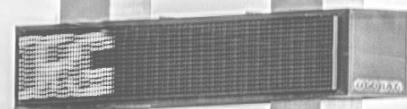
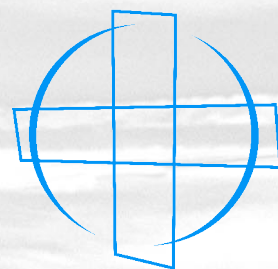


NOVEMBER

2024

Donald J. Wills
Senior Pastor

WORSHIP



DONALD J. WILLS
— PASTOR —



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

Letter Coming Soon!



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned into your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30 am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

3



November 3, 2024

Worship God for

His Grace

[Psalm 95:1-11](#)

19



November 10, 2024

Worship God for

His Glory

[Psalm 96:1-13](#)

37



November 17, 2024

Worship God for

His Greatness

[Psalm 99:1-9](#)

53



November 24, 2024

Worship God for

His Goodness

[Psalm 107:1-22](#)

November 3, 2024



*Worship God for His
GRACE*

Psalm 95:1-11

Focal Verse:

"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation."

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Psalm 95:1

Introduce

Most of us probably know the names George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln or at least something about the significance of their contributions to our nation. But, perhaps, most of us have never heard the name Sarah Josepha Hale or know anything about the enduring legacy she left. Thomas Jefferson, as the third president of the United States and the drafter of the Declaration of Independence, parted ways with his predecessors in declaring a National Day of Prayer or even offering encouragement to pray. Both Washington and Adams had led the nation to dedicate themselves to a time of prayer by official proclamations they issued through their governmental positions.

Jefferson, however, regarded the president's role as an officiant over civil matters—not religious ones. As such, he felt that he had no authority to direct the nation to pray or encourage its citizens to worship. So, Jefferson



left prayer up to the churches. Subsequent presidents adopted Jefferson's view on the matter. James Madison, for instance, saw nothing nefarious with a president encouraging the country to pray, but regarded an official proclamation to pray as a constitutional pitfall and a violation of the separation of church and state. This angered a great many believers around the country at that time, including Sarah Hale.

As Hale surveyed the country, she saw a downward spiral as people drifted from God. Therefore, she called upon the President to issue a proclamation urging people to pray so that the country might return to the Lord. In 1827, after becoming the editor of a ladies' magazine in Boston, Hale used her influence to promote the need for prayer and call upon the nation's leaders to return to a posture of prayer! Faithfully, Hale used her platform as an editor, poet, and novelist to urge the nation to pray and remember the Lord from whom their blessings came. Over the span of thirty-six years, she wrote every president; she lobbied national and local leaders to pray for our nation and direct the American people to pray. During that time, no president budged. No

Introduce

national leader would acquiesce to her request.

Now, the calendar had turned to 1863 and the nation was entrenched in a violent and bloody Civil War. As she had countless times during her quest to point the United States to the Lord, Sarah Hale fired off another letter—this time to the sixteenth President of a nation embroiled in war—urging him to pray. Unlike her previous attempts, this letter did not fall on deaf ears; President Lincoln gladly received the encouragement to pray and promptly acted upon it. On October 3, 1863, Lincoln issued an official proclamation inviting the nation to turn to the Lord in prayer! Through the efforts of Sarah Hale who sprang to action rather than retreat in complaint, we now celebrate her call to prayer on the last Thursday of November as a national holiday: Thanksgiving.

Unfortunately, football, feasting, and fellowship often overshadow the thanksgiving and prayer that we should offer to the Lord. Our day has become very much like Sarah Hale's day with a nation pushing the Lord away. We can either resign ourselves to defeat arguing the US is a lost cause and complain incessantly about the culture or we can do something about it—like Sarah Hale did. We can point others to Christ by our own call to pray, repent, and dedicate ourselves to the Lord. Technically, it doesn't take an act of Congress to change the course of a wayward nation, but God's people humbly proclaiming His gospel and pointing people to a relationship with His Son. What are you personally doing about the direction of our nation? Do you just sit and complain or do you actively point others to the Lord through earnest prayer and thanksgiving which culminates with the sharing of the gospel?

Key
Question

What steps do you take to point people to Christ every day rather than just complain about the direction of our culture?

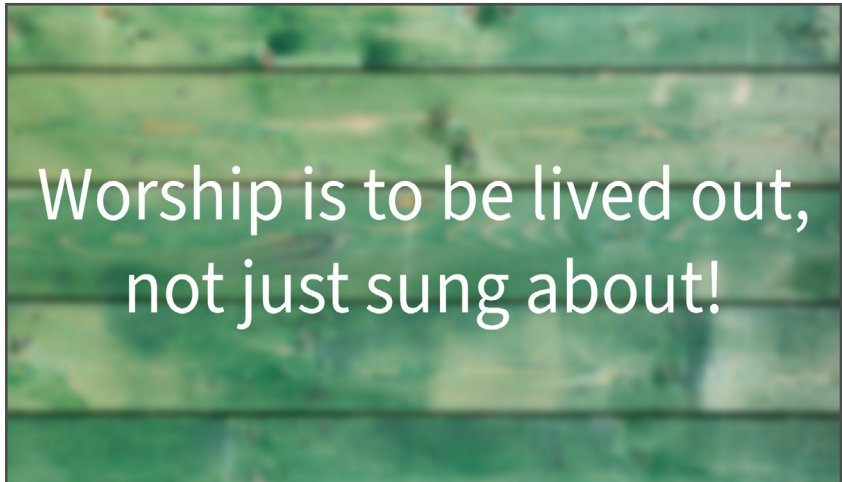
Psalm 95:1-3

WORSHIP OUR SAVIOR:

A few decades ago, many churches would sing the “Doxology” at the beginning of a service as a call to worship. In Greek, *doxa* means “glory” so “doxology” refers to an expression of praise as clearly reflected by the first line of the hymn: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” As Israel’s ancient hymnal, the psalter (Book of Psalms) repeatedly calls the nation to praise **the Lord** for who He is and give thanks for what He has done. We could even call Psalm 95 a “doxology” of sorts as it calls us to worship through its imperative command, **come** (v. 1). The word translated “**oh come**” actually means “walk” or “go” and thus bears the sense “let’s go” or “come on,” serving as inspiration to motivate people to worship. Even more important, the word “walk” defines worship as a way of life—not merely what we say or what we believe about God, but what we do in response to His divine will. Worship is to be lived out, not just sung about!

As we walk in fellowship with **the Lord**, we can express our gratitude by singing and shouting **joyfully to the Rock of our salvation**. The word translated **sing** literally means “to cry out” and doesn’t necessarily refer to the act of singing alone, but more to

the utterance of a testimony or word of praise. In this context, therefore, it signifies a worshiper bursting forth with praise in a loud voice. Although the Gospel of Luke uses Greek instead of Hebrew to record the details of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem the Sunday before His crucifixion, it captures this same idea of people so filled with praise that they loudly proclaim their testimony. Luke reports that those who lined the streets “began to rejoice and praise God with a *loud voice* for all the mighty works they had seen” ([Luke 19:37](#)). As the processional passed, the people “cried out” to Jesus, “Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” ([Matt 21:9](#)). When the Pharisees rebuked the crowd moments later, however, Jesus responded by saying, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately *cry out*” ([Luke 19:40](#)). Whether in the Old Testament or the



Worship is to be lived out,
not just sung about!

New Testament, the point remains the same. We must voice our praise and thanksgiving to the Lord confidently, not sheepishly. We must boldly declare what the Lord has done for all to hear!

When we have good news, we want everyone to hear and share in the joy with us. While we may not literally **shout** at the top of our lungs given our modern technology, we certainly don't keep silent either. We tell everyone. Excitement and joy permeate our voices regardless of the decibel level we may use. Our texts may frequently employ all capital letters, have multiple exclamation points, or contain emojis which convey our delight. For example, the two most common occasions which warrant such announcements are engagements / weddings or the birth of a baby. Upon hearing the good news ourselves for the first time, we then begin sending text messages to our friends and families or posting announcements on social media replete with pictures from the event or an ultrasound from the doctor to celebrate. We also start making plans to celebrate these occasions together in person through ceremonies and showers to which we invite almost everyone we know. We don't wait. We tell people immediately. We can barely contain ourselves as joy bursts forth from our inmost being.

We must ask ourselves this question: Do we have this same kind of joy and excitement in telling others about what the Lord has done for us and about the things in which He has allowed us to participate or witness? Throughout Scripture, people could never keep silent about the things the Lord had

done. They always told others! After arriving at the stable in Bethlehem and witnessing the birth of Christ as the angel had proclaimed, the shepherds "made it widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child" ([Luke 2:17-18](#)). The Samaritan woman at the well hurriedly returned to tell "the men" in town that she had met the Christ; they should come and see for themselves ([John 4:28-29](#)). Under the threat from the Sanhedrin to no longer teach or speak "in the name of Jesus," Peter and John



Instruct

defiantly answered, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” ([Acts 4:18, 20](#)). As the gospel spread through Thessalonica transforming the hearts and minds of the people, they told everyone in the surrounding area their testimony so Paul and his team had no need of saying anything on their behalf; everyone could see the dramatic change in their lives ([1 Thess 1:8-10](#)).

Question
1

What testimony, story, or message has the Lord given you to tell others?

Like these individuals in Scripture, if we have a relationship with Christ, then we have a story to tell. At times, we may not have exactly the right words to express what God has done, but others should still see the joy evident in our lives. To believers suffering persecution, Peter writes, “Though now you do not see [Christ], yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” ([1 Peter 1:8-9](#)). We don’t need to be a pastor or public speaker to tell others what the Lord has done. We don’t need to give only eloquent or polished speeches. Simply report to others what you have seen, heard, and experienced in your life as confirmed by God’s Word. To the best of the ability which God has given you, tell others your story of God’s saving and transformative work in your life in your own words; express your gratitude and praise to Him from the depths of your heart. After all, it is the story which God has given you. You must simply share it with others even when you feel you don’t have exactly the “right” words to say!

Question
2

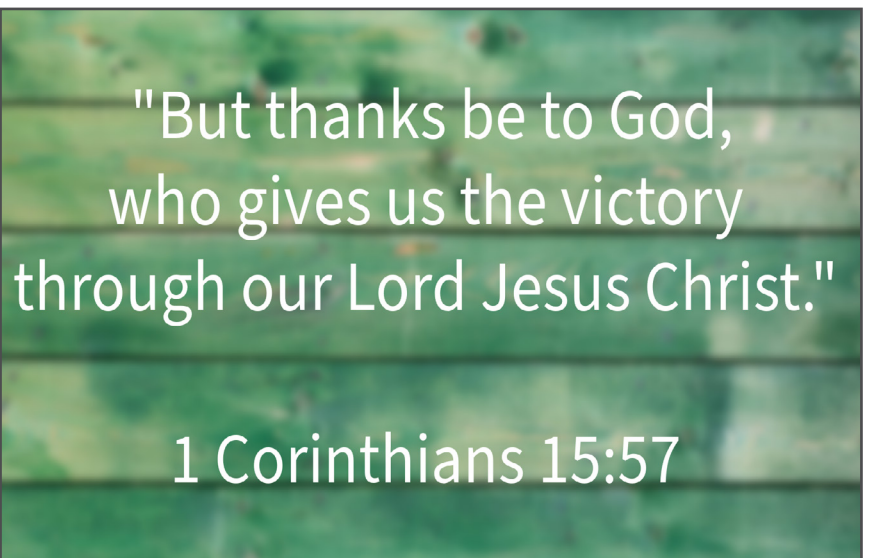
Why is it sometimes difficult for us to share our stories with others?

In the second line of this first verse, the KJV originally translated shout joyfully as “make a joyful noise.” Somewhere along the way, an enterprising Minister of Music seized upon the phrase as a recruitment tool to promote their choir. In an attempt to get people to join, they would often quip, “God doesn’t mind if you can carry a tune. Just sing to Him with joy!” But this interpretation actually obscures the true meaning of the phrase. It was actually used as a cry of victory in battle. With all their might at the top of their lungs, the victors would shout joyfully to announce their win! For example,

imagine the atmosphere of a locker room after winning a championship game. The players, coaches, staff, owners, and media can't restrain their excitement because they've just won the most-coveted prize in their sport. In a tumult, everyone bounds around the room yelling and screaming, whooping and hollering at the top of their lungs. As they give interviews, they talk loudly with authority in their voice so they can be heard over the rest of the din.

On the other side, the locker room of the defeated team is a somber and quiet place. Although they may be proud of their effort, hard work, and accomplishments, they don't have the same enthusiasm as the victors. People certainly don't bound around the room; they speak in a subdued tone when answering questions from the media without any fanfare. Even though they may have a glimmer of hope for next year, they have no joy whatsoever. Which locker room mood best describes your life in Christ? Does the joy of victory in Christ always radiate in your life or do you often look defeated because the cares of the world weigh heavily upon you? Despite the sometimes-difficult circumstances we may face, we must remind ourselves that we're on the winning side. Through Christ, we have victory over sin and death even though we may have temporary trials and heartaches here in this world ([1 Cor 15:54-57](#)).

For emphasis, verse two repeats the plea of the first verse with slightly different wording. The psalmist once again urges us to **come before** the Lord **with thanksgiving** and **shout joyfully with psalms**. Moreover, the psalmist reveals that we should offer Him praise and honor because He **is the great**



God and **the great King above all gods** (v. 3). From these first three verses, therefore, we learn two reasons why we should offer Him praise. First, we should praise Him for what He has done—namely the **salvation** which He has freely given us (v. 1). While the psalms often speak of God rescuing Israel or individuals from a physical enemy, we can also praise Him for rescuing us from the penalty of our sins through the sacrificial death of His Son! Second, we should praise God for who He is: God is sovereign (v. 3). As the

Instruct

one true and living God who created the universe, He stands unique; He is above all. Since no other gods truly exist, He has no competition; He orchestrates everything in the universe according to His divine plan. Therefore, as our sovereign Creator, we owe Him honor, respect, and reverence through our praise and thanksgiving.

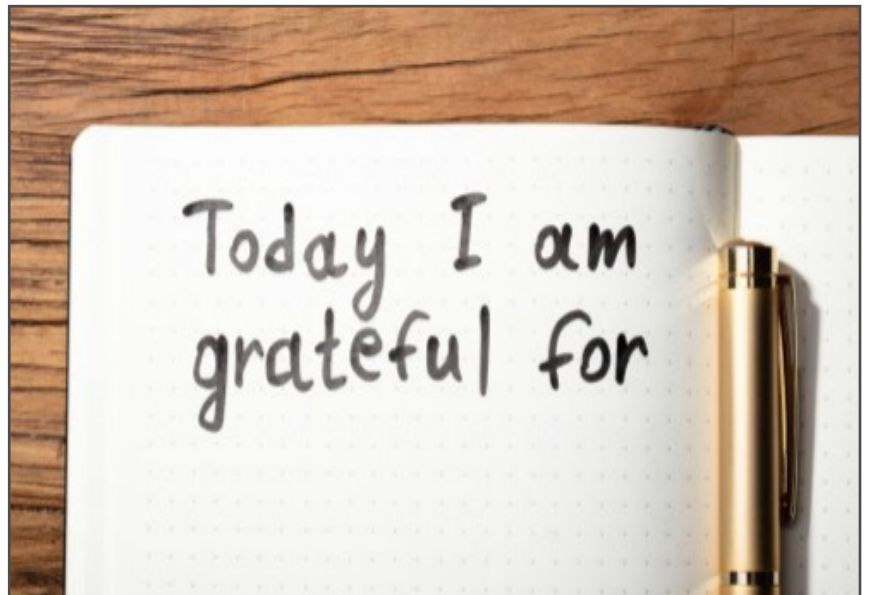
Question
3

Although not explicitly mentioned in this psalm, for what other character traits can we praise God?

As we study the Book of Psalms, I want to offer us two challenges. First, take time to praise God even for the “small” or seemingly ordinary things He may do in our lives. God deserves our praise simply for His daily presence and provision in our lives. We miss many opportunities to praise God and even overlook His daily presence in our lives because we tend to focus on “big” events such as those where He has delivered us from a health crisis, saved us financial harm, or kept us from serious injury to name a few instances. When discussing the blessings God has bestowed upon us with others, praise should roll off our tongues; we should never be at a loss for words, struggling to think of ways we have experienced God’s blessings in our lives. They surround us every day in every way if only we would pay attention to what we may consider the “insignificant” or “little” things in life.

Second, even though we ought to praise God for the things He has done for us in the past, we also ought to be keenly aware of the things He’s doing for us right now in the present. Generally, when someone asks the question, how has God blessed you, we tend to think of

events in the distant past. Surely, we should praise God for our salvation every day; we ought to use every opportunity to glorify His name for His gracious gift to us in Christ. Please don’t misunderstand this point! Yet, we also ought to praise Him for His presence and work in our lives at this very moment. Therefore, we can rephrase the question



slightly and ask it this way: How can I praise God for the blessings in my life *today*? It need not be a profound proclamation or a comprehensive list, but we should simply give God the glory for who He is and what He is doing in our lives right now. Praise and adoration should continually flow from our lips.

Question
4

For what can you praise God concerning the blessings in your life today—right at this very moment?

Psalm 95:4-7c

WORSHIP OUR SOVERIGN

In context, verse 4 continues the theme of God's sovereignty begun in verse 3. As a God with no equal, He has **the deep places of the earth** and the tallest mountain peaks **in His hand**. He oversees it all. Nothing escapes His attention. He firmly has everything in the universe under His divine control. He can exercise such authority because He created the universe and everything in it. He **made the sea** as well as **the dry land** (v. 5). As the Creator, God has the right to do with His creation as He sees fit according to His divine purpose. Just as in the illustration that Jeremiah received, we must remember God is the Potter and we are the clay whom He shapes and molds according to His purpose ([Jer 18:1-11](#)). As our **Maker**, we should **bow down** and **kneel before** Him in **worship** (v. 6).

As we look at the natural world around us, we see God's **hand** in every aspect. We see a complex universe that didn't just happen by accident, but by design. We see a universe that He intentionally crafted with purpose. Each element in it has a specific purpose to sustain and support life. Consequently, the universe displays God's majesty, glory, and splendor as its **Maker**. While we shouldn't worship the creation ([Rom 1:18-32](#)), it nonetheless should inspire our worship by pointing us to the Creator! However, worshipping God in nature should not be an excuse to forsake corporate participation in the church and live a solitary existence apart from other believers as some have misused it. Rather, as we go about our daily routines, we ought to use it as an opportunity to remind ourselves of God's greatness and sovereignty as we enjoy the things which He created!

Although it's been almost thirty years ago since I last visited, I still vividly remember exiting the Wawona Tunnel through the Sierra-Nevada Mountains in Central

Instruct

California and staring into the stunning Yosemite Valley. In the distance from the aptly named Tunnel Viewpoint, Bridalveil Fall plunged hundreds of feet straight down into the valley, eventually flowing into the meandering Merced River. Lush, dense forests filled the valley floor whose vibrant green canopy only served to further highlight the sheer exposed rock face of the giant monolith El Capitan and the beautiful, smooth Half Dome at the far end of the valley. As I stood with my mouth agape and gazed in wonder, God's greatness became evident through the detailed handiwork of His creation. God carefully and meticulously sculpted every inch of that valley better than the most highly talented artist ever could. The creation declares His unparalleled glory.

Certainly, dramatic landscapes like the Grand Canyon, the forests of the giant sequoias in the national park baring the same name, the gushing plumes of scalding water bursting forth from cervices in Yellowstone's geothermal area, or the sun setting over the brilliantly white sands of a pristine beach all captivate our attention and remind us of God's magnificent work in His creation. Yet, we must stop and look around us every day; we can see God's presence and work within His creation right now. In the evening, pause to look into the sky at the moon and stars. Give the **Maker** praise for His greatness. As the sun rises in the morning breaking forth into beautiful hues of orange, yellow, and red, contemplate God's faithfulness and give the **Maker** praise. Take time to notice the flowers, trees, and creatures, such as birds and squirrels, which God uniquely spoke into existence according to their own kind. And be mindful of His loving provision for even the least of these things in His sovereignty as their Creator, for He has promised even more abundant care and provision to us as the pinnacle of His creation!

Question
5

As you look around God's creation, what inspires you to worship Him most? How does what you see show God's character or highlight His work amongst His creation?

In addition to worshiping the Lord as **our Maker**, we should also worship Him as **our God** who is our Shepherd (v. 7a-c). The psalmist describes us as **the people of His pasture** and **the sheep of His hand**. These two descriptions of a shepherd thus serve to highlight God's provision for His people as well as His protection of His **people**. First, a shepherd leads his flock to a good pasture where they can get the nourishment they need. In other words, the shepherd looks out for the sheep's well-being; he provides

them with the basic resources they need for life. If we trust God and follow Him, He will also provide for our basic needs. Like a shepherd, He will supply all our needs and we will lack nothing; He will lead us to “green pastures” and “still waters” so to speak ([Psalm 23](#)). Indeed, God provides for us in every way!

Second, God will protect us as His **people**. He has us securely in **His hand**. Describing Himself as the Good Shepherd and us as His sheep, Jesus reassures us of the security He offers: “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” ([John 10:28](#)). Even in the midst of trials and tribulation, God remains firmly in control. As our sovereign Shepherd, we can have confidence that nothing in this world can derail His plan. Therefore, we must place all our trust in Him and follow Him with all our heart. When we recognize that He has our best interest at heart, it becomes natural for us to worship Him through our faithful and obedient service to which the psalmist now turns.

Question
6

How do you see the provision and protection of God in your life on a daily basis?

Psalm 95:7d-11

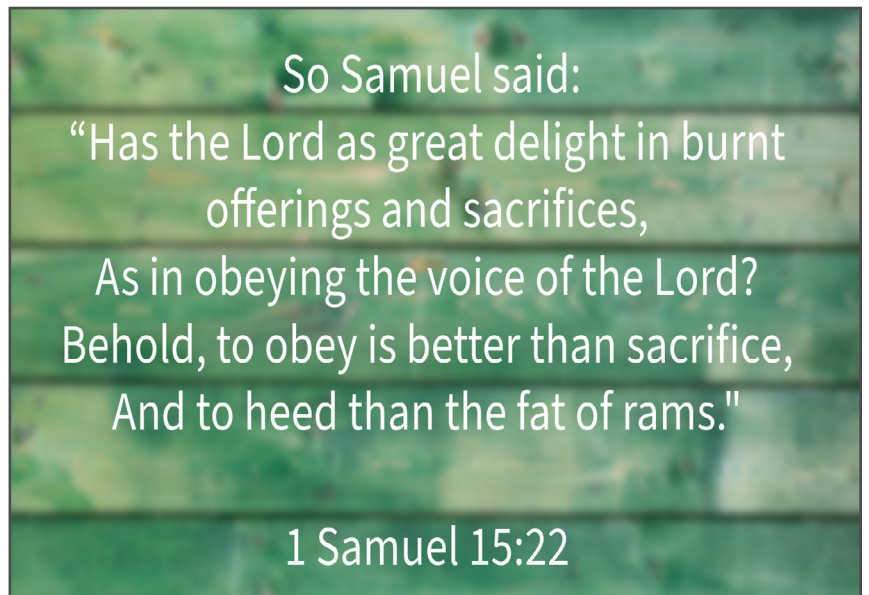
WORSHIP IN SUBMISSION

Now, the psalmist turns to address the heart of worship: our obedience. Praise, thanksgiving, song, and testimony all become meaningless if we don't honor the Lord with obedient lives. Therefore, it bears repeating what we said earlier in this lesson: Worship is to be lived out, not just sung about. Scripture affirms this repeatedly! Samuel poses the question: “Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed better than the fat of rams” ([1 Sam 15:22](#)). Centuries later in Hosea, God again declares, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifices and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” ([Hosea 6:6](#)). The word translated “mercy” here is best translated faithfulness. God doesn't desire meaningless ritual done with an insincere spirit and hypocritical heart. He wants a relationship with us predicated upon faithfulness because we love Him with all our being.

The psalmist opens the last stanza of this psalm encouraging our faithfulness by pointing out the disobedience of the previous generation which **tested** God. He

Instruct

implores them **today** to **hear** God's **voice** and **not** to **harden their hearts as in the wilderness rebellion** (vv. 7d-8) like their forefathers who **tested** God even though they **saw** His miraculous **work** among them (v. 9). Specifically, this refers to the incident where Israel sent twelve spies to scout Canaan; dissuaded by the mighty inhabitants occupying the land and the well-fortified cities of the region, the people ultimately failed to trust God to deliver it into their hands as He had promised. Even though they had seen God deliver them through the ten plagues inflicted upon Egypt, part the Red Sea, and provide water and food in an arid land, the people still trusted in what they themselves could do rather than in what God could do for them. Therefore, they spent forty years wandering aimlessly in the **wilderness**, complaining and wavering back and forth in their faithfulness to the Lord.



The people's disobedience had consequences. Because of their sin, they experienced God's wrath. The psalmist reveals that God **was grieved with that generation for forty years** because the people went **astray** and did not follow His ways (v. 10). In His **wrath**, God **swore** that this **generation** would **not enter** His **rest**—that is they would not have the privilege of crossing the Jordan River to settle into the land promised to their ancestors (v. 11). True worship requires complete trust in the Lord. True worship requires unwavering faithfulness to go wherever, do whatever, and be what God has called us to be according to His plan. True worship, therefore, requires unquestioned obedience to the Lord. We worship the Lord by living transformed lives by surrendering control daily to His Holy Spirit who lives within us from the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior.

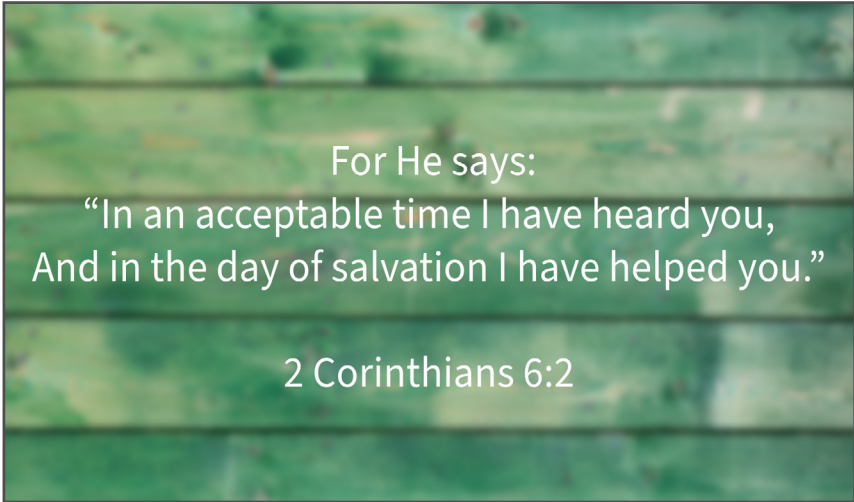
While we must remember the past and anticipate the future, we must live for **today** in Christ. Notice how this section begins with the word **today** for emphasis as it bids us to listen to God's **voice**. In other words, our obedience starts **today**! We must remember the past and celebrate what God has done while also learning

Instruct

from our mistakes so we don't repeat them. But how we respond to God **today** is most important. We must anticipate and plan for the future by thinking about the consequences of our actions. But we must begin those preparations **today**; we can't wait for tomorrow.

In a local restaurant, management proudly displays a sign advertising "free beverages tomorrow." Although permanently affixed to the wall, the management has never given out one free drink based on this sign nor

has anyone sued them for false advertising. Why? Tomorrow never actually comes! Unfortunately, some take this approach with their walk with the Lord. They will start serving Him *tomorrow*. They will start listening to **His voice** *tomorrow*. But *tomorrow* never comes. Obedience must start **today**! This doesn't mean that we live for the moment or try to seize the day the way the culture views it, but that we live righteously for Christ in the way He has called us according to Scripture. Therefore, as we conclude our brief study of this psalm, let us pay closer attention to how we worship the Lord **today**. In worship, let us live in obedience the way God has called and enabled us through our relationship with His Son, thanking Him for the grace which He has shown us even while we were yet sinners He died for us so we might have this abundant life in Him.



For He says:
"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."

2 Corinthians 6:2

Today is a day of action where we declare our worship of the Lord through our personal testimony of what He has done for us as well as how we conduct our lives in obedience to His voice. Today, we must live out our worship in faithfulness to His call. We can choose to model our lives like the unbelieving generation in Israel who experienced God's wrath or Sarah Josepha Hale who saw a nation in spiritual decline and springing to action pointing people to the Lord. After whom will you pattern your life? Let us thank God for His grace and worship Him by living obediently, following His guidance each day. Today, may we hear His voice and dedicate ourselves completely to serving Him.

Incorporate

In what ways do you see God's grace in your life? How do you incorporate that into your worship and service each day?

How effectively do you live out your worship through a transformed life? What do you do well? What do you need to change?

How often do you give God thanks throughout the day for who He is and what He has done? What would help you be more aware of even more opportunities to express your gratitude throughout the day?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 10, 2024



God's GLORY

*Worship God for His
GLORY*

Psalm 96:1-13

Focal Verse:

"Give to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts."

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Psalm 96:8

Introduce

In bygone eras when monarchies ruled over most countries, royalty would announce their arrival to the citizens with great pomp and circumstance. Some, for instance, would have a herald or trusted steward announce their presence verbally, proclaiming their honor and excellency above the kingdom over which they reigned. Others would employ a fanfare of trumpets or other musical instruments to alert their awaiting subjects. Although we don't have many monarchies remaining today, we still use these two methods to announce the presence of dignitaries and heads of state to an audience of awaiting citizens. For example, in courtrooms, bailiffs will ask the juries and galleries to rise in recognition of the honorable judges presiding over the cases as they enter from their chambers. In addition, most of us will also immediately recognize the tune "Hail to the Chief," even if we don't know the lyrics, as signaling the entrance of the President of the United States at an official state-sponsored meeting.

In a way, Psalm 96 functions much like these more modern introductions announcing the presence of royalty and dignitaries. Much of this psalm



comes verbatim from a song sung in 1 Chronicles 16:22-33 when David held a ceremony to announce the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem where it would be housed in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle ([Exod 26:34](#)). Taken together with the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant symbolized God's presence among His people ([Exod 25:8-9, 22](#)). Figuratively speaking, therefore, Psalm 96 pictures the arrival of God as sovereign King and righteous Judge in Jerusalem to preside over and dwell amongst His people. Thus, this celebratory psalm prepares the people to enter into God's presence by reminding them who He is and about the salvation through which He has made them into a "new" people ([2 Cor 5:17](#)).

If the President invited us to the White House, we would most definitely prepare ourselves to meet Him. We would put on a formal outfit which we would have had dry cleaned and pressed. We would polish our shoes, fix our hair, and double check to

Introduce

ensure everything in our ensemble matched. We certainly wouldn't arrive at the White House unbathed and unkempt, looking like we had just finished hours of grueling yardwork. Moreover, we would review our formal etiquette, such as how to greet him, how to address him, and, if at a state dinner, the proper protocol we should use at the table. We may even plan and rehearse what we would say if we had the opportunity to speak to him directly so we wouldn't stammer and stutter. We'd use our best manners to put our best foot forward! We certainly wouldn't rush up to the President and put our arm around him like an old friend saying, "What's up bro?" On the contrary, we would treat him with the dignity and respect that his office deserves.

If we prepare ourselves to meet other "important" human beings, how much more should we prepare ourselves to meet our Creator? With God, we can't merely prepare ourselves by altering our outward appearance, for He can see our hearts. In order to meet with Him, we must be in right standing with Him which can only come through the salvation He offers in Christ whereby we become a "new" person—putting to death our old way of life and living in His righteousness. Therefore, may we approach His throne with the right attitude, remembering how great and how holy is the Lord our God whom we serve!

Key
Question

How do you prepare yourself daily to enter the presence of the Lord God?

Psalm 96:1-6

SING OF HIS SALVATION:

This psalm beckons **all the earth** to **sing to the Lord a new song** (v. 1). Each of the subsequent stanzas then develops the themes of this new song around the Lord's sovereign role as King and Judge through which He offers salvation to the world. Yet, why does the psalmist designate it as a "**new**" **song** if God has held these positions and had this plan for salvation even before He created the universe? Certainly, the musician whom God inspired composed these lyrics afresh to celebrate the Ark of the Covenant being placed in the tabernacle at Jerusalem ([1 Chron 16:22-33](#)) and to remind the people of God's authority as King and Judge to accomplish His divine plan to restore the world to righteousness in Him. However, the term "**new**" signifies something more than just **new** lyrics never before penned or melodies never before sung. It signifies a **new** era in which we now live as God's people!

For David, this **new** era ushered in peace and stability with the defeat of the Philistines and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital. This ultimately united the people in Israel to serve the Lord fervently in a period of spiritual renewal and revival unlike the time of the Judges where the people forsook God and did what was right in their own eyes ([Judg 17:6](#)). When



the people repented and faithfully devoted themselves to the Lord under David's leadership, they could **sing** this **new song** because a **new** era had literally begun through the work of the Lord within them. Although several centuries after David, the prophet Ezekiel perfectly describes what this **new** era looks like when we trust God and repent. He records God's words saying, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" ([Ezek 36:26-27](#)).

We can also participate in singing this **new song** when we repent and trust in Jesus as our Savior ([Heb 8:7-13](#)). Thus, the **new song** once again refers to the **new** life we have in Christ—not merely the lyrics or tunes we **sing**. This is why the psalmist in verse 2 turns immediately to praise God for **the good news of His salvation!** In essence, the testimony of our transformed lives in Christ becomes the most crucial part of this **new song!** A **new** era has begun. We have a **new** position as joint-heirs with Christ, receiving the promised inheritance of an eternal life spent with Him. We also have a **new** perspective and attitude about life, viewing the world through God's eyes rather than our own flesh. We have a **new** way of living characterized by God's righteousness and our obedience to His call. Everything about us has changed! After all, Paul emphatically points out, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away: behold all things have become new" ([2 Cor 5:17](#)).

Question
1

In what ways have you experienced God's transformative power about which you can sing and declare to the world?

If you have ever noticed, secular songs may have different titles, different lyrics, different beats or melodies, and different artists at times, but they all communicate the same old, tired message. Even though different, secular music isn't technically "**new!**" It describes the condition of our lives according to the perspective of the fallen world around us. It doesn't matter the genre, whether country, pop, rock, or rap, they all share the same plots and themes. Without even listening to specific songs, we can easily summarize much of their content based upon this pattern. For example, secular songs often depict broken and dysfunctional relationships, heartaches, and desperation. They glorify Hedonism (i.e., self-indulgence), sexual immorality, and violence. They frequently speak of substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) as a means of coping with life. Rarely do they have a positive message that is wholly consistent with biblical values!

As believers, we truly have a **new song** to **sing** that differs markedly from the one which the world sings. Our **song** gives hope because it is founded upon a life in Christ which has transformed us from the inside out. In Christ, unlike the world, we can attempt to mend broken relationships through forgiveness. We can overcome dysfunction by living the way God intended from the beginning in obedience to

Instruct

Him. We need not rely on self-indulgence, immorality, or chemical substances to find satisfaction in life. Our joy comes from our relationship with the Lord—not from the circumstances around us! If Christ has saved us, we have a **new song** to **sing**—one that stands in stark contrast to the world. The way we behave, the way we talk, the way we think, what motivates us, and the attitudes we hold—indeed our very lives lived in Christ—become the basis for this **new song**!

Question
2

What does your new song look like? Does it look more like secular music or the “new song” described in this passage?

Everyone can participate in singing this **new song**, for the psalmist invites **all the earth** to sing. Even though this psalm marks a special day to recognize God’s presence among His people in Israel, His offer of **salvation** extends to every person on **the earth**. God desires a relationship with **all** people whether Jews or Gentiles ([1 Tim 2:4](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)). Consequently, we **all** have an open invitation to join this choir of saints praising the Lord! It only requires that we have a relationship with Christ Jesus by faith through His grace after we confess and repent of our sins. When it comes to life, therefore, God is inclusive and generous, not exclusive and stingy. He gives life to anyone who will receive it ([John 3:16](#)). For many, however, the problem becomes that we must accept this life on His terms and not on our own terms. For this reason, many people will miss out on this life because they want to do it their way, but their way leads to destruction in the end ([Prov 4:12](#)). We can only attain life through Jesus Christ ([Acts 4:12](#)). Only then can we join in the celebration of the redeemed here on earth to sing this new song which the Lord has given us through a transformed life.

The psalmist further bids us to **sing to the Lord** and praise (i.e., **ble**ss) **His name**, proclaiming **the good news of His salvation from day to day** (v. 2). The phrase translated **proclaim the good news** refers to a courier bringing a report of victory from the battlefield.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

2 Corinthians 5:17

While in this context **salvation** could connote victory over a physical enemy, such as the Philistines, it seems to bear a more intimate, personal meaning here denoting God's continual provision and care for His people. He watches over them **from day to day**. This aspect of **salvation** highlights the on-going nature of the relationship. It's not simply a one-time action performed in the past, but an action whose results continue into the present. In this way, it demonstrates how God saves and sustains His people every day, providing for them and protecting them physically and spiritually when they surrender to His leadership.

Rarely does the Bible speak of our **salvation** in the past tense like we tend to do when giving our testimony: I was saved or God saved me. Rather it speaks of our salvation in the present tense as a continuous action: I am being saved or God is saving me. Scripture refers to salvation in this way to remind us of the necessity of God's daily activity in our lives. While we can have absolute confidence and security that God has saved us from our sins through His Son ([1 John 5:11-13](#)), we must also recognize that we need Him to sustain us every day. He alone makes it possible for us to live successfully in a fallen world, but this requires that we depend upon Him to live out our **salvation** daily. We need Him to save us from ourselves and our fleshly desires daily, so we can live according to His righteousness ([1 Cor 10:13](#)).

Some people treat **salvation** like a ticket to a sporting event or concert where it guarantees entry into the venue on the appointed day, but until then it has no enduring value on their lives. They receive the ticket and, having it securely in their possession, they lay it aside and go about their daily routine. They know they have the ticket. They remember that one day they'll get to redeem it at the venue. They may even be excited about going, but it has no bearing on how they live. They go about their business as usual. **Salvation**, however, isn't just a ticket to heaven when we die. It reflects an on-going, personal relationship with the Lord **from day to day** where He works in our lives to accomplish His purpose. **Salvation** isn't something we possess or something that even just happens to us, but



rather it signifies the process through which God conforms us to His character each day as we walk with Him and mature spiritually ([Rom 12:1-2](#)).

Question
3

How do you see the on-going work of Christ in your life today? How has He helped you to grow spiritually this week?

In addition to proclaiming **the good news** of God's **salvation**, the psalmist also encourages us to **declare His glory among the nations** and **His wonders among all peoples** (v. 3). The use of the verbs **proclaim** and **declare** indicate that this is a message we should share publicly. We shouldn't keep it to ourselves. We must tell it to others. In fact, we should tell it to everyone we meet! Our society has an unwritten rule that we should avoid discussing the topics of religion and politics since they stir such passion and can create controversy. However, God hasn't asked us to talk about "religion." On the contrary, He has asked us to share our personal testimony about what He has done for us through the relationship we have with Him. He has asked us to **proclaim the good news** of how He has saved us and to **declare to all nations** and peoples how He works in our lives daily to transform us, guide us, and provide for our needs.

If we have a relationship with the Lord and He has saved us from our sins, we have no excuse not to share. **Salvation** isn't a "private" matter which we guard and keep to ourselves as some attempt to portray it. **Salvation** is meant to be declared for **all** to hear so that they too may know the grace and greatness of our God in overcoming sin. It doesn't matter whether we view ourselves as an introvert or extrovert or whether we consider ourselves to have the ability to speak publicly or we fear it, God has asked us to tell our personal story of His work in our lives. After all, Jesus died for our sins on the cross as a public spectacle for all to see ([Heb 12:2](#)). Therefore,



we must be willing to **declare** our faith in Him publicly too. We must share the gospel boldly without shame or fear ([Rom 1:16](#); [2 Tim 1:7](#)). Jesus further notes, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” ([Luke 9:26](#)).

The meaning of the word translated **wonders** is somewhat difficult to capture in English. In fact, modern translations interpret it in various ways: “amazing things” (NLT), “marvelous works / deeds” (NIV, ESV, RSV), “wonderous works” (CSB), and “wonderful deeds” (NASB). Broadly speaking, the word refers to actions with unexpected outcomes that are difficult or even impossible to comprehend through our finite human means. Such circumstances leave us in awe of God’s power and might displayed through His ability to accomplish the seemingly impossible in the world according to His will. For example, when God reveals to Abraham and Sarah that they shall conceive a son in their advanced age, He uses this word to ask rhetorically, “Is there anything *too hard* for the Lord” ([Gen 18:14](#))? Of course, we learn the answer is “no” because God accomplished the seemingly impossible in a most unexpected way by having a couple nearly 100 years old bear a child.

Although the word wonders does not correspond directly to “miracles” as we would understand it, it does refer to any activity in our lives which we cannot do on our own power. Thus, it shows our need for complete reliance upon the Lord to order our lives every day. Scripture most often uses this word in association with God’s deliverance or **salvation**—just like it does here in this context. Only God can truly deliver us! Using a similar thought process albeit in the Greek language rather than Hebrew, Jesus makes a similar point when His disciples ask Him, “Who then can be saved” ([Matt 19:25](#))? To which He responds, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible,” thereby linking **salvation** with an activity only God can do ([Matt 19:26](#)). Praise God when He works in our lives to accomplish the impossible even if sometimes it occurs in the most unexpected ways which we may not immediately comprehend! We must look for that work each and every day as we walk with Him so that we can give Him the glory!

Question
4

How have you experienced God working in your life this week to do something you couldn’t do on your own power? How do you share that testimony with others?

Instruct

The next three verses describe why we should **declare** God's **glory** to **all peoples**. As the true and living God who created the universe, He is unique. God has no equal or rival. He has no competition whatsoever. We should therefore fear **Him above all gods for** He alone **is great and greatly to be praised** (v. 4). The so-called **gods of the peoples are** nothing more than **idols** (v. 5). As inanimate figures carved into wood or stone, these false **gods** have no power or authority. They cannot act. They cannot show compassion or mercy. They are truly impotent, worthless objects that cannot do anything. God, on the other hand, had the power to create **the heavens** and sustain them. Therefore, **honor and majesty** belong exclusively to Him (v. 6). Wherever God dwells (i.e., **His sanctuary**), we will see His **strength** and **beauty** on display.



As we have become more “diverse” as a culture, people in the United States today still serve a pantheon of **gods** created under the guise of religion. During the election season, I’ve noticed many politicians and people talk about “god,” pray, and even plead with god to bless America. I intentionally left the word “god” lower case in the previous sentence because these individuals do not pray or speak about the God of the Bible. They serve only **idols** which have no power and authority. Their **gods** offer no help or guidance. They speak no wisdom or truth. The god of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and any world religion for that matter or the god of cults like the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are nothing more than **idols**. They don’t exist! To equate them with the Lord God, Yahweh, and say that we worship the same God is an error perpetuated by the enemy—an error which this psalm seeks to dispel definitively.

There is only one God and His name is Yahweh. He has a Son, Jesus, whom He sent to save the world through His death on the cross and to provide eternal life through His resurrection three days later. Only Yahweh is **to be feared above all** these other **gods**! We cannot buy into the cultural push for tolerance and acceptance to lump the Lord God into a group with the idols of these world religions. While the Bill of Rights

affords us the protection to worship freely whomever and however we choose without fear of government interference, we must also remember that we have the freedom of speech which we should lovingly use to tell people the truth.

We cannot allow culture's quest for unity and push for diversity dissuade us from speaking the truth about the Lord God in love ([Eph 4:15](#)). We must treat all people respectfully with dignity ([Luke 6:31](#)), but we cannot shy away from speaking boldly in the name of the Lord because it upsets our culture when we advocate that we all must worship the same true God. The **gods** these other religions purport to serve are leading them to destruction. Scripture is clear that we're not all on the same path to God or just taking different routes to get there via various religions. On the contrary, only one path leads to eternal life with God, but the broad path—the one the world takes—leads to destruction ([Matt 7:13-14](#)). Yahweh, the Great I Am, is the one true and living God who gives life through a relationship with Him via His one and only Son ([John 14:6](#)).

Question
5

How has the culture's push for unity and diversity affected the church's ability to proclaim the gospel?

How can we combat this push by the culture to lump all **gods**, including Yahweh, into the same broad category? Years ago, when we mentioned God in our country, people would have almost universally understood that we were talking about the God of the Bible. Now, however, the term "god" has become so broad and diverse that it has little meaning unless we define what "god" specifically. For this reason, mentioning "god" generically or even praying doesn't cause much controversy unless talking to an avowed atheist which is a still relatively small percentage of our population—albeit growing. On the other hand, mentioning Jesus can set off a firestorm because it usually leaves no doubt what God we serve. Rather than speak generically about God, we must **declare** the wondrous work which Jesus has done in our lives to define the God whom we serve. And may our words and testimonies always be an accurate

"So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

Acts 4:18

Instruct

reflection of how Scripture portrays God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Psalm 96:7-10

GIVE HIM THE GLORY:

These verses call all people on the earth, literally **the families of the peoples**, to worship the Lord for the great and wonderful things they have witnessed Him do. The word translated **give** has a wide range of meaning in Hebrew. In these two verses, most modern translations render it as “ascribe,” but it can also mean choose wisely ([Deut 1:13](#); [Josh 18:4](#)) or a summons to act ([Gen 11:3-4, 7](#); [Exod 1:10](#)). In a sense, God asks the people to choose Him over the worthless idols mentioned in the previous stanza. He alone demands our adoration and worship. Thus, He wants us to recognize or “ascribe” to Him the **glory** and authority (i.e., **strength**) that rightfully belong to Him as the Almighty Creator (vv. 7-8a).

Every day we should consciously choose to glorify the Lord by bringing our **offering** of praise into His presence (v. 8). Unfortunately, we sometimes forget to give God the praise He so rightly deserves and we take His presence in our lives for granted. To illustrate, think about how much we depend upon electricity every day. It’s such an integral part of our lives that we don’t often stop to contemplate it much. We don’t really show our gratitude for it; we just expect it to be there when we need it! When we plug something in, turn on a switch, or switch on one of our many electronic devices, we simply expect it to work. We only become aware of how much we depend upon electricity when it doesn’t work. When we don’t have it, we still don’t show our gratitude for the times that we did. Rather, we complain that we don’t have it right now!



Sometimes we treat God in this same way. Despite the many ways He works in our lives daily, we simply don’t pay attention to all the integral ways He orchestrates

and sustains the world in which we live. We take Him for granted and expect Him to be there when we need Him. When things don't go as expected, we tend to complain rather than declare our gratitude for His enduring presence and benevolent provision. We should not live this way! Every day we ought to praise God with our entire being. We have so many things for which to be grateful and thankful that we should never be at a loss for words. May we look around us and see God at work, giving Him the **glory** and praise He deserves.

Question
6

How do you integrate praise into your daily fellowship with the Lord? Does your praise outweigh your petitions?

Verse 9 then describes the manner in which we should **worship the Lord**—**in the beauty of holiness**—rather than a characteristic or trait of the Lord for which we should worship Him. Once again, translations handle this somewhat difficult phrase drastically differently. Some add the pronoun “His” before the phrase in an attempt to clarify the reason why we **worship** the Lord (NIV, CSB, NLT). Thus, we worship Him *for* His holiness. Others, however, render the phrase even more ambiguously as “in holy attire” (NASB, RSV). In addition to the NKJV, only one other translation interprets the phrase literally: “in the splendor of holiness” (ESV). Based upon the context, this phrase seems to signify how we as the worshiper should approach God (i.e., **in holiness**). We should **worship** Him through our obedience, for in numerous places God emphatically reveals that He desires obedience more than meaningless ritual and sacrifice done with an impure heart ([1 Sam 15:22](#); [Psalm 51:16](#); [Prov 21:3](#); [Isa 1:11-17](#); [Hosea 6:6](#); [Amos 5:22-25](#)).

Certainly, our **holiness** and righteousness come from God, for apart from a relationship with Him we are bent on fulfilling our own wicked desires ([1 John 1:9](#)). To enter the presence of a holy God, therefore, we must first be in right standing with righteousness—the very reason why the High Priest had to offer a sacrifice before entering into the Holy of Holies in the temple. This fact coupled with the reference to God as a righteous Judge in verse 10 further supports this conclusion that verse 9 refers to the manner in which we **worship** the Lord through our obedience in righteousness. We can only stand before the Lord confidently and joyously when we have the righteousness He has imputed within us through Christ ([Heb 4:16](#)). For as believers, the

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day of judgment, as we shall see in the last stanza of this psalm (vv. 11-13), is a joyous occasion and not one to be feared or dreaded.

At the same time, God is calling His worshipers to practice obedience in righteousness, He is also calling all **the nations** into this same relationship with Him. The whole **earth** should **tremble before Him** (v. 9b). Thus, God calls all **the nations** to reject the false gods around them and serve Him alone so that they too

can stand confidently on the day of judgment. As His worshipers, who practice obedience, therefore, we should constantly remind **the nations** that only one God **has firmly established the world** and has complete authority and control over it (v. 10). Nothing can wrestle this control from His hand, for it **shall not be moved**. And as the sovereign God who controls the earth, He will one day **judge all the peoples righteously**. Therefore, the **nations** must prepare themselves for that day by submitting to Him authority and worshiping Him now ([Heb 9:27](#)).

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4:16

Question
7

How does the idea of coming judgment from the Lord influence your participation in communicating the gospel?

Psalm 96:11-13

REJOICE IN HIS REIGN:

The last three verses of this psalm show the joyous response of the created order to the **coming** judgment. The whole world rejoices because it awaits its renewal from the sin and chaos that has dominated it since the fall in the Garden of Eden ([Rom 8:19-21](#)). The psalmist calls **the heavens to rejoice** and **the earth to be glad** (v. 11). **The sea** and everything in it should **roar with gladness** while at the same time **the field** and everything in it should **be** filled with joy (v. 12). In a slight against the inanimate idols, the psalm specifically calls **all the trees in the woods**, from which many of the idols

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were carved, to **rejoice before the Lord!** In verse 13, the psalmist declares the reason for all this celebration. The Lord **is coming** and He will **judge the world** according to His **righteousness** and **truth**.

When Adam sinned, he single-handedly subjected creation to destruction. While all the bad things that happen in this world today to people may not be directly the result of a specific person or culture's sin, they are all the result of sin in general. The natural disasters, diseases, famines, political and civil turmoil, financial instability, and the list could go on indefinitely are all the result of living in a fallen world. So, God has sent His Son to redeem us and save us from that destruction. While we may continue to experience hardships in this life, we have hope of a better life to come—one spent in eternity with our Lord and Savior. For this reason, we should not fear the **coming** judgment if we have a personal relationship with Christ. Instead, we should **rejoice** and celebrate, for all creation will be perfectly restored in His **righteousness** one day. On that day, there will be no more sin, sickness, sorrow or suffering. And, for this, we should celebrate that our God has given us a way to overcome!

Question
8

How can you communicate this positive act of judgment to a world that has a skewed understanding of both justice and judgment?

In the introduction, we reminded ourselves of the painstaking preparation we would all undertake to meet a dignitary such as the President of the United States. As much as we would prepare ourselves to meet him, how much more should we prepare ourselves to meet the holy God who created us? Worship isn't just something we drag ourselves out of bed on a Sunday morning just because it's something we're supposed to do. Worship isn't just following a list of regulations of do's and don'ts or religious rituals. Worship is a relationship based upon the new standing we have in Christ when we repented of our sins and He saved. Worship requires preparation to keep ourselves holy and unstained by the world so we can approach a holy God. We must work at it because it's a lifestyle. It reflects who we have become in Christ. We must submit ourselves to the Lord daily and live in obedience to His holy commands, worshipping Him with every fiber of our being. May we glorify the Lord in worship by what we do, what we say, what we think, where we go, and the attitudes we exhibit. Give Him the glory both through the testimony we hold and the lifestyle we display.

Incorporate

How do you view your worship? Is it the way you live or something merely you attend? Why? After this lesson, how is God asking you to perhaps change or strengthen the way you worship Him?

In what ways has God blessed you this week? How have you shared these blessings with others?

Why is it a fallacy (wrong thinking) not to share our blessings verbally with others because it may seem conceited or egotistical? What must our purpose of sharing our blessings always be? How can it become conceited or egotistical?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 17, 2024



God's GREATNESS

*Worship God for His
GREATNESS*

Psalm 99:1-9

Focal Verse:

"Let them praise Your great and awesome name — He is holy."

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Psalm 99:3

Introduce

In a book which compiled a series of radio broadcasts aired on the BBC during World War 2 which he later expanded and collected into a single work titled *Mere Christianity* (1952), C. S. Lewis argues for the existence of God on the basis of a universal standard for morality and justice present among all human cultures.* Just as we have certain immutable “laws of nature,” such as gravity, genetics, and physics, Lewis contends that we also have the universal “law of human nature” which governs our moral behavior. This “law of human nature” states that all human beings possess an innate sense of right and wrong that transcends culture as regulated by our consciences. For example, Lewis points out that every culture despises selfishness. Although slight variations may exist amongst cultures as to what actions specifically constitute selfishness, every culture still views selfishness negatively no matter what form it may take. This universal aversion to selfishness, therefore, necessitates that an objective standard must exist apart from mankind which firmly establishes moral boundaries.

In other words, we must have a clear and indisputable standard by which we can assess right from wrong which does not depend upon man’s subjective opinion often skewed by sin. Without such a universal standard, we would have no concept of fairness or justice and no basis by which to judge any



action. To those who reject absolute truth and cling to moral relativism, Lewis asks them to consider how they would respond to someone who breaks a promise. He reveals that such a person “may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining ‘It’s not fair’ before you can say Jack Robinson.” In other words, one must concede that a universal, impartial standard exists by which we can unequivocally judge the fairness of an action. That standard is God who has never once broken a promise to us! Through His holiness, therefore, only God can provide this perfect standard by which we can judge our actions with absolute impartiality. And only God can judge fairly with such impartiality!

Introduce

I cited C.S. Lewis' argument not as proof for the existence of God like he does, but to demonstrate how corrupt our human understanding and application of justice truly is. Apart from God, we cannot truly have justice because the standard would depend upon every man's own interpretation ([Judg 17:6](#)). We need God as an arbiter who judges dispassionately according to the absolute truth He Himself has established to guide the universe. Without Him, our sense of justice will always be skewed toward our own sinful perspective no matter how good or impartial we may think ourselves to be. People clamor for justice all the time in our culture. They want to right the wrongs they perceive have occurred. We even have people who self-identify as "social justice warriors," but these individuals often have a skewed view of reality because of sin. As a result, they usually create more injustice and inequality than they resolve. We need God; we need His perspective to know what truly constitutes justice. Fortunately, we serve a great God who judges impartially based on His holiness—which is the main theme Psalm 99 communicates. Therefore, let us praise our great and holy God who always acts righteously and justly.

Key
Question

In what ways does sin skew the human quest for justice?

In Reference



C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1952), p. 17-21.

Psalm 99:1-3

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GREATNESS:

As I write this lesson, we have just finished voting for our next our next President along with other national and local leaders to guide our nation over the next few years. More than any other election in recent history, and perhaps even our lifetimes, this one has been the most contentious and worrisome, teetering on the thought of civil unrest no matter which candidate would have won. One side has villainously labeled the other as fascists and Nazis, even calling their opponents a threat to democracy. Anger, bitterness, and division now seem to drive the cultural narrative on either side of an issue, leaving everyday Americans still worried about a peaceful transition of power in January. As Ronald Reagan once quipped, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'"

As we look around, we can see this uncertainty and worry written on the faces of our fellow countrymen. Regardless of the person currently in office or even the one awaiting to assume office, citizens continue expressing concern over the current direction of our country almost to the point of despair and hopelessness, wondering what the future may hold for them and their families. The condition of the world remains tenuous with the threat of global war along with severe economic repercussions. People struggle to make ends meet in an economy hampered by rampant inflation. Others fear for their safety and security as crime continues to rise nation-wide and spiral out of control in many cities. However, no mere transition of government will change any of this. These threats may abate at times with strong, practical leadership, but they will once again rear their ugly head in future generations because we live in a fallen world wrecked by sin.

Despite all the uncertainty and fear we may face as a nation at times, Psalm 99 gives us hope by reminding us that **the Lord reigns** (v. 1)! Regardless of which candidate may have won the election, we as believers still have



hope either way because our trust resides with God, not man. Our hope rests not with human governments, human achievements that purport to make life better, or technological advancements. It rests solely on the fact that God remains in control no matter what may happen here on earth. Wars may continue, diseases may come upon us, disasters may strike, and persecution may occur, but even so God still remains firmly in control seated sovereignly upon His throne. No matter what circumstances we may face, we must always remember that we serve a living God who intimately watches over the world He created, caring for it daily.

Question
1

In what specific situations have you found comfort in knowing that God remains in control despite the circumstances?

Psalm 99 also calls the people to recognize that **the Lord reigns** as sovereign King not only over **Zion** (Israel), but the whole world (see v. 2). In His presence, the people **tremble** and **the earth** quakes or shakes (i.e., **moved**). Here, the trembling does not necessarily indicate fear per se, but more admiration and awe of God's greatness as displayed particularly through His holiness and divine authority to execute judgment. Think of meeting a famous well-respected and admired person—you may even consider to be your hero. This may be an athlete, musician, artist, actor, entrepreneur, dignitary, or whomever. Likely, you will have enthusiasm and experience some kind of euphoria for being in their presence. Some may **tremble** or shake with excitement. Some may even faint. Most of us, whether or not we do either of these things, will have tremendous joy in getting to meet our hero. As excited as we would be to meet someone we admire on earth, how much more exciting would it be to enter the presence of the Lord God who created us and saved us?

In another sense, **the earth** quakes as it awaits its eventual restoration through God's judgment against the sin which has corrupted it ([see Heb 12:25-29](#)). As believers, however, we do not have to fear God's judgment which will shake **the earth** to its core because our confidence resides in the Rock which cannot be shaken even though the prospect of others encountering God's wrath may make us **tremble** with fear for them! Nonetheless, this should remind us of the parable Jesus gave about two builders ([Matt 7:24-27](#)). One man built upon sand while the other built upon a rock. If we build our

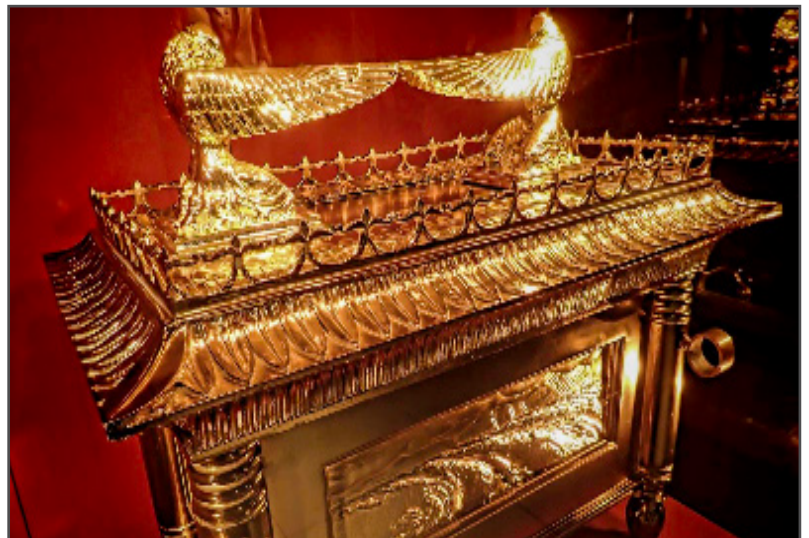
lives upon the shifting sands of culture and the popular practices of the day, when judgment comes what we built will suffer catastrophic failure. But if we build upon the Rock who is Christ, we will remain securely anchored to His firm foundation and will weather the storm no matter how intense it may seem.

Question
2

How has the Lord given you strength to remain faithful during storms in your life when you relied solely on Him?

The Hebrew phrase **He dwells between the cherubim** is somewhat difficult to translate into English. The word interpreted **dwells** by the NKJV, for example, most likely refers to God sitting upon His throne; hence, most modern translations render it “sits enthroned.” This phrase then seems to be a reference to God’s presence among the people as symbolically represented by the tabernacle or temple. Although we know that God does not dwell in temples made by human hands ([Acts 7:48](#), [17:24](#)), the tabernacle or temple provided a physical reminder to Israel that God dwelt in their midst. For this reason, both the tabernacle and temple were constructed in the very center of the camp or the city to signify God’s presence among His people in addition to serving as a gathering place for worship.

Furthermore, the NKJV and most other modern translations (NIV, CSB, NLT) describe God’s presence as seated **between the cherubim** while two others say *upon* or *above* (ESV, NASB). The translation of this preposition plays a significant role in determining where God is seated. To sit **between the cherubim** may



simply refer God’s presence in the tabernacle or temple where the ten outer curtains along with the veil in the in the Holy of Holies featured cherubim woven into them ([Exod 26:1](#), [31](#)). Thus, the phrase **between the cherubim** implies God’s presence in His “house” or sanctuary. To sit upon or above, on the other hand, may refer to God’s

presence over the Ark of the Covenant sitting upon the mercy seat. When God gave Moses the specifications for this object, He indicated that the lid would be inlaid with gold and a cherub on either side of the mercy seat from where He would speak ([Exod 25:18-19](#)). As a result, some scholars believe that this reference refers to worshipping at God's **footstool** later in verse 5.

While we cannot be for sure to what this phrase actually refers in relation to God's perceived location, the point remains clear: God is present among His people! He is not some "deistic" God who has set the universe in motion and then has nothing to do with it. On the contrary, He is intimately involved every day, bringing us full circle back to the declaration that **the Lord reigns!** God is in control and promises to be with us every step of the way. It doesn't matter what situation we may face. Tragedy can strike our families. We can lose our jobs. We can have health problems. Our possessions can suddenly vanish or breakdown. We can encounter financial ruin. Although God may not ever explain why these things happen, He always remains firmly entrenched at our sides. He remains faithful to His promises! Therefore, let us join the psalmist in praising the Lord for His presence in our lives, for He **reigns** on His throne today.

Question
3

How have you seen God's presence in your life demonstrated today?

In verse 3, the psalmist encourages the assembly to **praise** the **great and awesome name** of the Lord, for **He is holy**. As humans, our **name** is perhaps the most valuable commodity that we have. After all, Solomon tells us that "a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver or gold" ([Prov 21:1](#)). Our names indicate so much about us. They become the basis of our identity as conduits used to describe our personality and character. They become synonymous with our achievements and accomplishments. Our names can garner us a favorable impression or even a bad reputation depending upon how we live.

To illustrate, think about how we associate a person's name with his or her character or accomplishments whether good or bad. For example, what comes to mind when you hear these names: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Troy Aikman, or Elvis Presley? Most likely, we think immediately of their accomplishments as a President, inventor, star athlete, or famous musician. Similarly, what comes to mind if you hear

these names: Abraham, Mother Teresa, and Adolf Hitler? We may think about their character which exemplifies faithfulness, kindness, or evil and hatred.

In the same way, God's **name** reveals much about His character and what He has done for us as His creation. Like [Proverbs 22:1](#), God zealously guards His **name** and His reputation (see [Ezek 36:20-23](#)). He asks us not to misuse or carelessly use His **name** in any way ([Exod 20:7](#)), He asks us not to swear falsely by His **name**

([Lev 19:12](#); [Matt 5:33-35](#)), and He demands that His people who are called by His **name** represent Him well as His ambassadors ([Isa 52:5-6](#)). In the previous paragraph where we saw how some human names had become synonymous with certain character traits and accomplishments, certain traits and accomplishments based on Scripture should also come to mind when we praise the **name** of the Lord. What character traits come to mind most when you hear His **name** for which you could praise Him today? What actions or activities best describe God's work in the world for which you could praise Him? Individually in your quiet time and collectively as a class spend time praising God for who He is and what He has done. Exalt His holy name!

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11

Psalm 99:4-5

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS JUSTICE:

At the end of the previous stanza when we reflected on God's "great and awesome name," you probably mentioned love as one of His most characteristic attributes. For most people, this was probably the first trait that came to mind when you thought about God. Indeed, Scripture declares, "God is love" ([1 John 4:8, 16](#)). While God certainly demonstrates His love toward us in multiple ways, one other characteristic defines Him more than any other—and this even includes love. This single attribute influences everything that God does, but we often overlook it! Take a moment to read back through verse 3 in the previous stanza. How does the psalmist

describe the Lord there? He describes Him as **holy**. How many of you praised God for His holiness before praising Him for His love, provision, salvation, or any other trait He has or deed He has done? Holiness is the primary attribute which absolutely defines who God is! For this reason, it is a recurrent theme throughout this psalm and is the most important character trait which reflects who God is—even above love!

As the most important attribute of His character, God's holiness influences everything He does. For example, God's holiness dictates His faithfulness; God remains faithful to His Word precisely because in His holiness He cannot lie. God's holiness necessitates His wrath and punishment for sin. Without God's holiness, we would have no **justice** or **equity** in the world because no definitive standard for right and wrong would exist (v. 4). Moreover, His holiness also leads Him to forgive and be reconciled with a creation that He loves so dearly. Above all, His holiness enabled Him to send His Son—a perfectly holy sacrifice—to die in our place so that we might have eternal life. God's holiness, more than anything else, determines how He acts regardless of the situation and circumstance.

In verse 4, we see God's **holy** character on full display as He dispenses **justice**. Once again, however, we have a difficult phrase to translate into English. Literally, the text reads the might of **the king loves justice**. Most English

translations attempt to smooth it out by saying something akin to "the mighty King loves justice." But this somewhat obscures the point that the psalmist wants to make here. God's strength or power comes as a result of His **love** for **justice** which ultimately points back to the central trait of His character—His holiness. In other words, God's power to do good comes directly from His holiness. Everything that God does He does with His holiness in mind. Therefore, we can praise God for His **justice** and **righteousness** which will one day restore the world to its pre-fall sinless state made perfect through Christ. Even now in this fallen world, however, we can still experience God's **justice** in the world—even if at times it may seem that wickedness and

"No one is holy like the LORD,
For there is none besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God."

1 Samuel 2:2

unrighteousness win. Because “the Lord reigns” as we learned in the first verse of this psalm, God works despite the wickedness that dominates this world to accomplish His purpose and bring glory to His name. For this reason, Paul can write, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” ([Rom 8:28](#)).

Question
4

In what circumstances have you see God work to accomplish His good purpose despite the wickedness and unrighteousness of the world?

Justice may seem delayed at times, but again paired with His holiness God mercifully gives mankind time to respond and be made in right standing with Him. Because of His holiness and grace, we do not have to suffer the penalty of our sin if we repent and surrender our lives to Christ! In 2 Peter 3:9, for instance, the Apostle writes, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Although God does not tolerate evil of any kind and His full wrath will one day come against it ([Rom 1:18](#)), He overlooks it for a period in order to give mankind a chance to repent. In Acts 17:30, Paul explains to the Athenians, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” In this sense, God has **established equity**.

Equity, therefore, refers to God’s impartiality of extending His grace to all people whether Jew or Gentile ([Rom 2](#)). Every person on earth has the same opportunity to receive God’s grace by repenting of their sins. God is not stingy, but generously offers reconciliation through Christ to those who will accept it!

"And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name
of the LORD shall be saved. For in
Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall
be deliverance, As the LORD has
said, Among the remnant whom
the LORD calls."

Joel 2:32

The psalmist concludes this stanza with a call to **exalt the Lord** and **worship at His footstool**, for **He is holy** (v. 5). He invites all people from every walk of life to

Instruct

worship the Lord in the temple ([1 Chron 28:2](#)) and perhaps specifically around the Ark of the Covenant in conjunction with the first verse which the author may call God's footstool here. We can praise God precisely because we know that He will act justly according to His Word which promises life to those who turn from their sins and serve Him. Although God gives ample opportunity for all people to repent and be saved ([1 Tim 2:4](#)), one day we can also rest assured that He will punish iniquity completely and establish His kingdom in full. Truth and righteousness will become the norm when we gather to **worship** around His throne because He will make us perfect through His Son, Jesus ([1 John 3:2](#)). Even though trials and tribulation may come in this life temporarily, we have victory over sin and death that awaits us in the Lord with whom we will be privileged to dwell forever in heaven.

Question
5

How does God's equity differ from the equity that our culture today espouses?

Psalm 99:6-9

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS FORGIVENESS:

Finally, the psalmist praises God for the fact that He answers us when we call upon Him. The last stanza of the psalm gives three historical examples of God's willingness to answer the people who also served Him most faithfully. Here, the psalmist identifies Moses and Aaron as **priests** and includes them along with Samuel as those whom **God answered** when they **called upon His name** (v. 6). The term priest, in this context, refers more to the role of mediator than one who carries out specific religious rites or rituals in association with the tabernacle or temple. In other words, the text emphasizes how God utilized these three men as mediators to communicate His message to His people—whether during Israel's time in the wilderness or during the kingship of Saul. But in the end this psalm primarily focuses on God's goodness to His people in that He **answered** them when **they called** rather than the role of His servants as mediators.

Question
6

How has God answered you when you have called upon Him? How can you use these instances to give Him praise?

Overall, the psalm speaks in broad, general terms regarding God's interaction with these three individuals. Consequently, we cannot identify a specific historical period other than during the wilderness era when God **spoke** to Moses and Aaron often in **a cloudy pillar** of smoke (v. 7). This could refer to any number of events because God led them through the wilderness with such a pillar during the day, He descended upon the tabernacle visibly in a similar form, and He even manifested His presence on Mount Sinai with a dramatic cloud emanating thunder and lightning as He uttered the Ten Commandments. In all, it really doesn't matter whether we can pinpoint a specific event. The psalmist's point still remains clear. Out of His goodness, God answers those who call upon Him. At the same time, these mediators also had the responsibility to keep the commandments which the Lord had given them. For this reason, verse 7 notes that **they kept His testimonies and ordinance**.

Like these three men, we can praise God for His faithfulness to His promises and His willingness to answer us when we call! If we have a relationship with His Son and are in right standing with Him, we can call upon God in any situation. We can ask Him for help. We can seek wisdom from Him. We can cry to God for mercy or compassion in

times of need. We can bring all our requests and petitions to Him no matter what they may be. We can also lift our voices in melodious praise. Yet, we must always be willing to listen and respond in obedience according to the directives He gives—just as these three men **kept** His commandments. Disobedience, however, always hinders our fellowship with the Lord—and this includes our prayers or communication with Him. For those who live in disobedience, God will not hear their prayers. In Isaiah, for example, God tells the people, "Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear" ([Isa 1:15](#)). But the good news as we shall see in verse 8 is that God always stands ready to forgive when we call upon Him in those times that we fail.

Even though these men generally obeyed God's commands, they still were imperfect and succumbed to their fleshly desires. And God **took vengeance upon**

"To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD
than sacrifice."

Proverbs 21:3

Instruct

their deeds when they sinned —that is He punished them for their disobedience (v. 8). For example, God plainly told Moses to speak to the rock to produce water for a people complaining of thirst in an arid land rather than strike it with Aaron's rod. In his frustration, Moses disobeyed and struck the rock for which God forbid him to enter the rest of the Promised Land as punishment ([Num 20:10-13](#); [Deut 3:23-38](#)). Aaron, along with his sister Miriam, became jealous of Moses' leadership and attempted to usurp the authority God had granted him for which God sent upon them leprosy as punishment ([Num 12:1-16](#)). While we don't have any specific instances in which Samuel disobeyed the Lord, we still know that as an imperfect human he had flaws and, therefore, stood in the need of forgiveness at times.

Question
7

When have you had to call out to the Lord in forgiveness? How did He respond?

Because of their disobedience at times, this trio stood in the need of forgiveness just like we ourselves do. Even in their disobedience, God was **to them a God-who-forgives** when they repented! While Moses, Aaron, and Samuel mostly lived a godly life in complete obedience, they still erred at times and stood in the need of forgiveness. Likewise, we may live godly lives most of the time, but occasionally we will still err. We need forgiveness. This week as you study this psalm pray to the Lord and ask Him to reveal any area in your life in which you have unconfessed sin or have been unfaithful. Then, pray, seek forgiveness and repent of those actions, for God is also a **God-who-forgives** to us so that you may approach Him in worship holy, pure, and cleansed by Him! God will certainly discipline us when we stray, but He also stands ready to forgive. God's holiness demands that He punish wrongdoing, but in His holiness He has also provided a way for us to have a relationship with Him when we repent and entrust Him with our lives. Then, like the psalmist, we can **exalt the Lord our God, worship Him**, and praise Him for His greatness as manifested in His **holy** character.

We serve a holy and righteous God. In fact, Psalm 89:14 asserts, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.” However, we live in a world which has been destroyed by sin—our sin. God created a perfect world, but by our own disobedience choices we subjected it to destruction. Fortunately, however, we serve a holy God who stands willing to forgive so that we might be made in right standing with Him and live eternally with Him. One day, God will judge the world and justice will come. If we don’t have a relationship with His Son, we will face that judgment ourselves. But praise be to God that we can escape such a judgment if only we would repent of our sins and surrender to Him. We serve a great and mighty God who has offered salvation to all without partiality. Let us praise Him for His great and awesome name!

Incorporate

What events in life leave you feeling uncertain? How does knowing the Lord reigns calm those fears?

In what ways do you see our world clamoring for justice? How has this call for justice affected the church?

How does sin in our lives hinder our fellowship with the Lord? When we sin, why will He only hear us when we call upon Him in a time of repentance?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 24, 2024



Worship God for His
GOODNESS

Psalm 107:1-22

Focal Verse:

"Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men!"

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Psalm 107:21

Introduce

With Thanksgiving Day now upon us, we enter a nearly month-long stretch of holiday celebrations that culminate with ringing in the New Year. During this time, many people cram so many more activities into their schedules that they become completely overwhelmed to the point of exhaustion. On the Day after Thanksgiving, affectionately known to retailers as Black Friday, shoppers begin their quest to find the perfect gift for their loved ones. They brave long lines and stores filled to capacity, standing shoulder to shoulder with other bargain hunters trying not to get trampled in a dense sea of humanity to buy the hottest Christmas gift of the year. But, in reality, searching for that perfect gift takes days—if not weeks. People scour the internet and search the stores—a pursuit that becomes even more frantic as the days tick down.

In addition to the shopping, many people also begin decorating the day after Thanksgiving. We have such elaborate displays in our homes that it can take several days to put them all together. We make that arduous climb up the stairs to our attic or begin laboriously pulling out several boxes of trees, lights, and displays from our garages. It can take



several hours just to sort through the lights and make sure that everything works—let alone to incorporate them festively into our decor. Sometimes we become so overwhelmed with decorating that we may even hire one of these companies, whose advertisements have already popped up everywhere, to hang them professionally for us on the outside of our homes!

No sooner than we have hung our decorations than do the Christmas parties and other holiday events begin. If we have children or grandchildren, for example, choir programs, band concerts, and plays dominate the early part of the calendar before Winter recess. And we simply can't miss any of them! Then, we have office parties or other functions that we must also attend. Finally, we have activities at church. We have class parties with our Bible study groups. We have the church-wide Christmas dinner just one week prior to the actual day. Most of us have something almost every night of the week—our busiest time of the year by far!

Introduce

Yet, on the days themselves, we still don't get to celebrate as much as we perhaps may like because we once again find ourselves busy. We must cook our families a sumptuous meal that takes hours. Once again, this requires that we find our way into a jam-packed grocery store to get everything we might need. Then, the preparation begins at least the night before—if not earlier. We find ourselves busy, tired, and wanting relief. Does this sound like your schedule during the holidays?

Unfortunately, many people become so busy that they fail to stop and give God thanks for all He has done for them. We may find ourselves in a hurry to celebrate. But with all the actual activity with which we overload ourselves, we may forget to give thanks to the One who deserves it most. We simply go about our business as usual. We get stuck in that holiday routine that we do year after year. After Jesus healed the ten lepers, this same thing happened to them. They got busy with their lives. Only one of them took time to return and thank Him for what He had done. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week and throughout the rest of the holiday season, may we be grateful and express our gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord for what He has done in each of our lives. May we never become too busy and distracted that we withhold our thanksgiving to the Lord which He so rightfully deserves.

Key
Question

How do you navigate the busyness of the holiday seasons in a way that you remember to express your thanksgiving unto the Lord?

Psalm 107:1-9

THANK GOD FOR HIS REDEMPTION:

This psalm serves as a general introduction to the fifth division of the book of Psalms, reminding Israel of God’s faithfulness to them as a people. It leads Israel to give thanks to the Lord particularly for delivering them from bondage in Egypt. As Thanksgiving quickly approaches, let us join with Israel and offer our sincere gratitude to the Lord for what He has done in our lives. Although we may not be physically enslaved like the Israelites, God has nevertheless rescued us from the bondage of sin through Christ. He has set us free to live an abundant life in Christ—blessing us when obediently submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit whom He has sent to indwell us. This Thanksgiving may we use this psalm to reflect on all the things that the Lord has done for us so we can give Him the praise and thanks He rightly deserves.

The opening refrain of this psalm bids us to **give thanks to the Lord for He is good** (v. 1). In this context, the word **good** is synonymous with God’s holiness. Thus, it means morally righteous. To help us understand the use of **good** here in this psalm, recall the “certain ruler” who respectfully asks Jesus, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life” ([Luke 18:18](#)).

Before answering his actual question, Jesus curiously poses another, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God” ([Luke 18:19](#)). When we substitute the word holy for **good**, the intent of Jesus’ inquiry becomes clear. No one is perfectly holy or sinless save God alone! Jesus doesn’t dispute the description directed toward Him, but rather asks the man point blank if he understands that He is truly God in the flesh. After all, we cannot save ourselves by what we “do” as this man wants to know. Rather, we are saved by what Jesus did for us on the cross which requires a perfect, unblemished sacrifice without sin to die in our place!

Last week in our study of Psalm 99, we learned that God’s holiness functions as the central attribute of His character which determines everything He does. Yet, people



often misunderstand what God's goodness actually entails. They typically associate the word **good** with God's material blessings in their lives. They equate it to God's provision in health, finances, possessions, relationships, and the like. To them, **good** means something beneficial and useful or acts of kindness and compassion. While God certainly blesses us tangibly in these ways, His goodness stems from the very core of His character. Consequently, who God is—holy—influences what He does. Even though we may not always get what we expect or want, God always does what is right according to His "goodness." He always gives us exactly what we need!

Question
1

In what ways do you see God's goodness/holiness even though it may not be what you wanted or expected?

Moreover, the psalmist also urges us to **give thanks to the Lord** because **His mercy endures forever**. The term translated **mercy** by the NKJV is somewhat difficult to define with only one English word. Therefore, modern translations have variously rendered it as "faithful love," "lovingkindness," "steadfast love," or even "loyal love." In Hebrew, the word describes God's faithfulness to His covenant. Precisely because He is **good** or holy, God never breaks a promise. He always fulfills His word! We can count on God's faithfulness to His promises. Hence, Paul reminds us, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" ([2 Tim 2:13](#)).

Probably, most of us can name a time when someone broke a promise to us or when we broke a promise to someone else—and it may have even happened to us this week! People break their commitments to attend certain functions with us. They break their promises to repay their debts. They break their promises to help us with a particular project. They

break their promises to hang out with us. Parents even break their promise to discipline their children when they get home because they sometimes forget. People break their

"If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself."

2 Timothy 2:13

promises all the time, but God doesn't. We can know exactly what we can expect with the Lord. We can also know where we stand with Him based on His Word. God will always act according to what He has said! This should give us great comfort and assurance in an uncertain world! Therefore, let us praise the Lord for His holiness which compels Him to be faithful to His word.

Question
2

How does knowing God is faithful to His Word give you comfort and reassurance in life?

Next, the psalmist encourages **the redeemed of the Lord** to testify publicly about how the Lord delivered them **from the hand of their enemy** (v. 2). Based on the illustrations used, the composer points to the historical period where God delivered them as a nation from slavery in Egypt and fulfilled His long-awaited promise of giving them a land to call their own. From every point of the compass, God **gathered** His people who had been scattered in exile amongst all **the lands** (v. 3). Thus, God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt serves as an example to future generations of His faithfulness to His covenant. In faithfulness to His Word, God will reward those who obediently serve Him, but He will also punish those who defiantly remain in their sin. We see this pattern throughout Scripture. Years after the exodus, for example, the prophet Isaiah also writes about a time when God would gather the remnant from exile who would once again "sing to the Lord, for He has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst" ([Isa 12:4-5](#)).

Even though the fulfillment of God's promise which He made with Abraham spanned some 400 years, He still brought it to fruition at the right time through Joshua and Caleb who led the people out of the wilderness across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Such a seeming delay demonstrates that God doesn't

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23

work on our timetable; He works on His according to His holy purpose. One could also say the same thing about the birth of the Messiah which spanned 700 years from the time of Micah and Isaiah to the birth of Christ in the first century BC. Today, we could even say the same thing as we await His return nearly 2,000 years after His death and resurrection. We've been waiting and waiting for God to fulfill His promise. Yet, we must learn to trust Him and wait upon His time instead of becoming disillusioned and disheartened or even attempting to act on our own volition. While we wait, we can still rejoice, knowing that the victory has already been won. He will fulfill what He has promised us! Therefore, we can give the Lord thanks not only for what He has done in the past, but also what we know He will do in the future!

Question
3

As you wait upon the Lord to return, how do you publicly declare your praise and thanks to Him?

For us today, redemption takes on a more spiritual connotation. This doesn't mean that God won't rescue us from our physical, flesh and blood enemies at times, but that He has saved us from an even greater, more powerful enemy who seeks to destroy us completely ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). In Christ, God paid the price for the penalty of our sin so that we might have eternal life through Him. In other words, He redeemed us and set us free from enslavement to sin and its addictions. Although sin may seem advantageous and fun for a while, think about how much it actually enslaves us and robs us of our joy. Sin consumes our time. It commands our attention. It monopolizes our affection. It captivates our minds, pulling us in many different directions but always away from the Lord. Addiction is a constant pursuit to find satisfaction in the things of this world. But true satisfaction can only be found in a relationship with Christ. Thankfully, we have a Savior who came to set us free from such addiction. He enables us to live in righteousness and holiness in the way in which we were created, restoring us to our original purpose ([Rom 6:15-23](#)).

After God graciously redeemed Israel from Egypt, **they** perilously **wandered in the wilderness** for forty years because of their lack of faith in Him to deliver the Promised Land into their hands. As **they wandered** restlessly, **they found no city** or really habitation of any kind suitable for dwelling (v. 4). With the lack of sustainable resources in the region, they experienced extreme hunger and thirst (v. 5). In dire straits

without the staples of life, they became desperate to the point of death—literally **their soul fainted within them**. At times, the people complained vociferously. They charged Moses, and by extension God, with bringing them into a barren wasteland to die. They even surmised that it would have been better for them to have remained in Egypt rather than face these uncertain perils. They had forgotten the Source from which their provision had come. They blamed God instead of earnestly seeking Him and obediently serving Him. Nevertheless, God continued to act faithfully according to His holy plan to fulfill His promise to the subsequent generation.

God heard their cry as they called out **in their trouble** and **He delivered them out of their distresses** (v. 6). In all, God still provided for them out of His abundant grace, but He also disciplined them in order to keep them on the **right** path. Notice how the psalmist commends the Lord for leading **them forth by the right way** (v. 7). Solomon uses a similar phrase in Proverbs 4:11 to encourage Israel,



his figurative son, to avoid wickedness and walk in righteousness: “I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.” We should be grateful for all the ways the Lord provides for us every day, but we should also be grateful for the lessons He teaches us to keep us on the **right** path so we don’t stumble and fall. May we never forget to praise the Lord for His gentle correction which keeps us from constantly straying off course!

As adolescents and teenagers, most of us probably resented—or at least questioned—the boundaries our parents set for us. At the time, we may not have understood what benefits these boundaries had. We may have even viewed them as our parents’ attempt to keep us from having a “good time.” As we looked around at the world which seemed to have much freedom and much less stringent boundaries than we did, we may have complained, “But everyone else is going or doing it.” At times, we may have even sought to rebel, challenging our parents’ authority and seeing how far we could push them to acquiesce to our demands. When they didn’t budge and we still

chose to break the boundaries anyway, we certainly didn't like the correction that we received. It all may have even seemed unfair in comparison to the world around us.

But as we grew older, we developed a new perspective. We started to understand why they set these boundaries. They wanted to keep us safe and help us lead a productive, successful life. Perhaps, we even began to appreciate the times they corrected us, preventing us from wandering down a dangerous path that could have altered the course of our lives. Hopefully, we have communicated our gratitude and thanks to them for their loving correction along with the principles they instilled within us as they raised us. Most of us would not be in the positions in which we are today if it would have not been for a parent, guardian, or relative who lovingly shaped us through their guidance. In the same way, we must thank God for His correction along with His guidance which is shaping us into the people whom He has called us to be.

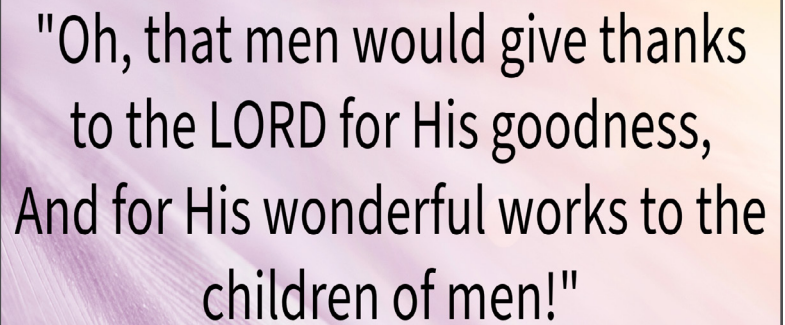
Question
4

In what ways can you give God praise for the specific ways in which He has corrected you and kept you on the right path?

Verse 8 functions much like the chorus of a modern song which we will see repeated in each of the subsequent stanzas with no variation. It calls Israel to worship the Lord for the specific actions which the psalmist has highlighted that demonstrate God's faithfulness to them as a people (vv. 15, 21, 31). Although loosely modeled after verse 1, it has a few significant changes of which we should take note. First, the word **goodness** in the NKJV is somewhat misleading because it is the same word translated "mercy" earlier which refers to God's faithfulness to His covenant. Thus, the psalmist once again calls people to praise God for His faithfulness to His promises of which they have been beneficiaries. Second, the psalmist exhorts the people to **give thanks to the Lord** also for **His wonderful works to the children of men** (v. 8). In our study of Psalm 96:3, we've already discussed the same word used here when the cantor exclaims, "Declare His glory among the nations, His *wonderous works* among the people." In our discussion, we concluded that this word signifies something only God can do on our behalf and it is usually used in conjunction with deliverance or salvation. This proves to be the case here. The **wonderful works** which God does among all people is to save **them out of their distress** (v. 13).

Verse 9 explicitly defines one of **the wonderful works** which God has done: **He**

satisfies the longing soul and **fills the hungry soul with goodness**. Our world constantly searches for two things in life: love and purpose. In the beginning, God invested us with the specific purpose to have a relationship with Him borne through obedient service in caring for His creation. Because we have all chosen to sin and have separated ourselves from the Lord, we desperately seek a way to fill the void this lack of God-given purpose in our lives leaves. Therefore, people try to find purpose and value in other things, in other people, in movements or causes, in activity, or even in religion. Yet, none of these things can satisfy **the longing soul**. In the end, they still leave us disappointed, frustrated, and searching. Only a relationship with God can satisfy completely. He **fills** our **hungry** souls not with temporary things which will fail, but rather with **goodness** or righteousness. Only when we understand our purpose in the Lord can we have true peace and contentment in our lives no matter what may happen to us.



"Oh, that men would give thanks
to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the
children of men!"

Psalm 107:8

Question
5

In what ways does the world seek to find purpose in their lives apart from Christ? How do you see the lack of satisfaction in their lives?

Psalm 107:10-16

THANK GOD FOR HIS RELEASE:

The second stanza depicts God rescuing His people from a dark prison cell. Today, we would equate this with solitary confinement where the inmates sit **in darkness** under the sentence **of death** with no hope of escape. Their **affliction** figuratively shackled them like **irons**. The ancients would use caves or pits as jails and would shackle the prisoners to the wall using leg or wrist **irons** such as we might think of a Medieval jail today. But why were they imprisoned? The psalmist gives the terrifying answer. The people had intentionally **rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High** ([Deut 28](#)). As a result, God humbled them with hard labor until they repented; **they fell** in exhaustion, but no one **was there to help** (v. 12). They could not overcome this condition which they had brought upon themselves by their own power. They would need help from the Lord!

Today, most of us aren't imprisoned in a literal jail cell, but some of us may be imprisoned by some type of addiction. Addictions, it doesn't matter what they may be, hold our minds and wills captive to every desire and they have the potential to even alter the chemicals



our bodies produce to create an even more severe dependence upon them. Addictions can harm our relationships. They can hinder our work. They can drain our finances. They can deprive us of sleep by monopolizing our time. In the end, they always rob us of our joy because they compete with the Lord for supremacy in our lives. Just like substance abuse, any addiction requires more and more participation in order to produce the same feeling over time. Consequently, addiction leaves us in a very dark place in life with little hope of overcoming it once we start. We have truly become enslaved to our desires and don't have the power on our own to resist temptation! Addiction can take many forms. We most often think of it as substance abuse, but it can also be lust (pornography), gambling, or cursing and even things that have positive value like sports, work, shopping, and media usage (internet, tv, and gaming).

While many secular programs may exist to help break addiction with varying

degrees of success in human terms, only one way works 100% of the time. Psalm 107 outlines that plan here. First, we must admit that we have a problem; we must acknowledge that we have willfully elevated our “addiction” above the Lord in our lives. Israel had to come to the place where they recognized they had **rebelled against** God and **despised** His **counsel!** Second, we must confess our sin and cry to God in repentance. In other words, we must recognize that only He can set us free from our addiction when we rely wholly upon Him. In verse 13, Israel does just that. The psalmist pictures how the people came to realize that only God could deliver them so they **cried out in their trouble** and **He saved them out of their distresses**. And God will do the same for us today!

Question # 6 In what way has God helped you to overcome an addiction?

If God has redeemed us, we should declare our testimonies publicly. Indeed, the psalmist has already decreed, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” We shouldn’t consider any testimony too small or insignificant to share if we’ve led a relatively decent, event-free life. At the same time, we should also share specifically how God has helped us to overcome sin and addiction in our lives. While we need not communicate every sordid detail and should use discretion when we speak, we should still need to give God the glory and praise for what He has done in our lives. In Scripture, the people shared their shortcomings for the world to see albeit under the divine inspiration of the Lord. In the same way, if the Lord compels us to share our testimony publicly, we should also not hesitate. After all, our testimony may help someone else who has a similar background and story to turn to God for help in overcoming their sin and addiction.

"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy"

Psalm 107:2

The psalmist concludes this stanza by showing how God set Israel free from a hopeless situation of disobedience and rebellion the moment they repented. God figuratively breaks them out of jail. He brings **them out of the darkness** and removes

Instruct

the sentence **of death** from them, breaking **their chains into pieces** (v. 14). To further illustrate how only God could have helped them overcome this situation, the psalmist describes how He broke down the impregnable **bronze gate** (door) and **cut the iron bars in two** (v. 16). Nothing confines the people any longer. God has set them free to find true satisfaction and contentment in serving Him in righteousness! May we praise God that He always stands ready to forgive us and restore us into right relationship with Him. May we also find our satisfaction and joy in Him so that we can have the right perspective on the way we live here on earth.

Psalm 107:17-22

THANK GOD WITH REJOICING:

The third, and final stanza of this psalm which we will study this week, describes the predicament in which Israel found herself as one of sickness. Although not every illness can be directly tied to an individual or nation's specific sin such as in the case of Job's boils ([Job 1:1, 22; 2:7](#)), God does use disease at times as punishment to correct His people. For this reason, the psalmist calls the people **fools** and notes that they **were afflicted** with sickness because of their **transgressions and iniquities** (v. 17). By definition, a fool says in his heart that there is no God and he despises wisdom and instruction from the Lord ([Psalm 14:1; 107:11; Prov 1:7](#)).

Even though someone may not literally deny the existence of God, fools still live disobediently according to their own selfish desires as if God does not really exist or somehow He doesn't have the capacity to punish them for their **transgressions**. Israel lived this way at times in the wilderness, so God sent disease and sickness to punish them. When the people reacted greedily in collecting and consuming the quail that God had graciously provided as food, for example, He struck them with disease while they still had the meat in their teeth ([Numb 11:31-35](#)). Similarly, God punished the people later by sending poisonous vipers into their camp to afflict those who spoke rebelliously against God and His servant Moses ([Numb 21:4-9](#)). God used disease not as a tyrannical form of retribution, but as a means to lead His people to restoration.

The psalmist reports that the people became so sick that they couldn't stand to eat (i.e., **abhorred food**) and they were on death's doorstep (i.e., **drew near to the gates of death**). Once again, they came to realize that only God could help them out of their situation. So, **they cried out to the Lord in their trouble** and **He saved them out of their distresses** (v. 19). According to His faithful love, God then **sent His word** and

healed them; He **delivered them from their** self-destruction (v. 20). The word healing in Hebrew has a wide range of meaning, including recovery from a physical ailment as well as spiritual restoration which we would call “salvation” in our understanding. Certainly, God **healed** the people in the wilderness from their physical peril when they cried out in repentance after the plague of vipers. God had Moses construct a bronze serpent and present it to the people. Anyone who looked upon that symbol with faith would live. Yet, God had something even greater in store than physical healing for the world; He always had a plan to save the world from the self-destruction of its sin!



In the New Testament, we see a reference to this bronze serpent in the Gospel of John where it pictures Jesus being lifted on the cross as payment for humanity’s **transgressions and iniquities** ([John 3:14](#)). Everyone who repents and puts their trust in Him will have eternal life! But the parallels don’t end with the serpent. Notice how the psalmist contends that God **sent His word and healed them**. In John, Jesus is described as the divine Word who became flesh so that He might dwell in the world ([John 1:1, 14](#))! Moreover, Jesus reveals His purpose for coming into the world to a Pharisee named Nicodemus. In perhaps the most recognized verse in Scripture, Jesus explains, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” ([John 3:16](#)). We usually quote this verse by itself, but we should also look at the next verse where Jesus contends, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” ([John 3:17](#)). In other words, we can summarize John’s argument with the psalmist’s words: God “**sent His Word and healed them.**”

What more do we have than to be thankful for God’s complete healing of our **transgressions and iniquities** through His Word—Jesus the Christ. We ought to **rejoice** ecstatically that God has saved us from our sins! In our own folly according to our own selfish desires which lead to destruction, we have no recourse but to pay the penalty of death for our sin. On our own, we sit without hope in **darkness** in that cell

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waiting for our execution just as the psalmist describes. However, thanks be to God that **He sent** His **Word** who can save us! God heard and answered our distress call by sending His Son! In faithfulness to His covenant and guided by His holiness, God provided a way that we can conquer our sin and have eternal life! Like the psalmist who tells the people to bring **the sacrifices of thanksgiving** and **declare His works with rejoicing**, we ought to break into praise for how the Lord has delivered us from our sin through Christ!

Question
7

How does the joy of Christ's salvation show in your life? How do you declare it to the world?

Inspire

In the introduction, we may have relived the nightmare of the holiday season's demand on our time as we began to think about everything we must do. Perhaps, the thought of it may have sent us into a frenzy realizing how little time we have and how much we still have left to accomplish! We get so busy during this time of year. We can become so overwhelmed that we forget to worship! We can forget to stop and give the Lord the praise and thanks He so rightly deserves. We have so many things for which we can thank the Lord—not least of which is our salvation only made possible through His Son. This Thanksgiving let each of us take time to really contemplate all the ways the Lord has blessed. Let each of us join together in worshiping the Lord, for He is holy, good, and faithful to us!

Incorporate

During your Thanksgiving celebration, how do you as an individual or family take to time express your sincere gratitude to the Lord in more than just a prayer for the meal?

What are some things for which you can praise the Lord for right now at this time in your life?

Why should you declare your praise and gratitude to the Lord publicly (i.e., let the redeemed say so)? Do you share publicly? Why or why not?

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