthronement* of Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords." It particularly exposes the vanity of men's opposition to the purpose of God to seat Christ on His throne at the Father's right hand. Accordingly, this psalm has little to do with David and matters accompanying his rule as king over Israel;
2. As a "non-Messianic" psalm dealing with the uselessness of men's efforts to oppose the physical rule of David as king over Israel. Along with that primary emphasis, the psalm obviously includes several statements that are directly applied to Jesus in the New Testament;
3. As one of the several psalms that are intended to be understood with an emphasis both on David's experiences and those of Jesus as well.

Either option two or option three seems to be better choices that could be defended by an examination of the language and events of the psalm.

The authorship of Psalm 2 is indeterminate since it bears no title.

Verse 1-- David experienced *two* coronations as king over God's people:

1. Over Judah (2Samuel 2:4). His complete rule was immediately blocked by Abner and Ishbosheth, Saul's son who was made king over all tribes except Judah. Following a war between the armies of Judah and Israel, "David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker" (2Sam. 3:1). Both Abner and Ishbosheth were killed, ending their opposition to David;
2. Over all Israel (2Sam. 5:3). David was denied access to Jerusalem by the Jebusites; the Philistines sought to destroy David in battle; the Moabites, Zobahites, and the Syrians

PSALMS-- LESSON 6

also refused to acknowledge the authority of David's kingship. David achieved overwhelming victory over all of them;

3. It is likely that Psalm 2 concerns events of resistance to David's rule following his second coronation as king over all Israel. The sudden and substantial increase in his military resources was alarming to other nations who might have to contend with David's newly-gained power.

The military opposition planned against David was vain [useless] because chariots and horses cannot stand against the "name of the Lord our God" (Psa. 20:7).

Verse 2-- The kings of the Philistines, Moabites, Zobahites, Syria, and [later] the Ammonites, were "set" [determined] to destroy the new administration of David. The Syrians and Zobahites conspired to join forces ["took counsel together"] against David's army. Their warfare was knowingly or unknowingly against both David [God's "commissioned one"] and the Lord who had appointed him to become Israel's king.

Verse 3-- Other nations feared the potential power of the Israelites to bring them under subjection. They made plans to do whatever it might take to avoid the "bonds" and "cords" by which the Israelites might one day hold them in their control.

Verse 4,5--How would One as strong as God react to the flimsy power of men who sought to counter His purpose to make David king over Israel? David answers this question in terms of human emotions easily understood by anyone who would dare to oppose the Lord's purpose:

1. First, God "laughs" at the utter foolishness of unthinking men and holds them in contempt;
2. Next, He becomes angry with them when He considers that they are really serious in their fanciful plans;
3. Then, He will take active measures ["distresses them"] to end their opposition to His own purposes [through David's military victories].

Verse 6-- The Lord reasserts His unchangeable plan for David:

1. His king *will* be "set" [firmly established, unmovable];
2. David would be that king and he would rule in Jerusalem which would thenceforth be regarded as a "holy city" of God.

Verse 7-9-- The Lord was firmly resolved to make David king, to make his nation great, and to pursue whatever conquests were necessary to that end.

1. David's authority originated from God's own "decree" ["an authoritative order declaring what is, or is to be done"] which was much like our President's executive orders based on his own authority as President.
2. The order was delivered personally by a prophet [Nathan] that David was His choice to succeed Saul (2Sam.7:8ff.).

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3. "Today" was probably the day of the second coronation; "begotten" was the divine act of giving David his life as *king* over Israel. Thayer: "Begotten" [*gennau*] metaphorically: "To engender; cause to rise; excite. It is used of God making Christ His Son; formally, to show Him to be the Messiah; viz., by the resurrection (Acts 13:33)."
4. The Lord's support would be extensive. The "nations" and the "ends of the earth" would be subject to David's rule. This promise probably included the conquests of Solomon (1Kings 4:21--Egypt to the Euphrates River).
5. The military power of Israel would be impressive, resistance vain.

Verse 10-- [David's] advice to other leaders of nations as they decide a course to follow:

1. Oppose David and Israel; or, (2) co-operate with God's chosen leader?

Verse 11, 12-- Kings and judges [decision makers] should:

1. Serve the Lord by submitting to His [and David's] administration of Israel;
2. Rejoice in the opportunity to survive; be careful not to jeopardize that opportunity;
3. "Kiss the Son"-- accept and honor David as king and recognize that God's anger against you and in support of David can result in serious consequences to your nations;
4. Those rulers who accept David's position of leadership and bow to the authority bestowed on him by the Lord will be "blessed" with peace, prosperity, and survival.

PSALM 105--One of David's accomplishments as king of Israel, and one which seemed to give him great satisfaction, was to return the ark of God to Jerusalem after it had been captured long before in battle by the Philistines. It had remained away from the tabernacle where it belonged for some seventy years. Psalm 105 is a record of David's feelings of thanksgiving for the privilege to lead this effort.

1. We know that this psalm was composed by David because it first appears in First Chronicles 16 as a part of the historical record of the return of the ark to Jerusalem and where it is said, "On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren to thank the Lord."
2. Psalm 105, verses 1-15, is virtually identical in language with 1Chron. 16:8-22.
3. It is possible that another psalmist used the words of David in 1Chron. 16 to introduce this psalm.
4. The psalm is a lengthy recitation of the numerous ways in which Jehovah had blessed the Israelites by remembering His covenant with them and by bringing them through many difficult circumstances.
5. Allowing the ark to be brought back from captivity was another of God's blessings to be added to the already long list of undeserved favors previously shown to His chosen people.

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Verses 1-6-- This psalm celebrates the strength of God's "name" as displayed in:

1. His deeds among the peoples (vs. 1);
2. His wondrous works, including works of creation (vs. 2);
3. His marvelous works performed for Israel, e.g., ten plagues, Rea Sea crossing, quail and manna, etc. (vs. 5);
4. His wonders and judgments (vs. 5), especially the Sinai Law "for a thousand generations";
5. His chosen ones who remember the covenant made with them (vs. 6).

Verses 7-15-- This psalm also celebrates the faithfulness of God's promises (vs. 8):

1. The covenant made with Abraham [Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 17:18] (vs. 9);
2. His oath to Isaac [Genesis 26:3,4,24] vs. 9);
3. His covenant [statute] made with Jacob [Genesis 28:13,14] (vs. 10);
4. The land promise to Israel at an unlikely time (vs. 11,12);
5. His protection of the people who were "anointed" to realize the promises made to the nation (vs. 13-15).

Verses 16-41-- This psalm likewise celebrates the power of God's providence to fulfill everything He has declared, as witnessed by:

1. Joseph's role in Egypt in preserving the lives of Israel's fathers (vs. 16-22);
2. The development of a tribe of 70 souls into a nation of 603,550 [Numbers 2:32] (vs. 23-25);
3. The deliverance of the nation with freedom to serve Jehovah (vs. 26-36);
4. The preservation of the people after their deliverance from Egypt (vs.37-41).

Verses 42-45-- Finally, the psalm celebrates Israel's blessings through the fulfilled promises:

1. Joy and gladness instead of sorrow and suffering (vs. 43);
2. Fruitful lands in which to enjoy others' labor [houses, wells, vineyards, etc. (vs. 44);
3. Opportunity for freedom to keep the Lord's laws without opposition (vs. 45).

The simple lesson of Psalm 105 is: Israel has *many* fundamental obligations as a nation because of God's unfailing beneficence:

1. GIVE thanks to the Lord (vs. 1);
2. CALL on His Name (vs. 1);
3. SING psalms to Him (vs. 2);
4. TALK of His wondrous works (vs.2);
5. GLORY in His holy Name (vs. 3);
6. REJOICE in seeking the Lord (vs. 3);
7. SEEK the Lord's face and strength always (vs. 4);
8. REMEMBER His wondrous works and His unerring judgments (vs.5);
9. *IN SUMMATION*: "GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD" (VERSE 1); "PRAISE THE LORD" (verse 45).

PSALMS-- LESSON 6

PSALM 96-- The nation of Israel was chosen as God's special people to perform a special function among the nations of the earth. This they were to accomplish in two ways: (1) by their lifestyle of obedience to the strict moral code contained in the Law of Moses, and (2) by their ceremonial worship that made its blessings dependent on complete and specific adherence to its numerous regulations. These activities displayed to pagan nations the *power* and *purity* of Jehovah and the lofty standards He had set for His people to achieve. By following the example shown by Israel and by submitting to the Lord and His requirements, all nations of the earth could be blessed.

Psalm 95 seems to be a "companion piece" to Psalm 96. It sets out the obligations to be met by Israel if God is to be glorified by the behavior of the people. They must:

1. Shout joyfully to Him with psalms [songs] (vs. 2);
2. Worship and bow down (vs. 6);
3. Kneel before the Lord (vs. 6);
4. Hear His voice (vs. 7).

What their fathers did instead:

1. Hardened their hearts (vs. 8);
2. Rebelled against God (vs. 8);
3. Tested God in spite of their *own* eyewitnesses (vs. 9);
4. Grieved the Lord for forty years (vs. 10);
5. Went astray in their hearts (vs. 10);
6. Did not know God's ways (vs. 10).

Israel *failed* to glorify God's NAME [reputation] by their lifestyle. Similarly, they *had failed* to glorify His MERCY and FORGIVENESS when they could no longer conduct the rituals involving the ARK OF TESTIMONY, which was in the hands of the Philistines (1Sam. 4:10,11). Its return to the tabernacle was especially important to David, who always sought to glorify the Lord in every way possible. Re-installing the ARK would allow God's glory to be shown to other nations, as well as to the Israelites, once again.

Psalm 96 is another section of the psalm sung by David when he returned the ARK from the house of Obed-Edom to the tabernacle in Jerusalem (1Chron. 16:23-36). There are some variations in the last few verses of the two writings, but Psalm 96 obviously is a repetition of David's words when he brought back the ARK of God. Psalm 96 is intended to glorify God through the ceremonial offerings and sacrifices that could only be conducted in the tabernacle. With the ARK back in place, Jehovah's name could once again be glorified before all other peoples as it had been prior to the ARK'S captivity among the Philistines.

Verse 1-- A "new song" of thanksgiving for "new" blessings-- the ARK, worship, glory, and other such wonderful gifts.

PSALMS-- LESSON 6

Verse 2-- Good news of God's "salvation" -- from the Philistines and other nations (1Chron. 14:16,17) and the delivery of the ARK from captivity.

Verse 3-- God's glory could be proclaimed among the Gentiles and his wonders shown among all other peoples.

Verses 4,5-- Glorifying Jehovah was appropriate to His greatness and to His superiority.

Verse 6-- The heavens He made (verse 5) declare His honor and majesty (Psalm 19:1).

Verse 6b--His strength and beauty are also displayed in the appointments of the tabernacle.

Verse 8a-- Give ["ascribe"] the glory *due* His name.

Verse 8b-- Glorify His name with offerings made in the courts of the tabernacle/temple.

Verse 9-- Tabernacle worship was "beautiful" when "holy" [special] duties were performed.

Verse 10-- The message of tabernacle worship was: *"The Lord's reign is firmly set and will not be changed. But take heart because God's reign is the very best possible for all the world."*

Verses 11,12-- The whole creation should rejoice [figuratively] at the good news (verse 2).

Verse 13-- God will judge [treat] the earth's people according to how they react to His rule over them. The Lord will rule in *righteousness* and *truth*. This passage *could* include God's rule over the nations through David.

PSALMS-- LESSON 7—“David: King of Israel” (2)

[2Sam. 7-10; 1Chron. 17-19]

PSALM 60--One of David's priorities as the new king of Israel was to recover the lands that had been lost to other nations over time. The land promised to Abraham (Gen. 18:15) was far more extensive than that actually occupied by David's people. 2Samuel 8:18 describes David's military victories over the Philistines, Moab, Zobah [a large region north of Damascus and extending NE to the Euphrates River], Syria, and Ammon. Still to be conquered were the Edomites who claimed territory south of the Dead Sea. The psalm appears to have been written by David prior to his campaign to take back an area inhabited by the Edomites. Its historical context probably follows verse 12 of Second Samuel 8 prior to Israel's great victory over the Edomites in which 12,000 [as in the title; 10,000 (2Kings 14:7); 18,000 (2Sam. 8:13)] Edomites were killed at the Valley of Salt [an indefinite location, but south of the Dead Sea]. Following this achievement, David was able to put Israel's garrisons throughout Edom and keep the Edomites in subjection.

The psalm has three distinct sections:

1. Prayer for Jehovah to resume His support of David's military conquests after one or more significant setbacks resulting from God's displeasure with Israel (verses 1-5); We cannot know any more about this situation;
2. A listing of the previous conquests that had been made because of God's support for His armies (verses 6-8);
3. A plea for the Lord's assistance for completing David's military goals by defeating the Edomites (verses 9-12).

Verse 1--David felt "cast off" and broken down by God's displeasure. Restoration was his greatest desire.

Verse 2-- God had "upset the applecart" for David and the people. It was as if the earth had opened up and swallowed His army. Only God could heal the great chasm that now seemed to separate David from His mighty power.

Verse 3-- Hard times had been suffered by Israel. The victories and the prosperity were gone. The nation was confused, and its former sense of direction had been lost for the moment. The nature and extent of "hard things" is unknown.

Verses 4,5--Despite Jehovah's chastisement of His people, He had *not* abandoned them. He was willing to let those who still "feared" Him to rally around the banner of David's rule in unity and combined strength and to go forth again with His blessing to another victory.

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Verses 6-8-- God had reassured David of His support in future conquests, but in His "holiness" [justice] He insisted on Israel's obedience and commitment to their own "holiness" (Lev. 1:45). God's special treatment has *always* depended on the holiness of those blessed.

1. David was greatly relieved that what he had done could be undone ["rejoiced"].
2. He was now confident that his administration would be sustained by God.
3. His political and military control would continue in previously disputed areas:
 - a. Shechem-- had been occupied by pagans before Joshua led his people to the promised land. Following the defeat at Ai, their overwhelming victory demonstrated God's support. The whole nation met at Mt. Ebal, heard the Law and dedicated themselves to it. Shechem, located between the north [Galilee] and the south [Judea] areas of the land, represented the entire land. David would regard the entire land as holy just as Joshua had done;
 - b. Valley of Succoth-- lies east of the Jordan at about the same latitude as Shechem. It signified control ["measurement"] of both east and west areas of the promised land;
 - c. Gilead-- a large area east of the Jordan River;
 - d. Manasseh-- east *and* west of the Jordan;
 - e. Ephraim-- located west of the Jordan and depended on for military support. [The references to "Mine" are considered by some to refer to Jehovah, and by others to refer to David, depending on whose words these are. The capitalization, of course, is the work of translators. The ASV utilized small letters rather than capitals]. Ephraim protected David's "head";
 - f. Judah-- the lawgiver (Gen. 49:10);
 - g. Moab-- an unimportant "washpot" devoted to menial service. David had totally defeated Moab and had measured its defeated warriors into lines [groups] to be spared or executed as he saw fit (2Sam. 8:2);
 - h. Philistines-- had been vanquished by David, so their "victory shout" never happened because of David's prowess. This was strong mockery of a nation that was possibly Israel's most persistent enemy;
 - i. Edom was the only area not yet subdued by Israel, but it soon would fall in defeat like all the other nations. Its power would soon be "cast away" by David [and God] in a declaration that any further toleration of Edom's wickedness was soon to end. [See Ruth 4:7.]

Verse 9-- How can Israel conquer the last of its foes? Only by leadership better than David's. They would depend on the Lord's leadership for victory. The "strong" city" likely refers to a fortress in Edom, possibly Petra.

Verse 10-- Only God could offer adequate leadership for Israel's mission. This fact had been demonstrated when He had withheld that guidance from them and they had failed.

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Verses 11, 12--Despair (vs. 1-3) has been replaced with great confidence. God would lead them and they would do valiantly!

PSALM 18-- The title attached to this psalm relates to a period when David was delivered by the Lord "from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul." There are several Biblical passages possibly associated with the psalm's historical background:

2Samuel 15-18-- Absalom's rebellion and defeat;

2Samuel 20-- Sheba's rebellion and defeat;

2Samuel 21:15-- Battle with Philistines and a "close call" when David "grew faint." His opponent, IshbiBenob, one of the sons of the "giant," was killed by Abishai, and David was discouraged from personally engaging again in warfare.

2Samuel 21:18-- In fighting against the Philistines, another son of the giant was killed by Sibbechai the Hushathite;

2Samuel 21:19-- Another giant Philistine, the brother of Goliath, was killed by David's nephew Shimea. Interestingly, this giant had twenty-four fingers and toes.

Verses 1,2--In all his conflicts, the Lord was David's "strength," "rock," "fortress," "deliverer," "God," "Horn [power] of salvation," "shield," "and "stronghold."

Verse 3-- Because the Lord was his every support [vs. 1,2], David called on Him whenever he needed Him. The "man after God's own heart" always expected the same outcome of his prayers: "So shall I be saved from my enemies." (2Timothy 1:12; James 1:6)

Verses 4-19-- Here is a summary of outcomes of David's requests for help from the Lord.

Verses 4-6-- David's precarious positions: death, ungodliness, etc.

Verses 7-15-- God's reaction-- great anger at David's enemies and the manifestations of that anger, reminding us of signs at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19) with both warnings and retributions expressed.

Verses 16-19-- God's actions in answer to David's prayers: "took me," "drew me out," "delivered me," etc.

Verses 20-24-- Reasons why God continually rescued David from his enemies.

Verse 20-- Because of David's righteousness and clean hands he was rewarded accordingly.

Verse 21-- David had "kept the ways of the Lord." This claim had its limitations because Bathsheba and Uriah could not be forgotten.

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Verse 23-- He had kept himself from his "iniquity." He had refused to allow his past mistakes to defeat him in his attempts to serve the Lord.

Verses 24-27-- God's mercy was available to all righteous people. He was fair in dealing with all who call on His name. He will deny blessings to the haughty and save the humble. He will always discriminate between honesty and dishonesty.

Verses 28-42-- David recites all the benefits he received when he prayed for assistance from Jehovah. These benefits may be found in verses 29, 34, 40, 48 [especially Saul, Absalom, and Sheba], and 49.

PSALM 132-- The ARK of the Covenant was Israel's most sacred religious object. It was located where the High Priest alone could "meet" God just once each year. Upon this meeting depended the temporary forgiveness of the people's sins.

1. The ARK was first put into the tabernacle following the giving of the Law at Sinai.
2. It was carried by Israel along with the tabernacle through the wilderness wandering and the conquest of Canaan.
3. It rested at Mizpah and then at Shiloh, where it remained for many years.
4. It was captured by the Philistines while Eli was High Priest.
5. After more than seventy years, it was returned to Jerusalem by David [Lesson 6].

David wanted to remove the ARK from the tabernacle [a temporary tent] and place it in a great temple [permanent] that would display God's Person appropriately. Through the prophet Nathan, David learned that his plan was unacceptable to the Lord. In the historical account (1Samuel 7), God gives David no reason for His decision. But in 1Chronicles 28:3, He explained that David was a man of war and a shedder of blood. This meant that he had pursued God's wars and that his kingdom was yet insecure. Still ahead were battles to be fought. When the kingdom was secure from its enemies, a permanent resting place for the ARK would be appropriate.

Solomon later would be the king who would build the Lord's temple. His reign would flourish in a peaceful environment not threatened by other nations. Despite his disappointment, David formulated plans and gathered materials for Solomon to do what he had been forbidden to do himself (1Chron. 22).

This psalm was likely written by David as he reflected on his feelings about the rejection of his plans to erect a great temple to the glory of Jehovah.

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Verse 1-- David's reign as king should not be damaged because he had made serious mistakes while he was king.

Verse 2-- His purpose had been sincere and firm.

Verse 3-- David had a fine house to reside in (2Sam. 5:11) but the ARK did not.

Verse 6-- The ARK had been located in "fields" [woods] at Kirjath-Jearim after it had first been sought in Ephrathah [Ephraim].

Verse 7-- Full worship had been restored since the ARK was back in the tabernacle.

Verse 8-- The Lord's appointments needed a permanent ["resting"] place where He could "rise" to His *full* glory before the world.

Verse 9-- In the great temple, God's glory would be even more apparent when His priests were adorned and were performing their righteous ceremonial service. The joy of devoted worshippers would increase to greater heights.

Verse 10-- David was concerned that his rule might be overthrown should he behave in a way that displeased the Lord. The NKJV capitalizes "Anointed," but other translations use the small "a." The footnote is "commissioned one," the role assigned to David as king of Israel. Termination of his kingship would put an end to David's desire to help in preparations for the temple and to continue his service to God and to the people of Israel.

Verse 11-- Dependent on his own faithfulness, David had confidence that Jehovah would honor His promise that his offspring would sit on the throne, build the temple, and continue to rule over Israel provided they were faithful to the Law of the Lord. This promise was later applied also to Jesus as the offspring of David in the flesh (Acts 2:30), long after the time of Solomon.

Verses 13-18-- David was confident that the Lord would fulfill all His promises:

1. Dwell in the temple as His "resting place" [footnote- "home] in Jerusalem;
2. Bless Jerusalem as His chosen city;
3. Assure acceptable ceremonial religious service in His temple, which would be the source of great joy among the people;
4. David's ["anointed" rather than "Anointed"] dynasty would grow strong and serve as a "lamp" to give direction to the nation;
5. Israel's enemies would fail in their opposition; David's governance ["crown"] would succeed.

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PSALM 101--David bore two great responsibilities as king over Israel. First, he was the leader of the military activities upon which the safety and continuance of the entire nation depended. Second, he was the chief administrator of the government that made possible the prosperity and equitable treatment of all its citizens.

This psalm describes David's goals to be a successful administrator of his kingdom. 2Samuel 8:15 says, "and David administered judgment and justice to all his people."

Verses 1,2-- David had been the recipient of God's mercy and justice to an ultimate degree for many years. Now, he had resolved to exhibit the same blessings to his subjects. He purposed that *whenever* the Lord chose to "check" on him, he would be found doing just as he had vowed.

Verses 3-5-- As king, David would carefully eliminate unworthy servants from their positions.

1. He would not allow sinful or unproductive behavior by any servant.
2. He would dismiss those who were slack in the performance of their duties.
3. He would insist on moral uprightness among his workers. The rebellious would be summarily dismissed from their employment.
4. Discord and underhanded behavior among servants would not be tolerated.

Verse 6-- The king would enlist those "faithful" to the Law to serve him and his nation.

1. "Faithfulness" both to the Law of God and to the law of the workplace would be required of everyone.
2. Continued employment would depend on "walking in a perfect way."

Verse 7-- Devious and untruthful people would not be allowed to continue in service.

Verse 8-- The king would seek to establish the same high standards of conduct throughout his kingdom as he demanded within his administration. What was good for his own household and administration would also be good for Jerusalem and for the entire land of Israel.

Psalm 101 is the vow of a king intent on raising the moral character of his kingdom above that of the previous ruler. A necessary part of this process was to "drain the swamp" of undesirables and replace them with righteous people who would provide commendable service to the nation.

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PSALM 144-- This psalm is somewhat similar to Psalm 18. Both speak of David's frequent dangers at the hands of his enemies, of how he cried for rescue by the Lord, and how God always responded to his petitions to deliver him from his adversaries. Some of the imagery is used in both poems, and both include profuse praise and thanksgiving for the Lord's help.

There are some basic differences between Psalm 18 and Psalm 144. The former deals almost exclusively with David's successes against his national enemies and is focused on his military conquests. The latter is divided into *two* parts. The first part emphasizes how God rescues from the perils of war. This part praises the Lord for rescue from the *sword*. The second part also pleads for rescue from the *mouth* of those who would bring down the kingdom with vicious falsehoods. David had been harmed by a number of such liars, especially during the events of Absalom's rebellion. It was important for David to be saved from both *national* enemies and from "*foreign*" [ob. "not belonging to one's house," i.e., "not loyal"] people such as those close to him in station but disloyal in purpose. The stability and prosperity of David's reign depended on God's blessings in both *military* and *domestic* matters. When there was *peace* through *military might* and *political health* through *national patriotism*, good conditions would exist in every part of the kingdom.

Verse 2b-- "Who subdues my people under me"-- The Lord arranges or permits leaders to be installed either to *raise* a nation or to *bring it down*. He does not always override our political choices when they don't harmonize with His own plans for the nation. We must sometimes live with the consequences of our own mistakes.

Verses 3,4-- Human ability can only take us so far. Only God can remove serious obstacles to significant problems. See Psalm 8:4-6.

Verses 12,13-- David's prayer for the future of Israel was hopeful. All elements of the nation would be cause for national pride. Sons would be strong and vigorous; daughters would be like beautiful columns ["corner pillars"] of stately buildings. The land would be fertile, producing an abundance of all kinds of crops. There would be full employment for the people, and commerce would thrive. The fields would be fully stocked with cattle ["thousands and ten thousands"], and everywhere would be seen a growing economy and a national prosperity.

Verse 14-- Well-laden oxen would signify full employment among farm workers, and robust markets would tend toward full pockets for all the populace. Additionally, threats of crimes against public property and thefts of private property would remain on a low level. Furthermore, there would be no political unrest against the king and his administration of the kingdom.

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Verse 15-- Obviously, if an entire nation could be persuaded to submit its affairs into the hands of Almighty God, the blessings He would shower upon it would be impossible to measure. That would produce an enviable condition for any people. Such a state of affairs is *not* an impossibility but merely a matter of *choice*. And the choice is not God's alone. Rather, it is the decision of any nation to *serve the Lord* that may shape its future.

PSALMS--LESSON 8--"David: Fallen and Forgiven"

[2Sam.11:1-12:25]

PSALM 51--Over the years, we have all known people who were offered the opportunity to obey the gospel but who declined, declaring that they were too guilty of sin to be saved. But Paul described himself as the "chief of sinners" and still maintained that he had obtained mercy from the Lord (1Timothy 1:15). Even his terrible sin of persecuting Christ was washed away in his baptism(Acts 22:16).

David was guilty of the heinous sins of adultery and murder. It is hard to comprehend how such a man "after God's own heart" could have fallen so low. Yet, in a moment of weakness he disregarded the sacred warning, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1Cor. 10:12). How extremely careful we should be that we do not allow temptation to overcome our good intentions and to destroy our relationship with God in a moment of time. Most of us are far less devoted to serving God than David had been before he committed crimes against God and men.

Psalm 51 displays more than any other the deep and desperate emotions of a man who had previously lived close to his Lord but now was suddenly cut off and separated from Him because of the sins he had committed. He had no one to blame other than himself, and he had no one to beg for forgiveness except the One against whom he had sinned so grievously.

David had many times appealed to God for relief from other problems based on his "righteousness" and his relatively "clean" hands. Now it is different. His "sinlessness" has become "sinfulness" and his hands are stained with the ugliness of his personal conduct toward Bathsheba and Uriah her husband. *What to do?* How could he ever recover his standing with Jehovah after Nathan the prophet had declared so bluntly, "*You are the man*"?

Psalm 51 discloses David's reaction to a very serious situation in his life. It serves as an effective plan of action for us when we fall from where we have been to where we ought never want to be.

Verses 1, 2-- Only a God of endless mercy could "blot out" [erase] such extreme transgressions as adultery and murder. Still, this was the God who would one day offer forgiveness to people who were spiritual adulterers and the murderers of His only Son. His "nature" obviously included a "*multitude* of tender mercies."

Verses 3-6-- Several things were required if David was to be forgiven:

1. He must acknowledge his guilt of sin. A humble heart must admit that no man with a high esteem of himself with regard to sin will be held in high esteem by the Lord who knows the truth about his weaknesses and his frequent transgressions against the law of God;

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2. He must maintain a healthy conscience that will "keep his sins always before him";
3. He must not cover up or deny the reality of his sinful behavior. We cannot know how often David's sins were on his conscience or what impact they may have made on his heart before Nathan condemned his sinful actions, but we know that afterward he was deeply moved to shame and tears by what he had done;
4. He must realize that his sin, like all sin, basically is against God who has always pointed man away from sin for his own protection and welfare. *Adultery* is wrong [among other reasons] because it is against the *sanctity of marriage*, which is the physical foundation of man's greatest good in this world. *Murder* is wrong in part because it removes all opportunity for the victim to fulfill the purpose for which God placed him on the earth-- to glorify the Lord through his obedience and godly life for whatever number of years God may have planned. In actuality, of course, David had also sinned profoundly against Bathsheba, Uriah, his unborn child, his family, his kingship, and the entire nation of Israel;
5. He must understand and admit that the Lord is just in His condemnation of sin and in His punishment of sin when it occurs. There is never any excuse for a violation of the law of God!
6. He must accept the personal responsibility each man has for his own righteousness. Sin cannot be blamed on the unrighteousness of others or on the circumstances which surround him. David, like all of us, was both conceived and born into a world of sin, But God's purpose for him was nevertheless to "know wisdom" and to value "truth" in his heart.

Verses 7-9-- Forgiveness was David's only goal. Nothing else really mattered. Only God could make it happen for him. As with all sins committed under the Law of Moses, *blood* must be shed to cover sin (Hebrews 9:22). The priest sprinkled the blood of cleansing with a branch of hyssop. In the cleansing from leprosy [a figure of sin], the leper was required to wash himself and his garments as part of the process. Practicing the ceremonial purging in the temple and the figurative cleansing of his spiritual leprosy, David was hopeful of complete forgiveness and restoration to his former intimacy with Jehovah. The despair he felt for his sins had been like hearing his bones breaking and knowing the consequences of such a mishap. His depression would surely be replaced by sounds of joy and gladness when he knew that his spiritual "bones" had been healed by the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord.

Verses 10-15-- This chart perhaps will help us to understand David's despair and his fervent desire for redemption:

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THE WAGES OF SIN (Rom. 6:23)

1. An unclean heart (Psa. 51:10a)
2. Motivation is gone (vs. 10b)
3. Cast away from God (vs.11a)
4. Absence of Holy Spirit (vs. 11b)
5. Joy of salvation lost (vs. 12a)
6. Disqualified to teach (vs. 13a, 15a)
7. Profound guilt (vs. 14a)
8. Worship unacceptable (vs. 16a,b)

THE REWARDS OF FORGIVENESS

1. A clean heart and conscience (vs. 10a)
2. A steadfast spirit (vs. 10b)
3. Close presence of God (vs. 11a)
4. Holy Spirit active (vs. 11b, 12b)
5. Joy of salvation restored (vs. 12a)
6. Turn others to Jehovah (vs. 13b)
7. Salvation realized (vs. 14a)
8. Worship acceptable (vs. 17a,b); broken spirit and contrite heart (vs. 17a)

[Notes on the verses above]

1. Verse 10-- David was afraid, uncertain, and inactive following his conviction of sins.
2. Verse 11-- How much did David understand about the Holy Spirit?
3. Verse 16-- God did not desire sacrifice and burnt offerings *only*. He also desired sincere worship from His people.
4. Verse 13-- "Been there and done that" can be effective in converting some sinners.

Verse 18-- God would also receive a "blessing" through David's restoration to favor:

1. The entire nation [Zion] would prosper with a righteous king again on the throne to guide its activities and to set a good example for Israel to follow. Its walls [strength] would be rebuilt for other nations to witness and to be impressed.
2. The populace of David's kingdom would worship more sincerely and enthusiastically as they imbibed the renewed dedication of their king. This would result in their efforts to please Jehovah as David tried to do.

PSALM 38--This psalm, like Psalm 51, reflects the deep anguish felt by David when he contemplated the serious consequences of the terrible sins he had committed against Bathsheba and Uriah. The psalm's inscription states that its purpose for being written was "To bring to remembrance." That likely means that it was intended to serve as a reminder to David or to the nation [or both] how frightening are the consequences of sinning against Jehovah and how deeply penitent the king was for the sins that had caused him such extreme suffering. Scholars are divided over whether this suffering was physical or mental. Some contend that David was afflicted with a life-threatening malady as part of his punishment for what he had done.

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A strong case can be made for this position from several statements in the text, although there is no historical record of such an incident. Psalm 41 definitely concerns a critical illness apparently experienced by David. We do not know whether these two psalms are related with regard to such a sickness. On the other hand, it is possible that David is speaking in an extended metaphor, comparing his deep mental distress to symptoms of a physical disease that others would recognize and thereby understand the severity of the mental anguish he felt prior to the forgiveness of his transgressions. This was a common technique used by David and others in the psalms. Regardless of which interpretation seems more probable, the psalm certainly deals with a very unhappy time in David's life.

Verses 1, 2-- A plea for relief; David felt: (1) rebuked; (2) chastened; (3) pierced deeply; (4) pressed down.

Verses 3-5-- The admitted causes of his affliction were: (1) God's anger; (2) his own sin; (3) his own foolishness [as they say, "there's no cure for stupid!"-- but *God has a cure*].

Verses 3-8-- The serious nature of his condition [physical or mental]: (1) complete involvement ["flesh and bones"]; (2) drowning in sins; (3) crushed by the weight of his guilt; (4) "wounds" foul and festering; (5) bowed greatly; (6) full of inflammation; (7) feeble and broken; (8) a heart in turmoil.

Verses 9, 10-- God was aware of David's condition whether it was mental or physical. David was in a stupor, without any direction [the "light of his eyes" was gone].

Verses 11,12-- The reaction of others to David's condition: (1) relatives and friends avoided him; (2) his worst enemies laid snares for him; (3) adversaries spread lies to destroy him.

Verses 13,14-- David had no response to charges and accusations made against him. There was neither any justification nor any excuse for his guilt. He was like a deaf mute in his behavior, unable to utter a sound in his own defense.

Verses 15,16-- The threat that David's affliction posed to the nation of Israel was alarming:
(1) His enemies were glad to take advantage of him in his condition [physical or mental];
(2) Adversaries might become more bold to challenge his authority should he commit any *future* misdeed.

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Verses 17-20-- David's sorrow and repentance for his past sins are not enough to stop the opposition's efforts to bring down the king. Even when he does "good" [exhibits sorrow and repentance], his enemies grow stronger and more numerous and will continue to harass him and challenge his right to be the king of Israel.

Verses 21, 22-- There was nothing more that David could do to make things right and to save his administration over his nation. He was now trying his best to "follow what is good." Only the Lord's help could save him from the dire consequences he now faced because of his foolish and hurtful behavior in the past.

PSALM 40-- This psalm is similar to Psalm 32 in that it celebrates the pardon granted to David following his fervent pleas to God for forgiveness. Although many scholars believe that this psalm is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, the text as a whole seems to better support the primary interpretation as one relating to David. A few verses are quoted in the New Testament and applied to Jesus as a secondary subject because of similar circumstances.

Verse 1-- David frequently mentioned the importance of patience in "waiting for the Lord" to deliver him from various difficulties. Impatience betrays a distrust in the Lord's willingness or in His power to help us.

Verse 1b-- Nathan assured David immediately upon his confession ["I have sinned"] that Jehovah had "put away" his sin. Some suppose that might have applied to the death penalty for his adultery with Bathsheba rather than forgiveness that required recognition of the *extent* of David's guilt and *full* repentance on his part. This idea might support "patience" by the king as he "waited" for God's pardon.

Verse 2-- David likened his sense of forgiveness to an escape from a "horrible" pit and from being held fast by the "miry clay." He was sinking fast into destruction. Instead, God had "set" him on a rock and "established" his feet so they would not slip again into sin.

Verse 3-- Many *see* what the Lord did for David, *hear* his praises [a "new song"], and so fear [respect] and trust God to forgive them, too.

Verse 4-- One is blessed who trusts God to help, not the proud [self-sufficient] or liars [who give wrong advice].

Verse 5-- God's thoughts of concern and His work to help men are to be remembered or recounted. His display of mercy and forgiveness cannot be denied or doubted.

Verses 6,7-- Ceremonial sacrifice alone could not forgive David. His ears must be opened ["I come"] to hear the Law ["scroll of the book"] which condemned adulterers and

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murderers as "*sinner*s" ["written of me"]. These verses are also applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Hebrews 10:5-7).

Verse 8-- Forgiveness required sincere repentance, which in turn required a change of mind to follow God's will for man's righteousness rather than to follow man's own will to commit sin.

Verses 9, 10-- Soon after being exposed in his great sins, David had vowed that if Jehovah would forgive him, he would teach others the lessons he had learned from his transgression (Psa. 51:13). Here, it appears that he had kept that promise and had widely dispersed the message to his people that sin doesn't pay. His greatest goal now was to teach and convert sinners to God's "way." He had openly proclaimed his experience of forgiveness, not just felt it internally.

Verses 11, 12-- David now knew as never before how true it was that, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1Cor, 10:12). There would be sins needing forgiveness in the future. David's plea was that God would treat them, as he repented of them, just as he had dealt with these past sins. Otherwise, his heart "fails" at the prospect of ultimate condemnation.

Verses 13-15-- David's prayer deals with adversaries who used his sins to "destroy" [discredit] his life as king over Israel. May their motives be exposed, may they be put to shames, and may their evil efforts be defeated. "Aha"-- an expression of contempt.

Verse 16-- All who sin should be glad for God's readiness to forgive. They should also be ready to praise Him when He forgives.

Verse 17-- David wanted to be a model for his subjects. As such, he must show that even the king is "poor" [sinful] and "needy"[of pardon]. Therefore, all Israelites must call upon Jehovah for "help and deliverance" just as their king had done. David's final plea was, "deliver them as You have delivered me."

PSALM 32--Two psalms in this lesson [51 and 38] record the emotional outcries of David to Jehovah in seeking forgiveness for his sins against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah. Both express the profound relief felt by the king when the Lord chose to hold him guiltless for his despicable actions.

Verses 1, 2--David felt "blessed" by God in many ways. He had been preserved from many dangers when Saul pursued. He had fought many fierce battles against Israel's enemies. He had been elevated from being an unknown shepherd to the throne over God's people.

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But *never* had David felt more blessed by the Lord than when he was pardoned from the grievous sins of *adultery* and *murder*. The chains of guilt had been thrown off and the prospects of physical death and eternal damnation had been laid to rest. Prior to his forgiveness, he had tried to cover up his sins. But as long as the Lord charged him with ungodliness, and as long as he attempted to deceive others [as well as himself], he had no real sense of being blessed by Jehovah.

Verses 3,4-- The deception practiced by David while he "kept silent," hoping that his sins would remain hidden from other people, took a heavy toll on the king both mentally and physically. His deceptions were maintained for perhaps a year or more, and during that time his energy was greatly diminished and his body felt old. God's hand [through his conscience] was "heavy upon" him.

Verse 5-- Finally, following Nathan's scathing condemnation, things changed dramatically. He decided to stop the deception and confess outright the wickedness of his behavior. Suddenly, a profound change occurred-- God *completely* and *forever* forgave him of his sins! Selah! ["Let *that* sink in!"]

Verse 6-- The king's pardon from such heinous and unthinkable actions as he had been guilty of was a powerful example to all other people in Israel who desired to live godly lives. They too could be forgiven by a merciful Lord of whatever wrongs they might have done. David's redemption was a real "altar call" to all sinners within the chosen nation. His caveat, however, was that the Lord will forgive only when men are truly penitent of their sinfulness ["in a time when You may be found"]. Hesitation can deter the heart from necessary repentance, so the timing is *urgent*.

Verse 7-- Sincere prayers will allow callers on the Lord to escape "drowning" in the deep waters of unconfessed sins. David had found Jehovah to be his safe hiding place from the spiritual death that wrongdoing brings. God also offered escape from various troubles, as David well knew from his personal experiences in the past. Forgiveness would replace sorrow with gladness, and "songs of deliverance" could be sung and appreciated as only those released from condemnation of soul and body could. *Selah!*

Verse 8-- David was anxious to teach his subjects about the wonders of God's mercies and to encourage them to avail themselves of His rich provisions of forgiveness. He would guide them with his eye of personal experience [what he had seen in his own case], knowing that an example is often the best way to teach a precious truth.

Verse 9-- The king would dissuade sinners from waiting for some compelling cause to prompt their compliance with Jehovah's requisites for forgiveness. That may work with horses and mules but not with people. Such "bits" and "bridles" are insufficient for *true* repentance toward God (2Corinthians 7:10).

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Verses 10, 11-- Continuation in sin only leads to "many sorrows," but divine pardon brings profuse mercies from the Lord. Rejoice in that fact and praise the Lord for the wonderful opportunity to be washed from the awful stains of sin. [All of us can add, "Selah!"]

It was unthinkable that David, a "man after God's own heart," would ever succumb to sins of passion and inhumanity, *but he did*. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah to selfishly cover his sin. Although the Lord mercifully set aside the death penalty attached to the king's crime, his behavior could not continue to go unpunished. And, the punishment must be severe enough to send a message both to the king and to his subjects about his disobedience. Second Samuel 12:10-14 specifies *five* consequences of David's ungodliness:

1. Warfare would plague his kingdom during his lifetime;
2. Members of his own family would rebel against his leadership as king of Israel;
3. His wives [concubines] would be given to another man;
4. His adversaries would have great opportunities to blaspheme the Lord's name;
5. The child born of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba would not live.

Each of these prophecies of punishment was precisely fulfilled as promised by the Lord. Each punishment brought deep anguish to David's life, and out of each one came one or more of the psalms that reflect that anguish. Each consequence of the king's transgressions in its own way declared loudly to all his people: "Be sure your sins will find you out" (Numbers 32:23) and, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

PSALMS-- Lesson 9-- "David: Paying the High Cost of Sin" [2sam.12:15- 22:51]

PSALM 6- This psalm recounts the terrible sense of sorrow and loss experienced by David when the child borne by Bathsheba fell ill and died soon after its birth. It hovered between life and death for seven long days, compounding David's grief even further. The king's only resort was to God in prayer for the life of the child. Such a petition could only appeal to the Lord's *mercy*, not to His *justice*, for justice called for a severe answer to the prayer. Although his sense of loss was overwhelming, David could find no reason in the situation to place any blame on Jehovah.

Verse 1-- Perhaps from earlier experiences as a parent, David knew that discipline springing out of anger tends to be more severe than when it originates from unexcited deliberation. In his own fear and frustration, David approaches God as if He were a *human* father about to punish his human child for disobedience. But, of course, David knew better...so...

Verse 2-- God is not a physical father and His actions are not dictated by physical responses. His mercy takes notice of weakness and of the repentance of the sinner. David was so "troubled" by his guilt that both body and soul were deeply affected. None of us dares to ask for *justice* as we confront our sins, whether "little white lies" or the murder of innocent people. Justice will condemn us! We must have mercy!!

Verse 3-- David was confident that God's mercy would bring him relief in one way or another. The only uncertainty was-- *when* would it come?

Verse 4-- "Return"-- be merciful once again as You have been before-- deliver me from guilt and grief. For "Your mercy's sake" was primarily for David's sake, but God's reputation for mercy would be greatly enhanced if He showed mercy to such a sinner as David.

Verse 5-- David's servants had feared for his life during the child's illness. Perhaps those fears had some basis in fact. But, if David contemplated suicide should the child die, he reconsidered and changed his mind when he realized [or remembered] that self-murder is as much a sin against Jehovah's precious gift of life as the murder he had committed against Uriah the Hittite. A person guilty of suicide deliberately ignores the value of the life God has given to him, and his grave certainly does not speak of a soul thankful to his Maker for the opportunity to live that life.

Verses 6,7-- David's grief and suffering were profound during the seven days while the child lingered between life and death. Perhaps hoping God would cancel what He had promised, the king "groaned" and wept profusely until his eyesight was dimmed and perhaps even physically impaired. ["sunk back"?] There were many problems oppressing David at this time, and each one contributed to his distress. The greatest, of course, was the increasing likelihood that his child would soon die.

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Verses 9, 10-- Additionally, there were other things that sought to overwhelm him and destroy his faith in the Lord who heretofore had often been his benefactor. For one thing, his enemies were seeking to destroy his influence and disrupt his administration of the kingdom because of what they interpreted as weakness on his part when they saw or heard of the serious disability that this sin had brought upon him. They were attacking his character for having caused the affliction of his own child. They were questioning his mental and physical ability to manage the affairs of his government. They possibly were even taking action to have him replaced as king. David's response to such devious plans was: if the Lord had heard his case and had seen fit to forgive him and to allow his reign over Israel to continue, then what cause did anyone else have to challenge his position as its ruler? His prayer was that God would make certain that all those hard-hearted and politically selfish enemies would be exposed as the traitors they really were. They should be *shamed* and should *be ashamed* for their despicable behavior.

PSALM 3-- One of the worst things a person can do is to betray the love and trust placed in him by his/her parents. We can't know how much David took to heart God's pronouncement that part of his punishment for sins committed would be rebellion from within his own family. Almost certainly, he never guessed that the rebel would be Absalom, his third son whom he loved deeply and who he thought loved him in return. But how wrong he was! Clearly, Absalom's respect for his father had been damaged by David's sinful conduct with Bathsheba and Uriah. Other instances of action and inaction likely were considered inexcusable by his disillusioned son. Mainly, it was Absalom's lust for power and his greed for notoriety that led to his rebellion against his father, the king of Israel. Psalm 3 is attached to Absalom's insurrection against David by the title of the psalm. We note that it was written by David "when he fled from Absalom.." It deals with the great alarm the king felt when confronted by the reality of what his son and others were doing. Also, it shows how Jehovah was willing to rescue him and to support his kingship even when members of his own household were involved.

Verse 1-- Through devious means, Absalom "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2Samuel 15:6). Within four years after being reconciled to his father, Absalom began his conspiracy to snatch the kingdom from David. Within a short time "the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number" (2 Sam. 15:12). The actual number of Absalom's supporters was exaggerated when reported to David, and in great haste he chose to flee the city. Obviously, the defection of the people was by no means unanimous but was highly overestimated in David's mind. Of particular concern were those traitors whose loyalty he would never have questioned but who had now "risen up" to betray the king.

Verse 2-- Of even greater distress to David was a widespread opinion that the Lord no longer supported him or his role as ruler over the nation. Apparently, there were serious doubts about this matter in David's mind as well (2Sam. 15:25,26). ["Selah"-- How could this desperate situation end well for the king?]

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Verses 3,4-- Despite the discouraging outlook, David's trust in God's wisdom and justice remained strong. He cried out to the Lord for assistance but remained willing to accept whatever outcome God might choose [a necessary lesson about our prayers as well]. Jehovah was still in charge "on His holy hill" [i.e., His rule had not been stolen by some other god or man.] He communicated to David His intention to continue His support as David's shield against his enemies. He would continue to assure that the glory of the kingship would rest with David, and the king's head would soon be "lifted up" in victory instead of hanging down in expectation of defeat at the hands of Absalom.

Verses 5, 6-- With God's reassurance of support, David's confidence was renewed and he was able to sleep well without a fear of imminent destruction. He awoke with a new resolution to place himself totally in the hands of the Lord and take up the fight that would restore him to his rightful place as ruler over Israel. Not even overwhelming numbers of the enemy could frighten him because now he realized that even *one man* on God's side of a battle would ultimately prevail!

Verse 7-- Reassured in the knowledge that the Lord's approved of his reign, David called on the Lord to act in his behalf in this current warfare. Past experience suggested that victory would once again be his because God had always struck down his enemies just as one would disarm vicious animals by knocking out their teeth.

Verse 8-- One basic truth returned to cheer David as he confronted a determined and powerful enemy in the person of Absalom-- "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" No matter the odds. If Jehovah willed a victory for David, no other outcome was possible. He would do what was best for His people Israel.

PSALM 55-- David as king of Israel was the nation's commander-in-chief of the army and also chief administrator of its civil activities. Not surprisingly, he had been very successful in both roles because he had relied on the Lord's guidance in all that he did. He had engaged other nations in battle and conquered them almost without exception. He had seemed to know what to do and how to do it in practically every situation. He had proved himself to be a great warrior against every foreign adversary.

However, David's grievous sins against Bathsheba and Uriah had badly damaged both his moral fiber and his physical prowess. Bold action had been displaced by inaction and uncertainty. Firm decision-making had given way to doubt and hesitation. He was never

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again to be the powerful leader he once had been prior to his great transgressions of God's Law. And his enemies of all kinds saw in his new weakness an opportunity to do things against him that they never would have done before when he was strong in every way.

When his own son led a rebellion to tear away the throne from him, David faced a situation unlike any he had even known before. Previously, he had always known who the enemies were and what their motives were for war. He understood what tactics could be expected from foreign leaders and how he would deal with them when the conflict was over. But now, it was his own son who was the enemy. He was no doubt confused about why Absalom and some of his best friends would suddenly turn on him so viciously. And, how should he want this war to be resolved? These are just a few of the dilemmas facing David as he was thrown into conflict with his beloved son Absalom.

Psalms 55 is a psalm that records the bewilderment felt by the king as he tried to sort out all the unthinkable circumstances of this rebellion. It also emphasizes that there was only *one way* to handle the seemingly unmanageable situation presented to him by Absalom's betrayal. That way was to continue to look to Jehovah for guidance that would make things right again.

Verse 1-- David's first impulse in the precarious situation was to pray. That, to his mind, must be a large part of solving any problem in his life. *Four words would likely summarize the entire book of Psalms:*

1. PRAY-- solicit God's help with whatever is wrong in one's life;
2. TRUST-- God is concerned and can alter whatever situation may need to be changed;
3. PROOF-- incident after incident proves the validity of following #1 and #2;
4. PRAISE-- thanksgiving and honor are due such a caring and powerful a God as ours.

David's response was no different here than everywhere else in the psalms. This is a fundamental lesson to be learned from this wonderfully rich book of the Old Testament!

Verse 2-- David's desperate need poured forth like a river when he sought God's help. He was "restless" [footnote- "wander"] in his prayer. He faced a complex situation with no simple solutions. There were multiple things he must pray about and he must have confidence that God could fix every one. David's emotions were intense and he was very unsure about what to pray for. The king's fervent pleas could only be expressed in groans. Many of us have also had that same experience (See Romans 8:26).

Verse 3-- David's enemies, many of whom were family members, close friends, and formerly loyal subjects, now had only hatred for him. They slandered his character, they were anxious to oppress him in every way possible, and they exhibited great wrath toward him as they sought his destruction.

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Verses 4,5-- The king's reaction to this unusual situation was extreme. He was "severely pained," terrified of an imminent death, and deeply moved by the horror of this crisis.

Verses 6-8-- David also experienced a normal reaction to the multiple problems he faced. He wished that he might simply "fly away" and avoid having to confront his situation at all. How often have we wished just to "wander off into the wilderness," forget it all, and "escape from the windy storm and tempest"?

Verses 9-11-- Perhaps David refers here to the defection of Ahithophel, a former close friend and counselor of the king. When informed of this man's shift of loyalty, David had prayed that the traitor's advice to Absalom would be faulty and lead to his defeat. The condition now prevailing in Jerusalem was proof that a change was urgent. Violence, strife, iniquity, trouble, destruction, oppression, and deceit were rampant. The king was deeply concerned about the future of his capital city.

Verses 12-14-- David now turns to his own personal remorse about this uprising against him. Had the rebels been people who could be *expected* to rebel, he could have avoided the current situation. But chief among his enemies was one of his closest companions, Ahithophel, who had been his equal in devotion to the best interests of the nation and who had always shown the same principles of loyalty and morality as David himself. They had been confidants with each other about personal matters, and they were mutually dedicated to serving Jehovah. They had often attended worship together. How could his friend's treachery be explained? How could he know how to deal with such unexpected behavior?

Verse 15-- The king's conclusion about these bewildering situations was the only resolution he could desire if he wished for vindication and victory in this newly-begun conflict. He must deal with these wicked persons in the same way one deals with all others who deliberately violate one's friendship and God's own law. But how difficult it is to make this wish when our relatives and friends fall into sin! How much would we wish instead that they could be treated less severely than those unfamiliar to us! The real depth of one's faith might easily be tested by this reaction to the wisdom and justice of the Lord.

Verses 16-18-- Perhaps these verses reveal David's thoughts after the rebellion of Absalom had been resolved. He had learned once again that it was wise to rely on the Lord for help in every crisis. His deliverance was one more proof of what he had believed before: PRAYER, TRUST, and THANKSGIVING would see him through every problem, no matter how serious it might be.

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PSALM 44--David's heinous sins against Bathsheba and Uriah had serious consequences attached to them. Many people suffered as the result of David's wicked behavior.

1. David himself-- Never again would he be the strong and decisive leader of the kingdom that he once had been. His reputation for good leadership was greatly diminished in his own eyes and in the eyes of many others.
2. The child--It would be forever denied the opportunity to experience the joys and satisfactions of a lifetime here on earth. Of course, neither did it have to suffer the sorrows and sufferings of a wicked world. And, innocent as it was, its place in an eternal heaven was assured.
3. Bathsheba-- While David's deep grief over the child's death is recorded in detail, nothing is said about the emotions of a bereft mother who gave up the life of her newborn. Experience testifies that the grief of a mother in this situation surpasses that of anyone else.
4. David's other family-- Every family member must have been deeply impacted by the shame that he/she had to bear because of the shameful actions of a relative.
5. The nation of Israel-- The reputation of the nation's leader substantially affected the reputation of the whole kingdom in the eyes of foreign countries. The welfare of all the people was negatively impacted by the sins of its *main citizen*-- David the king.

Psalm 44 is a psalm intended to voice the complaints of men and women who were being made to suffer the consequences of actions not their own. It also raises a plea to God to relieve them of this "unjust" burden [as they saw it]. This is *not* a psalm of David [composed by "the sons of Korah"] but a psalm about David.

Verses 1-3-- Spokesmen in behalf of Israel ["sons of Korah"] bring their complaint by reciting incidents in Israel's history that prove God's concern and care for the entire nation:

1. He drove the pagans from the land promised to Israel;
2. He "planted" [established] Israel in their place as a strong people;
3. He supplied the "strong arm" and "sword" necessary to take the land;
4. He favored His nation above all other nations in every respect.

Verses 4-8-- These spokesmen next express the confidence of the people that Jehovah will continue to give His watchful care to Israel in all their future struggles. Enemies will be "pushed down" and "trampled." As always before, it would be by God's power and not theirs that future victories would come.

Verses 9-12-- As a result of their king's sinful activities, Israel had been placed in a precarious position before both national and domestic enemies, If the king is now regarded as morally weak and inattentive to his kingly responsibilities, the strength of the entire

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nation has likely diminished also. A possible military scenario is presented in these verses to illustrate the damage done to Israel's standing among surrounding peoples:

1. They were shamed because of their king's sins;
2. Enemies were confident that God's support of their armies had been removed;
3. It was thought that they would flee in battle and their goods taken from them;
4. They were considered to be as helpless as sheep and were likely targets for "the nations."
5. A people who were worthwhile to God would be sacrificed by Him to nations of no worth in terms of offering Him service.

Verses 13-16-- The ill effects of their leader's behavior are further listed. Israel's name as a powerful nation has been destroyed. That is the collective opinion of its citizens ["us"]. Every "man on the street" ["my"] supports this view. All are shamed by the insults voiced by their enemies.

Verses 17-19-- God's action in allowing these conditions to arise was considered as "unfair" by innocent people who must suffer for the deeds of a guilty king. They had *not*:

1. Forgotten Jehovah;
2. Dealt falsely with His covenant;
3. Turned back in their hearts;
4. Departed from God's way.

In return for their *good* behavior, they felt that they had been "severely broken" and left separated from God in the "wilderness" and threatened by an imminent death.

Verses 20-22-- The people were bewildered by an *effect* without a *cause*. If they had violated God's will, they would expect the Lord to know about it and to punish them accordingly. But-- it was their *good* behavior, not bad, that had made them to be like sheep waiting for the slaughter. How could you explain that?

Verses 23-26-- Out of their weakness of faith and fear for their safety, the people called for God to "awake" [as if He had been "asleep" to an unjust situation] and to set things aright. Jehovah's help would once again testify of His abundant mercy to the helpless.

PSALM 41--While there is no historical record of David's suffering a serious physical illness following his sins, Psalm 41 certainly describes a situation that strongly indicates that circumstance. If the psalm does disclose an illness not discussed in the historical record, it may or may not have been associated with David's sinful conduct. It would not be at all unusual that the stress of sinful actions would bring severe consequences to him. If that is the context of this psalm, we can see how David sought to deal with the illness, how others tried

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to take advantage of it, and how the king was determined to maintain his faith in a God who could heal him of whatever was wrong both physically and spiritually.

Verse 1-- David believed that God will bless those who are sympathetic with and supportive of "the poor" [footnote-- "helpless or powerless"] because that is how the Lord treats them. This confidence gave David strong hope that he would soon be restored to health by a caring God.

Verse 2-- Jehovah would not only keep David alive, he believed, but also He would cause him to be "blessed on the earth" after his recovery.

Verse 3-- The king of Israel would surely have been attended by the best doctors available. These physicians would have applied the most effective medical procedures of the day. Still, David's trust was not in the doctors but in God *working through* the doctors.

Verse 4-- David's chief concern, as sick as he may have been, was not his *physical health*. He had sinned grievously against the Lord, and it was his *spiritual* condition that caused him the greatest anxiety. God's mercy was needed even more than medicine. Healing of the *soul* was much more urgent than healing of the *body*.

Verses 5-8-- Not everyone was hoping for the king's recovery. His political foes sensed an advantage in his illness. Better yet for them, his death would give them opportunities unavailable while he lived. The response of some of David's "friends" to his sickness was a deep disappointment to him:

1. Their conversations among themselves revealed hearts set on evil toward him. They hoped that death would soon remove the king's power and influence that were contrary to their purposes;
2. However, when each one visited in the sickroom he spoke as if he sincerely wished for the king to be well again soon;
3. Even during their visits with the patient, these hypocrites formulated their plans to undermine David's influence while he lay ill. They would work hard to carry out their wicked schemes after his death;
4. These plans were eagerly shared with others of like mind to destroy the king;
5. Numerous persons conspired to find ways to hurt David while he lay sick and helpless;
6. His enemies were confident that David's illness was terminal.

Verse 9-- Most hurtful to David was the discovery that one of his closest friends [we do not know who] had betrayed his friendship and "acted" as a "traitor" [footnote]. This person had been close to the king and was trusted as only a good friend would be. Perhaps he was even among the leaders of the conspiracy against David.

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Verse 10-- David's prayer for his healing was not only in his personal interest but also for the good of the kingdom. If he could recover, resume his kingly role, and thwart the evil plans that wicked people had made while he was ill, that would protect the welfare of the entire nation.

Verses 11, 12-- Recovery from such a severe illness would assure David of God's support. Healing would come only because he would seek to live and govern again within the Lord's will for Israel.

Verse 13-- A final outpouring of praise for the Lord's continuing watch care over a ruler whose reign was always subject to God's supreme control over His people.

FOR FURTHER STUDY ABOUT DAVID'S PUNISHMENTS

Read Numbers 32:23 and Galatians 6:8. Both Old and New Testaments warn us that God is not to be trifled with. "Be sure your sin will find you out" and, "He that sows to the flesh will reap corruption" are truths that have rung in the ears of sinners for many centuries. They give promise that the Lord will, in His final accounting, see that each one receives his just "payback," whether good or bad. David was made to suffer the consequences of his sins while still in this world. Several punishments were included in the Lord's judgment, and each one came to pass exactly as foretold.

THE PROMISED PUNISHMENTS (2Samuel 12:9-14)

1. Continual warfare would confront David during his tenure as king;
2. Trouble would arise against him from among his own family;
3. His wives [concubines] would be given to another man;
4. His enemies would blaspheme the name of his God;
5. The child born of his great sin would not live.
6. Speculation suggests that a severe illness would befall him, although this is not included in the historical record.

A CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE AND IDENTIFICATION OF CERTAIN RELEVANT PSALMS

- I. The child of the unlawful union died as promised.
 - A. The historical record. 2Samuel 12:15-25
 - (1) The child fell ill and lingered for seven days
 - (2) David pleaded for the child and lay on the ground all night with no food.
 - (3) Following the child's death, David's behavior changed when he realized he could not bring the child back to him.

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(4) He and Bathsheba later had another child, Solomon [Jedidiah], who succeeded David on Israel's throne.

B. Psalm 6 and possibly others that are not titled may relate to this event in David's life.

II. Trouble would arise against David from among his own family.

A. The historical record. 2Samuel 13-20

(1) Amnon [his oldest son] violated Absalom's [the third son] sister Tamar. David took no action; Absalom killed Amnon after two years; Absalom fled; Joab manipulated his return; David only partially forgave Absalom his crime.

(2) Absalom raised a rebellion against David and "stole the hearts" of the people; his followers "increased continually"; David fled to Mahanaim after the evil plan of Ahithophel failed to capture him.

(3) A great battle ensued, and David forbade harm to his son. Absalom was killed by Joab. David displayed profound remorse, which angered Joab.

(4) The people sought David's return to Jerusalem as king; Judah "took over" the process which caused the enmity of the other tribes; Sheba led another rebellion by those tribes. Amasa was made general of the army but was killed by Joab.

(5) Adonijah, David's fourth son, attempted to seize the throne of Israel as his father had taken to his death bed. This posed a serious threat to David's expectation that Solomon would follow him as king. Through the efforts of Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan this rebellion was quickly ended. (1Kings 1)

B. Psalms 3 and 55 may well relate to the turmoil during this period of David's rule.

III. David's wives [concubines] would be given to another man.

A. The historical record. 2Samuel 16:20-23

(1) This action was a flagrant insult to the king and it must have hurt him deeply.

B. There are several psalms that may possibly concern this event, but none can be specified with any certainty.

IV. The enemies of God and the kingdom would blaspheme because of David's sins.

A. The historical record. 2Samuel 16-20

B. Unconcern for God's plan was clearly exposed in the actions of specific persons such as Amnon, Absalom, Shemei, and Sheba.

C. Psalm 44 may refer both to local and foreign enemies. Psalm 69 contains references which may come out of the fallout from David's transgressions.

V. Wars would continue to plague David's kingdom until his death.

A. The historical record. 2Samuel 21:15-22 [four wars with the Philistines].

B. Other conflicts occupied the energy of the king and kingdom: Absalom, Sheba, and the Philistines.

C. Jehovah denied David the privilege of building a temple because of these wars.

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- VI. David suffered a serious and life-threatening illness that was brought on by the stress of dealing with the consequences of his iniquities [it is speculated].
 - A. The historical record-- none.
 - B. Psalm 41 is a psalm of David that speaks of such an illness. It likely involves his own personal experience, but we cannot know the circumstances surrounding it.

PSALMS-- LESSON 10--“Looking Ahead” [2Sam. 23,24; 1Kings 1,2; 1Chron. 21-29]

David was naturally interested in Solomon’s success on Israel’s throne. This concern was intensified by the prospect that his son was to be the one chosen by Jehovah to erect the great temple in Jerusalem. This project had dominated David’s agenda for a long time, and he wanted to do whatever he could to make sure it happened without undue difficulty. This psalm is sometimes assigned to Solomon as its author, but more likely it was his father David who offered this prayer for his son’s positive achievements in the days ahead when he would rule over God’s people.

PSALM 72--

Verse 1-- God’s “judgments” came from His Law. The divine commandments should be kept constantly in the mind of the new king if he intended to make the Lord his prime counselor. Righteousness and justice must be the standards by which he would rule over his subjects.

Verse 3-- The “mountains” [highest officials] and “little hills” [lesser officials] would in unison bring political and economic “peace” to the whole nation through merciful and just legal decisions.

Verse 4-- The poor who were so often completely defenseless in the courts were to be especially blessed with real justice. Their children would no longer suffer from the oppression of greedy and powerful people, and the domination of such oppressors would be “broken” under Solomon’s influence on Israel’s legal system.

Verse 5-- Those who would be benefited by Solomon’s fair treatment [“They”] would respond with faithful respect and obedience. Their loyalty would be as unchanging as the orbits of the sun and moon throughout the passing of time.

Verse 6-- Solomon’s reign should favorably affect his subjects in a way comparable to a gentle rain causing the grass to grow and all the earth to produce its fruit.

Verse 7-- “In his days” on the throne, the *righteousness* of Solomon’s conduct and the *peace* that would result from that conduct would not vary from day to day [as constant as the moon].

Verses 8-11-- Solomon’s political and military influence would be extensive. David’s conquests had greatly exceeded those of Saul, and Solomon’s were still greater than David’s (1Kings 4:21,21,24). The expansion of his kingdom occurred over the forty years that he was on the throne:

1. He would rule from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea;

PSALMS-- LESSON 10

2. His kingdom would extend from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates (1Kings 4:21);
3. His territory would include wildernesses [remote locations];
4. Spain and Arabia would offer him presents to assure peace;
5. All [known] nations would seek protective relationships with Israel (1Kings 4:34).

Verses 12-14-- Solomon's domestic policies would focus on "poor and needy" citizens:

1. The king would respond to the cries of helpless and hopeless people;
2. He would offer to the unfortunate "salvation" and "redemption" from oppression and violence at the hands of unjust persons. "Poor blood" rather than "wealthy blood" would be "precious" in Solomon's sight.

Verses 15,16-- The kingdom in general and the king in particular would greatly benefit from his merciful treatment of others:

1. Immense wealth would accumulate from foreign gifts and tribute (2Chron. 9:22-24);
2. Prayer [by Jews and others] and praises would be raised in the king's behalf;
3. Israel would be prosperous agriculturally [cultivation of "top of mountains"] and commercially ["flourish like grass"].

Verse 17-- Solomon's reputation ["name"] would be enduring. All nations would benefit from contacts with his kingdom and would acknowledge as much (1Kings 4:34).

Verses 18,19-- These positive effects of Solomon's years on Israel's throne could happen only if he enjoyed the support of Jehovah. But, with that support almost anything was possible because only God can do marvelous things! Let His mighty works administered through Israel cause His name to be blessed and His glory to be revered throughout the entire world!

Verse 20-- [Added by the compilers(s)] The END OF BOOK II. Books 1 and 2 contain most of David's prayer-psalms. This verse has no integral connection with Psalm 72.

PSALM 127--

This "Song of Ascents" is designated as "of Solomon." However, as with Psalm 72, it more likely was written *about* Solomon by his father David. It lays down several basic principles for the new king's success and then makes some general observations about the importance of children to a man's legacy. David's vision of Israel's glorious future, of course, depended on Solomon's walking the path of obedience that his father had followed most of the time.

PSALMS-- LESSON 10

Verse 1a-- Solomon would be the builder of the great temple [“house”] in Jerusalem. But unless it was constructed strictly according to the Lord’s own plans, and [more importantly] unless its ongoing activities were accompanied by the sincere and obedient hearts of the worshipers, its existence would be meaningless to the nation.

Verse 1b-- Jerusalem had been promised significant blessings as the site of the temple (Psa. 132:13-17). Nevertheless, those blessings would be removed and all divine protection for the city would be withheld should its inhabitants fail to honor the Law of God.

Verse 2a-- Other measures that might be resorted to by a king for the security of his kingdom might include long hours of devotion to his tasks and a genuine concern for the problems of the people [“bread of sorrows”] on the part of the leader. Without complete trust in the Lord to make the time spent and the concern meaningful and productive, efforts to make a kingdom safe and prosperous were useless.

Verse 2b-- Hard work without faith in God would only lead the king to frustration and sleepless nights. Reliance on heaven would cause peace of mind and refreshing rest for a “beloved” [obedient] ruler.

Verse 3-- David had a number of children, of whom at least eighteen are named (2Sam. 3:2-5; 14-16; 13:1). Some of them probably were faithful to the Law, others not. The king had experienced both the satisfaction and joy that come from having loving and obedient offspring and the disappointment that disloyal children bring to a parent’s heart.

Verse 4-- Just as arrows are a warrior’s instruments for accomplishing his greatest purpose-- the destruction of his enemies-- so children are the agents for solidifying and enhancing the legacy of their parents and for assuring that the parents’ most important goals for living are carried forward.

Verse 5a-- A man is fortunate indeed who has several faithful sons and daughters who will move on with the principles and activities that were most important to his own life.

Verse 5b-- A large number of honorable sons and daughters would also enlarge a father’s influence in his city, even if he did not possess as many other things as some others. His reputation would be increased, and he would be better able to confront his personal enemies “in the gate” when controversy arose. He would have many persons [including his children and their friends] to support his position in any dispute.

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PSALM 24--While there is no definite connection tying this psalm to Solomon, its content certainly is appropriate to the time when David looked ahead to his son's rise to the throne of Israel. The greatest danger to any king of the Jews was to exaggerate his own importance and to diminish the importance of Jehovah to Israel's well-being. Such an attitude would one day heavily damage the reign of Rehoboam, David's grandson.

Psalm 24 could have been a timely warning to Solomon about his priorities as he stepped forward to lead God's people as their king. Unfortunately, this message seemingly lost some of its urgency as Solomon's kingship progressed.

Verses 1,2-- Solomon was destined to become the prime player in what would be the grandest construction project in the history of the Jews-- the erection of the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. He would also come to possess large quantities of gold and all manner of military weaponry and other kinds of wealth. He would exert significant influence over other kings and nations, both near and far away. Moreover, "God gave Solomon wisdom and exceeding great understanding (1Kings 4:29) that "excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt" (verse 30). "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom." It would have been difficult for any man to have kept his head on straight amid all the adulation he would receive from every direction. But *one* thing he must never forget-- he would always be only a *steward* of everything he would manage as Israel's ruler. It *all* belonged wholly to Jehovah who expected Solomon to manage it wisely and humbly. *God was the Great Builder* of the entire earth.

Verse 3-- David raises a question that reveals an eternal truth. What qualities cause a man to be worthy of God's blessings? And, who could truly achieve a spiritual closeness to Jehovah? Only kings and possessors of great things? Or, is something else the basis of friendship to God?

Verse 4-- David answers his own question with a similar but shorter list of spiritual traits than the one he recorded in Psalm 15:

1. Clean hands [righteous acts];
2. Pure hearts [righteous thoughts and motives];
3. Solid loyalty to the true God;
4. Honest dealings with one's fellowmen.

Verse 5-- The importance to God of a man with these characteristics far surpasses that even of a king who controls buildings, armies, riches and other such things so highly valued by humanity. Righteousness and salvation are much more to be desired than the gifts king Solomon had been given.

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Verse 6-- Solomon should always remember that that he had been selected to reign in such a grand fashion because he was a physical descendant of Jacob [and of Abraham], through whom the promise of the “King of kings and Lord of lords” would be fulfilled as a blessing to all the earth. Solomon’s affluence was *not* intended to glorify himself but the God who had favored him so abundantly. He was no more than a link in the chain of generations that would eventually reveal the greatest glory of all-- salvation for all who seek the Lord!

Verses 7-9-- David expands his message of humility and obedience to include the whole nation of Israel. God’s support to them would depend on their behavior as well as that of their king. David addresses Jerusalem as a city with a choice about as its “Leading Citizen.” He is an eminently desirable resident, strong and mighty in battle with a “host of warriors” at His command.

PSALM 130-- We all make mistakes. Sometimes, our errors affect only us. At other times, many besides ourselves may be impacted. Those mistakes, of course, are more serious. David’s sin with Bathsheba had bad consequences for the entire nation of Israel. Now, he had committed another grave sin for which the people must suffer. His census of the people betrayed a dangerous lack of trust on his part in the Lord’s watch care over Israel. That sin must not go unpunished and it must not be allowed to spread among the people, whose punishment for the rebellions led by Absalom and Sheba perhaps had not yet been imposed. This psalm reveals the deep anguish felt by David for his part in contributing to the intensity of the punishment upon the nation.

Verses 1,2-- David’s guilt was great; so, also, the guilt of his subjects. All desperately needed the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness. David’s prayer was for them as well as for himself. All were in the “depths” of their disobedience.

Verse 3-- The king was well aware that God’s forgiveness was all that stood between every transgressor and total destruction. If God should choose to exact punishment proportionate to the iniquities of men, no one could “stand.” The awful nature of the plague that the Lord had inflicted was proof of that.

Verse 4-- By God’s grace, however, forgiveness was available. Rather than being forced to cower before the mighty Jehovah with no prospect but utter destruction, men could instead repent of their guilt with a new commitment to turn and in humble obedience demonstrate their “fear” [awe] of the God they had offended.

Verse 5-- Even though the pestilence was devastating to the people, David maintained hope that it would be limited, based on the Lord’s promises in His word of mercy for the penitent. He trusted that his prayers would be heard and God would relent and halt the retribution that the citizens were suffering because of their leader’s sin.

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Verse 6-- David's anxiety was intense, even greater than that experienced by someone who endures a serious crisis during the nighttime and anticipates that perhaps the dawning of a new day will see an improvement in the situation causing distress.

Verse 7-- It was not adequate that only the king should pray for the healing of the people. They must pray for themselves as well. Their hope, too, should be for the Lord's mercy toward them. Only then would God grant redemption for the masses and relief from His wrath which was being imposed because of David's sins [and theirs].

PSALMS-- LESSON 11-- “David: Looking Back” [2Sam. 20-24; 1Ki. 1-2:12; 1Chron. 29:26-30]

PSALM 15-- “Dwelling in the tabernacle of the Lord” and “living on God’s holy hill” meant everything to David. By the time this psalm was composed, he likely had spent most of his life trying to live after the pattern set out in this psalm for godliness. Many great honors had been conferred on him. He had ruled over a growing and prospering nation of people for nearly forty years. His popularity during that time had usually been unquestioned. He had resisted several efforts to unseat him from his throne, and he had won many significant victories over his enemies. All in all, he had experienced a long and productive life as he struggled to be “a man after God’s own heart.”

The years had taught David many basic truths about what life requires of a man if he is to reach the potential for success that the Lord has placed within him. It was important for the old king to pass along whatever insights he had acquired over time. Those who were following after him would need to know the formula that had shaped his relationship to Jehovah so that they, too, might become people whose lives pleased their “King of kings and Lord of Lords.” This same lifestyle is still mandatory for all who would have a closer walk with the Lord.

[The teacher may follow closely the material in the workbook for this psalm. The items cited by David, the meaning of the terms employed, and the obvious connections to New Testament teaching for today's disciples provide a rather definite route to follow in the lesson.]

Perhaps Psalm 15 can be summarized by three principles that must guide the journey of all men who seek to go to heaven:

1. Love the Truth;
2. Obey the Truth;
3. Share the Truth with others in *word* and *deed*.

Also, the words of Jesus provide a good summary of the lessons taught in Psalm 15: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

PSALM 112--Three psalms in succession [111, 112, 113] begin by declaring, “Praise the Lord!” Two of those [111, 113] demand praise because of God’s gracious deeds toward *all* who seek to obey Him. The other psalm [112] praises the beneficence of a God who offers to bless ordinary people in extraordinary ways in exchange for the daily practice of simple things that show respect for one’s God, one’s fellowmen, and one’s self. Authorship and background are not provided for these psalms, but it is evident that they are the product of extensive personal experience in living.

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Verse 1-- "Praise the Lord." As David, or whoever wrote this psalm, looked back at the important lessons he had learned over time, he arrived at a fundamental truth.

Sometimes, the Lord sees fit to dispense special blessings to special people who will need such advantages to accomplish God's purpose through those gifts. This writer was one of many who could testify personally of that fact. However, notoriety and unique responsibility are not required for a person to be showered with the Lord's favors. One need not be as brave as David or as smart as Solomon to be a blessed child of God. There are only *two* things that the Lord makes necessary for those who seek His benefits:

1. "Blessed is the man who *fears* the Lord." God takes priority over everything else in the life of one who would be blessed;
2. "Who *delights* greatly in His commandments." The attitude of God's servant is one of "want to" and not "have to."

Verses 2-9--

I. Characteristics of the man who is "blessed" by the Lord:

1. He is gracious [shows undeserved favor], compassionate, and righteous [behaves rightly] toward others (vs. 4);
2. He is a "good man" who is [comparatively] superior to many others (Matthew 19:17); he "lends" [shares his blessings with others] (Eccl. 11:1); he conducts his life with "discretion." His actions are measured and carefully planned toward desirable outcomes (vs. 5);
3. His heart is *steadfast, trusting, and established* [deeply convinced in principles] (vs. 7,8);
4. His benevolence is unlimited (Luke 6:34); it is also heartfelt (vs. 9).

II. Blessings promised to the man who is favored by the Lord:

1. His descendants will be "mighty" and "blessed" (vs. 2). The best assurance we have of our children's success in life is to focus on their *spiritual* rather than *worldly* accomplishments. Physical success can come through education, bank accounts, skill in sports, an entrée to influential persons, and other such things. Spiritual success comes only through personal godliness, setting a good example for others, developing a deep respect for God and His word ["delights greatly in His commandments" (vs. 1)] and similar qualities. An appreciation for godliness in other people is also important. Children brought up to value these spiritual achievements will be "great" in the world (Mark 9:35). Our broken world doesn't need more wealthy, famous, or smart people. It cries out for more righteous people if it is ever to improve;
2. He will enjoy wealth and riches (vs. 3). It is not material wealth that is promised (Luke 12:21), although that will be adequately supplied to a righteous man (Matt. 6:33). Abundant *spiritual wealth* is the reward promised here. Love, genuine concern for others, and sincere godly devotion to what is right will truly enrich the Lord's disciple in the things that really matter in this world (vs. 3);

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3. His righteousness will endure (vs. 3). A man's personal values are promoted through his offspring. They are like the "arrows" that sustain the cause of a mighty warrior after he is gone (Psalm 127). Like Abel, he can "speak" the things important to him even after his death. It is disturbing to observe that the "arrows" [children] of many church members are *not* "hitting the bull's-eye" of righteous living that their parents intended for them. Instead, they are aiming at goals far different than the one the one recommended by the psalmist in this psalm. As parents and grandparents, we must continually strive to "hit the target" with our arrows;
 - 4 He will have light in the darkness (vs. 4). The "darkness" of our problems can sometimes seem too dark to be overcome. However, godly people are promised that even the darkness of the "valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23) cannot defeat the servant of God. There is always "light at the end of the tunnel" for persons who trust in the Lord to see them through to better times;
 5. He will never be shaken (vs. 6). The righteous man's religion is based on *conviction*, not convenience or other such considerations;
 6. His remembrance is everlasting (vs. 6). Righteousness [doing right] is the highest achievement possible for any man in this life. It even surpasses the desirable qualities of dependability and respectability [although a righteous life includes those traits]. What we wish to be remembered for may well speak volumes about the kind of persons we really are;
 7. He is unafraid of evil things (vs. 7). The "good" man does not live in the fear of unknown things, and he does not "cross bridges before he gets to them." Most of our fears never materialize, and the Lord has promised to rescue us from those that do. Furthermore, He uses our trials to make us stronger spiritually stronger. "Been there and done that" can be a blessing for ourselves and for others as we face life's obstacles;
 8. His "horn" will be exalted (vs. 9). This is an expression of power [as in horned animals]. But it is *spiritual* might that is extolled here. Such power will be employed in giving godly advice, making godly decisions, setting a good example, exercising a positive influence over others, displaying reliably good behavior even under stress, and in other such endeavors.
- III. The vindication of righteous people. Cynics believe that "good people finish last." Not true! In this world, godliness is "profitable" (1 Timothy 4:8). In the world to come, it is the *only* thing that will be profitable-- not, "Were you rich?" "Were you smart?" "Did you occupy a prominent position?" The only answer that will open heaven to us is an affirmative response to, "Were you righteous?"

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PSALM 37- This psalm, according to its title, was composed by Asaph. This person was one of the men appointed by David to be in charge of the singing and playing of instruments in the tabernacle (1Chron. 15:16,17). Asaph is credited with twelve of the psalms appearing in the book. Psalm 37 affirms the central theme of Psalms as a whole-- It pays to serve God in this life because He rewards the righteous with great blessings, and He causes serious problems for those who choose to follow their own will rather than His.

The lists of verses that explore the benefits of an obedient life and those that recite the certain punishments stored up for disobedient people are clear and decisive. They require only a minimum of comment, as the teacher sees fit. In conjunction with the study of Psalm 37, the teacher would do well to look also at the lessons taught in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73 is another psalm that is similar to Psalm 37 in that both poems look into the two different outcomes of the two different lives of obedience and disobedience. However, each psalm takes an approach unlike that of the other. Psalm 73 addresses two age-old questions-- "Is it really worthwhile to pay the price of serving the Lord?" "Why do the wicked so often seem to be treated as well or even better than the righteous?" In the course of pondering those questions, the psalmist becomes so confused about the Lord's commitment to justice that his feet had "almost stumbled" and his steps had "nearly slipped" away from the confidence in Jehovah that previously had kept his faith secure. The psalm becomes a warning to every believer not to allow appearances to interfere with what we *know to be true*.

The writer of Psalm 73 makes a common mistake: he jumps to false conclusions before he has enough facts to assure sound judgments. Notice what he *thought* he saw when he looked at what went on around him:

1. Irreligious people prosper in spite of their irreligious lives (verses 1-9);
2. Religious people suffer great misfortunes in spite of their religion (verses 13,14);
3. Satisfactory explanations for these troubling "observations" are difficult to reach (verses 15,16).

There were several basic truths that the psalmist was ignoring:

1. The righteous are not alone in making their life choices. God oversees those choices for the good of His people;
2. The Lord's promise is sure: He will deliver the godly from their troubles no matter how severe they may be;
3. Adversity serves to *strengthen the faithful*, provided they do not lose confidence in His abiding oversight and deep concern for their well-being.

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What the psalmist *knew* when he stopped to measure his “observations” against what his *real knowledge* and *personal experience* told him was really true:

God’s “appointments” will call us back to reality from our delusions when we give them the opportunity to teach us their lessons. Those truths that He has “appointed” as the foundation of our faith are such facts as:

- a. There *is* a God;
- b. He has a law;
- c. His law requires righteousness in men’s lives;
- d. God’s blessings are given only to the obedient;
- e. Real blessings are spiritual in nature;
- f. Spiritual blessings are eternal; physical blessings are only temporary.

It was only after the writer “went into the sanctuary of God” that he was able to realize how seriously flawed the thinking that had clouded his confidence in Almighty Jehovah. A spiritual environment brought him back to his senses. Similarly, there may be times in our lives when we, like Asaph and others, allow the untruths of the material world to muddy our confidence in God’s promises to His children. A more spiritual environment may be just what we need to “get our heads on straight” again. Great value should be placed on such things as: worship services, Bible reading and study, discussions with godly “been there and done that” fellow Christians, and sincere and honest evaluations of what our personal observations have taught us about the consequences that come to people from living either righteous or unrighteous lives.

PSALM 71-- As David “looked back” in his old age, no doubt he entertained numerous memories of the active life he had lived. He had been a brave shepherd, a fearless warrior, an able administrator of a prosperous nation, a caring parent, and a singer of psalms. Most importantly, his years of strength and vigor had been occupied with diligent efforts to be “a man after God’s own heart.” Over all, his life had been well spent in the service of his Lord, although several incidents betrayed David’s human weaknesses. These intrusions of sin into his moral character had for a time caused him to turn from the lofty goals he had set for himself. We can imagine the deep satisfaction he must have felt about the numerous victories he had won and the extreme shame he had in his heart over the ugly episodes that had marred his spiritual record.

Psalm 71 was written by an older man [likely David], as the language indicates. Perhaps these are the thoughts of an old king as he reviewed his days of glory and as he also recalled his moments of deep disappointment. Or, this psalm might be the work of some other old warrior who shared in common with David the reality that the passing years had stolen away the strength and energy of youth and had left in their place, along with many physical limitations, the strong resolve to maintain a healthy relationship with the Lord that would keep him spiritually secure to the very end.

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Verses 1-3-- This prayer is typical of the prayers that David had always prayed, even in his earlier years. God remained his “rock” and his “fortress” as He had always been.

Verse 4-- We cannot know what the problems were that were faced by this senior citizen of God’s kingdom or who the “wicked” and “cruel” men were who caused his problems. Whether they were military, medical, or personal issues, they were as real and as challenging as any faced by the writer when he was young and better able to cope with trouble.

Verses 5,6-- This old man maintained his confidence that the Lord on whom he now called for rescue was the same God who had rescued him from trials so many times while he was younger. From his earliest recollections, God had proved to be dependable to “sustain” him “from the womb.”

Verses 7,8-- Many people “wondered” at this old man’s ability to keep a firm trust in God to deliver him from so many troubles that he was facing in his declining years. How was he able to remain so steadfast in his service to Jehovah, even as his physical and mental faculties diminished in the wake of passing time? The problems of old age that might have destroyed the faith of other seniors had not lessened his belief that God would give him refuge from troubles. Nor had they eroded his commitment to praise the Lord and glorify His name just as he had always done from childhood to old age. If the writer of this psalm is King David, the “wonder” of people about him might refer to the remarkable way in which he had been able to face so many crises in his life and to overcome them so impressively because the Lord was his “refuge.” It *was* a “wonder” that he had: faced and defeated the giant Goliath; survived the onslaughts of a wrathful king Saul; committed heinous sins involving Bathsheba and her husband but received forgiveness for those sins; survived a serious illness that portended a certain death; fought successfully against his own son Absalom in defense of his throne; and had lived to give extensive help to his son Solomon in the building of the great temple in Jerusalem. Indeed, his whole life had been filled with “wonders.”

Verses 9-13-- Old people may become vulnerable to doubts and fears that everyone, including God, will “cast them off” and “forsake” them because of their assumed uselessness caused by advanced years and physical infirmities. If David or another military leader composed these words, we can understand his anxiety that his military enemies would become more aggressive as he aged physically. It became very important to him to call on God as the *only ally* who could intervene in his defense.

Verses 14-16-- Although his own strength was now only a distant memory, the psalmist would strive more than ever to rely on the strength of the Lord to rescue him from his troubles. His age-related disabilities could never limit the strength of a never-aging Jehovah to do whatever it might take to set him free from his problems. He would boldly

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declare-- “I can’t, but GOD can!”

Verses 17,18-- The writer had been deeply impressed with God’s “wondrous works” all his life. An old and gray-haired man now would strive to teach younger generations the reality of God’s power as long as he had the opportunity.

Verses 19-21-- The Lord had allowed the psalmist to experience “severe troubles” time and again. Why should anything change now? As always, he expected that the Lord would “revive him again” and “bring him up from the depths” of his earthly troubles. In return, he would be more faithful than ever before and more *secure* in his salvation. His service to his Savior would be strong and vibrant, despite the restrictions placed on him by his aging body.

Older members of the Lord’s church should be extremely cautious that they don’t allow advancing years to diminish their efforts to be faithful and active individually and as members of their local congregations. It is easy to fall into the fallacy of thinking that they no longer can do what they once did or that what they *can* do is not done as well as it once was. Consequently, they suppose that their responsibilities as Christians are greatly diminished also. Although age will definitely affect one’s abilities to sing, teach, preach, study, and participate in other activities, there is no reason that older members cannot continue to worship and participate at acceptable and effective levels along with those who are younger. There are some areas in which seniors may be even more valuable in the kingdom than ever before, such as being able to offer sound spiritual advice when needed and to serve as living demonstrations of how truly worthwhile it is to hold firmly to our faith amid all the unsettling changes of our world.

PSALMS-- LESSON 12 –“Psalms of Captivity and After”

[2Chron. 36; Ezra; Nehemiah]

PSALM 137-- This is the only psalm definitely attached to the years of captivity in Babylon (vs. 1). However, there are doubtless others that are also appropriate to that period of Jewish history. These psalms disclose the deep grief experienced by the captives and their new determination to renew their commitment to Jehovah to be more faithful to their duty under the Law than they had been before. This psalm [137] also expresses the resentment felt by the Jews toward not only their Babylonian captors but also toward other nations that had either directly or indirectly given support to Babylonian forces when they assaulted God’s city of Jerusalem.

Verse 1-- The minds and the hearts of the Jewish captives daily were filled with remembrances of life back in Zion [Palestine] before they had been carried into a strange and distant land. Perhaps pleasant recollections were now exaggerated in their minds to the extent that they were led to tears in recalling what they had lost in their captivity.

Verses 2,3-- We cannot know what sort of treatment these particular captives received at the hands of the Babylonians. Seemingly, many of the Jews were treated humanely during the seventy years of servitude in Babylon. No doubt there were many exceptions, and physical ill-treatment was not always their main challenge. Scorn, disrespect, social isolation, and other such conduct by their captors were difficult burdens to bear on a daily basis. Disregard for their religious convictions was perhaps the hardest of all to endure. Either deliberately or unintentionally, they had been greatly offended by being “asked” by their captors to entertain them by playing and singing some of the sacred songs of Zion. Such actions they could not perform conscientiously, and they “hung their harps on the willow trees.”

Verse 4-- Religious devotions should never be used for purposes of entertainment. Demeaning the precious purposes intended in their songs was unthinkable, even at the “requests” of those who enjoyed an upper hand in their relationship.

Verse 5,6-- The psalmist vows that his songs will always be sung only to glorify his beloved Jerusalem and its religious connotations-- the temple, its priests and sacrifices that enable cleansing from sin, the heartfelt temple worship to Israel’s unique God, and all the other things that made songs of praise and thanksgiving so special. No other purpose was worthy of them.

Verse 7-- The thoughtless and unreasonable “requests” of the psalmist’s masters for his performance stir up his deep feelings of anger and resentment toward his captors and others who had conspired to destroy the nation about which he had once sung so joyfully and proudly. Edom in particular had played an active role, according to history, in aiding the assaults of the Babylonians against God’s city and in serving as obstacles to the

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escape of defenseless Jews who sought to flee from the vicious attacks of the Chaldeans. The Edomites and other neighboring nations had wanted Jerusalem to be leveled to the ground in settlement of long-standing bad relations with the Jewish kingdom.

Verses 8,9-- The closing words of the psalm place it in the category of “deprecatory” psalms. It is hard to reconcile the harsh intent of such psalms with many expressions in other psalms of love, forgiveness, and even of God’s ultimate purpose one day to bless Gentile peoples with His salvation. Many explanations have been offered to reconcile such positive and negative concepts. Several such ideas appear on page 5 of the introduction to the workbook [“The Psalms of David and Others”]. Also, we should remember that Jehovah is a God both *good and severe* (Romans 11:22). These qualities are sharply demonstrated in His dealings with *good and bad* people. Furthermore, in judging God’s concern for humanity, which action demonstrates greater love, taking the lives of innocent children whose souls will surely go to *heaven*, or letting them live in a wicked world and ultimately go to *hell*? And, which is kinder-- inflicting a quick physical death or allowing a spiritual death where “the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44)?

PSALM 80-- Through many years Jehovah had cared for Israel and had provided abundantly for the needs of the people, both physical and spiritual. Now, however, Israel’s fortunes had changed drastically.

At some time during their long seventy-year captivity, the psalmist writes this poem that laments the loss of God’s blessings and the reception of Babylon’s trials. Although the captives are weakened and bowed under the heavy load of enemy oppression, hope seems to be alive that soon a deliverer might be sent by Jehovah to lead them back to their beloved city [verse 17]. Then, all would be well with them and God would guide them and bless them as He had done throughout the years of their history.

Verses 1,2-- Among all the sons of Jacob, Jehovah seems to have had a special relationship with Joseph. It was Joseph who exhibited the greatest faithfulness to God, and it was Joseph who had been the most blessed as he rose to power in Egypt. His two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh who became heads of Jewish tribes in the place their father. Perhaps the writer of this psalm supposes that enlisting these names in his plea to Jehovah might carry some influence with Him that would result in a more timely and favorable response from the heavenly throne.

Verse 3-- The writer is confident that their situation does not continue because God is *unable* to end it. Their deliverance depends only on God’s determination that the *time* is right. When the time for restoration comes, God will also “come” and take His people out of bondage and into the safety of Jerusalem. This was the manner in which he had led Joseph long ago out of his brothers’ clutches into the security of Egypt.

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Verses 4-6-- Strangely, the psalmist seems to overlook the *cause* of the Jews' misfortunes in Babylon and to focus instead on their unwanted circumstances in the hands of their enemies. In spite of their prayers, the Jews had become the object of Jehovah's anger and had suffered numerous trials and indignities as a result. They had [figuratively] subsisted on tears for their food and drink, so overwhelmed with grief were they because of their condition. Peaceful lives in their home country had been destroyed by warfare [strife] brought against them by the neighboring Babylonians and others. Their former strength as a great nation had diminished into such weakness and vulnerability that both captors and onlookers laughed in derision at their present situation.

Verse 7-- God's "face" had been turned away from their problems for some time, but if He would only look ["shine"] on their unhappy circumstances, the captives would surely enjoy salvation in the Lord again.

Verses 8-11-- As if God needed to be reminded of how He had over many years blessed Israel beyond all measure, the psalmist recites numerous examples of God's goodness toward His people:

1. He had delivered His "vine" from a land unfavorable to its growth and productivity;
2. He had cleared a favorable place to plant His spiritual vine;
3. He had nourished His vine so that it enjoyed remarkable growth;
4. The vine had prospered and spread under Solomon's rule from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

Verses 12,13-- The Lord's protective care was totally responsible for the impressive progress of His vine [Israel]. But the protective hedges and walls had been breached by the nation's enemies. Now, strangers stole its fruit, and plundering animals [nations] ravaged its territory.

Verses 14-16-- Another plea is raised for God's deliverance from the oppression of the captivity. The Lord is implored to "visit" the vine which He Himself had planted and caused to be strong among the nations. In Babylon it had been "cut down" and "burned with fire." The entire vine [people] will certainly perish if the Lord turns down ["rebukes"] this desperate cry for relief.

Verse 17-- Psalm 89:20-23 affirms the solid support that God had promised to David as the leader and king over His chosen people. Jehovah's "hand" and "arm" would be employed to assure David's domination of his enemies. Here, the reference might be a reaffirmation of that promise. The present captivity in Babylon in no way should be seen as an indication that God had withdrawn His intention for a king "always" to sit on David's throne. That divine purpose was as firm as ever. The psalmist therefore calls on the Lord to take action on behalf of the Jews. Or, it could be that some other leader

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whom the Lord had made or would make “strong” should soon arise and “revive” the oppressed captives through leadership similar to that which David had supplied years earlier. The cry of the psalmist perhaps suggests that the people thought that the end of their captivity might be drawing near. A strong leader could rise up and, with God’s help, return the vine [nation] to its former place and former health. That might possibly refer to Zerubbabel or some other prominent leader of the restoration.

Verses 18,19-- In return for the Lord’s rescue, the writer pledges that the nation will commit its trust to Him and continue to “call on His name.”

PSALM 79--This is another psalm that was written to pour out to Jehovah the intense feelings of despair felt by the Jewish captives in Babylon as they suffered the intolerable circumstances of their imprisonment. Their captors had been merciless when they laid waste the holy city of Jerusalem. Now, they continue to oppress those whom they have transported to a distant and unfriendly land. The author, Asaph, admits the sinfulness of the captive nation, but his plea asks for forgiveness and restoration for those undergoing the trials of bondage. In return, he pledges that those now captive will renew their dedication to the Lord and to His rule over their lives once again.

Verse 1-- This psalm obviously was written sometime between the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the release of the captives by Cyrus of Persia in 536 B.C. It was against the Babylonians rather than the Persians that the charges of cruelty and ungodliness were made. They were the “nation” [Gentiles] who had invaded the “inheritance” [land promised to Israel], defiled [demolished] the temple, destroyed Jerusalem, and killed multitudes of God’s people during their vicious ravaging of the land.

Verses 2,3-- Disrespect for the vanquished dead was widespread. The dead bodies had been left unburied and subject to the abuse of hungry animals and birds. The poet’s expression, “the blood flowed like water,” is descriptive of how widespread had been the damages of the Babylonian conquest of Judea. The once-grand nation had been so completely devastated by their conquerors that the Jews were now scorned and derided for their utter helplessness not only by the Babylonians but also by their neighboring nations. Israel’s past adversarial relationships with those peoples would have made the present condition especially hard to bear.

Verse 5-7-- The psalmist acknowledges the fact that the woes that had befallen the Lord’s people were the direct consequence of God’s anger against them for their disobedient conduct. Jehovah had been “jealous” of their courting other gods and other religions over a long period of time prior to their captivity. The writer raises *two* desperate questions

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about the *length* ["forever?"] and the intensity ["burn like fire?"] of their punishment for what they had done. In *fairness* [a human reaction], perhaps Judah had already suffered enough and it was time for the Lord's attention to be turned to nations even *worse* than Israel [again, a human judgment]. After all, those Gentiles did not "know" the "true God" or "call on His name." Ironically, these were the very same sins for which the Jews were suffering such harsh treatment both before and during the captivity. It was true that Babylon had "devoured Jacob," i.e., had disrupted God's plan for His people ["Jacob"] to glorify Him. It was also true that unbelievers had "laid waste" the sacred dwelling places "that had been set apart" both for Him [the temple- Psa.15:1] and for the people [Jerusalem]. But the truth was clear that the Jews' own disobedience had *long before* desecrated the holiness of both places. Why should one party be charged for these sins and not the other?

Verses 8,9-- The footnote on "former iniquities" is, "iniquities of these who were before us." That might indicate that this psalm was composed during the latter days of the nation's seventy-year captivity in Babylon. Perhaps its author had been young enough when the captivity began to have *not* been guilty of the sins which had led to the trials of the southern tribes. That would explain the psalmist's "softer" view of national responsibility for those trials and of "fairness" by God in giving the Jews another chance to do better than their forefathers had done.

Verse 10-- Beyond the poet's desire for *personal* relief from the trials of captivity, he shows deep concern for what the captivity had done to the reputation of Jehovah as the "Mighty God of Israel" and to the previous reluctance of other nations to try to inflict harm on His chosen people.

Verses 11,12-- The psalmist combines his plea for God's mercy with his confidence that God's nature is both *compassionate* enough to be moved by the "groanings" of His captive children and *powerful* enough to rescue them from their tribulations. He is able both to preserve those who would surely perish without His intervention in their captivity and to amply repay ["sevenfold"] ungodly persons and nations whose actions toward Israel were seen as a reproach to the glory and power of the Mighty God of the Jews.

Verse 13-- This is a declaration of the desire and determination of the captives to be once again a "people" who would acknowledge the great blessing it was to have so awesome a spiritual Father who could nurture and protect His children from any further distress at the hands of their enemies. Also, the "prisoners" are finally willing to hear the voice of their Shepherd [John 10:3] and to follow His leadership into paths of righteousness [Psa. 23:3]. If Israel had been willing in the past to acknowledge Jehovah as Father and Shepherd, the awful events surrounding their captivity would never have occurred! The psalmist pledges-- "*never again* will we make the same sinful mistakes that brought us to where we are now!"

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PSALM 106-- This psalm has *two* purposes in its writing: (1) to praise God and to express the gratitude of an undeserving nation for His great mercies and, (2) base this natural plea for rescue from their present captivity in Babylon on those abundant mercies. Surely, in the light of Israel's frequent and flagrant rejections of Jehovah's goodness toward His people, one more demonstration of His forgiving spirit was not too much to ask or to expect. Such a prayer as the one included in this psalm would help the captives to attain a level of humility and submissiveness that might go far in persuading a deserving God to extend mercy to an undeserving people. The writer calls up numerous examples from Israel's history to emphasize his awareness of how unworthy of the Lord's beneficence the nation really was. Examples include:

1. Israel distrusted Jehovah at the Red Sea (Exodus 14);
2. They tested God in the wilderness and lusted for meat (Numbers 16);
3. They challenged the Lord's appointed leaders (Numbers 16);
4. They worshiped the image of a golden calf ((Exodus 32);
5. They despised the promise of a good land (Numbers 14; Hebrews 3:18,19);
6. They sinned with Moab at Baal of Peor (Numbers 25);
7. They angered Moses at the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20);
8. They failed to drive out all of the pagans from Canaan (Judges 1,2).

Jehovah had repeatedly forgiven Israel's transgressions, even though serious consequences of their sins were suffered by the people (vs. 43a).

Finally, the sins of both Israel and Judah were so widespread and so outrageous that they were "brought low for their iniquity" and were often carried into captivity by their enemies (vs. 40-43). Israel had fared better than they deserved. God "regarded their affliction," "heard their cry," "remembered His covenant," relented", and "made them to be pitied" by their captors. (vs.40-46).

It is likely that this psalm was written sometime before the first group of captives would return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel's leadership. Many more Jews would follow the first "ingathering" from Babylon. They, too, would soon experience the same blessings already anticipated by some of their leaders (vs. 47).

PSALM 102 -- God had declared that the disobedient nation of Israel would be carried into captivity and kept in bondage for seventy long years (Jeremiah 25:11). Our information about the treatment they received from their captors is very limited, but psalms such as this one disclose the fact that the experiences of many of the Jews were not all pleasant.

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Psalm 102 portrays a rather miserable existence for many of them while in Babylon. As the promised seventy years wore on, the prisoners clearly have become more and more anxious for deliverance to come. Their impatience with the Lord's plan made the captivity more intolerable for them. This psalm reflects the despair felt by the Jews during the latter days of their ordeal and the fear held by many that survival might become a serious issue for them.

The inscription of the psalm is: "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the Lord." The "afflicted" psalmist may be: (1) an individual bemoaning his own personal anguish or, (2) one who is speaking for all the captives or for those who were being mistreated. The "overwhelming" reflects the accumulation of indignities that had piled up over time and had reached a breaking point.

Verses 1,2-- The psalmist expresses desperation and asks for a "speedy" answer to his prayer. One reason for this request is disclosed in verse 24: death might come and he would be denied the enjoyment of the long-awaited release.

Verses 3-7-- The captivity had taken a significant toll on the captives physically, mentally, and emotionally:

1. There was no real purpose for them in their lives as captives-- their days were like "smoke." One day seemed to drift into the next without distinction;
2. Physical strength was diminished like the ashes of burned bones;
3. Mental courage to resist their unjust captors was as useless as withered grass;
4. Food and other necessary things no longer seemed important;
5. Emaciation [either real or symbolic] was the result of their "groaning" hardship;
6. The alienation caused by their displacement to Babylon had caused great loneliness and a sense of isolation much like that of a pelican in the wilderness, an owl in the desert, or a sparrow alone on a housetop;
7. Mistreatment by their enemies was constant, and they endured "swearing" all day long;

Verses 9-11-- The effects of the bondage on the prisoners was severe. There was no pleasure in anything, even in eating and drinking. Unhappiness was magnified by an awareness that their own sins were the cause of all their troubles. Israel had seen God "lift them up" when they were faithful and "cast them away" when they were not. They had no one to blame but themselves. Moreover, they felt a constant foreboding that the "shadow of death" would soon overtake them all as they "withered like grass."

Verses 12-17-- Although both bodies and minds had suffered terribly during the long captivity, hope remained that Jehovah would yet "arise and have mercy on Zion," as He had promised (Jeremiah 25:12). Physical age and debility could not prevent His action as they could in the case of the captive Jews. The "set" time calculated for release was

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drawing near and their only pleasure was the anticipation that soon they might be allowed to rebuild their holy temple with the very stones of the old temple on the same location [“dust”] where it had stood before. *Then*, there would be cause for all nations to see and acknowledge the power of a God who could release captives from strong nations. His beneficent actions would be in response to fervent prayers of a “destitute” people.

Verses 18-22-- The impact of their release would be long-lasting. Future generations would rejoice and offer praise to a God so merciful and powerful enough to execute such an act. Those who otherwise would have died in a strange land would instead be allowed to praise His name in the days ahead.

Verses 23-25-- Not all of the captives would survive and return home. It was the prayer of each one of them that he would live long enough to enjoy that blessing. Time meant nothing to an eternal God, but to the prisoners, it meant *everything*! Old age and passing years were no threat to the Creator of heaven and earth, but they were a real threat to the realization of Israel’s fondest hopes. Some Jews [“they”] would live to see Jehovah’s promise fulfilled, and *all* of them desperately wanted to be in that number! Israel would survive to become a real nation again and would once more serve their God, having learned the lesson of “TRUST AND OBEY” from the events in Babylon.

PSALM 126--This “Song of Ascents” is one of the book’s many anonymous psalms. It celebrates the joy experienced by the first group of Jewish captive who returned from Babylon. For them, a terrible ordeal had ended. New and wonderful opportunities to live at home in their own land now lay ahead for them.

Verse 1-- After many years of unhappy experiences for them in Babylon, it seemed too good to be true that the captives were now back in their beloved city and free to pursue the same religious activities that their fathers had practiced prior to the years of servitude. It seemed as if they had just awakened from a bad dream.

Verse 2a-- Their moaning had turned into laughter; their sad lament had become glad singing.

Verse 2b-- Their national reputation had been restored among their neighbors. The popular opinion had once been, “Look how their God has abandoned these people and has allowed them to suffer bad treatment in a distant land.” Now, it is, “Look how their Lord has done great things for them.”

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Verse 3-- The psalmist comments: “They are right. God *has* blessed us beyond measure, and we are now happy once again.”

Verse 4-- Many of the captives at this time were still in Babylon, and it would be almost one hundred years before the “great return” was completed under the leadership of Nehemiah. Those who were part of earlier groups of returnees were deeply anxious for the restoration of those who had not yet come back.

Verses 5,6-- Many tears of godly sorrow had been shed by captives who had humbled themselves in repentance for their own previous conduct and for that of their fathers. Sin was responsible for their bondage and suffering in Babylon. Their tears had sown the seeds of forgiveness and release when observed by the Lord whom they had offended time and time again by their idolatrous practices. Their continuous “weeping” testified to the sincerity of their repentance and was instrumental in their eventual release from captivity. Such “seed” was sown in the deep sorrow of guilty souls; it produced “sheaves” of freedom and religious blessings when the prisoners were finally permitted by the Lord to “come again” with rejoicing to their precious holy city.

PSALM 107--This psalm of thanksgiving, assigned to no particular author, seems to be directed to captives who had been favored by release but whose subsequent behavior fell short of what should have been expected from grateful hearts. The psalmist wants his brethren to remember God’s consistently merciful assistance to His people whenever they had fallen into difficulties of their own making. The experience of the Babylonian captives had been no different from that of their fathers. However, their sense of gratitude and of their obligation to respond with greater faithfulness was not as keen as it should have been. The psalmist calls attention to the fact that Jehovah always blesses the faithful and withholds His favors from unfaithful and ungrateful people.

The psalm follows a definite pattern. After a short introductory exhortation, several verses present situations of people in trouble and how the Lord had responded with mercy in each event. A recurring statement urges more appropriate gratitude for God’s grace, and a final short declaration of the lessons to be learned from these incidents of God’s beneficence. Finally, verses 33-43 reflect on the Lord’s never-changing rules that govern the dispensing of His favors to men in need.

Verses 1-3-- The captives must be aware of how extensive are Jehovah’s blessings that have been granted to them. They have been given freedom after seventy years of bondage. They must now demonstrate their gratitude by their personal conduct.

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Verses 4-9-- The ancestors of these captives had also once been in “bondage” to the trials of their wilderness wanderings. God had given them relief from their problems and had provided them with a great inheritance in Canaan. They, too, should have been far more thankful to God for their blessings, but their subsequent history proved that they were not. How sad that they forgot that the Lord “satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry souls with goodness” (verse 9).

Verses 10-16-- These ex-prisoners were proving that they were “cut from the same cloth” as their forefathers. After being freed from severe trials and eventual death in Babylon, their sense of gratitude seemed to be falling far short of what might be expected. How normal it would have been for them to recall that, “For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two” (verse 16).

Verses 17-22-- The freed captives should remember how desperate their circumstances had been while in bondage to the Babylonians. That memory alone should have resulted in more righteous behavior in their own homeland. They should now be anxious to “sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing” (verse 22).

Verses 23-32-- The Lord’s mercies had always been extended to trusting believers in difficult situations. The writer employs a lengthy example of this truth involving sailors who encountered perils on the sea. Just like the Jewish nation, their gratitude for deliverance often fell short of reasonable levels. “Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders” (verse 32).

Verses 33-43-- Another lengthy passage declares the basic law of God about who can expect a favorable response from the Lord when people in distress call on Him for deliverance. He blesses the faithful and withholds His favors from the disobedient. Deep gratitude should issue forth from righteous people in return for God’s watch care. Always, “Whoever is wise will understand the loving kindness of the Lord” (verse 43).

PSALM 120--Both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah faced serious opposition to their work of rebuilding the temple and the wall of Jerusalem, respectively. Their enemies were unrelenting in trying to halt the projects. Only a deep faith in God and trust in His support for their work saw them through to success.

This short psalm of “Ascents” bemoans the fact that persecution of the Babylonian captives had not ended with their release from their captors. Oppression was as real and present now that they were back in Jerusalem as it had been when they were in Babylon.

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Verse 1-- The psalm's writer speaks for the restoration leaders. Possibly, the psalmist could have been one of the leaders speaking for himself. Whatever the case, the present opposition to the work of rebuilding had caused great distress to the author. His cry for relief had been heard with a favorable response.

Verse 2-- Ongoing relief was still needed because lies and deceit were still being spread in efforts to disrupt whichever projects [temple or wall] were underway. Their enemies would not give up!

Verses 3,4-- The outcome of the opposition could was inevitable. Jehovah of Israel was far too wise and too strong for the adversaries to win the struggle against the Jews. Sharp arrows of punishment and certain destruction such as suffered by a tree burned in the fire ["coals"] lay ahead for them.

Verses 5-7-- A final expression of the distress being experienced by people who were only trying to execute Jehovah's orders ends the psalm. How ironic and how disappointing it was that after finally having received freedom from bondage in Babylon, conditions must be endured in Jerusalem that were just as bad as before. The people of God were more than weary of conditions that had resulted from useless warfare against enemies who had been too powerful to resist. Judah had learned too late that a peaceful obedience to Jehovah was the only path to success as a nation. Sadly, those who were trying to stop their efforts to rebuild refused to allow the people to enjoy the peaceful pursuit of their goal.

PSALM 85--As this psalm was being written, Jehovah was *again* angry with His people because of their sins. His earlier wrath against the Jews had resulted in seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Now, that sad episode had ended and the Jews were back home. Things should have become much better for them in every way. However, there were at least *two* times in the years following their release that God's wrath was raised against the former captives because of serious departures from His commands. The first was during the time of Ezra's oversight [Ezra 9,10]. The sinful practice of marrying pagan wives was widespread among the people, contrary to God's decrees.

The second time of disobedience that resulted in the Lord's anger occurred after Nehemiah and his fellow workers had completed the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. At that time, the Israelites were guilty of numerous sins against their brethren and of serious violations of Moses' Law. Psalm 85 evidently was written about one or both situations. It was a plea to the Lord for forgiveness and to the people for a return to righteousness in their lives so that God could once again grant pardon to them for their transgressions.

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The psalmist, probably a prominent leader among the “sons of Korah,” takes it upon himself to raise this plea to Jehovah in behalf of his wayward nation. This prayer would also serve as a powerful message to his fellow Jews that the entire nation was in danger of forfeiting everything that God had restored to them when He brought them out of the captivity in Babylon. God had been very merciful then, but He would not tolerate future disobedience on their part.

Verses 1,2-- God’s blessings had indeed been “favorable” to His people. Jacob [Judah] had returned home, their great iniquity had been forgiven, and their sins had been “covered” [up] completely as if they had not been committed at all.

Verse 3-- Judah’s repentance while in Babylon had turned away the Lord’s wrath and the infliction of further punishment on the people.

Verse 4-- Unfortunately, repentance from previous sins had not prevented the captives from falling into other sins after arriving back in Jerusalem. “Old” repentance from idolatry did not “cover” the “new” sins they were practicing at home. Those transgressions moved Jehovah to take away the promises He had attached to their restoration from Babylon. Now, it was not restoration to their *hometown* that the people needed but restoration to God’s *favor*. It was as if nothing had changed. Although God’s wrath had been averted once, He was angry with them again. Their previous repentance meant nothing if they did not change their present behavior.

Verse 5-- The psalmist bemoans the fact that God’s justice demands that He must remain angry toward the nation and withhold His blessings as long as the people persist in their wicked activities, even if that extends over several generations.

Verses 6,7-- On the condition of the repentance of the people, the psalmist is hopeful that prolonged grief would not be their destiny. Revival to righteousness and happiness in God’s service was possible through the Lord’s mercy and their restoration to His favor [“salvation”].

Verses 8,9-- The writer bases his confidence for better times on God’s own promises in His word about repentance and forgiveness. But the people must not again act foolishly as they had recently done. It appears that repentance had not fully occurred, but the writer is hopeful that it will soon be forthcoming. Salvation was “near” to fearers of God in the nation, and the Lord’s glory would dwell in the land to the extent that their repentance led to godly lives once more.

Verses 10,11-- The people should remember that they had not been treated by the Lord as they deserved for their sins. Total destruction would be just. Instead, upon their repentance, the Lord had *completely* forgiven them. Though extremely painful, their

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punishment in captivity had indeed been mild when viewed by the eye of *justice*. God had seen fit to allow His mercy and His demand for justice to “meet” [combine] and to arrange a suitable punishment not leading to destruction for Israel. “Righteousness” [justice] and “peace” [mercy] had merged in mutual agreement. God’s nature (Rom. 11:22-- goodness and severity) had so dictated the outcome of the captivity that it could no more have been impeded than vegetation can be restrained from springing forth from the ground or sunlight and rain be kept from falling from the heavens to nourish the new plants.

Verse 12-- This spokesman for the nation was confident that the Lord would behave toward the people’s sins just as He had acted about the sins responsible for the Babylonian imprisonment. He would graciously forgive their new transgressions and bless the land [people] with prosperity. Before this could occur, however, the people must remember His righteousness [laws-- Psa. 119:172] and obey all He has said about godly living. God’s “footsteps” [guidance] must hereafter determine the behavior of the entire nation.

ADDENDUM ON PSALM 85--

The HISTORY of the return from Babylon:

1. The record is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah;
2. Cyrus of Persia decreed the release, the return, and the restoration of the temple;
3. 42, 360 captives and their servants returned voluntarily under Zerubbabel’s leadership;
4. Adversaries opposed the rebuilding until Darius’ reign in Persia (Ezra 4:5);
5. Charges of sedition against Persia halted the work for a time;
6. Darius affirmed the authority for the work and it was resumed with his support;
7. Construction continued from the second to sixth year of Darius’ reign and was finished;
8. Ezra returned and discovered unlawful marriages among the Jews; God was very angry;
9. Corrections were made by the people and the marriages were dissolved;
10. Thirteen years passed; Nehemiah learned of the city’s terrible condition;
11. Nehemiah was sent by Artaxerxes to restore Jerusalem and its walls;
12. Great opposition was raised by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem;
13. Opposition took various forms: “cooperation,” ridicule, force, and fear of reprisal;
14. Changes were made: unlawful marriages, failure to tithe, pagans’ use of the temple, and working and trading on the Sabbath were corrected.

Psalms 85 addresses the need for *spiritual restoration*, which was even more important than physical restoration:

1. Both physical and spiritual captivities had been halted by the Lord (vs.1,2);
2. God’s fierce anger had been removed once again (vs. 3);

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3. Remnants of God's wrath remained; memories of Mesech and Kedar [cities in Babylon] were refreshed by the situation in Jerusalem (vs. 4);
4. Full salvation/revival depended on full obedience by the people (vs. 7-9);
5. Two factors are necessary for complete blessings: (1) mercy [from heaven] and truth [on earth]; (2) righteousness [on earth--Psa. 119:172] and peace [from heaven] (vs. 10,11);
6. God gives what earth *cannot!* Earth supplies what heaven *will not!* (vs. 12);
7. A righteous attitude toward God must be the first step toward restoration. (vs. 13).

PSALM 48-- This is another "Psalm of the sons of Korah." It appears to be a song to celebrate the end of the trials suffered by Jews who had come back from Babylon to their beloved Jerusalem. Great opposition had been overcome both in Ezra's time and under Nehemiah's leadership in rebuilding the walls around the entire city of Jerusalem and the temple on Mount Moriah. Through perseverance and the mighty hand of Jehovah, the work had been completed and the Jews rejoiced in their great blessings. God had kept His promise to restore their temple and city in response to their own efforts to restore their spiritual condition as His people.

Another possible background for Psalm 48 is thought by some scholars to be during the reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah. Second Chronicles chapter twenty records a time when several nations prepared to attack Jerusalem but were defeated by the Lord's intervention. However, the psalm seems to be more appropriate to the sense of victory that was felt by a nation that had recently won both its struggles against the enemies of their rebuilding efforts and its campaign against the disobedient lifestyles of many of its own people.

Verse 1-- The completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and Jehovah's temple was ample cause for the Jews to give heartfelt praise to His mighty Name.

Verse 2-- The newly-restored city was impressive, especially when seen from its north side where the new temple and large buildings were located. The nation had finally regained some respect among its neighbors and had once again become an object of admiration to many.

Verse 3-- Not only were Jerusalem's physical beauty and strength impressive to other nations but also it was now recognized as having a special relationship with the God who had recently demonstrated that He was now Jerusalem's Great Protector.

Verses 5-7-- In what was likely a figurative or hypothetical situation, the writer(s) portrays a number of foreign kings gathering to plan an assault on the holy city. They marveled at the improvements that had been made to render any such action on their part highly questionable, and they abandoned their plans. Any attack on the city would end in a

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painful defeat for them, as painful as childbirth and as disastrous as the shipwreck of a fleet bound for Tarshish [Spain].

Note-- 2Chron. 20:35-37 records the wreck of such a fleet which ended a mutual project of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah, king of Israel. This leads some scholars to apply this psalm to the time of Jehoshaphat rather than to the time of Ezra or Nehemiah. However, the reference may be only an illustration from Jewish history to emphasize the fear entertained by any king who might consider an assault against the Jews' capital city.

Verse 8-- The psalmist reflects on Jehovah's watch care over the holy city in time past. There had been numerous instances in Israel's history when Jerusalem was in peril from its enemies but was rescued by the Lord. The psalmist, like other faithful Jews, had heard these incidents recited at various times. Now, the faithful had witnessed such an event with their own eyes. The Lord had demonstrated once more that He would assure Jerusalem's safety so long as its residents were loyal to His Lordship.

Verses 9-11-- God's display of goodness toward their beloved city had made an indelible impression on faithful people. This sense of gratitude was especially strong when worshipers approached the Lord in their devotions in the rebuilt temple. Gratitude and pride both came easily when people recalled how Jehovah's "right hand" of power had so righteously spared their city and temple from annihilation. "Mount Moriah" [representative of the male population who participated in the ceremonies in the temple, and the "daughters of Judah" [representing the female Jews], i.e., "everyone" should offer glad praises for the Lord's "judgments" in favor of His nation.

Verses 12,13-- The victorious captives were so filled with pride and joy for what had been accomplished in the completion of their work of restoration that their exultation could not be restrained. It was only right that the marvelous story of the release and return of the captives, the victory over enemies of the rebuilding, and the ultimate completion of the restoration work should forever become a vital part of the history of the relationship between God and His chosen nation. The glories of the new towers, bulwarks, palaces [large houses], and other structures were clear testimony of the fact that Israel enjoyed a special place in God's heart so long as they were loyal to His kingship.

Verse 14-- The writer ends the psalm with a word of caution to the Jews: don't suppose that it was superior intellect or greater abilities than other nations on the part of the Jews that had made possible the significant accomplishments in their holy city. Rather, only Jehovah could have made a reality of the dream that had long been in the hearts of these now-liberated people. This realization was reason enough for every Jew to forever be determined to follow the Lord's divine guidance in everything.

PSALMS-- LESSON 13-- PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Numerous references to the Psalms are found in the New Testament. They may be classified as “Messianic” [referring to Jesus Christ] or “non-Messianic” [referring to things or persons other than Jesus Christ].

An interesting study can be pursued by comparing the references from the Psalms [listed in the workbook-- "The Psalms of David and Others"] to the accompanying New Testament scriptures. Sometimes, the content of a psalm is referenced in the New Testament passage, and often direct quotations are taken from a psalm and given a New Testament application. For example:

Psalm 4:4-- “Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.”
This psalm of David is addressed to “the sons of men” who were seeking to harm the king of Israel, possibly during the rebellion of Absalom. As a “godly” man (vs. 3), David cautioned himself to trust the Lord to handle the situation and to restrain his own anger against his adversaries. The apostle Paul made a broader application in Ephesians 4:26 to every situation in which Christians may find themselves. The principle of allowing God to resolve our problems is the same in both passages.

Psalm 8:2-- “Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength...”
David’s statement points to the strength that the Lord can find in unlikely persons and things and can use that strength to overcome the power of the most formidable foes. In Matthew 21:16 Jesus quoted words from this passage to call attention to His own use of improbable sources to generate whatever strength was necessary to accomplish His purposes.

Psalm 24:1-- “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” The Lord controls all things and all activities for His people. He determines how everything is to be used in accomplishing His plans on earth. His wisdom and power override any strength in man, and it is wise to accept His leadership and submit to His control of our lives. Paul quotes these words in 1Corinthians 10:26 to affirm that if idolatry is not involved, the Christian may use whatever is not unlawful, since the Lord has provided everything for his benefit.

Psalm 24:1-- The same words of this psalm are quoted by Paul to warn Christians about the sin of idolatry. Since all things belong to the Lord, everything on earth should be used with the ultimate goal of pleasing and glorifying God. Paul quotes from the psalm to deny the use of what he had permitted by the same words two verses earlier. Idolatry and the misuse of things in this world place God in competition with “other” gods and challenges His ownership of *all things*.

PSALMS-- LESSON 13

Psalm 94:11-- “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.” These words were intended to teach the lesson that wicked people who perform evil deeds will not escape the Lord’s retribution. The Lord will be vindicated against rebellious men. Any action by man contrary to His will is futile. This Old Testament truth is employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:20 to reaffirm for New Testament Christians that the Lord’s wisdom is far superior to that of the “wisest” of men. Any attempt to set aside His revealed truth will prove disastrous.

Psalm 102:25-27-- “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed.” These are the words of the “afflicted” in Babylon. They contrast the eternity of Jehovah and the mortality of men. The psalmist felt an urgency for the captivity to end soon because the prisoners might not survive much longer. Time means nothing to the Lord, but it means everything to men. The eternal qualities of the Father described in the words of the psalm are used by the writer of the Hebrew letter [Hebrews 1:10-12] to establish the eternity, and thus the divinity, of the Son.

Psalm 104:4-- “Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” God’s complete control over the work of angels and their servitude to Him is just one of the arguments offered by the psalmist to magnify the absolute power of the Lord over the earth and all that is in it. In Hebrews 1:7 the same statement is made by the writer to contrast the station of Jesus and that of the angels. Jesus has been given charge over the angels, and they are only servants to execute His will.

Psalm 110:1-- “The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'” These were originally the words of David in the psalm, but he was not speaking of himself. Rather, this was a statement of the future spiritual conquests of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. He was designated by the Father to sit on a throne of power in heaven and to exercise control over the Father’s plan to save the lost on earth. The first part of the quotation was employed by Jesus in Matthew 22:44 in a confrontation with the Pharisees about His divine nature.

COMFORT FROM THE PSALMS

One of the greatest values to be found in the Psalms is the deep comfort that many of the poems provide to hearts in need of relief from the troubles that so often mar the human experience. Following are several examples of the comfort offered to thoughtful readers of this book of comfort. There are many more that also give great encouragement to Christians.

PSALMS-- LESSON 13

Psalm 12:6-- “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”

Psalm 14:1-- “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.”

Psalm 27:10-- “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.”

Psalm 29:2-- “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

Psalm 30:5-- “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

Psalm 31:5-- “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Psalm 33:5-- “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”

Psalm 33:12-- “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”

Psalm 39:4-- “Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.”

Psalm 46:1,2-- “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed...”

Psalm 50:10-- “I am God, your God...for every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.”

Psalm 84:10-- “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Psalm 91:11-- “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways”.

Psalm 111:9-- “He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; holy and awesome is His name.”

PSALMS-- LESSON 13

Psalm 116:15-- "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalm 118:24-- "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalm 119:65-- "You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word."

[Note-- Psalm 119 has 176 verses and all but six verses make a direct reference to God's word (NKJV-- 84, 90, 121, 122, 132, 149). Nine terms are applied to the word: "Word," "law," "testimony," "precepts," "statutes," "commandments," "way," "judgments," "ordinances."]

Psalm 121:1,2-- "I will lift up my eyes to the hills--From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Psalm 122:1-- "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' "

Psalm 132:1-- "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Psalm 139:1-3-- "O Lord, You have searched me and known me, You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways."

Psalm 147:10,11-- "He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy."

Psalm 149:4-- "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation."

Psalm 150:6-- "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"

