

Meditations on the Psalms

Volume Seven: Psalms 61-70

by Menes Abdul Noor

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1. Psalm Sixty-One

The Rock that is Higher than I

To the Chief Musician. On a stringed instrument. A psalm of David.

1 Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

3 For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy.

4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

5 For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.

6 You will prolong the king's life, his years as many generations.

7 He shall abide before God forever. oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows.

David wrote several psalms on account of Absalom's unsuccessful revolt against his him (2 Samuel 15-18, cf. the introduction to Psalm 3). Psalm 61 is one of them. He wrote it on the way back to his palace from his hiding place east of the Jordan. He describes in it his situation in those critical times, when he was unable to think and express himself. It was God's peace within him that made him sing.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: A Weary Heart's Cry (verses 1-4)
- Second: A Weary Heart's Confidence (verses 5-8)

1.1. First: A Weary Heart's Cry

(verses 1-4)

1. **The weary heart's prayer:** "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I"> (verses 1,2). David lifts up his prayer to "God", the master who has all

authority in heaven and on earth, the God of the covenant who pledged to protect and care for His people long before they called upon His name. Sometimes we focus on the problem and complain how big it is and how we cannot solve it, but from David we can learn how to turn to God, who has the solution, and say to Him, "Hear attend." He both prayed in a faint voice and shouted at the top of his voice. He was both fervent and insistent when he asked God not to keep silent till He had rescued and blessed him (Genesis 32:26). God will bear with us when we get emotional, and incline His ear toward us. We ought to thank Him for His favour and admit our wrongdoing to Him. We ought to ask Him to provide all our needs.

David was banished from his palace, place of worship and seat of rulership. He fled to the "end of the earth", to the east of the Jordan away from Jerusalem. His heart was overwhelmed by sorrow because of his removal from his God and the shock his dear son Absalom and his "loyal" friends gave him.

Despite this he knew that there was a "rock that is higher than him"> to which God will lead him. He could not lead himself, and his counsellors were too confused to suggest a suitable solution, so he turned to his God who gave him a sense of power and continuity. "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved... In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God"> (Psalm 62:2,7). When we are led to a rock that is higher than we, we become higher than our enemies, but we will need strength to be able to climb it and a guide to show us the way to do so. We will need God's eternal arms to lift us up and an inner strength which His Spirit produces within us to respond to the attracting power of those divine arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

2. **A prayer based on sweet memories:** "For You have been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy"> (verse 3). "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous shall run to it and are safe"> (Proverbs 18:10). The psalmist turned to the Lord, trusting that the One who stood by him in the past will do the same in the present and the future. "I have been young and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"> (Psalm 37:25). God was a tower of protection for David from the lion and the bear that attacked his flock, as well as from Goliath the giant, Saul's attempts on his life and Absalom's unsuccessful revolt against him.
3. **A prayer with two promises:** "I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings"> (verse 4). In this prayer he gives two promises. The first of these is to worship God always in His tabernacle: "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple"> (Psalm 27:4).

After experiencing God's love which gave him confidence and peace in his time of trouble, he promised the Lord that he would dwell worshipfully in His house always. A

worshipper is one who makes himself a servant of God and lives in obedience to Him. Worship is not just repeated words, but a life-style of service and voluntary servanthood to the Lord.

David's second promise to the Lord was to "trust in the shelter of His wings"> to feel secure like a little chick. He would take refuge in those two big wings, and there, enjoy love, warmth, stability and comfort. It is then that the promise will be fulfilled for him: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"> (John 14:27).

1.2. Second: A Weary Heart's Confidence

(verses 5-8)

1. **Confidence based on God's previous dealings:** "For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name"> (verse 5). Our confidence in the God who supported us yesterday refreshes us and makes us trust Him today and tomorrow. David put his confidence in the Lord to whom he made a vow, and the Lord regarded him and heard his request. His ancestor Jacob had also made a vow while fleeing from his brother Esau (Genesis 28:20-22) and when God confronted him (Genesis 31:13). The Lord answered Jacob's request, but 42 years went by before Jacob paid his vow to the Lord, so the Lord reminded him of it (Genesis 35:1). Here David promises the Lord not to delay the paying of his vow because the Lord himself never delayed the fulfilment of his promises. He gave the descendants of Abraham an inheritance, which was the land of Canaan, although it was impossible to obtain through their own military might. The Lord promised and fulfilled His promise. Christ also promised the disciples to fulfil all their needs, and He did. To make them aware of this fact, He asked them, "When I sent you without money bag, sack, and sandals, did you lack anything?"> So they said, "Nothing"> (Luke 22:35).

(See note on vows in the comment on Psalm 50:14).

2. **Secure confidence in the continuity of God's love:** "You will prolong the king's life, his years as many generations. He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him"> (verses 6,7). David feels secure with God's enduring love and trusts that He will make him live a long and fulfilled life. He will return to his throne after the unsuccessful revolt of his son against him, because "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand"> (Psalm 37:24). It isn't David who was meant by "his years as many generations"> because "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep"> (Acts 13:36). The reference here is to the King, Son of David, of whom it was said seven hundred years before His birth: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this"> (Isaiah 9:6,7 NIV).

David says that mercy and truth preserve him. Mercy comes first, for the Lord shows unmerited mercy upon us. Truth is God's faithfulness toward the believers and toward His promises to them. It was through His mercy that He entered in a covenant with His people, and is through His truth that He guarantees the continuity of that covenant (John 10:28-30; Romans 8:35-39).

3. **Confidence that expresses itself through singing:** "So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows"> (verse 8). David concludes his confident prayer with praise, which is a part of his vow. Whenever a man praises his heart fills with joy. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms"> (James 5:13). David started crying out in prayer and ended up expressing his confidence in the Lord through singing.

1.3. Questions

1. The psalmist prays and promises God two things - what are these two promises?
2. On what bases does the psalmist build his trust on God?

2. Psalm Sixty-Two

My Trust Is in God Alone

To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

1 Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.

3 How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.

4 They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah

5 My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.

7 In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

8 Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah

9 Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed on the scales,

they are altogether lighter than vapor.

10 Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

11 God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God.

12 Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his work.

Psalm 62 speaks of true confidence in God alone. It was sung by the choir led by the leader of singing Jeduthun the Levite. "To Jeduthun"> means to the tune that Jeduthun set. The same can be said of Psalm 39 and 77. The sons of Jeduthun were gatekeepers to the house of the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:42) but they were also the best singers. When one does his work well, he also praises and thanks God well. Those who praise well are not ashamed of doing any service to the Lord, for their motto is: "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness"> (Psalm 84:10).

In Hebrew this psalm is marked by the repetition of the word "*akh*" six times. It has been translated in this psalm in four different ways: "truly", "only", "alone" and "surely". It was used in connection to with God four times: "Truly my soul waits silently for God"> (verse 1). "He only is my rock"> (verse 2). "My soul, wait silently for God alone"> (verse 5). "He only is my rock"> (verse 6). And was used twice in connection to the enemies of the psalmist: "They only consult" (verse 4). "Surely men of low degree are a vapour"> (verse 9). David used the same word to say that he surely will overcome the difficulties and that, because of this, he will put his trust in God alone.

As Saul was chasing David to kill him, his friend Jonathan, Saul's son, came "and helped him find strength in God" (1 Samuel 23:16 NIV). Also when David's friends were angry and rose up against him, wanting to stone him, "David found strength in the LORD his God" (1 Samuel 30:6 NIV). This psalm is a poetic expression of the secure confidence in the Lord, especially in times of despair.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: True Confidence (verses 1,2)
- Second: Complaining Confidence (verses 3,4)
- Third: Teaching Confidence (verses 5-12)

2.1. First: True Confidence

(verses 1,2)

1. **Confidence waits on God:** "Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation"(verse 1). The psalmist waits upon God who fulfils His promises, as Moses

stated about Him: "Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). Joshua said of Him, "Not a word failed of any of the good things of which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:45; 23:14). Solomon said of Him, "Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to His people, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses" (1 Kings 8:56). Paul declared that "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks about God's promise and oath to His people: "That by two immutable things [the promise and the oath] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18).

While waiting for the Lord, the psalmist declares that his confidence in the coming salvation is beyond any doubt. While waiting, he also meditates quietly and reverently, repairing God's previous dealing with him. While waiting, he also rests, for anxiety leaves the person who pours out his heart before God. God has already prepared salvation, and is preparing us for it. He preserves us for the salvation about to be revealed in the end times (1 Peter 1:5). The psalmist is a son waiting for his Father with sure expectation and confidence, saying along with Christ, "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). He waits like a pupil who learns from his teacher, sitting at his feet and listening to the words of grace that issue from his mouth. The disciples did just the same: they followed Christ and learned from His words, answers, actions and reactions. He waits like a vessel in the hands of the Great Potter to be shaped and decorated (Jeremiah 18:4). He waits like a servant of God whose eyes are fixed on his Master's hand "As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us" (Psalm 123:2). The eyes are fixed on Him, knowing that He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

2. **Confidence is made sure by God:** "He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved"(verse 2). David took heart and waited for the Lord. He was reassured because he trusted in God's love for him and in His perfect timing to bless. He waited for the Lord because of His abundant wisdom, which could see what David could not. He waited for the Lord because He is powerful and able to fulfil his promises. This confidence is made clear through three attributes David ascribes to God:
 1. **A rock:** "He... is my rock."He is uplifted, faithful, unchangeable, constant, and in Him we always find protection. To Him Isaiah said, "O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things... You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the

- storm, a shade from the heat" (Isaiah 25:1,4). "He also brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps" (Psalm 40:2).
2. **A saviour:** "He only is my salvation"(verse 2a). "From Him comes my salvation" (verse 1b). He saves from sickness: "He healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16). He saves from trouble: "But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble" (Psalm 37:39). He saves from anxiety: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things" (Matthew 6:34). And, above all, He saves from sin: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He always saves: From the past through forgiveness, in the present through sanctification and in the future He will perfect the salvation of His trusting servant when He admits him into His eternal glory.
 3. **A defence:** "He is my defence."He is the only One able to defend those who take refuge with Him. He is an impregnable refuge for anyone who needs rescue and shelter from a raging sea or terrifying waves, "I shall not be greatly moved." When the salvation that the psalmist expects is fulfilled, his confidence in the Lord increases, which makes him state again, "I shall not be moved" (verse 6). After the Lord rescued David from all his enemies and from the of Saul, he said, "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour-- from violent men you save me" (2 Samuel 22:1-3 NIV).

2.2. Second: Complaining Confidence

(verses 3,4)

Every true believer is aware of the fact that he lives in an antagonistic world. The closer he walks with God the fiercer becomes the evil one's opposition to him. The devil will not be pleased when he loses his followers to the Kingdom of God. Therefore our lives are never empty from troubles and difficulties: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Christ warned, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19). Nevertheless, in the midst of all these troubles God still shows us His love for us clearly. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). For this reason the psalmist lifts his complaint up to God, being confident that He would be answered. David's complaint had to do with:

1. **The continuity and abundance of troubles:**He wonders: "How long will you attack a

man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence" (verse 3). They attacked him violently, but cowardly, because they were many and he was just one! They thought he was weak and wobbly like a tumbling wall- just one push and he would fall! They had already attacked and failed, but they rallied themselves again and did not give up. In a similar way the devil attacked Christ and failed: "Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). So let us always be prepared for the attack of the evil one against us and not wait for him to surprise us.

2. **An evil, hypocritical plot to remove him from his high morals:** "They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly"(verse 4). Great are the temptations that come after gaining victory over sin and getting saved. We must never trust the defeated enemy, but let us always put on God's perfect armour, let us shield ourselves with it, because the devil will always surprise us with a new assault and in great numbers (Ephesians 6:13). "They consult" against a single man "to cast him down from his high position." Yet, one man together with the Lord is mighty, and established in truth and righteousness. "They delight in lies" to make the believer doubt the efficacy of his faith, to talk him into believing in the impossibility of his victory. The devil is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). On the contrary, let us hear this divine wisdom: "My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from the path" (Proverbs 1:15).

2.3. Third: Teaching Confidence

(verses 5-12)

After expressing his confidence in the Lord and lifting up his complaint to Him, David started to advise himself, his followers and his enemies once more:

1. **The psalmist who trusts the Lord teaches his soul (verses 5-7):**
 1. **He teaches it to wait on the Lord:** "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be moved"(verses 5,6). David had already revealed this truth in verses 1 and 2. He repeats it here for himself. He exhorts himself to wait on God because he started to get restless from waiting. Again he began to encourage himself to wait and be patient a little bit more, because the light of dawn must shine no matter how long the night seems! He says to his soul, "My hope comes from him" (NIV). He lives in hope, therefore he is no longer moved *greatly*. He has become more secure. It is clear to all who wait on the Lord that the future of the believer is far better than his past, and his tomorrow better than his today. In that attitude he trusts that no matter how the winds and the rains bring troubles, the Lord will give him his share of protection, glory and salvation. "When my soul fainted within me, I repaired the Lord; and my

prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple" (Jonah 2:7). Let each one of us say to his soul, "My soul, do not give up, neither doubt God's love. Hold your ground and continue waiting for the Lord. Draw your hope from Him" "in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:12 NIV).

2. **He teaches it to take refuge in God:** "In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge, is in God"(verse 7). The psalmist encourages his soul with God's great qualities and teaches it that the One who has such qualities must be trustworthy. He is salvation, glory, the rock of strength and the safe shelter. He is our Saviour, our object of boast and glory. Since our salvation is in and from God, glory and honour must also be from and to Him. God perfects the believer's salvation through the glory that is revealed in him. So let us always take shelter in Him.

2. The psalmist who trusts God teaches his followers (verse 8):

1. **To always depend on God:** "Trust in Him at all times, you people"(verse 8a). He wants them to experience what he experienced and to get the reassurance he got. He advises them not to fear, but rather to entirely rely on the Lord, at the times of comfort as well as of discomfort. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3,4).
2. **To pray and be open to God:** "Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us"(verse 8 b). In His presence they empty their hearts of all anxiety, and at His throne of grace they pour out their hearts and express their fears. When He delivers them from all their fears, they do not keep anything hidden from Him, rather they get announce all. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). King Hezekiah indeed did the same as he took the letters of Rabshakeh, the Assyrian commander, as full of mockery and derision as they were, and set them before God. Thus he found refuge, shelter and rescue (Isaiah 37:14).

3. The psalmist who trusts God teaches his enemies (verses 9-12):

1. **That men, both high and low, are but vapour and dust:** "Surely men of low degree are a vapour, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapour"(verse 9). Adam was created of dust, and his name (earthly) even indicates that, for earth is called "*adamah*". Adam's second son's name was "Abel" which means vapour of vanity. He must die, and dust must return to the dust from which it was taken. Man is here today but tomorrow no one will find him. "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it" (Isaiah 40:6,7). "If they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapour," which should teach us not to trust in them. "Thus says the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord...

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:5,7). "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish" (Psalm 146:3,4). Human beings are all as useless as vapour, they neither help nor harm, and no hope is found in them. Likewise, nothing about them should frighten us, regardless how much harm we think they can do.

2. **That riches are not everything:** "Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them"(verse 10a). Man might think that he rises in status when he oppresses someone else, but oppression must bring destruction to its originator. It is unfair for a man to rob someone else of his honour and rights, neither will it profit the robber "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). "He who gets riches, but not by right; it will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool" (Jeremiah 17:11). This was James' advice to the rich who got their riches through unlawful ways: "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you... Indeed the wages of your labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (James 5:1-4).

"If riches increase, do not set your heart on them"(verse 10b). Man may think that he got his own riches by his own cunning, that his health and cunning will last for ever and that circumstances will always be in his favour. Yet, nothing on earth lasts for ever. The psalmist says to him who robs and to him who relies on his riches, "God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living. The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness" (Psalm 52:5-7).

3. **That power belongs to God:** "God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God"(verse 11). The words of the Lord hit the ears of the psalmist so hard that they echoed deep down in his heart, for "he who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9). What a world of difference between the psalmist who can hear and discern the voice of God (John 10:4) and the sinner, whom Elihu puts in total contrast "For God may speak in one way, or another, yet man does not perceive it" (Job 33:14).

God's word is one- it is effective and authoritative, therefore He does not repeat it in vain. Yet, this one word is repeated twice in the ears of the psalmist: When God created him and when He cares for him, when He gave him the new birth and when He granted him victory over sin, when He gave the first step of salvation through forgiveness as soon as he repented and when He gives the second step of salvation

through sanctification. This second step will last a lifetime.

We perceive God's strength and power twice: In the love displayed on the cross and in the power of resurrection. No man dares lay down his life on our behalf. "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7,8 NIV). This is the power of self-giving love. There is still the power of the triumphant resurrection, for death could not hold Christ, rather He conquered death and the grave and rose again. He "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV). We perceive God's power twice: In that He adds to the Church every day those who get saved (Acts 2:47). He did this in the first century and He still does it today with those He brings back to Himself. His power is manifested also in the continuity of the Church despite all adverse circumstances that would crush it, but the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Isaiah 54:17; Matthew 6:18).

How many sinners do not hear God's voice or see his power! They defy the divine will and resent surrendering to it. They do not call on God, and try to manage their own affair themselves. Indeed "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 12:15). And how many sinners are torn by anxiety because they have given up all hope in God's mercy, and, through their unbelief, set up a barrier between themselves and their God.

4. **That God is merciful and just:** "Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his work"(verse 12). God recompenses the righteous with His mercy and punishes the wicked with His justice, giving to all what they deserve. Solomon said to Him at the time of inaugurating the temple, "Act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence" (1 Kings 8:32 NIV). It is out of God's mercy that He does not punish a person until He has given him the chance to repent, therefore Paul says to those who do not repent, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done.' ...for those who follow evil, there will be wrath and anger ...but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good" (Romans 2:4-10).

Those who do good works, however, will have their reward from God according to His mercy, because they only do what is required of them regardless how much good they do. They give back only a little what He has already given them. The money

they give Him is His gift. The effort they exert has been provided by Him! Only His mercy recompenses the good person for his good works.

May God grant us to depend on Him alone, because He alone is trustworthy. He is the Almighty, the Merciful and the Just. He deserves to have said about Him: "Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation."

2.4. Questions

1. 1 - David rests relaxed in God for three reasons. Mention them.
2. 2 - David taught his followers two lessons. Mention them.

3. Psalm Sixty-Three

My Soul Thirsts for You

A psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.

4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.

6 When I repara You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.

7 Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

9 But those who seek my life, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

10 They shall fall by the sword; they shall be a por-tion for jackals.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone who swears by Him shall glory; but the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

David wrote Psalm 63 when he was in the wilderness of Judah, geographically removed from the house of the Lord. In it he expresses his extreme longing for attending the worship in the house of the Lord, where he could see the divine presence and find spiritual power. He loves the Lord so much, fellowships and communicates with Him. He had so many spiritual experiences when he was a fugitive in the wilderness of Judah, in whose caves he often hid

himself from Saul and once from his son Absalom. A Jew's worship always had to do with offering a sacrifice in the tabernacle or temple of the Lord, just as Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet, did (1 Samuel 1). David's worship, however, was not confined to ceremonies, but involved a personal and deep relationship with God. He was a friend and a lover of the Lord. As he was running away from his son Absalom, Zadok the priest and the Levites with him brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to where David was. Yet David said to the priest, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show both it and His habitation" (2 Samuel 15:25).

In the wilderness of Judah David was in a "mental wilderness" and a "spiritual thirst" for God. In his geographical removal from the house of the Lord he expressed his longing for Him by writing this psalm. John Chrysostom said of this psalm, "this psalm must be read every morning because it is a medicine that wipes out sin, ignites the heat of longing for God inside us, kindles the fire of worship to Him. Then our lives will overflow with goodness and love and we will be equipped for approaching God and being found in His presence."

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The Believer's Longing for the Lord (verses 1-4)
- Second: The Believer's Satisfaction with the Lord (verses 5-7)
- Third: The Believer's Covenant with the Lord (verses 8-11)

3.1. First: The Believer's Longing for the Lord

(verses 1-4)

1. Seven reasons why the psalmist longs for the Lord:

1. **Because He is his God (verse 1a):**The psalmist belonged to the Lord and could find no rest away from Him. Augustine said, "God, You created us for Yourself, therefore our souls will not find rest until they rest in You." He is the strong God to whom we turn with confidence at the time of crisis.
2. **Because He has the first priority in his life:** "Early will I seek You"(verse 1b). God is first and foremost in the life of the psalmist. He begins his day talking with Him because he loves Him with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. It was said of Christ that "Early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him" (Luke 21:38). The prophet said, "With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early" (Isaiah 26:9).
3. **Because he is thirsty for Him:** "My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You"(verse 1c). He was satisfied with the Lord, yet his soul was still thirsty for Him. A spiritual meal does not leave in no need for the next spiritual meal, much the same way as a physical meal does not leave in no need for the next. A believer who tastes

of the Lord's sweetness seeks to taste and be filled with more of it. The closer he walks with Him and lives in His presence the more he discovers that he cannot go far away from Him, but rather enjoy him more. A certain saint said, "we are often in error when we try to feed the dead, because those who are dead in transgressions and sins do not thirst or hunger for the word of God. A spiritually living man, however, thirsts and hungers for the heavenlies!" A spiritually living man will say, "My soul longs, yes, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2).

4. **Because the world does not quench his thirst:** "In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water"(verse 1d). Knowledge satisfies the mind and food satisfies the body, but they cannot satisfy the spirit that remains thirsty and hungry for God. He is the only One who can satisfy the soul. God is as "rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2).
5. **Because He is the God of holiness:** "As I have looked for You in Your sanctuary"(verse 2a). Sanctuary (*ha-kodesh*) can also mean holiness. God's holiness captivated David as it did Isaiah when he heard the seraphim shouting: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of hi glory!" And at that he exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3,5). In his realisation of his sins, David longed for a touch from the holy God in His holy house, to cleanse his life and purify his heart.
6. **Because He is the God of power and glory:** "To see Your power and Your glory"(verse 2b). The psalmist is weak in himself, unable to meet the requirements of life which presses him more than he can bear. He definitely needs God's power and glory. The ark of the Lord was a symbol of the Lord's presence amongst His people in His power and glory. But at that time he was distant from the ark of the covenant and wanted to return back to it to feel the presence of the God of power and glory.

We, believers, today realise that being deprived of the presence of believers around you does not mean that God is not present with you. The prophet Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon at the River Chebar. Nevertheless, he enjoyed God's gentle hand on him and was able to see the visions of the Lord (Ezekiel 1). John, too, was banished to the island of Patmos for the witness of Christ, but he was in the Spirit and saw the visions of the Spirit (Revelation 1).

7. **Because He is the God of mercy:** "Because Your lovingkindness is better than life"(verse 3a). The psalmist wanted to behold God's power and glory in his holy temple, but it was the divine mercy (lovingkindness) that gave him life. When Moses requested to see God's glory, God showed him His goodness (Exodus 33:18-20).

God's mercy is better than life, which is the dearest thing a man can possess. Without

it life is a mere desert, a certain death! The psalmist's life was under threat, but the threat vanished as soon as God showed him mercy.

2. The way longing for God is expressed:

1. **With thankful singing:** "My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live"(verses 3b,4a). He expressed his longing for the Lord through praise. His lips praise and his life also praises out of gratitude for the good, powerful, glorious, holy and merciful God. "Thus", on account of Your mercy I bless You, extol You and sing to You as long as I live. Every time we recall God's benefits we bless Him with all that is within us (Psalm 103:1,2). His mercies upon us never end; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23). Therefore, we sing to God with endless praise, and every morning.
2. **With prayer:** "I will lift up my hands in Your name"(verse 4b). We lift up our hands for prayer in the name of the Lord, who reveals Himself to us and says, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). Our response to this is: "Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place" (Psalm 28:2 NIV). In like manner King Solomon spread out his hands as he offered up to God a prayer at the inauguration of the temple, saying, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts" (1 Kings 8:23). "I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," Paul exhorted (1 Timothy 2:8). In prayer we spread and lift up our hands, a symbol of our prayerful hearts which are lifted up before the throne of the Lord: "To You, O God, I will lift up my soul" (Psalm 25:1). Lifting up hands shows watchfulness and concentration in prayer, as well as focusing on the Lord who speaks to the person.

3.2. Second: The Believer's Satisfaction with the Lord

(verses 5-7)

1. **The reason for satisfaction:** "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness"(verse 5a). He acknowledged that God satisfied his heart. David did not mean literal marrow and fatness, for he said, "as with marrow and fatness." He meant that God satisfied him with the heavenlies and the spiritual, and that the Lord has.

The expression "marrow and fatness" has two meanings:

1. **Lasting riches and fattiness:**The marrow was the most expensive part of a sacrifice because it was the most satisfying part for man. Similarly, God's gift is the best, for it offers lasting satisfaction. Right after writing the Torah Moses sang a song in which he described God's blessings to His people. He said that God gave them "curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, with fat of lamb" (Deuteronomy 32:14). Isaiah said

- that marrow and fatness were God's banquet for His people "The Lord of hosts will make a feast of fat things full of marrow" (Isaiah 25:6). The Lord Himself said, "I will satiate the soul of the priest with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness" (Jeremiah 31:14).
2. **Man is satiated with the divine things:**The Mosaic law commanded all of the marrow of a sacrifice to be given to God: "All the fat is the Lord's. This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all Your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood" (Leviticus 3:16,17). The psalmist describes the divine fulfilment in these words: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him" (Psalm 34:8). "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). "They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures" (Psalm 36:8). We are always guests of the King, who prepares a table for us and makes our cup overflow (Psalm 23).
2. **The result of satisfaction:** "And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I repara You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice"(verses 5b-7). When the psalmist's soul was filled to capacity with divine things his lips overflowed with praise. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). He praises "when I repara You." Every time the psalmist feels sleepless he meditates on the mercies of the Lord and recalls them with thankfulness. And as he ponders and praises day and night his soul becomes more and more reassured. Both his conscious and unconscious mind do not cease to meditate on God's providence in the past, which makes him repara the Lord with joy. He, then, begins to thank the Lord because He was his help, and to rejoice in the shadow of His wings. At this moment the psalmist must have been thinking of a great eagle with strong, big wings spread over its little ones for protection. Moses described such an eagle as follows: "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him" (Deuteronomy 32:11,12 NIV). Or perhaps he was thinking of the wings of a tender-hearted hen "As a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37 NIV).

3.3. Third: The Believer's Covenant with the Lord (verses 8-11)

As a result of having all his longings met in the Lord, the psalmist decided to renew his covenant of following the Lord closely. Afterwards he mentioned the result of fulfilling the requirements of this covenant:

1. **The subject of the covenant:** "My soul follows close behind You"(verse 8a). The psalmist fulfilled the commandment: "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast" (Deuteronomy 10:20). His relationship with the Lord was deep and constant, just as that of a man who leaves his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). The psalmist clung to the Lord, just as Ruth did Naomi when she said, "Wherever you lodge, I will lodge" (Ruth 1:16) and as the branch clings to the vine to receive the sap and yield fruit. David's soul clung to the Lord without any hindrance that could prevent the blessing from coming to him. The Lord was his chief and leader, and he became submissive and obedient. Just the body cannot be separated from the head David was joined to the Lord and abided in Him. So the Lord abided in David and was joined to him. The love of Christ will never be separated from you as long as you say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35).
2. **The result of the covenant (verses 8b-11):**The psalmist mentioned two results of his commitment to his covenant with the Lord:
 1. **The exaltation of the believer:** "Your right hand upholds me, but those who seek my life, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for the jackals"(verses 8b-10). The Lord says to the psalmist, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am Your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). The Lord will destroy the psalmist's enemies; they will go down to the lower parts of the earth, die and be buried. Perhaps the psalmist recalled what happened to the dwelling places of the children of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who rejected Moses' leadership and attempted a revolt against him. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, and they went down alive into the Pit (Numbers 16:25-32). God's warning was made good: "I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who seek their lives, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 19:7 NIV). In the same way Saul fell on his sword, and "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52 NIV).
 2. **The joy of the believer:** "But the king shall rejoice in God; every one who swears by Him shall glory; but the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped"(verse 11). King David expressed his longing for the house of the Lord, and covenanted with God to follow close behind Him, therefore he experienced genuine joy. Likewise everyone who enters in the Lord's covenant glories in the Lord and his heart fills with joy. David has sown in tears, and he must reap in joy (Psalm 126:5). "He who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten" (Isaiah 65:16). "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him, and all the upright

in heart shall glory" (Psalm 64:10). The enemies of the psalmist, however, who speak lies, their mouth shall be stopped by God "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).

The psalmist's soul thirsted for God, and God quenched his thirst in His person. Consequently, the psalmist's heart rejoiced in the Lord, and he gloried in Him. Now, do you yourself long for the Lord, so that He should gladden you with Himself?

3.4. Questions

1. The psalmist mentions seven reasons for thirsting to God. Write them.
2. What is the meaning of "marrow and fatness"?

4. Psalm Sixty-Four

A Complaint to Divine Justice

To the Chief Musician. A psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,

3 Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows -- bitter words,

4 That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.

5 They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they talk of laying snares secretly; they say, "Who will see them?"

6 They devise iniquities: "We have perfected a shrewd scheme." Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep.

7 But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded.

8 So He will make them stumble over their own tongue; all who see them shall flee away.

9 All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider His doing.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.

Psalm 64 is a complaint to divine justice. We all must have gone through this experience, whether our complaint was about God to God, about friends whom we expected to help us but didn't, about friends who hurt us or enemies who came against us. We may even complain about ourselves to God because we were not up to the spiritual level we expected ourselves to be, and were therefore disappointed!

We thank God, however, because He is our refuge in all cases. This is exactly what the

psalmist found out, for he lived a life of beautiful fellowship with God and continual communion with Him. He believed that God was with him in all circumstances. The Spirit-born believer is marked by the fact that his eyes always turn to God, since He is faithful to deliver. As a result of the psalmist's previous experiences he was sure that the Lord is the one and only deliverer, so he learned to knock at His door before doing anything else. Then, through the Lord, he can tap into other sources of help, according to the commandment: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). His mind got renewed and he began to turn his gaze immediately from the problem to God.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The Enemy's Plot (verses 1-6)
- Second: God's Justice (verses 7-10)

4.1. First: The Enemy's Plot

(verses 1-6)

The psalmist sings his song so that God would save him from the cunning of his plotting and devious enemies who insist on getting him. He trusts that God will surely intervene on his behalf.

1. He complains of the enemy's plots (verses 1,2):

1. **He complains of his own inability:** "Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint"(verse 1a NIV). This is a cry of a man who is unable to face the situation and request a speedy help.
2. **He complains about his fear:** "Preserve my life from fear of the enemy"(verse 1b). He is not imagining a problem, but he is living through one! He does not underestimate the enemy, the son of Satan, who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whomever to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Nevertheless, he knows the value of the divine help he has in the Lord who is able to preserve his life and redress the injustice done against him.
3. **He complains about the wicked:** "Hide me from the counsel of the wicked"(verse 2b). The wicked have a perverse behaviour. They plan perverse things and move on to attack him. Nothing will protect him from their secret ruses and devices but the divine hiding place, for "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). God hides and conceals the psalmist so that his enemies won't find him. This was also the experience of Jeremiah and Baruch the scribe, whom the Lord hid from the wickedness of King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:26).
4. **He complains of the worker of iniquity:** "From the insurrection of the workers of

iniquity"(verse 2b). The workers of iniquity overstep God's boundaries and do not set the fear of God before their eyes. David's enemies were cunning, practised in iniquity and experts in devising intrigues. David's eyes, however, were fixed on heaven, and his heart was with the Lord.

2. He complains of the words of the enemy (verse 3):

They wielded the weapon of words against the psalmist to shake his trust in the power of prayer:

1. **Words like a sword:** "Who sharpen their tongue like a sword"(verse 3a). Their words are like a sharpened deadly sword. Often the wound caused by words is deeper than that caused by a sword. The psalmist describes the tongue that slaughters with honeyed words as "smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords" (Psalm 55:21). He also describes the tongue that attacks and slaughters relentlessly: "I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts-- men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords" (Psalm 57:4 NIV).
2. **Their words are like an arrow:** "And bend their bows to shoot their arrows-bitter words"(verse 3b). An Arab poet said:

The wounds of the swords will heal,
But those of the tongue never will!

"But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness"(James 3:8,9 NIV). Wounded by words, the believer turns to the divine help, knowing that "if you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

3. He complains about the traps of the enemy (verses 4,5):

1. **They came together against him:** "That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; suddenly they shot at him and do not fear"(verse 4). "The bloodthirsty hate the blameless" (Proverbs 29:10). They are not courageous enough to face him, so they sneak up in secret. They come suddenly and unexpectedly in order to get what they want. They neither fear God nor respect man, so they plot together and encourage each other against the psalmist.
2. **They speak against him:** "They talk of laying snares secretly; they say, Who will see them?"(verse 5). Their words are like hidden traps that would ensnare the psalmist. They think no one will see them, as though divine justice will not do justice to the oppressed. They forget that one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still (Ecclesiastes 5:8). "Woe to those who seek deep to hide their

counsel far from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; they say, Who sees us? and, Who knows us?" (Isaiah 29:15).

4. He complains about the schemes of the enemy (verse 6):

1. **A shrewd scheme:** "They devise iniquities: We have perfected a shrewd scheme."(verse 6a). With every new day the wicked devise a snare more powerful than the day before. They use a perfect, secret counsel to block every way of escape before the psalmist.
2. **Deep cunning:** "Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep"(verse 6b). Man's cunning is deep: "Every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands" (Micah 7:2-3). But God knows the secrets of the hearts "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9,10).

The psalmist got weary and sought rescue. Satan taught the enemies how to devise their schemes, but the psalmist asks the Holy Spirit to teach new gifts to be able to face his enemies and conquer them.

4.2. Second: God's Justice

(verses 7-10)

1. **God's justice punishes the wicked:** "But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded"(verse 7). The wicked shoot their arrow in secret (verse 4). But the arrow of the Lord is clear, quick and hits suddenly. The arrow that is aimed at the believer must rebound on his enemies. God's arrows, however, are quicker and more powerful. The only thing we can say about them is, "You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your string toward their faces" (Psalm 21:12). "Vengeance is mine, and recompense" (Deuteronomy 32:35,36; Romans 12:19).

As Rabshakeh came at the head of the great army of Assyria to attack the children of Israel, he mocked King Hezekiah and wrote him this letter: "Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." Hezekiah took the letters of Rabshakeh to the temple and prayed, "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God." Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp, and the rest of the army returned to where they came from. (Isaiah 37 NIV).

2. **The wicked hurt themselves:** "He will turn their own tongues against them and bring

them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn"(verse 8 NIV). The sharpened, judging sword of words must return back against those who used it for harm. It judges itself and turns back on its owners. Those around them, however, will shake their heads in scorn and wonder at what befell the enemies of the psalmist who seemed to have the upper hand. The wicked were active and strong, but they vanished suddenly!

3. **God's justice teaches mankind:** "All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider His doing"(verse 9). Men realise that God's power does what is best for those who believe in Him. They consider His divine work as they see God's hand working to deliver the believer and destroy the wicked. Wickedness may seem prosperous for a season, but sure enough it will fall down on the heads of those who practice it. Believers may live as a minority under the big, outward pressures but the good God works among them, through them and for them with all power and authority. God said through Hosea, "Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them" (Hosea 14:9).
4. **God's justice makes the righteous glad:** "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory"(verse 10). The psalmist began the psalm with complaint and fear and ended it with the joy of justification which God grants the believer making him righteous. He is glad because he experienced the divine goodness and justice and was delivered by God.

This is the experience of the Church collectively and individually. Every believer lives the story of this psalm at all times. Let us, therefore, live joyfully in the Lord who made us righteous. Let us trust Him more, so that the wicked may be ashamed and all believers take heart and rejoice.

4.3. Questions

1. Why is the psalmist afraid?
2. What is the cure of his fears?

5. Psalm Sixty-Five

A Song of Praise for the Harvest

To the Chief Musician. A psalm of David. A Song.

1 Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed.

2 O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them.

4 Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple.

5 By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of the far-off seas;

6 Who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power;

7 You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.

8 They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice.

9 You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so You have prepared it.

10 You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth.

11 You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance.

12 They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing.

Psalm 65 was written to be sung at the harvest feast, or the feast of firstfruits. The children of Israel observed it according to the Lord's commandment: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf" (Leviticus 23:9-14). They held a special celebration at the feast of firstfruits during which they sang this psalm together to worship and give thanks. They offered the Lord the firstfruits of their harvest to acknowledge his favour upon them. We Christians read this psalm at the end of every year, offering thanksgiving to God for His blessings that He bestowed upon us throughout the previous year.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Believers Praise God (verses 1-5)
- Second: Nature Praises God (verses 6-8)
- Third: The Harvesters Praise God (verses 9-13)

5.1. First: Believers Praise God

(verses 1-5)

It befits believers to meet in the house of the Lord to lift up grateful praises to the One Who

hears the prayers of all His creation. True, their sins separate them from Him, but He provides atonement for them in order for them to find the greatest happiness in His house and presence.

1. **Believers praise Him who hears prayer:** "Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed. O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come"(verses 1,2). Believers praise the Lord and perform their vows to Him because He gave them what they wanted. They acknowledge their gratitude in public "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before those who fear Him" (Psalm 22:25). (See comment on vows in Psalm 50:14.)

John Calvin said that God ceases to hear prayer only when He ceases to be God! He hears prayer because He is able to take notice of the requests of those who pray to Him and accomplish all that is for their best. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14,15 NIV). Accordingly we ought to pray always and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). Let us ask in order to receive and seek in order to find and knock in order for the door to be opened to us (Matthew 7:7). He both hears and gives to all men. People are divided into two groups: children receiving from their heavenly Father, and beggars beseeching their gracious master. But the gracious master wants to promote our status from beggars to sons. He graciously adopts all those who accept Christ as Saviour and put their trust in His redemption (John 1:12). They say to each other, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). They are no longer slaves, but sons and heirs (Romans 8:17). And it is because of sonship that we come to Him in times of need as well as in times of plenty. We express our love to Him, tell Him of our longings and pour out our souls before him, saying, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:2). Thus we draw closer to Him at all times, so that our souls might be satisfied with the fruit of his love and peace and enjoy His fellowship that refreshes the soul.

2. **Believers praise Him who forgives them:** "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them"(verse 3). Iniquity is any crooked behaviour. He attributes these iniquities to himself and to his people when he says, "You will provide atonement for them." Transgressions contradict and oppose the divine will. In using both the singular and the plural, one sees that a worshipper must confess his sin as an individual as well as the sins of the congregation. We stand before God both as individuals and as a group; each one of us confessing for himself and admitting the shortcomings of all believers. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth to be a propitiation" (Romans 3:23-25). The Mosaic Law commanded both individual and collective confession. On the great day of atonement the high priest used

to go into the Holy of Holies, first with blood for himself, and the Lord would accept his repentance, then with blood on behalf of all the people so that the Lord would forgive them all (Leviticus 16). Nehemiah did the same when he said, "Both my father's house and I have sinned" (Nehemiah 1:6). Daniel, too, prayed and confessed his own sin and that of his people (Daniel 9:20).

Iniquities and transgressions are the enemies that we cannot overcome on our own, for they "prevailed against us". No one, however righteous, can provide atonement for himself. Let us all turn to the Lord and implore Him, saying, "Forgive us our sins and atone for our transgressions." After confessing our sins and repenting, God provides atonement for us and our sins no longer stand against us in His presence. It is noteworthy that forgiveness and atonement go together. Thus the New Testament teaches us that the redeeming sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbols for Christ's perfect sacrifice, Who is "the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)? It is He Who washed us clean from our sins by His great sacrifice and made us kings and priests for God His father (Revelation 1:5,6). Through His atonement Christ pays our debts: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5 NIV). Through His cross He fulfilled the demands of divine justice as well as demonstrating God's mercy in the clearest way. Through His atonement "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).

- 3. Believers praise Him whom they worship:** "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts"(verse 4a). The Lord chose the tribe of Levi and the descendants of Aaron to serve His house, but also designed all the children of Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). In doing so He made them His guests and filled them with His grace, as well as considering them His own household. He gave them the responsibility of delivering the message of His love and goodness to their neighbours. Yet they were reluctant to do that and kept it all to themselves. Consequently, God gave this privilege to everyone who would accept Christ as Saviour and Redeemer. Blessed is the man whom God chooses to dwell in His courts because "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). Such a person is secure. His alienation from God has ended and he can now settle down and rest. Such a person can be described by this statement: "And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for habitation. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful things to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:7,8). He who dwells in the courts of the Lord worships Him in the adornment of holiness (Psalm 93:5). He hears His word that cleanses the heart (John 15:3), enjoys an intimate relationship with God and receives the fulfilment of Christ's statement: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves me will be loved by My father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My

Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:21,23).

The greatest blessing, however, is that "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple" (verse 4b). In the Lord's holy temple the soul becomes satisfied: "The desire of our soul is for You" (Isaiah 26:8). "They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house" (Psalm 36:8). It is not by bread alone that man lives, but by having his spirit satisfied with the word of the Lord. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).

- 4. Believers praise the One who is in full authority:** "By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation"(verse 5a). We fear and reverence God. His loving care strikes us with awe as we see Him answering us with remarkable concern. Examples of this care were manifested in the miracles that happened with the children of Israel. Here are a few: the Exodus, the pillar of fire, the pillar of smoke, the division of the Red Sea, the water that gushed forth from the rock, the skies that rained manna every morning and the clothes and the sandals that never wore out in the span of forty years. Seeing the punishment God inflicted upon them and the blessings God bestowed on the Israelites, the Egyptians were struck with awe. These are the "awesome deeds in righteousness". God strikes the enemy with awe and dread because He is righteous and just, and saves His own because He is merciful.

Today we can experience both God's justice (righteousness) and mercy, for He pays everyone according to his own works. He forgives the wrongs of those who confess their sins and take shelter in Christ's atonement. So let us walk in obedience to God, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:12,13 NIV).

- 5. Believers praise the God of the whole universe:** "You Who are the confidence of the ends of the earth, and of the far-off seas"(verse 5b). Even if they did not know or worship Him, they still rely on the light of His sun and the generosity of His rain. Here the psalmist goes beyond the local thought of the Israelites to speak of God, the God of the entire universe. He sees Him as the God of all beings, the confidence of all mankind and the One Who hears the cry of all people. "All the ends of the earth shall repara and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You" (Psalm 22:27,28). The Lord does good to all people with genuine love, and he does not reproach. "These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season... You open Your hands, they filled with good" (Psalm 104:27,28). Paul said to the idolatrous people of Athens, "Therefore, the One Whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, Who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth... He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:22-25).

5.2. Second: Nature Praises God

(verses 6-8)

God created the cosmos and He holds it under His control. He controls and sustains all the forces of nature. Nehemiah said to Him, "You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You" (Nehemiah 9:6).

1. **Nature praises God who establishes it:** "Who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power"(verse 6). He is a Creator Who does not forget about His creation. He created it and cares for it; planets go around in their orbits, stars revolve in exactly the same location and mountains remain unmoved in their places. "Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides" (Psalm 119:90). Therefore they were called "the perpetual hills" (Habakkuk 3:6). Christ said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). Truly, God's work in the creation of the world ended, but He still rules the universe. Let us, therefore, cry out, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Revelation 4:11).
2. **Nature praises Him who stills its noise:** "You Who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people"(verse 7). The Lord said, "I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it" (Jeremiah 5:22 NIV). It is the Lord Who "rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He led them through the depth, and through the wilderness. He saved them from the hand of them who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy" (Psalm 106:9,10). It is the Lord also Who silences the storm. Storms rage and the waves rise up, so the Lord silences the storm to make the waves calm down. Christ did just the same, for He had authority over nature (Matthew 8:26,27). Describing God's authority over the nations that rose against His people like raging seas, Isaiah said, "Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us" (Isaiah 17:12-14).

When the waves of the sea roar, trouble comes and the nations get confused. Sometimes nations rise against God's people and we wonder, "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing?" (Psalm 2:1). God stills the roaring and the tumult in such a way that nature praises the Lord Who stills its noise, and the believers join in!

- 3. Nature praises the Lord who uses it to teach mankind:** "They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoing of the morning and evening rejoice"(verse 8). When men ponder God's work in nature, they see that "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4 NIV). God makes His sun rise, making the dawn rejoice in the beginning of a new day. As the sun goes down, then comes the dusk of the evening, making the people rejoice because God has crowned the work of the day with success. He gave His labouring servants rest after a long day's work.

In the same way God crowns the beginning of a repentant sinner's life as a believer with forgiveness, making the dawn of his life rejoice. At the end of his life, too, God gives him the crown of life, so that he ends his days rejoicing: "The righteous shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43).

5.3. Third: The Harvesters Praise God

(verses 9-13)

The psalmist's aim in writing Psalm 65 was to thank God for the abundant harvest He gave to His people on a specific occasion. Ample rain watered the land, making it yield its heart-gladdening fruits. The meadows turned green and sheep increased, and the harvesters burst into spontaneous praise.

- 1. The harvesters praise Him who waters the land:** "You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so have You prepared it. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth"(verses 9,10). God sends early rain at the beginning of winter to prepare the ground for the seeds, as well as the latter rain at the end of winter to prepare the crop for harvest. Harvesters cannot reap an abundant crop unless God sends rain at the right time and in suitable quantities. The Lord has storehouses of water (Deuteronomy 11:11; Job 38:25-28). This is how He provided their grain: He prepared the ground for the seeds through early showers of rain, watered its ridges and prepared its furrows. He also settled its soil to make it easy for the roots to go down. The farmer does his job of tilling the land and sowing the seeds, but the seeds will not germinate unless God does His job, for "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, Who makes things grow" (1 Corinthians 3:7). "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater" (Isaiah 55:10 NIV). Moreover, the harvesters cannot reap any harvest unless the ground embraces the seeds, producing first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head (Mark 4:28).

Believers also rejoice in the living water with which Christ revives the souls of those who love Him. Christ says to them, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Christ satisfies the souls of those who love Him according to His promise: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

2. **The harvesters praise Him who gives growth to the plants:** "You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side"(verses 11,12). The fields yielded their fruits and the people reaped a good harvest. God has crowned the year with His goodness, for the crown of the year is the reaping of the harvest. God's gifts manifested themselves so evidently in the trails of carts laden with plenteous crops and in what overflowed from every side of the carts. The carts were loaded to capacity with such a blessing that they just dripped with abundance. This figure of speech means that God gave a greater blessing than they asked or thought. He showered them with more than just their needs, because He gives liberally and richly. Grass increased in the pastures and there was enough feed for the flocks, therefore the little hills rejoiced on every side. This figure means that the hills tied their waist with a belt to dance for joy. "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12 NIV).
3. **Harvesters praise the shepherd of sheep and men:** "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing"(verse 13). The number of sheep increased so that the pastures were covered with them. They looked like they were clothed with sheep! The land received its share of water and yielded grass and grain, which germinated and covered the valleys like a garment. "He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat" (Psalm 147:14). With the swaying of plentiful vegetation in the mild winds, it seemed that the valleys were swaying too, suggesting to whoever saw them that they were dancing. Crops covered every part of the valley, so the valleys shouted aloud and sang a song of thanksgiving and praise to God for the blessing given them by His loving care.

So let us praise God our Shepherd Who looks for the one lost sheep until He finds it, and when He finds it He carries it on His shoulders and celebrates its deliverance and safe homecoming. Let us praise God our Shepherd, with Whom we lack nothing (Psalm 23:1). Let us praise Him Who sets the poor on high, far from affliction (Psalm 107:41). Let us sing this psalm because God always hears and forgives. He gives us another chance to repent and worship Him, answers us and allows us to enjoy nature as He establishes it and subdues it, in order to teach us that it is under His command. He always waters and satisfies us in a much greater measure than we need and gives us what we cannot get if we depend on our own efforts. He is worthy of our praise. "All you have made will praise

you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might" (Psalm 145:10,11 NIV).

5.4. Questions

1. How does nature praise God?
2. How do harvesters praise God?

6. Psalm Sixty-Six

What He Has Done for my Soul

To the Chief Musician. A Song. A Psalm.

1 Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!

2 Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious.

3 Say to God, "How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.

4 All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name." Selah

5 Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.

6 He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the river on foot. There we will rejoice in Him.

7 He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah

8 Oh, bless our God, you peoples! And make the voice of His praise to be heard,

9 Who keeps our soul among the living, and does not allow our feet to be moved.

10 For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.

11 You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs.

12 You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment.

13 I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows,

14 Which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.

15 I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals, with the sweet aroma of rams; I will offer bulls with goats. Selah

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul.

17 I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.

19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me!

Psalm 65 was a psalm of thanksgiving for the harvest and the consummation of the agricultural year. This psalm is a song of thanksgiving for victory and deliverance. In Psalm 66 the psalmist expresses gratitude to God for His kindness toward his people and himself in both the past and the present. In the first half of the psalm, the psalmist speaks in the plural (verses 1-12) and in the second half he speaks in the singular (verses 13-20). Perhaps the occasion for composing Psalm 66 was the deliverance of King Hezekiah and his people from the Assyrian attack. The king thanks God first on behalf of his people and second on his own behalf. The title of the psalm is "A Song. A Psalm." In this psalm, the psalmist offers thanksgiving to God through words and tunes. Both we and the psalmist thank God with our words as well as with our singing.

The psalm looks back to the past. It shows God as active through history. The psalmist says that He "turned the sea into dry land" (verse 6) then "brought us out to rich fulfilment" (verse 12). On the basis of this blessed experience the psalmist confirms his deep relationship with God and his concern to live in God's fear and in obedience to Him in the future. He makes a commitment to Him that in the future "I will pay You my vows" (verse 13). He also declares his commitment to testify to Him: "I will declare what He has done for my soul" (verse 16).

Psalm 66 teaches us to thank God for saving us and for His unending assistance, in sickness, trouble, need, confusion or depression. He rushes to our aid whether we or somebody else is the cause of our troubles.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The Declaration of a Grateful Soul (verses 1-7)
- Second: The Confession of a Grateful Soul (verses 8-12)
- Third: The Promises of a Grateful Soul (verses 13-20)

6.1. First: The Declaration of a Grateful Soul

(verses 1-7)

1. A call to thanksgiving (verses 1,2):

1. **The psalmist asks all the earth to shout:** "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!"(verse 1). He is the One to Whom all flesh will come because He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth (Psalm 65:2,6). Let all the inhabitants of the earth shout to Him in thanksgiving and sing in their diverse tongues.

2. **Let the shouting be out of exultation:** "Sing out the honour of His name"(verse 2a). Let the sound of singing be loud enough to wake up all the people of the earth, to declare the kind acts of the Creator toward them. His goodness to them is uncountable!
3. **Let the shouting be accompanied by music:** "Make His praise glorious"(verse 2b). We thank Him through singing and acclaiming His greatness, as well as His good deeds, in a manner worthy of His glory. May the heart and tongue and the whole being make a joyful shout, declaring the greatness of His person and acts and the immensity of His love. Let us join the seraphim in shouting: "Holy, holy, holy!" (Isaiah 6:3).
2. **The motive for the declaration of thanksgiving (verses 3,4):**His works that gladden His servants terrify His enemies, thus all his works praise Him (Psalm 103:22).
 1. **His works are awesome and solemn:** "How awesome are Your works!"(verse 3a). His works are extraordinary, astonishing and unexpected. They have always been so, and they will always be. "Among the gods there is none like You" (Psalm 86:8). "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Revelation 15:3,4).
 2. **His deeds are powerful:** "Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You"(verse 3b). He subdues them through His power and all they can do is cringe in submission. "Your enemies shall submit to you, and you will tread down their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29). It is for the good of the enemies to reconcile themselves to Him and pacify His anger. There are many people who have no faith-based relationship with the Lord but they flatter Him and seek His help and favour because they fear His power and punishment. But it is because of God's love that His people worship Him in love and true submission, thus "All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; they shall sing praises to Your name" (verse 4).
3. **A Meditation on God's works (verses 5-7):**
 1. **There are general works for all men:** "Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men"(verse 5). The psalmist calls his audience to meditate on God's wonderful works in the past toward all men from all races, whether they were kind acts to those who loves Him, or punishment to those who hate Him. God has given people a free will and has allowed them to form an opposition party. He has even given them the blessings, which they could use to oppose His kingdom- if they wished! He makes His sun rise on them every morning, gives them life, and is patient with them, so that perhaps they might repent. And when they rebel, He turns the evil they practice into good for His own kingdom (Genesis

- 50:20).
2. **There are special works for His own people:** "He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the river on foot. There we will rejoice in Him"(verse 6). "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea... Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians...' and the LORD swept them into the sea" (Exodus 14:21-29 NIV). Then Moses and the children of Israel sang, "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea... But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters" (Exodus 15:1,10 NIV). Also in the days of Joshua the Jordan river was divided in two and the children of Israel crossed on dry land: "As the priests who carry the ark of the LORD -- the Lord of all the earth -- set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap" (Joshua 3:9-17).
 3. **God's works are permanent:** "He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; do not let the rebellious exalt themselves"(verse 7). He has a mighty arm and His authority is from everlasting to everlasting. He neither changes nor grows weak. What He has done in the past He will continue to do. He is unchangeable. He is the great God Who divided the waters to serve His people. His eyes search about in all the earth searching to honour those who belong to Him and punish those who oppose His good will. Everything is naked and exposed before Him and nothing is hidden from His eyes. He sees the plot of the wicked in the dark and keeps the believer in safety even as he sleeps. He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). And (Philippians 2:10,11 NIV). "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen" (Revelation 1:7 NIV). Yet there is a difference between the tears of terror in the eyes of the rebellious, who will not be exalted, and tears of joy in the eyes of those waiting for Him. These will sing songs of joy and glorification and will make His praise glorious.

6.2. Second: The Confession of a Grateful Soul (verses 8-12)

The psalmist began this psalm by calling all the earth to make a joyful shout to the Lord, then he called all the nations to give Him thanks: "Oh, bless our God, you peoples! And make the voice of His praise to be heard" (verse 8). David declared God's favour to his ancestors when He divided the Red Sea and the Jordan River, as well as God's favour to him personally.

The psalmist gives three proofs of God's favour toward him:

1. **He saved him from stumbling:** "Who keeps our soul among the living, and does not allow our feet to be moved"(verse 9). Their enemies wanted them to die, but God bound their lives securely in the bundle of the living (1 Samuel 25:29 NIV). Their enemies wanted their feet to stumble into the pit of slavery and torment, but He rescued them because He rules supreme forever! Having given us new birth and saved us from bondage to Satan, He now shields us by His power so that we can continue in the life of liberty (1 Peter 1:3,5 NIV). Believers are called and kept by Jesus Christ (Jude 1). "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand" (Psalm 37:23,24).
2. **He saved him from testing:** "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver"(verse 10 NIV). The Lord allowed the enemy to trouble His people so that they would draw closer to Him. The fires of pain were to refine and purge them so that they should become as pure as silver. All their dross would then be burnt away as the Bible says, "I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities" (Isaiah 1:25 NIV). Oh that the enemy would know that his persecution of believers does not burn but that it purges them! Oh that he would know that the blood of the saints is the seed of the Church! Oh that the enemy would know that the flames do not burn the bush but makes it turn greener! May all believers know that the aim of every testing and trouble is to purify them, so that we would be found "to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).
3. **He saved him from pressures:** "You brought us into the net; You laid afflictions [Heb: *mu'akah* meaning pressure] on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water"(verses 11,12a). God allowed the enemies to hunt His people and gather them like fish in a net, or like a prisoner in a dungeon. They laid heavy burdens on them, both financially and emotionally, so that their wealth was plundered and they had to pay tribute. They were defeated in wars; they went through fire and through water and cried out along with Jeremiah, "From above He has sent fire into my bones, and it overpowered them; He has spread a net for my feet and turned me back" (Lamentations 1:13). But the Lord has promised that "When you pass through waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2). God allowed His people to be caught in the hunter's net, the adversary's fire and the drowning waters, yet He is with them throughout all these. He brings them out purer and more refined.

The psalmist ends all that with what he describes as "rich fulfilment" (verse 12b). It is a happy ending to a sad situation. God has brought His people out of oppressive servitude and severe pain to a land that overflows with milk and honey. He brought Joseph out of Pharaoh's prison to establish him as the second most important person in Egypt. Indeed, there is a

glorious resurrection after every painful crucifixion. In place of the pressure that weighs us down, God puts a crown on our heads, and instead of making the enemies ride over the heads of His people, He makes His people reign over the nations. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

6.3. Third: The Promises of a Grateful Soul

(verses 13-20)

God, Who worked in the past through our fathers and granted us a wonderful heritage, and works in the present time to grant us an eternal salvation, deserves that we dedicate our lives to Him. He is worthy also of our faithfulness to the covenant He made with us and the renewal of our commitments to obey and be subject to Him every day. We ought to testify to His greatness and proclaim His grace to everyone. This is exactly what the psalmist did.

1. **A promise to pay his vows:** "I will go into Your house with burned offerings; I will pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals, with the sweet aroma of rams; I will offer bulls with goats"(verses 13-15). The psalmist felt indebted to God's grace and mercy and did not want to appear before the Lord empty-hand (Deuteronomy 16:16). He decided to offer to God the best things he had in payment of his vows. (See comment on vows in Psalm 50:14.)

The psalmist decided to offer to God sacrifices of thanksgiving as he had previously promised. Here he describes the burnt offering of rams as incense from a sweet-smelling offering. This was in accordance with the Mosaic Law: "Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire" (Exodus 29:18 NIV). This was not a destructive act, but rather an expression of love for the Lord, much the same way as the repentant woman expressed her love by pouring the precious nard on Christ's head. Her love was commended (Mark 14:3-9). All who act in the same spirit store up for themselves treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

The New Testament teaches us to love God by offering ourselves and our families to Him: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15 NIV), as well as all of our possessions. Then we will shout aloud, "I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me" (Song of Solomon 7:10 NIV). Today we offer God our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is our spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1 NIV). The Lord is Master over all our lives because He created us and, when we went astray, redeemed us.

2. **A promise to testify to God's kindness (verses 16-20):**

The psalmist acknowledges a threefold kindness and calls on believers to listen to him as he testifies to God's favour toward him:

1. **The kindness of the One Who hears prayer:** "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue"(verses 16,17). In verse 5 David calls everyone to look, and here he calls them to hear, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, which he is now delivering so that they can believe (Romans 10:17). Once they have believed, they live: "Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3). He imparts his experiences to those who hear him, and the humble shall hear and be glad (Psalm 34:2). Rising above human glory, the psalmist glories in his God and exalts and magnifies Him. He cries out to Him and finds Him near and ready to hear the cry of his heart. King Hezekiah said, "Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17).
2. **The kindness of the One who cleanses the heart:** "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer"(verses 18,19). God hates the prayer of the wicked, "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer will be an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9), unless it is a prayer of repentance. If a man keeps sin in his heart and guards and develops it, God does not listen to his prayer, because sin stands as a barrier between him and the Lord. The prophet stated, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). But the Lord hears the psalmist and listens to the voice of his prayer, after He has cleansed his heart, justified him and made his prayer worthy of hearing and his petition acceptable. All the credit goes to the One Who justifies us through faith, giving us peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we can enter through faith into His grace in which we stand (Romans 5:1).
3. **The kindness of the One who shows mercy:** "Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me"(verse 20). The answer to the prayer was not due to the psalmist's own worthiness, but due to God's mercy, which did not ignore his prayer. This is the basis for our confidence, the object of our hope and the joy of our praise. God did not deny the psalmist the right to appear in His presence or refuse to answer his prayer, because by His mercy He cleansed his heart. "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 NIV). "Who is a God like you, Who pardons sin and forgives the transgression... You will again have compassion on us, you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18,19 NIV).

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul...
Blessed be God!"

6.4. Questions

1. How did the psalmist proclaim his praise?
2. What were the promises of the psalmist to God?

7. Psalm Sixty-Seven

Believers are a Blessing to the World

To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

1 God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. Selah

2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth. Selah

5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

6 Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

This is a psalm of joy. It was sung after the harvest, and therefore said, "Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us" (verse 6). At the climax of joy, after celebrating the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles, the psalmist describes God blessing the world through believers. He seeks God's face in order to show the people the Lord, His salvation and authority. Thus God's promise to Abraham would come true: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2,3).

There is a prayer lifted up in this psalm for the entire universe, because as believers are blessed, they bless others. They become like salt to their society, which gives it flavour, and light to the world that illuminates its path!

Usually rains fall down on the peaks, then inundates the valleys. Believers are the peaks of the world, because they are the nearest to God. They are the ones who receive the blessing from God first, then distribute it to others, just as the disciples took the food from Christ to offer it the hungry crowd.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Requesting Blessings for Believers (verse 1)
- Second: Believers Bless the World (verses 2-7)

7.1. First: Requesting Blessings for Believers

(verse 1)

This psalm begins by asking for three blessings God had previously promised to give His people in what we call "The Priestly Benediction". It says, "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). When the believers get the Priestly Benediction they present the world with seven blessings. When they share their blessings with the world around them God multiplies His blessings to them. They can enjoy these blessings more. Here are the three blessings requested:

1. **God's mercy:** "God be merciful to us"(verse 1a). The psalmist requests God to be merciful to him and his brethren, because he recognises that he is unworthy. Mercy stops our deserved punishment, and grace gives us undeserved blessing. The thing that man needs from God's mercy is the forgiveness of his sins. Man cannot be eligible for God's mercy unless he prays, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). God made His people the recipients of His mercy when He said, "Say to your brethren, 'My people,' And to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.'" (Hosea 2:1). They did not deserve to be shown mercy, but God showed them mercy anyway and made them a people of mercy.
2. **God's blessing:** "And bless us"(verse 1b). He sought blessing for himself and for believers; the blessing of triumphing over the enemy of people's souls. King Jehoshaphat was afraid when the Moabites and the Ammonites went to war against him. He fasted and prayed. So the Lord sent him Jahaziel the prophet to encourage him. The children of Israel went out shouting and singing, "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever." God gave victory to His ancient people over their enemies, so the hungry were filled, the penniless became rich, and the fearful waxed bold. The name of the place was called "the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD" (2 Chronicles 20).

Believers today take up the cup of blessing whenever they sit around the Lord's table. When they are filled with Christ they say, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). They are blessed by the Lord, through their fellowship with each other, and through the divine presence amongst them.

3. **God's favour:** "And cause His face to shine upon us"(verse 1c). The psalmist asks for God's favour to shine upon him and upon other believers. When God smiles at them, they know he is pleased with them, and then the promise is fulfilled: "The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you." The Lord shines on us with the light of

Christ who said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life... As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).

The Lord makes His face shine upon us as He guides us. "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). God shone upon the desolate and formless earth with His light and covered it with life and beauty. And He does the same with the sinner when he repents.

7.2. Second: Believers Bless the World

(verses 2-7)

How important it is for the world to have believers! They are the salt of the earth and the light of world. Had there been ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorra, the cities would not have been destroyed and devastated by fire and brimstone! (Genesis 18:32). All those to whom God shows mercy and illuminates their lives bless others with a seven-fold blessing:

1. **They declare the Lord's way to the world:** "That Your way may be known on earth"(verse 2a). Rain falls first on the hills, and then forms into streams that run down to the valleys. Just so, God's blessings do not reach mankind except through the blessed life of believers, whose light shines before men so that all should see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). "His way may be known on earth" as they see Him bear them on eagles' wings (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11). He looks after them like a mother looks after her nursing child, and carries them from the womb even to grey hairs. He will carry, and He will bear and will deliver also (Isaiah 49:15; 46:3-5).
2. **They declare the Lord's salvation to the world:** "That... Your salvation [may be known] among all nations"(verse 2b). This is a prophetic utterance about God's salvation reaching all parts of the world, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Watching believers' lives being transformed, the nations will understand the meaning of God's salvation and realise the meaning of the new birth. God's salvation is manifest in redemption, divine providence and victory. God says about the salvation of His people, "And I will cause the captives of... Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it" (Jeremiah 33:7-9).
3. **They inspire the world to praise the Lord:** "Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You"(verse 3). The same words are repeated in verse 5. The world

praises God as it witnesses His mercy and blessing, which shine on His people. It offers Him thanksgiving as it enjoys His salvation. Therefore, the psalmist calls to the people in Psalm 117 to "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!" "Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted" (Isaiah 49:13).

4. **They gladden the world through God's justice:** "Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously"(verse 4a). God listens to the poor man who cries out because of injustice, and He avenges him. Then those who are tormented in the earth will rejoice in divine justice. The Lord sits upon His throne to rule in righteousness and justice, and judge the people. "A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgement and righteousness in the earth... Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUS" (Jeremiah 23:5-6). It was Isaiah who foretold that "There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth... Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist" (Isaiah 11:1-5).
5. **They gladden the world through God's government:** "And govern the nations on earth"(verse 4b). The Hebrew for "govern" is *nacha*, which actually means, "to guide". People are ignorant, unjust, unbelieving, dead in sins, and separated from the Lord by nature. When a sinner is guided by God's mercy, blessing and favour, he becomes a living, tangible example of what the saving grace can do. Such an example gives a soul that is far away from God a hope in salvation and guidance, because it demonstrates that there is nothing impossible with God in terms of His mercy, and that the door of mercy is ever open. Whoever comes to the Lord, the Lord will by no means cast out, just as Paul said, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief... And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Timothy 1:13-16).
6. **They gladden the world with God's gifts:** "Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us"(verse 6). When sin entered the world, the earth was cursed, but all creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Romans 8: 21). Further, God says, "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,

then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely" (Leviticus 26:3-5). "Yes, the LORD will give what is good; and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our pathway" (Psalm 85:12,13).

7. **They bless the world though the fear of the Lord:** "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him"(verse 7). There is a general blessing and a special blessing. The general blessing involves all the people, but the special blessing is a personal relationship with the Lord. Some people get to know the Lord in a personal, saving way as a result of the good life that believers lead. The rest still recognise that a life of righteousness is worthy of respect, even if they themselves do not aspire to it!

Isaac dwelt in Gerar, and God gave him a hundredfold of the harvest: "The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous." His neighbours envied and resisted him, but God blessed him all the more, so much so that his enemies came to him and said, "We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you.'" (Genesis 26:28).

All the earth must fear the Lord, so that this request may be granted. A time will come when every knee in heaven and on earth shall bow for Christ, for He is the Saviour and the righteous Judge.

7.3. Questions

1. What are the blessings the believers receive from God?
2. How do the believers bless the world?

8. Psalm Sixty-Eight

Victory in the Past and in the Future

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song.

1 Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him.

2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.

4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him.

5 A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

6 God sets the solitary in families; he brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

7 O God, when You went out before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, Selah

8 The earth shook; the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby You confirmed Your inheritance, when it was weary.

10 Your congregation dwelt in it; you, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor.

11 The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it:

12 Kings of armies flee, they flee, and she who remains at home divides the spoil.

13 Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalmon.

15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; a mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan.

16 Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain which God desires to dwell in; yes, the LORD will dwell in it forever.

17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place.

18 You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell there.

19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah

20 Our God is the God of salvation; and to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.

21 But God will wound the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in His trespasses.

22 The Lord said, "I will bring back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,

23 That your foot may crush them in blood, and the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies."

24 They have seen Your procession, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.

25 The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the maidens playing timbrels.

26 Bless God in the congregations, the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

27 There is little Benjamin, their leader, the princes of Judah and their company, the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali.

28 Your God has commanded your strength; strengthen, O God, what You have done for us.

29 Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to You.

30 Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples, till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples who delight in war.

31 Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.

32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; Oh, sing praises to the Lord, Selah

33 To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old! Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.

34 Ascribe strength to God; His excellence is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.

35 O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!

This psalm is a song of thanksgiving for a victory that took place. The psalmist confirms here that the Lord who gave victory to His people in the past will defeat all their opponents in the future. So finally all the kingdoms of the world will belong to the Lord and worship Him. In the past God parted the sea and made a path for them. He led them in the wilderness for forty days and nights till He brought them to the Land of Promise. He divided the land for them, then chose Jerusalem as the capital for the kingdom of David, in which Solomon built the temple of the Lord. All these glorious victories offer evidence of God's faithfulness to His unchangeable promises. God shall give victory to His people so that they avenge themselves on their enemy. He will show His power so that all should praise Him.

This psalm confirms that the final victory belongs to the Lord, because every authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him alone. All those who embrace the cause of the Lord will have victory through the Lord's power.

The Jews used to sing this psalm in the synagogue on the Day of Pentecost. The early Church called it "The Psalm of the Day of Pentecost" because Paul quoted verse 18 in Ephesians 4:8, speaking of the blessings that Christ gave to His Church after rising from the dead and ascending on high. It is a psalm of receiving blessings, future victories, and the coming of the nations into the Kingdom of God. It is also a psalm of praise to the Lord, who walks with us, sympathises with our weaknesses, and prepares for us present blessings and eternal glory.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Victory in the past (verses 1-18)
- Second: Victory in the future (verses 19-35)

8.1. First: Victory in the Past

(verses 1-18)

1. Introduction (verses 1-6):

1. The coming of the Lord gladdens His people and terrifies His enemies (verses 1-3):

The psalmist quoted these three verses, which introduce the psalm, from the words that Moses said as the ark of covenant departed: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You" (Numbers 10:35). The ark was a symbol of God's presence among His people. God is a consuming fire; He turns His enemies into smoke that disperses into the air. They melt like wax before the irresistible fire! They vanish "like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away, like chaff blown off from a threshing floor And like smoke from a chimney" (Hosea 13:3). However, His people who belong to Him, who take refuge in Him, who abide in Him, will rejoice and be glad. They will leap with exultation and gratefulness.

Even though the righteous are grieved by many and various trials, yet before the Lord they rejoice like those who are reaping the harvest or dividing spoils, because the Lord makes them rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:9,10). When Christ comes, the strong enemy must be defeated, because the stronger One will bind him and set his captives free. "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matthew 12:29).

2. Let everyone praise Him: "Sing to God, sing praises to His name"(verse 4a). Then he provides the reasons for his demand:

- They should praise Him because He is the One "who rides on the clouds" (verse 4b) to fall upon the enemies of His people. Before Him there is a "voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3). "Who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds" (Deuteronomy 33:26).
- They should praise Him because He is YAH (a short form of Yahweh) (verse 4c). He lives from the eternal beginning to the eternal future, with whom there is no variation nor shadow of turning. YAH is the source of life and love. He is Yah of

the Exodus and the deliverance, to whom they sang, "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him" (Exodus 15:2).

- They should praise Him because He is "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows" (verse 5a). With this divine greatness He still takes care of those who are not cared for by anyone, those who have no friends and no one to defend them. He values those who have no social value! The Israelites were like orphans in the desert of Sinai, and God was like their father who fed them and met all their needs, to the extent that even their clothes did not wear out, and their sandals did not wear out on their feet (Deuteronomy 29:5).
- They should praise Him because He is "in His holy habitation" (verse 5b). The holy habitation is heaven. They must say to Him, "Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people" (Deuteronomy 26:15). The Lord is in His holy temple. "The LORD is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven" (Psalm 11:4). "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy [in order not to be punished for what we deserve] and find grace [receive what we do not deserve] to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).
- They should praise Him because He "sets the solitary in families" (verse 6a). He removes the solitude of the lonesome and places him in a home full of those who love him. The Israelites were strangers in Egypt. They also lived among heathen nations. So the Lord made them to dwell in safety and peace. David was likewise cast away and a stranger, but the Lord made him to sit on the throne and established a house for him.
- They should praise Him because "He brings out those who are bound into prosperity" (verse 6b), giving them freedom and prosperity. This is exactly what happened in the exodus when God carried them away from Pharaoh's servitude to the freedom of worship they were now enjoying. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).
- They should praise Him because He punishes the wicked with justice. "But the rebellious dwell in a dry land" (verse 6c). In a typical Judean setting, a dry land would be rocky and barren. The heat of the scorching sun would heat up the ground so much that the feet of the rebellious, who are banished there, would only burn and find no rest!

2. God gave victory to His people throughout the ages (verses 7-18):

The psalmist supplies three examples of God's help to His people from the history of the children of Israel:

1. The first victory-The victory of the Exodus (verses 7-10):

As the Lord brought His people out, the earth shook and the skies poured water. "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night." "And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night" (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 14:14). When He gave them the law, God appeared on Mount Sinai and there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud (Exodus 19:16). Deborah and Barak sang together after that victory and said, "LORD, when You went out the earth trembled and the heavens poured, the clouds also poured water" (Judges 5:4). Heavy rains accompanied the thunder and lightning. God walks alongside you on whichever road you take, and when you grow weary, He carries you as a father carries his son!

"You confirmed Your inheritance, when it was weary"(verse 9). When the people were utterly exhausted He showered them with manna and quails (Exodus 16:4). He filled their hunger from heaven, and quenched their thirst from the rock. He led them by a pillar of cloud and fire on a road they had not trod before (Deuteronomy 8:2).

This part is rounded off by the declaration that "You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor" (verse 10). They had been the underdogs in the land, oppressed and tormented by Pharaoh, but He provided them with all they needed out of the abundance of His goodness and kindness.

2. **The second victory**-Possessing the land of Canaan (verses 11-14):

After crossing the desert and reaching the outskirts of the Land of Promise, the Lord gave the Israelites a word that carried all His authority. This word brought instant victory to a small nation that was fighting against large and great nations equipped with all sorts of war material. They were lowly and humiliated, but God gave them victory. When victory was attained, an army of women went out to proclaim the good news with singing. They followed the example of Aaron's and Moses' sister, Miriam the prophetess, who sang the song of "The horse and its rider" (Exodus 15). Also Deborah, the judge of Israel, later on sang her song "I, even I, will sing to the LORD" (Judges 5:3), just as the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite sang with tambourine and dancing (Judges 11:34). The Israelite women, too, sang at the death of Goliath, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). Women usually rejoice in victory, because their men won the battle and now they are safe from the enemy's danger. Now they will divide the spoils that their men brought back.

The psalmist says, "Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (verse 13).

The psalmist compares the victorious people of God with a gentle dove, adorned and garnished with all the silver and gold booty they won. Like anyone who gains victory, they have become independent and secure. The rays of the morning sun shone on the precious loot, and were reflected on the skin of the women who were telling the glad tidings of victory. Their complexion shimmered like the feathers of a dove.

Then the psalmist says, "When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalmon" (verse 14). Perhaps the psalmist refers here to an unknown military battle, in which God seems to have scattered the enemies with a blizzard that covered Mount Zalmon. This mount is near Shechem and was covered with thick woods. Zalmon means, "darkened". Perhaps it took its name from its thick, gnarled thickets that made it look like a black forest. On the day of battle, however, the mount turned white as snow!

The psalmist could have used the snow that fell on Zalmon to refer to God's power and the purity of His deeds. Snow often refers to whiteness and purity. Through His holiness, might and awesome presence, God scattered the kings.

Or he maybe be referring to the change of the hearts of the Israelites after God turned the darkness of their troubles to light and made their black, sinful, fearful hearts as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

Snow may refer to the white bones of the soldiers of the enemies who fell dead in battle. The pinnacle of Zalmon was covered with them. "So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

3. **The third victory**-The choice of Mount Zion (verses 15-18):

The psalmist is talking about David's victory that secured him Mount Zion from the Jebusites. Later, Solomon erected the temple on top of it. There were many other towering mountains in the Holy Land, on which the temple could have been built. There was "the mountain of Bashan" which the psalmist calls "a mountain of God". (The expression refers to its loftiness and elevation.) Also there was "Mount Haran" with its high peaks and black, volcanic rocks. There was "Mount Sinai" which had a special place in the history of the children of Israel. Moses received the law on that mountain, but it was only a temporary residence for God, and the clouds covered it for six days (Exodus 24:16). Yet, God, in His grace, chose "Mount Zion" with its chalky rocks. The mighty granite mountains began to "fume with envy" on account of this chalky mountain, because the temple of the Lord was built on top of it, rather than any other. And in the temple the glory of the Lord used to come down. This should serve as a lesson for us on the choice of grace. God has chosen the weak and

base persons of the world to put to shame those who consider themselves mighty, great, and wise (1 Corinthians 1:27-30). This is the work of His grace (Ephesians 4:8).

Verse 17 says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place." The chariots of God are the angels whom Elisha saw (2 Kings 6:17). The Lord demonstrates His power through them as they serve those who believe. "Sinai, in the Holy Place" means that Mount Zion has become like Mount Sinai in holiness, and that both have become the source of the law. It also means that Mount Zion has replaced Mount Sinai. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Verse 18 says, "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell there." Perhaps the psalmist meant by "on high" "the height of Zion" (Jeremiah 31:12), where the Ark of the Covenant was taken up to Mount Zion from the Jebusites, whom David defeated (2 Samuel 6:12-19; 1 Chronicles 15:11-28). Or perhaps he meant heaven. The meaning of the verse would then be: God went down to give victory to His people, then went up to heaven victoriously, having taken His enemies captive, or having captivated His own people with His unrivalled love, or having done both things... "You have received gifts among men" could mean: You have received the tribute paid to the victor by the defeated. Or: You have received the gifts of love the people of God offered for the building of the temple. It could also mean both things together. God received the rebellious heathens who submitted willingly or unwillingly. They came under divine protection. Maybe the psalmist means by "the rebellious" the generation that wandered in the wilderness for forty years. God put that generation to death in the wilderness, and their children after them acknowledged the grace of God who granted victory to His people.

Paul quoted the sense of verse 18 as he wrote, "'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.'" (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be..." (Ephesians 4:8-11). The quotation means that Christ, who came down to redeem His people, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of man, died the death of the cross. In the cross, He triumphed over His enemy the devil, and made a public spectacle of both him and his soldiers (Corinthians 2:15) through His resurrection from the dead and ascension "on high". Both His people and enemies submitted to Him, and everyone worshipped Him and acknowledged His deity. He bestowed spiritual gifts on His

people, including the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives them spiritual victory over their enemies (Acts 1:8), the gifts of divine grace and heavenly fellowship (Matthew 28: 20). He "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (1 Peter 3:22).

8.2. Second: Victory in the Future

(verse 19-35)

Some nations dwell on the glories of the past and the miseries of the present. They vaunt the glories of their ancestors that have become history, yet they do not create a present for themselves or a future for their children! The nations that really belong to the Lord, however, sing of the glorious past, the great present, and the promised future, because God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Having experienced the greatness of the past, the psalmist moves on to the present and says, "Blessed be the Lord daily."

The psalmist sings of four future things:

1. The Lord will grant victory to His people over their enemies (verses 19-23):

- 1. The Lord will save His people:** "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Our God is the God of salvation; and to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death"(verses 19,20). The benefits He loads upon us may be the sufferings He allows us to bear. Yes, He lets us go through pain and difficulty, but He never lets us carry our burdens alone; He always carries them with us. There are troubles in the world, but we are certain of our overcoming the world, thanks to His salvation. Our Lord brings us out of death in many different ways (John 16:33). He has the keys of Hades and of Death (Revelation 1:18), and it is also He "who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:10).

God may also load upon us His easy yoke and light burden. He requires us to carry the responsibility of the ministry and obey His commandments. And His commandments are not heavy, because we love Him. He delivers us from the wages of sin, which is death, and sets us free from the clutches and power of sin (Matthew 11:19). The psalmist may have wanted to say that God loaded upon us gifts and blessings, like a fruitful tree that yields a hundredfold. He makes us fruitful and purifies us to give forth more fruit. When he rids us of our spiritual weaknesses by filling us with the Spirit, we are not cast out like a withered, unfruitful bough that is hurled into the fire to be burnt (John 15:2).

2. He will save them despite the ferocity of the enemies (verses 21-23):

How ferocious our enemy is! Their scalps are "hairy", namely they did not have their

hair cut. This was done by anyone under a vow who dedicated himself to the accomplishment of a specific goal in mind. He would not have his hair cut until he had paid his vow and attained his goal. The vow they took was to kill God's people. But the Lord will crush the heads of the enemies that are covered with thick hair, with which they show their self-will and arrogance.

The Lord says, "I will bring back [the enemies] from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea" (verse 22). Pharaoh attacked God's people, and was drowned in the depth of the sea together with his army (Exodus 15). Og the king of Bashan attacked them, too, but God annihilated him (Deuteronomy 3:1-11). History repeats itself. The power of Pharaoh, Og, and the like must be crushed before God's salvation. The feet of God's people will be coloured red with the blood of their enemies, and the dogs will lick their blood, just as it happened with Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:19;22:38; 2 Kings 9:36). The enemies shall not escape God's punishment. "Though they dig into hell, from there my hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down; and though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them" (Amos 9:2,3).

2. The people will thank the Lord for victory (verses 24-27):

These verses depict a procession of thanksgiving heading toward the temple of God to thank Him for the old, new and future victories. God had rescued them from harsh and mighty enemies, like Pharaoh and Og, who were bent on exterminating them. But He delivered them, and they described it in verses 21-23. He must also deliver them in the future, because the ways of the Lord are the ways of triumph and holiness. They are the ways of the Almighty, who has authority over heaven and earth.

As the people celebrate through thanksgiving, the singers came up, followed by the dancers and the players of instruments, as Miriam did when they celebrated the Exodus. They blessed the Lord, whom the psalmist called "the fountain of Israel" (verse 26). This means that in Him they live and move and have their being, because He is their Creator and Protector (Acts 17:28).

Among those who thanked God by shouting was "little Benjamin". From Benjamin came Saul, the first King, and from Judah, the ruler. Also David, Solomon, and the coming Messiah sprang up from him. The land of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah lay in the south. Among those who thanked God by shouting were also Zebulun and Naphtali, whose lands lay in the north. Being the experts in war, Deborah eulogised them in her famous poem (Judges 5:18). Here we notice how the psalmist sees his present life in the light of his past one. He was sure of his future, therefore he encouraged the hearts by

saying, "Bless God in the congregations" (verse 26).

3. The people will pray for a manifestation of God's power to the nations (verses 28-31):

In verses 28 and 29 the psalmist requires the Lord to confirm what He had done for His people. He who delivers us will also grant us a better life. When He begins a good work He always completes it. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). When we receive the gift that God gives us, He showers us with greater graces "grace for grace" (John 1:16).

The psalmist stresses that God has commanded strength and power for His people. He requests divine support for the continuity of the victory of God's people, so that all the opponents are subjugated to them and the defeated kings should come and offer gifts to the Lord in His temple as token of surrender. Isaiah prophesied, "In that time a present will be brought to the LORD of hosts from a people tall and smooth of skin, and from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide; to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, to Mount Zion" (Isaiah 18:7).

The psalmist asks the Lord to "Rebuke the beasts of the reeds" (verse 30). These are crocodiles or hippopotamuses. It is a metaphor for Egypt in which reeds and papyrus abounded. The psalmist also asks the Lord to rebuke "the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples," which are the minor kings together with their people, who struggle and fight for the silver and the booty. The bull symbolises arrogance and defiance, whereas the calves symbolise subordination and submissiveness. Nations usually follow their arrogant kings who lead them into wars with hope for the plunder.

Verse 31 proclaims that the nobility of Egypt will come, together with the Ethiopians, in submission to God. Egypt symbolises the enemies of the people, and Ethiopia symbolises the far lands. Both the enemies and those who are far away will submit to God.

All this came true on the day of Pentecost when representatives from those countries came to Christ. It will also be fulfilled in a clearer way when "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 2:10,11).

4. The psalmist calls on all the peoples to praise the Lord (verses 32-35):

The psalmist calls upon them to join the children of Israel in singing to the Lord. He says, "Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; Oh, sing praises to the Lord" (verse 32). He is the eternal God, the Creator of all things, the proprietor of authority in heaven and on

earth. He made everything and He holds them under control. He carries everything by the word of power. He is the final authority everywhere.

This good God deserves all praise, for He is the powerful God, the owner of eternal authority, who created and established heaven and earth. He "rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old" (verse 33). He is also the God of the covenant, "The God of Israel" (verse 35) who strengthened and empowered His people. "Blessed be God" who can do all things. "Great and marvellous are Your works... O King of the saints... For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgements have been manifested" (Revelation 15:3,4).

8.3. Questions

1. Reading verses 4-6 why do the believers praise God?
2. The psalmist records three victories God gave His people. Mention them.

9. Psalm Sixty-Nine

A Cry in the Midst of Persecution

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Psalm of David.

1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully; though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.

5 O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You.

6 Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.

7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face.

8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children;

9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

10 When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach.

11 I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them.

12 Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters.

15 Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily.

18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies.

19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You.

20 Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually.

24 Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.

25 Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents.

26 For they persecute the ones You have struck, and talk of the grief of those You have wounded.

27 Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

29 But I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bull, which has horns and hooves.

32 The humble shall see this and be glad; and you who seek God, your hearts shall live.

33 For the LORD hears the poor, and does not despise His prisoners.

34 Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them.

35 For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it.

36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it.

Psalm 68 is a psalm of victory, but Psalm 69 is a cry of hope in the midst of persecution. Life

is an intricate fibre of victory and adversity, daylight and dark, cross and resurrection. One day we achieve success and another day we fail. But in all these we run for shelter to God, and cry out to Him. So in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). The psalmist thanks God for the victory He granted him and gives Him the credit for it. When beset by troubles, he rushes to the All-Merciful, seeking assistance. The believer's compass is always pointing toward heaven. In his success he turns to Him to thank Him, and in his weakness he turns to Him to seek help.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The sufferings of the psalmist (verses 1-21)
- Second: The weakness of the psalmist (verses 22-28)
- Third: The hopes of the psalmist (verses 29-36)

9.1. First: The Sufferings of the Psalmist

(verse 1-21)

1. A complaint of troubles (verses 1-4)

1. **He is drowning:** "Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck"(verse 1). The psalmist identifies himself with a drowning man encircled by waves, swamped by their waters, and bogged down in them like a pierced ship. He is like Jonah who prayed, "The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head" (Jonah 2:5). And like Jeremiah who exclaimed, "The waters flowed over my head; I said, 'I am cut off!'" (Lamentations 3:54).
2. **He is in deep mire:**In verse 2 the psalmist lodges a complaint against his drowning in deep mire and slipping under the onrush of the flood. A mire is a swamp that is full of mud and dirt, the harder he tried to get out it the deeper he sank in! Waves of grief continued to overtake him. Surrounding him at first, they increased till they covered him and even invaded his soul. The promise will nonetheless stand: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you" (Isaiah 34:2).
3. **His prayer is not answered:**In verse 3 he says that both his body and soul have become weary from waiting for the delayed answer for his prayer. He cries out so much to God, who seemed not to listen to him, that his throat just dried up. He seems to have the same attitude that Jeremiah had as he told Baruch, "Woe is me now! For the LORD has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest" (Jeremiah 45:3).
4. **His enemies are many:**In verse 4 he says that his enemies are so many. They are also

mighty and powerful. Although innocent, they treated him as if he were guilty. They wanted to destroy him and coerced him to give back what he never had stolen!

2. The cause of trouble (verses 5-12):

- 1. The psalmist is the primary cause of his own troubles:** He admits his own foolishness and unhidden sins in verse 5. Sin itself is foolishness, but a foolish man turns wise when he confesses and repents to God. In verse 6 he beseeches God to keep believers who wait on Him and seek His face, so that they will not be ashamed as they witness the foolishness of their leader and example! In the course of his confession he makes reference to the effect on his fellow-believers of what he committed. He asks on their behalf that they would lift up their heads and not be ashamed. (cf. our comment on "the LORD of hosts" in Psalm 24:10.)
- 2. The psalmist's love for God is yet another cause of his troubles:** The psalmist loved God and had zeal for His temple, which made the people mock him (verses 7-12). He felt what Jeremiah felt when he prayed, "Know that for Your sake I have suffered rebuke" (Jeremiah 15:15). The psalmist's zeal for the house of God was like fire burning within him. Seeing the dishonesty of the worshippers, he wept, fasted, prayed and put on sackcloth. Those hypocrites were his own kith and kin. But rather than repent, they mocked and cut him off. He received the same kind of treatment at the hand of the hypocrites who were not his family. Those were the leaders and the judges who sat by the city gate, as well as the vile and the drunkards. All of them held him as the object of their sarcastic songs!

David's zeal for the house of the Lord showed itself in the fact that he pitched the tent of meeting on the holy mountain (2 Samuel 6:12) and his desire to build a house for the Lord instead of the tent (2 Samuel 7:2). And even after the Lord refused his request to build Him a house, he still gathered a lot of building material to help with constructing it (1 Chronicles 28:11-18).

When Christ cleansed the temple (John 2:17) and drove out the moneychangers and dove-sellers from it, the disciples recalled verse 9 of this psalm.

3. A prayer in the midst of trouble (verses 13-21):

- 1. The psalmist prays in dependence on God's mercy (verses 13-17):**

True, he had a consuming zeal for the Lord's house, but he needed divine mercy. Therefore he asked the Lord for three things: "Acceptable time", "multitude of mercy", and "truth of salvation" (verse 13).

- 1. Acceptable time:** A time when a request is granted "Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to help me!" (Psalm 40:13). God answers the psalmist: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people"

(Isaiah 49:8). God will surely answer in the right time that He has appointed according to His love and wisdom. He will hasten it in its time (Isaiah 60:22).

2. The multitude of Your mercy: He explains that in verse 16, where he says, "Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies." The Lord must turn to him because He is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6). But God demonstrated the riches of His mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, in that He made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4,5). "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Timothy 3:3-7).
3. The truth of Your salvation: This refers to the trustworthiness of His promises of deliverance. For "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). The psalmist explains this in verse 17: "Do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily."

In verses 14 and 15 the psalmist repeats the complaint he had lodged earlier, in verses 2 and 4, of the mud, the depth of the waters, and the torrent, so that "the pit [should not] shut its mouth on me." Perhaps the pit is the grave (Psalm 55:23) or a dungeon (Lamentations 3:35,55). The psalmist may have been thrown into the dungeon, either metaphorically or literally, as it happened with Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:6).

2. He prays for redemption and deliverance (verses 18-21):

"Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies"(verse 18). Redemption in the ancient Hebrew culture meant that the nearest kin should stand by his relative and pay off his debts. Redemption simply meant paying off the debts of somebody near to you, thus delivering him from slavery. As God answers, the psalmist says with Jeremiah, "You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, 'Do not fear!' You have redeemed my life" (Lamentations 3:57-58). God answers, "I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible" (Jeremiah 15:21). Considering himself a slave sold as payment for a debt, the psalmist asks the Lord to pay the ransom on his behalf so that he can go free. It was the next of kin who usually "redeemed" (Ruth 4:4). What a beautiful picture of the Lord- a redeemer, the next of kin!

The psalmist reiterates his pains and the inhumanity of his enemies in verses 19-21. They were so inhuman as to give him poisonous gall for food, and for his thirst they gave him undrinkable vinegar.

Though feeling bitter, he knew deliverance would come. Christ also went through the same pains, and verse 21 is quoted in John 19:28 about His thirst on the cross and the vinegar he was offered to drink. Yet, victory belonged to the risen Christ who ascended to heaven.

9.2. Second: The Weakness of the Psalmist

(verse 22-28)

Recalling the cruelty of his enemies, the psalmist could not contain himself, so he began to invoke all sorts of punishment and destruction upon them. Owing to the cruelty of these words, some interpreters assume that they are actually the words of the psalmist's enemies. But, in fact, verse 22 and the following verses should be understood in the light of verse 21: "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." It is the psalmist who invokes the destruction of his adversaries, since they added more suffering to what God originally inflicted upon him because of his sin. The psalmist remonstrates, "They persecute the ones You have struck [that is the psalmist]" (verse 26). He goes on to say that they gloated over his suffering and derided and defamed him: "And talk of the grief of those You have wounded" (verse 26).

Some assert that the woes mentioned in these verses foretell what will become of the unjust enemies as a result of their injustice. Others, however, claim that the psalmist invokes woes upon the enemies, in keeping with the spirit of the Mosaic Law: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Exodus 21:24). Obviously the righteous sometimes get weak and do not want to let God avenge them on their enemies in His time and according to His wisdom. They ask God, therefore, to inflict certain punishments on their enemies in a specific time. The Bible recorded the words of the psalmist with perfect honesty to tell us of the terrible destiny that awaits the wicked. It also shows the spiritual weakness of the psalmist and his need to learn the Spirit of Christ that forgives and forgets.

God dealt out sufferings to the psalmist, but they were "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The enemies, on the other hand, hurt him to push him to despair and devastation.

He prayed that their table become a snare as they eat in safety, because they gave him gall for food and vinegar for drink (verse 22), almost the same as in Romans 11:9.

He prayed that their eyes, which watched the righteous in order to hurt him, be blinded, and their loins would shake, either because of sickness or terror (verse 23).

He prayed to God to pour out His indignation upon them (verse 24), as it was said in Jeremiah 10:25.

He prayed that the Lord would make their dwelling place desolate (verse 25), as happened to the traitor Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20).

David mentions the reason for invoking all these curses in verse 26: They drove him out after God had punished him, and mocked him when the Lord wounded him.

He prayed that the iniquities of his enemies be piled on their heads, so that they would not be forgiven by God who justifies the righteous (verse 27), as it is said in Jeremiah 18:23.

He prayed that their names be blotted out by death from the land of the living, or maybe he prayed that they should be blotted out from the Book of Life. Perhaps both meanings were intended (verse 28).

9.3. Third: The Hopes of the Psalmist

(verse 29-36)

The psalmist makes a difference between the destiny that the wicked deserve (in verses 22-28) and his own destiny and the destiny of his people. The latter is one of salvation and deliverance. God will set him up on high and make His righteous people dwell in Jerusalem, as Jeremiah said, "Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD! For He has delivered the life of the poor, from the hand of evildoers" (Jeremiah 20:13).

1. The psalmist expects the salvation (verses 29-31):

"Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high"(verse 29). This is a prayer, as well as a confident declaration that God will set him on high on an unapproachable tower or a fortress. He believes that God will surely save him and lift him up above his emotional crisis. Then the water that has flooded his soul (in verse 1) will go out from him, his foolishness and iniquities (of verse 5) will be forgiven, and his prayer (which he lifted up in verse 13) will be answered. Indeed, the just shall live by his faith (Habakkuk 2:4). And then he will offer to God praise that is more desirable to Him than "an ox or bull, which has horns and hooves" (verse 31). The horns indicate that an ox is one year old, and is good to be slaughtered. Having hooves means that it is a clean animal that is fit for food and for offering as sacrifice (Leviticus 11:3).

2. The psalmist rejoices in salvation (verses 32-34):

When salvation is complete, the psalmist rejoices, and all the humble rejoice together with him. They have empathised with him and offered their prayers for him, therefore their hearts were refreshed by joy since God answered him and them.

In this final part of the psalm, the psalmist goes beyond the dismal realm of complaining to the cheery realm of hope. So he declares God's benefaction and recognises that the hearts of those who seek the Lord must live, not die of sorrow (verse 32). God accepts the repentance of the penitent who were prisoners of his punishment because of their sins. Now that they are delivered, they became prisoners of God's mercy and love (verse 33).

Here all nature trembles, together with the heavens, earth, the seas, and all that moves in them. They sing together of the Lord's salvation "Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isaiah 44:23).

3. God's congregation rejoices in salvation (verses 35,36):

The Lord saves His people who cry out to Him, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against them (Matthew 16:18). The Lord will add to the church daily those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). The meek shall inherit the earth (Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5), and shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward (Isaiah 37:31). The descendants of the righteous will prosper (Psalm 37:25). They shall build the old waste places, raise up the foundations of many generations; and shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In (Isaiah 58:12).

9.4. Questions

1. According to verse 5 what was the main reason for the psalmist's troubles?
2. What are the hopes of the troubled believer?

10. Psalm Seventy

An Urgent Plea

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.

1 Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O LORD!

2 Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life; let them be turned back and confused who desire my hurt.

3 Let them be turned back because of their shame, who say, "Aha, aha!"

4 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified!"

5 But I am poor and needy; make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay.

This five-verse psalm is an urgent plea. The author opens the psalm by saying, "Make haste to help me!" and concludes it with the same plea: "O LORD, do not delay." When man's resources are reasonably adequate, he asks for God's help and waits, but when his resources have come to an end, when he assumes they are finished, or when his strength wanes and he finds himself giving way he cries out in urgency, "Make haste to help me!"

The superscription of the psalm is "To Bring to Remembrance." This may mean that the psalmist reminds himself of God's saving presence with him and God's continued and renewed grace toward him. Or it may mean that through his prayer he reminds God of his distress, not because God forgets, but to reassure himself. The psalm could also have been a memorial of the deliverance from a disaster that almost overtook him, his nation, or both. This follows the command: "In the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts... you shall blow the trumpets... and they shall be a memorial for you before your God" (Numbers 10:10).

The words of this psalm are almost identical to those of Psalm 40:13-17. Psalm 40 opens with thanking God for previous mercies (verses 1-12) and concludes with a prayer (verses 13-17). Psalm 70 includes only the prayer. Most likely one of the prophets took the last five verses of Psalm 40, put them to music, and used them in public worship.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The Psalmist's Personal Request (verses 1-3)
- Second: The Psalmist's Request for Believers (verse 4)
- Third: The Psalmist's Personal Request Once More (verse 5)

10.1. First: The Psalmist's Personal Request

(verses 1-3)

There are two things that make anyone in need turn to God to seek His speedy help. First: knowing and believing that he is precious to God, and that God must look after him. Second: the intensity of his need, his personal inability to handle it, and the pressure this urgent need has on him. Both things exist in the case of the author of our psalm.

1. **The psalmist's knowledge and belief in God's care for him, and that he is precious in the sight of his God:** "Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O LORD!... Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay"(verses 1,5).
 1. **He knows that the Lord is God (Elohim):**He recognises the Lord as the God the Creator who started and who will finish, who created all things, and by His will they exist (Revelation 4:11).

2. **He knows God (Yahweh) in a personal way:**He called Him "Lord" or "Jehovah". This is the God of the covenant, who gave the promises to His people and who abides by them. Today, we understand in a better way that we have a new covenant, sealed with the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:28). For Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24). We trust in this covenant and believe in its constancy because the blood of Jesus guarantees it.
2. **2- The intensity of the psalmist's need:** "Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life; let them be turned back and confused Who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back because of their shame, who say, 'Aha, aha!'"(verses 2,3). The intensity of the need comes from the intensity of the attack. The psalmist mentions three sorts of enemies attacking him: those who pursued him, those who contented themselves with wishing him ill, and those who flouted him.
 1. **"Who seek my life":**Like Saul, who pursued David from place to place trying to kill him, they chased and hunted him. The psalmist asks the Lord to put them to shame and put an end to their "seeking his life."
 2. **"Who desire my hurt":**Motivated by envy, they desired his hurt, whether through others or themselves. He requests that they would turn back and be ashamed of their ill will.
 3. **"Who say, 'Aha, aha!'"**:Seeing him hurt, they shout with malicious delight. They utter these exclamations with mock-ery as they watch him fall down and perish. It is also a cry of threat and warning. The psalmist requests that they would turn back from their mockery and threats of shame.

10.2. Second: The Psalmist's Request For Believers

(verse 4)

In this verse the psalmist provides a description of the believers for whom he prays. Then he lifts up a prayer for them. He says, "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, 'Let God be magnified!'"

1. The description of believers:

1. **They "seek the Lord":**The Lord said, "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Moses said, "You will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29). The Apostle Paul said to the Athenians about those who seek the Lord, "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).
2. **They "love Your salvation":**The psalmist said about them, "Let them shout for joy

and be glad, who favour my righteous cause; and let them say continually, 'Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.'" (Psalm 35:27). They are also the one "who love His name" who shall dwell in His house (Psalm 69:36). From the New Testament we know that they also have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

These two traits, "those who seek Him," and "those who love His salvation" reveal the quality of the life of faith. It is a life of seeking the Lord through prayer and waiting. It is a life of salvation from all that may disturb us or spoil our peace. Sin is the primary cause of disturbance, and it is through His precious atonement that God rids us of it. Anxiety also disturbs, but God's antidote against it is peace and rest. Enemies may disturb us, too, but the Lord delivers us from them and gives us reassurance.

2. **The psalmist's request for believers:**

1. **He requests joy:** "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You." Joy is an inner feeling that results from Christ's dwelling in the heart, the assurance of forgiveness, and Christ's fellowship with us every day. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit when He possesses the believer's life. This joy is not dependent of the circumstances; it is rather above circumstances and grows stronger in the midst of difficulties. This is why Paul was able to say, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Thus the joy of the Lord turns out to be the strength of believers (Nehemiah 8:10).
2. **He requests them to magnify the Lord:** "Let those who love Your salvation say continually, 'Let God be magnified!'" This is an outward expression of the inner joy of the heart "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). To glorify the Lord is to give Him credit and acknowledge His salvation. It also involves thanking Him in prayer in private and proclaiming His kindness toward us in our churches through singing. To glorify God means to invite others to experience the same joy we experienced.

May God teach us to request things for ourselves as well as for others. Job did that when the Lord restored his losses. He prayed for his friends, and the Lord gave him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

10.3. Third: The Psalmist's Personal Request Once More (verse 5)

"But I am poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay"(verse 5). Once again the psalmist calls God to send speedy help. He bases the request on two things (as he has done in verses 1-3): Knowing the saving, sustaining God, and his crushing need for help and deliverance. The Lord does not grow

weary of hearing the believer's prayer, nor does He weary of answering it. He even requires us to pray continually without losing heart (Luke 18:1).

1. The Lord is a helper and deliverer:

1. **The psalmist calls Him "my help":** He is intimately related to Him, therefore he says to Him, "Make haste to help me" (verse 1). A helper will provide you with what you need but cannot get on your own. A helper offers you the things you cannot do without. Such was the case when God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone without the help of Eve (Genesis 2:18). Your sustaining God says to you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). This leads us to say with the psalmist, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God" (Psalm 146:5).
2. **He calls Him "my deliverer":** He delivers according to His promise "'Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,' says the LORD" (Jeremiah 1:8). "Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:10).

2. The psalmist needs the Lord desperately for two reasons:

1. **He is miserable:** "But I am poor." He feels lonely. Loneliness was the only thing he felt as he fled from one cave to another, because none of his relatives and friends could accompany or help him for fear of the king. Only the bitter at heart joined David. When the cruel feeling of loneliness crushed him he turned to God seeking His speedy succour.
2. **He is financially poor:** "But I am needy." How can someone on the run earn a living? One day his need forced him to go to miserly Nabal: "Please give whatever comes to your hand to your son David" (1 Samuel 25:8). With Nabal's refusal to give him anything his financial resources failed, so he demanded God to intervene with His divine help.

The psalmist realised at the end that his weakness was the secret of his strength, because God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). He recognised that his poverty was the secret of his riches, because Christ, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Let us always call God whenever we need help or deliverance: "Make haste to me do not delay."

10.4. Questions

1. What did the psalmist ask for himself?
2. What did he ask for the believers?

11. Quiz

There are two questions at the end of each chapter. If you answer 15 of these questions correctly you may join our Bible school by correspondence and work toward a certificate.

Call of Hope- P.O. Box 100827 - 70007 Stuttgart - Germany